

The Handy Man

The World of a Professional Masseur

JIM

I discovered Jim's Web site while doing Internet research. His site showed a depth that I wasn't expecting. There was information on massage, session options, instructional videos, a questionnaire, video-tapes, books, and more. The site was not a blatant sex ad. Could someone who works in erotic massage be so professional? I contacted Jim about being interviewed, and he wrote back saying that he was interested.

On a Saturday morning I arrived at Jim's apartment, which also doubles as his massage studio. Like his Web page, there was a professionalism that I wasn't expecting. Massage was his full-time business and he treated it like a business. He was trained in many forms of massage. He cared about his clients and their well-being. There was a spiritualism and energy surrounding him that was very soothing.

I left his apartment wanting to learn more about creating a balance of energy in my own life.

NAME: Jim

AGE: Forty-two

ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Caucasian

PHYSICAL STATS: 5'8", 160 pounds, brown hair, and hazel eyes

WORKOUT ROUTINE: When do I have time?

PARENTS: Father is deceased.

SIBLINGS: One half brother and a twin brother who passed away

RELATIONSHIP: Single

CHILDREN: None. I do have two male cats and four females. My oldest cat is twenty-five.

ALCOHOL: Occasionally

TOBACCO: No

DRUGS: No

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND: I have my own philosophies. I don't follow one particular doctrine. I've studied a lot of different backgrounds and I've decided that there are similar roots, so I formed my own.

HOMETOWN: I was born in a little village in north central Wyoming. I moved to New Jersey when I was nine and lived there until I was fourteen, when I ran away from home. I had a very rough childhood.

CURRENTLY LIVING: Minneapolis, Minnesota

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: Gay

MY STORY: I always wanted to be a doctor. As I got older and saw what doctors did and how they weren't always successful in what they were doing, I decided that I didn't want to be one. When I was fourteen I started to study herbalism and naturopathy. After I ran away from home I started to study aromacology and aromatherapy. When I was seventeen I went to my first workshop in meditation.

After the workshop I became very interested in meditation. I came across the Silva mind development program, which is taught in eighty countries and has twelve million graduates. It is a forty-hour program teaching a wide range of meditation and the expansion of your mind.

A month after I took the first workshop, the Silva people were doing another workshop on massage without touching—just the use of pure energy. I was very fascinated. I took the workshop with three hundred other people.

During the workshop, two students were chosen from the group. One person was picked to receive the massage and I was chosen to

give it. I didn't want to do it, but the instructor convinced me. We had already learned some of the techniques in the basic lecture series and she talked me through what would happen. As she was guiding me, I went into my meditative space. Three hours later I opened my eyes and I had no recollection of what had happened. None.

The instructor told me that I had stepped out of the way to let some other energy come through me. She said that I had channeled the energy. I thought that she was full of it. They had me back for the next class and the same thing happened. I was told that I had found what I would be doing for a living.

The instructors suggested that I meet with massage therapists to learn integrating energy and physical massage. That's what I've done during the past twenty years. I've blended energy with physical massage.

I have over eleven thousand hours in massage training. I'm certified as an instructor in eleven styles of massage. A few of the areas I've studied include Russian, Belgian, Swedish, Amish, four styles of Oriental massage, two styles of Native American massage, and five styles of Polynesian massage. I'm also a certified Kahuna healer.

The focus of my work is connecting at a deep level. Traditionally when people get a massage, they get on a table and have an obvious physical experience. I want to connect with people at a meditative level. Physically, emotionally, physiologically, psychologically, and mentally. People retain so much more of the experience when this happens. This is why I have so much repeat business. I give something that is so totally different.

I work about one hundred hours a week. I start seeing clients at seven in the morning and take clients up to midnight—or after. I work seven days a week and see an average of eight to ten clients a day. I usually take a break in the middle of the day to do laundry or eat. Each week I do about thirty-six loads of laundry, which costs me one hundred dollars.

I have sessions that run from one hour up to six hours long. I do in and out calls, but most people come to me. I have a few people

that I let work with me to create two-on-one or three-on-one sessions. If it is just me doing the session, it's fifty dollars an hour, seventy-five dollars for two hours, one hundred dollars for three hours, one hundred and twenty-five dollars for four hours. The two-on-one and three-on-one sessions cost more.

Having other people work with me takes a tremendous amount of coordination. It's difficult to have someone follow my lead. A lot of people have asked to work with me, but I haven't found many who I will allow.

During the holidays I offer a buy one, get one free package. If there is one thing prevalent during this time of year, it's people who don't know what to get each other. I offer the two-for-one option. Keep a massage for yourself and give one to a friend. I've done this for twenty-three years. Last year I sold three hundred and fifty massages. This keeps my December, January, and February very busy. I can't even accept new clients until March.

I have a good mix of gay, bisexual, and straight men as clients. Most are gay. They come from all economic levels, and the ages range from low twenties to early seventies. I am very selective about who gets to become my client.

My Web site has a survey with forty questions. Prospective clients must answer all the questions and submit it for my review. This really turns off a lot of people, but if they can't go to my Web site, I can't see them. I'm very picky about who I share my energy with. For every client I accept, I turn down up to fifteen others.

Without exception, all the people who fill out my questionnaire answer that they are having trouble and stress in their jobs and relationships. There is something wrong in the world. The majority of the population has too much stress in their jobs and they are sad at home. They spend all day in an unhappy work environment and then go home to an unhappy relationship environment. I want to help people move to a better place.

The biggest misconception about my clients is that they are dirty old men. My clients are not shady characters creeping in during the middle of the night to get a sexual experience. I don't run a whorehouse.

Many clients want to develop a more intimate relationship with me. Because of the work that I do, I have to maintain a level of professionalism. And at the same time, I have to allow our energies to blend. I do become attracted to my clients physically, emotionally, and energetically. A lot of the time the same thing happens with them.

One client has been coming to me for twenty-three years. He was twenty-one the first time we met. I have another client who has seen me for eleven years. Every six weeks I fly first class to Cleveland to give him a massage. I have a couple dozen clients like this. A guy from London goes to New York City four times a year, and he books a session a month in advance. He flies me to New York City and pays me five hundred dollars a session.

I've seen one client twenty times in the past ten years. He recently made me an offer to move in with him. I'm not attracted to him physically or emotionally, so I thanked him but turned him down.

Many people are looking to have sex. I do much more intensive work than sex. I filter them out. I have a lot of contact with clients before they come to me for the first time. There are phone conversations and the Web page questionnaire. Once they get to me, it means that they have jumped through the hoops. I don't put you on a table, rub your back, and then get you off sexually. There are plenty of guys out there who will do that, so look for another ad.

I get a lot of phone calls from horny men of all ages who just want a sexual experience. Legally, there is a very gray area about what I can say to people when they call me. I can't answer sexual questions. Guys will ask, "Do you give blow jobs?"

I answer, "You're asking the wrong person." Or "I'm not allowed to talk about that on the phone. If you want to discuss massage work, I can do that."

People will also call and ask what I look like. "Is that important?" I ask. "Does it affect the quality of my work?"

They respond, "I want to make sure that I am getting a massage by someone who is cute."

“If my looks matter, obviously you are not looking for a massage.”

I hang up on a lot of people, but I do it nicely. Some call back and say, “I don’t understand.” If someone gets to me via the Web site or client referrals, I don’t run into these issues.

People confuse the terms *sexual* and *sensual*. Of course the work I do is sensual. A person’s skin is a sensory organ from the moment I lay my hands on it. So yes, it is a sensual experience. I’m awaking senses. Massage doesn’t have to mean sexual experience.

Do I give sexual massages?

It depends on how you define a sexual massage. There is no part of the body that I ignore unless specifically requested. This does not mean that I rub someone’s back for a few minutes and then dive at their genitals.

I come from the belief system that the work I do can’t neglect any part of the body, and I worship the entire body as a temple. When I’m working, it would be damaging to a client if I ignored a body part. I use my hands, my wrists, my forearms, my elbows, my shoulders, my chin, and my chest.

I might be working on six parts of your body at the same time. I keep the entire experience very fluid, working the entire body. I am not there to have a sexual experience with you. I’m there to get the entire energy of the body moving, to balance the chakras, to keep the energy moving.

The hardest thing about my job is keeping up with the schedule. I’m booked three weeks in advance. A lot of people call at the last minute looking for something, but usually I can’t accommodate them. I get at least thirty phone calls a day—some guys wanting in immediately. I have to offer them something weeks later. I have regular clients who won’t see anyone else. Even they can be spur-of-the-moment, so I try to maintain two spaces every couple days for last-minute changes or requests from repeat clients. I also keep a list of twelve people who want me to call them if I ever have any last-minute cancellations. These are the people who can’t plan out three weeks in advance.

One summer I made a database out of all the client records I had. Since 1977 I've seen over seventeen thousand clients. Currently in the Minneapolis, St. Cloud, Rochester, St. Paul, and Duluth areas I have about eight hundred clients. There are two thousand and two hundred people in the Twin Cities area who are on my mailing list. Not all have been to me for massage. Some are interested in my workshops. Topics of these sessions include herbalism, aromatherapy, relaxation, meditation, and energy.

I can't even advertise for my weekend workshops. I sell out six months in advance. It's impossible to accommodate all the people. At the last workshop I had one hundred and thirty people. After they attend my workshops, people will write to me and tell me their experiences. I'm very happy that I am able to get into people's lives and share with them in a way that they have never experienced. There are a lot of people lacking in human touch and connection.

It's wonderful if my workshops can help people better understand what is going on with their lives. There is an expression I use. "Once you drive to Detroit, you know how to get back." It is very important to learn how to relax and to develop intuition.

I used to do a forty-six-city tour where I would teach workshops. During this time I was living out of a travel trailer.

Last year I had a scary experience in Madison, Wisconsin. A guy set up an appointment, completed the entire questionnaire, and left a contact number. I was running late, so I didn't have time to confirm the appointment. Thankfully I'm very intuitive. As soon as he walked into the hotel room, I knew that something was wrong. I said to him, "Joe, this is not meant to be offensive to you, but I'm not going to see you as a client today."

He went ballistic on me.

I found out later that he was a university professor who had a habit of setting up massage appointments and then calling the police to get the guy arrested after the session. Out of all the years I've done this, it's been my only bad experience.

Someone who wants to work in massage must realize that they are there for the client. They need to get out of the way. The prob-

lem with most people who do body work is that they utilize too much of themselves. These are the people who can only do two sessions in a row. They are expending their own energy. They must get out of the way. Once you can start connecting with people beyond the physical level, it changes the experience. It is no longer about giving someone a massage.

Getting into the mode of being there for the client is the biggest thing you can do—regardless of the formal training, the knowledge of anatomy and physiology. These things are helpful, but they are not everything. I've met people with thousands of hours in massage therapy and their work sucks. I've also met a lot of people who have never had a day of formal training and they do great work.

Know what products you are using. I have a very strong background working with oils. I use a base oil with a unique combination of olive, aloe vera, apricot, almond, grape seeds, sesame, and pine bark, and to that I add one to sixty-five other oils—depending on the individual.

There are so many chemicals in oils and lotions on the market that are detrimental to the skin. People doing massage could benefit by studying what oils are most beneficial for each skin type. Blood types even respond better to certain oils.

Baby oil is deadly. It is good for the skin up until you are six years old. After that your skin has certain defense mechanisms that it breaks down. The only time I use baby oil is with AIDS patients. Their skin has reverted to a preadolescent stage of growth which doesn't replicate properly.

There is perceived competition, but not really for what I do. The competition is nowhere near doing the guided relaxation or autogenic training that I do. People can pick up a paper and see forty-five ads for people offering erotic massage. There is only one other person in Minneapolis that does something similar to what I do.

If I got into a relationship with someone who was uncomfortable with what I did, I would probably stop doing my work. I'd stop doing the massage work, but I'd keep doing the energy work.

Unless I get bored with what I am doing, I won't stop giving massages until I can't walk anymore. Maybe one day when I'm eighty-six years old, I will say, "I want to do something else with my life."
