



## When massage taps hidden emotions Huna offers physical and spiritual release

By Matthew B. James

Massage therapists are trained to relieve physical pain in our muscles. But what happens when they encounter emotional pain in their clients?

One thing I have noticed in working with massage therapists is that at some point they realize some problems are outside of the scope of the physical body.

I have had hundreds of massage therapists come and take trainings with me. With the exception of one or two who were just starting out, most of them have experienced something like this:

You are moving your hand up the person's back, you hit a spot and they get emotional — not out of pain, but out of an emotion that comes up.

What the massage therapist has essentially done is hit a spot that is a physical manifestation of a client's stored or trapped negative emotion. And it is usually at this point the massage therapist says: "I better get some extra training."

The connection between mind, body and spirit is integral to Huna, the ancient Hawaiian tradition of my lineage and life experience.

Huna means "secret" or "hidden wisdom." It is the modern term used for Ho'omana, the ancient Hawaiian system for living.

Ho'o means "to make." Mana is "energy." Taken together, Ho'omana means to make life-force energy.

Huna teaches people how to get in touch with their life-force energy, how to move it, and how to understand their connection with the environment and with others.

As we go through life, we all encounter painful experiences. Some of these are so painful that we are unable to process and release them, so we hold onto them deep inside. I refer to these stored negative emotions as our black bags.

When a massage therapist finds a client crying or getting emotional, it can be an unsettling experience. Often it compels the massage therapist to begin looking for ways to help their clients. Those who want to help their clients on a spiritual level often come to my workshops on Huna.

The best massage therapists I have ever gotten a message from know how to work with energy. They know the mind does affect the body so they need to at least have a working understanding of the mind and how that trickles down to the physical body. That makes them a better massage therapist.

The Hawaiian approach to massage therapy that incorporates energy work is called Lomilomi. One of the foremost experts on this method, Auntie Margaret Machado, taught at our early Huna workshops. So our workshops fit very well into a model of massage plus energy work.



I don't teach massage therapists specific techniques that they can use in massage. But I teach people how to work with energy. And at certain levels of Huna I teach people how to help others let go of their negative emotions and the limiting decisions those emotions can cause.

Kathi Miyagawa is a massage therapist in Honolulu who has been coming to our workshops for years. She says it has transformed her massage and her practice.

When a client has emotions come up, Kathi says “may I assist you with releasing the negative emotion associated with that knot?” And that is because she has learned the process of Ho'oku'u — to make something release.

If a client holds onto a negative emotion and it manifests itself in a muscle knot, that knot will keep coming back no matter how much you massage it. What Kathi has learned to do is help her clients release the negative emotions, and therefore free themselves from limiting decisions. She has told me her clients are getting better results faster than ever before and she gets more referrals from clients as well.

When a trapped negative emotion is released the physical body has an almost immediate reaction, which a massage therapist can sense. It's all about helping people release negative emotions from the spiritual to the mental to the emotional to the physical.

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**About the Author:** Matthew B. James, MA, Ph.D., is President of Kona University. His new book, *The Foundation of Huna: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Times*, details forgiveness and meditation techniques used in Hawaii for hundreds of years. He carries on the lineage of one of the last practicing kahuna of mental health and well-being. To reach Dr. James, please email him at [info@Huna.com](mailto:info@Huna.com).