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**What Every LMT Needs**

Much is written and movies are made about our need to feel understood. But who understands what it is like to be a Massage Therapist? Whether we work at a large clinic or we have an individual practice, we really work one on one, in a small, warm room with our patient.

We give to our patients and family, but no one really understands what motivates, disappoints, rewards, or exhausts us like another therapist. But we don't reach out to other therapists. Why? I have asked this question to LMT's all over Washington. Here is a synopsis of the answers I have heard:

- I will feel dumb talking to other therapists; they might think I am stupid or needy.
- They might be my competition and use what I talk about against me in the community.
- If I network with other LMT's they might steal my patients from me.
- If I share what I have learned they might steal my patients away from me.
- I would like to, but I just don't have the time.
- I would like to, but I am just too tired.

As you can see these reasons seem to fall into two main categories:

1. We do not trust other LMT's.
2. We don't take the time.

Who can we trust? Other businesses and professions have been through this before us. They use to see each other as competition, but finally they figured out that by networking together, they helped each other and their profession. Massage is a science and an art and it is our individual interpretation and personality that makes our massage unique. If we want what is best for our patients, then we will suggest other LMT's who might do a different technique or have a different personality that might be better for them. Patients come to us because they like us, so no one steals your patient away from you, they find a better connection.

From years of working too much, I realized that I was not staying in touch with my friends. One day while reading the Tipping Point (a great book about how things become popular) I read ...you are most likely to be friends with those you work with. Wow that hit me, because I thought of other LMT's as colleagues not as friends. Why couldn't they be my friends? Who would better know what struggles I deal with than other LMT's?

I have seen LMT's stay connected with others LMT's they went to massage school with. They share, network, and support each other. They try to take classes together because two heads are better than one. But for those of us who have been doing this for a while we have become isolated.

It is time to create new friends and to meet other LMT's. Here are some suggestions of where you can meet other LMT's:

- ✓ Contact students you went to school with and setup a reunion lunch at a local restaurant.

- ✓ Get a massage from someone who does a technique that you want to experience.
- ✓ Look at [www.amtamassage.org](http://www.amtamassage.org) website and search for local Unit meetings, education, and trainings. (You don't need to be AMTA member look or attend)
- ✓ Go to a Convention, you can attend one or all days and if you live locally you can usually stroll through the vendors for free.
- ✓ Go to a Massage Emergency Response Team or Sports Massage Team training and get CEU's and have fun.
- ✓ Volunteer at your association for a position that you are interested in or that gives you the opportunity to learn a new skill like leadership training.

We don't have time! "I have patients to do, sheets to wash, chart notes, billing, taxes, stacks of papers to go through, BILLS to pay, and then there is my family and pets. I am barely keeping up with everything and I feel angry when someone suggests I need time for myself." I hear this often, and from my own past experience I know you are in burnout. We take care of everyone else hoping this will help us feel better, it is called "caregivers syndrome." You feel too exhausted to network or for anything else.

What we need is an intervention, which a friend who is also a massage therapist and can recognize. Sometimes I feel so tired I just can't imagine driving to an AMTA Unit meeting. But after I am there I get so energized. I get hugs, snacks, my mind gets stimulated and I find a place where everyone knows how I feel. A place where I feel supported. I can discuss a difficult patient, billing problems, and current events that are affecting my practice.

We must schedule the time to connect to other therapists. Maybe you are already booked this month so book out one of these in your schedule for the months ahead. I have seen so many therapists who do not see the signs of burnout and finally collapse with medical conditions. This burnout, this exhaustion, is compromising your immune system. You would see this in your patients but you cannot see this in yourself. **YOU NEED HELP!** You need a friend who understands you and can make you take some time for fun, laughter, rest, and best of all a massage.