

[IMAGE]

Massage Today

April, 2001, Vol. 01, Issue 04

We Are One! Let's Act Like It

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This January, an incredible event took place in India, halfway around the globe from most of us: the Maha Kumba Mela. It happens only once every 144 years. It is believed that the tone of this event sets the pattern for the next 144 years.

Eighty million people came from all over the world to a site where three rivers converge. They came to see and hear the great spiritual leaders and teachers who appear there, offering their teachings to anyone willing to listen and learn; teachers and masters as well known as the Dali Lama, to the unknown sages from the caves of the Himalayas. The most obvious external ritual performed by most attendees was to bathe in the waters of the holy Ganges River at this auspicious site. This bathing represents the washing away of ones sins or karmas. Less noticeable were the fire practices offering nourishment to the forces of nature; group prayers and meditations; chanting; and many other rituals.

The theme was to bring about a healing of the planet through a renewed personal (individual) commitment to spiritual growth, peace and tolerance for the spiritual beliefs of others. Peace is such an overused word that it has almost lost its meaning. Most people believe it is up to politicians to bring us peace. That belief is as faulty as the hope that allopathic medicine will ever bring us health and wellness. Politicians need war just as much as the medical industry needs disease. When there isn't enough, they create more. It is however, the collective consciousness of all humanity combined that allows them to succeed or to fail.

The message of the Maha Kumba Mela is that it is time to uplift the collective consciousness -- to make the efforts of those who profit from war, sickness and pollution fail; to overwhelm them with a new dedication to living the fundamental truths that are common to all the great spiritual teachings. Virtually every spiritual path emphasizes living a balanced life, creating beauty within and without, attending to ones duties, and being disciplined and devoted. To see the Dali Lama sitting with the most powerful Hindu and Vedic leaders, stating that it is time for a new era of understanding and tolerance among all faiths to advance the universal principals of peace and love and to minimize the differences that have caused so much harm and

suffering, was truly inspiring. To see them all holding hands, smiling and nodding in agreement, and to hear the thunderous applause from the multitudes assembled, was a confirmation that the promised new age has begun. A message repeated again and again was the importance of living a balanced life. A person balanced in body, breath, mind and soul will be healthy, happy and successful. A person out of balance will be sick, unhappy and less likely to accomplish the purpose of life. Great emphasis was placed on the importance of proper breathing, diet and exercise, along with meditation and contemplation. Taking responsibility for one's actions in all areas of life is essential. We are really all one, and the actions of each of us affect the whole.

It was remarkable to meet so many massage therapists from around the world. There also were many health care practitioners from other disciplines. Even Dr. Andrew Weil, MD was there, immersing himself in the sea of humanity at the Maha Kumba Mela and observing ayurvedic schools and centers in other areas of India. Massage is a very important part of ayurveda.

So what does all this have to do with our massage profession? How can the message and the energy of the Maha Kumba Mela be applied to massage here in the United States?

First and foremost, it is time for all the different forms of massage to lower their egos, come together and work for the common advancement of the profession. The Knapp Study, done for the national certification exam, proved that every type of massage shares the same entry-level knowledge base. There are only 8-10 techniques organized and used by every touch therapy system. It is difficult for most to notice this, because of the interesting names placed on these basic techniques by each "specialized" group, and the aura created around particular names. The statement, "I don't do massage, I do -- (insert your favorite egoism)" is quite common. However, the person not doing massage looks just like someone who is. If someone presses into the soft tissue of another human being with the thumb, holds for a while and releases, does the body know if the therapist is doing shiatsu, acupressure, trigger-point therapy, sports massage, NMT or any other brand of touch? Perhaps it is just responding to the stimulus applied to it. Remove the placebo effect and the belief that the therapist is going to help you, and you will find it is at least 90% simple stimulus response. Dr. Tiffany Field, PhD, from the University of Miami Touch Research Institute, has stated that in researching virtually every known technique, there is no measurable, reproducible effect unless the pressure receptors in the skin are sufficiently stimulated. Wow, we truly are one.

The whole of all our various specialties is greater than the sum of its parts. Working together and acknowledging our common knowledge base of anatomy, physiology and massage techniques will help us all to better reach and serve the public. It is the public's acceptance and demand for our work that can evolve massage into the premier wellness modality of all health care. For this to happen, we need to present a united message of care and competence that emphasizes a mastery of the common knowledge base we all share, yet allows for the expressions of our various specialties. It is time for a new paradigm that puts wellness and true preventative care at the front of the health delivery system, and relegates crisis intervention medicine (allopathic) to the secondary position where it belongs. May the message of the Maha Kumba Mela pervade our profession and guide us all to greater service to suffering humanity.

Click [here](#) for more information about Ralph Stephens, BS, LMT, NCTMB.



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