

## Thai Massage

Lapierre describes Thai massage as, “partner yoga, during which you’ll get stretched and pulled until I’ve worked every inch of your body.” She likes to focus on acupressure points and kneads sore muscles until energy blockages are cleared and energy flow fully restored.

Thai massage also incorporates gentle rocking motions, rhythmic compression along the body’s energy meridians and passive stretching. It promotes flexibility, inner organ massage, oxygenation of the blood, quieting of the mind and general well-being.

Traditional Thai therapy is performed on a mat using no oils, with the client fully clothed. Thai massage is a favorite among yoga students.

## Reflexology

For those new to massage and interested in trying it out, reflexology is a good way to start. Reflexology is performed only on the hands and feet, via finger and thumb massage, with the client fully clothed. It is based on the belief that specific reflex points on the soles of the feet and the palms of the hands correspond with every major organ, gland and area of the body.

Lapierre works reflexology into all of her massages, explaining, “A lot of healing can be accomplished simply through working the hands and feet, because every part the body is mapped out to related pressure points on the hands and feet. Thus, we can clear energy channels and release tension throughout the body just by working these specific points.” Lapierre describes reflexology as calming and soothing.

Reflexology is especially suited for anyone wary about being touched; it is often incorporated with other forms of massage, as well.

Practitioners encourage everyone to find the form of massage that suits them best. “You will surely find one that brings you renewed vitality,” concludes Lapierre. “Massage not only feels good, it’s a good way to increase physical, mental and emotional health by reducing the effects of everyday stress. If you can’t take the day off to unwind, at least find an hour to get a massage.”

*Rachel Mork is a freelance copywriter, editor and novelist in Charlotte, NC. Connect at RachelMork.com.*



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# Sole-ful Massage

## Local Barefoot Therapist Provides Two-Footed Treatment

By Joel Shuler



Jeni Spring's hands help guide her blue Vespa scooter through busy San Antonio traffic, but it's her feet that power her “sole-ful” massage business. As the owner of Healing Sole Barefoot Massage Therapy, Spring has long had a special connection with her feet, which she now uses to practice Ashiatsu and Ashi-Thai massage in the Alamo city.

“I used to walk on my dad’s back as a kid, and as a dancer I always use my toes to pick up things around the house,” Spring says. The evolution to her barefoot massage work evolved she says while incorporating different parts of her body, her belly, hips and knees, for example, into her traditional practice in an effort to get a deeper hold. “This left my feet wanting to do some bodywork.”

Barefoot massage therapists typically hold bars that extend from a ceiling while using their feet to provide deep pressure to muscles. Barefoot massage provides sustained deep compression, often deeper than typical deep tissue treatments.

Ashiatsu barefoot massage uses controlled pressure to provide a deep, luxurious experience. Spring says she her approach to Ashiatsu is more clinical, focused on treatment of chronic pain and acute injuries. “I think in terms of how to address the fascial pathways, how to work structurally with the muscle and skeletal alignment,” she says. “I have the same outcomes in sessions provided by hands as I do with feet, but with Ashiatsu my clients report longer lasting effects, and I notice that I can get to the point quicker than I ever did with my hands.”

Ashi-Thai is similar to Ashiatsu, but Ashi-Thai incorporates stretching into the massage. Spring says Ashi-Thai is sometimes referred to as the “lazy man’s yoga” because the therapist moves and maneuvers your limbs into deep stretches for you. “It’s a bit like taking a nap while your body goes through a yoga class on its own,” she said.

A self-described “education junkie,” Spring continues to perfect her barefoot practice. She’s an authorized associate Ashiatsu instructor and is currently one of the highest-trained barefoot therapists in Texas.

“I love to educate the public and other therapists on the benefits of barefoot massage, and I hope they get as much joy and benefit from it as I do,” Spring says.

*Healing Sole Barefoot Massage Therapy is based at the Integrative Healing Institute on San Pedro in San Antonio. For more information about Healing Sole, Ashiatsu or Ashi-Thai massage, or to schedule a massage or sign up for a couples barefoot massage class, visit [www.healingsole.com](http://www.healingsole.com). Joel Shuler is the publisher of Natural Awakenings San Antonio.*



Jeni Spring