

Fundamentals of Esalen® Massage (4-day) A 26-hour course

Course Rationale

This workshop will introduce the core concepts of Esalen Massage. Through experiential exercises, brief lectures and demonstrations, and with plenty of personal hands-on guidance, the workshop presents the essentials: grounding, sensitivity, and massage skills. At the end of the week, you will be able to give a basic massage to friends or family. This course is also appropriate for the professional who wants to recover the immediacy of touch and healing.

Participants will be introduced to the elements behind every successful massage experience, including breath awareness, mindful centering practices, movement, quality of touch, rapport and closure. You will learn how to safely and easily apply the long, balancing strokes and gentle stretches that are the foundation of Esalen bodywork. Instruction in specific detail work will address constrictions and contribute to overall release of tension. This massage practice is designed to promote feelings of wholeness and reconnection with our natural state of being.

Participants will learn to effectively share their experience about massage with each other. Teaching tools include music, tables, charts, lecture demonstrations, and experiential exercises to awaken the senses. Come prepared to enjoy the healing waters of the natural hot springs and the magical beauty of the Esalen grounds. All levels of experience are welcome.

Syllabus

- The importance of centering and presence.
- How to build empathy and create a safe space for healing and renewal.
- Experience with the vitality that results from the release of chronic muscular tension. The relaxation response and the physiology of breath.
- Good body mechanics for giving a massage on a table
- The role of sensing in massage: how to wake up your hands. The impact of touch.
- The importance of slow as a means toward release.
- Basic long integration strokes in prone and supine positions
- Specific methods for shoulders, low back, legs, arms, neck, torso and feet.
- Contraindications for massage
- Communication skills, including how to ask for what you want.

Educational goals

At the conclusion of this workshop, students will

- Be sensitive and aware when initiating a massage.
- Make personal contact with their partner and meet his/her situation.
- Effectively give an introductory massage, in the prone and supine positions.
- Effectively move the body and limbs to release muscles and joints.
- Provide comfortable draping and clear, safe boundaries
- Use good body mechanics to move easily around a massage table and avoid injury.
- Be able to check in and share feedback for optimum results.

Course Schedule:

Mon 7:15 pm – 9:30 pm

Tue 9:30 am – 1:00 pm

Tue 3:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Wed 9:30 am – 1:00 pm

Wed 3:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Thu 9:30 am – 1:00 pm

Thu 3:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Thursday Eve 8-10 pm

Fri 9:45 am – 12:00 pm

Monday evening 7:15-9:30

Leaders introduction and welcome. Brief description of course content, intent, class schedule, what to expect. Introduction and stated intention by group participants. Q and A. Exercise to develop sensitivity to surroundings: standing, sensing the earth, walking, making eye contact with others, reaching out and shaking hands. Building rapport. Brief shared exercise to build sensitivity and provide basis for long sensitive Esalen massage strokes: The brush off. Standing, facing each other, greeting. Making slow deliberate contact with one shoulder. Stillness, allowing hands to take the shape of the shoulder. With hands connected, sweeping down the arm and out through partner's hand. Repeat other arm, move to mid back and sweep down the back, down the front, down the legs. Sweeping up the head and face. Peer feedback regarding what changed, how it felt. Exercise 3: stillness. Client in Supine position, partner kneels at the side and gently rests her hand on client's belly, follows the rise and fall of the breath, does nothing. Moves the hand to the clavicle. To the forehead. Variation: partner can request hand placement. Shared feedback from the class, Q and A, exercise looking around the group to see group members. Reminder of Monday's schedule.

Tuesday morning: 9:30-1 pm

Centering exercise based on Tai chi, yoga, or expressive movement

Demo on how to put up and adjust the table; linen and pillow placement.

Demo in the prone position. Draping and boundaries. Breath and contact. How to initiate the massage. Back, legs. Oil application. Long slow strokes following the contours of the body. How to address the back, contraindications for cross spine work. How to sense more deeply into the shoulder to add detail.

Q and A. Shared practice with class partners. Teachers assist tableside. Exchange.

Feedback, importance of speaking from one's experience. How I feel right now is....

Check in. Closure.

Tuesday afternoon 3:30-6:30

Brief Centering exercise

How to check in and interview the client.

Demo supine position. The importance of good draping. How to position bolsters.

Position partner on the table aligning legs, hips, shoulder and neck.

Long strokes on the front of the body. Areas to avoid. How to address and lift the legs. How to lift the head and lower it slowly, how to turn the neck to address side muscles and integrate to shoulder.

How to give and receive feedback.

Exchange practice session. Teacher guidance and instruction.

Feedback exchange, Q and A. Closure for the day. Optional practice session at night with instructor present.

Wednesday 9:30-1 pm

Brief Centering exercise based on t'ai Chi chuan, yoga, or expressive movement
Demo prone position. Teacher focuses on body mechanics, stance, and ways to move around the table. Review of yesterday's overall approach to the back.

Focus on bony landmarks. Locate scapula, cervical, thoracic vertebrae, hip ilium. Feel soft tissue of thoracic cervical junction, add pressure to contact and release the muscles. Add more detail on the scapula. More detail along the erecto-spinae group. Ways to mobilize arm to release muscle tension.

Work down back, establish relationship between shoulders and hips. Use skeleton model to assist. Shared practice with a new partner/client. Share feedback, following model detailed above. Trade. Q and A. Closure.

Wednesday afternoon 3:30-6:30

Brief centering exercise

Demo supine position. Body mechanics re: how to lift the legs, provide traction, work under the shoulder. Demo shoulder work from the front, under the shoulder to access the erecto-spinae, across the clavicle, up the neck. Contraindications on neck.

Demo arms, including forearms and hands. Integration of upper body. Draping options for the chest. Integration into yesterday's leg work.

Student practice, with instructor guidance and feedback. Shared peer feedback.

Trade sessions. Q and A. Dinner break.

Thursday morning 9:30-1 pm

Brief Centering Exercise based on t'ai chi chuan or yoga

Demonstration in the prone position, the legs. How to work the gluteals. How to lift the legs, apply even pressure up the legs, leg stretch (heel to buttock) and contraindications. Achilles stretch. Introduction to the foot. Discussion re: hip and knee replacement. Shared practice including feedback regarding pressure. Integrate upper back as demonstrated Wednesday. Teacher guidance at the table, special issues addressed. Shared feedback.

Q and A. Circle with each person speaking. Closure

Thursday afternoon 3:30-6:30

Brief centering exercise

Table demo torso, including abdomen and chest, ribs, working through the Torso "3D". Alternate draping options. When possible, full massage, with trade in the evening.

Shared practice, instructor at the table to ensure safety and address special needs.
Feedback. Q and A.

Thursday Evening 8-10 pm

Full massage practice and trade, with instructor guidance at the table.
Feedback.

Friday am 9:30-12 noon

Brief centering exercises.

Q and A

Special issues.

In the supine position on the table, demonstration and practice: a brief 25-minute supine stress reduction session through clothes reviewing material already taught. Some students may choose to work on the floor if that is how they will work at home.

Future ways and means to build Massage and embodiment into daily living.

Closure and feedback.

Pass out continuing education assessment if you offer it.