



Massage Today

December, 2001, Vol. 01, Issue 12

Why We Do What We Do

By Ralph Stephens, BS, LMT, NCTMB

The "holiday" is upon us. It is not a time for controversy. It is time for reflection; sharing; joy; reverence; giving; receiving; shopping; gift certificates; and lots of good food! Hopefully you will experience lots of the above.

As you shop, don't forget the reason for all the observances that occur at this time of the year.

This has been an amazing year. So much has happened, from the peaceful Maha Kumbha Mela, the largest spiritual gathering in the history of the planet, to the events of September 11. Huge contrasts and monumental changes; and yet, through all of this, we are still able to get up each morning and pursue our dreams. We still have the privilege of being in the profession of our choice, and being able to serve those who chose to come to us. Never take this for granted.

At the 2001 AMTA Convention in Quebec City, Canada, a colleague made a comment that I want to share. He said, "Always be grateful and give thanks every time a person gets on your table (or chair), for the privilege of being able to help and serve them. Never forget that you could be spending your time at a 'meaningless' job."

The AMTA convention was a great meeting. Many members of the Massage Emergency Response Team (MERT) attended. Dozens of them had been working in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania. Their stories were inspiring. Never has massage been more appreciated than at the sites of these disasters. The MERT volunteers who donated their time, skills and energy, working in an incredibly stressful environment, are the unsung heroes of our profession. To all those therapists who participated in the relief efforts, and to all the vendors that supplied them with equipment, thanks for doing all you could to help those in need.

The AMTA is the only organization in our profession that invests its members' dues into programs like MERT. All of AMTA's faults and mistakes fall by the wayside when one effort like MERT is successful. May AMTA's new president, Carolyn Talley, and her new leadership team continue to develop and support MERT and other programs that give professional massage therapist more ways to serve humanity.

It has been a year since *Massage Today* was launched. It has been an exciting experience to be a part of this publication, and I am grateful for the opportunity. *Massage Today* is providing a forum for debate of important issues not allowed anywhere else. This debate is necessary and important. When Editor Cliff Korn asked me to be a regular editorial columnist, I told him I had never been a columnist. He said, "No problem, I've never been an editor." He then whispered in my ear, "Insurance," and left me on my own. He has done a great job. I have enjoyed mine. I have especially enjoyed the e-mails from readers, both supportive and otherwise. It is the free exchange of ideas that helps our profession grow and evolve. If I have stimulated some of you to think seriously about the issues of insurance and education, I have been successful. I hope to continue to irritate your grey matter in upcoming issues. Just remember, our professional debates should stay on the plane of ideas, and never descend to the plane of personalities.

As this very unusual year comes to a close, it should be obvious that humanity needs a new focus. It is time to end our focus on disease, poverty and war. Let us all resolve to concentrate on health, prosperity and peace. As the travesties that brought us together as a nation pass into yesterday's news, may our resolve to bring about a better, safer world for all people continue.

Take care of yourselves and strive for health, for as touch therapists, you are desperately needed. Wishing you and yours a joyous holiday season, and a healthy and rewarding New Year.

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



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