

PUSH It

Another form of massage therapy

By Darrin Eisman

When Marcia “Moe” Skaro suffered a life-threatening ski accident several years ago, the doctors were able to put her back together again, but they couldn’t relieve the chronic pain she continued to suffer as a result of the accident.

By chance, she discovered PUSH Therapy, and was amazed at the relief that she felt after just a few sessions.

So it shouldn’t be surprising that this former Olympian and member of the U.S. Ski Team would become a PUSH therapist herself.

PUSH is a form of bodywork that many runners and triathletes are discovering at events around Colorado. Local PUSH therapists have been busy setting up tents and spreading the word—via their hands, arms and elbows—about this relatively new muscle therapy that is less invasive than traditional deep-tissue massage.

PUSH stands for Power Under Soft Hands, and unlike your standard massage, the therapist rarely uses her hands. Instead, the forearm and elbow do most of the work.

Also, unlike massage, the pressure is applied across the muscle fibers rather than with them. According to the theory of PUSH founder Michael Takatsuno, this does a better job of releasing constricted muscle fibers, which in turn increases blood flow to the muscle.

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I visited Skaro at her office on Pearl Street in Boulder to learn just what PUSH could do for runners. Skaro is one of 25 to 30 practicing PUSH therapists along the Colorado Front Range, and she was part of Colorado’s first PUSH class several years ago. In addition to working as a PUSH therapist, she also travels around the country providing instruction on the method.

As I walked in the door to Skaro’s office, I noticed that she was busy analyzing my gait and posture. After a brief introduction, she continued the analysis as she asked me what types of problems I was experiencing. Then she came up with a plan and asked me to jump up on the table.

Unlike massage, PUSH therapy is done fully clothed. I was instructed before my visit to wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing so I arrived in shorts and a T-shirt. Also, unlike massage, no oils are used.

My session was typical of a first PUSH visit. It lasted 90 minutes and included work primarily on my legs and feet. Skaro explained that a session generally focuses on one portion of the body—upper, lower or core. Since I was interested in learning the type of treatment performed for problems with my scrawny runner’s legs, Skaro focused on the lower area.

The differences between PUSH and the hundred other massages I have

● **Hands-on manipulation for healing is probably older than any other healing tradition. The oldest written records of massage go back three thousand years to China.**



PUSH therapists have been setting up at various running and triathlon events around Colorado to introduce athletes to the benefit of this relatively new, less-invasive type of massage therapy.

had was in the way the therapist approaches the muscles. While a deep-tissue massage involves finding problem spots and digging away at them—which I have found moderate success with in the past—the PUSH therapist works the length of the muscle, from one attachment site to the other, and back again, using the broader area of her forearm and, on occasion, elbow.

I won’t lie. At times it can get uncomfortable, but it was never an excruciating pain. Skaro explained that one of the philosophies of PUSH is that it only goes as deep as the tissue allows.

Skaro began her work on my right side, and once she was through, she instructed me to get off the table and walk around prior to having the left side worked on. It certainly felt strange—like my weight was spread more evenly over my right foot and not so on my left.

I also had the chance to look in the mirror, and my right shoulder was hanging noticeably lower than my left. Skaro explained that when the body is totally relaxed, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles should line up and you should feel like your body is hanging—similar to a suit on a coat hanger.

My right side was certainly relaxed from the waist down, and it showed in the mirror.

Work on the left side was similar to the right. Skaro located a few adhesions where the muscle fibers were stuck together, and she managed to work them out which she explained will allow the muscle to fire more efficiently as a single unit, thus improving my running. She also explained during our session that many injuries are caused by muscle tension—including IT band problems, plantar fasciitis, and many knee problems. These can be improved and even eliminated through PUSH Therapy.

When I stepped off the table, I felt good, but the session wasn’t over. Skaro worked with me on improving my posture and recommended some exercises I could do at home.

She typically recommends three PUSH treatments to start, with the first running 90 minutes; additional sessions are in the 60-75 minute range. Once she becomes familiar with your body, she will teach you ways you can work on yourself. “My goal is to teach you how to take care of yourself, so you don’t need to see a therapist so often,” she explains.

For more information on PUSH Therapy, visit www.pushtherapy.com. Click “Contact Us” on the site to find a therapist near you.