



Teaching Parents

an online resource
created to accompany

Pre- and Perinatal Massage Therapy:

*A Comprehensive Guide to Prenatal, Labor
and Postpartum Practice
(Third Edition)*

Carole Osborne

Michele Kolakowski

David M Lobenstine

(Handspring Publishing Ltd. 2021)

this resource links to:

Chapter 1, page 24

Chapter 4, page 117

Chapter 5, page 157

Chapter 8, page 271





Teaching Parents

Teaching basic massage to expectant parents can be both exciting and overwhelming. If working with expecting parents in this way intrigues you, then we encourage you to explore further. (But if it doesn't interest you, then focus your energy on massaging your clients, rather than teaching them—and create a referral list of other therapists in your area who do offer massage classes!)

These classes should be as simple as possible. All you need is a pregnant person and a support person—whether a partner or a relative or a friend—who will be massaging them. You can either teach private classes or group classes (or both). Design your classes and your marketing of them to get expectant parents started sharing massages as early in their pregnancies as possible. Most parents take childbirth education classes in the second half of the pregnancy when discomforts are more likely, but time may be at a premium. There is no need to wait to start learning massage! Many couples who are close to or thinking ahead about labor and birth are motivated to learn.

General Guidelines

1. Emphasize touch and massage skills and minimize repeating what they will learn or have learned in childbirth education classes or from other resources. Because you are a touch expert, use your time focusing on hands-on skills and building their confidence with massage and touch.
2. Create an outline for your presentation targeting the content to the specific topics that fit your audience's needs. Practice with a friend



or colleague, then fine tune and finalize your class. Prepare an additional 15 minutes of material for each class so you have additional material to share if needed.

3. Adult learning theory suggests that you should change activities and/or method of instruction each 20 minutes, especially if talking, lecturing, or using any other non-interactive method of education. Vary activities to hold students' attention and improve retention.
4. Plan for the number of participants with adequate space, props and equipment. Be clear about what you will bring and what participants need to bring for a comfortable class—i.e. pillows and lubricant.
5. Bring business cards, marketing materials, gift certificates, handouts about what you teach, and your copy of *Pre- and Perinatal Massage Therapy* as a reference.
6. Stay within your scope of practice. Be clear about what you are best suited—and legally allowed—to teach.

One of the fun parts about these classes is that they are infinitely adaptable. You could teach a private class to a couple that is just an hour on massage for lower back pain, because that is what the pregnant person needs most. And you could have a more standard two-hour group class on massage during pregnancy, and then another followup two-hour class on techniques to use during labor. Or you could have a six-session class, with each session an hour long that focused on working a different area of the body. The possibilities are endless!



Sample Class Plan

As you'll see, the format is very simple, and could be used for a single, standalone class, or could be used as the basic template for each session in a multiple class series. Similarly, it will work for a private class or a group class, and can be adjusted to a variety of lengths, anywhere from 45 minutes to three hours. Below is the basic flow of the class, which you should of course adjust as fits your needs and the needs of your participants.

Self-introduction

Who you are, your passions, credentials and education.

Massage Benefits to Mother, Baby, Partner and Family

Refer to specific benefits cited in *Pre- and Perinatal Massage Therapy* and research studies at the end of each chapter. Also share personal testimonials from other previous class participants and your clients. Focus your discussion of benefits to the particular portion of pregnancy that you are addressing that day (e.g., how massage can help during the third trimester, or during labor, or how massage can help with discomfort in the lower back, etc.)

Depending on the scope of your class, focus your discussion on massage basics and safety including:

- Focused attention and intention
- Relaxed hands and healthy body mechanics
- Moving slowly into and out of tissue, usually not directly on bones
- Therapeutic depth, repetition and rhythm



- Sharing feedback about touch (i.e. green, yellow, red)
- Avoiding areas of skin irritation or injury
- Adapting abdominal and leg massage
- Adapting for high risk conditions and complications

Practice Pregnancy and/or Labor Massage

Choose the simplest techniques - massage to scalp, temples, forehead, and jaw, kneading of shoulders, neck, and back, superficial abdominal effleurage, lumbosacral stretch and others from *Pre- and Perinatal Massage Therapy's* Chapters 4 and 5 technique manuals - that fit into your available class time. Use only those that do not require advanced anatomical knowledge or highly refined palpatory skills to be safe and effective. Demonstrate each one with a volunteer. Take questions. Then have participants' practice on their partner. Circle the room to give positive and helpful feedback to each couple or single mother and her support person.

Be creative and have fun! For example, for practicing labor massage, you set up "stations" in a circle around the room each with a flashcard naming a massage or comfort technique - for example, contraction distraction, sacral counterpressure, double hip squeeze, support between contractions - with a laboring position from *Pre- and Perinatal Massage Therapy's* Figure 5.1. Ask couples to work together at each station using provided props (birth ball, stool, chair, etc.). In your guidance to the group, simulate the timing of contractions that gradually increase in length, frequency and intensity as participants rotate stations clockwise through practicing at each station for one or more contractions. Encourage everyone to remember to hydrate and enjoy a light snack throughout the exercise to also emphasize the importance during labor for all!



Questions and Closure

At the end of class, ask each participant to share their favorite learning that they will take home with them and why. Also leave a few minutes to answer any questions. If there are abundant questions, promise to start the next class with those answers or offer to stay after the class.

