

KATIE BREITKREUZ



CAREER

Toward Health Massage

Owner / Registered Massage Therapist

EDUCATION

Massage Therapy Diploma (Sutherland-Chan)
Design Diploma (Ryerson Polytechnical Institute)

Describe the services offered by Toward Health Massage.

Toward Health Massage provides therapeutic massage therapy. Treatments can either take place at our Etobicoke clinic or on-site at a client's workplace. Each treatment is customized to the specific needs of the individual by integrating several modalities such as Swedish massage, deep tissue massage, ultrasound, myofascial release, relaxation and breathing techniques and hot stone therapy. Pregnancy massage is also available. We partner together with our clients to increase their awareness of the interconnectedness of mind, body and spirit through the healing power of massage therapy.

How would you describe the atmosphere you create for your clients?

Our clinic is a serene and tranquil space. Clients are encouraged to come in, take off their shoes, forget about the rest of the hectic world outside, and relax. When we provide on-site services, music and mood lighting is brought to the workplace to create a calm and peaceful environment. The boardroom no longer exists as it has been changed into an oasis of serenity. Receiving a massage gives our clients a chance to focus on their own well-being and let everything else fall away.

How do businesses benefit from providing massage for their employees?

Clients of Toward Health Massage are proactive in their health. They actively participate in improving

their own health and well-being. Many of our clients are businesses within the GTA who value the welfare of their staff and realize the benefits that are provided by massage therapy. Massage therapy at the workplace helps to reduce job-related stress and increase a sense of well-being. As a result, the work environment becomes a more productive, positive and calmer space.

What are some practical examples of how massage has benefited your clients?

I can recall one client who came to see me with severe tendonitis in his right arm. The pain was so debilitating that he could no longer carry his briefcase. After several massage therapy sessions, along with exercises at home, his arm was once again strong and pain free. He is now a massage junkie!

At one of my onsite locations, the manager confided to me that she now schedules her staff meetings on massage days. There tends to be less absenteeism among her staff on that day and everyone is so calm and relaxed that the meetings are quick, efficient and very productive.

One of my clients had been coming to me for approximately four months. She was suffering from recurring lower back and hip pain and had no idea what was causing it. In the middle of one of her massage sessions, her face suddenly became very flushed and then animated. Her entire body tensed for a couple of seconds, then completely relaxed and she unexpectedly started crying. She had just experienced an emotional release and she suddenly realized the source of her pain. When she was ten years old, she had fallen off of her bicycle and landed on her hip. The injury meant that she could not participate in the upcoming track and field meet. She had been a track star at her school and felt that she had let everyone down due to her injury. She never participated in any track and field events after that fall. The release that she experienced helped her let go of the emotional

pain she had been suppressing all those years. Her entire body felt lighter and she has never experienced the hip pain again.

What motivated you to become a Registered Massage Therapist?

About 20 years ago, I got whiplash from a car accident and decided to try massage therapy to help ease the pain from the injury. I always looked forward to the treatment and it felt wonderful receiving the massage. I was euphoric and pain free for many days afterwards! Those sessions planted the first seed on my journey to becoming a therapist. I remember thinking to myself that my therapist had a fabulous job and that I would like to help others feel better too. Several years later, I decided to leave my government job and went to school to study massage therapy.

What challenges did you face while pursuing your true passion?

When I decided to leave a secure job after twelve years and pursue a career in the health sector, I faced a lot of criticism and resistance from fellow co-workers. They thought I was crazy. I was giving up job security, health benefits, and a full pension. It was a big risk and the idea of returning to school full-time without an income and devoting all of my time to studying certainly made me anxious. In my heart, I knew it was the right decision and, once enrolled in the program, I began to flourish. While studying anatomy, pathology and physiology was a challenge, I loved the program. With perseverance and the help of a wonderful study group, I passed the two-year program and the board exams. I was ready to start my own clinic but once again, I felt those butterflies in my stomach. I took the first steps to working for myself believing in the saying, "If you build it, they will come." Well, they didn't come right away, but in time they did, and I haven't looked back since!

What do you like most about what you do?

I love helping my clients to feel better and educating them as to how they can become proactive participants in their own health care and well-being. This not only empowers my clients, but it also makes me feel wonderful and grateful that I am able to contribute to their healing process. I believe that, if we can all help

each other to feel better about ourselves, our world will become a better place.

What do you do to unwind?

At the end of the day, I love having a 30-minute sauna to detoxify my body or an Epsom salt bath. I love Epsom salt! Once I am relaxed and ready for bed, I make a list of everything I am grateful for that day. I find doing this little exercise on a daily basis helps me clear my mind and sleep soundly. I wake up in the morning feeling wonderful, more mindful of my surroundings and appreciative of the day ahead. I believe that gratitude refuels the soul.

What is the best part of your day?

I am a morning person. I love to get up early so I can go for a walk with my yellow lab, Schatzi, and try to catch the sunrise. After that, I have my "golden hour" where I meditate, stretch or do Hatha yoga. I find that starting the day in this manner sets the pace for the rest of the day. I don't like to rush, it stresses me out!

How did your childhood experiences shape the person you are today?

My parents were immigrants who came to Canada with very little. They worked extremely hard to provide a comfortable life for our family. We had a fruit orchard and as kids; my siblings and I had to help out. My parents had a very strong work ethic and we all had to work together to accomplish our family goals. We were taught a variety of skills which instilled a sense of confidence in me. My Mom always told me that I could be anything I wanted to be, as long as I was willing to work hard enough to achieve it. These words of wisdom have helped me over and over throughout my life.

If you see a fork in the road - take it!

- Yogi Berra

Toward Health Massage

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

I look forward to all the opportunities the day ahead will bring!

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| 6:30 AM | Wake up to soft jazz music and a wet puppy nose! |
| 7:00 AM | Take a 30-minute walk with my dog. If we're lucky, we can catch a sunrise. |
| 7:30-8 AM | I like to do 30 minutes of either yoga, stretching or infrared sauna. |
| 8-9:00 AM | Hop into the shower, have breakfast and coffee and get ready for work. |
| 9 AM-7:30 PM | Work either at the clinic or at an on-site location. If there are breaks between clients, I use this time for administrative jobs such as returning calls, answering emails, completing paper work, charting and banking. |
| 7:30 PM | Walk my dog. Meet up with friends or family. At the end of the day I relax with a glass of wine and reading, watching TV or painting. |
| 10:30 PM | Reflect and review the day, give thanks and lights out. |