

Selena Belisle

Selena Belisle is a massage therapist and CE provider from Miami, Florida. She has been practicing massage and bodywork for 30 years and is a retired professional athlete with three World Armwrestling Federation titles.



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By Hannah Fell

By the time Selena Belisle was 19, she was a champion arm wrestler, winning the gold medal in the 1989 World Championships in Athens, Greece. It was then that a trainer gave Belisle a massage for the first time.

“I remember the compassionate touch, and it made me feel stronger and more secure,” she said. “Once I retired from professional competition I went to massage therapy school.”

In the early 1980s, before massage became recognized as a profession and field, Belisle said there wasn’t much licensing in her area to practice massage. Then, she focused on sports massage and compression massage and practiced on training partners at competitions.

However, in 1995, she enrolled in a massage therapy program in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that was a 1,000-plus hour program. She wanted to do more than sports massage and learned full-body techniques.

Belisle stressed the importance of being a lifelong learner in the massage field.

“I do think it’s important for therapists

to get that basic training that is offered and to seek out CE training and hours for what they are especially interested in practicing,” she said. “Massage therapy is a lifelong educational experience.”

For instance, if a massage therapist is interested in working in a clinic, they should seek out continuing education classes in lymphatic drainage, she said, adding that you should just make sure to follow your interests and keep an open mind.

Although she’s been working in massage therapy for most of her career, Belisle said that massage therapy has opened doors for her that she would never have achieved without it.

One of her most memorable moments as a massage therapist was in the days just after 9/11.

“Therapists were saying, ‘What can we do?’ So, we headed to Logan Airport,” she said. “People were there working on the families waiting.”

Belisle and a team of eight therapists stayed at the airport for two days after 9/11. They had to go through high-level

clearance and airport security so they could give therapeutic massage. They brought their on-site equipment and gave massage to a long line of people in the airport.

“You should have seen the line in the hallway for everyone receiving therapeutic massage,” she said. “It’s probably one of the most powerful moments in my life.”

Belisle has kept up the hard work in her massage practice, and she still makes plenty of time for self-care. She lives in Miami Beach, Florida, where she plays tennis regularly and goes to the beach as much as possible. She said she finds going in the ocean incredibly cathartic.

Through everything, she said she tries to remember the reason she got into massage therapy.

“I wanted to give others that power and comfort that others gave to me. And I thought, ‘What a powerful thing to share with others and actually make a career out of it.’” **M**

Hannah Fell is *MESSAGE Magazine’s* associate editor.