



3. Core principles: pressure, direction, and intention

Core Principles in Kalari Uzhichil

1) Pressure — dose, depth, and tempo

Definition - Pressure is not just “how hard.” It is **depth × rate × contact area × time** delivered through a chosen tool (thumb, palm, forearm, heel). Changing any variable changes physiology—lymph needs light skin-stretch; fascia needs sustained, moderate depth; joints prefer traction more than compression.

Rule of thirds - Maximum working depth should stay within **one-third of the tissue thickness** under your contact. This preserves vessels and nerves around marmas and prevents capsular irritation.

Pain scale & consent - Keep perceived intensity $\leq 5/10$; if pain rises, you are recruiting guarding reflexes (unhelpful). Stay conversational: “Tell me when this reaches 4 out of 10.”

Enter-hold-exit ladder -

- **Enter** slowly (1-2 seconds) so mechanoreceptors adapt without alarm.
- **Hold** through **one to three exhalations** to let tone melt (Golgi assistance).
- **Exit** slower than entry to avoid rebound tightening.

Tempo guide (surface speed) -

- Lymph/skin: **3-5 cm/s** light stretch.
- Myofascial warm-up: **2-3 cm/s** fluent glides.
- Focal release: **0.5-1 cm/s** with minimal drift.

Tool logic -

- **Thumb** for sūkṣma marmas and small borders (precise, short lever).
- **Palm/forearm** for sthūla regions and long fascial lines (broad, energy-saving).
- **Heel/foot** for large posterior chains and decompression (deep, evenly distributed).

Thermal assist - Warm oil **38-40 °C** lowers tissue viscosity, reducing the force needed to achieve the same therapeutic depth—safer for nerves and your own joints.

Safety flags - Sudden “electric” zing (nerve), sharp stab (periosteum), or client breath-hold = back off, broaden contact, and slow tempo.

2) Direction — where the force travels and why it matters

Venous & lymph return - Work **distal → proximal** along limbs, but **clear proximal basins first** (inguinal/axillary) with light skin-stretch; then move distal fluid toward the cleared “gates.”

Fibre orientation -

- **Along-fibre** glides lengthen and hydrate; safest entry for most tissues.
- **Cross-fibre** (short, precise) is for matured adhesions—never on acutely inflamed tissue or directly over varicosities.

Joint logic -



- **Traction** (away from the joint) soothes capsules and decompresses nerves.
- **Approximation** (toward the joint) is brief and only for proprioceptive wake-up in stable joints.

Nerve glide - Nerves prefer **longitudinal, oblique loading** with limb movement. Pair ankle dorsiflexion with **Gulpha** work; pair elbow extension with **Kūrpara** holds.

Spiral lines - The body loads in spirals (thoracolumbar fascia, obliques). Use **oblique strokes** across ribs and hips to free rotation for **Vatta** turns and weapon forms.

Energetic axes - Start midline (**Suṣumṇā** sweep heel→occiput), then balance left/right (**Idā-Piṅgalā** with mirrored paraspinal glides), then address local marmas. Direction here is **central → lateral → focal**.

3) Intention — the quiet variable that changes outcomes

Definition - Intention is the therapist's **aim + state + attention** embedded in touch. In Kalari, the ethical frame is **ahimsā** (non-harm) and **sattva** (clarity).

Breath coupling - Begin deeper phases **on the client's exhale**; it signals safety to the nervous system. Keep your own breath audible and even; clients entrain subconsciously.

Clarity of aim - Pick **2-6 marmas** only; name your priority (e.g., "calm chest," "free sciatic glide"). Fewer, clearer targets create stronger systemic change.

Language & feedback - Short cues ("slow exhale... stay with warmth") reduce cognitive load. Ask for **one-word check-ins** (warm/cool, heavy/light) to steer dose without breaking the parasympathetic flow.

Endings matter - A **quiet crown or Hṛdaya hold** for 2-3 breaths "seals" autonomic gains; rushing off the table invites rebound tension.

4) Putting it together — three common scenarios

A) Cold low back with tight hamstrings (Vāta pattern) -

- **Pressure** - moderate, sustained; warm oil.
- **Direction** - distal→proximal leg glides, heel traction at sacrum; finish with midline sweep.
- **Intention** - grounding; long exhales; *Talahridaya* → *Gulpha* → *Ūrvi* then brief *Nābhi* spiral.
- **Expected shift** - lumbar warmth, slower breath, easier forward fold.

B) Hot shoulder tendinopathy (Pitta pattern) -

- **Pressure** - light-moderate, even tempo; avoid friction.
- **Direction** - along-fibre cuff glides, scapular upward-rotation support; avoid anterior capsule jamming.
- **Intention** - cooling and space; *Sthapanī* feather circles at close; coconut-manjistha oil.
- **Expected shift** - heat disperses, smoother abduction, no post-session flare.

C) Heavy legs with desk edema (Kapha pattern) -

- **Pressure** - light but brisk; brief podi-kizhi before holds.
- **Direction** - clear inguinal basins → distal→proximal calf/ankle → ankle pumps.
- **Intention** - lighten and mobilise; finish seated to avoid drowsiness.
- **Expected shift** - reduced heaviness, livelier gait.



5) Calibration drills for therapists

Pressure ladder - On a sandbag, deliver levels **2, 4, 6/10** with thumb, palm, and forearm; partner identifies the level blind. Train until your self-rating matches their report.

Direction compass - Tape arrows on a practice limb (along-fibre, cross-fibre, oblique). Perform each and note tissue feel and client descriptors; this builds a felt vocabulary.

Intention minute - 60 seconds of nasal breathing before sessions; set one sentence of aim ("free left shoulder rotation"). Recheck after the session—did choices match aim?

Summary Tables

A) Pressure decision grid

| Tissue/Target | Primary goal | Depth & tempo | Best tool | Stop sign |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Skin/lymph | Drain & calm | Feather-light, 3-5 cm/s | Palm pads | Pink streaking, itch |
| Superficial fascia | Hydrate & slide | Light-moderate, 2-3 cm/s | Palm/forearm | Guarding, breath-hold |
| Muscle belly | Tone reset | Moderate, hold on exhale | Forearm/palm | Sharp local pain |
| Tendon edge | Remodel | Short cross-fibre, slow | Thumb | "Electric" zing |
| Joint capsule | Decompress | Gentle traction, no jab | Heel/forearm | Pinch, instability |
| Sūkṣma marma | Neurovascular ease | Light, oblique, brief | Thumb pad | Numbness/tingle ↑ |
| Agni marma | Autonomic settle | Broad, indirect | Palm | Nausea, chest unease |

B) Direction cheat-sheet

| Goal | Direction choice | Why it works |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------|
| Reduce swelling | Distal→proximal after proximal "clear" | Uses valves/lymphangions |
| Free rotation | Oblique spirals across trunk/hip | Matches fascial helices |
| Ease nerve drag | Longitudinal with limb motion | Encourages nerve glide |
| Calm chest | Midline sweep sacrum→crown | Organises axis & breath |

C) Intention checklist

| Moment | Therapist action | Client cue you want |
|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Before depth | One minute breath, set aim | Shoulders drop, longer exhale |
| During hold | Quiet counting on exhale | Jaw softens, pulse eases under thumb |
| After work | Crown/heart seal, silence | Still gaze, warm hands/feet |

D) Dosha-guided dosing at-a-glance

| State | Temperature | Tempo | Point emphasis |
|------------------------|------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|
| Vāta ↑ (cold, erratic) | Warm | Slow | Talahridaya, Gulpha, Ūrvi, Nābhi |
| Pitta ↑ (hot, sharp) | Cool-neutral | Even | Sthapanī, Hṛdaya (broad), Ani (light) |
| Kapha ↑ (heavy, dull) | Warm-hot (brief) | Brisk | Gulpha, Jānu, Indrabasti |



Key take-aways

1. **Pressure is dosage**—enter slow, hold on exhale, exit slower; never exceed the tissue's one-third depth.
2. **Direction is strategy**—clear proximals first; follow fibres for safety, use obliques for rotation, and traction for joints.
3. **Intention is the multiplier**—a calm, focused therapist with a clear aim turns the same strokes into reliable therapeutic change.

Use this triad—**pressure, direction, intention**—as your moment-to-moment compass, and every Uzhichil session becomes targeted, ethical, and reproducible.

AYURVEDBHARATI.ORG