

Comfort Touch: Massage For The Elderly And The Ill  
By Mary Kathleen Rose. Wild Rose, 2004 (PO Box 17313,  
Boulder, Colorado 80308-0313; 303-449-3945;  
[www.comforttouch.com], VHS, 34 minutes with booklet,  
40 p.

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Reviewed by Lisa Mertz

Mary Kathleen Rose developed the Comfort Touch method as a “healing balm” for frail elderly people, and for those who are severely ill. Rose is the clinical supervisor of the massage therapy program at HospiceCare of Boulder and Broomfield Counties in Colorado. She teaches wellness education, massage, energy therapies and shiatsu. Her Comfort Touch method is enhanced by Asian bodywork and meridian theory, especially at the more advanced levels.

This video presents a thorough introductory overview of the method’s techniques. Rose incorporates “Six Principles of Comfort Touch” that describe the method’s intention, quality of touch and techniques, which are slow, comforting, respectful, “into center”, broad and encompassing. By “into center”, Rose means: “The direction of pressure is in to the center of the part of the body being touched. In this work, we do not use gliding or kneading strokes. Rather, pressure is applied at a 90-degree angle to the skin, thereby preventing tearing of the skin or bruising of the tissues. The focus of intention is into the core or central axis of the part of the body being touched. This specific direction of pressure and accurate focusing inward of intention allow for penetrating touch, even with light to moderate pressure. Both the giver and receiver of touch experience a profoundly deep sense of connection” (p. 8).

The video shows practitioners demonstrating the techniques on a female client seated in a wheelchair, a male client supine in bed in a hospital, and a frail elderly female client side-lying in bed in a long-term care facility. The practitioners demonstrate how to position themselves for proper body mechanics and how to cushion the clients for maximum comfort. The application of slow, comforting, rhythmic movements are sedating for the client's nervous system, thereby facilitating deep relaxation and pain relief. *Comfort Touch: Massage For The Elderly And The Ill* is a beautifully produced video. I particularly like the DVD because the menu makes each section easily accessible for review. The background music, *Sea Spirits* by Jesse Mann [[www.jessemanno.com](http://www.jessemanno.com)] and *Contemplative Harp* by Polly Mahoney [[www.celticharp.com](http://www.celticharp.com)], supports the viewer's receptivity to learning in the same way that it supports the client's receptivity to relaxing.

The booklet includes notes on the benefits of Comfort Touch, communication and CARE documentation (client's Condition, practitioners Action taken, clients Response and Evaluation of further need for touch therapy). Both booklet and video conclude with a section on self-care for the caregiver. The video presents a follow-along self-care exercise routine based on yoga and *qigong* for stretching and relaxing that can be performed prior to touch therapy sessions.

Practitioners who are experienced in working with frail elderly or severely ill clients will be interested in integrating Mary Rose's techniques into their work. Beginners in this area will appreciate the thoroughness of this booklet and video set, and will want to use it as an adjunct to professional training and supervision.