

Building a New Relationship with My Feet

As a kid, my hands and feet were a source of quiet shame for me. I was born with what adults kindly referred to as “old soul’s hands,” which in the schoolyard translated to a regular inquiry from kids: “How come your hands look like an old lady’s?” My feet, with their gap-toed goofiness, didn’t fare much better. “I bet you could peel a banana with those!” teased one schoolmate. It wasn’t until I started practicing yoga in my late 20s that my wide toe span garnered admiration. Suddenly, my “monkey feet” were the envy of other, close-toed bipeds. My journey into appreciating feet was just beginning.

When I discovered reflexology in my late 30s, I was immediately fascinated with its practical applications. Reflexology is an ancient healing modality that recognizes the hands and feet as precise maps of the entire body, with reflex points that correspond to all the organs and systems. A far cry from a “foot rub,” reflexology addresses health by helping to harmonize all the major body systems, including spinal, muscular, lymphatic, digestive, immune, and endocrine. Through applying pressure to reflex points in the feet, a healing response occurs in the correlating system. There are various styles of reflexology, depending on the lineage. I consider it a powerful “folk medicine,” a living modality that is influenced by whatever culture — or person — adopts it.

Learning reflexology was like receiving a secret treasure map to the body. At the time, I was working as a Pilates trainer and Breema instructor, two modalities that actively include the feet. Pilates is generally practiced while barefoot, so when I began to learn reflexology, it was easy to observe how tendencies in the body correlated with tendencies in the feet. Weak/tight hips equaled weak/tight ankles; shoulder and neck issues were evident in the toes — the same for low-back issues. Working consciously with the feet brought balance to the entire body, and vice versa.

What I found was that when my clients began paying more attention to their feet, their feet responded. “What is this point? It keeps talking to me!” was a standard comment. I would then get to play translator for the budding relationship between my clients and their feet. I secretly enjoyed their surprised looks when, in reading their feet, I could accurately relate to them the physical issue their feet were reflecting. For many, this seems like magic, but for a reflexologist it’s business as usual.

Yet it wasn’t until I left my Pilates practice that the more soulful aspects of reflexology emerged for me. I took three months in the wilds of Mexico’s Baja Peninsula, completely removed from all that I knew and those who knew me. I walked barefoot, practiced yoga, and lived on the most ferocious coastline I’d ever seen.

I also had the opportunity to touch a lot of soles, Mexican and American alike. No longer looking through the Pilates lens of physical structure, something subtle and sublime started to occur: When I touched people’s feet, I received impressions. I saw colors, energy, spirits around them. I received messages about issues



they were facing. Holding people’s feet seems to give me access to touching into a deeper level of their being.

Since my Baja sojourn, my “old soul’s hands” have touched hundreds of people, helping them renew, rebalance, and reconnect with their entire body and being through their most humble servants — the feet. Most people have a deeply restorative experience from a session (see Soletosoulwellness.com). Occasionally, a body reacts with a “restless leg” type syndrome. If this occurs, I invite my client to spend 5 to 30 minutes barefoot on damp earth. This seems to help rebalance the electrical system.

When people ask me how to best care for their feet, my advice is simple: touch them in any way that feels good. Soak them in warm water. Allow them to breathe. And most important, let your feet touch the earth as often as possible. And don’t forget to wiggle your toes!

— JOY HOSEY