



College of Massage Therapists of Ontario  
Code of Ethics

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## **Foreword**

After the enactment of the Regulated Health Professions Act in 1994, the Quality Assurance Committee began its preparation of the Quality Assurance Programme required by the Act. It immediately became clear to the Committee that the Quality Assurance Programme could not be developed without a more current and readily applicable Standards of Practice.

The Standards of Practice were revised to provide all massage therapists with clear directions in a comprehensive document from which they may obtain guidance on how well they are expected to perform their various tasks within the Scope of Practice.

During the consultation process with the profession on the development of the Standards of Practice, the majority of the members indicated clearly that these Standards, no matter how comprehensive, should not be presented to the membership without a revised Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics would provide the necessary human framework for the Standards. Together, the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice present a strong and confident foundation for the profession of massage therapy. Although the creation of the two documents was the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Committee, the project would not have been possible without the expert guidance of Commtec Communications Group and the many therapists who dedicated their time and experience to the focus groups and developmental work. On behalf of the Quality Assurance Committee and the Council, thank you to all those volunteers who contributed their time, expertise, insight and continual support throughout the process. This profession has you to thank.

**Code of Ethics**

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Touching with Our Hands — Healing With Our Hearts  
Serving With Integrity In Touch

*by Cidalia Paiva*

To touch and cherish the worth and dignity of each person  
as a blessed and unique expression of life  
Is to affirm the value of life.

To touch and accept each other in our different skins,  
our wounded parts and our hoping hearts  
Is to create safety and trust.

To touch and know the vulnerability of aching flesh,  
a despairing brow, a trickling tear  
Is to create empathy and compassion.

To touch with gentle strength and knowing softness  
Is to restore the healing power of touch.

To touch and express sincere praise, kind thoughts,  
considerate deeds and gestures  
Is to create confidence and self esteem.

To touch with integrity  
Is to create truth, honesty and wholeness within ourselves,  
our fellows and in our world.

To touch with our hands and heal with our hearts  
Is to renew the miracle and the majesty of serving  
with integrity in touch.

## **Preface Statements**

### **What is a Code of Ethics?**

A Code of Ethics is a statement which expresses the primary ethical values, obligations and goals of the profession. It is a commitment which serves to bear witness to our promise as a profession to uphold the values and ethical obligations expressed in the Code.

### **Why do we need a Code of Ethics?**

A Code of Ethics gives definition to our commitment to practice in ethical terms. As regulated health professionals, we have made a promise to society to accept the responsibility and maintain the trust with which we have been invested.

### **What does a Code of Ethics do?**

It lays out clearly the massage therapy profession's values and explains what they are in terms of what we ought to do in order to protect and promote the public good, and what we must avoid doing in order to prevent harm to the public.

### **To whom does this Code apply?**

Massage Therapists who act as practitioners, educators, researchers, administrators or policy makers are all expected to maintain a commitment to massage therapy values and to follow the principles outlined in this Code.

### **What is CMTO's Mission Statement?**

*Paragraphs one and three of the CMTO Mission Statement state:*

"The College of Massage Therapists of Ontario protects and serves the public by guaranteeing the competency and quality of services provided by massage therapists through maintenance of Standards and Regulations."

"We will operate in a manner which encourages innovation, and which elicits a sense of pride in the job and commitment to results through the Council. We will dedicate ourselves to improving our performance through focusing on group and individual goal setting, effective performance measurement and regular feedback. We will be guided in all that we do by our primary focus - to protect the public."

### **What is Massage Therapy?**

Massage practice is a therapeutic, integral healing relationship in which the therapist assists the client in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the well-being of the client.

### **What is the Massage Therapy Scope of Practice?**

"The practice of massage therapy is the assessment of the soft tissue and joints of the body and the treatment and prevention of physical dysfunction and pain of the soft tissues and joints by manipulation to develop, maintain, rehabilitate or augment physical function, or relieve pain." (*Massage Therapy Act, 1991*)

## **General Principles which Guide the Practice of Massage Therapy**

Principle I - Respect for Persons

Principle II - Responsible Caring

Principle III - Integrity in Relationships

Principle IV - Responsibility to Society

### **Principle I - Respect For Persons**

#### **Meaning:**

To value the dignity and worth of all persons regardless of age, race, culture, creed, sexual identity, gender, ability and/or health status.

#### **Application:**

*Client autonomy is demonstrated by:*

- a) Ensuring that clients are as fully involved as possible in the planning and implementation of their own health care
- b) Providing complete and accurate information in a sensitive and timely fashion to enable clients, or when necessary a client's substitute decision maker, to make informed choices
- c) Listening to and respecting a client's values, opinions, needs, and cultural beliefs
- d) Encouraging and being responsive to a client's choice to accept, augment, modify, refuse or terminate treatment
- e) Being informed about moral and legal rights of a client
- f) Advocating for and supporting a client in exercising his/her moral and legal Rights
- g) Safeguarding the client's right to privacy and confidentiality by holding all personal and health information in confidence unless otherwise required by law.

## **Principle II - Responsible Caring**

### **Meaning:**

Providing sensitive, compassionate and empathetic quality massage therapy.

### **Application:**

*Responsible care of a client is demonstrated by:*

- a) Listening to and respecting the client's values, opinions, needs, and cultural beliefs
- b) Promoting the client's best interest and well-being, through the highest possible standard of professional practice
- c) Seeking assistance when conflicts arise between the value systems of the practitioner and the client
- d) Recognizing and referring the client to other health care providers when it is in the client's best interest to do so
- e) Being alert to and reporting, as required, any unethical practice by any member of the regulated health professions
- f) Approaching and co-operating with substitute decision makers in assessing the client's wishes and best interests in the event of incapacity
- g) Protecting the client's physical and emotional privacy
- h) Collecting only that information which is relevant to the provision of health care.

## **Principle III - Integrity in Relationships**

### **Meaning:**

To practice with integrity, honesty and diligence in our professional relationships with ourselves, our clients, our professional colleagues and society.

### **Application:**

*Commitments to Clients are demonstrated by:*

- a) Ensuring that we always act in our client's best interest as defined by the client's wishes and consistent with the standards of practice of the profession
- b) Informing the client about health care services available to support them
- c) Referring to other health care providers as necessary and appropriate

- d) Obtaining assistance when value conflicts arise which threaten to impede client autonomy
- e) Providing client-centered health care which includes the following:
  - i) Explaining to the client and advocating for his/her right to receive information about, and take control of his/her health care
  - ii) Providing information about the proposed treatment, alternative courses of action, the material effects, risks and side effects in each case and the consequences of not having the treatment
  - ii) Assisting the client to comprehend information
  - iv) Responding to questions about our client's health care/treatment

*Commitments to Self are demonstrated by:*

- a) Being pro-actively committed to our own health and personal and professional development
- b) Being competent, conscientious and empathetic practitioners
- c) Being aware of our personal values and being able to identify when value conflicts interfere with client care
- d) Keeping our professional commitment by integrating massage values and principles in our daily practice

*Commitments to our Professional Colleagues are demonstrated by:*

- a) Respecting our colleagues and working co-operatively with them
- b) Intervening in situations where the safety and well being of a client is in jeopardy
- c) Reporting to appropriate authorities any regulated health care practitioner who abuses a client physically, verbally, sexually or financially
- d) Referring to other health care providers when necessary and appropriate
- e) Co-operating with regulatory functions of the profession
- f) Contributing to continuous quality improvement initiatives
- g) Upholding standards and guidelines of the profession
- h) Advocating with other health care providers to promote and support social changes that enhance individual and community health and well-being
- i) Representing ourselves honestly, and performing only those services for which we are qualified.

## **Principle IV - Responsibility to Society**

### **Meaning:**

To be accountable to society and conduct ourselves in a manner that fosters and promotes high ethical standards.

### **Application:**

*Ethical practice is demonstrated by:*

- a) Pursuing continued career-long, professional learning
- b) Advocating for and supporting a client's ethical and moral rights
- c) Participating in the promotion of the profession of massage therapy through advocacy, research and maintenance of the highest possible standards of practice
- d) Being committed to promoting the welfare and well-being of all persons in society
- e) Making every reasonable effort to ascertain that our clinical environment will permit provision of care consistent with the values in the Code of Ethics
- f) Committing to continuous improvement and implementation of standards of massage practice
- g) Collaborating with members of the other health professions to meet the health needs of the public
- h) Continuing to develop ways to clarify massage therapist's accountability to society.

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