



Jody Olsen, RN, CMMT

Nurturing Steps Wellness Massage

I was a mother of four sons under age 7 (including twins) as well as a Maternal/Child Nurse and Childbirth Educator working at the hospital. I enjoyed my work but I had always dreamt of working with expectant mothers on a more personal level. In 1997 with my husband, Erik's encouragement and a great deal of planning, I took a leap of faith and started *Nurturing Steps*.

I absolutely loved my practice. For eleven years I was blessed to help young couples by providing child birth preparation, labor support and well baby assessments as well as lactation consults in the home. During that time I developed close bonds with families and was very touched that many of them called on me to help with their second and third babies.

It was very rewarding work but not always easy. One of the major challenges that I faced was feeling chronically exhausted with severe muscle pain that went unexplained by doctors for years. I was made to feel that it was "all my head" or that it was "normal" to be tired as a busy mom with a career. My condition was difficult at times while caring for my family or attending long labors. After seeing many different doctors I was referred to a rheumatologist. After many tests, I was so relieved to finally have a diagnosis-- Fibromyalgia. Back in the 90s not much was known about this mysterious condition so I made it my mission to find out all I could so that I could be pro-active in my health care.

The National Fibromyalgia Association (founded in 1997) defines Fibromyalgia as a chronic pain disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal aches, pain and stiffness, soft tissue tenderness, general fatigue, and sleep disturbances. With the power of knowledge and the help of medication, chiropractics, good nutrition, rest and gentle exercise I am now able to cope much better. Another thing that I discovered helped immensely is Massage Therapy. Having regular massages helps me to sleep better and decrease my pain; which ultimately gives me more energy!

Over the years, I continued to witness the healing benefits of massage whether I was helping a woman in labor, teaching infant massage or stroking my ill father's back. After much thought, I decided to combine my nursing knowledge with Medical

Massage Therapy so that I could create awareness and help other women who cope with chronic pain. In the fall of 2007, I took out a student loan and enrolled in the Medical Massage Program at the Blue Heron Academy of Healing Arts and Science.

It has been over 20 years since I graduated from college so I found it very challenging to get back into a study routine. I was memorizing flash cards and studying muscle diagrams everywhere I went. Between my other part-time job, Nurturing Steps and juggling my busy family (the boys are teens now) I often had thoughts like, "what were you thinking, Jody?" Managing my fatigue and pain with the many hours of practicing massage techniques was also very taxing. Somehow, my excitement for learning and the thought of helping others along with positive affirmations inspired me to keep me going. My husband and sons also cheered me on before each test and they definitely enjoyed the benefits of regular massages. I am very proud to say that I graduated with straight A's in the spring of 2008 and passed my National Board Exam with flying colors!

Since then, Nurturing Steps took a new direction and became *Nurturing Steps Wellness Massage*. I now provide Massage Therapy that specializes in women's health. I have had a wonderful response and my practice is growing everyday. My office is located in the wonderful community of Interlochen which is close to my home. I love the fact that I can go to work but be only five minutes away from my family. My goal as a Therapist is to provide a nurturing environment with a blend of Relaxation, Therapeutic and Medical Massage Therapy that is personalized to each individual. So far, I have worked with expectant mothers, women with chronic pain and those just looking to make massage therapy an important part of their wellness plan. I also teach Infant Massage and provide health education and support. I am honored that I can now touch the lives of women in all stages of life.

Advice that I have for other woman entrepreneurs is:

- 1) Identify your passion. Do your research and figure out what you know and also what you need to learn....then do it.
- 2) Network, network, network especially with other business women. They are a wealth of information, eager to help and have wonderful connections that may be able to help your cause.
- 3) Believe in yourself and that all things are possible if you work hard, have patience and take things one step at a time!