



Touch of Haven



Compassionate Touch ©: *Massage for life-limiting illness*

“Tools for revolutionizing geriatric care and utterly transforming the experience of aging.”

Deane Juhan, author of *Job's Body*

When Dawn Nelson discovered the lack of touch provided to the elderly and others being served by health care and skilled nursing facilities, she decided to create a massage therapy exclusively for this population. After 20 years as a teacher and therapist, she created Compassionate Touch© to bring to light the special needs of these individuals.

Ann Catlin has continued to develop and promote Compassionate Touch education, which has received widespread recognition since its inception in 1991. She explains the characteristics of a Compassionate Touch© session as:

Informed

Knowledge that touch will not harm
Permission to touch (verbal or non-verbal)

Focused

Intentional and direct (versus random, casual touch)

Conscious

Person offering touch is present, alert,
focused and aware of his/her actions

Caring

Touch is given with positive regard, affection and respect

Unconditional

Expect nothing in return

Non-intrusive

Touch is not forceful or invasive in any way

Therapeutic

Touch is offered in service to another.
Touch is intended to support the person.

Compassionate Touch is a technique that allows us to “speak” to the elderly using touch. It is gentle, thoughtful and caring and may be offered to the elderly, medically frail or terminally ill person. Massage therapists can become certified in Compassionate Touch© after attending an in-depth training program. The instruction includes not only the physical techniques to use with these patients, but also comprehensive education in communication skills needed to properly understand the impact treatment is having.

Haven Hospice supports all massage therapists in practicing this touch with patients receiving massage treatments in their plan of care. It is considered an integral part of the massage session.

As the elderly population increases, it is important to focus on the needs of these people and find ways to comfort and value this special time in life. Compassionate Touch© is a wonderful way to offer love, respect and nurturing to these individuals.

SUGGESTED READING

From the Heart Through The Hands: The Power of Touch in Caregiving, 2001, Dawn Nelson

Therapeutic Massage in Facility Care, 2004, Dawn Nelson

Massage for the Hospital Patient and Medically Frail Client, 2005, Gayle MacDonald

“Compassionate Touch© is calming
and can diffuse agitated behaviors.”

Dawn Nelson, author of *The Power of Touch in Alzheimer Care*,
Massage Therapy Journal, Fall 2004

