

## The Relationship Between Reflexology and Massage

Since, in Florida, the Department of Health’s Board of Massage Therapy regulates reflexology, it is easy to think of reflexology as a form of massage – when it really isn’t.

Just like Reiki, Polarity and Shiatsu, which also fall under the broad umbrella of massage, reflexology has its own

- \* body of knowledge
- \* scope of practice
- \* history
- \* terminology
- \* hands-on techniques
- \* intent
- \* educational standard
- \* national certification (since 1992) and
- \* research studies.

Reflexology is not a subset of massage. Like massage therapy, it is a somatic practice; a discipline of bodywork.

Reflexology and massage share both similarities and differences. The chart below – in very broad terms – describes the primary differences and similarities in very simple terms. There are, of course, overlaps in their effects on the body.

PRIMARY:	REFLEXOLOGY	MASSAGE
<b>Intent</b>	Relaxation; support system function; help body achieve homeostasis.	Relaxation; reduce pain in musculoskeletal system; realign structure.
<b>Focus</b>	Reflexes. Physiologically focused (function).	Muscles, fascia, tendons, ligaments. Anatomically focused (structure).
<b>Application</b>	To reflexes on feet, hands and outer ears. Only bare hands or feet required.	Techniques applied to entire body or areas of complaint. Clothes usually removed.
<b>Techniques</b>	Small muscle movements of the hands and fingers unique to reflexology, such as thumb-walking, rotating-on-a-point, press & roll.	Large muscle movements of hands, forearms, elbows and/or feet to perform specific techniques to work particular areas of soft tissue. Small muscles movements may be used.
<b>Directly Addresses</b>	All body systems.	Musculoskeletal system.