

McKinnon Body Therapy Center
Touch, Health, and Common Conditions – 125 hrs

THCC Massage Session Decision-Making Model

When you are working with someone experiencing health conditions, what questions do you need to ask? Are there any risks in providing a massage to your client today? What modifications do you need to make? The volume of information can often overwhelm the massage therapist and make it difficult to determine a session plan. The following model (SPPSG) will be used throughout the THCC course as a way to discern the essential modifications necessary to provide a safe and effective massage session.

Site – Implied in Site is also **Contact**: Is it safe to touch this person? Or are contraindications and cautions local? Is there an area that is healing from an acute injury? Has there been a change to a skin area, such as a rash, burn, wound? Is there a medical device being used that is attached to the person's body, port, drain, IV, colostomy, glucose monitor, brace, cast, compression garment, etc.? Does the client note an area that they wish to not have touched? Is this person a high fracture risk? Do they have a herniated disc, peripheral neuropathy, edematous legs? Is this person at risk for lymphedema?

Position – Always position for comfort. Ask, In which positions are you comfortable sleeping? Note that site restrictions and the client's ease of breathing often direct positioning. Be creative – think outside of prone or supine options.

Pressure – We will be using a 1-5 scale for level of pressure. Level 1 (light lotioning) will be for the frail; Level 5 (full, usual pressure) for the very healthy. For many of the conditions discussed in THCC, Levels 1-3 will be appropriate. Level 4 would only be used after an established massage relationship has occurred and there is evidence that it would be well-received. Implied in Pressure is also **Technique/Modality**. In addition to considerations around pressure, are there types of work that would be most appropriate for any given client (for example, energetic modalities vs mechanical)?

Stamina – As health condition acuity rises, so does the number of affected body systems. Greater acuity also increases clients' experience of pain and/or distress and may increase the number of psycho-emotional-spiritual dimensions of the client's experience and the massage session. As client stamina decreases, pace generally slows and duration of sessions also generally decreases.

Goals – This refers to both your and your client's goals for the session. For the practitioner, this often means realignment from "Doing" to "Being With" and providing comfort. Implied in Goals are **Expectations** and **Communication**. What can you actually provide? Are there particular things you need to inform your client about, hear from your client, or discuss with your client?