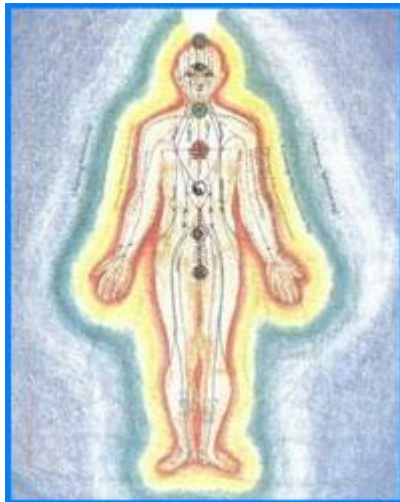




Thai Massage And Traditional Sen Lines

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Energy lines

Thai Massage is known for its work on energy lines, called *Sen lines* in Thailand, and for its many stretches that often resemble yoga moves.

Most Asian bodywork is based on the concept that there is a **system of energy lines** in the body. If they are blocked, health problems develop.

Unblocking this energy flow results in improved health. In Thailand this energy is called *Sen*, in China *Chi*, in Japan *Ki*, and in India *prana*.

There are various ways of moving energy through those channels:

- **Acupuncture** uses needles on specific points along the lines (these are not identical with the Thai Massage Sen lines)
- **Acupressure** uses finger pressure on specific points and lines
- **Qigong and Tai Chi** use gentle movements combined with breath
- **Yoga** uses a variety of methods to open the energy. The best known in the western world are yoga asanas or postures.
- **Thai Massage** uses pressure along the Sen lines



Acupuncture



Tai Chi

I have studied Thai Massage in several schools in Thailand, and in all of them we were taught to work those energy lines extensively.



Thumbing Thai Massage Sen lines



Yoga asanas

However it did not take me long to notice that in actual practice not many therapists work as much on the Sen lines. I receive regular massage sessions, and Sen line work according to text book fashion is rarely done. Why is that?

Since I have been practicing and teaching Thai Massage for many years, it has become quite obvious to me what the reasons are.

1. Sen line work in Thai Massage is always applied with thumbs

There are six major lines on the legs, six major lines on the arms, and four major lines on the back, along with several lines on both feet and hands. In order to effectively work them, a good amount of **pressure** is needed.



If every therapist would work all those lines every day on all their clients, they could count the days until they would burn out their thumbs and their career right along with it.

Especially working on large and muscular people can strain thumbs considerably.

Therefore most therapists wisely use alternative methods like palms, forearms or elbows. This does not allow the precision approach that can be done with the thumbs, but it will preserve the career of the therapist, which is clearly the most important consideration.

Some therapists have very strong thumbs and they are able to use them a lot while others are simply physically not able to using them as much.


Without any doubt the **preservation of the massage therapist's health** is more important than following a traditional system of therapy through thumb pressure.

Rather than seeing this as a drawback, it is actually one of the greatest strengths of **Thai Massage** that the therapist has a choice to work with many body parts including thumbs, palms, forearms, elbows, knees and feet.

2. There is no agreement among the major Thai Massage schools about the exact location of the Sen lines.

Sen line work is not about finding a specific point on an anatomical chart, pressing it, and expecting some magic to happen.

Energy line work in Thai Massage is more of an art than a science. It requires a refined sense of touch, a well-developed intuition along with the theoretical knowledge base.



Thai Massage Sen lines are not static fixed anatomical features. They require feeling, intuition, experience and mindfulness.

The reason why the lines are not easy to locate is that they are not actually physical lines. In addition **energy lines can move**. They are not frozen in fixed locations.

You trace them along the physical body, but the lines themselves are not actually in the anatomical structure. Few therapists in Thailand are capable of working on the Sen lines with a high degree of accuracy and therapeutic success.

3. Working the Sen lines with the thumbs can feel uncomfortable or even painful to the client

Thumbing all the sen lines is not the most suitable method for a relaxing massage. They are best suited for therapeutic applications.

Thai Massage is a very versatile system and can be done in various ways - in a therapeutic mode, in a relaxing mode, or in a yoga-like high intensity stretch mode, or of course any combination of them.

Although Sen line therapy is an important part of Thai Massage, in actual practice it is not done every time.

Here is my solution for the Sen line therapy. It all started with a problem that turned into an opportunity. Early on in my Thai Massage career I followed the traditional method of lots of Sen line thumb work.

After a few months I developed a serious inflammation in my thumb joint that took over a year to heal. This was my inspiration to develop massage methods that **focus first on preserving the therapist's health.**

Thai Massage and rocking techniques

In my experience it is possible to activate internal energy and stimulate it without using the traditional Thai Massage thumbing techniques.

Instead I use **motion techniques** like circling and rocking which are highly effective for activating energy flow. They are much easier on the therapist and more pleasant for the client.

My main opening technique for a Thai Massage session is something I call "**Chi Machine.**" This is a highly effective method to stimulate energy. It generates a delightful feeling of warmth and tingling throughout the client's body.

Since my personal experience with joint trouble I decided to make sure that I would never teach my students any massage method, no matter how traditional it may be, that has the potential to cause harm to their hands, wrists or thumbs.

Instead I focus on alternative methods like [rocking techniques](#). Thai Massage does not have to be a static process that requires you to use traditional methods exclusively.

There is an **evolution in massage techniques**, and there are many adaptations and improvements that can be made.

Even here in Thailand some of the best known and most effective Thai Massage teachers have all developed their own styles and their own techniques.

Thai Massage evolution through alternative techniques

Most dedicated long term massage therapists will eventually develop their own style. *Thai Massage* lends itself very well to such an evolution since it offers an incredible amount of techniques along with many body parts to do them with.

I realize that there will be some traditionalists who will not share my opinion on this subject. But there is no need for all of us to agree on everything. The world is getting richer with more massage styles, techniques, adaptations and skills.

My choice has been to not focus on the traditional Thai Massage Sen line thumbing method. Instead I have chosen alternative methods of moving energy that have worked very well for me and my students.

These methods have proven highly effective, and, based on my experience, they are the best choice for the health and longevity of the therapists.



The author, Shama Kern, has been practicing and teaching Thai Massage for 16 years. He is the founder and director of [Thai Healing Massage Academy](#) and the creator of 20 online [Thai Massage video training courses](#).



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