

How Does Myofascial Release compare with Massage Therapy?

Traditional Massage Therapy: It has its Limitations

Massage is used to reduce stress, pain, tension and fatigue and can be very effective, depending on the training and skill of the therapist. It helps people feel relaxed, can improve circulation and reduce symptoms, if only temporarily. There are many variations and styles of massage all of which feel quite wonderful and nourishing.

Many Licensed Massage Therapists have invested in extensive post-graduate training to learn more specialized and effective forms of manual therapy. Myofascial Release (MFR) is the one of the most well-known of these therapies, and MFR is capable of preventing, reducing or eliminating more serious, chronic or whole body discomfort and pain.

Regular massage can be helpful for pain prevention, but it has its limitations. Those limitations become clear with increased understanding of the body's connective tissue called *fascia*.

What is Fascia?

Fascia is literally the tissue that ties all the individual pieces of the body together into an integrated, functioning whole. It spreads continuously throughout the body, surrounding, penetrating and supporting every muscle, bone, organ, nerve, blood vessel and cell. It permeates and surrounds every structure in the body. Take away everything from your body, leaving only the fascia behind, and your unique shape and physical features would still be clearly recognizable.

In order to make any lasting changes and improvements in persistent pain or movement problems, your therapy must address the fascia.

Addressing the Whole Body, Not Just Symptomatic Areas

The continuous, interwoven nature of fascia often allows symptoms to appear in areas *distant from their causes*. It's critical to evaluate patients as they stand or move vertically in gravity, looking for their unique structural compensations. **Has your tone and structural alignment been evaluated in this way?** This is the only way treatments can be customized to address your unique imbalances, which give rise to symptoms, instead of band-aiding your symptoms alone.

“Find the symptoms, look elsewhere for the cause” John F. Barnes, PT

Most therapies view the symptoms as the beginning and end of the problem. It's only through realizing that all parts of the body are literally held together by the same cloth – the connective tissue called fascia – that one can begin to understand how symptoms can be and often are merely the ‘loud expression’ of a larger problem. Pain and dysfunction occur in order to get your attention, calling you to action.

Treating symptoms can have value, of course; the squeaky wheel gets the grease. But the wheel usually squeaks because it's misaligned or the entire frame is bent. Grease alone is seldom enough. More often than not, as soon as one symptom is quieted another one emerges. *It's important to treat the whole body for the complete resolution of symptoms, and for the return to painfree function in daily living.*

A Therapy Without Lubricants

Using a lubricant drastically reduces a therapist's effectiveness when the desired outcome is anything more than temporary gains. The very purpose of myofascial work will not be adequately achieved under these circumstances, as the resilient, structural fibers of fascia can't be effectively engaged in order to improve their organization and length. Lubricated techniques in general only *temporarily* soften the hardened fluid aspect of the myofascia.

John Barnes Method of Myofascial Release= Lasting Results!

For over 50 years, John Barnes, PT has taught thousands of physicians, physical therapists, Licensed Massage Therapists and other health professionals this highly effective form of soft tissue therapy.

The Barnes method of MFR is characterized by gentle, sustained techniques geared toward releasing adhered, contracted fascia. These areas require several minutes or more of sustained gentle treatment in order to stretch and align their resilient, structural nature. Time makes the biggest difference to fully soften, lengthen and reorganize the myofascial system, *and only Barnes method MFR consistently seeks to resolve problems in this way. The changes enable permanent reduction or elimination of pain and other symptoms, increasing your quality of life.*

MFR combines the best of both worlds: pain reduction or elimination, stress-reducing, skilled and compassionate touch provided in the context of more effective, specialized techniques. These techniques consistently unlock and optimize the structural balance of twisted, misaligned bodies, which is very often the underlying cause of symptoms. **MFR principles and techniques enable profound awareness and healing on all levels: body, mind and spirit, making this a uniquely comprehensive therapy.**

Sandra Norris Wheeler, LMT CST was one of the first Advanced Myofascial Release Therapists in the State of Oregon, having trained with John Barnes since 1990. She has worked as an Intern in both of his treatment facilities in Paoli, PA and Sedona AZ, has assisted him in his educational trainings, as well as maintaining an extensive private professional practice. She has recently relocated her MFR and Craniosacral practice to Ashland, Oregon.

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