

Bodywork Techniques*

and their intended effects**

Stroke Category	Subtype	Mechanical Effect <i>(direct effect)</i>	Systemic Effect <i>(indirect effect)</i>	Other uses and notes
Nurturing Touch (aka “passive touch”)			Tissue Healing Parasympathetic Reduce anxiety	<i>Build trust and rapport Can be done over clothing</i>
Effleurage	<i>Nerve Strokes</i>		Tissue Healing Parasympathetic Reduce anxiety	<i>Palpation Can be done over clothing</i>
	<i>Gliding Strokes</i>	Circulatory response	Tissue Healing Parasympathetic Reduce anxiety	<i>Apply lubricant Palpation Prepares tissue for deeper work</i>
Differentiate from Effleurage	<i>Myofascial Pulling/Pushing, stripping, dragging</i>	Postural correction Hyper tonicity Stretch myofascia	Trains proprioception in the direction you tell it to go	<i>May be used to differentiate hypertonicity from nodules</i>
Petrissage	<i>Knead and glide</i>	Local circulatory response	Tissue healing Parasympathetic Reduce anxiety relaxing	
	<i>True Kneading</i>	Break up adhesions, knots, etc. Soften tissue	Reroutes scar tissue	
	<i>Compression</i>	Circulating (if fast and rhythmic)	Stimulating (if fast and rhythmic) Relaxing (if slow and rhythmic)	<i>Palpation Warmup Gauge pressure</i>
Direct Pressure <i>Used in acupressure and trigger point release</i>	<i>Static Pressure</i>	Release Trigger Points, activate energy points		<i>Can be used over clothing (the more layers... the more difficult)</i>
	<i>Pulsing Pressure</i>			

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Friction	<i>Superficial Friction</i>	Relaxes contracted muscles hyperemia	stimulating	<i>Can be used over clothing, as a transitional stroke</i>
	<i>Deep Friction</i>	Break up adhesions, knots, etc. Soften tissue	Reroutes scar tissue	<i>Can be used over clothing</i>
Oscillation	Vibration	Relaxes spasm, contracted and guarding muscles	Stimulating or relaxing (depending on how applied)	<i>Can be used over clothing, as a transitional stroke, repaired client for deep relaxation or bring them back (depending on how applied)</i>
	Tapotement			
Swedish Gymnastics				
	Range of Motion	Lubricates tissues and joints		<i>Can be used over clothing</i>
	Stretching	Soften and lengthens soft tissues		<i>Can be used over clothing</i>

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Build your own table: Categorize the techniques within your modality. Look for correspondences within other forms of bodywork to create a universal language.

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This document intends to create a framework for understanding the how, why, and when of applying a specific technique and building communication between modalities.

*In this document, we use the word “technique” to mean the specific technique (as opposed to the modality the technique is found within); some modalities may refer to their techniques by different terms, e.g., Swedish massage refers to these as “types of strokes,” and polarity therapy refers to these as “contacts.”

**We recognize that there isn’t a universal understanding, wealth of supporting documentation, etc., for all techniques and their desired effects. Therefore, much of the information we rely on is empirical (if not anecdotal).

*** *When building your own table, it may be helpful to write down where you got this information for ease of recall later.*

Our table was built over a vast number of years from many resources, including massage therapy textbooks, various workshop manuals, and oral transfer. Therefore, this is intended as a guide and not the final authority.