

THE NEW STONE AGE

The Art and Practicality of Stone Massage

The New Stone Age has Begun

Although stones and crystals have been used for thousands of years, the recent merging of technology and stone is allowing for mainstream access and acceptance of this modality.

Like anything that goes from obscure to mainstream, evolution and development will emerge in that modality. Stones and crystals in massage and beauty therapy is no exception.

Stones have a wonderful cosmetic and aesthetic value in the salon, clinic or Spa environment. Most of us have noticed the new prevalence of massage stones as props in many advertising campaigns. However, it should be remembered that hot and cold stones have deeply therapeutic benefits when used as the simple implements for which they were crafted or selected.

Akin to stirring paint with a screwdriver or hammering a nail in with a chisel, so is the importance of the correct choice of the stone for its practical and therapeutic benefits. The old adage comes to the fore: Choose the right tool for the job.

What Makes a Stone useful for Massage and Beauty Treatments?

- ◆ Hot - warm stone massage requires stones be easily heated and retain heat for the longest period of time. Traditionally, basalt has been popular as it is readily available as pebbles and smoothed stones in riverbeds and beaches. Recent technological advances (and a lot of effort) now means that other stone such as granite (for hot) and marble (for cold) can be crafted into perfect massage tools. Semi precious stones are also becoming available.
- ◆ Size does matter. A stone meant to work the larger muscles needs to



have a size that can easily transfer enough heat to that muscle whilst also being easily handled by the therapist. Smaller stones for between the toes and working the facial muscles are also necessary.

- ◆ The shape of the stone. Here is where the handcrafted stones leave other options far behind. Flat stones are great for placement on the body, as they are more comfortable to lay on, and also when placed on the body will not roll off as easily as their rounded counterparts. Handcrafted stones are easily identifiable for their function and offer thermal uniformity and ease of use. The more rounded stones are great for the massage of the muscles.

choose the right tool for the job

- ◆ Stone material is also important. Marble is excellent for its use in cold stone massage. Granite is perfect for hot stone massage as it holds heat extremely well and has a fine finish to give the best hygiene properties: the smoother the stone the less exfoliation. Basalt, the traditional stone, has good thermal properties and is more porous than marble or granite. (Many stones are marketed as basalt, but basalt is a material that can range from pumice stone to blue metal road base, so make sure the basalt is fine grained and smooth.)

What Stones are Not Suitable for Massage and Beauty?

- ◆ Stones that are too small do little more than rub the skin, failing to achieve any benefit to the client.
- ◆ Stones that crack, splinter or shatter when heated. Some people pride

themselves on their 'hardware specials' or 'free beach pebbles' saving them money. Beware, some stones are treated with diesel or other chemicals to give them a uniform shine, some stones will readily splinter, some even shatter on heating, or cooling, all very undesirable for the client.

- ◆ Stones that are too rough will tend to exfoliate and unless hygiene is exceptional, may become a disease transfer risk.
- ◆ Stones that do not hold the heat or cold for a reasonable period will be ineffective, however they may be ok for non-thermal massage work.

Massage with stones can be of great benefit to clients and therapists alike, and to the businesses that invest in this modality. Proper training will allow for best results, enabling the therapist to become fluent in this treatment and creative in improvising ways to incorporate aspects into everyday massage and beauty.

Anything that can reduce stress on a practitioner's hands, whilst giving the client a wonderful and beneficial treatment is a valuable modality to have on your menu list.

Beauty and Functionality equal Enthusiasm

Personally, having handcrafted massage stones from various precious and selected materials has provided an insight into the esoteric attributes of many stones.

Starting with roughly sawn and squared pieces of stone, my massage stone sculptures begin to take shape through successive grades of diamond grinding wheels, rainforest sourced fresh water and lots of effort.

the right stones reduce stress on a practitioner's hands

The very quiet and grounding effect of Carrara Marble, used for cold stones, seems to provide an almost meditative serenity and clarity when it is worked. This is an attitude that I have heard mirrored by therapists working with these creations.

Granite on the other hand, gives great strength and endurance, and helps dispel those niggling feelings and thoughts that may arise about situations and people and so aids in balancing relationships. Granite is a sacred healing stone of Aboriginal and Mayan cultures. A very hard stone, the effort to craft it is very intense. Yet the stone feels as soft as a human hand to the client when it is used in massage.

My favourite stone to work, though, would have to be Lapis Lazuli. This intensely blue precious stone is treated with utmost respect. The very high vibration of this stone causes such a flood of intuition and creativity that it can become intoxicating. Things seem to fall into place. I have had quite a few Eureka moments working Lapis. The way the successive grinding of this stone reveals greater and greater beauty within its form is amazing. Indeed, when I clear away the final polishing paste to reveal the finished form, I am almost breathless.

Those who have used the Lapis may have also been infused by the energy of this stone, as many have phoned me excitedly buzzing with their experiences whilst working with the stones.

I believe that the energy you put into your actions is very important and that positivity, self awareness, and gentleness is contagious. Maybe as the stones influence us perhaps they also act as a generator as crystals do imparting our centredness and intention to a client.

Therapists have a unique opportunity to deliver more to their clients than a beauty treatment or massage. They have a chance to help ground and heal another person as well as themselves. Surely this is why they have chosen this field of endeavour.

Remember, enjoy your work, and the company of those around you, and see a little more of the magic that surrounds us all every day. 🍀



By Brett Smith

Brett is the owner of the Port Douglas Natural Therapies Centre and Spa. From a family of miners, Brett's celebrated stone-working skill utilises the traditional techniques to hone raw stones into beautifully crafted massage stones. Distributed through Stone Eagle Handcrafted Massage Stones, Brett's penchant for beauty and practicality ensures his massage stones are sought after globally.