

The five-minute shoulder massage

A simple shoulder massage can be incredibly relaxing. Here are some simple techniques that will aid you in providing a short, safe and simple massage to help relax and release some tension for your partner.

Some simple rules

If the person has severe pain or has had any recent injuries to the shoulder area, don't do this massage. Instead, suggest they see a massage therapist, because the massage could aggravate their condition.

The massage should not be painful, so make sure the pressure is comfortable. If something feels hard like a bone, it probably is a bone. Everything you massage should feel relatively soft.

Don't wreck your body giving the massage

- Keep your shoulders relaxed
- Keep your back straight and avoid bending excessively
- Relax your hands between each movement
- Use a slow, even pace
- Use your thumbs in a re-enforced manner

The techniques

Have your partner sit upright in a regular chair. The upper shoulder muscle is called the *trapezius* – *traps* for short. Stand behind your partner and rest your forearms on the top of their shoulders as close to the neck as possible, with the fleshy part of your forearm on the muscle. Let your weight fall straight down onto their shoulders; do not push forward and don't lean on their head. Hold this for several seconds. Slowly lift the arms and move them down the shoulder one inch. Let your weight fall through your arms again. Repeat this process several times. Remember do not push on the bony part of the shoulder.

Now, move to the side of your partner and feel the hard, bony tip of the shoulder with your fingers. Move your fingers toward the neck until you feel some soft muscle. Place your thumbs on that spot and put one thumb on top of the other for reinforcement.

Press straight down with the thumbs. You'll be pressing on the *traps* again. Press down slowly and hold for a couple of seconds, then slowly ease off the pressure. Move one thumb width towards the neck and repeat. You should be able to do four to six compressions before you reach the neck. Once you reach the neck, move your thumbs back to the starting position and do a second set of compressions to those same points. Move to the other side and repeat.

Lastly, stand behind your partner. Drape one hand over each shoulder as close to the neck as possible, with your thumbs beside each index finger. Squeeze the *traps* between the fingertips and the heel of the hand, hold for a couple of seconds and then slowly release.

Move out one inch toward the shoulders and repeat. You should be able to get three or four squeezes in before you run out of muscle. Be sure that you have the whole muscle in your hand so that you don't pinch the skin.

Remember, you can repeat each maneuver a couple of times for a more effective massage, and always check with your partner to ensure the pressure is comfortable. Next time I will outline the five minute neck massage.