

Suggested Guidelines for Partnering and Safe Touch

Touch is a powerful tool for healing and transformation. It can be especially effective when communication between the client and practitioner is clear and open. Many people have experiences and feelings regarding touch, as well as cultural and societal orientations that affect their relationship to touch.

Partnering is about two people finding a way to meet. In a partnering situation there is always me, you, and us to explore.

Basic touch is about bonding, listening, and following. With this as a base we can learn to direct our body mind to new options and possibilities of expression.

GROUND RULES FOR SAFE TOUCH

- Knowing when touch begins – a clear beginning of contact.
- Using a cellular or more neutral touch to begin contact, feeling where your partner is and finding a meeting place for you both.
- Initiating, following and responding is the mutual dance of both client and practitioner. In touch there is an active participation between both at the point of contact.
- Knowing (or learning) your own needs and boundaries in relation to touch
- Permission to stop touch at any time.
- Permission to give feedback and alter the type of touch at anytime.
- Coming to a mutual place of closure within the time structure.

GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

Touch and language are important aspects of this learning situation. Ask your partner for feedback at any time, especially if you are not sure what is happening. The person being worked on has a responsibility to let the practitioner know if the way they are being touched does not feel good or appropriate to them, as well as what feels good and is working for them.

Feedback is most clearly heard when it is made with an “I” statement. A client might say: I need a lighter or deeper touch; I need to pause a moment; I need to stop now; I feel more stable, taller or, could you continue what you were doing longer. Practitioner statements might be: I feel lost and unsure of myself or, I feel a release under my hands and more energy flowing.

If touch is uncomfortable for any reason it is better to pause and possibly stop the contact than continue and possibly shut down or withdraw inside oneself for

protection. Pausing can give us time to catch up to the present moment after memories emerge.

Your feedback is part of your learning.

GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

An essential skill as a bodywork professional is to be able to receive feedback from a nonjudgmental place. Judge neither yourself nor your partner. Many times a clients need to stop has very little to do with the practitioner, and often more to do with their owns needs, history, etc. Specific feedback can be used to enrich our bodywork skills. Also feel free to ask for feedback when if you are uncertain and need more guidance from your client.

OTHER ISSUES REGARDING PARTNERING

- **Different styles and Quality of Touch** – How we meet with someone who has a very different style and quality of touch; How we utilize the edges where we have difficulty meeting, to open and develop as both practitioner and client.
- **Projections and Feelings** – Projections and feelings are quite natural and occur all the time. The question is: What do we do with them within ourselves and in relation to others?
- **Issues of Intimacy and Boundaries** – Safety, vulnerability, and comfort.
- **Finding the Ease In Working**

Myra Avedon and Linda Tumbarello