

## A Day In The Life Of A Massage Therapist

One of the reasons many get into the career of Massage Therapy is due to its flexibility and possibilities. Whether a person is just entering the work world or leaving a life of 9 to 5 for something completely different, there is something available in this health field for everyone. It's hard to give just one idea of what a day in the life of a massage therapist looks like because it's different for all therapists. So I'll tell you a couple different experiences I've had in my short, but full, 4 year career as a MT, and how I went about making the choices I have made.

When making my decision to go into this field, I asked myself many questions. Am I looking to massage full time or part time, what environment can I see myself working in, what type of clientele would I enjoy seeing, do I want to work at one place or multiple, or do I want to work for myself? There are many questions I had to ask in determining what my day may look like, and the above are just a few to get me started.

When entering MT School I thought I was going to use massage as a way to supplement my income. I wanted something extremely flexible that I could do anywhere, anytime. At the time I was a professional bowler, traveling not only the country, but the world. My thoughts were I could do massage on other bowlers at tournaments and between stops. One thing was for certain, we all needed it! What I didn't realize was how drastically my life was to shift upon seeing what all the possibilities were in this career choice. With the bowling industry struggling to stay afloat, and not too many places for a female bowler to compete, I decided to look at other opportunities. Some of the most common employers of Massage Therapists are spas, chiropractic offices, physical therapy offices, health clubs, hotels, and privately owned massage studios. Another option I considered was working for myself. That may mean opening a store front, traveling to client's homes, working out of my own home, or renting space from someone.

A month into school and I was completely enthralled, I couldn't get enough of what I was learning. I decided that I wanted to get started right away and learn as much as I possibly could. I started looking for a job that would allow me to be at least in the field I was so captivated by, so when I was licensed, I would have a full working knowledge of the industry. When looking at the above choices, I decided the best bet for me was to work for someone else to learn the ins and outs of all that went into running a massage business. Within weeks I found myself working at a privately owned massage studio. My rationale was I would learn more working for an independent company with many areas that I could take part in. Prior to finishing school my day was mostly cleaning and administrative duties, but I also completed my school hands on outreach hours at work. Once licensed, my role was massage therapist and manager of that massage studio. Of course, first priority was servicing clients needing massage but when there weren't bodies to massage, I was making advertisements, e-newsletters, adding to our client database, and other administrative/advertising/marketing activities. My day may have looked something like this:

10:30am	Walk to work
11:00am	Shift started
11 -12p	If no client, check messages, return calls, start laundry
12:15 – 1:15	Greet client, take history, massage session

1:15 – 1:30	Wash hands, use restroom, ring up that client, get table ready for next appointment, and switch the laundry
2:30 – 3:30	Greet client, take history, massage session
3:45p	Lunch
4:45p – 5:45p	If no client, create an e-newsletter, add to client database, laundry, etc
5:45p – 6:45p	Greet client, take history, massage session
6:45p – 7:00p	Wash hands, use restroom, ring up client, get table ready for next appointment, and switch the laundry
7:00 – 8:00p	Last Massage Session of the day – Greet, history, massage
8:00p	Close up duties....Clean table, fold laundry, etc
8:30p	Walk home/dinner

The above was a pretty typical day for my first two years of employment in the Massage Therapy industry. I worked 5 days a week, 11p to 8p or 12 to 9p, and weekends, as this is when most people are free to receive massage. My days off were Monday and Wednesday, or two days during the week. Some days I would have as many as five clients and some days as little as 0 or 1. Days with 5, all I did was massage, laundry, and lunch. Days with very little massage were geared toward getting more people in the door. If I was working for myself, the day would be very similar except I would have leeway to decide if I wanted to leave early, when I want to book clients, maybe I need a full day to work on generating clients etc.

Wages: There are a few different options in payment arrangements. Generally in massage a therapist is either an employee paid hourly with tips or an independent contractor working on a percentage split, that is unless one works for them self. The example above, I was an employee at \$14/hour with tips. If working on a percentage split one might expect a 70/30, 60/40 or a more uncommon, and good split, for a therapist would be 50/50. The employer usually gets the higher split percentage. As an employee, the benefit was I made a stable, dependable income. And as an independent contractor, the benefit is the high earning potential.

My second and current arrangement is working part time for myself and part time as a massage instructor. I feel it is the best of two worlds. I get to do some massage, but not too much in that I get burnt out, and I also get to teach others what I love to do so much. I decided to work part time as a massage instructor, but that could be any other part time job if a person has other interests. In teaching I have a set income and then supplement with the hands on. I can do 0 massage or 30 hours of massage in a week depending on how I feel and how much money I need or want to make. I've slowly generated clients that I see on a regular basis. I have a few that I travel to their home and then I also rent space at a Pilates Studio. I rent the space by the massage hour, \$20/hour and I pay only if I have a client (some arrangements are to rent a space for an allotment of time. Here one would pay say \$50 for an entire day. Whether you have 8 clients or 0 clients you would still have that fee). I'm subject to the spaces availability but I don't have any expense unless I've booked a client. In my situation, I have a lot of flexibility. I can take a day off, book a half hour between people if I need more time, charge what I feel is reasonable for the service, etc. The great thing I am able to take home almost the entire amount I charge, but I also take on more responsibility than I did working for someone else, in that, now I'm responsible for marketing myself and generating clients or I have no income.

My day of massage currently looks like this: Saturday's starting at 11am and ending around 6pm. I try to book all my sessions in a row. When this isn't possible I take a pilates class if I have a break between clients. I have hours available Saturday, Sunday afternoons and then upon request during the week. I'm only at the studio when an appointment is scheduled.

So looking at just my experience in massage therapy, there are endless variations as to how I proceed in my career. The great thing is that, as therapist, I get to decide if my days will all look the same or different. As I make my way through the different possibilities, if I don't like one, there are dozens of other combinations I can try. Currently I enjoy that massage isn't work but a life style!