

Selling Good Health to Men

In this feature, Lee Anthony Taylor, gives a few pointers on how to tempt the male of the species into trying reflexology and to stick at it.

How would you like to double the number of reflexology clients you work with by making just a few simple changes in your promotional literature?

If you don't do so already, appealing to men to try out reflexology will boost the numbers coming through your doors. Men can be your worst sceptics but your greatest ambassadors when it comes to advocating reflexology to others. They may be distrustful to start with but then, once converted, tell everyone that they MUST try it!

While there is reluctance on the part of some women to allow men into their clinic rooms (that is a whole different and justifiable argument) there is also a need to grasp the nettle and present our therapy in its truest form through the messages we put out. We need to dispel the myths about what reflexology is perceived to be and talk about what it is actually capable of doing for our clients. In my role as President of the International Council of Reflexologists (ICR), I have made it my mission to bring more men into the profession and to foster ways of encouraging men in general to try out reflexology.

For this to happen, we need to have some guidance on what makes a man tick. Bearing in mind that we are dealing in stereotypes, I am sure that there are many exceptions to the rule.

To better understand the psyche of a man and find out how to appeal to his self-caring nature, we need to get past the macho façade. Men do have a sensitive side; they do care about what other people think of them. They are just socially conditioned not to show it.

So, we have to go back to how they behaved as boys to effectively communicate with them. It is vital to congratulate men on their successes and not focus on their weaknesses, seeing them instead as areas to develop.

Men love to measure up, so it is important to give them achievable and realistic outcomes with their health regime. It is like saying to them: "As a result of reflexology ... you will be better able to do this"- obviously not falling foul of any advertising standard regulations in the process!

Don't ask them to give things up but, instead, encourage them to put alternatives alongside their vices. Trying to get him to eat seeds may not work for some unless you bury them in a pastry.

When marketing reflexology to a man be aware that a man is totally aware of how intimate his feet and hands are, and hence why he is reluctant to offer them for that reason. A lack of trust or connection through intimacy is an overriding bar to treatment.

You must make the treatment come across as more 'clinical' in your literature. Avoid the fluffy lines about feeling transcendent: a man wants to know if the pain in his neck will be lower on the scale after your treatment. Feeling relaxed and rejuvenated comes along as standard anyway.

Think about the different ages of man. Studies consistently show that younger men are spending more of their disposable income than women on improving their physical appearance at the moment. In your

advertising, you can equate this improvement with what goes on on the inside by making direct parallels: “The only way to look really good on the outside is to take care of what is going on on the inside”.

Then say: “This is how you can do it” – give them a checklist of what to do and what can be achieved by better diet, drinking more water, sleeping better and not pushing their bodies too hard. No advertising standard ruling can dispute that the less we punish our bodies the better they will respond for us.

Middle-aged men are aware that their bodies are changing; some things still work, and others are definitely in decline. They need to be reassured that they still have it within their control to make a difference with their health and maintain it at an efficient level for them.

Talk about how they have “all systems running” at this stage in their lives and that reflexology can help maintain this. They have a maturity at this stage to see how important it is to look after themselves.

Older men (and I will leave it to you to work out when that is!) are more interested in achieving peace within themselves. After a lifetime of stress and performance management, they want to know that it is safe for them to hand over the reins to the next generation. This stage of life is faced as another challenge they can undertake without having to be in the centre of the chaos.

You need to promote this in your marketing. Tell older men that reflexology can give them the resources to step up and meet this new challenge, and to help them find peace within themselves. Don’t talk about ‘freedom’ – men don’t want to be removed from the picture, just not so responsible for what happens.

One common thread that runs through all the ages of men is the way they look after their mental health. In Western civilisations, depression and even suicidal tendencies are higher in men of a certain age than women. In fact, studies have shown that 18-25 year old men are the most at risk of taking their own lives, if suitable help and support is not available or provided. The huge amount of pressure placed on them at that age to perform is too much for some.

Expectations on men (and by men on themselves) needs to be examined and placed within a new context. The peace that older men are looking for should be readily available to men of a much younger age. There is a complexity to men’s health that has not been fully explored. As I say in all my promotional material for my Men’s Health course - We are more than just a prostate!

That said, incidences of prostate cancer have soared in recent times and men need to take charge of their prostate health with regular checks. As previously stated, getting a man to be proactive in maintaining good health is definitely a way in to encourage them to try the preventative benefits offered by reflexology.

From a holistic perspective, it is possible to demonstrate to men that their physical health is inextricably linked in with their emotional and mental wellbeing and that by caring for the one you nurture the other.

When a man is a boy, his world is shaped by all the male influences he sees around him, and it is fuelled by an imagination of how women want him to be. A boy’s mother and father play a crucial role in determining whether the man will be autonomous enough to take charge of his health but, ultimately, it is the break with social conditioning that decides whether a man is willing to listen to his instincts and place a greater value on maintaining good health. These are the ones you will get into your treatment rooms on a consistent basis.

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More details on 'Reflexology and Men's Health' and 'Reflexology for the Male Andropause' courses online are available by visiting www.effectivereflexology.com