

Focused Mind, Energy & Words

Harness the Healing Power of Intention

by Donna Elizabeth Jason

I recently had an experience where I was reaching for an object and crumpled to my knees in pain. Unable to walk unassisted, I went to a physical therapist to see what was going on. As I lay on my back, my knees bent to alleviate the pain, my therapist's fingers were at least four inches into my guts. He was methodically moving my insides around and said, "My intent is to move all of your organs out of the way so I can work on your psoas and spine."

Through the pain, I perked up. "Really? Your intent? Seriously?" I asked—because I could feel a heck of a lot more than intent digging from one side of my body to the other! His steady gaze, therapeutic touch and laser focus were all in fact guided by his intent. In that dramatic moment, he demonstrated to me that intention is not wimpy or reserved for the metaphysically minded. Intent can be fully integrated into structural realignment as well as restorative massage therapy.

The healing power of intention is accessible to everyone. It only requires that you make a commitment to focusing your mind, energy and words on what you want to achieve.



Thought precedes form

As a massage therapist, there are many days when you give greatly of yourself with ease and grace—and there are some days when the clock won't move fast enough. Even if you are very skilled at what you do, massage is demanding and clients can arrive with big expectations. Many clients arrive

in a passive, "fix me" state of mind, rather than in an intentional "We're in this together" mindset.

Envision for a moment that you're tired, it's the last massage of the day, and you were ready to go home hours ago. A long-time client walks in complaining of the same tension she's had in her upper back and neck for months. Now imagine you set the following intention: "My intention is to accept this client as she is and to teach her body that it's OK to let go and receive." Imagine that you suggest an intention to her that will allow her to relax and receive the support she's getting. You have now invited her to consciously send her body the message that it's OK to relax and receive, and more importantly to be proactive in her own healing process.

For both client and therapist, using intention can be powerful and transformative. Intention is the thought

that precedes form, the vision that precedes the journey. It is to healing and transformation what goal-setting is to other forms of achievement. It sets the stage for what you and your client want to consciously achieve. It is the portal through which you activate your will and the foundation on which everything else is built.

As the therapist, you are in service, but this does not mean passively obliging your client's requests. You are also the expert, bringing your experience to the table. As the expert, and through the use of focused intent, you can invite clients to transcend their present mindset. You can gently and effectively encourage them to shift out of patterns that no longer serve them and invite them to embrace a new state of being.

The science of intention

Although intention and prayer are usually considered metaphysical, which literally means beyond the physical, science is demonstrating that the brain probably can't differentiate between the intent to achieve something and the actual accomplishment of it. This implies that by setting intentions, we can initiate a whole series of physiological possibilities.

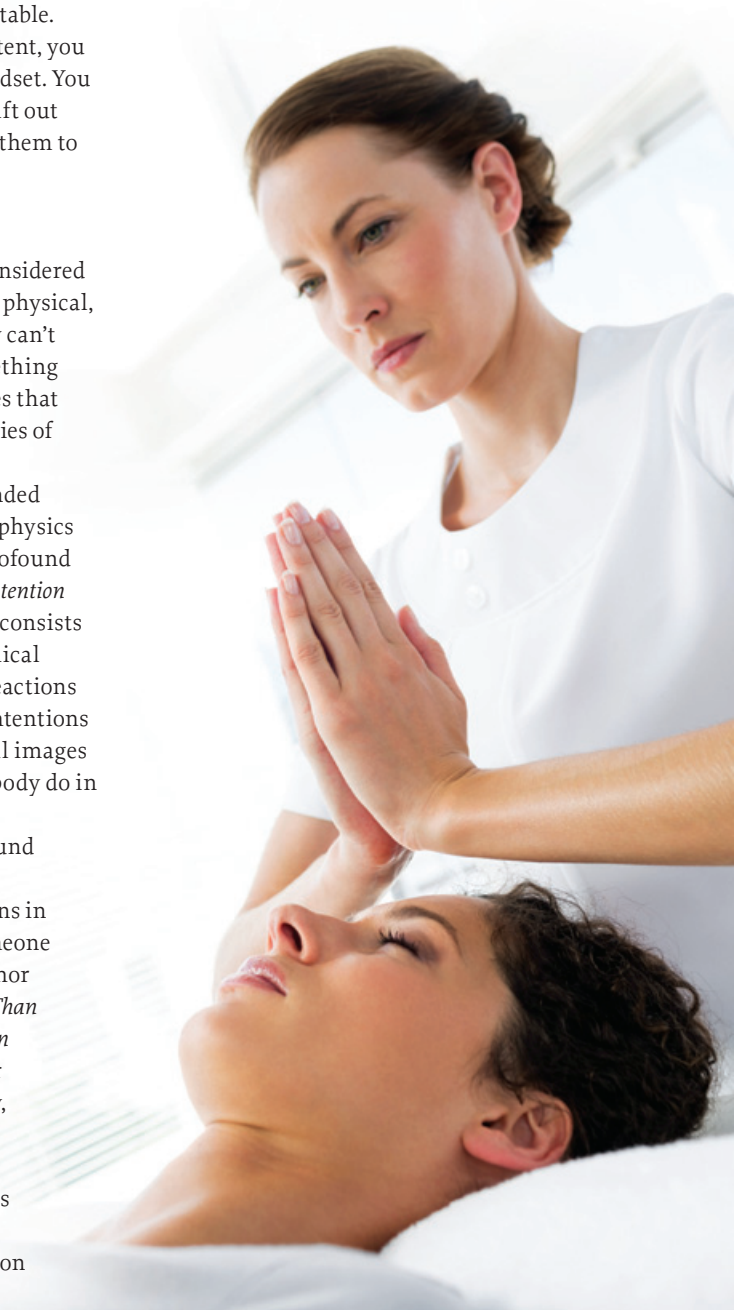
The science of intention is a young field, founded just decades ago. Emerging data from quantum physics supports the theory that our thoughts have a profound effect on form. Adam McLeod, N.D., author of *Intention Heals: A Guide and Workbook*, writes, "Your body consists of trillions of cells and there are countless chemical reactions taking place every second. All these reactions are influenced on the molecular level by your intentions ... It has been proven experimentally that mental images and intentions directed to specific parts of our body do in fact produce significant physiological changes."

Additionally, there are recent discoveries around mirror neurons that support the value of setting intentions. Mirror neurons are a subset of neurons in the frontal cortex that fire when we observe someone else having an experience. Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* and *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships*, wrote in an article for *The New York Times*, "Mirror neurons track the emotional flow, movement and even intentions of the person we are with, and replicate this sensed state in our own brain by stirring in our brain the same areas active in the other person ... In short, these brain cells seem to allow the interpersonal orchestration of shifts in physiology."

In other words, by focusing on a healing intention as you work, your client's brain may attempt to match your experience and you may both be guided by a wisdom that is beyond your conscious awareness.

Healing gifts

In a world where it's common for people to give their authority away to doctors, teachers, healers and therapists,



PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK

it's beneficial to take the time to teach your clients that they have healing gifts that can be activated through the use of intention. If you believe your client would be open to this, ask her if she would be interested in hearing your suggestion regarding intentions. If so, invite her to express an intention, either silently or out loud, explaining to her the simple principle that she will energize whatever she gives her attention to.

Effective intentions focus on transforming a physical or emotional challenge, letting go of something that's been detrimental or allowing something that would be beneficial.

A good intention invites possibilities without forcing an outcome. As an example, try closing your eyes and saying to yourself, "My intention is to embody a peaceful and honoring state of being." Take a deep breath into that intention. What do you notice?

This is quite different from setting an intention for your client to feel honored and peaceful, because you have no control over what your client feels. All you can do is take full responsibility for creating an environment of honor and peace and then invite him to experience it, to whatever degree he is able.

To craft an intention, begin by gathering information. You may want to ask your client questions, or you may

have an intake form about physical or emotional challenges he may be facing. Next, offer this intention to your client, or invite him to come up with his own. You might try an example from this article or from your own knowledge base. Once he expresses his intention, you can then craft one that supports your endeavor to support him.

After setting the intention, *let it go*. Allow yourself to be in a fully receptive state. Listen to your client's body and the wisdom flowing through you. If your attention wanders, you can refocus by silently repeating the client's or your intention. Allow the session to unfold without being attached to an outcome. Attaching to an outcome, positive or negative, separates you from being fully present. Instead, experience each distinct moment, allowing the healing journey to unfold.



Read "Sample Intentions for Therapists and Clients," by Donna Elizabeth Jason, at www.massagemag.com/powerintent.

Intention energizes new possibilities, which means you can express what you want and leave out *how* it's going to happen. For example, if a client has chronic pain, you might suggest the following intention: "My intention is to recognize the root of my physical pain, to hold myself in love and kindness and to allow deep healing to occur."

You as the therapist can then say the following intention silently or aloud: "My intention is to support you to release your pain and to help facilitate healing on all levels." This initiates an environment within which you allow whatever is meant to occur. Healing is a journey that unfolds in layers. You are not responsible for achieving any specific part of that journey, but rather for holding space for clients to experience the process.

Direct life force

The benefits of intention are far-reaching for both you and your client. The very act of speaking an intention invites all of the inner resources in your body and mind to problem-solve and achieve that intent. Mental focus on an intention may also influence the places inside of you that seek validation and will help you replace that need with focused purpose.

Whether you are setting an intention for your life, your career or a session, or teaching your client how to set an intention prior to her massage, intention is a tool that effectively directs life force. By taking responsibility for what you want to create, you activate your will. Having a strong will means you're more likely to accomplish your goals—and your clients are more likely to accomplish theirs.

Donna Elizabeth Jason cofounded Sacred Lomi (www.sacredlomi.com) with Tom Cochran and wrote and produced their *Sacred Lomi* DVDs. As a seminar leader, writer and filmmaker, she is committed to supporting people who want to live authentically, heal and thrive. Her *Hawaiian Healing Intention Cards* will be available in December.

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