Preventing and Treating Professional Burnout
Garry Adkins has been a Certified Massage Therapist Instructor since 1994 and is board certified by NCBTMB and approved by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) as a continuing education Approved Provider.

He is a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee Sports Medicine Society, Alliance for Massage Therapy Education, International Association of Healthcare Practitioners, American Massage Therapy Association, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals and past president of the Association of Michigan Myomassologists Inc.

Garry is a current speaker and the Massage Therapy Consultant for Cross Country Education, seminar instructor for Lakewood School of Therapeutic Massage in Michigan and Educating Hands School of Massage in Florida, published author and International featured speaker. Past senior faculty member helping to develop current core training program, including 12 week anatomy program for over 18 years at Irene's Myomassology Institute in Michigan.

"Garry Adkins is the most talented massage teacher I have ever worked with. His natural ability to teach to both the analytical and visual sides of the student’s brain is uncanny. Garry’s use of multi-media presentations and movement techniques engage the student at every level of perception such as touch, taste, visual, analytical, and much more. Finally, Garry’s inner child is his guide to knowing how to make learning fun." Brian J. Piccolo
As a massage therapist, you are in a profession where the risk for burnout is relatively high, which means you need to be extra vigilant about self-care.

Don’t worry, though, with a little knowledge, awareness and fine-tuning, you can create an arsenal of physical, emotional, mental and strategies to help keep burnout at bay.
Understand your physical limits

First, you have to work within your physical limits. According to a 2012 University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing study, nurses who worked 10 hours—or longer shifts—had two and a half times greater burnout.

Strangely, however, these nurses had no idea they were heading toward burnout, actually reporting being happy with their flexible schedules.

So, be sure to track your energy level so you have a good idea when you’re feeling most tired, irritable or ineffectual, and adjust your schedule accordingly.
YOUR FEET WERE SORE AND YOUR BODY WAS TIRED. YOU COULD HAVE QUIT, WHICH IS WHY IT FELT SO GOOD WHEN YOU DIDN'T.
It’s the advice you consistently get. Head over shoulders, shoulders over hips, back straight, keeping wrists straight.
They say, you are more likely to be injured from overuse and repetition, which usually affects lower back, shoulders and thumbs.
Take care of injuries when they first appear, no matter how mild the symptoms since early treatments tend to be both conservative and effective.
Listen to your own body, no matter what others are telling you. Our bodies send us messages:

“If you listen to your body when it whispers, you won’t have to hear it scream”

Take a break, get exercise, or get rest, but we have disconnected that mind body connection. Our mind says, Keep going, keep going, In short, we are ignoring the very signs we should be heeding.
The Bad News

The burn out rate within the industry has been estimated at 50 to 88% within the first 3 to 5 years after graduation according to a study completed by Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals, a reputable industry organization.

Enrollment statistics seem to support this with over 50,000 students enrolling per year with 45,000 that leave the field annually.
The Good News

If you approach your job knowing the physical demands involved and accordingly taking steps to manage them, you should be fine. There are thousands (probably millions worldwide) of people that stay in the industry for decades.

These folks have learned the right way to apply themselves within the profession, manage their schedules effectively and take good care of their body to avoid repetitive strain injuries.
Asymmetrical standing is said to be the most efficient stance while giving a massage.
With their pelvises tucked under, the therapist’s bodies are compressed through their midlines. Because the shoulders are unsupported by the spines, the arms are working too hard.
Release of the pelvic floor and hips results in better body alignment, better grounding through the legs, and greater efficiency of movement.
Chair Demo Video
Physical Burnout
Low Table Video
Table Height Considerations

If you cannot adjust your table, a foot stool can give you added leverage.

A larger client would mean lowering your table even further.

If you have limited space to work in, use your forearms instead of your hands.

With clients that require more pressure, stand further away from the table and lean with all of your body weight.

If your table is too high, you must generate pressure with your arms...
Feet Position

Position your feet to provide a wide base of support. Point your toes in the direction of the stroke. This prevents you from undue stress on your joints.
Keeping your feet together… Could cause you to lose your balance.
Feet Position

Keep one foot forward of the other, with the weight on the back foot...
Always keep your scapula (glenohumeral joint) facing downward. If it is rotated downward, the torso is above and behind the joint, and communicates the weight directly through the joints.
If the glenohumeral joint is facing upward, the weight of the torso has to be communicated to the arm indirectly by pulling downward at the joint. This would strain the shoulder joint as well as the neck muscles.
Shoulder Joint

Don’t reach more than 12 inches from your body with any stroke it is ineffective and puts a strain on your other muscles.

Always keep your shoulder down and your torso above...
The elbow is an extremely useful tool for compression but not for stroking. Pressure should be initiated slowly and applied gradually. Always avoid highly sensitive areas, such as the face, neck, and groin.
Use of the Elbow and Forearm

The Forearm is a better suited tool for stroking.
Use of the Elbow and Forearm

Because of the sharp edges of the bones of the forearm and the location of the nerves, using the forearms and elbows at certain angles could be painful.

Use Your Forearm Whenever Possible...
Use of Your Hands

The joints and muscles of the hand are small in comparison to other areas of the body. They are also relatively fragile, and are extremely vulnerable to over-strain injuries. The hands are better suited to precise and specific work.
Use of Your Hands

Make sure that your wrists and hands are always relaxed.

If they are not, the muscles of the hands and forearm will become fatigued faster and you will lose sensitivity in feeling the tissues you are working.
Use of Your Hands

Keep petrissage strokes to a minimum. Grasping strokes such as petrissage are stressful on the hands and forearms.

With petrissage, develop a rhythm of rocking forward as you grasp the tissue. Pulling of the tissue as you rock back.
Use of Your Hands

Use your hand like a mitten for grasping

Using grasping movements with your fingers separated will fatigue your hands and joints much faster.
Use of Your Hands

If we want to use fingers or thumbs to transmit force to the client. The joints that are applying the force are in alignment with each other, and are stabilized in whatever manner possible, then sideways strain is eliminated.

While doing any pressure point work be sure to stabilize or support the joints of the fingers.
Use of Your Hands

And especially with the thumb, reinforce the joints!
Use of Your Hands

Never hyper extend the wrist. Make sure the angle of the wrist is no more than 110 degrees to avoid compression of the nerves that run through the wrist.
Use of Your Hands

Remember that your hands are not meant for deep work. Use your forearms whenever possible...
And finally, pay attention to your body. Get to know your own body, and use the mechanics of your own body.

Your own application of body mechanics will be somewhat different from anyone else’s although the same general principles apply.

Lauriann Greene says: “Poor body mechanics are not the only causes of injury, and good body mechanics are not the only elements needed to prevent injury”.

A massage therapist, who never works out, has hypermobile wrists, suddenly increases the number of massages she does per week, and uses her thumbs 95 percent of the time is likely to get injured, no matter how solid her body mechanics are”.
To Effectively Prevent Injury and Physical Burnout:

We must adjust technique

Become aware of our own physical advantages and disadvantages

Exercise

Stretch/yoga

Improve posture

Understand the physiology and warning signs of injury

Practice good body mechanics (among other things)
Self-help Stretches

Rubber Band Extension

Place a rubber band around all fingers. Open and close the hand for a maximum of 30 seconds. This exercise strengthens the extensor side and takes pressure off of the flexor side.
Self-help Stretches

Thumb Squeeze

Place the finger nails of the opposite hand into the pad of muscle under the thumb, and then close both hands around each other.
Self-help Stretches

Thumb Extension Stretch

Using the index finger of the opposite hand push the thumb into extension to stretch, and then with the opposite thumb stroke the base of the thumb of the outstretched palm.
Self-help Stretches

Wrist Flexion Stretch

Put your arm straight in front of you, as if you are pointing directions. Make sure that your elbow is fully extended but not locked. Flex your wrist gently. Use your other hand to pull the flexed hand toward your body. Pull for five seconds and repeat.
Self-help Stretches

Wrist Extension Stretch

Put your arm straight in front of you. Make sure that your elbow is fully extended but not locked. Use your other hand to pull up and extend the hand by pulling up the fingers. Pull for five seconds, then release. Repeat.
Self-help Stretches

Pronation Stretch

Grasp the wrist with the other hand and rotate inward to stretch. Hold for five seconds, and relax. Repeat
Self-help Stretches

Supination Stretch

Grasp the wrist with the other hand and rotate outward to stretch. Hold for five seconds, and relax. Repeat.
Self-help Stretches

Forearm Wringing

Twist the forearm muscles with the other hand in both directions. Then repeat other forearm.
Self-help Stretches

Neck and Trapezius

Place hands behind the back and grasp the wrist. Pull the wrist to one side, so you have a bent elbow and the other elbow is fairly straight. Slowly bring your ear to the bent elbow side, repeat on the other side.
Treatment for Inflammation of the Elbow

Place finger or thumb below the protrusion of bone that sticks out at the side of the elbow.
Cross fiber massage this area (X) as deep as possible for up to 10 seconds.
Do the same for the other side of the elbow.
Ice this area for up to 2 minutes, after treatment. Continue each day for 5 days.
Mental and Emotional Burnout

Burn-Out occurs where highly committed people lose interest and motivation. Burnout is more than being overworked. Burnout is a feeling of intense, long term exhaustion and hopelessness, caused by exposure to relevant stress.

Symptoms include emotional exhaustion, alienation from job-related activities, and reduced performance to name a few.

The real culprit for burnout is the frustration and anger we experience when we lack control, face unclear job expectations, lack social support outside of work, or face dysfunction in the workplace via misaligned values and/or people.
Boundaries Defined

As massage therapist, we have boundaries that must be maintained between the client and ourselves – or professional boundaries.

Setting personal boundaries only begins with saying “No,” and meaning it when we are asked to do something that does not serve us.

In our personal lives, setting boundaries can include asking for what we need emotionally from those close to us, dealing with bullying from those who feel it is okay to walk all over you, and limiting time with those who drain us and our energy.
Personal Goal Setting

The other big contributing factor to burnout is a lack of direction. If you do not know where you are headed or what you are trying to accomplish, then how can you know what you should be doing?

When you have no direction, it is extremely easy to get pushed and pulled in the energy currents of those around us, both at work and at home.

I'm going to do what I want to do. I'm going to be who I really am. I'm going to figure out what that is.

Emma Watson
Burnout Awareness

Typically burnout will occur in hard working, hard driven people, who become emotionally, psychologically or physically exhausted and don’t realize it. You are at risk of burnout where:

- You find it difficult to say 'no' to additional commitments or responsibilities
- You have been under intense and sustained pressure for some time
- You have an incorrect belief that you are accomplishing less
- You have a loss of a sense of purpose and energy
- You have a feeling of loss of control

You can avoid mental burn-out by ensuring that what you do remains fun: there is a limit to your mental energy that you should respect.
As you get better at what you do, people may want increasing amounts of your time, and will rely on you more and more.

It is easy for commitments to get bigger: people tend to be quite happy to consume other people’s mental resources without worrying about the consequences.

You must learn to say 'No' to commitments that you do not want to take on; otherwise you will be in severe danger of burning out as you become unhappy with your situation.

Examine other areas in your life that are generating stress

If you don’t take care of yourself, you cannot take care of anyone else.
What Should I Have Done Instead?
Encompassing the most advanced and effective modalities used today

Garry Adkins for 2011 is offering a series of one day seminars showcasing three of the most requested areas of the body, and starting in March the completely new seminar “Effective Treatments for Sciatica”, along with his most popular seminars nation wide, Effective Treatments for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, and Hot Stone Massage.

Advanced Massage Education is dedicated to providing concise, easy to understand, continuing education courses for the medical field and the bodywork and massage community.

“I believe that a quality education starts with the instructor, realizing that we all absorb information differently. It is essential to keep the message entertaining and to inspire participation through a varied pace and informative presentation”.

Credited Courses

Garry Adkins is approved by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCSTMB) as a continuing education Approved Provider. Provider # 450377-07.