

Acupressure & Reflexology FOR **DUMMIES®**

by Synthia Andrews and Bobbi Dempsey



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***Acupressure &
Reflexology***

FOR

DUMMIES®

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Dedication

Synthia would like to dedicate this book to her mother, Susan Ramsby, who “taught us the truly important things in life and who has facilitated and supported every part of my path.”

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Introduction

Face it: Life is stressful. Just going through your normal daily routine can often leave you frazzled and out of balance. And, if you're like most people, you also have to cope with your share of aches and pains, ranging from those mild-yet-irritating annoyances to the big-time, all-consuming pains.

Wouldn't it be great if you could wave a magic wand to restore balance and harmony to your life and to help alleviate some of those aches and pains?

Well, in a way, you can. Only instead of a magic wand, you use your own two hands (or someone else's). That's all it takes to unleash the healing power you have inside you — power that you can put to good use through the techniques of acupressure and reflexology.

About This Book

Because acupressure and reflexology are rooted in ancient oriental healing arts, they can seem mysterious and intimidating to understand. That's where this book comes in. We tell you everything you need to know about these bodywork techniques, from start to finish. We begin by explaining exactly what acupressure and reflexology are, and how they came to be. After a short history lesson (very brief, we promise), we get into the real “meat” of the book — showing you exactly how these techniques can improve your quality of life and alleviate some of your pain.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help you navigate easily through this book, we set up a few conventions that we use consistently throughout the book:

- ✓ Anytime we want to highlight new words or terms that we define in the text, we *italicize* them.
- ✓ **Boldfaced** text is used to indicate the action part of numbered steps and the keywords of a bulleted list.
- ✓ We use monofont for Web sites and e-mail addresses.

- ✔ In the illustrations and healing routines, we use abbreviations for the acupoints for simplicity's sake — we provide the full names of the points and their accompanying meridians (see Chapter 1 for a definition) in the accompanying tables.
- ✔ Every acupoint has many functions, and different routines use the same points for different reasons. We list only the functions that we're focusing on in a specific routine, so you see different functions for the same point in different routines.
- ✔ Because acupressure was developed in Japan from Chinese acupuncture theories and practices, the terms used to describe these two very similar practices are often different, which can cause some confusion. In this book, we use the Japanese terms. We do, however, provide the Chinese names as well in cases where the Chinese terms are more common.
- ✔ Some meridians have multiple names. In this book, we use the meridian names we like best.
- ✔ Most acupoints have many different names. We used the most common names in this book, but you may see many variations in other literature.
- ✔ The meridian illustrations throughout this book are renditions and aren't meant to be taken as exact maps. For precise detail, refer to acupuncture textbooks.
- ✔ The bladder meridian (see Chapter 3) has two different numbering systems. In this book, we use the system that numbers the inside line and then the outside line before heading down the leg. (Traditional Chinese Medicine, from which acupuncture stems, typically uses the alternate numbering system.)

When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If you come across these instances, rest assured that we haven't put in any extra characters (such as a hyphen) to indicate the break. So, when typing one of these Web addresses in a Web browser, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending as if the line break doesn't exist.

Foolish Assumptions

Although we normally don't like to make assumptions, we made an exception in this case in order to make this book most helpful to as many readers as possible. To that end, we assume that:

- ✔ You have little or no previous training in acupressure or reflexology.
- ✔ You have a positive attitude and will do your best to focus that positive energy on the healing process.

- ✔ You approach this process with an open mind, welcoming new ideas and techniques that may seem strange or foreign to you at first.
- ✔ You or someone you know has some aches, pains, or general uneasiness that you or they want to treat in a natural way.
- ✔ You want to discover how your body has the capability of healing itself (within reason — we'd *never* suggest that acupressure or reflexology can cure cancer or perform any other type of medical miracle).

What You're Not to Read

Granted, we like to think every single word on these pages is important. However, the information in the gray sidebars is interesting and informative, but it isn't required reading in order for you to grasp the material in each chapter. We like to think of them as a bonus — a tasty little dessert to enjoy after you digest the main course.

How This Book Is Organized

Acupressure and Reflexology For Dummies is divided into five parts, each of which has its own special theme and focus. Here's an outline of the parts, and highlights of what you can find in each of them.

Part I: Touching on the Basics of Acupressure and Reflexology

If you know little or nothing about these bodywork techniques, we recommend that you start by reading Part I. Here, we give you all the basics of these healing arts, including

- ✔ Definitions of important terms
- ✔ A quick overview of the history of ancient oriental healing arts
- ✔ Basic healing art principles such as qi, yin/yang, and energy forces
- ✔ Things you need to know to prepare to heal yourself or others
- ✔ Maps of the meridians and reflex zones, the foundations of these healing sessions, to serve as your guide throughout the rest of the book
- ✔ Full explanations of all the techniques used in both acupressure and reflexology, along with illustrations to show you how to perform them

This part also teaches some basic exercises that come in handy to get you warmed up, and gives you a preview of what the recipient and provider can both expect from a session. We also cover all the important issues you need to consider when enlisting professional help — from finding qualified candidates to evaluating their credentials. In addition, we give you a sneak peek of what to expect from your first session.

Part II: Promoting Emotional and Physical Wellness

An important concept when it comes to healing is the strong connection between emotional health and physical well-being. If your emotions are upset or out of balance, you will almost inevitably experience physical discomfort as a result. This is a major belief in the healing arts. Separating emotional and physical well-being is almost impossible. The two go hand-in-hand, and if you focus on one while neglecting the other, you won't reap the full benefits of your healing sessions.

To that end, in this part we focus on maintaining the best possible health, both physically and emotionally. We explain the correlation between energy and emotions, and we show you how negative and positive thinking can affect your physical well-being.

Of course, we know that realistically you can't totally avoid emotional stress, so we also show you how to do damage control and keep those unavoidable stressors from wreaking havoc on your body.

Part III: Where Does It Hurt? Treating Common Aches and Ailments

Most likely, you're dealing with at least one or two aches or pains at this very moment. Perhaps that's why you picked up this book, hoping it would help you attain some relief from your discomfort.

Relax, we're here to help. In this part, we target specific body parts and identify common ailments that often afflict those areas. More importantly, we provide — in clear, easy-to-understand steps — routines you can do to address these particular ailments.

Here are a few of the problems we cover in this part: backaches, including sciatica and muscle strain; pain in the hips and legs; headaches and other problems in the facial region; problems in the arms, shoulders, and hands; digestive problems and other stomach concerns; and issues affecting the heart and chest.

Part IV: Addressing Specific Needs and Concerns

In this part, we get a bit more specific, addressing issues that may be of particular interest to certain groups of people.

First, we touch on the various pains and problems that tend to be age related. This applies to people on all ends of the chronological spectrum, from babies to seniors and everyone in between.

Then we discuss those myriad problems that plague our female readers. Ladies, we feel your pain — and we come to your rescue in Chapter 16. (To our male readers: We're not neglecting you. It's just that women have several major gender-specific needs, whereas the majority of problems that may plague men are covered throughout other areas of this book.)

We also cover routines for handling common conditions like colds and the flu, and we talk about boosting the immune system for preventive measures.

Part V: The Part of Tens

In every *For Dummies* book, you find the Part of Tens. The last two chapters in this book address facts and fallacies about acupressure and reflexology, and also illustrate just a few of the many ways that these healing arts can enrich your life.

And last but not least, we include an appendix full of various resources in case you hunger for a more advanced understanding of acupressure and reflexology, want to find a good practitioner, or simply want to talk it up with others who love the healing arts as much as you do.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, you find different small pictures in the margins. These pictures, called *icons*, alert you to little tidbits of information along the way.

Here's a list of icons you will encounter in this book:



As the name implies, this icon lets you know that we're sharing a little helpful piece of information that relates in some way to the material we cover in that section.



This icon points out little pieces of material that you should commit to memory.



You should pay special attention to the Warning icon, because it cautions you away from things you should avoid in order to stay safe and prevent any problems.

Where to Go from Here

Although we hope you find this book so intriguing that you devour it from cover to cover, the path you take to explore it is totally up to you. We designed this book to be a complete how-to guide for the beginning healer. If you have a specific need, you can dive right into a specific chapter. The chapters are complete and thorough enough to stand on their own so that you can zero in on particular topics (or parts of the body) that interest you most.

Otherwise, we recommend starting at the beginning and working your way through the book. Don't worry — you can jump past any topics that don't interest you at the moment and skip ahead to others that do. (You can always go back and catch up on what you missed later on.)

Part I

Touching on the Basics of Acupressure and Reflexology

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"What I'm doing should clear your sinuses, take away your headache, and charge your iPod."

In this part . . .

part I gives you all the important essentials you need to know about acupressure and reflexology. Think of this as your Healing 101 introductory course.

We explain exactly what acupressure and reflexology are, and what they mean to anyone who needs emotional and/or physical healing. We fill you in on the history of the healing arts and the meaning of *qi*. We tell you what you need to heal yourself and others — your own two hands and confidence in yourself — and give you a little pep talk to strengthen your faith in your innate ability to heal.

Finally, we review the anatomical concepts that you need to know in order to properly perform the techniques in this book. You become familiar with the meridians, acupoints, reflex zones, different types of tissue, and other body parts that play an important part in the healing process. Unless you already have some massage training, we strongly suggest that you read this part so that you know all the basics.

Chapter 1

Acupressure and Reflexology Essentials

In This Chapter

- ▶ Defining acupressure and reflexology
 - ▶ Tracing the roots of the healing arts
 - ▶ Getting the keys to understanding qi
 - ▶ Finding out how bodywork can help you
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If you're like most people, you know little (if anything) about acupressure and reflexology. You may incorrectly believe that acupressure involves needles. It doesn't — but don't worry, we address that and other misconceptions in the next few chapters. And when thinking about reflexology, you may guess from the name that it involves your reflexes in some way, but that may pretty much be the extent of your insight on the topic.

Or perhaps you *do* have some knowledge of the healing arts. You may know, for example, that a basic tenet of these approaches is the idea that pain can often be traced back to its root, which is often some distance away from the place where the pain is felt. However, you may not know exactly what that is, or how to trace the source of your pain.

Regardless of your knowledge level, or your reason for wanting to discover more, you can definitely benefit from reading about these important approaches to healing. Bodywork is beneficial to almost everyone, and it's often helpful if you know the background behind the techniques.

In this chapter, you explore the roots of reflexology and acupressure. You find out about the fundamental principles involved, including the concept of qi. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you discover how these approaches to healing can help *you*. No matter what your physical ailment or health concern, you'll probably be pleasantly surprised at the difference even a minimal amount of bodywork can make.

Acupressure and Reflexology Defined

Before you get too far into the healing routines and practices that we discuss in this book, you need to make sure that you understand exactly what acupressure and reflexology are. They're closely related, and in much of this book we refer to them jointly as a pair of complementary healing arts. But despite their similarities, they do have some differences.

Acupressure

Acupressure is an ancient healing art that entails using an object (generally the hands or arms) to stimulate specific key points on the body with the goal of relieving pain or discomfort. Pain and discomfort are considered to be signs of energy imbalance, which, if left in this state, will become illness and disease.

Acupressure approaches this energy imbalance in a concrete way through the identification of *acupoints*. Acupoints are located on *meridians*, or channels that run throughout the body and connect all parts of the body together. These acupoints are specific sites on the body that often treat pain or discomfort elsewhere. By addressing problems or imbalances at the acupoints, you can balance the flow of energy and thereby reduce or eliminate pain in the affected areas.



Many people confuse acupressure with *acupuncture*. The two are similar and closely related. Both rely on the same fundamental principles, and both use the same points and meridians. The most important difference: acupuncture uses pins — technically, they're hair-thin, sterile needles — and acupressure doesn't. This difference is crucial, because the needle aspect is something that makes many people squeamish or nervous about acupuncture. For those people, acupressure can be an equally effective — yet much less nerve-racking — alternative.

Eunice Ingham: Reflexology's patron saint

Reflexology first began catching on in the United States in the early 1900s. This was due in large part to a woman named Eunice Ingham. Eunice was a massage therapist who worked in the 1920s for a man named Joe Shelby Riley. Dr. Riley was well known as the creator of the Zone Theory, which is often seen as the precursor to modern-day reflexology. Inspired by Dr. Riley, Eunice expanded on the ideas of zone therapy

while focusing on only one zone, the feet. She published her first book on the topic, called *Stories the Feet Can Tell*, in 1938. Soon Eunice became an in-demand teacher and lecturer who was often asked to share her knowledge of healing therapies. Eventually, she was joined by her nephew, Dwight Byers, who went on to become the founder of the International Institute of Reflexology.

Reflexology

Reflexology is a system of healing based on balancing energy by stimulating areas in the feet and hands that relate to organs, glands, and parts of the body. Reflexology is similar to acupressure in basic principle, but the two have some differences as well. They both correct imbalances in the energy force by focusing on specific areas of the body where they pinpoint (and treat) that imbalance. Although acupressure involves meridians and acupoints, reflexology relies on pathways called *reflex zones*, which contain *reflex areas* located on the hands and feet. The reflex areas on the hands and feet are essentially holograms of the whole body; therefore, stimulating the hands and feet affects the whole body. By applying pressure to specific reflex points, you adjust the flow of energy and can create a positive response (reduced pain) in a corresponding location elsewhere on the body.

Digging Deeper into Origins and Philosophy

Many healing arts, including acupressure and reflexology, are based on the beliefs of Chinese energy medicine — which people first practiced more than 5,000 years ago. The ancient Chinese believed that spiritual imbalances caused many illnesses and physical ailments. In order to effectively address the pain, the Chinese believed, you needed to resolve your spiritual imbalance and get your energies and life force in a balanced state. In other words, the Chinese felt that you couldn't properly treat physical pain unless you also addressed your spiritual issues and any imbalances in your energy force. In this section, we explain a bit more about where this belief started as well as a bit about how acupressure and reflexology support that philosophy.

The origins of acupressure and reflexology

Acupressure and reflexology are no New Age “flash in the pan” trends. In fact, they've actually been around for thousands of years. Their roots are believed to trace back to the ancient people of Asia, who realized the many benefits of strategic touch as part of a healing therapy routine. (In the case of reflexology, some evidence indicates that ancient Egyptians also practiced this type of healing therapy. Treating the body through the feet and hands has also been found in many indigenous healing systems. For example, Native Americans and Australian aborigines are both believed to have healing practices based on foot manipulation.)

Huang Di Nei Jing

One of the most well-known works related to ancient Chinese medicine is the *Huang Di Nei Jing*, which translates to *The Medical Classic of the Yellow Emperor*. This book, believed to date back to around 200 B.C., details the philosophy

and techniques of acupuncture and other forms of medical treatment. In addition, it also covers other important topics such as astronomy, weather, and military operations.

The ancient people of Asia discovered that pressing specific points on the body can reduce or eliminate pain — often in locations elsewhere on the body. Chinese doctors began focusing on pressure points as a way to treat pain, fight illnesses, and encourage healing after injuries. These sessions, like many others developed by the Chinese of the period, were often used to treat soldiers who had been injured in various military conflicts.

Stone probes, found in Chinese tombs and believed to date back thousands of years, are believed by experts to be the first tools used in acupuncture and acupressure. These stones were called *Bian stones* and were used as tools to apply pressure to acupoints.

Originally, in Asia, many schools of Chinese medicine passed down in family lines. Most of these schools were similar to each other, but they also had lots of little differences — such as the exact function, name, or location of a point, how you use point combinations, and the use of extra points and extra channels of qi. After the Maoist revolution, General Mao combined all the teachings into one, eliminating all the differences, and he called it *Traditional Chinese Medicine*, or TCM. However, current practices still use acupuncture and acupressure techniques that fall outside of TCM and don't necessarily use organ meridians or standard acupoints. Some examples are auricular (ear) acupuncture, which many practitioners use today to treat addictions, and Korean hand acupuncture, which is similar to reflexology. The point? These examples show the vast array of healing techniques available to practitioners who use acupressure and reflexology therapies.

How and why they work

The foundation of Chinese energy medicine is the belief that a balanced and positive energy force is imperative for good health and emotional well-being. If you move or manipulate this energy to create a more balanced harmonious state, they believed you could effectively treat pain and illness.