

The background of the page features a vertical arrangement of bamboo stalks on the right side, with traditional Chinese calligraphy in black ink on a light yellow background on the left side. The calligraphy consists of several columns of characters, some of which are larger and more prominent than others. The overall aesthetic is traditional and naturalistic.

BAMBOO MASSAGE

Chinese, Indonesian, and Japanese festivals, rituals, and myths abound with bamboo symbolizing life energy, prosperity, longevity, sexuality, and fertility. In China, stalks of bamboo still symbolize eternal youth, strength, prosperity, and peace. What may seem like a new technique, bamboo massage, has ancient roots and perhaps deeper associations than simply bodywork. Today, bamboo massage is touted as Bamboo-Fusion, Tian di or simply Bamboo Massage.

Bamboo massage is a technique that incorporates heated bamboo stalks of varying lengths and diameters to provide deep-tissue work. (The Japanese name for bamboo is *take*, while the Chinese call it *chu*. It is from this word that the cho sticks, used by some bamboo massage practitioners, take their name.)

Practitioners may combine other elements of massage, trigger work or essential oils to further enhance benefits. The massage itself promotes circulation, sensory nerve perception, and lymphatic drainage and provides a deep sense of relaxation and well-being.

Part of what makes bamboo hard and straight, yet flexible and light, is that its outer cell walls are covered with silica. This creates a crystalline-like matrix, much like that of a quartz crystal or our own connective tissue. Some practitioners believe that releasing tension or fascial adhesions held within this matrix can help restore and rebalance the body's electromagnetic field.

"Skillful manipulation [in bodywork] simply raises energy levels and creates a greater degree of sol (fluidity) in organic systems that are already there, but behaving sluggishly," writes Deane Juhan in his book *Job's Body*.²

Stimulation of the tissue by the bamboo sticks is believed to relieve this "sluggish state," by dissipating the heat that results from an accumulation of toxins and poor circulation, much the same as what would occur through deep-tissue work, trigger-point activation, or various acupressure techniques. Some recipients of bamboo massage have described these releases as a whole-body tingling, reflex reaction or a warming sensation.

Therapists and clients are continually seeking new approaches to massage therapy, bamboo massage may be at the forefront, offering a basic solution: a technique that not only makes use of a renewable and sustainable resource, but also reconnects us to ancient approaches while respecting our needs and those of the natural world.

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