

Lesson 6: Practical Application and Technique

OBJECTIVES OF THIS LESSON

- Consider the key practical applications for giving a reflexology treatment.

Key points to note:

- The feet should be almost eye level.
- When doing the lateral foot – you can twist the foot to the side.
- Do not bend your thumb too much and smooth rhythm is very important.
- Think logically about conditions and state why you would work those reflexes – relate it back to your knowledge of anatomy.
- Very important – examiner will check if you re-work reflexes for crystals.
- You may lift the foot slightly when working the heel – remember – this relates to the pelvis and lower back.

Introduction

Many and varied techniques are used in reflexology. Four or five basic ones are described because the intention is to provide a basic foundation for your work. However, this is not to promote any one approach as more correct or valuable.

Some variations in reflexology techniques are, for example; linking: developed by Pru Hughes, Light Touch Reflex Action, and the Rwo Sur techniques: developed in Taiwan.

Holding the foot

While one hand, presses the other braces and supports or pushes the foot towards the pressure. The hand applying pressure is referred to as the 'working hand', the other hand, the 'supporting' hand. Neither hand should ever be idle.

The standard support grip

Take the foot in the support hand, either from the inside or the outside, the web of the hand between the thumb and the index finger touching the side of the foot, with the four fingers on top of the foot and the thumb on the sole. The support hand must always stay close to the working hand. Whichever grip, you use on whatever reflex, always keep the foot bent slightly towards you – never in a tight grip with the toes bent backwards.

Pressure techniques

The Rotating thumb technique - ROCK

It can be used to apply pressure, to most of the reflexes throughout the treatment procedure. As you work, move from square to square, applying pressure and rotation to each square. The movement of the thumb from point to point must be small, moving along progressively, leaving no space between the points covered by the thumb tip.

Place the four fingers of the working hand on the back of the foot to be worked on, keeping the thumb free to work on the sole. Bend the thumb from the first joint to between a 75 and 90 degree angle – the angle must ensure that the thumbnail doesn't dig into the flesh. This is the standard position of the 'rotating thumb'. The contact point is the tip of the thumb. Apply firm pressure with the tip of the thumb to the point to be worked on, and rotate the thumb, clockwise. Keep the pressure firm and constant and stay on the square. Two to three rotations are sufficient. Lift the thumb, move to the next point and repeat the procedure. The basic movement is, press in, rotate, lift and move. The amount of pressure or number of rotations, depend on the practitioner and patient.

The thumb and finger walk technique

The aim of this technique is to ensure that the foot can be covered effectively and efficiently without missing any reflex points and to ensure that every part of the foot can be explored sensitively to assess any imbalances in the body. This is also a crucial technique to master and is often used during a reflexology treatment.

Think of your thumb and fingers as exploring or searching the foot, seeking out, probing – but in a highly sensitive way – the foot to detect imbalances, irritations, blockages to the client's health. Try to put your mind, your conscious awareness into the tip of your thumb or finger so that your hands, fingers and thumbs experience and register what you are sensing there. Become aware of each nuance of tension in the person's foot, of any irregularities in the tissues beneath the surface such as congestion, grittiness, lumpiness, and heat or cold.

Finger techniques

Hands are placed on either side of the foot with the thumbs on the sole and four fingers on top. The index and middle fingers are the working tools, the middle finger usually placed on top of the index finger to create extra leverage. This is used on the Fallopian tubes/vas deferens and lymphatic reflexes which run from the outside anklebone, along the top of the foot at the ankle joint, to the inside anklebone.

Pinch technique

The support hand cups the foot at the ankles, while the working hand locates the Achilles tendon at the back of the heel and moves up and down the tendon, pinching it gently between the thumb and index finger. (This is used to stimulate the kidney and bladder meridians.)

Pin Point

Using the knuckle of the forefinger to pin point a reflex, such as the Pituitary gland

Knead technique

It is much like kneading bread. It is used mainly on the heel area, which is usually rather tough, and therefore needs more pressure for effective stimulation.

Hook in and back up

Thumb rolling technique, but stationary. Good for the sinus reflexes

Leverage

To use leverage, as you apply pressure with the working thumb, use the other fingers of the working hand, which are wrapped around the foot to bring the foot towards or onto the thumb. You 'pull' the foot onto your thumb. When giving treatment, the non-working hand is used to support the foot, and to place and maintain it in the most advantageous position for the application of pressure to different reflexes. This is important to gain better access to the reflex points and enhance penetration of the touch.

Relaxation techniques

One of the main benefits of reflexology is the relaxation aspect, it is also important to become familiar with a few basic relaxation techniques.

Achilles Tendon Stretch

Cup the heel of one foot so that it rests in the palm of the hand. Grasp the top of the foot near the toes in the standard support grip. Pull the top of the foot towards you, allowing the heel to move backwards, and then reverse the procedure.

Ankle Rotation

Cup the back of the ankle of the right foot in the palm of the left (support) hand, with the thumb on the outside of the ankle and the fingers on the inside. Rotate first clockwise a few times, then anticlockwise

Loosen ankles

Hook the base of both palms above the backsides of the heel so that the palms cover the anklebones. The ankle joint serves as the pivot point. Move the hands rapidly backwards and forwards in opposite directions to each other, keeping the hands hooked beneath the anklebones.

The spinal twist

Grasp the foot from the inside of the instep with both hands, fingers on top, thumbs on the sole – the web between the thumb and the index finger on the spinal reflex. The hand nearest the toes will execute the twisting action. The two hands should be used as a unit, keeping all the fingers together and the hands touching at all times.

Rotate all the toes

The principle here is the same as the ankle rotation.

Solar plexus

The solar plexus is referred to as the 'nerve switchboard' of the body, as it is the main storage area for stress.

This technique is applied to both feet simultaneously. Pressure applied to this reflex is usually used as a relaxation technique to complete the treatment but can be used at any time during treatment if necessary.