

# Exclusive Interview

## Cherie Sohnen-Moe

Business coach, instructor, healing arts practitioner, author

by Melissa Mower

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It seems perfect that I interviewed Cherie Sohnen-Moe just three weeks before Christmas. Her willingness to share of herself was immediately evident as she called a few days prior to my arrival to ask if I wanted to help decorate her tree. I'd been slowly developing a fun working relationship with her through her business column writing for the magazine over the last year, but really didn't know much about her.

After spending two and a half days with her, I discovered that she's very candid about who she is, where she's been and wants to go. She's also a woman full of hopes, dreams and positive faith. Her warmth and humor are contagious.

Her smart and practical approach to marketing—with personal emphasis on value-oriented marketing—intrigued me. The advice she imparts to practitioners and others seeking counsel tends to mirror what will work best according to that individual's perspective and value system. Her book, *Business Mastery*, recently underwent its fifth printing and remains a premier text providing invaluable practice management tools for healing arts practitioners. *Business Mastery* is used in more than 200 massage and bodywork schools across the country, and is required reading in about 60 schools.

We conducted the interview in three sittings, the first while still in our pajamas on a Sunday morning. During my stay, we laughed a lot and stayed up way too late. Her home in the Tucson Mountains—where she also operates her office—is open, spacious, serene and inviting. It's easy to share her excitement about the simple pleasures of desert living, including frequent visits from a roadrunner named Clyde.

A self-proclaimed catalyst for positive change, Cherie is on a personal mission to promote peace on this planet in the most comprehensive way she possibly can. She realized she could reach far larger numbers of people through speaking, teaching and writing than is possible on a one-on-one therapist/client basis. She tirelessly strives to equip therapists with information to best make themselves more visible and thus further utilize their skills in touch to bring about global peace.

Since the interview, I have received an amazingly nurturing, loving and caring message from Cherie. She made no assumptions about me as a client nor about my goals for the session. She was entirely professional throughout and gave the great attentive massage that would practically guarantee any client's return. The embodiment of her own advice within her massage strengthens her message.

In practice, Cherie Sohnen-Moe is a sharp, engaging speaker who's eager to share what she knows and learns in order to help others empower themselves. The same holds true on a personal level. So it's not surprising to learn that she was honored as an outstanding instructor at the Desert Institute of Healing Arts' 10th year anniversary party last fall, that she was the keynote speaker at that school's graduation and that her seminar travels continue to expand. She enthusiastically embarks on new and creative avenues to teach practitioners how best to educate the public about their work—for everyone's benefit.

### Where did you grow up?

**Sohnen-Moe:** "I was born in Tucson and from the ages of 7-12 we lived on a ranch 20 miles out of Tucson. I sort of grew up a cowgirl."

*Was touch a regular part of your family life?*

**Sohnen-Moe:** "My mom's Italian so there was hugging and that kind of touching. We were in the restaurant business so there was always people and there was always a lot of hugging."

### Who was your mentor?

**Sohnen-Moe:** "It wasn't until I came back to Tucson as an adult that I actually found a career mentor. His name's Irv. He gave me advice and tried to steer me in the right way in terms of my consulting practice. His ideals were things that would create business success for me. Unfortunately, those were the arenas that I didn't want to work—the corporate accounts and training with the big companies. I knew he was right if I wanted long-term, easy success. Once you get into a company, if they like you, they'll keep hiring you, but I hated bureaucracy. So in that way, that didn't work, but it was finally nice to have a mentor, to have someone who was older than I was who had worked in all different kinds of industries and who would really tell me the truth about things. We still keep in contact."

### Tell us about your experience as a rebirther.

**Sohnen-Moe:** "Rebirthing, I think, is magic. I don't know how else to describe it. For me, rebirthing ties into everything that I do, which is really exciting. It ties into bodywork. It ties into clearing and consulting and it's all about breath. The whole bottom line of rebirthing is for people's lives to become much more simple so that there's a flow in and out. What we're doing is we're training them to breathe differently so that they will be breathing in and out. When they start patterning that, it seems to happen in life that things flow in and out more gently."

*Is that because after re-experiencing the trauma, people can relax?*

**Sohnen-Moe:** "Oh, you mean in terms of the trauma with birth?"

**Yes.**

**Sohnen-Moe:** "Well, I think rebirthing is a misnomer. For a lot of people, things happen at their birth. We've been in the womb and have had all our oxygen supplied, and then all of a sudden, with a lot of births, they cut the umbilical cord before the infant has taken its first breath. So that's got to pattern in some incredible physiological fear, let alone emotional, of being cut off. A lot of people, unfortunately, have had even more traumatic events in their lives. Rebirthing is really about letting go of all that trauma. It focuses on the throat chakra, and the throat chakra is about being yourself in the world. So that's what tends to happen. It tends to let go of what's stopping you from being who you are. For a lot of us, we have a lot of things associated with birth..."

“The other thing I like about rebirthing is that it’s the only process out there that I know of that there’s an end to. We can all be in therapy for years. Most of us are in therapy for years. There’s always something else to work on or there’s always some other level, but with rebirthing, there’s four breaths and when you can do each of those breaths for 20 minutes each without having any major constrictions come up or any emotions...you’re done. Then you can practice on your own. You don’t need a coach anymore.

#### **How did you get involved with massage therapy?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “At the same time I was in school as a psychology major in the 1970s, they were trying to weed out the psychology majors. There were too many of us. The whole thing started with this one psychology course in studying birth trauma. We watched the films of Frederick Leboyer. He did a lot of studies with some native tribes where they were all massaging these infants every day. That whole aspect interested me. I always was a touchy person. I was always giving people neck rubs. Being a young adult in the 1970s during the personal growth movement, I was receiving that a lot...I got interested in it and began to take a lot of weekend classes, and took a Touch for Health course.”

#### **Where did you receive your training and what kind of training did you have?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “Originally, most of it was informal. It was a lot of weekend courses. I got my official training at the Institute for Psycho-Structural Balancing (IPSB).”

#### **How did your psychology background help with your massage therapy practice?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “First thing I think is perspective. The other thing is mainly seeing people as whole beings. When people’s bodies are being worked on, when people are being touched, a lot of things happen for them. Sometimes it’s kind of an emotional release. It’s connecting with a part of themselves that they hadn’t connected with in a long time. It’s not that you want to do therapy with them, but as a massage therapist, it’s okay for them to release emotions. You don’t have to actually get entangled in it.”

#### **How long did you practice as a massage therapist?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “About nine years.”

#### **Why did you stop practicing?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “We moved to Tucson and it was a major change. I decided that I wanted to change focus. I had started out my professional career as a consultant and I thought that would be really fascinating to do again. That was what I did—a new move, a new location. Once a bodyworker, always a bodyworker, so even though I don’t do massage for a living, I have to touch. I have to do that...”

“I think there are those of us that are attracted to this field. It’s like our art. It really is, and if we’re not doing that work, we cut off our creativity on some level. It doesn’t mean we have to do it every day. We need to do it on a fairly regular basis to keep things flowing.”

#### **As a massage therapist, what was your most rewarding healing experience?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “There were several, but one that was really incredible for me was this man who came in and had what he thought were club feet, but they weren’t. All his life he had convinced himself that he had club feet and that’s what was wrong with his life. Within a very few sessions of just working and stretching out the muscles, his feet actually became elongated. It was really simple to do because there

wasn’t a structural bone problem. Maybe he had injured himself at one point and just patterned that in and never let go of that. It was only one of his feet. He had to go buy new shoes. It was really great. That was really rewarding because it was on that physical change level...”

“I think that happens on an almost daily basis for people who are in practice. It’s pretty neat, massage and bodywork. I think that’s why I work in this field so much because there are so many miracles that happen on a daily basis. It’s really very inspiring to me.”

#### **Do you receive massage regularly?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “Oh, at least once a week. It keeps me centered, it keeps me relaxed and it keeps me healthy. Not only that, it feels good.”

#### **How did you become a teacher?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “Oh, I think I was always a teacher. I was always the kid who organized things and had everyone else do them all. When I was at UCLA, I was part of a program called the creative problem solving department. I created a communications workshop. So when I was in college, I created my first seminar and got involved with a group of people who created a personal growth organization and did seminars. It started from there.”

#### **How long have you been at the Desert Institute?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “It’s been six years.”

#### **Describe the classes you teach and the need for them, both at the Institute and on your own.**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “Well, at the Desert Institute, right now I’m teaching communications classes. Communication skills are vital—how to be able to talk to a person and really hear what they’re saying, being able to put them at ease in a client-therapist relationship. Then there’s communication skills in terms of business, how to get out there, how to market yourself, how to promote yourself.

“I’ve just started doing that there, but it was a great throwback to the very first seminar that I ever created so this has been really nice. I taught business there for many, many years and in the last year I trained someone else to teach the business course. Now I’m teaching a business practicum.

“Business is vital. If you can’t sell yourself, what difference does it make if you do the best bodywork in the world? If you’re not paying your bills, you’re not going to be reaching the people you need to reach. It’s all very cyclical. It all fits in.”

#### **How many hours is your business course?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “Well, the Desert Institute, their actual business course is 28 hours, but they have communications class every semester so that’s 72 hours. They have the option to take the business practicum which is 35 hours. That’s when we actually set up a mock business.”

#### **Tell us about that.**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “We negotiate a pretend lease and set up an association or partnership agreement, depending on what the class wants. We design a full business plan. They have to do marketing and advertising research. They have to find out what ad rates are and who to send press releases to and we make up press releases, brochures and cards.

“Our final for the business practicum is an open house. We invite all the students and faculty, families of the students in the practicum and we pretend it’s a real open house—the meeting and greeting and doing presentations. It’s a lot of fun and it makes it real. One of the best side effects is that they’re getting the experience of working with others. They get to see how that works and how it doesn’t work. They get to experience it without having the legal and financial obligations of being in it.”

**What kind of changes have you noticed in the students taking your courses?**

Sohnen-Moe: "The sophistication level. Students or people who've been out and practiced for a while that come to the seminars are at least aware of marketing. It's exciting because they're also seeing that it doesn't have to conflict with their values, which is your whole stance, to build a business that reflects your values. Otherwise, don't do it. Too much marketing has been hard sell and it's just not my style. I don't think it needs to be anybody's style if they don't want it to be."

**Why is it that you choose to primarily work for bodyworkers?**

Sohnen-Moe: "Well, this is another one of those emotional kind of things for me. I actively work for peace. The more people that we have out there that are getting touched on a regular basis, the more peaceful this world's going to be and we need to work on that level.

"Most of the time people only get touched sexually or parent-child kind of touching, but there's not a whole lot of just healthy touch. It's hard to be angry, it's hard to be violent if someone's been loving to you and recently touched you in a way that was non-threatening. We need to work on that one-on-one level to promote peace. That's my contribution to world peace and I know it happens. You can see it on an individual level. I've always believed in the grass roots movement... Massage therapists in the world are the ones who are going to bring peace. I don't think anyone else can have the impact that massage therapists will."

**How would you describe the people that have been coming to your class and also to your workshops?**

Sohnen-Moe: "The people who tend to come to my workshops either have been in business for a very long time and want to come in for that one insight or that one change that they know is going to make the difference. Or they are people who are just starting out or are currently students and are about to begin practicing. They don't want the business part to be an issue. The majority have been in practice for five years."

**What do you teach outside the school?**

Sohnen-Moe: "With the *Business Mastery* workshop, that's all about figuring out who you want to be in your practice and targeting your market and making a successful business. I also teach presentation skills nationally, at the Desert Institute, and at the local adult community college and also at the University of Arizona. I think that it is really vital, to become comfortable with saying who you are and getting up among a group of one or 1,000 and sharing who you are in a way that's interesting and engaging. It's a skill that most people don't spend the time learning...I'm out to change that..."

**You're also a private consultant. What led you to move into the consulting field?**

Sohnen-Moe: "When I was in college, I started taking courses in industrial management. I would petition and take graduate school courses. I thought that's what I was going to do until I discovered bureaucracy. But because of that shift in changing with psychology into business, and before I graduated from college, I started working with these two people who wanted to start up a health center. That was my first consulting project and that lasted about six months."

**How would you categorize the consulting work you do?**

Sohnen-Moe: "Eclectic. I tend to work with small businesses. The largest business that I've worked with was as a consultant, not a trainer. I think there were about 80-85 employees. I've worked with a lot of one-person businesses. Mainly the kind of work I do is a lot of goal-setting, some marketing work, a lot of helping them keep balance. Most of the time what happens with my long-term clients is that actually they just hire me to be a sounding board. I think most people know what they want. They just need a little guidance in the right direction."

**What percentage of your consultant business is from massage therapists?**

Sohnen-Moe: "That's really hard to say. A lot of it's so informal. A lot of it's 20-minute phone calls that I don't bill for and locally, they get it free when I'm teaching. I could probably figure it out, but it's hard because one or two times is usually all it takes. Actually, for a lot of my clients it only takes a couple of times to get them on the right track."

**What is the number one reason people consult you?**

Sohnen-Moe: "Because I'm good and I have a good reputation. I do have a lot of information. I do have a lot of knowledge and I work with people in taking what they know and coming up with a way that works for them. It may not make them a million dollars or anything like that, but I work with them on what's really important to them and what they can do to make their business thrive. I won't sit there and try to convince them that they need to go do this kind of promotion if it's not who they are. It doesn't matter, because if they're out there doing something that isn't who they are, they're not going to be happy."

**How do you view the current image of massage and bodywork in America?**

Sohnen-Moe: "I think that people see the field as an emerging field. Of course, those of us who are in it don't think that way. It's gone a long distance from the snickers. The problem I still see is that people don't know what massage is. When you say, 'I'm a massage therapist' or 'I'm a bodyworker,' they don't know what that means. That's sort of the beauty and the negativity of this profession. It's so diverse..."

"Some consistency would be nice, some baseline ways that if people knew they were going to a massage therapist that they would know that certain things tend to happen in that kind of a session. In almost every bodywork session, there is a chain of events that happens, and if that could get more clarified and unified, and then let the specialties take in within that, I think it would be more clear to the general public."

**Do you think the image is changing in a positive way?**

Sohnen-Moe: "Yes I do, definitely. Well, when you say massage now, people are interested. It went from people sort of being uncomfortable about the word massage to, 'Oh, you do that? What's that do for you?' So that's pretty exciting."

"In general, I think it's a positive change from people all around the country. There's a lot of people out there, lots of grass roots massage therapists doing their work and making a difference and those going with the medical mode. I think both are really important."

**What can massage therapists and bodyworkers do to bring about more positive change in image perception?**

Sohnen-Moe: "The first thing is that they need to be clear what kind of image they want to present. I think that's the biggest one. There's so much waffling. There are two ways to bring about change in that way and also in terms of marketing themselves. They can either decide who they want to work with and adjust their image to fit that or they could take who they are and find clients that fit in that image, but whatever, make it consistent.

"There's a lot of space and a lot of ways you can be. You don't have to totally fit a role. You just have to decide what image, as long as it's professional, which means clean clothes, good hygiene, but also looking at yourself from a client's point of view. How's your client going to feel? And more importantly, your communication skills. That gets the image across the best."

**Do you think national certification will help promote the image of massage therapists and body workers?**

Sohnen-Moe: "Actually, yes. For whatever happens in this process, there's a lot of energy being put out and when that happens, more people become aware of the profession. One of the side effects of this that a lot of people don't realize is having national certification handled by the Psychological Corporation. They do the major testing for almost every group. In their handbook, they are using massage therapy as one of the examples, so that means everyone who gets this sees massage. It's being sent out to physicians who are being licensed, and nurses who are being licensed. In that way it's going to change the perception in the medical field, which will do wonders."

**Do you favor standard educational requirements for relaxation massage, for working with athletes or for working with physicians on injuries?**

Sohnen-Moe: "I think there needs to be performance requirements that take form either in education or with some way to challenge that. There are a lot of self-taught healers, a lot of people who've apprenticed. There have been a lot of natural healers before anyone taught massage. There's got to be a way to do that and there is no easy way."

In your opinion, what are the three most important business aspects?

Sohnen-Moe: "To have a clearly defined target market, to plan well and follow through on those plans and be able to describe who you are and what you do."

**What are the nuts and bolts of forming a successful business?**

Sohnen-Moe: "Well, first thing is you need to start off doing something you do well. The next thing is to be clear of where your profession fits in with the rest of your life. You have to always be checking in with that. To plan well, get a clear sense of what you want to do and what it's going to take for you to get there and check in along the way. I always refer to my long-term goals at least once a month and then I have my big goals that have little project dates. I check those over once a week.

"What does marketing effectively mean? Reiterating a little bit, the nuts and bolts in marketing your practice are knowing what you do, being able to communicate what you do, having a clear picture of who your market is and being able to communicate particularly to them in a way that reflects who you are. The other area is client retention and follow-up. I know lots of therapists out there who do okay work

and they're booked, but they treat their clients like royalty. They take the time to find out what's important to each client and do those things..."

**Through your own trial and error, what have been some of your best lessons learned about building a successful practice?**

Sohnen-Moe: "Set a schedule. I was in my early 20s, and lived by the beach in southern California. What do you think I did when I didn't have clients? I learned that if I wanted my practice to grow, I needed to set office hours. It didn't mean that I only took clients during a certain time, but every day I spent at least a half an hour building the business in some way, did some sort of marketing. That was the best lesson I learned. And I didn't do it from the beginning, so I was able to see the difference once I started.

"One of the most vivid things I remember learning that happened to me was that while I was part of this networking organization for years, I never got any clients. I could never understand that. There was a financial consultant who was part of the group too, and she wasn't getting clients. So one day we decided to sit down and figure this out. We actually did some surveys. We really wanted to find out what people's impressions of us were. There were three things that came across for both of us: it appeared that we had all the clients that we could handle; that we didn't work with little businesses like theirs; and that our prices were probably too high. We never said anything along those lines, and that's what made me change my introduction to saying, 'I work mainly with individuals and small to medium-sized businesses.'

"But because we were both very confident and outgoing, good speakers, people just thought we were there for other reasons. And we were. We made some great friends, but once we shifted how we introduced ourselves, both of us started getting more clients."

**What's your advice to practitioners in warding off burnout?**

Sohnen-Moe: "First thing is to get regular bodywork for themselves. Next is to be involved in some sort of business support group. Not necessarily one of those networking groups, though those are important, but a group where you can really talk about what's working and what's not working in your business, get support and suggestions."

"Physical burnout happens a lot. People aren't using good body mechanics and can injure their body. If they're not getting regular bodywork, they're not keeping themselves loose and limber. I think those are two major ways, besides eating well, getting exercise, that kind of thing. Physical burnout is a major component, but it's also one of the easiest to address. The other kind of burnout that happens comes from not taking care of themselves emotionally. A lot of times when you're giving out a lot of nurturing and you're not getting it back, there's an imbalance. You can get burned out."

**When discussing time management principles in your book, you wrote, "There's a difference between working harder and working smarter." What exactly did you mean?**

Sohnen-Moe: "Well, there are a lot of times when what we do is put all this energy, time and effort into doing something. We think that because we're putting in all this exertion that it's better. Quite often, the best thing to do is a much simpler approach. That means learning how to streamline, learning how to delegate, taking perspective."

**What are some of the things that massage therapists can sell to their clients to help boost their own income as well as help their clients?**

Sohnen-Moe: "I think there are a lot of products out there in the market that therapists use in their sessions or would consider using in their sessions that they don't think about selling to their clients. Particularly things that would help in between sessions, like the hot and cold packs..."

"If you use aromatherapy in your practice, I recommend selling the diffusers or whatever kinds of products that are available for aromatherapy and the essences. It can be subtle. It doesn't have to be anything major, but there are things out there that people don't normally have access to that we do. We see them at conferences, we see them in magazines, so we see all this information and they don't necessarily..."

"Therapists can contact the distributors and the manufacturers and sell them to their clients. Therapists will probably be able to give clients a better price than if they could possibly find it anywhere, and they'll be making money and helping their clients. And that's the bottom line, you're helping them to make their lives easier. You probably won't ever get rich off product sales in your practice, but it's a nice passive income."

**How can massage therapists and bodyworkers go about target marketing if they don't know how to do demographic or psychographic research?**

Sohnen-Moe: "There's two ways of looking at that. One is to look at the people who you're naturally attracted to. Are you a hiker? If you hike a lot, join a local hiking club. Start there. Start with what your interests are and move out from there. There is research you can do."

"That's one way in terms of not taking an active approach to your target market, but by building up a clientele and going through the side door. But another way is if you want to figure out who your target market is, maybe you have someone in mind, like the hiking club."

"One of the things you could do is start getting literature from the hiking club. Talk to the people who coordinate the hiking club. Ask about the kind of members, who is attracted. What kind of occupations, what are the special interests of the group other than hiking that bring them there. Usually, those coordinators have that kind of information. Attend a meeting. Go to the local sporting goods store and talk to the manager. In some industries, there is access to statistics."

**In trying to determine whether a massage therapist wants to move to a new city, how can s/he figure out whether the market is already saturated?**

Sohnen-Moe: "First of all, you find out how many massage therapists are in the area. You can do that in several ways. One is the Yellow Pages under many different topics—under health care, massage, bodywork, look under chiropractic to see if they say 'we also offer massage.'"

"It's also wise to pick up any of the new age and holistic publications and look through them. You can call the chamber of commerce for statistics and talk about demographics. They'll send you the traditional demographics, how many people make a certain amount of money and what are the age groups of those who live in this zip code..."

"You can always go to the library. A lot of times we forget that the library has these kinds of resources. It's also good to pick up regular newspapers to see if there's anything there, but that can be hit or miss."

"I also recommend calling a couple therapists and asking them what they perceive it is, but you have to remember you don't know who you're talking to. You don't know if you're talking to somebody who's confident or if you're talking to someone who has scarcity consciousness and if they think another therapist is coming to town, they're going

to want to downplay it. Make a couple calls to chiropractors and physicians and see if they actually use massage therapy in conjunction with what they do to get a feel for the community and find out what's out there."

"Talk to nurses. Nurses know a lot and in general they tend to have a good pulse on the community. Perhaps not necessarily about massage therapy there, but they'll know how health in general is treated in the community. If you're doing something as serious as looking at where you're going to live, go there first in the worst time of the year. Find out what it's like."

"Make sure that you set up interviews so you can talk to people when you get there. Go to the bookstores. Go to any holistic health centers that are there and really see firsthand what it's like and that will give you a sense of what's out there and what's available. Look at the numbers. If there's a community of 1,000 people and there are 500 massage therapists, you know you're in trouble and it's not necessarily wise to move there."

"If there are no massage therapists, that's not necessarily good. Quite often, I see that as a nice open market, but it could be that no massage therapist has ever been welcome there. You need to check that out. You can also check out some of the local business groups."

"Do some research ahead of time, which means some letter writing, phone calls, particularly if you're thinking of moving. It's a big investment. Also look into the schools. Not just massage schools, but if there's a massage school there, that's a good sign that it's open in the community. Check and see what kind of courses are offered in the community colleges. There are ways that people can look to see the indirect atmosphere. That's more important, I think."

**If hired as a consultant by the massage and bodywork industry to improve its public image, what specifically would you do?**

Sohnen-Moe: "I would spend most of my budget on the grass roots movement, getting therapists out there doing presentations, getting involved in their chambers of commerce, to get out there and talk to every civic club and every business club and on a regular basis going out and doing demonstrations on massage, talking about massage, building up their visibility in the community. That has a bigger impact in the long run. It's also less expensive. People are doing that right now, but it's not done as a concentrated effort..."

**If hired by industry leaders to increase professional development, what would you suggest?**

Sohnen-Moe: "In how we could build the trade? We could spend more time in training within the school programs or continuing education, much more on communication and business. Really taking the time to interview clients, to learn how to hear what people are saying if they're not getting the words that are conveying the meaning, because they don't have the training and communication skills to learn how to go from there..."

**What are the most common mistakes made in developing a practice?**

Sohnen-Moe: "One of the biggest mistakes is not taking the time to plan. Too often we react and that's our modus operandi. Something happens and we react to it and we're not proactive in our business..."

"Some goals, just writing them down is enough. Most of them, it's not. The old cliché—inch by inch, anything's a cinch—really is true, and particularly with goal setting. So planning is a big one. Also, choosing the right support system—other colleagues that you can talk to and get feedback from."

“Also, it’s having the right people to support your business growth: a bookkeeper, an accountant. A lot of people don’t do this... Also having an attorney if you ever have a partnership or association, or a lease. Before you ever lease an office space, have an attorney look it over. We don’t think about that. It looks right, it looks good, and we don’t take the time. So there’s the technical aspects. It’s the same thing with being a bodyworker. You know what to look for. People come to you because they trust you with their body. And if you’re not trusting the other aspects of your business and life with the appropriate people, in a way it’s sort of presumptuous to expect people to do that with you.”

### **What are some of the most effective extra steps that massage therapists can do to help retain clients?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “Some of the little extra steps they can do, first of all, is review their client files before they work on a client. I say that sort of jokingly, but a lot of therapists don’t do that.

“In some ways some of those things we do in our profession have more of a therapeutic effect than our hands-on work. Remembering that, and empowering someone to get what they want, to make it easy. It’s hard. It’s so much easier to say, ‘Are you warm enough? Is this the right pressure?’ But it is much better to learn the different ways of asking the question.

“For example, if you’re working on someone and you notice that they look a little uncomfortable, maybe they’re moving their shoulder around and you’re not working on their shoulder. Take the initiative. You know it’s uncomfortable. Offer them a towel and say, ‘Here’s this. How would you like me to position this so you can be more comfortable?’

“Keep in mind that the clients don’t necessarily know how to communicate their needs and you can serve them best by acknowledging that to yourself. When you think there’s something, come up with a way to get their needs met...

“It can be scary, but I highly recommend that the therapist maybe once or twice a year do a blanket evaluation where they have all their clients fill one out. Make it really easy where they check off one to 10. Ask them different questions. Have some different comment sections. Make it fun—maybe everyone who fills one out gets in for a drawing to get a free massage, something to give them incentive to fill one out. A lot of people are uncomfortable doing that. Let them know it’s for your professional development so that you make sure as a therapist that you’re meeting your clients’ needs. Then they’ll fill them out.”

### **In your classes, do you talk about the ambiance in massage therapists’ session rooms?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “Yes, and that relates back to your whole image and your target market. It all coincides in your room. For me, what ambiance is in this therapeutic setting is really now the client feels they’re going to fit in...Having the right things, including the right kinds of artwork and posters combines into ambiance. It’s how they feel about themselves when they walk into your room.”

### **What exciting things are in the future for you?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “Well, I’ve got a couple more books I’m working on and that’s pretty exciting. One of the things that’s happened for me is that there’s a lot of information that I would like to expand upon, but it’s not a whole book’s worth, so I’m coming up with a little booklet series. That’s neat because those can continually be expanded, so those will always be current.

“One of my long range goals is to set up a retreat center designed mainly as a place for healers to rejuvenate and heal themselves at little cost. Given the intensity of the work we’re doing, and given it’s going to

increase profoundly, we need this. The center will be ecologically sound: solar powered, water reclamation, etc. I also envision this as being an educational center where the public can see ecology in action, attend open forums where practitioners describe different modalities and participate in workshops. I have a sense that this is going to happen soon!...

“I’m also working on writing a science fiction political thriller which is a nice change of pace for me. I love what I do. I love business and I love working in that arena, and I am an avid reader, particularly science fiction fantasy, personal growth and business. Those are the books that I read a lot. I really want to write that book. I’ve started it, and am actually co-writing it, and that’s a fun process too. That’s really exciting for me...”

### **Is there another edition to *Business Mastery* coming out?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “No, not for a long time...I’m pleased with it. There are some little changes. We’re running out of books, and instead of just reprinting them, for all you readers out there, we will repaginate it...”

“Another project to come out is that I’m going to come up with a computerized program to go along with the book. It’s not going to have the book text in it, but it will have the exercises, the forms and sample letters of introduction and things like that. People will have a packet, because that’s one of the things they ask for a lot...”

“That’s exciting for me because in terms of what I’d like to do with the booklets and with the products we carry in the catalog, it all comes from what the therapists have requested. Books are too expensive to produce for 20 pages of information, but with booklets and that computer program, it’ll be done and that’s really exciting. I’m really jazzed about that. The simpler it is, and that fits in with anything with marketing, the simpler I can make it for them, the more they’ll use it.”

### **Is there anything else you’d like to say?**

**Sohnen-Moe:** “The whole point of business and marketing and the strong stance that I take on this is to help therapists do what they love to do. That’s what it’s all about. Marketing is really all about educating the public on what you do, who you are, how you can support them in achieving their goals and to remember that the more people that are getting massaged, the better this planet’s going to be.

“Remind yourself that it doesn’t have to be hard, and also that you don’t have to do this alone. I’m not necessarily talking partners, but join forces with other therapists. I see a lot of this scarcity consciousness, whether it’s about money or ideas or you don’t want to share this because someone else will take it and do well with it. Particularly in massage, it’s much more effective when you’ve got two people doing a presentation. It’s very hard to do a demonstration and talk at the same time without getting out of breath. It’s a lot more fun. It takes away the loneliness that’s inherent in this profession, because even though you’re working with people every day, you’re not interacting with them as your peers, and it’s important to have that in your life...”

“The one thing that I would hope people would do is give real marketing and real business organization a chance to see how easy it can be after you’ve done it once or twice.

“After you’ve gone through and done a little promotion and particularly some kind of cooperative marketing venture, you’ll see how once you work out the little frizzy ends and all that, how exciting it can be and how much fun it can be and how everyone’s empowered you—the people involved and the clients you get. Keep perspective and keep touching.”

**Thank you, Cherie.**