

SET TALK

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Are You On The Road to Self-Actualization?

I continually see massage therapists experience amazing personal growth with the massage profession being a major catalyst for this to happen. Often this personal growth process starts when you make the decision to enter the field of massage.

Like the majority of Americans, we have grown up in a society that promotes co-dependency following the examples and directions of the media, that strokes the egos and rewards the materialistic values of entertainers and athletes rather than rewarding them for their service to society, and focuses on personal appearance rather than the magnificence of our inner beauty. These artificial measurements of success, lovability and acceptance result in feelings of anxiety, unhappiness, and a sense of never being good enough or acceptable just as we are.

Thus, our journey through life tends to be a series of struggles just to “measure up”, a journey where there is never enough for us to be happy or satisfied, and we find ourselves compromising our own values and ethics to fulfill our deepest desires just to be loved and accepted. Even at the young age of four, children are already enmeshed in this struggle to be loved for who they are. They have already bought into the lie that they are not loveable just as they are, or for the way they feel and the way they express their feelings. Once this lie is believed, they spend their lives building evidence to support this feeling of not being loveable. They believe they must earn love by striving to live up to the unhealthy values of society and by pretending to be someone other than who they truly are. This perversion of their lovability, along with society’s messages of greed, moral righteousness, and “more/bigger and better,” lead to a life of seeking happiness and fulfillment in materialism, aggression, and greed-driven manipulation and exploitation of others and of nature.

Many therapists in the massage profession have to turn away from this unhealthy and unfulfilling path. They are looking to make a positive difference in the lives of those they touch and support. This

necessitates looking inside themselves and getting in touch with their hearts. They become inner directed rather than being directed by outside influences. From that point on they begin their process of becoming comfortable with who they are, and of realizing the possibilities of unconditional love for themselves, for their clients, and others around them. They get in touch with their feelings through being touched and touching others in a loving, healing way. They begin to realize that they really are making a difference in this world, and that they are loveable for who they are. Touching others in a healing, loving manner is healing them as well.

This is the beginning of becoming a self-actualizing person. This process will last the rest of their lives. It can create confusion because as a self-actualizing person you don’t necessarily fit the norm in society and its values.

Some qualities of self-actualizing people are:

- They don’t let opinions and judgments of others shape how they act or feel. They care - they just aren’t manipulated by the opinions of others.
- They seek a path that is right for them, not what society dictates.
- They love and accept themselves first, then share that love and happiness with others.
- They take responsibility for their own lives and don’t make others responsible for what happens in their lives.
- Their responsibility doesn’t include any judgments of being right or wrong, good or bad.
- They take responsibility for their own feelings, thoughts and actions;
- They do not take responsibility for the feelings of others.
- They know they are OK and loveable and don’t need to seek approval and love from others.
- They are respectful and considerate, and have compassion for their own struggles, as well as the struggles of others around them.

- They surround themselves with other self-actualizing people, and set limits and boundaries to protect themselves from the games and manipulations of other people.
- They have integrity with themselves.
- They keep agreements or renegotiate them.
- They don't support others lies.
- They don't sit in judgment of others.
- They love unconditionally, both themselves and others.
- They communicate their love.
- They don't use love to manipulate.
- They appreciate material goods for what they are, and realize that their self image and happiness aren't based on material goods and values.
- They aren't owned by material things – they see them as circumstances of life that don't govern happiness or one's ability to love.
- They are of service to a healthy evolving self that includes being of service to others
- They derive joy and satisfaction in serving others and in empowering others to heal, grow, and become the best they can be.
- They are forever growing and expanding.
- They see life as an evolutionary process of growth.
- They see problems as challenges and learning opportunities.
- They know that the self is not the mind, but rather the congruence of the heart and mind.
- They develop the ability to cancel out old negative and pre-programmed thought processes.
- They discipline their minds to stay focused on tasks.
- They know that positive thoughts produce positive reactions, and maintain a positive attitude.
- They come from true humility and don't feed their egos.
- They see their lives as a process of spiritual evolution and growth.
- They set goals and manage the steps to achieve them.
- They have ethics that are based on love.
- They practice some form of meditation or self contemplation.
- They take responsibility for their bodies, and naturally seek healthy habits, food and activities.
- Develop physical discipline that leads to physical accomplishment.
- They live in the present moment.

Perhaps you recognize some of these qualities in yourself, or perhaps you are beginning to see some of these qualities emerging. The journey to becoming a self-actualizing person is often not an easy one since you are challenging many belief systems that have become a part of your survival in life. However, as you release those belief systems and become a self-actualizing person, you will quite possibly experience a feeling of being free, a feeling of inner peace, and a deep love of yourself and others. As you see, it is an inner directed and focused journey that is forever a work in progress. Be compassionate and loving to yourself in the process. The rewards are boundless.

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