

Holistic

Therapist Magazine

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Foreword

Autumn News from Complementary Health Professionals

Another year has almost gone by and by the time this newsletter reaches you, we will all be planning for Christmas (provided it is not cancelled again!). It has been another strange year albeit in a different way. For one, we are still all having to wear PPE in clinics and training classes and despite a bit of a flurry when we were all able to open again, therapists are finding it hard to always have their diaries full. It would seem that people are still being very cautious about being out and about, especially the older population. We are sure that 2022 is going to be a better year and we as an organisation are working hard in the background to drive home the importance of complementary therapies as part of every day personal healthcare as well as being considered more as part of integrated healthcare within the NHS.



CPD Annual Conference

Despite all the issues, we were determined to have a face-to-face conference this year and we had a fantastic time in the new venue in

Croydon. From the feedback attendees provided, you all loved the venue for its space and having the tables. The catering was great (and there was plenty of food!), but we take on board that you would like some healthier options. We were restricted with what was offered, so will try and see if we have to resort to outside catering next year and what the costs are – bearing in mind that we do not charge you for either the conference itself or your food and drink. You all said how much you enjoyed the conference from meeting other therapists and having the ability to chat with like-minded folk to the amazing speakers and content. Thank you again to Carole, Dave, Meghan, Dan, Sarah and Caroline for their contributions. The theme idea and case study was also liked so we will be carrying that on into next year. So many of you commented that you were “buzzing” when you left, feeling inspired once again and we are so happy that we were able to give at least some of the membership a great uplift.

We have pencilled the 15th October 2022 in for next year – to be confirmed at a later date and next year’s theme has already been confirmed for musculoskeletal disorders. The planning and work never stops!



Therapy Awards 2021

This year we were delighted to award Jenny Gordon the CHP Therapist of the Year Award. Jenny has worked to set up a Reiki treatment centre within an NHS Hospital in a Day Centre for Mental Health clients, with remarkable success. Her huge number of nominees spoke of her commitment to providing outstanding support with Reiki, not only to clients but also to staff members where she has been able to de-mystify Reiki and demonstrate its efficacy. If you would like to find out more about how Jenny set up her service, she has written an article that is now up on the CHP website: <https://www.complementaryhealthprofessionals.co.uk/single-post/setting-up-a-reiki-clinic-within-a-nhs-mental-health-service>



We did not give a student award this year as most schools have been closed over the past 18 months or only open sporadically, so we felt it was best to put this one on hold until next year. Instead, we decided to award to Fellowships and these were to our esteemed colleagues at Jing Advanced Massage. Meghan Mari and Rachel Fairweather have been very active during lockdown, holding online support and information zoom meetings for therapists that we have been pleased to attend as their accrediting organisation.



continued...

They continue to push the boundaries of excellent teaching in massage and are the only training provider in the UK to offer what is a degree in Massage with the level 6 BTEC Award. Rachel was not able to attend the conference as she was teaching but Meghan, as one of the speakers was able to collect both awards.

National Complementary Therapy Week

We are meeting up with our accredited training providers shortly to discuss what we can put on during the week to get everyone excited about complementary therapies, which after all is the reason we sponsor this awareness week. We will have more information for you in the next newsletter, in the member's area of the CHP website and on social media in the New Year.

GCMT Meetings Update:

Carole has attended the GCMT AGM and three working group meetings since the last newsletter and a great deal of work is being done, and it is all really exciting. The mental health group is in the final stages of putting together what is an informative and useful document for therapists whose association is a member of GCMT and we will circulate it once it is complete and signed off by everyone. We are also working on a guidance document for soft tissue therapists to help protect them from solicitation. This is an ongoing problem for massage therapists in particular and we have come up with lots of ideas in an initial meeting already, including the potential use on a zero-tolerance logo that can be used by professional associations on their

public referral pages on their websites and also by therapists whose association is a GCMT member. We will of course keep you updated as well as with other work that is currently confidential.

Reiki Council Update:

Dan has been attending meetings and there is not a great deal to report at this time except that a new vice chair has been appointed and the Council is looking to upgrade its website to make it more informative and easier to navigate. If you would like to know more or would like to ask any questions about Reiki, or have any suggestions for the next Council meeting, please contact Dan on dan@complementaryhealthprofessionals.co.uk

CNHC Meeting update:

Both Carole & Julie attended the CNHC Verifying Organisations meeting on 15th August and we participated in workshops with other therapy groups to help the CNHC with its marketing. We were informed that the CNHC no longer has an office but as with many other organisations, everyone is now working from home. Their new official address is now in Bristol. We were updated on the Professions Standards Authority that has now increased its price quite substantially, which is one of the reasons the CNHC relinquished its lease in its London office. There are now two new categories on the Register, which are Sports Therapy and Kinesiology but they will not be adding any more new therapies. The reason for this is that without Government authorised National Occupational Standards (NOS), they cannot add anymore. In the noughties, the Department of Health

facilitated the NOS for all the therapies currently available, but any new ones would have to be paid for by the individual therapies, and these would be quite costly. Fortunately, CHP is not restricted and we are able to accredit and recognise many therapies outside of those with a NOS. We just require that good written standards exist for each therapy that we work with.



At present, there are around 6500 Registrants on the CNHC register. 2035 of these are nutritional therapists, 896 are massage therapists, 260 are aromatherapists, 866 reflexologists, 60 Shiatsu practitioners, 144 Yoga Therapists, 37 craniosacral therapists, 50 Sports Massage Therapists, 98 Bowen therapists, 1045 Hypnotherapists, 43 Microsystems, 63 Healers, and 316 Reiki practitioners.

If you would like to be on the CNHC Register for your therapies, it costs £70 per annum for your first therapy and £10 for each additional therapy up to your 4th discipline, after which there is no fee for additions. We all of the paperwork for CNHC free of charge as a member (charged at £20 per therapy for non-members) and you can find the form in the members area of the CHP website.





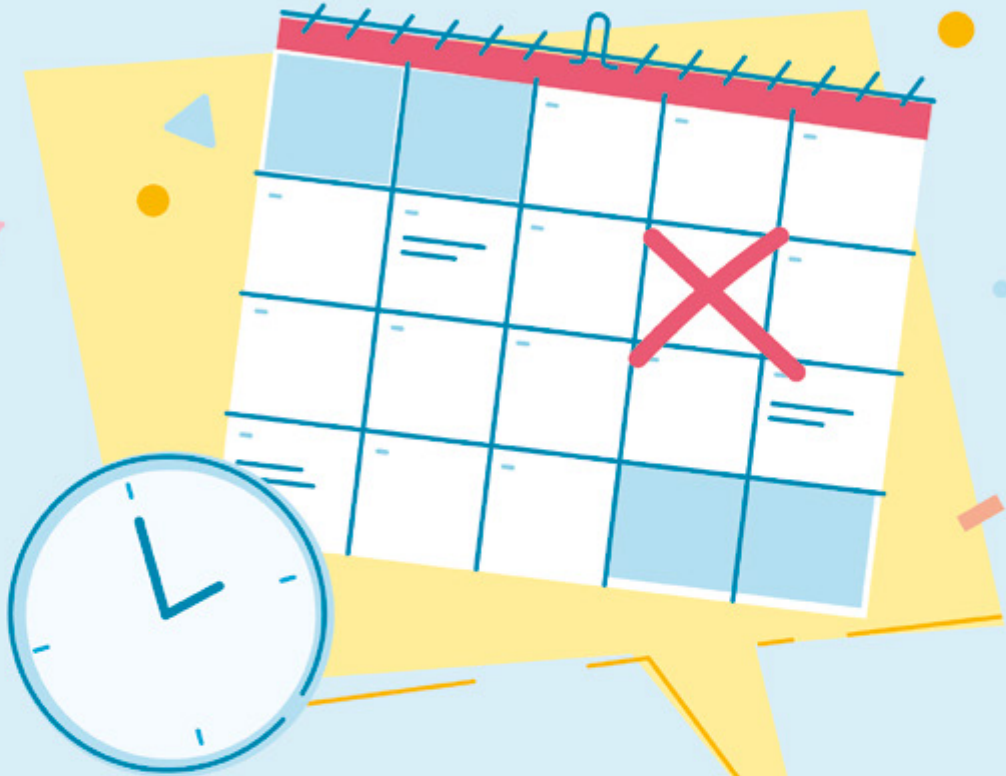
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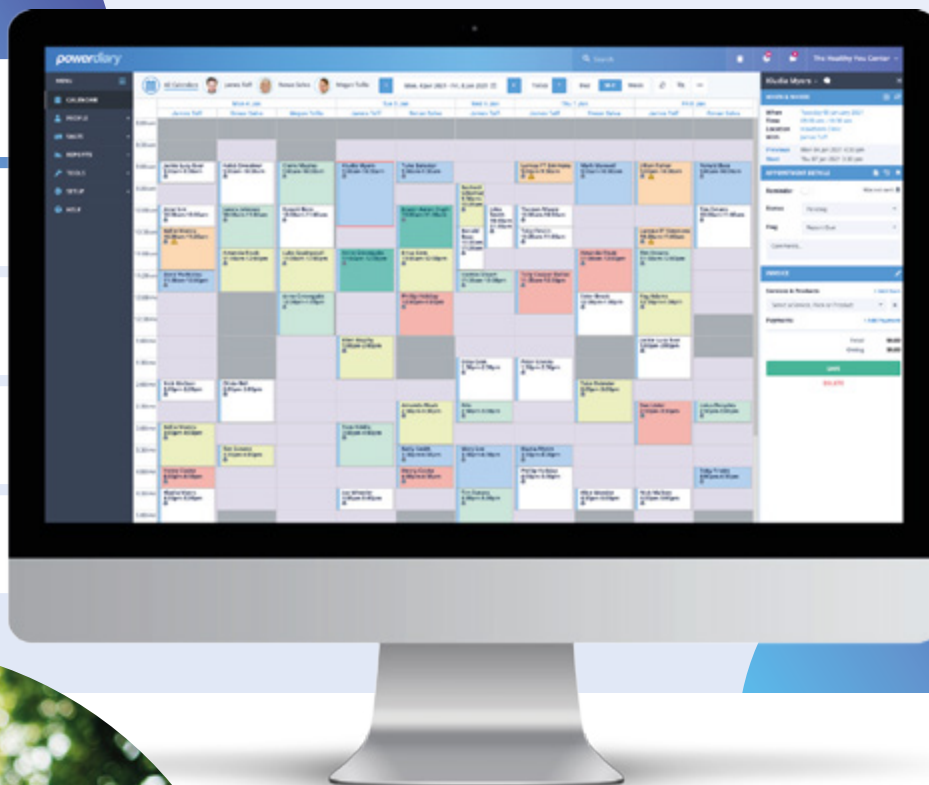
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Editor's Letter



Hello again,

I'm usually a calm and laid back person, but the other day I found myself caught up in a tide of public anger. The Lancet, that esteemed journal produced by the British Medical Association, was being castigated for its seeming misogynist cover line. It read, "Historically, the anatomy and physiology of bodies with vaginas have been neglected." In the words of their editor-in-chief's subsequent apology, they, "conveyed the impression that we have dehumanised and marginalised women."

Like many others, I was disappointed, though not surprised, by this apparent reduction of women to mere vessels for their reproductive equipment. It's an attitude that many women still come up against in the dealings with the medical profession.

Unlike many others, I located the article online and read every single word of it.

The cover sentence had been truncated. The article was about an exhibition at the Vagina Museum, which sought to explore and demystify menstruation. The actual copy read, "Historically, the anatomy and physiology of bodies with vaginas have been neglected—for example, the paucity in understanding of endometriosis and the way women's pain has been seen as more likely to have an emotional or psychological cause, a hangover from centuries of theorising about hysteria."

I find nothing to disagree with in the full sentence. It takes an average of eight years for a woman to get a diagnosis of endometriosis. That's eight years of agonising pain and fertility issues. Eight years of being dismissed by doctors and told it's all in their head. We know too, that new drugs tend to be tested on young men, rather than a full spectrum of the population. We know that women are often palmed off with paracetamol and anti-depressants. That's why you'll find several articles that deal with issues that affect women disproportionately in the magazine this time. We're looking at autoimmune disorders, including fibromyalgia, why the menopause might be the next big thing in marketing and exploring the world of people trafficking in the UK's massage parlours.

There's a lesson here for us all about getting the whole story. About looking beyond the headlines and the hysteria they are designed to provoke. About recognising that controversy and division sells newspapers or creates viral content. In a world of misinformation, we need to critically evaluate everything we read and everything we are told. We'll continue to do our best to be a trusted source of information for all holistic therapists – whether that's bringing you the latest consumer trends, sharing research papers or looking at the role healing plays within the NHS.

Love, Alison and everyone at Holistic Therapist x

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OUR THANKS TO HEIKE LÜCK-KNOBLOCH, ELIZABETH ASHLEY, ASHLEY KOLESNIK, HILARY BROWN AND ALL THE OTHER CONTRIBUTORS AND THOSE BEHIND THE SCENES WHO HELPED OUT TO GET THIS ISSUE TO PRINT. SPECIAL THANKS TO KAREN YOUNG AT THE FHT, WHO IS GOING FREELANCE. YOU'VE BEEN A JOY TO WORK WITH.

Openers

The latest from the world of holistic health and beyond...



HOLLY WILLOUGHBY SUPPORTS HOLISTIC THERAPIES

Morning TV presenter Holly Willoughby has created a new lifestyle platform called Wylde Moon which focuses on wellness and spirituality. Holly discovered her spiritual side while in Australia filming for I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!

Within a day, the platform's Instagram account had amassed almost 70,000 followers. Holly is following in the footsteps of celebrity wellness gurus such as Gwyneth Paltrow and Jessica Alba. PR experts have suggested that the Wylde Moon brand could be worth £6-£12 million within a year, as the wellness market grows as we emerge from the pandemic. Wylde Moon has several sections including Wylde Women, Wylde Beauty, Wylde Moonboard and Wylde Podcast, the latter launching with an inspiring



conversation with Lena Dunham. For Holly, the approach to wellness is very individual. She explained, "I have things in my own hypothetical toolkit, like meditation and sound baths that really work for me. I really think it's all about finding what works for you, whether that's going for a run, talking to a friend, or dancing around the kitchen in your pants with a margarita in your hand."

FLORIDA CONSIDERS GREENLIGHTING RESEARCH INTO PSYCHEDELICS

Democrats in the Florida state senate have brought forward a bill which would require the state to research the medical benefits of psychedelics such as psilocybin and MDMA. If the bill was passed, the state's Department of Health would be directed to "conduct a study evaluating the therapeutic efficacy of alternative therapies" such as those substances, as well as ketamine, "in treating mental health and other medical conditions," including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, chronic pain



and migraines.

A similar law was passed in Texas earlier this year, but focussed on researching substances to support military veterans with PTSD.

ARIZONA: ENTIRE MASSAGE REGULATORY BOARD REPLACED

In late September, Arizona's Governor Ducey removed and replaced all five members the Arizona State Board of Massage Therapy in the wake of a newspaper's critical report about the occupational regulatory body's handling of complaints about alleged sexual abuse by therapists.

The newspaper report concluded that the board was lax in disciplining therapists accused of abuse. Three of the five new members have experience in victim advocacy and support. The other two are both licensed massage therapists with more than 25 years of experience.

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WORDS OF WISDOM...

Happiness cannot be travelled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude.

Denis Waitley

NEW YORK: ILLEGAL MASSAGE PARLOURS PROLIFERATE

The New York Post has reported that at least 629 illicit massage businesses have been discovered across the city. The Post reported that this was 200 more than the city's network of subway stations and also outnumbered Starbucks coffee shops by 2 to 1 citywide. Many of the illicit parlours are located in plain sight and appear to be functioning as normal massage businesses, leading to problems and loss of business for registered massage therapists. However, online, the illicit businesses are often reviewed by customers or advertised for providing "sexy" "full-body" massages or "happy-endings," according to the Post. Some are known to provide full-service sex, while others provide masturbation or groping services. According to specialist researchers at Heyrick Research, "as of mid-



2021, there were approximately 11,000 illicit massage businesses in the USA. The overarching trend has been a steady increase in the numbers since we started measuring in late 2016. The illegal massage parlour industry is estimated to pull in as much as \$4.5 billion in annual revenue across the U.S., according to a report from Forbes earlier this year. That accounts for about one-quarter of the overall \$16 billion massage services industry in the country.

TRY THIS... TREAT TRUNK SNACK SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you find yourself too rushed to eat, try Treattrunk.co.uk. Their subscription service will post you a box crammed with delicious vegan treats every month. You can even order a one-off box and there are options for adults or children with delicious snacks from lots of smaller ethical UK based snack brands featured.



PHARMA NORD OFFERS FREE CPD AND LIVE SEMINAR PROGRAMME

Independent supplement manufacturer Pharma Nord is offering health practitioners free CPD certified services including a 20 module e-learning platform and highly topical live webinars. The seminars, which are delivered by leading health practitioner educators, include topics such as nutrition in longevity which explores age-related health and wellness. The programme builds on Pharma Nord's long-standing commitment to scientific advancement, through the provision of pharmaceutical quality



supplements, medical products and continued work in nutritional research.

For further information please email training@pharmanord.co.uk

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DID YOU KNOW?

A survey of over 41,000 women in the UK showed that just 19% are wearing the correct bra size. That explains why so many women abandon their bra when they get home from work. Women's bodies

changing with hormones, age, having children and weight fluctuations, yet we rarely get professionally measured. Poorly fitting bras can lead to bad posture, sore backs and shoulder pain.

READING FOR 10 MINUTES A DAY HELPS TRANSFORM YOUR WELL-BEING, CREATIVITY AND HUMAN PERFORMANCE

Professor Angus Fletcher says that reading a story for just 10 minutes a day works wonders for a person's mental well-being and creativity. Watching a drama on TV, listening to a play on the radio and being read a story are just as effective as it is all to do with losing yourself in another world rather than the act of reading itself.

Different kinds of stories are can alleviate the whole gamut of emotions from grief, trauma and loneliness to love, empathy and joy – and have been clinically proven to do so.

“Our world has become addicted to computer technology and we're putting more and more of that into human heads. And what we should doing instead is encouraging our kids and ourselves to read a little bit more.

“We don't need to read a lot,



just a little bit each day, and over time that reading grows and helps sustain you and strengthen you and give back to you in a way that say social media would never do.”

He added, “A small amount of literature every day has the power to radically change our human performance. When I was working with US special operations we were talking about 10 minutes a day. This is enough to gives us emotional resilience and intellectual resilience.”

TRY THIS... MOVE A LITTLE MORE

A new study from the University of Massachusetts Amherst shows that walking at least 7,000 steps a day reduced middle-aged people's risk of premature death from all causes by 50% to 70%, compared to that of other middle-aged people who took fewer daily steps. *Ref: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.24516*



AWARENESS DAYS

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

With continuing uncertainty over exhibitions and industry events, we've gathered a selection of awareness days which you can use for social media posts and marketing campaigns...

8-14 – North West Sexual violence Awareness Days

9-12 – Talk Money Week

9 – Social Media Kindness Day

11-14 – Anti-bullying Week

16-21 – Road Safety Week

16-21 – Book Week Scotland

18 – Word Pancreatic Cancer Day

25 – Thanksgiving (USA)

NOVEMBER

November is COPD Awareness Month in the USA and Movember in the UK.

November is an awareness month for Men's Health issues.

1-6 – Global Prebiotics Week

2-5 – International Stress Awareness Week

4-9 – National Spa Week

6 – National Stress Awareness Day

DECEMBER

2 – International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

6-12 – Illumination Street Week

12 – National Day of Workplace Remembrance

31 – National Champagne Day (USA)

UNREGISTERED MASSEUR JAILED FOR SEXUAL ASSAULTS AGAINST CLIENTS

An unqualified and unregistered massage therapist has been jailed for three years for sexually assaulting four female clients while giving them naked massages. Callum Urquhart, 38, was convicted of six charges of sexual assault and also made subject to a sexual harm prevention order banning him from advertising or engaging in paid or unpaid massage services.

Rob Welling, prosecuting, said Urquhart would carry out the massages at the women's homes, as well as at his own, in incidents which date back to 2018. He said the victims had been left “ashamed”, “confused” and “angry” at the assaults.

“The defendant would lift the towel off in an unnecessary fashion in the course of the lengthy massage. The defendant touched her around the area of her naked groin on numerous occasions.” Mr Welling added that Urquhart would also rub his own groin against his victim's hand. “She became



increasingly panicked as the massage progressed to the point where she wanted desperately to get rid of him and she texted her sister and partner who got a neighbour to come and pretend to fix the boiler and managed to get rid of him.”

Sentencing the 38-year-old at Winchester Crown Court, Judge Angela Morris told him, “None of these women had agreed to receive anything apart from a conventional massage and on each occasion, they were vulnerable and exposed. You exploited the situation for your own sexual gratification.”



FUTURE-PROOF YOUR PRACTICE

*The world has changed.
From new technologies,
new thinking and
evolving consumer
trends, CAM Coach
Mark Shield explains
how to adapt and
thrive...*

THE business landscape has changed and these changes affect everyone from the sole practitioner to global corporations. The challenge is to meet the emerging needs of your clients and thrive in this new psycho-social-economic environment. Everyone has been changed by the pandemic. Many feel their lives will never be the same again.

Over half of the UK's workforce still works from home. Major cities suffer from a lack of daily commuters and a wave of people selling their homes or moving out of rented accommodation to the coast or areas that offer more for their money now they don't need to be physically close to their workplace. More than a quarter of us are leaving their jobs and taking on new careers. Many are going part time and investing more of their time on pursuing lifelong hobbies and interests. In short, many people are changing their approach to life. Mental wellbeing, self-actualisation and sustainability act as a catalyst for this change. We are recognising that we live in the now and people want to live more fulfilled, satisfying lives.



Over half of us are still limiting travel and not visiting restaurants or pubs. Many admit that social anxiety as a major factor in how they are living their daily lives.

So, what will be the impact on our holistic therapist businesses and how are we going to ensure we can continue to successfully meet the demands of our clients within the parameters the challenge of the new world brings us? The key thing is to understand the changes holistic therapists will need to make because of these emerging consumer trends. We'll be focusing mainly on talking therapies in this feature, because this will be a major growth area and can be delivered online as well as face to face. That includes life coaches, psychologists, psychotherapists, nutritional therapists and health coaches. Qualifying in a talking therapy – or any therapy that can be delivered in a distance format – is one of the best ways of future-proofing your business.

Many such coaches now deliver all their services remotely and have access to a much wider pool of clients globally. Some have seen their income treble. Demand is surging and likely to remain high, with only around 10% of clients preferring face to face appointments. On my own courses, about 40% of new students are experienced bodyworkers such as massage therapists and physiotherapists who want to have a second income stream should further lockdowns disrupt business operations.

Future-proofing your business

As we move into 2022, it's clear that physical therapists will continue to gain new qualifications so they can work remotely. Talking therapists will nearly all be working virtually and the majority of personal trainers and Pilates teachers will continue to offer many of their services remotely often working with people all over the world in sessions of up to a hundred people over Zoom. They are not limited by logistics and can coach clients from anywhere in the world without geographical limitations.

Working by phone or skype offers many advantages. Your clients don't become distracted by the way you look or the surroundings of your practice room. They don't feel nervous about how they appear on camera. Most coaches find that their overheads drop significantly while you can charge a similar level for your sessions. Remote coaching is very relaxing and convenient. You

are able to RUN in your session from any location that you wish without the hassle and delays of travelling. Clients can gain direct access to world leading experts whilst coaches open up their market to an international audience.

We know people are far more comfortable on the telephone. Telephone coaching is done in complete privacy. Nobody knows what you are doing. You are simply on the telephone. To some privacy is of utmost importance. You will be able to enjoy the session without the fear of anyone watching or listening.

Remote coaching is much more popular from a time management perspective for both clients and coaches. For clients they don't have the stress of worry of travel time, getting parked, journeying to and from the coach's location. For coaches it is the same and they can fit many more clients in their diary.

Looking ahead

No one can predict the future. We did not see COVID coming or even realise its ravaging effects on us physically, mentally and economically. A lot of successful businesses have had to close through no fault of their own and no amount of pre-planning would have helped them. What we now know is that as business owners we have to think fast and pivot quickly.

Surveys suggest that consumer confidence is slowly coming back. The vaccination programme has meant that more of us feel able to return, albeit slowly, to some sort of normality. There are no guarantees that the current vaccine will continue to work as new variants emerge.

With this in mind, if your business has been affected drastically by closures and lockdowns then looking into training in other modalities and working remotely maybe be the answer to future-proof your business. Looking into other income streams too like selling products related to your discipline; writing books using your expertise or offering online courses related to your discipline are all possibilities.

Attitudes have certainly changed with regards to delivery of face to face activities and social interactions and you can see that many gyms, Pilates studios and fitness hubs have kept an online presence going despite bringing back

face to face sessions. The same can be said for talking therapists. The remote in person mix can offer the best of both worlds for clients and therapists.

Focus on the way your clients communicate to get the right mix for them. This can really help us to understand how they may be feeling in terms of their confidence to use our business services. Consumer confidence will also vary depending on socio-economic demographics and mental outlook of your clients.

So there you have it. How to pivot and future proof your CAM business throughout 2022 and beyond. We are witnessing a massive shift from face to face to online and remote services. If you still have reservations, my advice is give it a go and see how you get on. I'm sure you will be pleasantly surprised. ■



MARK SHIELDS

is often given the accolade of being amongst the UK's leading NLP and Coaching experts, known as the CAM COACH named after his book of the same name Mark Shields today works with delegates from all corners of the world who choose the Life Practice Academy as their to learn the powerful Life Practice Transformational Coaching Methodology and proven CAM COACH success in business strategies. Find out more at <https://courses.thecamcoach.com/p/home>

Embracing CHANGE

In order to thrive, businesses need to embrace change, but how can you identify what you need to do differently, or maybe even stop doing?

ONE of the main differences between a business that thrives and one which fails is their willingness to embrace change and understand what's happening in their marketplace before they are left behind.

This lack of flexibility and knowledge is reflected in business failure rates. The official statistics show that 20%

of new businesses will have closed within 12 months, 60% will fail within three years and according to the Office for National Statistics, under

half will survive beyond five years. The statistics vary from region to region, and some sectors, such as restaurants, have much higher failure rates, but each failure is the death of someone's dream.

We need, therefore, to be able to recognise when our business needs to change. This might mean operational changes, such as new opening hours or ways of working, but it can also mean changes in ourselves and our relationships to our businesses and our clients.

Start with some questions

The best way to figure out what needs to change is to start by asking yourself some questions about your life and business. You may come up with some surprising insights, especially if you've been in business a few years and everything is just trundling along nicely.

Look back over the past year or two and ask yourself:

Does my business meet or exceed my financial requirements?

Do I seem to need to work harder than I should to make enough money?

Does my business make me feel happy and fulfilled?

Does I still feel excited and enthusiastic about my work?

Do I feel exhausted at the end of the day?

Does the business make me feel anxious, unwell or stressed?

Am I making progress?

Do I feel fulfilled in my working life?

Am I happy with my working environment?

Am I happy with those I work with?

Do I like the majority of my clients?

Am I having a positive impact on those I treat and work with?

Do I look forward to my working day?

Do my customers feel they get a good service?

Do they ask about new treatments I know nothing about?

Is my industry knowledge and training up to date?

Add in any other questions that occur to you as part of this process.

Stuck in a rut?

It may be that this exercise shows you a few areas where you are not happy with your business or the balance between it and other aspects of your life. It's easy to stop developing as a person and as a therapist. You may be stuck in a rut or have allowed self-limiting negative beliefs to hold you back from achieving your goals.

You now need to consider what you need to do differently to have the business and life you want. That sounds simple, but making real and lasting change is difficult for many of us. Using your answers to the questions above, ask

yourself which you can change and which are beyond your control. Some factors may group together, so you need not deal with each matter individually. Let's take some examples.

Example A: Sarah Jane

Sarah-Jane feels overworked and undervalued. She works in a hotel spa and regularly experiences conflict with co-workers, particularly her spa manager. She feels she doesn't get sufficient time between appointments or to listen to her clients.

What changes does Sarah need to make? It looks like she's working in the wrong environment and wants more control over the way she works with her clients. She might want to consider looking for opportunities in other local spas, or consider working for herself as part of a longer term change. She could explore free start-up training and check for vacancies at holistic centres. As an interim step, she could try to reduce her hours at the hotel spa and perhaps take a room at a holistic centre or beauty salon one day a week to build up her own clientele.



Example B: Frances

Frances in her early sixties and has been in practice for almost 35 years. She offers the same aromatherapy-based treatments and reflexology as she has always done. She's been operating out of the same basement premises all that time and her client base is shrinking. Everything, including Frances, looks a bit tired and washed out.

Frances may decide that she needs to inject some new ideas into her practice and her life. Possible changes might include redecorating her practice rooms, or undertaking some training in an additional modality or some new techniques. She could also look at additional services such

as custom blending essential oils and producing her own product line, perhaps in room sprays or skincare products.

She needs to actively seek out more clients too. She could start by asking her clients for referrals. She might consider revamping - or even creating - her website and using social media more often, incorporating online advertising and traditional marketing and PR. She could seek help from her local enterprise or business development organisation to help with this.

Alternatively, she may decide it's time to wind the business down and move towards retirement.

Example C: Bryan

Bryan has recently qualified in Kinesiology and sports massage. He has little business experience but is currently working from 8am to 8pm six days a week in a room rented from the local amateur rugby club he plays for. 90% of his clients come for sports injury treatment and he feels his kinesiology qualification may be wasted. Despite a full workload, he's not making that much money as he's still charging mates rates of £20 per hour. He doesn't feel that he has sufficient experience to charge more and feels he might lose a lot of clients. He sees up to ten clients a day.

So, what changes does Bryan need to make? Firstly, he needs to recognise that he's heading for burn out and needs to charge a competitive rate for his skills. He needs to work out what his income and overheads really are and do some research into what other sports massage specialists are charging locally. He will need to learn to value his own skills and counter the fear of losing clients. If he put his fees up to £50 per hour, and lost half his clients as a result, he would still be better off at the end of the week and have time to build the business he wants.

Making changes

When you go through this exercise, it's important to recognise that some changes are easier than others and some have more impact on your business and life. If you have difficulty implementing change in your work or life, then it can be a good idea to start with small, easy to manage changes, like a new advertising sign or painting your practice room a calming colour. Profound changes take more planning, but only you can decide what those changes need to be. Only you can make them. ■



WHAT CLIENTS WANT NOW

Malcolm Sloan, of SIF.Health Clinic Software, looks at the way consumer behaviour is changing...

CONSUMER behaviour is constantly evolving and business textbooks are littered with examples of companies that have failed to understand what customers want and failed to adapt to meet those needs - Kodak and Blockbuster being high profile pre COVID-19 pandemic examples. In the last 18 months, the pace of change has accelerated and those that have adapted have thrived.

What has been the impact on our industry? Well, the good news is that the trends relating to the health and wellness sector are going the right way. Compared to 2-3 years ago 51% of people have increased wellness as a priority with only 9% decreasing it. According to McKinsey, the global management consultants, 79% of people now believe that their

wellness is important and 42% consider it a top priority.

It's mirrored in the workplace with, "make health and wellbeing of staff a core priority for the top level of management" being one of the top recommendations of a 2019 study by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence study into Workplace Health.

Consumer behaviours have changed in other ways too which may mean you need to adapt to take advantage of these changing behaviours.

People are moving away from wanting to pay for knowledge; they can get an abundance of that from the internet, family and contacts which can be overwhelming and of dubious quality. What they will pay for is trusted advice and outcomes as outlined in the best-selling book *The Trusted Advisor*.

Consumers are also more empowered than ever before; it's been referred to as the Customer 4.0 revolution. There is a need to fit into their world. They have a proliferation of choice, hyper-connectivity and distractions meaning attention spans are consistently reported to be declining, now below 10 seconds, and more than 6 out of 10 workers struggle to keep their life organised with everything they have going on.

In a recent study of 2,000 adults in the UK by NordVPN it showed a typical adult spends 59 hours a week online

It means that they spend money where there is a clear value proposition that grabs their attention. For example, many holistic businesses have a long list of services without a clear value proposition. This creates two problems. Too much choice can create analysis paralysis and a lack of a decision. A list of services also requires the potential client to already know and understand what that service is and whether it solves their problem which can create confusion instead of a booking.

It should come as no surprise to know that the time consumers are spending online is increasing too. In a recent study of 2,000 adults in the UK by NordVPN it showed a typical adult spends 59 hours a week online. That's the equivalent of more than two full days! As such, it is less a question now of should you have an online presence for your business but more a case of what type of online presence.

So, consumers are increasingly more aware of their health and wellbeing, it is harder to get their attention, they expect companies and services to make it easy to fit into their world and they spend increasing amounts of time online.

Those who will be most successful are those

who truly understand who their target customers are, the channels they can best reach them and having a clear value proposition that resonates.

A useful exercise is to think through the situation of your perfect client being online looking for help and ask yourself:

- Where/how would they be looking?
- How easy is it to find me?
- How clear is it that I can solve their problem?
- How easy is it for them to book with me?
- What are the other options they would see? How clear are they and how easily can they get help?

Running through different scenarios and stories can help. If your clients work or have children etc. then, when is their down time to search for help? When children go to bed? If someone is searching for help online at 8pm what happens?

Another trend that is helpful is that software is no longer expensive and the sole preserve of big companies. Even part-timers can have incredibly helpful clinic/practice management software for only a few pounds a month that

saves them time, gets them more bookings and gives a very

professional customer journey easily

paying back the cost and much more. Good ones will offer free trials with no credit card needed and a support package of calls, screen shares etc. to help you get set up and thrive whatever your level of technical ability. Popular UK ones include SIF Health and TM3.

Given the change in consumer behaviours, having an online presence rarely leads to fewer bookings. Likewise, clients expect and need automated email and SMS reminder to

stop expensive no shows happening. There is then the bonus of being able to maximise the time for each appointment due to no longer having to watch clients complete paper forms but automating the sending and completion of them. Such actions can even help with clients with anxiety who may feel uncomfortable making that initial phone call, especially amongst the younger generations.

What is great is that all of these changes to make it easier for the clients also save you an incredible amount of time whilst still giving you complete control. No more manual reminders, watching people fill out forms, filing etc.

Having said all of this, the key part to all of it is understanding your target market. A recent coaching client had spent hours curating, significant sums promoting their Facebook page with a Facebook ads marketer and, whilst she got a few leads, they were not the right clients for her. When she took the time to understand her market then it was people that typically weren't on Facebook. A well-executed relationship building exercise with the local parish council and women's institute meant she quickly created a steady pipeline of her target clients with minimal marketing spend.

The pandemic has been an incredibly difficult time and sadly has led to a number of therapists closing their doors. However for those of you still trading or starting out it means less competition, more demand and especially more demand for holistic services with far more mainstream acceptability of such services and an ever-increasing list of high-profile endorsements and academic studies supporting the benefits.

Yes, changes have happened but there are some simple steps you can take that not only benefit your clients but make your life a lot easier too, so what are you waiting for? ■



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CASE STUDY

From the ashes

Sally Chamness shares how her business was resurrected after being gutted by fire...

After a decade in IT, I wanted a career that made a positive difference to people's lives. My introduction to massage came when I was training for fun runs and half-marathons while living in Kentucky. I fell in love with massage and wanted to learn more. My massage therapist suggested the school she had attended, which focussed on evidence-based practice and helping people through pain. It was tough, attending class several nights a week and working full time. No sooner had I graduated, life intervened and my husband and I decided to return to Scotland. What a better way to start a new career than in my hometown?

My goal when I opened my clinic was to bring massage for pain relief and rehabilitation to the forefront. We called it Wee Sally Therapeutic Massage. The business flourished. By the time we celebrated our eighth year, we had a team of nine. We'd outgrown the premises and the name.

Looking back I wasn't prepared for the amount of people management involved. I struggled with the personality conflicts that arose. I focused on the service we offered clients and hoped everything would work itself out. It didn't. When the premises burnt down in August 2019, my hand was forced.

Some people told me that it was the right time to walk away, but I couldn't desert my clients. Others see fire as cleansing and I really believe that now. The initial impact of the fire was intense. I spent the

first few days covered in soot, crying and trying to work out what I was going to do. Most of our therapists were self-employed and had to move on to other things, because the repairs would take months.

When re-opening the clinic I knew things had to change. We switched to an employee model and promoted one of our senior therapists to Clinic Manager so that I had assistance in managing the clinic, and I had someone I could receive support from when things were difficult.

Our finances were devastated, but thanks to the goodwill of our landlords, we had the breathing space to get back on our feet. Despite my concerns, most of our clients returned when we reopened.

Dealing with the fire was a huge struggle personally.

It felt like I was permanently stuck in fight or flight mode, I'm still hyper-vigilant about electrical equipment in the clinic and I had difficulty switching off and sleeping well.

Bouncing back hasn't been easy, especially as Covid swiftly followed our recovery from the fire, but I am holding on with white knuckles.

I know the work we do at the clinic makes a difference, and as long as I can continue to do that, I will.

The fire gave us the opportunity to rebrand, and create a business that was team-focussed and full of passion. Phoenix just felt right, as it symbolised the business rising from the ashes. As holistic therapists, we often learn our biggest lessons from working on ourselves. Through exploring my own self-care needs I found floatation therapy really helped me. It disconnects you from the stresses of everyday life and social media. I decided to install West Lothian's first floatation therapy pod.

The next stage in our rebirth from the flames is to offer self-care classes and become a community hub for preventative care and self-care. We're also creating an apprenticeship scheme to bring new therapists into the field. ■



Find out more at www.phx-wellness.com.



Dealing with

POST-COVID

anxiety

Donna Booth offers some advice for coping with post-COVID anxiety, whether it's you or your customers who are worried about coming back to the practice room...

AS I write this, things are opening up and it finally looks as though there might be some light at the end of the COVID tunnel. That said, in many places, infection rates are rising, particularly amongst younger people. As the virus has mutated, so have our attitudes towards it.

While it is wonderful to have some hope after such a tough time, some worry and anxiety around opening up again is also natural. You may have had to drastically adapt your business or close it completely in response to the pandemic. These were many months when clients were unable to come for treatments,

classes or retreats and you might have noticed a reluctance in them to return. As you move back to working in person, you might be concerned about the risk of infection. Perhaps the venues you used are no longer available or suitable and you might be unsure of booking sessions with the threat of cancellation hanging over you. There are things that need to be taken into consideration to allow everyone to enjoy the benefits of returning to in-person working, while minimising the associated stress and anxiety.

During the enforced isolation of the pandemic, people have been suffering from a lack of human contact and connection. Even though life may have

slowed down for some people, it has been much busier for those on the front line and in essential services. Everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has been existing in a constant state of fight or flight, with even the things we could previously do almost on autopilot taking considerable thought and planning. This has led to exhaustion, confusion and brain fog. Our brains are over-stimulated and under-stimulated at the same time. I doubt there has been a time when our services as holistic therapists have been more needed, but it is important that your offering lowers the stress response in your client (and yourself) rather than adding to the already overwhelming load.

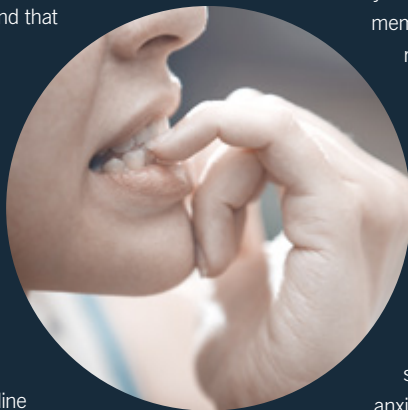
If you are anxious, your energy will affect your client's experience. Self-care is survival and the first step to easing your client's post-COVID anxiety is to manage your own. It can be tempting, when your income has been affected by months of reduced work, to jump straight into a full

workload. Try to avoid this. Look at your schedule – how many clients can you realistically see in a day without feeling burned out? You will need extra time between clients for cleaning and after being starved of human connection, it might be good to allow a little time between sessions to allow a slower goodbye and chat. This, as well as any new venue costs, might mean you will have to review your prices. Do not undervalue what you do and charge accordingly. You are providing a very important and much needed service.

Whatever your industry or way of working, keep in mind that everyone is suffering from post-COVID anxiety

Being prepared is a great antidote to anxiety. Allow time for extra cleaning. Familiarise yourself with the COVID guidelines for your industry. If you are a member of an industry body, they will provide detailed guidelines and often a COVID compliance course. These can take away a lot of the uncertainty and save time. If you aren't, make sure you are familiar with the rules and that you follow them. Create a checklist for new clients and between sessions. You might also want to create an information sheet for your clients – it is reassuring for them to know you are following guidelines.

If you don't already use one, consider an online booking system. Clients can book, reschedule, cancel, and pay for their sessions easily and quickly online. You can



provide registration forms and the guideline sheets mentioned above. Booking systems save time, paperwork, and the need to handle cash. They can also send reminders, reducing the number of dreaded 'no-shows'. Make your cancellation policy clear.

You will probably have made some adaptations to your business during the pandemic. Perhaps you have moved classes online or are offering Zoom workshops. Maybe you have been offering distance healing sessions or virtual retreats. It is a relief to be able to offer in-person sessions again, but a hybrid solution might be a good way to future-proof your business and reduce any anxiety around a potential return to lockdowns or limitations. Which parts of your business have your clients really enjoyed doing online? Have you been able to access a new online audience? What could you do for these clients? Online working has made me very aware of a huge number of people affected by chronic illness who were unable to access in-person therapies, classes or retreats and has opened up a whole new client base for my business. It also prompted the development of

Vitality's Inner Sanctum, an online membership site with themed retreats, visiting experts and moon circles. What had been quite a local business now has clients from all over the world. Whatever your industry or way of working, keep in mind that everyone is suffering from post-COVID anxiety and keep a focus on anything that reverses the stress response. My yoga classes are all slow paced and soothing at the moment. I



focused my online retreats on self-care and mindfulness. My first in-person retreat at the end of October will be a weekend Coorie Retreat (the Scottish version of hygge) and our Inner Sanctum retreats have been all about self-care, mindfulness, and energy balancing. Energy and gentle touch therapies are in high demand. Share stress management tips with your clients they can use at home (and use them yourself). Thank your clients for returning with a little gift... a rose quartz tumble stone perhaps, or a

herbal tea bag for a cosy cuppa. Stay informed, practice self-care, breathe deeply and with intention, stay grounded, take your time with the transition and give your clients space to do the same. Remember, we are all going through this together and we are all exhausted, overwhelmed and anxious about the future. Be kind to yourself and to others and step by step, you will recover, flourish and continue to provide services which are essential to the wellbeing of your community, wherever they may be. ■



Donna is an award-winning wellbeing coach, yoga &

mindfulness teacher and retreat host.

Based in Caithness, she loves wild gardens, stormy seas and infinite skies.

Vitality's Inner Sanctum offers monthly themed retreats with yoga, yoga nidra, nature walks, creative workshops and meditation as well as visiting experts and monthly moon circles. Find out more at

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MASSAGE PARLOURS:

THE SEX TRADE

AND SLAVE WORK IN THE UK MASSAGE THERAPY INDUSTRY

Magdalena Vonk explores the subject of forced labour and the connection of sex trafficking within the UK massage industry...

If you are a massage therapist, you almost certainly have an opinion on the word parlour. In the past, this innocent word described a place of work. Now, it is frequently associated with sex trade and human trafficking. When I typed into google “massage parlour” and the name of my local town, a number of Chinese and Thai massage studios popped up as results, together with www.Scoot.co.uk advertising “Massage Parlours in Cheltenham”. There were 18 results, all connected to escort and sexual services. It seemed a lot – more than I expected - for a town of just 118,000 people. Disguising sex work under the guise of massage therapy is nothing new. Indeed, I’ve written about the disturbing number of sexual enquiries I’ve received as a massage therapist and I’ve had to deal with some unpleasant phone calls.

Those people who are searching for sexual contact must go somewhere and more often than not, they will go to a "massage parlour" offering "extras" they are searching for. Why does it affect me? Aside from the personal discomfort such enquiries engenders, as a therapist, I care about the good name of the entire industry.

It was years ago, in the early years of my business, when I encountered the sex trade in the massage industry.

In May this year, one of the parlours in my town was raided by the police. An article was published in the local paper suggesting that the place was a crime venue for people trafficking (Gloucestershire Echo, *Police seal off Cheltenham massage parlour amid modern slavery probe*, 2021). A few weeks later, the police released the following statement: "The arrested person was later released without charge after enquiries showed that no offences had been committed. Because of this, no further investigation is ongoing into the matter". It is not my role to decide if the case had a background or not. If there is a worry that someone is being exploited, it does need to be investigated. The parlour in question is located on the same street as my massage and personal training studio, a place where I see my clients and where I run a legitimate business. The thought of being so close to a potential case of human exploitation was, and still is, unnerving.

Understanding Modern slavery

According to the charity Unseen, there is no typical victim of slavery. Victims are men, women and children of all ages, ethnicities and nationalities and cut across the population. However, it's normally more prevalent among the most vulnerable or within minority or socially excluded groups. In 2018, the UK Modern Slavery Helpline indicated that 3,280

potential victims of modern slavery cases were men, while 1,476 were women.

On their website, Gloucestershire Police warns about modern slavery and ways of spotting it in the local community. The signs of someone being a slave worker aren't always obvious, police advise that the list below is something we should look out for:

- A person looking scruffy, malnourished, or injured
- An individual who seems anxious, afraid, or is unable to make eye contact
- Therapists doing long hours, wearing unsuitable clothing or having the wrong equipment for the job
- Individuals living in overcrowded, poorly maintained conditions or with the curtains always closed
- People behaving like they're being instructed by someone else, picked up/dropped off at the same time and place every day or who don't have access to money or identification

Types of modern slavery

There are several types of modern slavery, including, human trafficking, forced labour, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, and organ harvesting.

In human trafficking, adults and children are traded so they can be exploited by others for commercial gain.

Forced labour victims are forced to work against their will, often working very long hours for little or no pay in dire conditions under verbal or physical threats of violence to them or their families. It can happen in many sectors of the economy including wellness and the beauty industry. In the UK, nail

salons can be not only places of illegal work but exploitation as well. The government's national referral mechanism (NRM) which identifies victims of slavery has reported cases of Vietnamese women forced to work up to seven days a week for very minimal or no pay (<https://www.infomigrants.net/>, 2019).

Sexual exploitation victims are pressurised to perform non-consensual or abusive sexual acts, such as prostitution, escort work and pornography. Women and children make up the majority of victims, but men can also be affected. Criminal exploitation can often involve victims being controlled and maltreated, victims are forced into crimes such as cannabis cultivation or pickpocketing against their will. They might also have their benefits taken over by their exploiter.

Organ harvesting is the illegal removal of a person's internal organs which can then be sold.

Modern slavery in my town

Victims of modern slavery can be any age, gender, nationality, and ethnicity. They are tricked or threatened into work and may feel unable to leave or report the crime through fear or intimidation. They may not even recognise themselves as a victim. There is a local church, located just a few minutes from my massage studio. It has a division which deals with educating the local community about modern slavery. In previous years they have campaigned on the streets to make the issue of modern slavery more visible to the local community. They usually campaign during the race week, four days of horse racing which brings a huge number of tourists, especially from Ireland.



Cheltenham Gold Cup Day brings over 70,000 visitors to the town. The week of the races also attracts many sex workers from around the country, with numerous pop-ups, but there are suspicions that some are trafficked from Eastern Europe (Daily Mail, 16 March 2012). The trafficking charity, Unseen, suggests that victims come from various countries with Romania being most common, followed by China and Albania.

Some people who live in Cheltenham choose to leave the town for the duration of the race week to avoid the loud noises and dirty streets, others join in the festivity. Many massage therapists in town choose to close their businesses or not take new enquiries to prevent sex enquiries and unsafe situations. In a way, we try not to participate in what is happening around us, but is that avoidance helpful? Are we silently allowing women to be criminally exploited?

My Encounter

It was years ago, in the early years of my business, when I encountered the sex trade in the massage industry. I was a young therapist, not yet able to listen to my gut instinct, not

trusting myself enough and too trusting of others. I was working from a holistic centre, and I was ready to increase my hours. I have been told that the treatment room that I was renting was booked up and I could not increase my client numbers at the centre. I knew I had to find another centre to work from but at the time I was without contacts and struggled to find the right place. It came as a pleasant surprise when one of my new clients said to me that he is an owner of a Thai massage business and that he had a room for rent that I could use. I was eager to move to the new location to accommodate my growing client base, so I booked an appointment to check the room. As I am older and much wiser, I realise there were so many warning signs which the younger me did not see. I went for the appointment and met the centre manager who was, like me, Polish. I sat and had a chat with her and the business owner (who was, you'll remember, also my client). During the conversation I was told by the manager that they would be happy to have me as an addition to their team. I was told that some of the team members were from Thailand and that they have a slightly different

way of working than I might be used to. When I asked about the details, I was told Thai masseuses provide "happy endings" for their clients. I was informed by the centre manager that sexual acts are part of the Thai culture. I listened with widened eyes, raised heart rate and growing sadness. I was upset that another woman, another therapist, was telling me that it's normal for another woman to pleasure strangers for money. I blocked the phone numbers of the contacts I had made and did not speak to them again.

A few years later, I learned that the centre manager had opened her own studio and that she is doing well on her own. She does not want to be associated with what was happening in the Thai massage studio. The Thai massage studio is still operational today.

Charities supporting trafficked women

A few years ago, I was involved in attempts to raise funding for a charity called Save From Slavery. The organisation looks after women from other countries who have been trafficked to the UK and released by the action of British police. I attended a training day to learn more about the charity and explore the opportunity of potential volunteering in one of the safehouses for women saved from sex trafficking. During the training day, I heard several horrific stories of sex trafficking. Needless to say, the experience shocked me to the core, and I was unable to carry on with the follow up training. I was broken after hearing their stories during that one-day training. How traumatised those women must be after years of being mistreated?

Most stories of female human trafficking victims are similar. Women are lured to a Western European country from East Europe or Asian countries after a period of grooming. Women are promised money and help for their family. They are promised love. They are promised a better life. As soon as they arrive in the UK their passports are taken away from them and they are left with travel and accommodation debt to repay.

Soon after arriving in the UK, women and girls are forced to do work, often sex work, in order to earn their passport and life back. They often don't know it, but it's unlikely they



will ever repay the debt. Women are “broken”, this includes often brutal rape, starvation, and biting. Women are thought not to trust anyone as everybody can be a member of the trafficking gang. As with victims of domestic violence, a form of a bond and knowing is created. Victims of sex trafficking once “broken” rarely try to escape.

If the massage parlour or sexual entertainment venue (SEV) is raided by the police under suspicion of human trafficking and victims are recovered, rescued women rarely give incriminating testimonials against the gang members. Often after being released, they go back to the perpetrators and the life they got used to. What help is there for those who choose to start over?

The UK Modern Slavery Act is one of the most far-reaching pieces of legislation in the world addressing issues of modern slavery.

The UK Modern Slavery Act is one of the most far-reaching pieces of legislation in the world addressing issues of modern slavery. It includes preventive measures, support systems and a regulatory body. Despite these measures the actual support for the victims is limited. Those victims of modern slavery who are EEA nationals, can stay in the UK for longer than 3 months if they can show they are a qualified person. Otherwise, they will have no right to reside in the UK and are deported to their country of origin.

There are charities across the UK which provide safehouses for trafficked women. Women have a chance to stay in them for approximately 90 days (Unseen, 2020). You do not have to have extended trauma training or a psychology degree to realise that this is not long enough to untangle (often) years of terror and trauma that each individual experienced. You can read more about stories of trafficking survivors at <https://www.unseenuk.org/>.

The Home Office provides some level of support for survivors of modern slavery where victims can access counselling, translators, English lessons and help with finding work and housing. However, there is a lengthy waiting list for those services.

No Voice

When I began writing this article, I approached some of my fellow therapists to ask for their opinion on sex trade and human trafficking in the massage industry. What I have learned is that therapists realise that this is happening in their towns and cities. It's happening on their street. However, as therapists, they feel powerless when it comes to doing something about it. Perhaps it is because as an industry massage therapy doesn't have a governing body, which would speak on our behalf and would work to separate legitimate businesses from parlours run by criminals.

The wellness industry struggled to survive covid-19 lockdown with many therapists closing their businesses and working temporary jobs in other places or leaving the industry altogether. I fear that as a member of an industry without a voice, perhaps my colleagues are right, there is nothing that we

can do to make things better. Perhaps we do need one organisation that will look after our interests, supports us, and speaks against injustice on our behalf?

Reporting

If you suspect that someone is a victim of modern slavery you can report it. To report a suspicion or seek advice you can contact the Modern Slavery Helpline confidentially on 08000 121 700. This is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can also file your report anonymous by contacting Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Always call 999 if there is a crime in action or immediate threat to life. ■



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Find your PERFECT PLATFORM

Social media is only effective if you connect with your core audience. Which platform is right for you?

THE social media landscape is one of constant change as platforms expand and then fall out of fashion. The choice of platform and degree of usage is generally based on the age of the user, but this often leads to misconceptions. For example, TikTok is often perceived as a platform for teenagers, but the people who spend most time on the platform fall into the 24-34 age group.

Crucially, 98.9% of users access their social media platforms via a mobile device (phone or tablet). This means that all your social media content should be designed to be mobile friendly, irrespective of the platform you choose to host your content.

The average UK user increased their daily usage from 1 hour 42 minutes to 1 hour 49 minutes in 2020, with younger people and women spending more time than men.

FINDING YOUR AUDIENCE

Reaching the right audience – those who will purchase from you - through social media can be tricky. Researching products to buy is one of the top ranked reasons users give for spending time on a platform, with 28% of UK users saying they do this. Conversely, this means that 72% of users are not doing so.

As users perform their brand research within the social media apps, guiding customers to your product pages and areas to buy is

becoming more important. The most efficient way to work out which platforms will work for you is to conduct a survey amongst your current customers. Focus on finding out which platforms they use, what they use them for and how long they spend doing so each day. This could be done by asking when they are with you, or by using an online survey services like [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). You can ask if you can connect to them on social media, but need to act within the GDPR regulations.

You can also try to match your customer base with the most appropriate social media platforms.

FACEBOOK

Facebook has 2.18 billion global users. People aged over 65 are the fastest growing demographic on Facebook while the percentage of younger age groups using the site has been in decline for several years, particularly in the US and UK. Despite this, 61.3% of global Facebook users are under 35.

According to Facebook the platform has a reach of 38 million people in the UK, equivalent to 66% of the total UK population over 13 years old. On average, the UK Facebook user will like an average of 14 Facebook posts per month and comment on 7. More importantly, UK users also click on nearly double the global average of ads, at 19 per month.

The UK average for engagement with Facebook posts is 0.11%. That's 1.1 responses, such as a like or click, per thousand views.

The wide demographic and sheer number of users make it vital to understand your own customer demographics in order to target posts and advertising effectively.

YOUTUBE

YouTube is the second largest social media platform by user numbers, having over 2 billion users and an estimated 1 billion hours of video consumed daily. The average viewing session is 40 minutes, up 50% from 2 years ago. The platform is great for those who post longer-form content such as follow up exercises or explainer videos. 70% of users say they've bought from a business after seeing their video on YouTube and users are actively managing the content they watch.

In the UK it's estimated that 53 million people are reachable via ads, which equates to 84% of all adults (18+). That said, the majority

of users skip ads where possible. MediaKix reports that the three most popular video types on YouTube are commentary videos (like vlogs), product reviews (like unboxings), and how-to/tutorial style videos.

In Q3 2020, 77% of 15-to-25-year-olds and 70% of 45-to-64-year-olds used YouTube. Just over 21% of YouTube's global audience is between 25 and 34, and 17% is between 35 and 44.

INSTAGRAM

Instagram is owned by Facebook and was purchased primarily to allow access to a younger user demographic. It's seen as the most aspirational/influencer led of the major platforms. As of January 2021 there were 31 million Instagram users in the UK. This is up from 24 million the previous January. 54% of users are female.

Currently, 17.8% of all Instagram content are video posts, 17.3% are carousel posts and 64.9% are photo posts, although video content is becoming more popular.

Engagement on Instagram is slightly lower than it is on Facebook. The more follower numbers increase, the less engagement results. For accounts under 10K followers, engagement sits at 1.29%. This goes down to 1% for 10-100K followers, and 0.73% for over 100K.

PINTEREST

We often think of Pinterest as a personal interest platform rather than a social network, but it can be one of the most useful sites for brands seeking to build relationships and generate sales, particularly with women.

Pinterest is a wants-driven platform. Users gather and pin images on a specific theme and place these on their boards, which may be private or public. Many users use the site to gather ideas for eventual purchases – fashion, jewellery, health and fitness, weight loss inspiration, interiors and weddings are all big topics.

Of all the social media platforms, Pinterest

has the greatest gender imbalance – 77% of all users are female. It also has a strong user base of those between the ages of 25 to 44. This age bracket makes up 44% of total users.

It's possible to upload entire product catalogues into shoppable pages. For ecommerce brands, it is incredibly valuable for driving customers down the conversion funnel, particularly since people referred by Pinterest are 10% more likely to complete a purchase than those referred by any other social media platform.

TIKTOK

TikTok is a short-form, video-sharing app that allows users to create and share 15-second videos, on any topic. The app has disrupted the social media landscape since its launch in 2016 and is hugely popular with Gen Z (13-20-year-olds). There are a reported 3.7 million users in the UK. User numbers are expected to grow to 10 million before the end of 2021.

It's particularly useful for brands who can provide on-trend short form content for the younger age groups, though there are concerns over child to child advertising.

SNAPCHAT

Despite perceptions that Snapchat is in decline, the total number of global and UK users actually rose in 2020. Its main appeal is for those businesses who can offer image-led posts aimed at a younger demographic. 59% of users are under 24, and the platform has around 21 million

UK users. The advertising reach is 36.6%, which represents more than 7 million people (aged 13 and over).

If your brand is targeting a younger market, then Snapchat should definitely still be a consideration. Branded lenses and filters can be a powerful method of getting many young demographics thinking about and talking about your brand. ■





STAYING STRONGER

*The Federation of Holistic Therapist's new Executive Director, **Monica Price**, looks at how to improve your professional and personal resilience, should we face restrictions again in the future...*

AS I write this, therapists are thankfully able to support their clients in person again. Yet, as we approach the winter months, we are all very aware that cases of COVID-19 are likely to be on the rise again. In the event that any government restrictions are reintroduced to those offering close contact services, let's take a look at a few ways you can help to protect you and your business...

Get registered

When we went into lockdown, being able to access government funding such as the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme relied on therapists having submitted Self-assessment tax returns to the HMRC. Some newly self-employed therapists were unable benefit from these schemes and those who had been up and running for a number of years but hadn't registered their business with the government, were unable to claim financial support. Although self-employment isn't the only option, it's worth visiting gov.uk and type 'self-employed' into the search field for information about what you need to do as a self-employed therapist.

Revenue beyond the couch

For many therapists, the pandemic brought with it the stark realisation that when they had to close their treatment room door, they had no other source of income. If this applies to you, can you look to expand your business offering with activities that don't rely on personal contact? Perhaps you could train in a new modality that can be delivered effectively online, such as counselling or nutritional therapy. Maybe you could learn how to make and retail products that are an extension of the therapies you already offer, such as soy-based candles with essential oils or aroma sticks to help people feel relaxed or uplifted, or to improve sleep.

Staying in touch

If you haven't done so recently, now is a good time to reach out to your clients and refresh their contact preferences, so that if you are unable to see them in person again, you know you are able to stay in touch in a way that doesn't breach data protection regulations. Are they happy to be contacted by phone, text message or email? Would they be happy to receive calls or newsletters from you, so that you can provide them with

some self-help tips? Being able to stay in touch not only enables you to support your clients remotely, it goes a long way to ensuring their loyalty.

Looking after you

When we carried out a survey asking FHT members and the wider therapy community how COVID-19 had impacted them and their business, 65% said they had suffered from increased stress and anxiety and 18% said it had affected their physical health. We had almost 2000 respondents. We are all human and as a therapist, it's important to 'walk the talk' and find ways to look after your own health and wellbeing, and especially when circumstances have just as much impact on you and your immediate family and friends as they do your clients. When the odds feel stacked against you, try to stay positive, eat well and exercise regularly. Sticking to a regular bedtime, having a warm bath and reducing the time you spend on devices just before you go to bed will also help your quality of sleep, which is so important to health. Meditation, mindfulness and yoga are also great for keeping stress levels in check. ■



The FHT offers a range of membership benefits to holistic therapists. For more information visit

www.fht.org.uk





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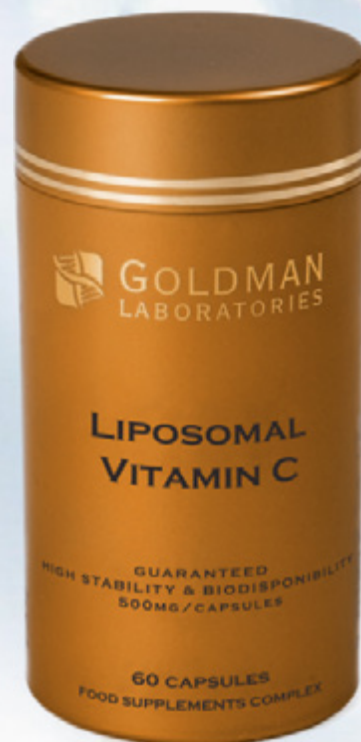


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CONFUSED ABOUT COOKIES?

Ran Janda takes a bite-sized approach to understanding and using cookies on your own website and protecting your privacy online...

NON-EDIBLE cookies can quite frankly, be confusing for most of us. Suddenly, we've been inundated with questions about whether we accept cookies when browsing a website, but what are cookies and what information can be gathered? Does your own website need a cookie policy? What is the purpose of them and where does the information harvested go to? Let's break it all down and also look at what you can do to protect yourself and your personal information better when browsing online.

WHAT IS A WEBSITE COOKIE?

Cookies are small blocks of data created by a web server whilst a user is browsing a website. They are placed on the user's computer or device by their web browser. They allow web browsers to track, personalise and save information when

you spend time on a website. They basically identify you when you visit a new website.

DOES MY WEBSITE NEED A COOKIE POLICY?

Yes! If your website receives visitors from the UK or EU, then you need to be compliant with UK and EU laws including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which instructs that it is the legal responsibility of website owners to make sure that personal data is collected and processed lawfully.

Cookie consent is part of the

compliance for websites outlined under the GDPR, due to website cookies being one of the most common ways for personal data to be collected and shared online. It states that every website must announce which cookies are on their website, what data they collect, how that data is used, how they store and protect user's information and how they can access, migrate and delete any information they hold. In addition, they must give users the option to consent or opt out of cookies that are not strictly necessary for the basic function of their website when they land on your site.

HOW DO I ENSURE I AM COMPLIANT?

Most practitioners won't be concerned about collecting information on their website visitors. This is usually more common in larger companies where they want to analyse how their website content is performing and collect data such as where their visitors are from and what their preferences are.

However, you still need to remain compliant, and it doesn't need to be difficult. You can quite simply purchase a "ready-made" cookie policy and install it on your website, which will create a cookie banner for visitors when they first land on your website and will allow users to accept certain cookies for activation rather than others, or to reject all non-necessary cookies.

When you purchase a policy, it will either scan your website for cookies or it will guide you through a set of questions. Either way, it will create a policy based on the information gathered. You will need to know technical aspects around plugins and any analytical software you use, so you might want to get support from your website developer when creating your cookie policy.

For example, your website uses a third-party plugin such as a Google map of your location, or if you have a Facebook like or comment section on your site, then you will automatically have cookies from these companies on your website. You are now responsible for third-party cookies, and you need to disclose this in your cookie policy. As the website owner, the legal responsibility for GDPR



cookie compliance is yours.

Cookiebot.com and cookieeyes.com are useful sites that perform scans of your website and provide a report which you can use to ensure you have covered all the cookies on your site and ensure you are GDPR compliant. They hope you will then purchase a cookie policy from them, but it is by far the easiest way to ensure you are fully compliant.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF COOKIES

Cookies fall into four categories:

NECESSARY COOKIES

These are mostly the website owners and are usually activated at all times in order for your domain to function properly. These are most likely only session cookies, which last as long as the user's visit to your site. These are the only type of cookies that are exempt from GDPR cookie consent as they are functionally based. Some uses are, to stop fraudulent activity, or for the site to remember what you have added to your basket or to keep you logged in as you move from one page to another.

PREFERENCE OR FUNCTIONAL COOKIES

These remember the user's choices such as language settings or currency on your website. They may be set by the website owner or by third-party providers whose services are being used on the website. These cookies cannot track your browsing activity on other websites.

STATISTICS OR PERFORMANCE COOKIES

These cookies allow the user to better understand how users arrive at and browse their website. They most often come from third-party services such as analytics software which measure traffic and determine ways to improve the performance of the site. The information collected is usually aggregated and anonymised. If you



do not allow these cookies, the site owner will not know that you have visited their site.

ADVERTISING OR TARGETING COOKIES

These cookies almost always come from third-party technology or advertising companies for the purposes of serving ads to users of the website or to collect personal data from them for future marketing purposes, either on the site or elsewhere on the web when you are browsing different sites. The purpose is to learn about your preferences and make adverts more relevant to your interests. Many social media sites use these cookies for advertising and targeting purposes. The technologies remember the sites you visit, and this information is shared with other advertisers. These cookies do collect personally identifiable information.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF WHEN VISITING SITES ONLINE?

Advertising cookies will infringe on your privacy if you consent to them without realising. When you search for something or click a post online or on social media and

then see ads for that thing everywhere else, it's usually advertising cookies which are responsible.

However, these cookies as well as the preference and statistical ones, require your explicit consent before they are allowed to be used. Click the cookie banner when you visit each site and either deselect or select "Don't Allow" in order to protect yourself.


Another way to protect yourself is by using browsers Safari if you use a Mac or Mozilla's Firefox as these browsers now block third-party cookies by default. Google Chrome does not do this as most of their revenue is received from advertising, so they will continue to benefit from this for as long as they can. They command a 67% of the browser market share. Most of us are not aware of their motives, so you might want to use an alternative browser. ■



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a holistic health platform that promotes the services of practitioners across the UK. Follow [@holisticroomservices](https://www.instagram.com/holisticroomservices) on Instagram to stay up to date on news and how they plan to make holistic health services more accessible.



HOLISTIC THERAPY FOR **autoimmune** DISORDERS

Autoimmune diseases are becoming more prevalent. We look at the latest research and how holistic therapies can help alleviate some symptoms in those who suffer from these disorders...

EACH of us has a natural immune system within our bodies. This is designed to fight off infections and attacks by viruses and bacteria. Because the immune system is a complex network of specialist cells, proteins and chemical reactions, it can malfunction, essentially treating the body's own healthy cells as if they were invading organisms and attacking itself, destroying the healthy cells. The reaction is automatic. Many autoimmune disorders involve attacks on the joints, muscles and organs throughout the body.

Autoimmune diseases

The NHS recognises over 80 different autoimmune diseases, although the US-based equivalents list over 140. There are varying degrees of underlying scientific evidence to classify various disorders as having an autoimmune component, so our understanding changes constantly. Earlier this year, fibromyalgia was recognised for the first time as an autoimmune disease. The most prevalent autoimmune diseases include type 1 diabetes, coeliac disease, Addison's disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), psoriasis, and rheumatoid arthritis.

At the other end of the spectrum, some autoimmune diseases are extremely rare. Symptoms are often easily confused with other diseases and some symptoms flare up intermittently which means a formal diagnosis may take several years and consistent pressure on GPs and medical staff. As autoimmune diseases affect women more commonly than men, it is often the case that symptoms were dismissed as being all in the mind or classed as women's problems.

Autoimmune disease can be classified as either localised or systemic. Localised autoimmunity affects specific organs or tissue. This includes Addison's disease, type 1 diabetes, Crohn's disease and Grave's disease. Systemic autoimmune conditions, on the other hand, can damage multiple organs and tissues, and will often affect the entire body. Joint health conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, in addition to MS, scleroderma and lupus are examples of systemic conditions.

From a medical perspective, treatment focuses on managing symptoms and the autoimmune process. For conditions that damage specific organs, medication may be needed to replace the loss of function from that organ. For example, thyroid hormones may be prescribed for Hashimoto's thyroiditis if thyroid hormone levels drop too low, while type 1 diabetes requires lifelong insulin replacement, through injections or an insulin pump.

It's tempting to see autoimmune diseases as disruptive, but they can also be life-limiting. A study published in December 2020 showed that those with rare autoimmune rheumatic diseases were at a greater risk of dying at a younger age during the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts looked at the electronic health records of 170,000 people in England with rare autoimmune rheumatic diseases. During March and April 2022 (the first two months of the Covid-19 pandemic), the team found that 1,815 (1.1%) of people with these diseases died.

Study co-author, Dr Fiona Pearce from the School of Medicine at the University of Nottingham, explained, "People with rare diseases often have poorer health outcomes generally. We now know that during the early months of the pandemic, people with these diseases were more likely to die than the general population." In fact, the study showed that women with rare

autoimmune rheumatic diseases had a similar risk of death to men during Covid-19 -- whereas usually their risk of death is lower. For people of working age with rare autoimmune rheumatic diseases, the risk of dying during Covid-19 was similar to that of someone 20 years older in the general population. **Ref: 10.1093/rheumatology/keaa855**

Underlying causes

Given that we are talking about so many different diseases, it's difficult to provide a definitive answer to what causes autoimmune diseases. Broadly speaking researchers agree that it is a combination of genetic and environmental factors. For example, in Multiple Sclerosis, the myelin sheath in the brain and spinal cord, which surrounds the nerves, protecting them and helping electrical signals travel from the brain to the rest of the body becomes inflamed in small patches causing plaques or lesions. This can have the effect of disrupting the electrical communications that pass down the nerves, jumbling them up, slowing them or simply not allowing them through and leading to permanent nerve damage. Researchers believe that it's partly caused by genetic factors although it's not directly inherited. If a relative has the condition, you are more likely to develop it,

but the chance of your child developing it is thought to be around 2-3%. This means that there are a number of environmental factors which seem to raise the chance of contracting the disease, these include a lack of sunlight and vitamin D, as those who live further north develop MS more often than those in the south, smoking, teenage obesity and previous viral infections particularly those caused by the Epstein-Barr virus which may trigger the immune system. Women are 2 to 3 times more likely to develop MS than men, although the reason for this is unclear.

Each autoimmune disorder has its own particular cocktail of underlying factors which affect the chances of developing the disease. In many cases, the symptoms, such as tiredness, joint and skin problems are common to other more common health problems, so getting a correct diagnosis can take persistence. They can also be found in association with mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, though they may be a contributory factor rather than directly causal. A 2017 study from a team at Boston Children's Hospital showed that up to three quarters of patients with systemic lupus erythematosus - commonly known as lupus - experience neuropsychiatric issues including anxiety, depression, headaches, seizures and even psychosis.



Autoimmune disease

Diagnostic accuracy and diversity of modern treatment
to choose the most effective set of treatment for each pa
treated with stan

Previously, mental health issues were not considered to be symptoms of the disease, but a malfunctioning immune system can attack the brain as well as other organs and tissues.

In lupus, an autoimmune attack on the body causes the white blood cells to release type 1 interferon-alpha, a small cytokine protein that acts as a systemic alarm, triggering a cascade of additional immune activity as it binds with receptors in different tissues. Until recently, however, these circulating cytokines were not thought to be able to cross the blood brain barrier, which controls the transfer of materials between circulating blood and the central nervous system (CNS) fluids. This means there's a mechanism that directly links inflammation to mental illness.

As might be expected, people with a compromised immune system can develop several autoimmune disorders, making life difficult and complicated. There are four million people in the UK known to be living with at least one autoimmune condition, but experts feel that those with two or more autoimmune disorders are underreported. Over 700,000 people have rheumatoid arthritis, 115,000 have Crohn's Disease, 127,000 suffer Multiple Sclerosis and 50,000 have Lupus.

Autoimmune disorders have a profound impact on the lives of those affected and those close to them. Some have difficulty in moving or travelling about, others find it impossible to work or study, to dress or care for themselves or carry out simple tasks. Children with autoimmune disorders often miss school and fall behind their classmates.

Those with autoimmune disorders often suffer periodic episodes or flare-ups when the immune system attacks a part of the body as though it were an infection. Because there is no infection it cannot be cleared and the immune reaction continues to act indefinitely or until the balances and checks of the immune system come into place.

These balances and checks are in constant adjustment. In autoimmunity they are sometimes effective at controlling inflammation at other times they are not. This is why inflammation occurs in waves or flares.

It is important to remember these natural flares and troughs in disease activity when judging the effectiveness of a treatment. The appearance and disappearance of

inflammation can be confusing to those who are not familiar with autoimmunity or inflammatory diseases.

As yet, there is no cure for any of the major autoimmune disorders, Anti-inflammatory drugs, or immunomodulatory drugs, can reduce the number and severity of flare-ups and, in some cases, can put the disease into a state of remission for long periods.

A growing problem

In 2018, UK based researchers reported that the incidence of autoimmune conditions is increasing, somewhere between 3% and 9% year on year. Rheumatic diseases rose by 7%, endocrinological diseases such as type 1 diabetes rose by 6.3% and neurologically-related autoimmune disorders, such as MS, by 3.7%. Coeliac disease was estimated to have risen somewhere between 4% and 9%. It's estimated that these diseases cost the UK £13 billion a year - £2.6bn for multiple sclerosis, £8.7bn for rheumatoid arthritis and £1.9bn for type 1 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes, which is much more common and takes up a sixth of the NHS budget is not an autoimmune disorder. Worryingly, medical science does not yet know the reason for the rise, and the charities are campaigning for change in the way research is approached, with more co-operation between disease-specific researchers and over-arching funding being put in place.

Latest research

There is a considerable amount of progress being made in the understanding of individual autoimmune disorders and the underlying genetic and physiological processes which cause the body to attack itself at a cellular level. In February, a team at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Australia pinpointed individual cells that cause autoimmune disease from patient samples. They also uncovered how these cells evade checkpoints that normally stop immune cells from targeting the body's own tissues. Rogue immune cells are so rare in a blood sample - less than one in 400 cells - studying them has been a challenge, but the new techniques which use cellular genomics to zoom in on rogue cells the researchers could isolate and study immune cells that produced rheumatoid factors in four patients with cryoglobulinemic vasculitis - a severe inflammation of the blood vessels. They found

that the disease-causing immune cells of the vasculitis patients had accumulated a number of mutations before they produced the damaging rheumatoid factors.

The researchers are now planning follow-up studies to investigate mutations of autoimmune cells in a range of other diseases, including lupus, celiac disease and type 1 diabetes. **Ref: 10.1016/j.cell.2020.01.029**

Those with autoimmune disorders often suffer periodic episodes or flare-ups when the immune system attacks a part of the body as though it were an infection.

In September, a team at Stanford demonstrated that those hospitalised with Covid-19 were more likely to harbour autoantibodies - antibodies directed at their own tissues or at substances their immune cells secrete into the blood - than people without Covid-19. Autoantibodies can be early harbingers of full-blown autoimmune disease. The findings may have implications in Long Covid, which affects approximately a fifth of those who contract Covid and shares several symptoms with many of the autoimmune diseases such as extreme tiredness (fatigue), problems with memory and concentration (brain fog), difficulty sleeping, dizziness, pins and needles, joint pain, depression and anxiety.

The study found that upward of 60% of all hospitalised COVID-19 patients, compared with about 15% of healthy controls, carried anti-cytokine antibodies. This could be the result of immune-system overdrive triggered by a virulent, lingering infection. The abundance of cytokines may trip off the erroneous production of antibodies targeting them. If any of these antibodies block a cytokine's ability to bind to its appropriate receptor, the intended recipient immune cell may not get activated. That, in turn, might buy the virus more time to replicate and lead to a much worse outcome.

In July, a team from King's College in London working in collaboration with colleagues in Liverpool and Sweden published

a research study showing that many of the symptoms in fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) are caused by antibodies that increase the activity of pain-sensing nerves throughout the body. The results show that fibromyalgia is a disease of the immune system, rather than the currently held view that it originates in the brain. The increased pain sensitivity, muscle weakness, reduced movement, and reduced number of small nerve-fibres in the skin that are typical of FMS, are all a consequence of patient antibodies. Establishing that fibromyalgia is an autoimmune disorder should transform how the condition is viewed and should pave the way for more effective treatments for the millions of people affected. Currently, treatment for FMS is focussed on gentle aerobic exercises, as well as drug and psychological therapies designed to manage pain, although these have proven ineffective in most patients and have left behind an enormous unmet clinical need.

Even from our earliest days, environmental factors appear to play a part in our chances of contracting autoimmune disorders as adults.

Current estimates suggest that at least 1 in 40 people are affected by FMS worldwide (80% of whom are women) and is commonly characterised by widespread pain throughout the body, as well as fatigue (often referred to as 'fibro fog') and emotional distress. It most commonly develops between the ages of 25 and 55, although children can also get it.

Fibromyalgia is a particularly difficult condition to diagnose and manage because its causes are unknown. This research shows that antibodies found in human blood can cause

fibromyalgia-like symptoms in mice, suggesting that these antibodies play a crucial role in the condition, offering some hope to the millions of people with fibromyalgia that an effective treatment could be found in the relatively near future. **Ref: 10.1172/JCI144201**

Even from our earliest days, environmental factors appear to play a part in our chances of contracting autoimmune disorders as adults. In January 2021, the University of Birmingham and the local Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust revealed new insight into the biological mechanisms of the long-term positive health effects of breastfeeding in preventing disorders of the immune system in later life.

Breastfeeding is known to be associated with better health outcomes in infancy and throughout adulthood, and previous research has shown that babies receiving breastmilk are less likely to develop asthma, obesity, and autoimmune diseases later in life compared to those who are exclusively formula fed.

However, up until now, the immunological mechanisms responsible for these effects have been very poorly understood. In this new study, researchers have for the first time discovered that a regulatory T cells expand in the first three weeks of life in breastfed human babies and are nearly twice as abundant as in formula fed babies. These cells also control the baby's immune response against maternal cells transferred with breastmilk and help reduce inflammation. Moreover, specific bacteria, called Veillonella and Gemella, which support the function of regulatory T cells, are more abundant in the gut of breastfed babies. **Ref: 10.1111/all.14736**

Also in January, a team from the University of Michigan reported that the main bioactive compound of ginger root, 6-gingerol, lowers autoantibody production and helps halt disease progression in mice with antiphospholipid syndrome and lupus. Researchers specifically looked at lupus, a disease which is often associated condition antiphospholipid syndrome, which causes blood clots, since both cause widespread inflammation and damage organs over time.

Ongoing stress leads to becoming stuck in a fight or flight state, increasing the body's levels of cortisol.

The 6-gingerol was shown to prevent neutrophil extracellular trap release, which is triggered by the autoantibodies that these diseases produce. Neutrophil extracellular traps come from white blood cells called neutrophils and are formed when autoantibodies interact with receptors on the neutrophil's surface. The web-like structures were found to play an important role in the pathogenesis of lupus and antiphospholipid syndrome where they trigger autoantibody formation and contribute to blood vessel clotting and damage.

Mice which were given 6-gingerol had lower levels of NETs. Their tendency to make clots was also drastically reduced and 6-gingerol appeared to inhibit neutrophil enzymes called phosphodiesterases, which in turn reduced neutrophil activation.

But the most surprising find of all was that the mice, regardless of whether they had antiphospholipid syndrome or lupus, had reduced autoantibodies suggesting the inflammatory cycle, autoantibodies stimulating NETs which stimulate more autoantibodies, was broken. **Ref: 10.1172/jci.insight.138385**

Holistic therapy's role

There are three specific underlying causes which are common to many immune disorders where holistic therapies have a role in alleviating symptoms. These are the digestive issues, reducing inflammation and in helping relieve stress.

Digestive issues

We know that the majority of the immune system lies in the gut, so a poorly functioning gut microbiome or gut structure can have a detrimental effect on the immune system. In the past few years, researchers have also found that the gut can become more permeable allowing some types of gut bacteria as well as heavy metals and chemicals to pass through the gut membranes and travel to other organs, including the brain. This can trigger an autoimmune response.

Nutritional therapy, naturopathy, medical herbalism and several other holistic therapies can help create a healthier, more resilient gut microbiome. Eating a Mediterranean diet, or one which emphasises fruit and vegetables over sugars and processed foods is advisable. Certain foods can trigger an autoimmune flare up, so this too can be worth exploring. Supplements, particularly vitamins C and D and pro- and pre-biotics should also be considered.

Increased stress

There can be few holistic therapists who don't deal with stressed clients. Bodywork can help tackle mobility and joint pain issues, while aromatherapy, acupuncture, reiki, reflexology, energy therapies, massage and talking therapies can all help reduce stress. Yoga, tai chi, CBD, guided visualisation and meditation call all have beneficial effects too.

Ongoing stress leads to becoming stuck in a fight or flight state, increasing the body's levels of cortisol. Elevated stress levels can deplete the body of vital nutrients and strain both

the nervous system and the gut. It can also suppress the immune system over time, and lead to regulation issues.

One recent study analysed over 100,000 people diagnosed with a stress-related disorders. It found that people diagnosed with a stress-related disorder were more likely to be diagnosed with an autoimmune disease, and that they were also at a higher risk of developing multiple autoimmune conditions.

Inflammation

Inflammation is often associated with high levels of stress. Psychological stress is associated with greater risk for depression, heart disease and infectious diseases as the body loses its ability to regulate the inflammatory response. Inflammation is partly regulated by the hormone cortisol and when cortisol is not allowed to serve this function, inflammation can get out of control. Prolonged stress has been shown to alter the effectiveness of cortisol to regulate the inflammatory response because it decreases tissue sensitivity to the hormone. Specifically, immune cells become insensitive to cortisol's regulatory effect. In turn, runaway inflammation is thought to promote the development and progression of many diseases.

There are several holistic therapies that can offer support in reducing inflammation, including bodywork, acupuncture and acupressure, medicinal herbal treatments, aromatherapy, lymphatic drainage, movement therapies, reiki and energy therapies. Given that many holistic therapies have been shown to offer effective help for stress and movement issues, helping fight fatigue, improving nutrition and rebalancing the gut, it is clear that they should have a valuable part to play in helping the ever-increasing numbers of people who suffer from autoimmune disorders. Given the sheer number of disorders, it remains, essential to research a client's particular disorder before treatment begins. More and more studies are showing a link between the physical and mental components of many autoimmune diseases. They affect both mind and body in a complex and individual way and as such, a holistic approach to ameliorating the symptoms of immune disorders makes sense. ■



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Fibromyalgia

*Medical journalist **Heike Lück-Knobloch** provides an insight into Fibromyalgia and the role that CoQ10 appears to play in ameliorating symptoms...*

FIBROMYALGIA is a chronic pain syndrome of unknown origin. In the UK, the NHS's own estimates of those with the disease vary with 2-4.5% of people thought to experience fibromyalgia syndrome, this equates to somewhere between 1.2 million and 2.8 million people. If the USA's National Institute of

Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS) figures are correlated to the UK's population, this would suggest a lower figure of around 800,000 people in the UK. That said, the commercial nature of the US healthcare system may mean that incidence rates are underreported.

Fibromyalgia profile

While we may not have a definitive number of sufferers, we do know that fibromyalgia is far more common in women than men, with the National Fibromyalgia Association estimating that 75-90% of people with fibromyalgia are female. Onset is often between the ages of 20 and 55 and there is some evidence that it is more prevalent in some families. As with many autoimmune disorders, the symptoms can vary from person to person and can appear and

disappear sporadically.

Diagnosis often takes a considerable period of time and it is not unusual for symptoms to be dismissed with a prescription for pain killers or anti-depressants. 90% of those with fibromyalgia experience sleep problems. As well as widespread pain, the NHS notes that those with fibromyalgia may experience an increased sensitivity to pain, extreme fatigue, muscle stiffness, problems with memory and concentration – known as fibro-fog, headaches and irritable bowel syndrome. Some also experience stinging pain, joint stiffness, migraines, toothache, painful urination, hypersensitive mucous membranes, psychosomatic heart problems or difficulty breathing, ringing in the ears, hypersensitivity to smells, noise and light, chills and depressive moods. Often they feel muscle soreness



throughout their entire body. Emotional stress and sleep deficit usually make the symptoms worse. In extreme cases, fibromyalgia may be just one of several auto-immune disorders a person has. Some people find fibromyalgia so debilitating that they have to give up work and need help with everyday tasks.

The NHS also notes that fibromyalgia can be triggered by a physically or emotionally stressful event, such as an injury or infection, giving birth, having an operation, the breakdown of a relationship or the death of a loved one.

Diagnosis and treatment

Until recently, diagnosis was primarily based on 18 special pressure pain points (tender points) at the junctions between muscles and tendons. If a certain amount of pressure causes pain in at least 11 of these 18 tender points, it is a clear sign of fibromyalgia. Pain above and below the waist or on the trunk that lasts longer than three months is also a characteristic symptom.

Researchers in Würzburg in Germany made an important discovery which offers a clearer understanding of the disease. They used three

specific test procedures, including skin biopsies, to examine the small nerve fibres which located right under the surface of the skin. In all three tests, subjects with fibromyalgia showed clear signs of damage to the small nerve fibres. This demonstrated that fibromyalgia patients actually suffer from neuropathic pain, rather than somehow imagining that they are in pain. Moreover, it provides the first objectively measurable criterion that doctors can use to guide their diagnosis.

Treatment primarily focuses on influencing the patient's altered perception of pain, in an attempt to desensitise the patient. This is often through targeted exercise or physical therapy, individually adapted endurance and strength training, cognitive behavioural therapy, medication including analgesics, opioids, cannabinoids, or even temporarily with certain low-dose antidepressants as well as relaxation techniques such as yoga, or Tai Chi.

Research studies

In July 2021, new research from King's College London, in collaboration with the University of Liverpool and the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, demonstrated that many of the symptoms in fibromyalgia syndrome are caused by antibodies that increase the activity of pain-sensing nerves throughout the body, effectively reclassifying the disease from one considered to originate in the brain to an autoimmune disorder. Mice injected with antibodies from people living with fibromyalgia syndrome rapidly developed an increased sensitivity to pressure and cold, as well as displaying reduced movement grip strength. In contrast, mice that were injected with antibodies from healthy people were unaffected, demonstrating that patient antibodies cause, or at least are a major contributor to the disease. It is thought that therapies which reduce antibody levels in patients are likely to be effective treatments. Such therapies are already available and are used to treat other disorders that are caused by autoantibodies.

Dr David Andersson, the study's primary investigator noted, "Previous exploration of therapies has been hampered by our limited understanding of the illness. This should now change. Treatment for fibromyalgia syndrome is focussed on gentle aerobic exercises, as well as drug and psychological therapies designed to manage pain, although these have proven ineffective in most patients and have left

behind an enormous unmet clinical need."

Previous studies have suggested that increased oxidative stress and mitochondrial dysfunction could play a particularly relevant role in the pathophysiology of the disease. Some studies indicate that CoQ10 (ubiquinone) may be beneficial. These findings are supported by the fact that fibromyalgia patients usually have significantly low CoQ10 plasma levels, suggesting that the disease is most likely associated with a coenzyme deficit. In the studies, supplementation with CoQ10 (at levels between 100 and 800 mg daily) for 3 to 9 months led to an increase in coenzyme Q10 levels, improved cholesterol metabolism and alleviated symptoms such as chronic fatigue.

Researchers at the University of Seville, Spain, recently conducted a randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled study, in which 20 fibromyalgia patients received 300 mg of CoQ10 daily over a period of 40 days. Compared to the placebo group, the pain, general fatigue, morning tiredness as well as the number of tender points decreased significantly.

The role of CoQ10

CoQ10, such as that contained in Q10 Bio-Qinon® Gold from Pharma Nord, is important for mitochondrial energy metabolism (ATP production, respiratory chain), membrane stabilisation and the immune system. The lipophilic antioxidant also regenerates vitamin E and reduces LDL oxidation. Various medicines can impair Q10 metabolism. These include statins, acid blockers, antibiotics, tricyclic antidepressants, antihypertensives, chemotherapeutics, antidiabetics and antihistamines. According to one study, even muscle aches caused by statins decreased statistically significantly in 28 patients after taking CoQ10 for six months. ■



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She has worked as a medical journalist in the health sector with a focus on nutrition, micronutrients, oncology, phytotherapy and environmental medicine for almost 20 years.

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JOURNEYS:

Vicky Paul

Researchers have shown that we now have an eight second attention span.

Best-selling author, artist and intuitive, **Vicky Paul** discusses her life path...

I'VE always 'known things' and remember predicting it would snow on a warm spring day when I was about 6 or 7, much to the amazement of our gardener! However, it wasn't until my mum's good friend, the psychic and astrologer Darlinda, piqued my interest in spirit as a teenager, that I became fascinated with idea of something beyond our five senses. During my twenties I explored spirituality through books like The Celestine Prophecies, Deepak Chopra, yoga and tarot readings, however it wasn't until my mid-thirties after a spiritual awakening, that I became fully aware of my own connection to spirit. This came about when I saw my dead Papa (grandfather) standing in my living room. This led me to study at Arthur Findlay College and take workshops with James van Praagh and June Field. I also studied to become an energy healer, and trained as a Soul Plan Practitioner – a powerful intuitive system of life purpose analysis that reconnects you with your gifts, talents and goals.

Many of us seem to have lost the connection to the spiritual aspect of ourselves. Society encourages us to focus externally and pursue the material and physical things in life, so these capabilities are not nurtured and encouraged in us as children. We spend so much time working and focussing on our

mind and body and our lives are also so busy that we don't have the time, energy or interest in switching off to explore this connection. Researchers have shown that we now have an eight second attention span.

I see more and more people becoming interested in spirituality, intuition, crystals, healing and energy in general, particularly the younger generations. We have many more spiritual leaders and trailblazers in mainstream media now and - given the struggles we have all faced during the pandemic - people are openly turning to alternative ways of finding a sense of peace and purpose.

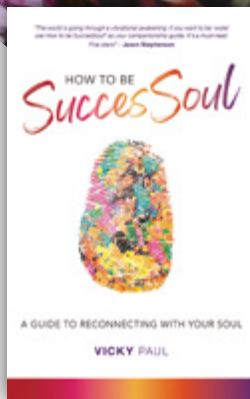
That's what my podcast is about. As a radio presenter, I loved communicating and sharing stories – they help us connect and make sense of the world and ourselves. I am also passionate about helping people to reconnect with their passion and purpose. My How to be SuccesSoul® podcast combines both passions. It's straight-talking, heartfelt and enlightening podcast full of soul centred wisdom, life changing insights and free flowing conversations with some of the most inspiring, knowledgeable and honest voices in wellbeing, spirituality, self-love and personal development. It's for people who are ready to thrive on their own terms.

Looking back, I've experienced a lot of bullying and rejection in my life, at school and in the work place. I've also experienced a number of health issues, including skin cancer, infertility and miscarriages. As a result, I withdrew and internalised my feelings. Life forces us out of ourselves and this taught me to understand the power of words to shape our reality. I learnt to take responsibility for everything in my life. I found courage and vulnerability and was able to open up and ask for help. ■



VICKY PAUL is an intuitive, international selling artist and author who helps you live with passion and purpose. Her book How to be SuccesSoul® is a guide to reconnecting with your soul.

Find out more: www.vickypaul.com and @vickyjpaul on socials.





TECHNIQUE: ZERO *Balancing*

James McCormick introduces Zero Balancing, a modality which integrates western knowledge of our body with oriental insights into energy, recognising the ways our body heals itself and how we maintain good health...

ZERO Balancing is the art of simultaneously touching and balancing the structure and the energy of the body. In fact, it is often this experience of touching both energy and structure that makes a Zero Balancing session memorable, when the sensations and perceptions of the receiver are intensified and felt in the whole body. By the structure of the body, we mean the physical body – the bones, the organs, the muscles, skin and other soft tissue. Of course, our physical structure is vitally important to our health and much of medicine is devoted to healing this part of our being.

The energy part is a more difficult idea for some people to grasp. In Asian cultures the concept of Ch'i energy is better understood. Ch'i is central to all ancient Chinese practices – not just in medicine, but also in painting, poetry, music, dance, martial arts, politics, spirituality and, indeed, all of life. We know there are many energetic aspects of the body, including heat, electrical signals in the brain and body, electrons floating in our blood and lymph systems. All of these create electric fields. Zero Balancers believe there is a bio-energy in the body, different from the nervous system, which influences the nervous system. If so, our scientific instruments are not yet sensitive enough to find it. But you can feel that energy with your hands, and you can work with it to help people heal.

Zero Balancing is about connecting to this energy in the body, coordinating it with the structure and using that relationship to help create a dynamic stability within the whole system. Through that process we can help healing occur in the body, mind and spirit. Fritz Smith, the founder of Zero Balancing has a special name for the act of touching both the energy and the structure of the client simultaneously – donkey touch. The donkey represents the animal or instinctual side of us, not our minds and not our logic, but the less linear parts of ourselves. We can think of the donkey as parts of us that are not fully under our control – almost like our unconscious. In this analogy, the rider of the donkey represents the mind. In Zero Balancing, when the client is met at the levels of both structure and energy, we call this donkey touch. In part, the term highlights the way the client responds from her instinctual self, and not from mind or thought.

In Zero Balancing we work by adjusting the relationship between the energy and the structure in the body, to affect the health, the mood and the liveliness of the person. We work with the bones and the joints as the strongest places to access structure and energy.

Touching the energy and structure of the client has several effects. First, the person feels deeply met, which creates trust. Second, donkey touch will often move the client into an altered state of consciousness. In that state he or she is less aware of the external world and more aware of their own internal experience. They may be less attached to her normal waking consciousness, less attached to their rigid belief systems and, therefore, more open to change. Some of our erroneous beliefs about ourselves and others (“I am stupid,” “I am not good enough,” “People don’t like me”) can shift more easily when we are in this state.

What happens during a Zero Balancing session?

A typical Zero Balancing session lasts 30–40 minutes and is done with the client fully clothed and lying down on a massage table. The Zero Balancer (ZBer) will frequently start with the client sitting up and will evaluate certain parts of the client’s body while the

client is sitting and then have the client lie down. The bodywork starts with the lower body, moves to the upper body and finishes by returning to the lower body. In each area, the Zero Balancing practitioner reevaluates the movement of energy through the bones and joints, reading both the range of motion and the quality of the energy moving through the bones and soft tissue, especially the ligaments. When imbalances are found, the practitioner uses gentle pressure, traction and rotation to bring about increased motion in both the physical body and the energy body. A Zero Balancing session generally feels extremely pleasurable to the client and leaves them feeling more relaxed and less anxious.

In a research project on the effects of Zero Balancing, done in 2017 in Austin, Texas, through the Neuro Synchrony Institute, subjects reported an average reduction in anxiety, stress and tension of 61%. Both the Zero Balancers and the clients were measured on six different physiological scales. The measurements obtained from these readings correlated well with the subjective replies to a questionnaire completed by the subjects. You can get more information on this study by visiting the website of the Zero Balancing Touch Foundation, zbtouch.org, and clicking on the Research tab.

The thinking behind Zero Balancing

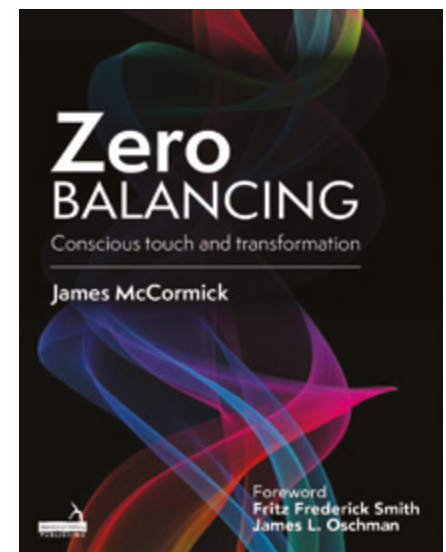
One of our theories in Zero Balancing is that when experiences are not able to be fully processed by our consciousness, this unprocessed information gets stored somewhere in the body as tension or other forms of held energy. We often see the strongest and deepest hurts showing up as held vibration in the bones and in the ligaments joining the bones. In particular, the unprocessed part of our early childhood experience can strongly affect the quality and the movement of the tarsal bones in our feet.

A vital principle of Zero Balancing which sets it apart from most bodywork styles, is our emphasis on working directly with the energy and structure of the skeletal system. In the ZB model, we believe energy from the universe comes into the body directly through the top

of the skull. This is our highest point and functions like a lightning rod. Our view is that this energy infuses all the tissues of the body, but the bones carry the strongest part of this energetic flow. So we can access this universal life force most directly in the bones.

In Zero Balancing we often say we want donkey-on-donkey touch. That is, we want to touch the clients’ donkey and also to reach out from our own donkey. We want the Zero Balancer to be in her instinctual self, as well as the client. Working from our structure and energy to the client’s structure and energy creates the deepest kind of connection and allows even more to happen in the session. As the Zero Balancer feels more connected to her core self, she can move into a state of unity as well, which allows the client to expand even further.

There are almost 1000 Certified Zero Balancing practitioners in the UK. Training and certification is provided by Zero Balancing UK. You can find out more at <https://zerobalancinguk.org/studying-zerobalancing/zb-uk-certification-programme/> ■



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Autoimmune

SPOTLIGHT:

HASHIMOTO'S THYROIDITIS

Jordi Mascio of Goldman Laboratories looks at the role Vitamin D plays in helping those with Hashimoto's Disease...

THE immune system is just like an army; it protects the body by fighting off foreign invaders and pathogens.

If these defence forces malfunction and start attacking the body, an autoimmune disease may result.

Normally, the immune system has the ability to distinguish between foreign cells and the body's own cells. An autoimmune disease refers to a condition when the body's immune system wrongly attacks its own healthy tissues by releasing auto-antibodies, making the body more vulnerable to infections and pathogens. Some autoimmune diseases are 'organ-specific,' meaning that they only target a specific organ. At the same time, other

disorders can be 'non-organ-specific,' that target the whole body.

General symptoms of autoimmune diseases

Many autoimmune diseases share similar symptoms at early stages. These symptoms often include rashes on the skin, tingling and numbness of hands and feet (pins and needles), weakness, pain, fatigue, fever, achy muscles, redness and swelling and difficulty concentrating. Of course these symptoms may not all occur, and they are common to many other illnesses too.

Symptoms can also be different for individual diseases. For example, if a person has type 1 diabetes, they may

experience weakness, weight loss, and extreme thirst. Diarrhoea, bloating, and abdominal pain are the symptoms of IBD.

Hashimoto's Thyroiditis

Hashimoto's Thyroiditis is an autoimmune disorder that attacks the thyroid gland, located at the front of the neck. The thyroid produces hormones which control how the body uses energy, so almost every organ suffers a knock-on effect. Typically Hashimoto's leads to an underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism), but sometimes hyperthyroidism can result. There are fewer than 20,000 new cases in the UK each year, normally starting between 30-50 years and being significantly more common in women.

It can run in families and progresses very slowly.

Hashimoto's disease is often diagnosed on the results of blood tests that measure thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) and thyroid hormone levels.

Treatment for Hashimoto's disease

If the patient is suffering from severe thyroid deficiency, replacement therapy with thyroid hormone is often used, generally the synthetic thyroid hormone levothyroxine. Other symptoms of this autoimmune disorder are treated with pain killers, Immune-suppressing drugs have proved promising in several studies, and corticosteroids are used to treat acute flare ups of symptoms and to reduce inflammation, as are anti-inflammatory drugs such as naproxen or ibuprofen.

The role of certain nutrients

The characteristic consequence of Hashimoto's thyroiditis is a severe deficiency of thyroid hormone. Since the gland is no longer functioning optimally, all metabolic reactions that require thyroid hormone are adversely affected. The symptoms include dry skin, depression, weight gain, goitre, sensitivity to cold, anaemia, and difficulty concentrating.

People with Hashimoto's thyroiditis can reduce thyroid damage and improve symptoms by certain lifestyle modifications, medications, and dietary changes. Clinical studies have reported that the symptoms of Hashimoto's thyroiditis may be made worse where a sufferer has specific nutritional deficiencies such as vitamin C and D.

Vitamin D Deficiency

A number of studies have concluded that people with Hashimoto's thyroiditis are more likely to suffer from a vitamin D deficiency. According to statistics, 90% of people with autoimmune diseases are deficient in vitamin D.

Vitamin D plays a vital role in modulating the immune system by enhancing innate immunity. Vitamin D is also associated with a diminished inflammatory response in the body by reducing hyperactive autoimmune antibodies.

Can Vitamin D supplementation Improve Hashimoto's Thyroiditis?

T-cells of the immune system, also known as lymphocytes, are primarily responsible for mediating Hashimoto's thyroiditis. Vitamin

D regulates and differentiates these immune cells. The expression of pro-inflammatory Th1 cells (major contributors to autoimmune diseases) and antigens can be reduced by adequate vitamin D supplementation. Insufficient vitamin D levels in the body can often result from a malfunctioning immune system. Hence, if the patients can regularly ingest vitamin D in adequate amounts and avoid nutritional deficiency, it can significantly help improve Hashimoto's thyroiditis.

Exposure to sunshine and eating certain enriched foods can help enhance vitamin D levels in the body. Foods like tuna, salmon, beef liver, and cheese offer high vitamin D levels. Vitamin D2 and D3 can also be consumed as supplements. Vitamin D3 is crucial for effectively raising vitamin D levels in the body. The required dose of vitamin D for managing Hashimoto's is 5000-10,000 IU per day. In the UK, the NHS recommends that everyone take a Vitamin D supplement daily between October and March.

Is Vitamin C good for patients with Hashimoto's Thyroiditis?

According to a study published in the *Journal of Endocrinological Investigation* in 2018, vitamin C is regarded as a highly beneficial supplement for Hashimoto's thyroiditis. Vitamin C plays an integral role in decreasing the levels of antithyroid peroxidase antibody (TPO-Ab). As a result, this diminishes the destructive power of autoimmune response against the body's own tissues.

Glutathione for Hashimoto's Thyroiditis

Glutathione is a highly potent antioxidant that functions by inhibiting the free radical damage, which contributes to destabilised immune function if left unchecked. The development of an autoimmune disorder aggravates glutathione damage due to chronic inflammatory assault on cells of the body. Previous studies have demonstrated an association of Hashimoto's thyroiditis with poor glutathione status.

Providing external support to the body's ability to recycle glutathione in the form of supplements can indirectly protect the thyroid glands from autoimmune attacks and inflammation. This is because glutathione dampens inflammatory reactions caused by the autoimmune response.

The role of holistic treatments

Alternative treatment options can also help manage the symptoms of autoimmune disorders in association with pharmaceutical approaches.

Acupuncture: Acupuncture offers invaluable advantages in alleviating clinical symptoms such as fatigue, neck pressure, and mood swings. Moreover, this form of alternative approach has no negative side effects. Clinical studies also indicate that acupuncture can stimulate a patient's body to synthesize numerous neurohumoral immune responses, which can play a critical role in improving the state of immune disorder.

Exercise: Exercise and yoga can be helpful for patients with certain autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis. Exercise significantly reduces pain and inflammation and strengthens overall immunity.

Massage: Patients with autoimmune disorders can also benefit from massage therapy for pain management and muscular relaxation.

Hashimoto's thyroiditis can take a huge toll, not only on a patient's physical health, but mental health too. Fortunately, the prognosis for someone suffering from this autoimmune disorder is very good with proper treatment. It is very important for individuals suffering from Hashimoto's thyroiditis to maintain a well-balanced and nutritious diet. Such patients should focus on eating unprocessed and whole foods. Consulting a dietitian to plan an ideal diet will also help combat disease symptoms more efficiently. ■



JORDI MASCIO has more than 14 years' experience in

the Bio Medical industry both in highly technical positions and in distribution and managing roles. He holds an MSc in Bio Medical engineering and an MSc in Molecular Physics. He provides courses and seminars on liposomes and innovative molecules to many practitioners around Europe. Find out more at

www.goldmanlaboratories.com



Now that mental health issues are openly discussed, it looks like the menopause may be next to come out from the shadows and be acknowledged publicly. This could represent a considerable new service area for holistic therapists...

A decade ago, I found myself at an event where a group of older women were discussing being, “women of a certain age”. I asked how I’d know when I was of a certain age and was met by smirks, raised eyebrows and informed, “Oh honey, take it from us, you’ll just know.” I was none the wiser. Menopause, while grudgingly acknowledged, was a private

and mysterious process. It was never discussed in the media, but was kept for private conversations about hot flashes amongst friends. Symptoms were sympathised over and doctors either shrugged and muttered about age or offered Hormone Replacement Therapy.

However you look at it, menopause is no longer a mystery. Amazon lists over 7000 books on the subject and many celebrities, including Jenny Éclair, Meg Matthews, Mariella Frostrup and Liz Earle have all published menopause guides, style advice and

memoires. There are several consumer magazines, such as Menopause Matters and My Menopause available on the shelves of major newsagents.

MENOPAUSE:

THE NEXT BIG THING

We have TV ads discussing menopause related vaginal dryness and bladder leaks and recent employment tribunal cases where women have successfully argued that they have been discriminated against for suffering menopausal symptoms at work. Menopause is, therefore, increasingly in the public eye.

Menopause: facts and figures

Menopause occurs when the body stops being reproductively viable and monthly egg production ceases as oestrogen production slows down. It's not an overnight process, but women are said to be in menopause when they haven't experienced a period for a year. This usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, with 51 being the average. That said, there are a considerable number of women who experience an early menopause, sometimes due to the surgical removal of the ovaries and others who are still fertile well into their sixties. The symptoms of menopause are thought to last from four to eight years. Some women have an easy menopause, while for others, it is a constant drain both physically and emotionally, with temperature spikes, night sweats, palpitations, weight gain, fluctuating hormone levels, skin changes, tiredness, mood swings, poor concentration, forgetfulness and mental health issues associated with no longer feeling like a woman. A surprising number of women initially assume that they are suffering from severe illness or are going mad.

Around 75-80% of women of menopausal age are in work, with one in three UK workers estimated to be over fifty. That said, it's not a subject discussed at work. Most women choose not to discuss the matter and its impacts on their professional and personal lives with their managers or colleagues. It's thought that 20-25% of women will have hot flushes which adversely affect their perceived quality of personal and working lives, although this is often the symptom most associated with menopause.

The menopause often comes at a time when women are under personal pressure, combining work with caring roles for children or grandchildren as well as aging parents and sick or disabled relatives.

Stages of menopause

Far from being like a switch being thrown, catapulting a woman from a fertile to a non-fertile state, menopause is a gradual phased process. Four stages are recognised:

Premenopause runs from the onset of periods to the early to mid-forties. This can be thought of as the child-bearing years, where a woman has the highest chances of becoming pregnant. Fertility tends to drop off from the mid-thirties onwards. The monthly cycle means that reproductive hormones are in constant flux, which can give rise to changes in sex-drive, menstrual cramps, mood-swings, skin outbreaks, bloating and breast tenderness.

Perimenopause marks the start of the transition towards a non-fertile state. It generally begins in the early forties and can last from two to ten years before menopause. It's often the case that women can only identify the length of each phase when they have passed to the next. Every woman has a different transition experience, so individual care is more effective than a blanket approach. The hormones associated with reproduction – oestrogen and progesterone – can fluctuate considerably, giving rise to irregular periods, mood swings, night sweats and mental distress. Some women find the loss of their reproductive capacity problematic, as if their very definition of self is been torn from them. Others welcome the transition.

Menopause is said to have arrived when a woman has not experienced a period for twelve consecutive months. The supply of eggs is depleted which reduces the production or reproductive hormones and women can no longer get pregnant without artificial fertility treatment. Around 5% of women will experience an early menopause, where periods stop permanently before the ages of 50. This tends to be associated with a loss of ovarian function and may be genetic in origin, or due to surgical intervention or autoimmune issues. Premature menopause occurs before the age of 40 and affects around 1% of women. The commonest causes include a lack of eggs, perhaps due to malfunctioning ovaries, or as a result of medical procedures such as surgery, radiotherapy or chemotherapy.

Postmenopause occurs in the years after menopause. Most of the problematic physical and emotional changes associated with menopause gradually subside or stop. Women in this phase may still experience issues with poor sleep, vaginal dryness and urinary tract infections. Osteoporosis and heart disease become more common as the higher oestrogen levels associated with fertility previously bestowed a protective effect.

Around 75-80% of women of menopausal age are in work, with one in three UK workers estimated to be over fifty.



What's happening in the body?

The phases of menopause are largely driven by two related processes – the loss of ovarian follicles and the associated decrease in the production of oestrogen.

Oestrogen is the name given to a category of steroid sex hormones associated with the female reproductive system and secondary sexual characteristics. There are three main endogenous oestrogens – estrone, estradiol and estriol, with the latter being most abundant. A fourth oestrogen, estetrol, occurs in pregnancy.

Oestrogens promote the development of female secondary sexual characteristics such as breasts and wider hips. They are also involved in the thickening of the endometrium and other aspects of regulating the menstrual cycle. They also play a much wider role in the body, being involved in everything from increasing muscle mass, bone density and collagen production, control of binge eating, metabolic speed, neuroprotection, verbal memory, increased fat storage and many of the balancing functions of homeostasis. This is why decreased levels of oestrogen give rise to such a wide range of menopausal symptoms and why menopause experiences differ from one woman to the next.

Oestrogen plays a significant role in women's mental health, partly because gender is core to how we see ourselves and present ourselves to the world. Sudden oestrogen withdrawal, fluctuating oestrogen, and times of sustained low oestrogen levels correlate with significant mood lowering. Clinical recovery from postpartum, perimenopause, and postmenopause depression has been shown to be effective after levels of oestrogen were stabilised and/or restored.



Progesterone is another endogenous steroid sex hormone which is involved in the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and embryogenesis. During the menstrual cycle, levels of progesterone can vary by 1200%, whereas estradiol fluctuates by 200%.

Progesterone has a variety of important functions in the body. It is also a crucial metabolic intermediate in the production of other endogenous steroids, including the sex hormones and the corticosteroids, and plays an important role in brain function as a neurosteroid.

In addition to its role as a natural hormone, progesterone is also used as a medication, such as in combination with oestrogen for contraception, to reduce the risk of uterine or cervical cancer, in hormone replacement therapy, and in feminising hormone therapy. Where no impregnation occurs, falling progesterone levels trigger periods. Where pregnancy occurs, a fall in progesterone levels signals the start of lactation and facilitates the onset of labour. Progesterone is also thought to temporarily reduce a woman's immune system so the pregnancy is not treated as a collection of invading cells.

For many women who raised their menopausal symptoms with their GP, Hormone Replacement Therapy was the sole option.

In menopause, decreased levels of progesterone and oestrogen lead to skin changes such as thinning and a reduced level of collagen, increasing wrinkles and reducing skin elasticity.

Hormone Replacement Therapy

For many women who raised their menopausal symptoms with their GP, Hormone Replacement Therapy was the sole option. The NHS considers it a safe way to relieve many of the symptoms associated with menopause, but it is not suitable for every woman.

Some types of HRT can increase the risk of breast cancer, particularly where treatment lasts several years, so it is not recommended for those who have previously had breast, ovarian or womb cancer or who have a genetic predisposition towards cancer. It's also not recommended for women prone to blood clots, or who have liver disease or untreated high blood pressure.

As there are several types of HRT treatment on the market, many GPs start patients off with a low dose trial for three months and may then switch to another treatment if this does

not alleviate the symptoms. It's possible to get pregnant while using HRT since it mimics the premenopausal state, so contraception may also be needed.

HRT can be based on a combination of oestrogen and progesterone or oestrogen only. It's available as skin patches, tablets, gels and vaginal creams, pessaries or rings. Some women use HRT to mimic the menstrual cycle, while others use constant treatment without breaks. The majority cease to use HRT when their menopausal symptoms pass.

Common side effects in the first few months of treatment include breast tenderness, feeling sick, indigestion, abdominal pain or cramps, vaginal bleeding and headaches. Essentially, HRT brings back the side effects associated with menstruation.



Other NHS treatments

Some GPs suggest lifestyle measures such as eating more healthily, stopping smoking and reducing the amount of coffee, alcohol and spicy foods consumed. Some types of antidepressant medications alleviate hot flushes and night sweats, but side effects such as dizziness and agitation may create more problems than they solve. Note that they these drugs are not licensed for this purpose. Clonidine is a non-hormonal treatment that offers marginal benefits in reducing night sweats and regulating hot flushes. Ibolone is a less effective medicine that's offered to women who ceased menstruation more than a year previously. It mimics the effects of combined HRT.

Some companies also offer bioidentical hormones, which are made from plant sources. Thus, these are not the same as body identical

hormones and the NHS does not prescribe such treatments because of a lack of published studies on their effectiveness or lack of effect. In many of these preparations, the hormone balance replicates that found in female saliva, which may not match that found in the body, nor relate to menopausal symptoms.

Natural and holistic treatments

A trip to your local health food store will uncover a variety of herbal supplements designed to tackle menopausal symptoms. These include evening primrose oil, black cohosh, angelica, ginseng and St John's wort. Studies show that black cohosh and St. John's wort can help reduce hot flashes in some women and, like all medications, natural or artificial, there can be side effects. St. John's work can interact with prescribed medicines and known side effects can include sleep problems, strange dreams, feeling anxious, irritable, or restless.

NICE, the government agency which sets down treatment guidelines and approves medications, notes that a recent survey reported that 95% of UK women said they would try alternative therapies before turning to HRT. This is a mix of preferring a natural solution to a natural process and concerns over HRT side effects.

A trip to your local health food store will uncover a variety of herbal supplements designed to tackle menopausal symptoms.

NICE use some different techniques to measure the effectiveness of different therapies. A network meta-analysis (NMA) allows lots of different treatments to be compared by how well they worked in relation to another treatment. An NMA compared placebo (no treatment) acupuncture, sham acupuncture, oestrogen alone, oestrogen and progestogen, non-oral oestrogen plus progestogen, tibolone, gabapentin, Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI)

and Selective Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRI), Isoflavones, Chinese herbal medicine, black cohosh, multi botanicals and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) all with each other which provided the evidence for the 2015 NICE Menopause Guidelines.

The good news is that CBT can alleviate low mood and anxiety which arise as a result of the menopause, and now we realise CBT can also improve hot flashes and sweats. The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) recommends a CBT approach that combines relaxation techniques, sleep hygiene and learning to take positive healthy attitude to a menopause challenge.

Black Cohosh: *Actaea racemosa* or *Cimicifuga racemosa* is a member of the perennial buttercup family, native to North America. NICE suggests that black cohosh can help hot flashes although trial results suggest it is less effective than HRT. Black cohosh does not help with anxiety or low mood. It may interact with other medicines and there are unknown risks regarding safety, including 83 recorded cases of liver damage. It is felt that at least some of these reported cases of hepatotoxicity were due to impurities, adulterants, or incorrect *Acteae* species in the black cohosh products used.

St John's Wort: St John's Wort was shown to have benefit in relieving vasomotor symptoms, particularly in women with a history of, or at high risk of breast cancer. However, like black cohosh, it may interact with other drugs which again means it should be used with due care. Women on tamoxifen must not take St John's Wort as it makes the tamoxifen ineffective. NICE found that other herbal treatments including Ginseng and Chinese herbal



medicines were not proven to improve hot flashes, anxiety or low mood.

Phytoestrogens: Phytoestrogens, including soy isoflavones can form a large part of dietary intake in certain ethnic groups; these women should continue their normal diet. There are very many studies looking at the effectiveness of these food substances, but NICE suggests that the results are variable and generally show little value. They are not recommended in patients with breast cancer.

Acupuncture: Acupuncture appears to reduce the number and severity of hot flashes and night sweats with acupuncture in some women. NICE notes that the evidence from clinical trials is inconclusive, with no difference between true and sham acupuncture. Sham acupuncture is when the patient receives needling, but not into true acupuncture points. It is likely this is due to a high placebo effect associated with acupuncture therapy.

Other forms of holistic treatment may help with particular menopausal side effects such as sleep problems and heightened stress levels. ■

A photograph of a shamanic practitioner, an older man with long dark hair and a beard, wearing traditional beaded jewelry. He is holding a lit pipe in his right hand, with smoke rising from it. His left hand is raised towards the head of another person whose hair is visible in the foreground. The scene is dimly lit, with the smoke providing a focal point of light.

THE SHAMANIC ART OF CREATIVITY

Shamanic practitioner Evelyn C. Rysdyk shares some practices to unlock your creative energies...

TO a shaman, everything is primarily energetic in nature. Energy is the armature on which physical reality is formed and this energetic arena is where the shaman has always been a master. In shamanic terms, even the animating essence that we may call spirit or consciousness is part of that energetic landscape.

When any imbalance or illness occurs, it means that spiritual energy has fallen out of harmony. Indeed, a shaman's work is primarily focused on the creation and maintenance of energetic harmony and balance. In their work, shamans work to increase that which is beneficial and to reduce that which is

harmful, to return a healthy state of equilibrium.

Shamans also understand that by attending to the harmony and balance inside yourself, you are simultaneously engaged in transforming the entirety. It is why shamanic healers spend the lion's share of their day attending to keeping balance and harmony inside their own lives. They have always understood what the new physics has postulated, which is that our universe functions like a hologram. In other words, even the smallest part of the whole holds all the information of the entirety. The microcosm of yourself is both a manifestation of and a doorway to the macrocosm of All That Is.

The destructive illness from which our human community suffers requires healing in a similar manner. While all of nature is engaged in an ongoing cycle of creation and destruction, it's clear that life's energetic balance is now weighted far too heavily to the latter.

We need to encourage and increase creative energy to balance our human collective's destructive energy. In so doing, we will heal ourselves and our world.

Fortunately, we are all the children of an immensely creative cosmos. As a product of nature's creativity, you were meant to engage with the creative energy that was wired into you as part of your birthright.

Creative energy is a life-giving force that unbinds our imagination, supports our capacity for brilliant innovation and aids in the implementation of unique, new solutions. It's a kind of inherent superpower that engages aspects of us that are capable of incorporating the intelligence of body and soul as well as a spacious nonlinear mind. Creative energy is ingenious. It actively seeks new horizons. It cannot be bound. It is an energy that, like water, always finds a way to flow.

Shamanic Journeying

The ancient method of shamanic journeying is an awesome tool for stepping out of the linear mind state. Shamans and creative people function across similar landscapes in that they function in both the local and nonlocal universe—the visible world of our three-dimensional reality defined by our senses and the invisible worlds of energy, connection, and the intersection of universal or collective consciousness.

Shamanic Journeying using sonic driving (such as repetitive drumming) is generally safe and easy for an average person to learn and offers access to the expansion of consciousness, which opens creativity. Using it can bolster your confidence, develop higher perceptual skills, and enhance your

creativity, as well as develop new skills and abilities. While journeying, our brains exhibit a symphony of waves, in the alpha, beta, delta, and theta range. With continued practice, these beneficial effects become more sustained even while in ordinary awareness. You can find

free to use shamanic drumming and guided meditations downloads on my website at <https://evelynrnydyk.com/myspiritwalk.html>



Alpha Brain-Wave State (8–12 Hz)

- Reduces depressive symptoms
- Increases creative thinking
- Supports experiences of mystical states of consciousness
- Conductive to innovation and new ideas

Theta Brain-Wave State (3–8 Hz)

- Detached relaxation state
- Vivid mental imagery
- Opens intuition
- Supports receiving inspiration

Delta Brain-Wave State (0.5–3 Hz)

- Sense of deep connectedness to universal consciousness
- Sense of connectedness to everything and living being

Gamma Brain-Wave State (25–100 Hz)

- Supports simultaneous processing of information
- Heightened perception
- Increased compassion, psychic abilities and out-of-body experiences

Collectively, the brain waves states achieved during the shamanic journey contribute to increases in imagination, the ability to synthesise information, boosting intuition and spontaneous “a-ha!” moments. It also supports thinking about more than one thing at a time, increases visual and visuospatial cognition, helps us to experience better open-ended thinking, increased problem-solving abilities and enhances the ability to learn new information, implement and remember it. It has even been shown to provide stress relief.

Creative energy is a life-giving force that unbinds our imagination, supports our capacity for brilliant innovation

These enhancements support the non-linear aspect of mind to blossom and turbo charges innate creative energy. It is important to note here that the products of creativity are not the point! Creative energy is natural force with its own pulse, rhythm, and flow. It produces more energy than is expended in its use and is capable of enlivening all aspects of life. Not only that, creative energy is installed as standard equipment in every model, shape, and size of human being.

Learning to flow with creative energy is a dynamic process, often triggered when we perceive a problem has arisen. The conundrum we face might be practical, esoteric, or a blend of the two that requires a solution. The brain analyses the situation and then begins shuffling data and thoughts around. If we give our brain free rein—which is a learnable skill—our ordinary, analytical brain state begins to step down from its place of dominance. At this point, the more spatial, nonlinear, imaginative, emotional, and intuitive brain activity begins to whirl so that images and seemingly random or especially unique ideas begin to arise. Through this process, cognitive leaps are often made. Our brain then processes all this data to synthesize new connections and soon we have a solution to implement.

That may sound complicated, but in truth you were born with the ability to do all of it.

Tapping into the creative energy in and around you

Try this guided meditation as a starting point.

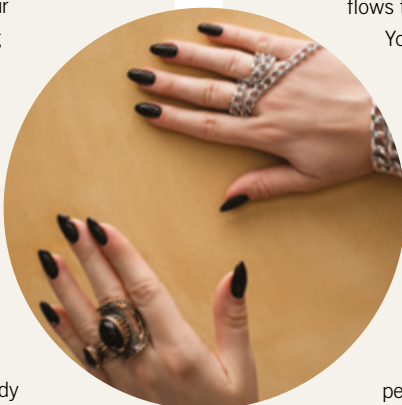
- Begin by finding a quiet space where you will not be disturbed. Sit down in a comfortable chair that allows your back to be straight with your feet on the floor.

- With your hands folded gently in your lap, close your eyes and take a few moments to breathe. Allow your breaths to be both quiet and full, somewhat like the breaths of the deep sleep state.



- As you begin to more fully relax, notice that your breath originates in the center of your chest. Imagine a light there that grows brighter with every breath that you take.

- As this light grows brighter, imagine it expanding to fill your entire body—growing ever brighter. Your radiant body is an expression of our cosmos of creative energy. The powerful creative force of exploding novae seeded the cosmos with all of the elements to make you and the body of our beautiful planet. All of the iron, calcium, oxygen, and other elements are gifts from the stars. This gift is what you inhabit while you are embodied. You are a divinely radiant, creative being wrapped in star stuff!



- Allow your radiant energy to expand so that your physical body is

enfolded in light. Your spirit—your light—completely surrounds your body. This is your true state of being. Your entire being is full, rich, radiant, beautiful, and alive with creative energy!

- While continuing to breathe, notice how your creative radiance is connected to the creative radiance of the Earth. Your body moves within the atmosphere of our planet. You live by swimming through her air with your feet touching her body. Your body is held by your light and is always cradled by the Earth. Her creativity is also yours.

- Allow yourself to reach out even farther and feel how the sun's creative, life-sustaining warmth embraces the Earth as she embraces you. Allow all your senses to be fully enlivened by this nurturance. You are a magnificently embodied aspect of the creative energy that flows throughout All That Is.

You were created to be a creator in concert with Mother Earth.

- Breathe in the depth of these creative connections between you, the cosmos, and our beautiful world and allow it to bring you to a peaceful and fully enlivened state of being. Allow yourself to feel completely and deeply peaceful in this awareness.

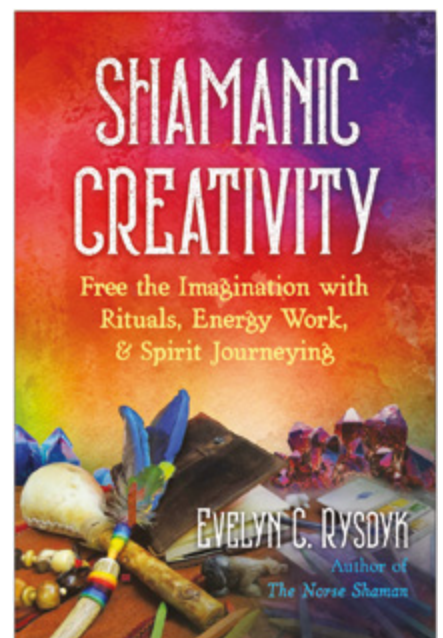
- When you feel full of this experience, clasp your folded hands tightly together. As you are doing this, recall the sensations of being fully enlivened and nurtured by the

creative energy that flows throughout the cosmos. Whenever you wish, you will be able to attain this feeling again by repeating this symbolic gesture with your hands.

- Now, gently release your hands and allow yourself to slowly return your attention to the room in which you are sitting. Take a full, deep, sighing breath, and gently open your eyes.

- Our collective creativity is essential for creating new realities. By unleashing our most creative selves, we become the potential for nothing less than a future that is visionary, healing, sustaining, and regenerative for all beings.

EVELYN C. RYSDYK is an internationally recognized shamanic practitioner and bestselling author. Her titles include *The Norse Shaman*, *Spirit Walking: A Course in Shamanic Power*, and *The Nepalese Shamanic Path*. Her latest book, *Shamanic Creativity* may be ordered from bookstores and through online merchants.





LIGHT FANTASTIC: THE BENEFITS OF RED AND NEAR- INFRARED LIGHT

***Ruth Milner** shares her insight into the healing power of red and near-infrared light for people and animals...*

LIGHT affects us in many ways, from physical health to psychological mood and mental wellbeing. It's not just light in the visible spectrum that impacts on our health. We know that ultra-violet light, in the form of UVA and UVB can damage our skin and even lead to skin cancer. Conversely, red and near-infrared light can have enormous therapeutic benefit.

What is Red and Near Infrared Light therapy?

Red light therapy uses the latest LED sourced technology with red and near-infrared (NIR) wavelengths being widely used and studied. Since 2015, this has been known as Photobiomodulation. It triggers a cascade of

biostimulatory photochemical effects in cells, thereby stimulating biological responses which are not actually derived from heat but can be considered as being similar to photosynthesis in plants. Unlike laser light, LED sourced NIR is totally safe for the eyes, so there is no need for protective goggles.

Regular application of photobiomodulation has been shown to be effective in aiding the natural healing processes of the body, reducing swelling and inflammation, stimulating the immune system and relieving pain caused by underlying health conditions or injuries.

How does it promote healing?

Photobiomodulation helps promote healing at a cellular level via multiple biological effects stimulated by photon energy. As the combined red and near infra-red light penetrates into the body, its photochemical effects absorbed by receptors increase cellular energy where there are damaged or compromised cells, whether it's soft tissue or musculoskeletal injury. Every cell is a building block of the body and if each cell can function at its best, the body will heal itself.

Previous studies have shown that photobiomodulation treatment increases blood flow and oxygen to the damaged cells, reducing inflammation. It also encourages lymph flow to the targeted area removing debris and radicals. Apart from offering pain relief, it also releases endorphins and increases serotonin calming the body. The Photizo CE Medically approved Home Care range offers specific models designed for pain relief, acute sports injuries, skin care, anti-aging and animal health.

Scientific evidence

There's a considerable body of scientific evidence concerning the positive health benefits of photobiomodulation treatment. Harvard professor Michael Hamblin PhD, co-author of *Low Level Light Therapy: Photobiomodulation*, states that PBM reduces signs of sun damage in ageing, reduces wrinkles, boosts collagen by 30%, and speeds up wound healing and even promotes hair re-growth. He also commented that PBM revealed, "Consistent and highly significant results in favour of active PBM for osteoarthritis". Other continuing PBM studies similarly show promising results for patients with cognitive degeneration, infertility and mental health.

How could a holistic therapist incorporate the use of red light therapy into their practice?

There are many holistic modalities that could incorporate photobiomodulation to enhance treatment outcomes. In massage and bodywork, photobiomodulation devices enhance any massage technique allowing deep tissue mobilisation, improving blood and lymphatic flow as well as fascia release. They also aid the healing process when combined and applied between professional treatments such as Physiotherapy, Osteopathy and Chiropractic. For beauty and skincare therapists, PBM offers a non-invasive approach to collagen stimulation, rejuvenating skin and reducing the appearance of wrinkles and well as offering benefits for atopic conditions like eczema. ■



RUTH MILNER is a member of the International Light Association network. She is the author of a successful CPD for animal health professionals and provides consultancy on the physiological effects, psychological and emotional effects of colours. She is the Managing Director of Danetre Health Products. www.danetrehealthproducts.com



SPIRITUAL HEALING IN THE NHS

Sandy Edwards discusses her work in hospitals and how she came to be part of the biggest scientific study of the effectiveness of spiritual healing...

LIKE many healers, my journey was not straightforward. In my teens, I suffered scalp psoriasis. I tried everything, but nothing would shift it. Someone told me that the upset energies causing the psoriasis would be corrected if I gave healing to others. She pointed me to The Healing Trust, a non-religious UK charity with a worldwide membership. From the start of training,

the people I practised on reported beneficial effects, even though I was completely unaware of the energies referred to. It was astonishing, more so because anyone can do it.

Training to qualify takes two years. I then set up a voluntary healing group thanks to Lottery grant funding. Five years on, one of our patients confided that her hospital consultant, Dr. Singh had sent her.

He had sent other patients, too, and was pleased with the results. I was amazed that a consultant would do this, so I wrote, volunteering to give healing to his patients at the hospital.

I detailed the professional standards that The Healing Trust adheres to and added that we do not diagnose, prescribe or manipulate, use needles, oils or lotions. I explained that a healing session takes just twenty minutes and the patient can be seater or lying down, remaining fully clothed.

We can work without touching or use a light touch on the joints, shoulders and feet. I mentioned two Healing Trust members who worked as salaried healers in different NHS hospitals and a highly distinguished family doctor whose surgery had employed healers for decades.

Dr Singh welcomed my offer and we met to discuss how to go about giving healing to his ward patients and outpatients. Getting permission from the hospital's bureaucrats took us 18 months.

Volunteers at the hospital fall under the responsibility of the Patient Advice Liaison Service (PALS) so the first step was to be interviewed by its Coordinator. She was fascinated by the concept of healing and was curious to know what the patients might experience. I offered to demonstrate on her so that she would have first-hand knowledge of what is involved. Unbeknown to me, her back had been painful for weeks. She was astounded that the discomfort disappeared completely within just a few minutes. As a result, she became a marvellous exponent for healing and, partly due to her enthusiastic support, we subsequently managed to introduce additional healers into other departments on the site.

After their consultation with him at the outpatients clinic, Dr Singh would suggest that selected patients might benefit from a healing

session with me. If they took up the offer, he would introduce me and I would lead the patient to my room, which was just next door.

I quickly realised that hospital patients are a different kettle of fish to those who come to the healing centre. These people had no prior intention of having healing, and they were highly sceptical that it could help them. Some told me point blank that only additional medication could help. Nevertheless, most took up Dr Singh's invitation, and they probably only did so because he presented the idea in positive terms, it was only next door, available immediately and cost nothing. By contrast, those attending a healing centre make an effort to get there, they anticipate a positive outcome and they are prepared to make a donation towards overheads. Despite hospital patients being so very different, though, their responses to healing seemed just as beneficial.

I quickly realised that hospital patients are a different kettle of fish to those who come to the healing centre.

In the first weeks, Dr Singh would interview each person directly after their 20-minute healing session, and he was intrigued by the range of benefits they reported. Some were dramatic. To avoid this feedback disappearing into the ether, I created an audit questionnaire. Once it was approved by the hospital's ethics committee, I was able to document their responses. The results soon revealed significant improvements regarding pain, anxiety, vitality, relationships and sleep quality, and many of these improvements were retained for at least a week. Some were permanent. One patient had suffered for

years and no medication helped, but he was immediately transformed into being healthy and happy after a single healing session. Dr Singh was so impressed that he visited the patient's home and recorded an interview with him. He now plays this recording to gatherings of doctors and medical students to demonstrate the potential value of adding healing to their provision of care.

Although I gave each patient a leaflet about our voluntary healing group, hardly anyone went along there. Dr Singh discovered that patients only wanted to have healing in the safety of the hospital, where they felt assured that the healer and the therapy had been approved. There were afraid to go anywhere else.

On the occasion that nobody was waiting for a healing session, I would invite the nursing staff to have a quick session. This turned out to be highly beneficial on two counts. First, these highly-stressed people had chance to really unwind and many were astonished that they could relax so deeply in such a short a time. Some felt aches and pains disappear. Secondly, they became enthusiastic advocates for healing, encouraging patients to take up the opportunity.

Having been a healer for some years, the patient responses seemed perfectly normal to me, but to many of them the experience was astonishing. At the outpatients' clinic, it was delightful to see Dr Singh sometimes beckon other consultants over to hear what patients had to say. On one such occasion, he asked the gathered consultants, 'How many patients leave our consultations saying, 'That was fantastic!''

Almost all of the patients I saw at the hospital were referred to me by Dr Singh. The nursing staff and administrative personnel began actively encouraging patients to see me after they witnessed the difference in some of the patients. Very few other consultants at Dr Singh's clinic sent their patients to me. One registrar was initially hesitant but after seeing the difference it made to one of his patients, he then referred several more to me. Soon afterwards he took up a promotion at a different hospital but, before he left, he told me that he intended to introduce healing at his new post as soon as he was established enough.



On one occasion, a surgeon made his way over to me to thank our team of healers for the work we were doing at the hospital. At the other end of the spectrum, another registrar never referred a patient to me and told me categorically that medication is the only answer; he said that he could not see a place for healing in any medical setting. In between these two poles, the other consultants seemed cautiously open-minded, and they would send me the occasional patient. Judging from the few that they sent, it did not dampen the patient's experience of healing if they were referred to me by a sceptical consultant.

Given the pressures that front-line staff in the health service are under—those who are actively caring for patients in clinics and wards—the stress levels can be extremely high.

Some of our volunteer healers worked in the cancer wards, offering their services to both patients and staff. A specialist consultant oncologist took advantage of the opportunity and had this to say: 'I had a number of sessions lasting 20–30 minutes after the end of my clinic, usually very stressful days, that I found tremendously valuable. It provided a tremendous feeling of deep relaxation and wellbeing that continued. I have found this service particularly beneficial and I know that a lot of our patients use this healing service to great effect. The service is provided by volunteer healers, but it is something that the NHS has to consider taking on board as part of a total package for people with cancer because I think that the benefits are certainly significant. If the healing service were funded by the NHS, it could be expanded so that all of the patients could be cared for this way.'

'Before having healing I was open-minded about whether it would be of benefit or not. In conventional medicine, we often don't have full answers to problems. You can't just

dismiss something because you don't have a scientific understanding of how it might work. I would certainly recommend it to all patients and would like to see a totally comprehensive service available.

'Given the pressures that front-line staff in the health service are under—those who are actively caring for patients in clinics and wards—the stress levels can be extremely high. The psychological burden of dealing with people who are ill is quite considerable and this kind of service would be absolutely invaluable.'

To my knowledge, I am the only healer to have had the privilege of working so closely with a senior consultant physician. It is immensely valuable that Dr Singh witnessed the effects of healing on his own patients, some of whom he had been treating for a long time. The medical file for just one patient can sometimes be several inches thick, giving evidence of the length of time they have been suffering and the number of procedures they must have endured.

Knowing that scientists and medics often ridicule colleagues who dare to use unconventional methods, one has to marvel at the risk that Dr Singh was prepared to take by openly introducing healing to his clinic. However, I came to learn from others that Dr Singh's reputation is sufficient to withstand such criticism, should any exist, and that he steadfastly puts his patients' interests first. His empathy with patients is sincere and unwavering, and every patient who has mentioned Dr Singh in my presence has done so with deep appreciation, even reverence.

The research project

Two months after I started at the hospital, the National Lottery announced a one-time-only, never-to-be-repeated offer of research funding. They sought projects that would help people, and that people wanted. Luckily, my audit ticked both these boxes. I took the news to Dr Singh and he brought the necessary parties together to make a strong application. Against huge competition, we were awarded £205,000.

The University of Birmingham, known for its world class research, led the study. The trial aimed to discover whether adding

healing to conventional care helped long-term sufferers of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Both conditions have highly embarrassing and painful symptoms with fluctuating severity, affecting every aspect of a sufferer's life. There is no medical cure and, as with any long-term illness, depression is often an additional burden for them.

There are no underlying physical causes for IBS symptoms to occur, whereas IBD sufferers do have internal abnormalities that cause suffering. The trial aimed to establish whether healing helped either or both of these differing conditions.

100 IBS and 100 IBD patients were recruited and split 50/50 into two groups. One half (the Intervention Group) immediately began a series of five weekly healing sessions, while the other half (the Waiting List Group) waited for 12 weeks before starting their five sessions. Comparisons could then be made between those who received healing and those who had not, for those first 12 weeks. To identify and measure changes, each patient completed three different questionnaires at Weeks 0, 6, 12 and 24.

After they received their healing sessions, the Waiting List Groups generally mirrored the pattern of the Intervention Groups, thereby doubly confirming the results.

The primary goal of the study was to ascertain whether lives were improved and the main tool for this was the MYMOP questionnaire. Using research terminology, the results were very highly significant. Using my own terms, I'd say they were spectacular and thrilling. Whether using score improvements, 'effect size' or statistics, the results were excellent for both IBS and IBD groups equally. It was delightful to see that improvements continued to increase after the last healing session, and that most gains were retained for at least 19 weeks after their final healing session (Week 24). The other disease-specific, quality of life



questionnaires supported these findings.

The secondary focus was to see if physical symptoms had improved, and they had, to varying degrees.

After they received their healing sessions, the Waiting List Groups generally mirrored the pattern of the Intervention Groups, thereby doubly confirming the results. In addition, the results across the various questionnaires tallied with each other, further supporting the validity of them all. In addition to this, 22 participants were interviewed, and the results from this qualitative study further corroborated the findings. From their statements, it was clear that people enjoyed receiving healing and felt empowered by it. The sensations they experienced confirmed that something more than relaxation was happening.

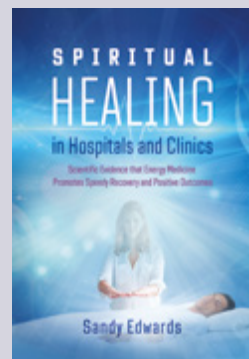
The research papers needed to be published in a medical journal, which meant being peer reviewed. Medical doctors conduct these peer reviews. The leading medical journals

rejected the main, quantitative paper. One blatantly stated that they do not subscribe to complementary therapies. Another was unable to find anyone willing to review a paper that concerned spiritual healing. Eventually published by online medical journals, both research papers are now available in full for anyone to access. Unfortunately, not many people read research papers, so I felt driven to write a book about it. There is so much more to say about this research than conveyed in the published papers. Also, with 200 citations, my book signposts a wealth of information sources, and refers to healing research on animals and plants that dispel the myth that healing is only placebo.

If a cheap drug with no side effects had gained these results, it would surely be welcomed by the NHS. The next mission is to convert these impressive findings into medical acceptance and practical application within conventional healthcare. ■



SANDY EDWARDS is a fellow of the Healing Trust, UK. She set up a voluntary healing clinic, and volunteered in hospitals, before instigating the largest medical research trial of spiritual healing, the results of which she presented at the Houses of Parliament in London. Sandy has served as a trustee of the Healing Trust charity and lives in Dorset, UK.



NEW FRONTIERS:

RESEARCH ROUND UP

INTERESTING NEW RESEARCH OF INTEREST TO HOLISTIC THERAPISTS AND THEIR CLIENTS...

BRAIN AND BEHAVIOUR: A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE OPIOID SYSTEM AND EATING BEHAVIOUR

Finnish researchers at the University of Turku have discovered that there is a connection between the function of the opioid system and food craving triggered by appetitive external stimuli. Previously, animal studies have shown that the brain's opioid and endocannabinoid systems are important in regulating eating behaviour and mediate the food reward experience. Malfunctions in this signalling system have been associated with obesity.

The Finnish study concluded that the function of the opioid system is connected to eating triggered by external stimuli. The fewer the number of binding sites there were for the opioids, the greater was the tendency to eat in response to external stimuli, such as seeing appetizing food. It is thought that the opioid system could be a potential target for anti-obesity drugs. *Ref: 10.1038/s41398-021-01559-5*

STANDING ASSOCIATED WITH BETTER INSULIN SENSITIVITY

More research from the University of Turku has established a connection between standing more and better insulin sensitivity and may have a role to play in preventing chronic lifestyle diseases.

Insulin function is known to be adversely affected by being overweight, leading to decreased insulin sensitivity and an increased risk level for developing cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

Lifestyle has a strong impact on insulin resistance and the development of type 2 diabetes, and regular physical activity

is known to have an important role in the prevention of these issues. However, so far, little is known about the impact of sedentary behaviour, breaks in sitting, and standing on insulin resistance.

The researchers observed that standing is associated with better insulin sensitivity independently of the amount of daily physical activity or sitting time, fitness level, or being overweight. *Ref: 10.1016/j.jsams.2021.08.009*

ADHD AND DEMENTIA: A LINK ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

A large study conducted by a research team at Sweden's Karolinska Institutet shows that parents and grandparents of individuals with ADHD were at higher risk of dementia than those with children and grandchildren without ADHD.

This suggests that there are common genetic

and/or environmental contributions to the association between ADHD and dementia. The study looked at more than two million people born in Sweden between 1980 and 2001, of whom around 3.2 percent were diagnosed with ADHD. Using national registries, the researchers linked these persons to over five million biological relatives, including parents, grandparents and uncles and aunts, and investigated to what extent these relatives developed dementia.

The researchers found that parents of individuals with ADHD had 34 percent higher risk of dementia than parents of individuals without ADHD. The risk of Alzheimer's disease, the most common type of dementia, was 55 percent higher in parents of individuals with ADHD. Individuals with ADHD were more likely to have parents with early-onset dementia than late-onset.



The researchers note that the absolute risk of dementia was low for the parent cohort; only 0.17 percent of the parents were diagnosed with dementia during the follow-up period.

It is hoped that further studies will explore whether there are undiscovered genetic variants that contribute to both traits, or family-wide environmental risk factors, such as socioeconomic status, that may have an impact on the association. *Ref. 10.1002/alz.12462*

COVID AND NUTRITION: PLANT-BASED DIETS MAY REDUCE RISK AND SEVERITY OF COVID-19

A new study from Massachusetts General Hospital suggests that those with a healthy plant-based diet had a lower risk of getting COVID-19, and, among people with COVID-19, were less likely to experience severe symptoms.

Previous studies have shown that obesity, smoking and type 2 diabetes were all linked to an increased risk of COVID-19, as well as an increased risk of experiencing serious symptoms once infected. Poor nutrition was found to be a common feature amongst groups who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

The new study, published in *Gut*, showed that people whose diets were based on healthy plant-based foods had lower risks on both counts. The beneficial effects of diet

on COVID-19 risk seemed especially relevant in individuals living in areas of high socioeconomic deprivation.

Data from almost 600,000 UK and US based participants in the smartphone-based COVID-19 Symptom Study was used. Of these, 31,831 participants developed COVID-19. Compared with individuals in the lowest quartile of the diet score, those in the highest quartile had a 9% lower risk of developing COVID-19 and a 41% lower risk of developing severe COVID-19.

FIBROMYALGIA: CBD FINDS FAVOUR WITH SUFFERERS

A study from the University of Michigan suggests that many US fibromyalgia patients are turning to CBD treatments in preference to opioid painkillers.

CBD, short for cannabidiol, is the second most common cannabinoid in the cannabis plant, and has been marketed for everything from mood stabilization to pain relief, without the intoxicating effects produced by the most common cannabinoid, THC. THC, which stands for delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, is the ingredient in marijuana that causes people to feel high.

Previous research shows that some people substitute medical cannabis (often with high concentrations of THC) for opioids and other pain medications, reporting that cannabis provides better pain relief and fewer side effects. However, there is far less data on CBD use.

The research team focused on 878 people with fibromyalgia who said they used CBD in order to get more insight into how they used CBD products. More than 70% of people with fibromyalgia who used CBD substituted CBD for opioids or other pain medications. Of these participants, many reported that they either decreased use or stopped taking opioids and other pain medications as a result. *Ref. 10.1016/j.jpain.2021.04.011*

BREASTFEEDING: PFAS EXPOSURE CAN AFFECT WOMEN'S ABILITY TO BREASTFEED

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are chemicals used as oil and water repellents and coatings for common products including cookware, carpets and textiles. These endocrine-disrupting chemicals do not break down when they are released into the environment, and they continue to accumulate over time. PFAS chemicals have been shown to affect pregnancy outcomes, the timing of puberty and other aspects of reproductive health.

Now a Danish research team have discovered that women with higher levels of PFAS in their system may be 20% more likely to stop breastfeeding early, according to a new study published in the *Endocrine Society's Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*.

The researchers analysed blood samples for PFAS and prolactin concentrations from almost 1300 pregnant women. The women provided information about the duration of breastfeeding in weekly text messages or questionnaires at three and eighteen months postpartum. The researchers found women with higher levels of PFAS in their system were 20% more likely to stop breastfeeding early. *Ref. 10.1210/clinem/dgab638* ■



Naturally gifted

Our pick of gorgeous festive gifts someone on your list will love...



◀ For lovers of the supernatural: Tales of Witchcraft and Wonder

In Iceland, there's a tradition where loved ones gift each other with a book on Christmas Eve, then spend the night reading. We'd love to see the custom become more widespread here. Given the popularity of ghost stories at Christmas, our choice is Tales of Witchcraft and Wonder by Claude and Corinne Lecouteux. It's a collection of medieval folk tales that balances being authoritative with being accessible and it'll send that little chill down the spine. Perfect for historian and wiccans too. Published by InnerTraditions.com, it's around £22 to order from your local bookshop, or £18.31 from [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk).



◀ For designated drivers: Mockingbird Agave Spirit

Whether it's a sober night or a sober life, it can be difficult to find good alcohol free alternatives to spirits. Somehow, the people at mockingbirdspirits.com have managed to create a drink that tastes like tequila, but doesn't involve either alcohol or a hangover the next morning. Mockingbird Agave combines Blue Agave from Mexico, with Ashwagandha to help reduce anxiety and promote a feeling of wellbeing. It's perfect for migraine-free margaritas or tequila slammer mocktails. £22.99 from mockingbirdspirits.com/collections/all.



◀ For pagans and role players: The Viking Dragon

TheVikingDragon.com stock everything for those enamoured of the Vikings. You'll find rune stones, t-shirts, costumes, drinking horns and books. They also stock raw materials like amber, wool, jet and hides for Viking crafts like weaving and leatherwork. We were impressed by their skilfully made replicas of silver arm rings and other Viking jewellery, using the same thousand year old techniques.

▲ For the outdoors types: Boing jewellery and keyrings

Boing makes vibrant hand-made rope bracelets and keyrings from genuine climbing and sailing ropes here in the UK. They also make a great woven leather range and stylish sterling silver pieces. Their products are beautifully designed, tough and tactile and come with a two year guarantee, so they're a great choice for anyone who loves an active outdoorsy lifestyle. There's a wide range of colour combinations to choose from at boingjewellery.com.



◀ For seekers of wisdom: Winterseer Animal Oracle Deck

This gorgeous oracle deck fuses Celtic and Norse lore with Siolo Thompson's beautiful illustrations of northern climate species. The guidebook uses folktales and mythology to help access the natural wisdom of species such as badgers, birds and bears through divination practices and helps to relate these to our modern lives. This would be a great choice for anyone exploring their own place in the world or in a state of change. \$27.99 from llewellyn.com.



▲ **For Busy Bees: Alexandra Kay Time to Inhale**

This essential oil mini diffuser is perfect for those who live life at 100 miles an hour. Pair it with one of their essential oil blends, like Time to Smile, which is a cheerful mix of lemon, cedar wood and sweet orange. 10% of net profits go to support the charity Ehlers-Danlos Support UK.

Alternatively, you could package it with a selection of personal custom blends that you've created yourself. Diffuser and Time to Smile oil £20 each from greenpeople.co.uk/collections/ak-alexandra-kay-natural-wellbeing-products.

► **For nature lovers: Henry Bell Sterling Wild bird feeding station**

Sometimes, it's all about just sitting back and staring out the window. Watching birds can help instil a sense of calm and wellbeing, as well as being educational for children. Garden feeders can help offset the appalling decline in bird numbers as well as providing hours of simple pleasure. The wider the range of food offered, the more species will visit. Bird feeders can be a great choice for the elderly, those living alone, nature lovers or families.

Henry Bell is a UK based family business that offers a huge range of feeds and feeders for garden birds. We liked the Henry Bell Sterling Feeding Station (RRP £19.99), which looks great and is elegantly distinctive. Pair it with some of their different types of feeders and don't forget that some birds are ground feeding. You can find their products in many garden centres and pet shops or purchase online at

food4wildbirds.co.uk

► **For those who work with their hands: Grown Alchemist**

Grown Alchemist's new Hand and Body care Twin Sets in their iconic, apothecary-style bottles make a great gift for anyone who works with their hands or just needs a little pampering. They come in biodegradable carrier bags and from February, all their body and hand care products will be refillable too. They've just launched two new scents into the range too. Take your pick from Tasmanian Pepper, Tangerine and Chamomile or Cedar wood Atlas, Ylang Ylang and Tangerine. £45 from grownalchemist.com/uk/body-care/hands.html from £3.50 upwards.



▼ **For little farmers: Britains Farm in a Box**

Pretend play is an important part of development, so this Farm in a Box set from Britains is a great choice for kids aged around 3-6. The 11-piece set includes a John Deere tractor and its detachable front loader for the heavy lifting, as well as hay bales and fences, and a selection of animals. The box converts into farm buildings that can be coloured in and reused time and time again. It even all fits back together so the set can be stored away. It's available from independent toy shops for £24.99.



◀ **For those who could use a boost of positivity: Mood Cards**

The Mood Clubs Mood cards make a great stocking filler for individuals or couples. It's a tiny gift that could make a big difference.

Each little tin comes with a set of 20 practical activities that help people get into a positive mind-set and encourage growth, self-reflection and positivity. The activities can be done in a few minutes, but have a long-lasting impact as they teach you to focus on the bright side of things, and support you in facing daily challenges with a positive attitude. There's a set especially for couples, or one for individuals. They are plastic free and printed on FSC paper. Each set costs £12.50 and is available from

themoodclub.com



Family COMFORTS

Rebecca Wilson shares some recipes to please the whole family...

Love your leftovers The dahl will keep for 3 days in the fridge, or freeze for 3 months. Reheat in a saucepan or in the microwave until bubbling and piping hot throughout.



EASY OVEN-BAKED CHICKEN AND MUSHROOM SHAWARMA (GF* EF

DF*) Serves 2 adults and 2 littles
Prep 10 minutes, Bake 30 minutes
Freezes

A perfect sharing meal. Let the kids help themselves and decide how they want to construct their plate.

Ingredients -

6 skinless, boneless chicken thighs
1 tbsp. smoked paprika
1 heaped tsp ground cumin
½ tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp ground turmeric
1 heaped tbsp. cornflour
3 fat garlic cloves, finely grated
Finely grated zest and juice of 1 unwaxed lemon
3 tbsp. garlic-infused olive oil
4 large flat mushrooms
Freshly ground black pepper

For the garlic dip

4 heaped tbsp. plain Greek yogurt*
1 small garlic clove, finely minced
Juice of 1 lemon

300g dried red lentils, rinsed
2 low-salt vegetable stock cubes* (gluten-free, if necessary)
1 tbsp. garam masala
1 tbsp. mild curry powder
A good grinding of black pepper
2 heaped tsp dried mixed herbs
2 tsp smoked paprika
1 x 400g can coconut milk
1 x 400g can chopped tomatoes
1 brown onion, finely diced
2 garlic cloves, grated

Method -

● Put all of the ingredients, including the water from the can of chickpeas, into the slow cooker, along with 350ml of boiling water. Give it a really good stir and put the lid on. Cook on HIGH for 3-4 hours or LOW for 6-8 hours. Once done, use a wooden spoon or rubber spatula to give the dahl a really good stir and mash the soft butternut squash into the sauce a little.

● Finally, add in the chickpeas and spinach and squeeze in the lemon juice. If using, dollop in the coconut yoghurt. Season with salt and pepper.

● Serve the dahl with rice or naan breads, or even as a pasta sauce. Adults may wish to add a little salt or a dash of chilli sauce to their plates.

CHICKPEA AND BUTTERNUT SQUASH

dahl (GF* EF V Vg DF) Serves 2 adults and 3 littles Prep 5 minutes, Slow cook 3-8 hours Freezes
(Whenever you see a * next to the letters in the recipe symbols, this indicates that the recipe can be adapted to suit this dietary requirement.)

A hearty vegan meal, creamy in texture and full of protein and goodness from the lentils and chickpeas, making it well balanced and nutritious for all the family.

Ingredients

1 butternut squash, peeled and cut into 2cm dice
1 x 400g can chickpeas in water

To serve -

Assemble chopped salad bits, such as cucumber, peppers, shredded lettuce, tomatoes, onions, pickled cabbage, pickled gherkins, and oven-warmed pitta breads or tortilla wraps*, hot sauce (optional).

Method -

● Put the chicken in a large sealable food bag along with the spices, cornflour, garlic, lemon zest and juice, 2 tablespoons of the garlic oil and a little pepper. Squash some of the air out of the bag, seal and give it a very good mix. Squeeze the chicken around the bag with your hands, coating it well and tenderising it a little. You can now bake this straightaway, or marinate in the fridge for up to 24 hours. When you are ready to cook, preheat the oven to 200°C fan (220°C/425°F/Gas 7) and line a large baking tray with foil.

● Make the dip – mix everything together in a small bowl and season with a little black pepper. Prepare the salad bits and arrange them, with the pickles, on a sharing platter or in bowls for everyone to help themselves.

● Once the chicken is cooked, remove from the oven and allow to rest for 5 minutes before slicing everything into 1.5cm wide strips, including the mushrooms. Place a couple of pitta breads at the bottom of a large serving bowl and tip the chicken and mushrooms on top including any resting juices. All these yummy juices will soak into the bread – my absolute favourite part! Serve with hot sauce for the adults, if you like.

Love your leftovers Any leftovers can be kept in the fridge for 2 days and are truly delicious cold in a tortilla wrap.

PEAR AND GINGER

CAKE (V GF*) Serves 8-10
| Prep 20 minutes, Bake 1 hour, freezes

Delicately spiced with ginger, it will surprise you how low in sugar this moreish cake really is. Whip this up

for a family gathering and see smiles all round.

Ingredients

- 150g unsalted butter*, softened, plus extra for greasing
- 80g soft dark brown sugar, or slightly less if preferred
- 1 x 290g can pitted prunes in fruit juice (keep the juice aside)
- 300g self-raising flour*
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 heaped tsp ground ginger
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 medium eggs
- 400g can of pear halves in juice (230g/8oz drained weight)
- Demerara sugar, to decorate (optional)



Method -

- Preheat the oven to 170°C fan (190°C/375°F/Gas 5) and grease and line a 20cm (8in) springform cake tin with non-stick baking paper.
- Put the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl and beat until pale and fluffy. Drain the prunes, catching the juice in a bowl, and add the prunes to the mixing bowl. Beat again for a few moments to break up the fruit – don't worry if it looks like it's starting to curdle.
- Add the flour, bicarbonate of soda, vanilla extract, ginger, cinnamon and eggs to the bowl, along with 80ml of the prune juice. Whisk well until a smooth batter is formed, but stop beating as soon as the mixture comes

together to ensure you don't overmix.

● Pour the batter into your prepared tin and level the top. Arrange the pear halves on top, then sprinkle over the demerara sugar, if using. Bake on the middle shelf of the preheated oven for 50–60 minutes until an inserted skewer comes out clean. Check after 30 minutes. If the top is browning too quickly, make a foil hat and place it over the cake tin to prevent burning.

● Allow to cool for 5 minutes in the tin before running a knife around the inside of the tin and removing the sides. Place the cake, with the base still attached, onto a cooling rack and set aside until it is cool enough to handle, then remove the base and serve. This cake is delicious slightly warm with a little drizzle of single (light) cream or custard.

Love your leftovers Store the cake in an airtight container for 3–4 days, or freeze for 3 months, defrosting at room temperature.



i Recipes extracted from **Family Comforts: Simple, Heartwarming Food to Enjoy Together** by Rebecca Wilson. Published by DK, £18.99 Photography by Andrew Burton

Traditional

CHINESE MEDICINE AND

animal ingredients

Documentary maker **Hannah Sweeney** explores the controversial use of animal parts in Traditional Chinese Medicine...

TRADITIONAL Chinese Medicine can be thought of as having two main components. Treatments such as acupuncture are now accepted globally. In fact, 113 states who are members of

the World Health Organisation have approved the use of acupuncture. In the UK, the NHS offers acupuncture through three London-based NHS hospitals: The Royal Free, The Whittington and North Middlesex Hospital. The World Health Organisation noted that, "the reason for including traditional medicine practices is that it is used by hundreds of thousands of people worldwide." For the first time traditional medicine will be included in the 11th version of the WHO's global compendium, the International Statistical Classification of Diseases (ICD).

However, within TCM, what might be called herbal medicines are more controversial. Plant species need to be protected and some animal species are under threat from the illegal wildlife trade.

Chinese herbal medicine is made of up three elements. Around 92-95% of the material used is derived from plants. Over a thousand species are used. Minerals make up 2-3% and the remaining 3-4% are animal products. Common animal-derived ingredients include: chicken (specifically 'black feet chicken') which is used for the stomach to help indigestion in babies and children, it also nourishes blood of women. Oyster shell is used to calm the body and spirit.



Shed cicada skins are used for skin conditions, sensitive skin and skin allergies. Cow gallstones are beneficial to ease troubled minds. More controversially, but not endangered, donkey skin are made into a jelly to nourish the blood.

Historically, just as Inuit people ate seals and whales, TCM incorporated parts of animals which are now considered endangered species; tiger bones were used for weak bones or arthritis and used to strengthen bones and joints. Bear bile was used to treat liver problems and rhinoceros horn was said to clear toxins, fever and lower a temperature.

Rhino horn and tiger bone were removed from the Chinese Pharmacopoeia - the official

record volumes of threatened species, including 8.3 tonnes of pangolin scales from nearly 14,000 pangolins. National Geographic reports that over a million pangolins were poached between 2000 and 2013.

Although the treatment of various threatened species is not yet legislated against, there is growing opposition to such practices. Linda Wong, deputy secretary general of the China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation, explained, "We support the sustainable development of traditional medicine. We strongly disagree with the use of endangered wildlife in traditional medicine, which drives species like the pangolin

Agreeing with Professor Ke, Lixing Lao, Director at the School of Chinese Medicine at the University of Hong Kong, added that there was no need to use endangered species. "Chinese medicine is part of the world. We take care of the human health. If we use endangered species, it damages our reputation."

After making a documentary series with Professor Ke on TCM, I was really impressed with the 3000-6000 year history and the fact that this ancient knowledge is still practiced in China and around the world today. I would describe the experience of a Traditional Chinese Medicine consultation as a detailed investigation into a person's physical, mental, emotional and environmental state. Followed by a simple diet, natural treatment, and herbal medicine plan to assist the body in balancing itself.

According to The National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (NATCM), "China is willing to work with all countries to continue to deepen cooperation in TCM basic theories, clinical efficacy and international standard, and to enable traditional and contemporary medicine to interact and draw upon each other's strength, so as to better serve the health and welfare of all humanity."

TCM treatments are already globally accepted by WHO. Within TCM herbal medicine world, steps are being taken to minimise the trade and usage of endangered species. Only 3-4% of TCM medicine is derived from animals, with an even lower percentage being derived from endangered animals and plants species. All of these can be substituted for plant alternatives. Were this to be the case, TCM could offer a kinder pathway to health for humans and animals alike. ■



listing of what is allowed in TCM -in the 1980s. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat states "The Government of China has zero tolerance in illegal trade in ivory and has put great efforts in cracking down on smuggling as well as illegal trade within China."

However, there are still endangered species used in the illegal trade of Chinese Medicine. Gui Zhen Tang, which owns the biggest moon bear breeding centre in southern China, has permits for extracting bear bile, according to its own website. Bear bile is collected by means of various, invasive extraction methods, often by using a tap-like mechanism. The extraction causes massive infections in the bears. Most farmed bears are starved, dehydrated and suffering from multiple diseases and malignant tumours that contaminate their bile and ultimately kill them.

Companies including Kangmei Pharmaceutical and Tong Ren Tang have been given permits by local government bodies to produce medicines with pangolin scales and saiga horns, according to corporate filings. In 2015, authorities in the Chinese territory of Hong Kong have seized

to extinction".

Can animal derived products be replaced with plant alternatives? Professor Ke, founder of Asante Academy of Chinese Medicine, who has practiced and taught TCM worldwide for over 30 years and pioneered acupuncture within the NHS, believes so. "After 35 years of practising medicine in the UK, I've seen thousands of people, treating illnesses from cancer to simple headaches. It's clear that animal products are not needed. I prefer not to use animal products in my practice. All animal and endangered plant derivatives can be substituted with very beneficial and effective results."

When asked whether medicines which include authentic animal parts such as tiger bones had measured physical effect or rather a psychological effect, for example if tiger bones made people feel powerful, Professor Ke explained, "People do believe 'rare' or 'expensive' ingredients are effective, but if people want to use animal bones, cow bones are as effective as tiger bones." TCM doctors can prescribe herbs to be cooked up in chicken soup or with pig bones or cow bones for an equally effective result as using tiger bones.



HANNAH SWEENEY

makes documentaries about

alternative medicine as the Healing

Hunter. Her most recent series:

Traditional Chinese Medicine will be released on her YouTube Channel

🔗 <https://bit.ly/3pPo6RR> A Kickstarter campaign has been created to support

this series. You can find this at

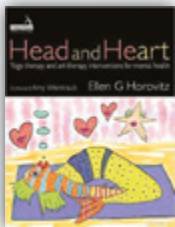
🔗 <https://tinyurl.com/894wxt6b> Find out more about Hannah's work at

🔗 www.thehealinghunter.com

Books for autumn

Cosy up and relax with our pick of the best new books for the darker nights...

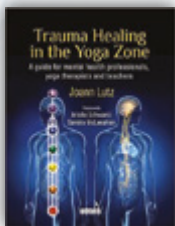
Head and Heart Yoga Therapy and Art Therapy Interventions for Mental Health



Ellen G Horowitz has produced a gem of a book aimed at using yoga and art therapy practices to help improve mental wellbeing. It's useful for

yoga teachers and health professionals who want to understand how yoga can enhance mental and physical treatment outcomes. It's a great mesh of Western psychological ideas with traditional Eastern philosophy and a very pragmatic approach. There are lots of practical exercises, reflection techniques and insightful case studies as well as easy to follow photography sequences. It would be an excellent buy for anyone seeking to broaden their service portfolio since sessions would lend themselves to both individual and group classes online. Published by Handspring.

Trauma Healing in the Yoga Zone



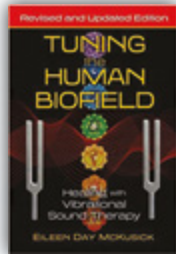
Our second selection from Handspring Publishing is Joann Lutz's Trauma Healing in the Yoga Zone. Again, this is aimed firmly at professional yoga

teachers and mental health workers, including those working within the military

environment.

Lutz offers an original and compelling model of nervous-system informed, trauma-sensitive yoga, drawing on classic yoga, somatic psychotherapy and neuroscience research. It is organised around the eight stages of classic yoga practice and includes scripts of chair yoga postures, the three-part deep breath, and the Integral Yoga version of yoga nidra, for use by professionals who are not certified as yoga teachers.

Tuning the Human Biofield



Sound therapy is a rapidly growing area of holistic therapy. As such, Eileen Day McKusick's updated guide to the basics of Biofield Tuning, using tuning forks to clear trauma stored in the

human energy field, is a thoughtful starting point for those who wish to learn more.

The technique involves using tuning forks of different frequencies to locate stored trauma in the body and then clear it. The book includes detailed maps of the energetic biofield that surrounds the body, showing where specific emotions, memories, traumas, and pain are stored. Again, this could be a useful addition to your reading list if you're keen to explore new avenues of healing for energy workers, massage therapists, body workers and sound healers.

The Healing Power of Pleasure

At its most fundamental level, Julia Paulette Hollenbery's latest book takes the idea that what feels good to us, does us good too and helps us discover – or rediscover – sensual

pleasure and delight. She classifies these pleasures into seven spiritual “medicines”-slowing down, embodying, deepening, relating, pleasure, power, and potency to help us feel more powerful, more connected and more alive.

The book is filled with reflections, practical somatic and breathing exercises, prompting questions, meditations,



and energetic transmissions for each medicine. It seems particularly timely following the pandemic as we reset our priorities and values.

Homebrewed Vinegar

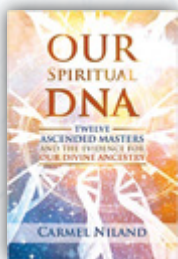


Fermenting expert and best-selling author Kirsten K. Shockey offers a creative and comprehensive guide to making naturally fermented

vinegars from a wide variety of ingredients. There are sixty different recipes included, from familiar favourites like Apple cider vinegar more exotic concoctions made from leftover juicing pulp or brown bananas, wildflowers or beer. You can even make your own balsamic vinegar as well as vinegar tonics, infused vinegars, and oxymels.

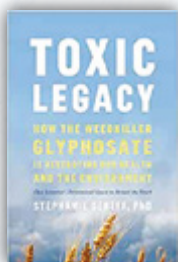
It's an ideal book for beginners, covering everything from the chemistry of vinegar making to equipment, brewing, bottling, and aging. There are insights into vinegars made around the world and the traditions associated with this ancient skill.

Our Spiritual DNA



Carmel Niland's guide to deciphering your spiritual lineage looks at the roles, energies, and essence of 12 Ascended Masters and how each of them holds a strand of our spiritual DNA. It's a bit outside my personal comfort zone, but Niland explains that alongside our physical double helix DNA, we all carry an energetic code or 12 stranded spiritual DNA that links us back to a divine ancestry. Down throughout the centuries this spiritual DNA conveys itself in patterns of behaviour, character traits, and life purpose, connecting each of us to a specific Ascended Master.

Toxic Legacy



Stephanie Steniff's Toxic Legacy had been described as the Silent Spring of our time. Steniff, and MIT scientist puts together a convincing case that Glyphosate - the active ingredient in the world's most commonly used weed killer - is responsible for debilitating chronic diseases, including cancer, liver disease and many more. Glyphosate is the active ingredient in Roundup, the most commonly used weed killer in the world. Steniff draws on an increasing body of scientific research suggesting glyphosate's deadly disruption of the gut microbiome, its crippling effect on protein synthesis, and its impact on the body's ability to use and transport sulphur, not to mention several landmark legal cases, tells a very different story.

The Book of Stones Robert Simmons and Naisha Ahsian



A must for all lovers of crystals and gemstones, this explores 455 crystals, minerals, gemstones, and their metaphysical energies, including vivid colour

photographs for each stone. It's a mine of useful information and guidance on working with stones and the majority of the listings are illustrated.

It's a great choice whether you're just starting out or need an expert reference guide. The authors provide personal insights on the subtle energy properties and spiritual applications of the stones. The entries conclude with the spiritual, emotional, and physical healing qualities of the stone and an affirmation for evoking its potential benefits. This edition also includes an index of the stones' healing and energetic properties, making it easy to find the stone best suited to your needs.

The Moon Cycle Cook Book



In The Moon Cycle Cookbook, bakery founder Devon Loftus and nutritionist Jenna Radomski empower women to nourish themselves with recipes for sweets, savoury

meals, and snacks, organised around each of the four phases of the menstrual cycle. Every recipe is formulated with the knowledge of hormonal fluctuations during each cycle phase, using ingredients that replenish and support essential nutrients. The really good thing, though, is that everything tastes great.

Healing in Hospitals and Clinics



We thought this book was so important that we asked the author, Sandy Edwards, to write an article for this issue of the magazine. It's a compelling, research-based

argument for healing to be offered in all hospitals and hospices. After all, what is medicine without treating the whole person, rather than their symptoms?

Holistic therapists will find the account of the largest clinical research trial of spiritual healing in the world fascinating. This outcomes of this two-year medical trial, which involved 200 chronically ill hospital patients demonstrated that spiritual healing (energy medicine) can support the healing process of a patient, whether they are in pain, sick, stressed, or depressed. In many cases, these patients had been suffering for a long time with little hope of recovery. Yet they improved substantially in numerous ways after receiving just five 20-minute healing sessions.

All titles can be ordered from your local bookshop, bought directly from the publisher or bought online. ■



Back

All the stuff we wanted to tell you about but didn't have room for elsewhere...

PAGES

INDIA: LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DELHI TO OUTLAW CROSS-GENDER MASSAGE

The local government authorities in Delhi have issued strict new guidelines for spas in the city, including the requirement that massage therapists and clients be of the same gender. Spa owners and workers have called the new guidelines regressive, restrictive and discriminatory.



Civic body officials estimate that there are between 2,000 and 2,400 spas and massage parlours operating across the city, of which around half operate illegally.

In September, the Association of Wellness Ayurveda and Spa filed a petition in the Delhi High Court against the guidelines, saying they were being

harassed for operating cross-gender spas and were being forced to renovate their facilities to accommodate men and women separately, adding that spa centres were being defamed as "some kind of prostitution hub or brothels".

Other rules being introduced mean that therapists must be over the age of 18 years and possess a degree/diploma/certificate in physiotherapy, acupuncture or occupational therapy. Additionally, the entrance, reception and common areas of a spa must be equipped with CCTV and recordings must be kept for at least three months.

AROMATHERAPY: BOOSTS MOOD AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN DEMENTIA

A paper published this April in the International Journal of Psychiatry found that aromatherapy with essential oils and reminiscence therapy can help reduce stress and agitation and improve the

overall outlook of people with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia. Those who used these approaches along with exercise also had some improvement in cognitive function, though they did not see a significant improvement in other symptoms.

The results are based on a review of data from 74 studies that collectively enrolled nearly 1,200 people with dementia living in nine countries including the United Kingdom. The frequency and duration of therapy sessions varied, but typically involved twice-weekly appointments lasting roughly 45 minutes to an hour.



WORDS OF WISDOM...

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

Aesop



MARKET SNAPSHOT: AROMATHERAPY DIFFUSERS

The market for aromatherapy diffusers is forecast to reach \$4.5 billion globally by 2031. This represents a CAGR of 9.4%.

Try this... Mushrooms

Eating mushrooms a few times a week not only lowers the risk of cancer and premature death, but new research also reveals that these super-foods may benefit a person's mental health, as a new study shows that those who ate mushrooms had lower odds of having depression. *Ref: 10.1016/j.jad.2021.07.0*



NANOSILVER LOSES EFFECTIVENESS IN LONG- TERM TREATMENT OF INFECTIONS

New research from Australia has found that pathogens that form biofilms can evolve to survive nanosilver treatment. The study is the

first to demonstrate that long-term nanosilver treatment can increase the risk of recurrent infections.

Nanosilver is a potent antimicrobial that is currently used in medical devices such as internal catheters, as well as wound dressings, in particular for burn wounds, to fight or prevent infections. It is also found in consumer products like sticking plasters, washing machines and as an anti-odour treatment in insoles and clothing.

Following prolonged treatment, nanosilver killed 99.99% of the bacterial population with only 0.01% cells surviving for longer. However, this minute fraction of 'persisters' resumed normal growth upon discontinuation of the nanoparticle treatment. The bacteria adapt to nanoparticles meaning there's a need to preserve the efficacy of the alternative antimicrobials to fight untreatable infections. *Ref: 10.1186/s12951-021-01027-8*



PORTSMOUTH MIND, BODY, SPIRIT FAIR GETS OFF TO A GOOD START

A new Mind, Body, Spirit fair took place in Portsmouth early in October. The event organiser, psychic medium Kev Hooper brought together over 15 stall holders and attracted over 100 visitors to the first in a planned series of fairs. Kev explained, "We had a great selection of holistic therapists with a natural approach, and spiritual workers. We had reflexology, hypnotherapy, Reiki healers, crystal healers, tarot readers, aromatherapy and massage – you name it we had absolutely everything here. "It was amazing. All the stallholders were brilliant and the customers were happy, the venue was happy, basically everybody was happy with how it went."



FHT APPOINTS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT) has appointed Monica Price as Executive Director.



Monica has a degree in Nutritional Therapy and Clinical Practice from the University of Worcester and vast experience in the fields of PR, communications, health and safety, quality assurance and compliance. Prior to joining the FHT, she ran her own successful consultancy business.

Monica commented, "I am delighted to be the new Executive Director for FHT. I understand only too well how tough the past 18 months have been for FHT members. The pandemic has made people realise more than ever that their health and wellbeing is so important. I believe that this has created a real opportunity to show how professional therapists can support people's health of any age, and I am determined to ensure that our FHT members get the recognition they deserve".

AND FINALLY....

Congratulations to HTM's Jason Firmager and Karen Lusted who got married in September. The wedding took place at The Dreys near Sittingbourne in Kent. www.thedreys.co.uk.



Water with a difference

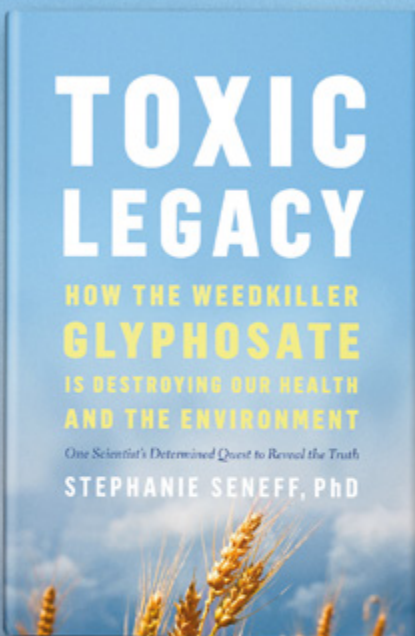


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Patrick Holden, founder and chief executive, Sustainable Food Trust

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