

## CHAPTER 9

# Techniques for Working with the Stones



### Outline

#### Techniques for Working with Tool Stones

- Using a Pointed Tool Stone
- Using a Concave Tool Stone
- Using a Curved Tool Stone
- Edging
- Compression
- Energetic Stone Vibration
  - Tapping*
  - Clanking*
  - Rubbing*
- Friction
- Pin and Stir
- Snaking the Spine


#### Techniques for Using Stones above the Body

- Gliding
- Heeling

- Circling
- Paws Digging
- Crisscrossing
- Rolling
- Elephant Walking
- Flushing

#### Techniques for Using Stones beneath the Body

- Alternating
- Draping
- Teetering
- Squeeze, Twist, and Slide
- Sandwiching
- Lift and Drag
- Sneaking Under



*"These techniques turn a hot stone practitioner into a hot stone sorcerer."*

*Selina Borquez,  
Student of Three-Dimensional Hot Stone Massage,  
Denver, Colorado*

## Objectives

*After reading this chapter, you should be able to:*

- Compare and contrast techniques for using pointed, concave, and curved tool stones.
- Explain how to use stones to generate vibrations that transmit energy into the client's body.
- Demonstrate several techniques for using stones from above the client's body.
- Demonstrate several techniques for using stones from beneath the client's body.

## Key Terms

**Alternating:** A technique that involves alternating the stone-held hands beneath any part of the body.

**Circling:** A technique that involves the vertical dropping of weight through the heel of the hand to make circles with the stone.

**Clanking:** A technique whereby the edges of placement stones are struck against one another.

**Compression:** A calming technique that utilizes the weight of an additional stone or sand/grain bag, laid on top of the placement stones. Compression can be increased by adding the weight of the hand(s).

**Concave tool stone:** A stone with a concave or indented surface that accommodates the contours of a bony protuberance.

**Crisscrossing:** A technique that is similar to gliding but done in crossing patterns.

**Curved tool stone:** A stone with a curve, either on its side or tip, that is useful for working the various shapes and contours of the body.

**Draping:** A technique that allows the client's body weight to drape or fall over the stone.

*(Continued)*

## Key Terms (Continued)

**Edging:** A technique that opens a muscle by using the edge of a stone to push or “scrape” the muscle fibers into submission.

**Elephant walking:** A technique similar to compression but done with alternating hands that move up and down the body slowly like an elephant’s feet walking.

**Energetic vibration:** Using stones to create a vibration that sends energy deep into the body by means of tapping, clanking, or rubbing together.

**Flushing:** A technique that uses light, sweeping strokes with a large flat stone to soothe and “clean out” an area that has just received deep specific work.

**Friction:** A technique similar to rubbing in which stones are rubbed back and forth against the client’s skin.

**Gliding:** A technique that involves sliding a hot oiled stone along the muscle in a long sweeping motion.

**Heeling:** A technique that utilizes the heel of the hand to increase the depth or specificity of gliding.

**Lift and drag:** A technique that involves lifting a stone against the underside of the body so that it drags rather than glides along the muscle.

**Paws digging:** A technique for softening tissues using stones in a motion similar to that of a dog digging in the sand with its two front paws.

**Pin and stir:** A technique that involves pinning the tip of a stone in place on the belly of a muscle and

moving the limb in a range of motion around the pinned stone.

**Pointed tool stone:** A stone with a pointed tip that is used for working trigger points and very specific areas of tension.

**Rolling:** A simple technique accomplished by rolling a round stone back and forth or up and down the body.

**Rubbing:** A technique accomplished by vigorously rubbing the sides of two stones against each other.

**Sandwiching:** A technique that involves covering a body part with a stone on either side.

**Snaking the spine:** A technique that uses the point of a stone to carve an S-curve down the spine.

**Sneaking under:** A technique that involves bringing a stone beneath the body in a smooth and subtle fashion.

**Squeeze, twist, and slide:** A technique that involves squeezing a stone up from beneath a body part, and then rapidly twisting and sliding it the rest of the way.

**Tapping:** A technique whereby very specific vibration is sent vertically into the body by tapping one stone directly down onto a placement stone.

**Teetering:** A technique that utilizes draping on a very specific part of the body.

This chapter describes specific techniques for handling and using your stones skillfully and effectively. While learning these techniques and incorporating them into your work, be careful that you don’t abandon the principles that ground them. Instead, fuse these techniques to the underlying principles, and you’ll produce a powerful modality for releasing your clients’ most deeply held tensions.

The techniques included in this chapter apply to using the stones as tools, using the stones above the client’s body, and using the stones beneath the client’s body. Each group of techniques is discussed in its own section for easy reference.

## TECHNIQUES FOR WORKING WITH TOOL STONES

The following techniques are meant for use with tool stones. Tool stones are stones with particular sizes and shapes useful for working very specifically on injuries,

muscles spasms, trigger points, small areas of tension, and around bony protuberances. You can also use them to create and deliver specific types of **energetic vibration** (this will be discussed in the Energetic Stone Vibration section).

When you use a stone for a tool, the stone is the only thing that makes contact with your client’s skin—there is no contact from your hand at all. Except for stone placement, this is the only case in which you should use a stone on its own. Otherwise, your hands should always accompany the contact of the stone to the skin.

Tool stones need to be warmer than other working stones for two reasons. As tool stones are used for working on very specific small areas of the body, only a very small portion of the stone makes contact with the skin. Although a stone may feel hot when applied to the body in its entirety, the effect is lessened when only a small portion of it is applied. As a result, the temperature of a tool stone needs to be slightly higher. Additionally, when a tool stone is used for

deep work, its heat helps to alleviate the discomfort of the increased and specific pressure. To ensure that tool stones remain hot throughout their use, replace them with new hot ones more frequently than you do other working stones.

### CAUTION



Remember, a cool stone is a hard stone. Unheated tool stones can also leave residual soreness and even bruising. The more specific and deep the work, the hotter the stone should be.

Because traditional massage tools made of wood or glass are not heated, they can be painful to clients. The beauty of using a stone for a tool is that it can be heated. Its heat not only reduces or eliminates the pain that usually accompanies deep work, but it also prevents residual soreness or bruising.

### Using a Pointed Tool Stone

A **pointed tool stone** is useful for deeply working trigger points and very specific areas of tension. Tips of different shapes serve different purposes. The sharper the point on the tip, the deeper and more specific the penetration will be (Fig. 9-1). A slightly broader point on the tip will widen the area of penetration. When an area of tension or a trigger point is located deep within the client's muscle, it is optimal to use a stone with a sharper point. When an area of tension or a trigger point is not buried quite as deeply in a muscle, or when a client cannot tolerate as much pressure, a slightly broader tip is preferable.

### TIP



In either case, adding the mother hand to the father tool stone will soften the entrance and allow for deeper penetration with less pain.

To use a pointed tool stone, first locate with your fingers or thumb the specific area that requires deep penetration. Once found, place the tip of the stone on the area and drop your weight slightly into the



**Figure 9-1 Using a Pointed Tool Stone.** A sharp point on a stone allows deep and specific penetration. Use the mother-father technique to ease the penetration of the stone.

area, asking the client if you are on the right spot. If the client approves, sink your weight even more into the area while bringing the mother hand in to soften the sensation of the deep penetration. Once you have reached the appropriate and desired depth, move the stone around slightly to break open the trigger point or the contracted fibers of the muscle. After approximately 1 minute of held pressure, lighten up with the stone, allowing blood and oxygen to fill and cleanse the area. Repeat as many times as necessary to offer relief to the client.

### TIP



Sometimes the best course of action is to work a specific point for approximately 5 minutes and then leave the area. Return to work the point again later in the massage. This allows the muscle some recovery time and enables you to go to a deeper level. After working a specific area, use a warm working stone in a broad fashion to soothe and flush the area.



**Figure 9-2 Using a Concave Tool Stone.** The dip in this tool stone allows the therapist to hug the bony protuberance of the elbow.

### Using a Concave Tool Stone

When working over bony protuberances, such as an ankle, knee, elbow, or shoulder, use a **concave tool stone**; that is, a stone with a concave or indented surface that accommodates the contours of the bones (Fig. 9-2). Using the round or flat side of a stone on a bony protuberance is useless, as only a tiny part of the stone's surface will make contact. The concave surface of the stone should be very smooth, and you should be careful to enter with the stone gradually, beginning with the edge before gliding into the full indentation. As soon as it's in place, move the stone in slow, small circles around the ankle, knee, elbow, or shoulder.

### Using a Curved Tool Stone

A **curved tool stone** allows you to match the contours of the client's body. For example, a stone with a slight curve in its end or edge can be useful for gliding along either side of the spine (Fig. 9-3). The curve does not need to be pronounced. Place the curved stone perpendicular to and flat against the spine. Its slight curve will keep the stone from hitting the spinous processes as you glide it down the client's back,



**Figure 9-3 Using a Curved Tool Stone.** With a curved tool stone, you can glide down the client's spine without making contact with the vertebral processes.

making simultaneous contact with both sets of erector spinalis muscles.

A stone with a sharper curve can be used for sharper angles. You can use a sharply curved stone along the spine to massage the more proximal edges of the erector spinalis muscles or to massage the lateral edges of the multifidus muscle. A stone with a broad curve is useful for matching the shape of a curved area of the body like the shoulders, as shown in Figure 9-4.



**Figure 9-4 Matching a Curved Stone to the Body's Curves.** A long curve on the side of a stone allows it to match the angle of the body.



**Figure 9-5 Using a Narrow Edged Tool.** A stone with a very narrow edge is useful for edging.

Sometimes, a pointed stone will also have a curve to its tip, making it useful as a pointed, concave, and curved tool stone.

### Edging

**Edging** is a technique that opens a muscle by using the edge of a stone to push or “scrape” the muscle fibers into submission. A very narrow edge—between 0.125 and 0.25 inch—is required (Fig. 9-5). The 0.125 inch edge is useful for narrow areas and the 0.25 inch edge is best for larger surfaces of the body.

To edge along the spine, locate the laminar groove found just lateral to the transverse processes. Using both hands, place the edge of the stone in the groove, as shown in Figure 9-6. Once in place, drop the edge deeper into the groove and push the muscle away from the spine with a sweeping motion while maintaining the deep pressure. Repeat this motion in a rhythmic fashion up and down the spine.

#### TIP

If the groove is narrow, use the thinner edge. If the client is very sensitive to deep pressure, use the thicker edge.

To edge along large surface areas such as the sides of the back or the thighs, use the edge of the stone to make broad sweeping motions, dropping down and



**Figure 9-6 Edging.** The therapist places the edge of the stone in the spinal groove and uses both hands to rock its edge back and forth as she moves slowly along the spine.

pushing out along or across the muscle fibers. Use a sweeping motion 2 to 4 inches in length before continuing down the muscle. Repeat this motion along the entire surface of the muscle or in particularly tight parts of it.

#### TIP

For edging on these larger surfaces, use a stone with a wider edge.

### Compression

**Compression** is a simple technique that utilizes the weight of an additional stone or sand bag, which is laid on top of the placement stones, as shown in Figures 9-7 and 9-8. Compression can be increased



**Figure 9-7 Compression with a Stone.** Compression can be created by the weight of a stone laid on top of the placement stones.



**Figure 9-8 Compression with a Sand Bag and Hands.** Compression can also be created by the weight of a sand bag. Press on the top of the sand bag to increase the compression.

by adding pressure from your hands. Compression feels safe and grounding to clients who have suffered trauma or have difficulty relaxing during a massage. It is very calming.

Compression can also be done using several stones to create patterns on an area. For instance, if you have four stones in a circle on the belly, you can press on adjacent stones one at a time to make a circle pattern or alternate stones to make a cross pattern. Experiment with other designs and sequences. As long as compression is performed slowly, it will create a peaceful, grounding experience for clients.

### Energetic Stone Vibration

Use stones to transmit a subtle energetic vibration, not unlike sound waves, into the client's body. The sensation this produces invites the client's body to relax on a different level than muscular manipulation. Three techniques for producing energetic vibration are tapping, clanking, and rubbing.

#### Tapping

**Tapping** is a technique whereby very specific vibration is sent vertically into the body by tapping one stone directly down onto a placement stone with a motion similar to a gentle jackhammer (Fig. 9-9). The strength of the impact from the tap is determined by the height from which the stone begins its descent. It is done in a percussive manner, staying on one stone at a time for approximately 25 seconds before moving on to the next stone. You can also tap on just one stone as you move it slowly up and down the spine.



**Figure 9-9 Tapping.** Tapping a stone into other placement stones feels like a gentle jackhammer sending vibrations directly into the body.

#### TIP



Tapping is helpful for releasing deeply held tension in a trigger point or a specific muscle spasm; however, it does make noise. Many clients like the musical sound, but it is not for everyone at every moment. For example, tapping is useful for helping the client “come back” at the end of a massage. In contrast, in the middle of a massage, if your client is in a deep state of relaxation, it may be too jarring. If you feel the vibration will be beneficial to the client but the sound will be too jarring, you can always place a small washcloth over the top of the stone before you tap.

#### Clanking

**Clanking** is a technique whereby the edges of placement stones are struck against one another. This can be done with just two stones at a time, for a very specific effect, or in a group or line of stones for a broader effect. For clanking to be effective, the height and shape of the stones need to match, and you should situate them so that there is no space between them. If the stones do not match in height or shape or if there is too much space between them, as shown in Figure 9-10, they will not make contact when you try to strike them against one another and the technique will fail.

To clank two stones together, simply take two adjacent same-sized stones and bring the sides of them apart and together, striking them against each other. This will create a vibration into the area directly beneath the two stones.



**Figure 9-10 Improper Height of Stones for Clanking.** Stones used for clanking must be about the same height or they will miss each other. This photo shows a line up with unmatched stones. You can see how the stones would miss each other or tumble over each other when being clanked.

For a broader effect, you can clank a group or a line of stones against one another at the same time. To do this, place your hands at either end of the line of stones. Pressing down, push the stones slightly towards one another (Fig. 9-11), then quickly pull your hands apart, stretching the stones away from one another, and then let the stones fall back together, clanking against each other. Repeat this action rhythmically, using an accordion motion. An alternative approach is to stand at the client’s head and gently push on the shoulders rhythmically, letting their rocking motion produce the clanking of the line of stones. When the proper rhythm is found, the stones create a wavelike motion when they clank. This sends a tingling vibration along the client’s spine that is simulta-



**Figure 9-11 Clanking.** To clank a line of stones, place your hands at either end of the stones and pull the stones apart. Then, release your hands and let the stones drop back against each other in a rhythmical fashion. Notice that the height of the stones is about equal for optimal contact.




**Figure 9-12 Rubbing.** Vigorously rubbing two stones against each another sends vibration and heat directly into client’s body.

neously invigorating and relaxing. As with tapping, you’ll need to judge whether the sound of clanking will be too jarring for the client and use the technique only when it feels appropriate.

**Rubbing**

In the **rubbing** technique, the sides of two stones are vigorously scrubbed against each other. As with clanking, the two stones need to be the same size and height for optimal surface contact. Place the stones flat on the body right next to each other and simply rub them back and forth together to create friction (Fig. 9-12). When the stones are rubbed at the appropriate speed and for the proper length of time, they will smell like burnt caps or phosphorous. The friction of rubbing creates vibration and heat, which are transmitted directly to the body tissues beneath the stones.

**CAUTION** 

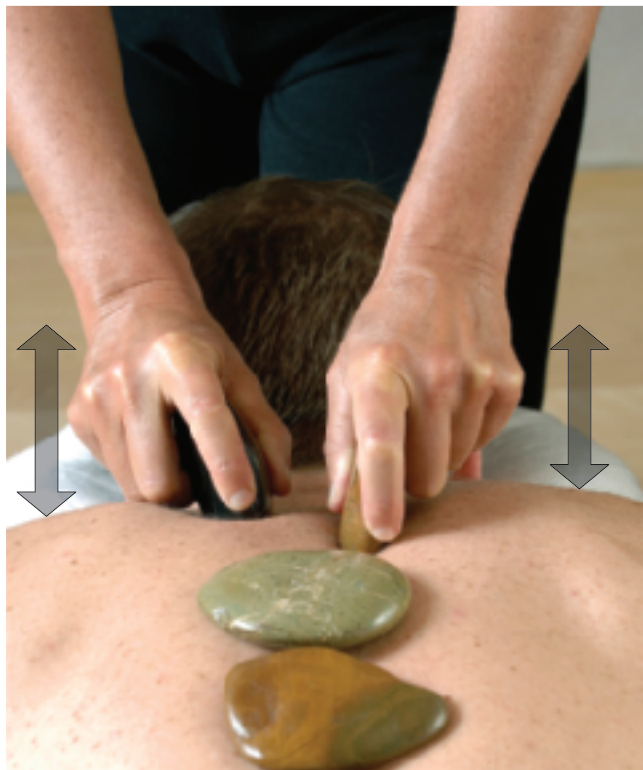
Be careful not to pinch the client’s skin between the two rubbing stones.



## Friction

**Friction** is similar to rubbing, but rather than scrubbing the stones against each other, you scrub them back and forth against the client's skin. Just like friction with your hands, friction from stones helps to increase circulation and break up dense, contracted tissue.

To perform friction, place the edges (stones are on their sides) of two stones against the client's body about 2 inches apart from each other. Be sure your thumbs are on the inside of the stones with your index fingers on the top edge and the rest of your fingers curled on the outside to frame and stabilize the stones, as shown in Figure 9-13. Once you are in this position, drop the stones vertically into the body and, alternating hands, create quick, up-and-down motions approximately 1 to 2 inches long. This motion creates the friction. Use the amount of depth and speed desired by your client. Stay in one place for 10 seconds and then move about 1 inch up or down the body and repeat. Remember to stop using the stones when they are no longer hot.



**Figure 9-13 Friction.** Making quick, firm back and forth motions with the stones against the skin creates friction that releases deep tension in the muscles.



**Figure 9-14 Pin and Stir.** After the tip of the stone is pinned in place, lift the limb and begin the “stirring” motion.

## Pin and Stir

**Pin and stir** is a technique that involves pinning the tip of a stone in place on the belly of a muscle and moving the limb around the pinned stone. This serves to open the muscle from the inside out. Some examples of this are pinning the buttocks and stirring with the leg, pinning the neck and stirring with the head, or pinning the biceps and stirring with the forearm.

To perform this technique on the buttocks, first find an area of tension in the belly of the gluteus maximus muscle with your hand. Using a pointed stone with a broad tip, place the tip on that spot. Gently press down with the stone tip to be sure you are in the right place. After the client affirms your location, press the stone in a bit deeper and hold in place while you raise the client's foot, as shown in Figure 9-14. Rotate (or “stir”) the raised foot in slow circles around the pinned stone. You can circle the foot in both directions or go back and forth in place.

### TIP

Improvise your stirring motion based on what is needed to release the tension in the area beneath



the stone. After approximately 1 minute, or when the muscle feels as if it has released, move to another spot in the same proximity. Work as many areas as required, conferring with the client. After you have completed an area with the “pin and stir” technique, use broad strokes to soothe and flush out the area.

### Snaking the Spine

In the technique I call **snaking the spine**, you use the point of a stone to carve an S-curve down the spine. The shape you make is similar to that made by a skier going down a slalom course. Begin by placing the tip of your pointed tool stone on either side of the client’s spine. Now, slowly “snake” it in and out of each vertebra, back and forth along the spine, as shown in Figure 9-15. Do this motion up and down the spine. It is very liberating for the spaces between the vertebrae and to encourage circulation of the cerebrospinal fluid.



**Figure 9-15 Snaking the Spine.** Snake the stone down the spine in and out of each vertebra as you would ski down a slalom course on a ski slope.

### CAUTION



Be careful not to hit the spinous processes along the way, as this would be painful for the client. Also, make sure that the tip of the stone is sufficiently heated.

## TECHNIQUES FOR USING STONES ABOVE THE BODY

Although three-dimensional hot stone massage emphasizes the use of hands on both sides of the body, certain techniques are done on the topside of the body only, in both the supine and prone positions. The following stone techniques are meant for performing above the body, rather than below.

### Gliding

**Gliding** is simply sliding the hot oiled stone along the muscle in a long, sweeping motion. It is akin to an effleurage stroke but done with a stone. Gliding is the most common and basic stone technique. It is generally performed across an entire limb or body part, but you can also restrict it to smaller areas. Gliding is an excellent technique to use for your first and last stroke on each body part.

It is critical when gliding to make sure your fingers contact the client’s skin along with the stone, as shown in Figure 9-16. Proper stone entrance is also imperative when gliding because it is a technique that is used so



**Figure 9-16 Gliding.** Gliding is the most basic technique for sliding the stone in long broad strokes up and down the body. Be sure to make contact with the fingers and the stone as you glide along the skin.



**Figure 9-17 Heeling.** Heeling is similar to gliding but done with more direct pressure from the heel of the hand.

frequently throughout the massage; thus, the quality of entrance will make the difference between a relaxing and a jarring massage. The amount of pressure you use in a glide should reflect the preference of your client.

### Heeling

**Heeling** is a deeper, slower, more specific variation of gliding. Rather than simply gliding the stone along the limb or body part, you drop your weight vertically into the client with the heel of your hand, as shown in Figure 9-17, and then push the stone along.

Even though the focus of heeling is the stone just below the heel of your hand, it is still important to make contact with the rest of your hand as well. Use heeling in just a section of the limb or body part rather than throughout the entire limb. It is great for opening the tissue on a deeper level and is a nice technique to follow gliding.

#### CAUTION



Because heeling involves deeper pressure than gliding does, it is important to pay careful attention to each area of the client's limb when using this technique, as various parts of the tissue may have a different tolerance for pressure. Adjust your pressure accordingly.

### Circling

**Circling** is dropping your weight vertically through your hand and then making circles with the stone. Circle slowly, going up and out a few inches, moving across the top of the circle, and coming back down to where you started, as shown in Figure 9-18. Make a few circles in the same area and then slide up the



**Figure 9-18 Circling.** With weight dropped vertically, make slow circles with the stone.

body a few inches and make more circles. Try circling following heeling to help eliminate tension in a wider area.

### Paws Digging

**Paws digging** is a technique for softening tissues. It resembles the action of a dog digging in the sand with its two front paws. Use the same motion, hand after hand, and dig away with the stones (Fig. 9-19). Make



**Figure 9-19 Paws Digging.** With this technique, you move your hands up and down like a dog's paws digging in the sand.



**Figure 9-20 Crisscrossing.** Begin with stone-filled hands that are crossed, then uncross, cross, and uncross them again up and down the back or legs.

only a minimal amount of finger contact with the body during this technique.

Paws digging is great for freeing up tense areas in the back, especially in the muscular areas of the upper thoracic region. You can also use it on the neck, lower back, buttocks, side of the torso, and either side of the thigh. It is difficult to do in more petite, less muscular areas of the body. Use paws digging wherever it feels good to your clients, using the depth and speed they desire.

### Crisscrossing

**Crisscrossing** is similar to gliding, but is done in crossing patterns. Begin with stone-filled hands that are crossed, as shown in Figure 9-20, then uncross, cross, and uncross them again as you move up and down the client's back or legs. You can make different shapes with your hands, such as a figure-of-eight or an X shape, and vary your speed and depth.

### Rolling

**Rolling** is as simple as it sounds. You just roll the stone back and forth or up and down the client's body. For



**Figure 9-21 Rolling.** Place a round stone in the center of your palm and slowly roll it back and forth in place or up and down the length of an area.

this technique to be successful, however, you need to use a very round stone. I have a few round stones that I reserve specifically for this purpose. Place the round stone in the center of your palm and slowly roll it back and forth in place or roll it up and down the length of an area of the body. Rolling can be done with one hand on top of the round stone, as shown in Figure 9-21, with two hands on top of the stone, or with one hand on either side of the stone. It is a useful technique for breaking up tension in a very calming way.

### Elephant Walking

**Elephant walking** is like compression with movement. Using medium to large stones in each hand, alternately press the stones into either side of your client's back, as shown in Figure 9-22, or down the backside of both legs. As you press the stones, drop



**Figure 9-22 Elephant Walking.** With medium to large stones in each hand, alternate pressing the stones up and down the length of the client's back or legs slowly, like an elephant walking.

your weight into the client's body, imagining your hands are the feet of an elephant. Walk the stones up and down the length of the body part slowly and rhythmically. As simple as it appears, this technique has a profoundly releasing effect.

## Flushing

**Flushing** is a technique that uses light, sweeping strokes with a large flat stone to soothe and “clean out” an area that has just received deep specific work. Use it to increase circulation to a large area, bringing fresh blood and oxygen to flush out toxins that your deep work released. It feels great to the client and also serves as a wonderful way to close a massage.

To flush an area, use a very large placement stone to cover as much surface area as possible. If the stone you choose is too large for your hands to embrace, you can still make hand contact with the client's body along the edges of the stone. Incidentally, you can also do a more limited version of flushing on smaller areas with smaller stones.

To flush the back, first make long sweeping strokes with your large, flat stone up and down the spine (Fig. 9-23). After going up and down the spine a few times,



**Figure 9-23 Flushing.** Using a large, flat placement stone, make long sweeping strokes fairly quickly along the entire length of the back. Move the stone sideways as well.

you can then twirl the stone slowly along the back. After twirling, you can make long flushing strokes across the back to either side. End the flushing with a few more long vertical strokes along the spine.

## CAUTION



If your client's spinous processes stick out, it is advisable to avoid going over the spine and instead flush up and down either side of the spinal column, using a stone of a lesser circumference. Use your judgment and explore gently.

## TECHNIQUES FOR USING STONES BENEATH THE BODY

The following stone techniques are performed from beneath the body or from both sides of the body at once. They thereby contribute to the three-dimensional nature of the massage and bring it to a deeper level than you could achieve using the “above the body” techniques alone.

### Alternating

**Alternating** is a technique that involves alternating your stone-held hands beneath a body part. It can be done on any part of the body. Alternating creates, for the client, a continuous sensation of stones being dragged across the body part from beneath. This flowing warmth is deeply soothing.

The technique for alternating beneath the client's shoulders, back, arms, or legs is straightforward: Simply alternate the hands, holding a stone in each, to achieve a continuous flow of strokes.

When alternating on the neck, in addition to alternating your hands, you must hold the weight of the client's head. This makes the technique a bit trickier. As shown in Figure 9-24, as one hand drags the stone across the back of the client's neck, your other hand, in addition to holding a stone, holds the client's head. At the end of each stroke, slide your working hand up to the top of the neck and switch places with the holding hand. Continue alternating your hands across the neck from below in a slow, rhythmical fashion. If it is difficult for you to hold the head up with your hand, you can rest the top of the client's head against your abdomen to support it while you alternate hands back and forth across either side of the neck. When you cross the



**Figure 9-24 Alternating.** With a medium-sized stone in each hand, alternate hand over hand making sweeping strokes up and across the neck.

spinal column, lighten up with the stones so that you do not hurt the spinous processes of the vertebrae.

### Draping

**Draping** (not to be confused with draping the sheet) is a technique for allowing the client's body weight to drape over the stone. It is both more effective and more soothing to the client than attaining the same deep pressure by means of pushing the stone into the body. To drape, simply lift the part of the body you wish to penetrate with the stone and place the stone beneath it. Then, slowly allow the weight of the body part to fall over the stone. For instance, when draping the neck, lift the client's head with one hand, place the stone on the outside of the neck with the other, and then allow the head to fall toward and over the stone as you gently lift your stone-filled hand up and glide it across the gravitational pull of the neck (Fig. 9-25). To drape the low back, bring client's knees up and then roll them away from you, exposing the client's low back. Place a stone-filled hand beneath the low back, and then slowly lower the body back over the stone-held hand. Use the weight of the torso to gain the depth needed for the stone's penetration. This method allows the stone's heat to penetrate deeply without causing pain or discomfort to the client. It is also easier on your arms and hands. Explore draping with every part of the body.

### Teetering

**Teetering** is a technique that adds movement to the stone that is being draped. To do it, first place a stone



**Figure 9-25 Draping.** Allow the client's neck, limb, shoulder, or other body part to fall over your stone-filled hand.

beneath a body part in a way that maintains some space around it and will allow you to create movement with the stone. Once in place, flip the stone back and forth in a slow rhythmical fashion.

For example, when performing teetering on the rhomboids, locate the area just inside the medial border of the scapula and place the stone with its long edge against this area. It is best to use an oblong stone with 0.25 inch edge for the most comfortable and effective teetering. Position the stone at the base of your fingers and grasp it between your thumb and finger pads (Fig. 9-26). After the stone is in its proper position, keep it planted against the body and wiggle it back and forth in place, as if the body part is teetering on top of the stone. This motion is very effective in opening the muscles and releasing deep tension from the area.



**Figure 9-26 Teetering.** When teetering the stone beneath the shoulder, make sure the stone is completely on its side, or the technique will be painful for both you and your client.

**CAUTION**

It is critical that you hold the stone completely upright in the side position, as shown in Figure 9-26, to achieve the teetering effect. If you're not holding the stone completely upright, you will not create an effective teetering motion and you might hurt your hand attempting to produce it. When the stone is held completely upright, the teetering motion is easy to do and feels great to both you and your client.

### Squeeze, Twist, and Slide

**Squeeze, twist, and slide** involves squeezing a stone up from beneath a body part and then rapidly twisting and sliding it the rest of the way. The technique feels particularly good on the upper trapezius muscles, but you can perform it in other areas of the body as well. On the trapezius, slide a stone beneath the upper trapezius and then squeeze it between your thumb and the client's body. As you squeeze the stone against the body, pull it toward you, allowing it to twist and then flip to its other side, as shown in Figure 9-27. After the stone has twisted and flipped to its other side, slide the stone up the length of the neck. Repeat this technique on the upper trapezius and neck several times. The twisting and flipping of the stone puts momentary deep pressure into the trapezius, just before it slides off. The combination of deep pressure followed immediately by the fluid slide serves to relieve long-held tension in a luxurious way.



**Figure 9-27 Squeeze, Twist and Slide.** As you squeeze the stone up against the traps, pull it towards you and allow it to twist and then flip to the other side. End by sliding the stone up the length of the neck, then repeat.



**Figure 9-28 Sandwiching.** Using stones on both sides of the body at the same time allows the body to feel completely met. This technique can be done on practically every part of the body except the head.

### Sandwiching

**Sandwiching** is an easy technique that uses stones on both sides of the body at once to envelop the body in warmth, as shown in Figure 9-28. You can use it on most any part of the body except the face. Rather than stopping to place two stones on the body before beginning to massage, work with one stone at first and then seamlessly add the second stone while continuing to massage. You can use the stones in a similar fashion and direction or move them in opposite directions from each other. As long as you move the two stones with awareness of their relationship, the precise direction in which you work them does not matter. Sandwiching the stones like this doubles their effect and helps to dissolve tension twice as fast.

### Lift and Drag

**Lift and drag** is a technique that involves lifting a stone against the underside of the body so that it drags rather than glides along the muscle. This simple technique can be done anywhere you are able to reach beneath the body with a stone. As you move the stone along the underside of the body, lift the stone to create tension so that it slowly drags against the client's muscle (Fig. 9-29). This deepens the tissue-softening effect of the stone beyond what you can achieve with gliding.

### Sneaking Under

If you stop the massage to pick up a stone, it breaks the flow and lets the client know that another stone



**Figure 9-29 Lift and Drag.** Lift the stone up into the posterior thigh and then drag it slowly across the hamstrings. You can also use this technique on many other parts of the body.

is coming. Instead, use the **sneaking under** technique to pick up a second stone while you are massaging with another stone on top of the client's body. Slide this second stone beneath the body midstroke. With sneaking under, entry of the stone is so smooth and subtle that the client is not aware of where it came from. It seems to appear out of nowhere.

When entering from beneath the body, it is important to enter with the stone where there is a natural space such as the joint areas, like the lumbar region, the back of the neck, or the knees. You can also rotate



**Figure 9-30 Sneaking Under.** Pushing back and down lightly on the shoulder creates a slight opening for easy entrance under the shoulder. This allows you to sneak the stone in with no effort.

or push on a body part, such as the shoulder, in a way that creates a slight opening beneath the body, as shown in Figure 9-30. Another trick for easy stone entrance from below is to strategically place your stones on the massage table so that they are there waiting for you when you need them. So, for instance, you would leave a stone on the table near the top of the client's shoulder so that when you reach under the armpit and beneath the shoulder, you can grab the stone with your hand from below and simply slide it beneath the shoulder on your down stroke.

Sneak in with a stone whenever you can. This technique adds to the seamless, flowing quality characteristic of three-dimensional hot stone massage.

## SUMMARY

There are techniques for working with tool stones, using stones above the body, and using stones beneath the body. Each has its own purpose and effect.

The three types of tool stones are: pointed, concave, and curved. Techniques for working with tool stones include edging, compression, friction, pin and stir, and snaking the spine. Energetic vibrations can be produced by using these techniques: tapping, clanking, and rubbing. Because only a part of the tool stone is felt against the client's body, its temperature must be higher than it would be if the whole stone were being used. A tool stone that is not hot enough will cause discomfort to the client.

Techniques for using stones above the body include gliding, heeling, circling, paws digging, crisscrossing, rolling, elephant walking, and flushing. If these techniques were the only ones used, the massage would feel flat; adding the techniques for using stones beneath the body produces a three-dimensional massage.

Techniques for using stones beneath the body include alternating; draping; teetering; squeeze, twist, and slide; sandwiching; lift and drag; and sneaking under. These techniques allow you to use the client's weight for depth, which not only feels wonderful to the client but also requires less strength than working from above. These techniques promote the feeling of a three-dimensional massage.

When incorporating the techniques for using stones into your massage practice, remember to ground them in the principles discussed in Chapter 8. The combination of principles and techniques will prepare you for effectively performing the three-dimensional strokes that you will learn in the next and final chapter.



**REVIEW QUESTIONS****TRUE/FALSE**

1. When you are using a tool stone, your hands do not contact the client's body, but just hold the upper part of the stone.

Circle:        True                    False

2. A concaved stone is used to work the concaved areas of the body.

Circle:        True                    False

3. Edging is a technique that requires a stone with a narrow edge ranging from 0.25 to 1 inch thick.

Circle:        True                    False

4. Tapping, clanking, and rubbing are ways to create energetic vibrations with the stones.

Circle:        True                    False

5. Friction differs from rubbing in that with friction, the stones are rubbed against one another, and with rubbing, the stones are rubbed against the client's body.

Circle:        True                    False

**MULTIPLE CHOICE**

6. When an area of tension is deep, it is best to use a pointed tool stone with a:
- Broad, wide tip
  - Sharp, narrow tip
  - Flat tip
  - Narrow edge
  - Curved tip
7. The following technique is performed above the body:
- Snaking the spine
  - Alternating
  - Crisscrossing
  - Draping
  - Both a and c
8. The following technique is performed from below the body:
- Gliding
  - Tapping
  - Elephant walking
  - Lift and drag
  - Flushing

9. Sneaking in involves:
- Entering the massage room without the client knowing it
  - Entering with slow speed
  - Leaving a working stone on top of the body as a placement stone
  - Using your pile system well
  - Entering with a stone beneath the body invisibly
10. Techniques need to be grounded in:
- A particular order
  - The geology of the stones
  - The underlying principles
  - The proper use of oil
  - None of the above

**SHORT ANSWER**

11. A technique of continually changing the stone-held hands that are beneath the client's body is called \_\_\_\_\_.
12. The technique called \_\_\_\_\_ adds stone movement to the more fundamental technique of draping.
13. Introducing the stones that will be used below the body in a seamless way so that they seem to appear out of nowhere, is called \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Adding the \_\_\_\_\_ hand to the pointed tool stone softens the entrance.
15. The technique called \_\_\_\_\_ requires you to use stones of the same height and shape.

**MATCHING**

- |                 |            |             |
|-----------------|------------|-------------|
| a. Paws digging | c. Heeling | e. Flushing |
| b. Pin and stir | d. Gliding |             |
16. A technique done with a tool stone.
17. Pushing with the heel of the hand.
18. A technique similar to something a dog does.
19. Cleans out toxins after doing deep specific work.
20. One of the most common techniques used in hot stone massage.

*Answers to Review Questions can be found in Appendix D.*

