

USING REFLEXOLOGY TO HELP THE AGING BODY

When the feet are tired the rest of the body joins in. It's no surprise to people, especially seniors who have been walking around on their feet for many years, that we feel we die from our feet upward. When our feet ache, we feel it all over. When we give in to these aches and pains and slow down our activities in life to accommodate them, in an attempt to cope with the discomfort, we actually further slow down the various systems within the body and create more discomfort for the body. Systems that begin to slow down -- such as the circulatory system, the respiratory system, and the cardiovascular systems -- affect the whole body and begin a cycle of decreasing the strength and function of all systems. This cycle ensures that we continue to slow down more which further takes us away from health and living and moves us closer to death and dying. How can Reflexology help minimize this slow down?

SENIORS AND REFLEXOLOGY

Reflexology is a natural healing art based on the principle that there are reflexes in the hands and feet which correspond to every part, gland, and organ in the body. Through application of pressure on these reflexes, Reflexology can benefit us in three basic ways: 1. by improving circulation within the body; 2. by relaxing tensions in the body and thereby relieving stresses in the mind; and 3. by promoting the natural function of the related body parts. Let's take a look at each of these benefits as, in particular, they relate to seniors. While seniors today are generally more active than they may have been in the past the aches and pains that come with aging often slow people down. This, of course, can lead to a decrease in circulation within the body, which can start a whole chain of events within the total body system. Poor circulation, as an example, affects the rate of digestion. The slower the digestion, the more that back-up waste forms in the colon thereby increasing congestion and mucus. Congestion and mucus lead to a build-up of toxins in the system and toxins reduce the body's energy efficiency. The build-up of toxins also places increased pressure on the respiratory system and that, in turn, strains the functioning of the heart and decreases blood flow within the system. This all impacts the body's ability to clean out the waste and the lymph system becomes overtaxed. The liver, kidneys, and skin attempt to get rid of waste but have to work overtime... thus putting more strain on the entire system. The system tries to slow down in response to all these demands and pressures. This, in fact, further reduces circulation and perpetuates the cycle. The body will, in an attempt to get out of this chain of events, begin to break down. Taking all this into view, when Granny's feet ache, we had better pay attention, because the body is trying to tell us that all is not right in its world. Circulation is the key to a healthy body and a healthy mind. There are many natural healing suggestions to help increase circulation but Reflexology is one that I have seen is a safe, easy and effective way to stimulate the body naturally.

STAGNATION IS THE CULPRIT

When a system gets stagnant, like a pond with little water circulation, stagnation takes on a life of its own and breeds continued stagnation. Any system that is moving in one direction, according to Newton's first law of motion, continues to move in that direction unless acted upon by another force. When people's bodies slow down, they continue to slow their body down by sitting or resting more often. Take the case of the author's father who had always led an active life. He began to have problems with his respiratory system and had to struggle to breathe. This made him not want to task his system... so he sat more. And the more he sat, the less efficient his system became, which, of course, promoted more sitting. This, of course, promoted other effects on his body as he gave in to the aches and pains. If we fight these aches and pains, by keeping the circulation as efficient as we can, we can counteract this process.

THE BODY NEEDS TO RELAX

The natural cycle of life is to slow down our system, a bit, as we age. But the key is to not slow it down enough to promote disease. Individuals want to remain vital and healthy and circulation is an important key to achieving this. Circulation can be promoted naturally, through Reflexology, by stimulating reflexes in the hands, ears and feet to naturally relax tensions in the body. Tensions can show up in many parts of the body and we have to be ever vigilant in our attempts to work with, and understand the meaning of, these tensions. By working with these tensions we can, for example, understand when the body is trying to let us know that we

are out of balance and make adjustments to our lives. Aches and pains in the feet are the body's way of trying to tell us that we are out of balance in how we understand our world and that we have to review our world and then we can make some adjustments. With the author's father, for example, his world was getting smaller and, to counteract that, he needed to go out more and get more involved with others (as had been the case in his past). This understanding would have kept him more active, more involved, and given him more meaning to his life. As we pull away from life, our bodies join us and these are choices we all make as we negotiate our way through this journey on planet earth. If there is tension in the shoulder area then perhaps we are carrying life's burdens to a degree that we cannot support. In this case we may want to look at how we are feeling about the people and things around us and make some adjustments. It is important to determine how much we want to take on and can manage with ease and what we have to let go of because it isn't serving us to hold on. We have to ask "Are we taking on other people's problems and making them our own?" If we are having problems with our urinary tract then perhaps we are feeling sensitive to the criticism or actions of other people and they are, so to speak, "pissing us off". In this case we may want to take some action to manage our outside influences and work through our resentment in a way that will alleviate the tension within our own system. We have to be careful around tensions that come from resentments as the resentment can deteriorate our bodies. I often remember a quote I heard from Dr. Bernard Jensen, a world-famous chiropractor and naturopathic doctor, who said, "I'm going to love you whether you want me to or not, because it's good for me."

GETTING BACK IN TO BALANCE

Whatever tension is blocking us in some way, either psychology or physically, needs to be addressed. Reflexology is a non-invasive way to get the circulation going and help improve the functioning of the whole system. With increased circulation comes an increase in the relaxation response. With increased relaxation, of body and mind, comes the ability to see and engage in more possibilities for problem solving. With increased relaxation we also help move the system from stagnation to circulation. In doing this we tend to resolve our tensions with greater ease and facilitate a healthy state of mind and body – which can help slow the aging process by helping us remain active. Reflexology is certainly not a cure-all but it does provide relief from stress by increasing circulation, relaxing tensions, and supporting the body's natural ability to heal itself. When we keep our systems flowing we improve our circulation and we promote healthy natural functions thereby providing relief for 'granny's' aching feet... and her corresponding aches and pains.

Bibliography:

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