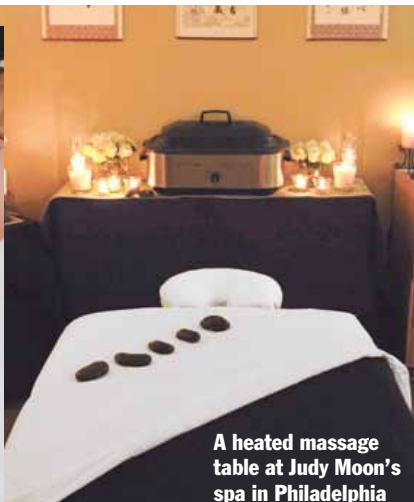
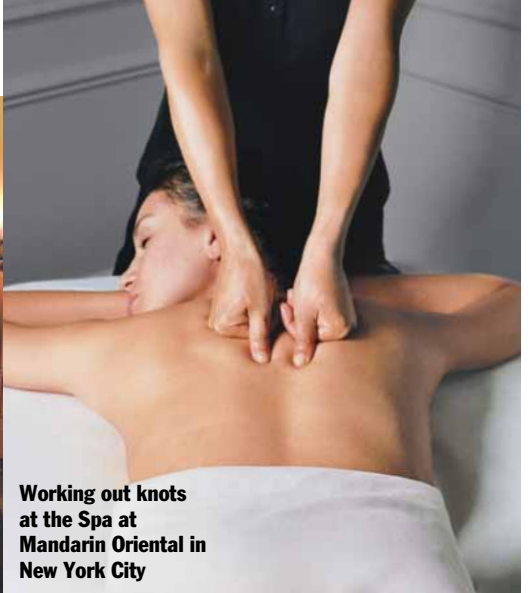


A therapeutic massage at the Sense spa in New York City



A heated massage table at Judy Moon's spa in Philadelphia



Working out knots at the Spa at Mandarin Oriental in New York City

otherwise, especially on our neck and the muscles on either side of our spine. Using long strokes with her forearms, remarkably powerful thumb pressure, and an almost indescribable trick of rotating each shoulder while fanning and flexing the fingers, Messing turned our body slack and calm. When we gazed over the city again from the relaxation room, the lights looked like promising stars and the traffic sounded almost like music. 50-minute massage, \$215.

Pratima Ayurvedic Skincare Spa

Hal Lubash
110 Greene St.
212-581-8136

The initial few minutes of our visit to this spa were a New Age cram session. We took a quiz to define our *dosha* (physical constitution) and tried to grasp Lubash's explanation of Ayurvedic principles. He warned that the massage would be "very oily," and we wondered what we had gotten ourselves into. But we stopped worrying once the treatment began. Lubash pushed pressure points and rubbed hot oil up and down our limbs using fast, hard strokes. By the time he massaged our face, scalp, and even our ears,

we were already relieved of our main complaint: stress. Marma Abhyanga Massage, \$145 and up.

Deva Spa
Niseema Dyan Diemer
425 Broome St.
212-274-8686

We went to this SoHo spa to zone out, but discovered that we needed a more intensive massage when Diemer zeroed in on the knots along our spine. She deftly rubbed out every last one and stretched us by pushing and leaning on our back with just the right amount of force. Next, she treated our feet to a superb rubdown with warm oil. When the hour was up, we felt refocused—both inside and out. \$150 and up.

Sense spa at the Carlyle
Daria Waluga
35 E. 76th St.
212-660-7560

We went to the Carlyle's spa in need of more than just pampering: A mysterious pain had taken hold of our neck and upper back. Instead of her usual full-body treatment, Waluga spent a welcome 30 minutes running the base of her palms and forearms along our back in a variety of firm, strategic movements. She then asked

us to flip over and spent another half-hour burying her fingertips and knuckles in the nape of our neck. The discomfort in both areas subsided, and we were amazed when we could look over our shoulder for the first time that week. \$195 and up.

Boston
Santi Holistic Healing
Amie Theriault
12 Parkingway
Cohasset, MA
781-383-3393

Long days at work had our shoulders plastered up by our ears, so we lurched over to Theriault. She focused her strength on loosening up the big balls of stress in our neck, shoulders, and back. She worked a delicate coconut oil into our skin and then gently rubbed our legs and feet for 15 minutes. After one last round with our formerly rock-hard shoulders, she had realigned our body—and our spirits. \$45 and up.

Philadelphia
Judy Moon and Associates
Judy Moon
604 S. Washington Sq.
267-671-0861

Brutal exercise classes had left our legs looking shapely but feeling seriously sore. To

relieve them, Moon alternated firm, sweeping strokes from our hips to our ankles with targeted deep-tissue massage, reserving the most pressure for our stiff calves (which, admittedly, made us wince). She then let up a bit, smoothing lavender-and-sandalwood oil over our entire body. We felt a tad tender right afterward, but by the next day our sore spots were a distant memory. \$80 and up.

Miami
Seven Seas Spa at the Newport Beachside Hotel
Katie Hart
16701 Collins Ave.
Sunny Isles Beach, FL
305-749-2100

We wanted something to take the edge off, so we were grateful when greeted at the spa with a glass of champagne. We already felt looser when Hart began a pressure-point massage on each side of our neck. She slicked her hands with eucalyptus oil and used long strokes from our shoulders to our fingertips and light squeezes on our legs. She then deftly wedged her palms under our shoulders to dislodge our knots. Though the bubbly had worn off, we left with a postmassage high. \$47 and up.