

Shifting Our Way of Working

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Making life changes, such as moving or changing jobs requires us to rethink how, and why we do things. In order to adapt and adjust to our new surroundings we shift our physical, emotional, and mental perspectives. We may also rely more deeply on our spiritual faith, religious or philosophical foundations if such principals are important to us. At a very practical level, we take a new path to work; our time with family may change. Our tasks and roles with our partner may change; perhaps they pick up the kids, while we work late. These adjustments enable us to manage the myriad minor changes inherent in making transitions. Such change and flexibility helps us become effective in our new roles and keeps us refreshed in life. We are continually trying to balance and adjust so we grow into a new way of living. We work to discover our “sweet spot” in what becomes our new normal routine.

As bodyworkers, we observe this readjustment process with our clients after they suffer an injury or illness. This is especially true with those who are dealing with cancer and going through various treatments. Frequent changes and transitions occur with those in the dying process too. Common to these scenarios is the requirement for us to be mindful and flexible in adapting in the moment. Perhaps a major difference is that in on one hand, we support our clients in redefining their sense of what is normal, and on the other, we help them release into what is unknowable. This observation clarifies the process we witness; it does not imply a specific goal to work toward.

Here is a necessary reminder: When working with clients with cancer we must be clear in knowing that having cancer does not automatically imply they are dying. Millions of people have a history of cancer or live with cancer treatments every day without being in end of life. As a result of treatments our clients have received, we adjust our sessions to accommodate their clinical considerations. We help them manage the side effects that have shaped their new normal. Our role is to assist them in living day to day.



Working with clients who have cancer or people who are transitioning into their dying process requires a shift our way of working as well as a shift our way of being with them. These professional shifts impact us personally because in the process of understanding why we shift our work, we gain insight into what is most important in the moment. We are learning that it is the smallest acts that express compassion and care. Our presence offers strength and support. A slower cadence in our walk and talk can deescalate stress. Our touch helps them remember what is comforting. Touch relieves



their suffering, allows movement beyond their previous discomforts, and helps them discover their inner source of strength. Our role is to assist those at end of life, in living into their dying process.

It takes large doses of energy and tenacity to navigate the changes in our lives. It takes even greater energy to seek out sources of support and wisdom to help us manage living with cancer or other life threatening diseases. To let go into the unknowable and live into dying draws on profoundly deep reserves of strength, courage and energy. Touch normalizes. Caring touch offers support, comfort and care. It is inherent in our role that our clients come to us asking us to help them heal. We are here to ease their path and witness their inner discoveries. What inner discoveries are you observing?



Meg Robsahm has been in practice since 2001 specializing in oncology and hospice massage. Currently, she practices in Rochester, MN and is focused on teaching around the country. She teaches *Massage for People Living with Cancer* © as a part of the Oncology Massage Education Associates and has developed and teaches *Bodywork in End of Life Care: Journeys in Dying*©. Meg recently co-authored chapter 11 in the 3rd Edition of *Medicine Hands, Massage for People with Cancer*, with Gayle MacDonald. She has authored articles on EOL Care in the 2012 & 2014 fall edition of *WA-AMTA Journals*. She has taught at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN and is a regular presenter for many organizations on topics such as Oncology Massage, Hospice and Caring Touch. She is the First Past President of the Society for Oncology Massage, www.S4OM.org; a 2007 Graduate of the Peregrine Institute of Oncology Massage Training and advisor to the April 22 – 24, 2016 [Oncology Massage Healing Summit in Bloomington, MN](#).