

**Finding Peace through Massage Therapy:
A Letter of Gratitude to The Healing Arts Center.**
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Peace is the unexpected present on the doorstep.

The difficulty in finding peace is that I don't know it's missing until I find it. How do I look for something I can't describe? I have found degrees of peace before, but not this deeper level of peace budding in me now.

Self-care: a look in the mirror.

The classroom focus on self-care teaches students to look within themselves to find peace, rather than run to "fix" or "rescue" others. I cannot give to another what I do not have myself. As students, we learn how to breathe, how to bring life into our bodies and how to extend compassion out through our hands. It starts from within.

A sanctuary of support.

Sometimes I grab onto the baggage I just released—I'm so proud I let go, I want to put it on a pedestal for everyone to see. As much as I try to keep my private little parties in full gear, they dissolve in the conversation, laughter, and hugs shared with students and staff. With the compassionate touch in both the classroom and the professional clinic, I have stepped through three major changes:

Bringing wellness to life.

An emerging intelligence in my body resonates with certain foods and is repelled by others. Food choices are a breeze now. The old willpower method of mind-as-dictator-until-overruled-by-emotion brought more guilt than lasting change.

Releasing the trauma.

My abdomen released the shock of a workplace shooting and the shame of the ensuing early and harrowing birth of my son. It had been lodged in my belly for 12 years and I didn't even know it was there. My belly is now moving with my breath; it is alive again.

Ending the nightmares.

I wanted to release the "protective armor" stiffening my back, but it wasn't budging. Then the light bulb went on—I only need protection if I am separate from what haunts me. Within this safe setting, I could let the haunts inside. As the torment subsided, my body reflected this peace in ease of breath, movement, and rest.

Only gratitude remains.

It's been a long time since I danced in the kitchen. I am grateful to The Healing Arts Center for providing me with a career that doesn't require wearing pantyhose, and for helping me make my body a more comfortable place to be.

Marty Wolins is a massage therapy student at The Healing Arts Center. Contact The Healing Arts Center on 314-647-8080 or www.hacmassage.com for information on their programs, professional clinic and student clinic. Marty is also a Certified Healing Touch Practitioner with a MA in Transpersonal Psychology. She uses energy work, essential

oils, and imagery to help clients reach new levels of wellness and can be reached at The Center for Mind, Body & Spirit, 314-962-5001. As treasurer of Healing Touch St. Louis, she invites you to visit www.healingtouchstlouis.org for information on Healing Touch classes and providers.

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