

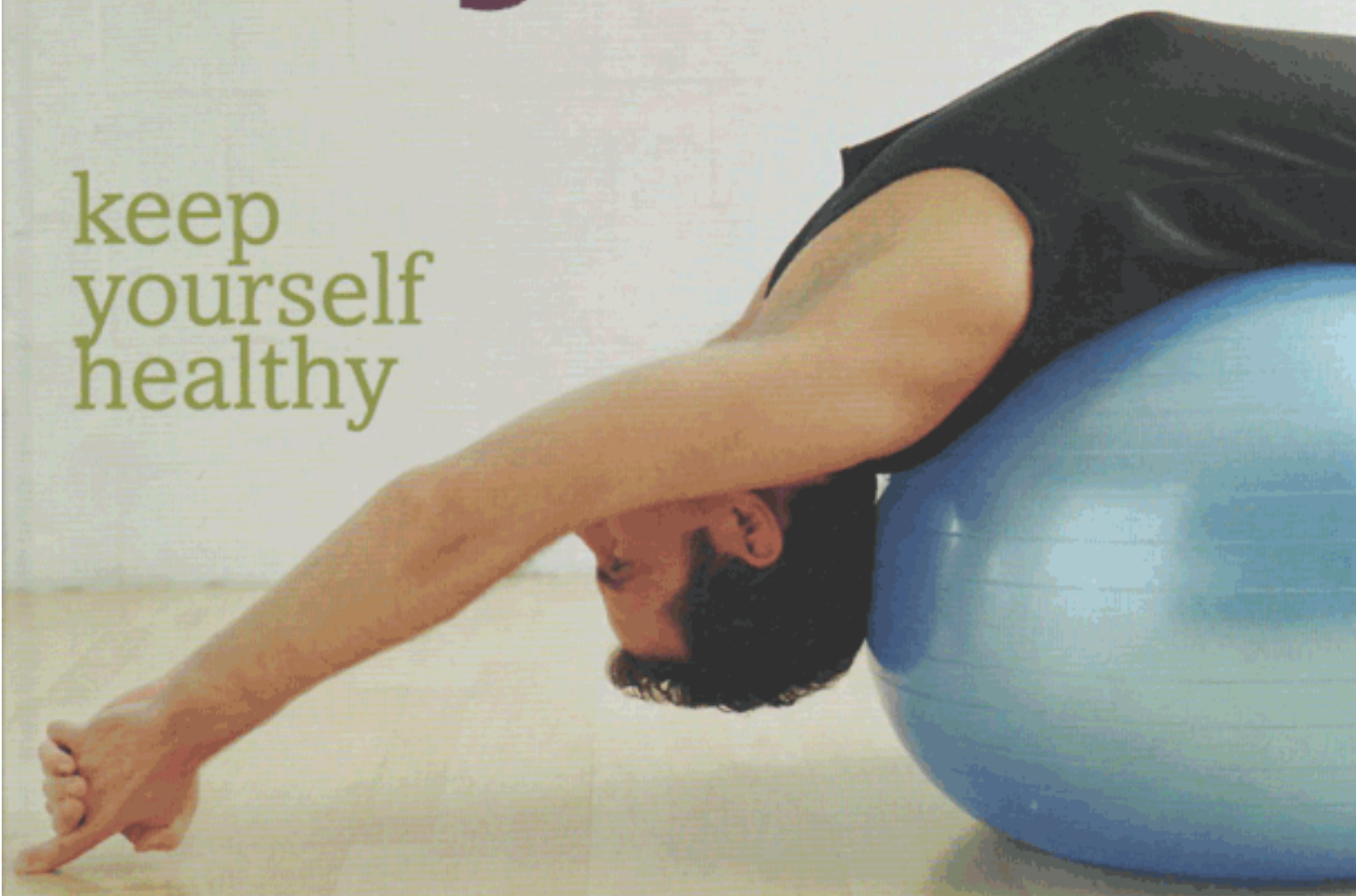
massage therapy journal

mtj

keeping you in touch.

SPECIAL
Self-care
issue!

keep
yourself
healthy



ergonomics: practical advice p141

15 tips to avoid burnout p80

is there gender bias in massage therapy? p48



how massage benefits babies

winter 2006 \$6.50
www.amtamassage.org/mtj





REGINA FERNANDEZ

Doorstep Day Spa // Los Angeles, California

www.doorstepdayspa.com

A massage therapist for 10 years, Regina Fernandez worked for chiropractors and then a hotel spa before starting Doorstep Day Spa. The hotel spa functioned much like a mobile spa, only confined to the hotel's guestrooms. The ease of traveling room to room convinced Fernandez it could be done on a broader scale. A public relations job at a yoga retreat center in Costa Rica added to her education, giving her an appreciation for what rose petals or aromatherapy could add to the massage experience.

"I thought, 'why not put this all together for a spa and massage service?'" she says.

Fernandez crafted her own website in 2000 and launched Doorstep Day Spa in 2001. Although she works with corporate clients, individuals and couples, the majority of her traveling practice centers on massage parties.

With her background in massage, she knew what types of therapies to offer. She added friends and associates who could specialize in various spa treatments from manicures to foot soaks to hydrotherapy. However, massage remains at the core of the business.

"People kind of like the twist of a spa service, but massage is a part of nearly everything I do," she says. "People may call asking about pedicures, but usually I can talk them into adding that to a massage session. With me being a massage therapist, it's almost guaranteed they're going to have a massage involved."

Those first-time callers also are more educated on massage than they used to be.

"When I first started, the concept was very new and people got all kinds of ideas of what a massage party was, but now I find that there's a huge acceptance," says Fernandez, who consults on the topic of outcall massage. "You still find people who haven't heard about it, but that happens less often."

During slow times in the market, she finds mobile

massage—with its focus on events of all kinds—to be steadier than an office practice. In the holiday season, for instance, parties flourish at the same time individuals may be canceling their office appointments because of chaotic schedules. The work hours are flexible and wide-ranging. With that added flexibility, though, comes additional responsibility for mobile therapists. Fernandez's 15-person "staff" consists solely of independent contractors.

"You have to look at yourself as a micro-business," she says. "You need to be prepared in every way: You need your tables, and you should have a massage chair. You need to keep up with your skills. You need a car that runs, and you need to be able to use e-mail, [find directions] and be more computer savvy in general."

Because of the emphasis on self-sufficiency and ability to handle last-minute changes, Fernandez typically hires therapists with experience. In addition to dealing with new environments, her therapists need to put people at ease, especially those who aren't familiar with massage.

"I get more people who haven't had a massage in a party environment than I would get somewhere else," she says. "People might have had a gift certificate for a year or two, and now with all their friends and family together, maybe they feel comfortable using it. Some people are still nervous about the idea."

Fernandez still does hands-on work herself—she just doesn't want to stop—but she spends most of her time and effort on the administrative end. As the business grows, the logistics and planning of events only grow more complicated.

"This last Saturday I had three events going on at the same time, so I went to one event, but I wanted to be sure I was accessible on phone," she says. "I did the setup and assisted the therapists, then answered any questions that came up at the other events."