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## Therapist Magazine

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# Foreword



## Winter News from Complementary Health Professionals

*This is our first newsletter of 2022 and things have certainly changed relating to Covid restrictions in the past 3 months. In England from 27th January, we were no longer required to wear face coverings but we put out a statement on our social media to say that as per Government recommendations, anyone in close contact services should continue to wear a mask during treatments. The Prime Minister removed all remaining restrictions on 24th February and mask wearing is still required in all healthcare settings and the government recommends that people wear face coverings in enclosed or private spaces where they are mixing with people they don't know.*

For Complementary Therapists, we recommend you base your decision upon your risk assessments and protect clients whose immune systems are compromised and who would get very ill even if they have been vaccinated. You should continue to follow all other protocols, such as ventilating your treatment room in between clients, pre-screen clients to ensure they are well and have not been in contact with anyone with Covid-19, and keep up all hygiene arrangements as previously given in the guides for members. As healthcare professionals, you must remain vigilant and treat this disease as you would any other transmissible disease. Covid-19 has not gone away and we need to be mindful of safety for all in our treatment rooms. We would recommend the continued use of masks.

In Northern Ireland, mask wearing is no longer a legal requirement; however, face coverings are still recommended in certain places, such as enclosed public settings and health and social care settings.

In Scotland, the requirement for mask wearing in some settings is set to be lifted on 21st March but not in healthcare. Currently, you are required to wear masks at all times in indoor public spaces.

In Wales, from 28 February masks will only be required in shops, salons, hairdressers, public transport and health and social care. So, for therapists, masks will need to be worn

at all times.

What we need to understand is that Covid-19 is still very much out there but of course, we as a society need to learn to live with it. Self-isolation rules will shortly change in England and Northern Ireland if you test positive. What we would recommend is that you treat having a positive Covid test the same as you would if you had a bad case of the flu where you would cancel appointments so as not to contaminate your clients. Once you are testing negative and feel well, you can resume your practice.



### National Complementary Therapy Week 2022 (20th – 27th March)

We are very excited about Complementary Therapy Week this year. We sponsor this annual national event in order to help further promote what we do and it is an excellent opportunity for you as a therapist to use to promote yourself in your local area.

We have put up on the CHP website a Guide for therapists on how they can use this special 7 days to promote themselves. It contains lots of marketing ideas that can help you increase your client base. It is always hard as therapists for us to promote ourselves but as self-employed individuals, it is absolutely essential to have a marketing plan in place. Using Complementary Therapy is the perfect excuse to tell people how amazing you are!

We have also created a schedule of events for the week supported by our accredited training providers. This table is available on

the CHP website and each day, there will either be a live webinar or a pre-recorded video talking about different therapies. Each day has a theme – Monday is all about massage therapy and Tuesday about plant therapies. Wednesday covers mid therapies, Thursday Back and Joint Pain therapies and Friday covers energy therapies. On Saturday 26th March, you can join us for a questions and answer session put to our expert panel about any aspect of complementary therapies.



If you click in the members' area of the CHP website, you will also find some free posters and resources for you to use to help promote yourself. We have also created a logo you can use and download that states you are a CHP member. You can use this to promote the fact that you belong to one of the UKs leading professional associations, known for its high standards and quality assurance.

### Important Dates for 2021

As well as Complementary Therapy Week, there are other opportunities in the year that you might find helpful for marketing purposes, depending on the therapies you practice.

#### All important dates are as follows:

**20th – 27th March 2022 - National Complementary Therapy Week**

**6th June – 12th June 2022 - Aromatherapy Awareness Week**

**20th – 25th September 2022 - World Reflexology Week**

**1st October 2022 - National Massage Day**

**15th October 2022 – CHP Annual Conference**



### CHP Annual Conference

We have scheduled this year's conference for the 15th October 2022 and it will be at the same venue as last year following the positive feedback from those of you who attended. Although most enjoyed the food from the feedback, we will ensure that some fruit is also available this year!

The theme for this year's conference will be Musculoskeletal injuries and we have already confirmed speakers from EMMETT UK, Spiral Stabilisation and Neuroskeletal Re-alignment Therapy. We will be offering two workshops during the conference that will be repeated so that everyone has the opportunity to attend all of the talks and workshops on offer. Booking will open later in May once the agenda is complete and you will be able to book through the member's area of the website.

#### Therapy Awards 2022

As usual, your chance to win one of the prestigious awards will be up for grabs. The nomination form is on our website so you just need to give your clients and colleagues the link and they can nominate you: <https://www.complementaryhealthprofessionals.co.uk/award-nomination-form>. These awards look great on your CV and also wonderful for using on your website and marketing materials. We love these awards as they really allow us to showcase the amazing work our members do. To see previous winners, see the CHP website. Last year's winner has also written an article, which you can read on the articles page of our website about her work in the NHS using reiki in mental health services.

### Welcoming New CHP Accredited Training Providers

We are delighted to announce that we have accredited two new training providers who have joined our ever-expanding therapy family:



Firstly, we would like to formally welcome the Reflexology Academy in London, under their principal Hagar Basis. We have already welcomed their student members to CHP and look forward to upgrading them to full members once they have qualified.

We are also delighted to accredit the West Shires School of Complementary Health in Wales under principal Cheryl Hawkes. At present, we accredit their reflexology and



A&P diplomas and hope to increase this to other therapies in the near future as well as some CPD courses. Details of all of our

accredited schools are available on the CHP website and most offer amazing CPD courses too, so you really do not need to look anywhere else!



### JING Lunchbox Zoominars

As you know, Jing Advanced Massage Training is one of our accredited training providers and they asked us to share information about their free series of webinars on zoom that will be available each month. These count towards CPD if you add them to your log book with a short reflection on how the learning has enhanced your practice. The next one is on 8th March 2022. To book head over to <https://www.jingmassage.com/lunch-box-series-2022>

### GCMT Update (The Council for Soft Tissue Therapies)

Carole Preen is our representative on the GCMT board meetings and has attended 2 main council meetings and 4 sub-committee meetings since the last newsletter. It is a big commitment being on these committees but we are passionate about supporting our members who practice soft tissue therapies and to help shape and promote the future of our profession.

At present, there are 6 working groups all working on specific areas for the profession. There is a crisis group that responds as needed and helped work on the Covid-19 guidance. There is also a regulations group that is constantly monitoring regulation and is in contact with Government. There is a public relations and communications group that deals with social media, emails and phone calls. There is a mental health group and we sent out how to obtain the Mental Health guide before Christmas. The 5th Group is looking at Sexual Harrassment in the workplace, especially for those practicing massage and we appreciate all who took part in the survey in December. More than 800 people responded and it was pretty hard reading. As a result, the GCMT is working on a guide and other resources for therapists for safeguarding purposes. The latest group is looking at creating video resources for therapists to explain the role of the GCMT, what different levels of education mean and who the professional associations are that are members of the GCMT. We will of course be participating in this and there will be a series of videos coming out in the future.

We would be extremely grateful for feedback about the Mental Health resources so that we can report back to the Mental Health Working Group on whether or not you have found this to be a useful resource.

If you have any questions about the GCMT and its work or would like us to bring any issues to the Council's attention, please do get in touch.

### Reiki Council Update

Dan Stephens is our reiki officer and represents us on the Reiki Council board. The Reiki Council have been discussing the need for anatomy and physiology to be included in reiki qualifications as currently it is not. We feel that all complementary therapists should have at least and level 3 diploma in A&P as it is the foundation of healthcare. They have also been discussing online learning and at CHP we accept online learning for theory but practical assessments have to be done in-class under supervision, especially as we want to be recognised as healthcare professionals.

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](mailto:dan@complementaryhealthprofessionals.co.uk)



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Date	Speaker	Location
02/03/2022	Shoela Currey	Cardiff
03/03/2022	Lorraine Nicolle	Tunbridge Wells
03/03/2022	Katie Sheen	Sheffield
07/03/2022	Katie Sheen	Edinburgh
09/03/2022	Shoela Currey	Oxford
10/03/2022	Lorraine Nicolle	London – Watford
17/03/2022	Katie Sheen	Manchester
23/03/2022	Shoela Currey	Bath
23/03/2022	Katie Sheen	Nottingham
24/03/2022	Lorraine Nicolle	London
06/04/2022	Lorraine Nicolle	St Albans

Date	Speaker	Location
13/04/2022	Shoela Currey	Southampton
13/04/2022	Katie Sheen	Penrith
25/04/2022	Katie Sheen	Birmingham
26/04/2022	Shoela Currey	Exeter
27/04/2022	Katie Sheen	Newcastle
28/04/2022	Lorraine Nicolle	Bournemouth





Managing Director

**Jason Firmager**

[jay@holistictherapistmagazine.com](mailto:jay@holistictherapistmagazine.com)

Art Director

**Richard Hejsak**

[richard@holistictherapistmagazine.com](mailto:richard@holistictherapistmagazine.com)

Managing Editor

**Alison Daniels**

[alison@holistictherapistmagazine.com](mailto:alison@holistictherapistmagazine.com)

Sales Team

+44 (0)1795 479 957

[sales@holistictherapistmagazine.com](mailto:sales@holistictherapistmagazine.com)



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# Editor's Letter



*Hello again,*

I found myself in need of a new office chair between Christmas and New Year. Choosing a new one provided me with a salutary lesson in just how much the way we buy things has changed over the past few years.

A couple of years ago, I would simply have popped into the car, driven around 20 minutes into town and visited my local branch of a chain of office supplies shops. There, I would have been completely ignored by the staff while trying out a few chairs to find one I liked. I'd have made a choice and somehow managed to fit the box into the car.

This time, things were rather more complicated. Firstly, the office supply shop went into administration well before the pandemic. This may have had something to do with the determination of the staff to avoid any interaction with customers.

I decided to look online and started with my local Argos, since they can often deliver quickly. Although they offered many office chairs, there were rather fewer models actually available for pick up or delivery. I found a model I liked the look of, but then read the reviews. They suggested it was a great chair to look at, but had little in the way of padding and support. Several users suggested it gave them back pains and was very cheaply made despite a hefty price tag. I went elsewhere.

I thought I should buy local, so checked the website of an independent office supply company in my nearest town. Again, there was lots of choice, but no indication of pricing on the website and mentions of bulk ordering. This suggested that their chairs might be too expensive and they might not sell me a single chair. I chose not to phone and enquire.

I wondered briefly about a local charity which has a warehouse full of used office furniture from firms who have given up their office space. I thought this would be eco-friendly, but they were closed over the holidays and I couldn't wait that long.

I ended up buying a new chair online from a national supplier. It arrived quickly, was well priced and even has some features that I didn't need, in that it offers both massage and heat.

So what's the point here? Just that it's often easy to put people off buying from you and it may be time to review your customer journey and see where you could be losing out on new clients. We're here to help you build your business.

*Love, Alison and everyone at Holistic Therapist x*

MANAGING EDITOR

# Contributors



MARK SHIELDS  
[www.lifepractice.co.uk](http://www.lifepractice.co.uk)



ELIZABETH ASHLEY  
[www.thesecrethealer.co.uk](http://www.thesecrethealer.co.uk)



MAGDALENA VONK  
[www.wellnessinmotion.co.uk](http://www.wellnessinmotion.co.uk)



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[www.fht.org.uk](http://www.fht.org.uk)



JORDI MASCIO  
[www.goldmanlaboratories.com](http://www.goldmanlaboratories.com)



RAN JANDA  
[www.holisticroom.com](http://www.holisticroom.com)



DONNA BOOTH  
[www.vitality-retreat.com](http://www.vitality-retreat.com)



BJORN FALCK MADSEN



RADHIA GLEIS  
[www.radhiagleis.com](http://www.radhiagleis.com)



JANA MITACKOVA  
[www.spiralstabilization.co.uk](http://www.spiralstabilization.co.uk)



KAT MAIER  
[www.sacredplanttraditions.com](http://www.sacredplanttraditions.com)



JACK WALLINGTON  
[www.jackwallington.com](http://www.jackwallington.com)



DEVON LOFTHUS  
[www.storey.com](http://www.storey.com)



JENNY RADOMSKI  
[www.storey.com](http://www.storey.com)



JULIA PAULETTE  
HOLLENBERG  
[www.universeofdeliciousness.com](http://www.universeofdeliciousness.com)

## OTHER ISSUE 41 CONTRIBUTORS AND PEOPLE WE'D LIKE TO THANK

OUR THANKS TO CAROLE PREEN AND THE CHP AND ALL THE OTHER CONTRIBUTORS AND THOSE BEHIND THE SCENES WHO HELPED OUT TO GET THIS ISSUE TO PRINT.

# Openers

All the latest news and dates for your diary...



## NEW THAI MASSAGE SPA OPENS IN SLEAFORD

Husband and wife team Graeme and Maliwan Wilson have opened Wansabai Thai Spa in Sleaford, Lincolnshire. Wansabai means "relaxation day" in Thai. The spa has five treatment rooms.

Thai-born Maliwan is an experienced massage therapist who set up the new venture when the couple moved from London.

Traditional Thai massage (nuat thai) combines pressure and assisted yoga postures. Graeme commented, "The therapist will knead and press muscles along the body's energy lines with the hands and feet to help you relax, relieve aching muscles and boost your mood. Loose clothing can be worn



for this therapy.

"Thai combination massage using aromatherapy oils enhances body and mind through a combination of different massage styles including Thai massage, Swedish massage and deep tissue massage and using pressure point massage techniques. We can also offer side by side couples massage."

<https://wansabaithaispa.com>.

## MASSEUR FOUND GUILTY OF FILMING CLIENTS IN CHANGING ROOMS

Tamas Dominko, 35, was found guilty of using a phone on a treatment room shelf to attempt to film a customer stripping naked. Prosecutor Maya Arputham commented, "The defendant was in a massage centre as a contractor. He gets clients and they come in hourly for massages. This complainant comes in, she has been coming for three years and he has dealt with her before.

The client spotted the device as she went to get changed for the treatment - and turned it to face away from her before replacing it. After the treatment, she moved the phone again while dressing, then checked the screen to see it was still recording

and had captured the massage.

The victim added, "It made me feel quite shocked and threatened through the appointment. I didn't know how to deal with it in the massage and felt incredibly vulnerable as I was stuck in the room with Tamas almost completely naked and feared some altercation was coming."

Dominko admitted a single count of voyeurism and was given a 12-month community order and ordered to carry out a sex offender's programme, rehabilitation activities and do 100 hours of unpaid work. He must also pay costs, including £250 compensation to the victim, of £430.

## 2022 NUTRITION TRENDS FORECAST

A recent survey published in Today's Dietitian provides an in-depth look into 2022 nutrition trends, based on responses from 1,173 registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs). The results show that RDNs believe that the major purchase drivers in 2022 will be immune support, affordability and value, and comfort/emotional well-being. Looking ahead, RDNs believe that consumers will actively seek out functional ingredients such as CBD, collagen

and hemp.

When it comes to product attributes, RDNs say that consumers want products to be convenient, healthy, and tasty. These attributes are particularly important when you consider that 95% of RDNs say that consumers are snacking more due to the pandemic. Therefore, they want comfort food, but they don't want to sacrifice their health to enjoy them.

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## TADASANA EXERCISE HELPS REDUCE RISK OF REFLEX VASOVAGAL SYNCOPE

A new study suggests that practicing a yoga position called the *tadasana*, or the mountain pose, for 15 minutes twice each day was associated with the complete elimination of episodes of vasovagal syncope for many patients. In vasovagal syncope, people are prone to fainting resulting from certain stressful triggers which lead to sudden drop in blood pressure and heart rate.

The researchers noted that with the *tadasana* manoeuvre, episodes of full syncope, where the patient actually loses consciousness, ceased completely, and episodes of near-syncope, where the patient feels faint but does not completely pass out, were greatly reduced. Episodes can be triggered by emotional stress, prolonged standing or getting up from a seated position too quickly.

In *tadasana*, the individual stands straight with their feet together, arms by their side (against a wall if they need support), and alternatively lifts



the front and back part of their feet. They first lift their toes with their weight resting on the ball of their feet, then after a few seconds they raise their heels with their weight on the front of the foot. Then after a few more seconds they lift their arms over their shoulders, stretching upward while standing on their toes. These movements are synchronised with breathing exercises, with the individual taking a deep breath in as they lift their arms and breathing out again on lowering the arms. Each movement takes a few seconds, and each cycle of movements takes about 2 minutes, so eight cycles are performed twice a day.

## ARIZONA CONSIDERS NEW MASSAGE COMPLAINTS LAW

Following the replacement of the US state of Arizona's Board of Massage Therapy last year, the state's legislature is now considering the introduction of a bill which would require the Board to publish both disciplinary and non-disciplinary actions taken against each licensed massage therapist in the state. This would include advisory letters, letters of reprimand, probation and "any other disciplinary or non-disciplinary action taken by the board." The information would have to be posted online in a searchable format.

The previous Board members were replaced as a result of failing to discipline massage therapists accused of sexual assault. The newly installed board has so far taken a more aggressive stance against allegations of sexual abuse, including doing summary license suspensions of massage therapists accused of sexual abuse. This prevents them from working with



the public until a formal disciplinary hearing on their licenses can be held. The previous board rarely, if ever, used emergency suspensions when dealing with complaints of sexual abuse.

The bill would also require applicants to have a valid fingerprint clearance card in order to get a massage license or license renewal. Under this process, the person's criminal history is reviewed and if they have been convicted of certain crimes, they are ineligible to receive a card.

Arizona has about 10,600 licensed massage therapists.

### WORDS OF WISDOM...

*The most efficient way to live reasonably is every morning to make a plan of one's day and every night to examine the results obtained.*

Alexis Carrel

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## TRY THIS... PLANET FRIENDLY SWAPS

You may not have considered your diet's carbon footprint, but swapping just one serving per day for a more planet-friendly alternative, can make a considerable difference according to a new study published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. For example, swapping a serving of beef mince for turkey mince meant their diets' greenhouse gas emissions fell by an average of 48 percent and water-use impact declined by 30%.

Replacing a serving of prawns with cod reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 34 percent, while replacing

dairy milk with soymilk resulted in an 8 percent reduction. Replacing asparagus with peas resulted in a 48% decrease in water use while substituting peanuts in place of almonds decreased the water scarcity footprint by 30%. **Ref: 10.1093/ajcn/nqab338**



## FUEL POVERTY SHOWN TO CAUSE INCREASED LEVELS OF INFLAMMATION

A new study from the University of East Anglia shows that fuel poverty – not having enough money to heat your home – impacts people's physical health by causing higher levels of inflammation, measured by fibrinogen, a blood-based biomarker.

Dr Apostolos Davillas, from UEA's Norwich Medical School, explained, "We know that exposure to cold temperatures is associated with increased blood pressure, inflammation and cardiovascular mortality risks regardless of age or gender. But until now there has been



limited research into the mental and physical health impacts of fuel poverty."

Elevated fibrinogen levels have been strongly linked to higher risk of coronary heart disease, heart attacks, stroke and an increased risk of death.

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2022 sees the return of major trade shows. Note that some events are only open to those in the trade. Here are a selection worth noting.

#### EXCEL, LONDON

Details at [excel.london/visitor/whats-on](http://excel.london/visitor/whats-on)

March 9-10 – Remote Working Expo

March 15-16 – Future Health Innovations

March 21-23 – London Produce Show

April 3-4 – Professional Beauty London

May 18-19 – Health Plus Care

alongside The Healthcare Show and The Digital Healthcare Show

June 17-18 – The Autism Show

#### OLYMPIA LONDON

Details at [olympia.london/whatson](http://olympia.london/whatson)

April 15-18 – Mind Body Sprit Wellbeing Festival

April 22-23 – The CBD Show

April 22-23 – The Natural Products Show

May 6-7 – The Fertility Show

#### SEC GLASGOW

Details at [sec.co.uk](http://sec.co.uk)

June 12-13 – Scottish Hair and Beauty

## AWARENESS DAYS

Our pick of upcoming awareness days for marketing purposes taken from [awarenessdays.com](http://awarenessdays.com)

### MARCH

March is the awareness month for Ovarian cancer as well as being Marie Curie's Daffodil Appeal and Dechox Month for giving up chocolate.

3-9 – Endometriosis Awareness Week

3 – World Hearing Day

6-12 – No More Week (Domestic Violence)

7-13 – National Feet Week

8 – International Women's Day

9 – National No Smoking Day

18 – Comic Relief

20-27 – National Complementary Therapy Week

27 – Mothers' Day

### APRIL

April marks the awareness month for IBS and Stress

7 – World Health Day

10-15 – Homeopathy Awareness Week

15 – International Microvolunteering Day

20-25 – Allergy Awareness Week

26 – London Marathon

28 – International Day for Health and Safety at Work

### MAY

May is National Walking Month and Skin Cancer Awareness Month

2-6 – Dying Matters Week

9-14 – Food Allergy Awareness Week

10-15 – Coeliac Awareness Week

10-15 – National Vegetarian Week

11-16 – ME Awareness Week

17-22 – Dementia Awareness Week

21 – World Meditation Day

29 – World Digestive Health Day





# DON'T LOOK BACK IN ANGER

*Mark Shields, explains why the best way to put 2020 and 2021 behind us is to plan ahead for a brighter, more profitable future...*

**2**020 and 2021 have been incredible challenging years for everyone including holistic practitioners although it's bitter sweet for us as we are massively in demand at the moment and will be for some time. You may feel that you just don't have time to plan ahead, or that so many factors affecting your practice are completely beyond your control, that planning seems pointless. Even working on your business plans in short bursts can mean a more successful future.

Start by looking back at what you can learn from the past year? Find the positives. What worked well for you? What aspects of your practice were you happy with? What didn't work so well? What is working now that didn't work before the pandemic? Income streams

are different now are you capitalising on the online world? Are you embracing the learnings and move forwards?

It may well be that your attitude to your work has changed, so you need to ask yourself some questions about what you really want from your life. The pandemic meant that many people rethought their personal priorities and goals. It's important to take some time for this, otherwise we can find that we've meandered on and have somehow ended up in a life that doesn't make us feel happy and fulfilled.

Have you changed your perspective on things? What is important to you now that wasn't before? Have you found a balance between time at work and time for other aspects of your life like seeing family and friends, hobbies or socialising?

Sometimes to move forward we need to take a few steps back. The most important action for any business owner right now is they have revisited their business planning and created a new plan going forward from 2022 taking into consideration all the learnings from the last 2 years.

## Business planning top tips

Planning is often regarded as painful and a waste of time. When the world is changing rapidly, it's easy to decide to go with the flow. I've worked with hundreds, if not thousands, of holistic therapists over the years. Let me tell you that every single successful holistic therapist I've met has prioritised business planning. Great skills will get you nowhere without a plan and spending time and resources on building your business.

It's important to understand that when it comes to business planning we look at the short, medium and long term plan of any business. This often goes overlooked and business owners focus on just one of those periods – if any at all. Ensuring your business plan caters for the short, medium, and long term future of your business means, typically, looking at plans for 1, 3 and 5 years. You will need to be flexible and able to adapt, as the business world and market changes as we progress into the next few years.

- Short term plan = 6-12 months
- Medium term plan = 12-36 months
- Long term plan = 36-60 months

You should commit to forecasting your business results in line with your short, medium and long term plan. These are some of the things you will need to predict. You may have others to add to the list depending on your location, modalities or expected returns. As a minimum, you need to consider the anticipated numbers of appointments, income levels, activity, your different income streams and costs.

### Short term plan (6-12 months)

This plan would include your activities in the next year:

- Start up actions
- Renting of room
- Ordering of stationary

- Creating first website
- First attempt at advertising and marketing

### Medium term plan (12-36 months)

This plan should include the things you'll be doing in one to three years' time:

- Ongoing review of Action Plan
- More advanced marketing campaigns
- Joint ventures
- Adding new income streams
- Media marketing
- Personal development
- Adding new therapeutic disciplines
- Formulation and addition to product range
- Review/change of premises
- Effective change management programme
- Ongoing CPD
- Data marketing

### Long term plan (36-60 months)

Longer term planning considerations should include:

- Business development
- Effective change management programme
- A review of short and medium term business plan
- A more strategic view of your overall business proposition
- Merging with or acquiring new businesses
- Product development
- Keeping up with economic and legislative change
- Attainment of further qualifications
- Ongoing CPD
- Strategic business development

Achieving success is one thing; consistently sustaining a successful practice is something entirely different. If we look at the success ratios of any CAM practice, more than 30%

fail in the first 12 months and only 8% remain profitable five years on. This is why it's imperative you ensure you have a five-year business plan, split into the three segments of short, medium and long term.

Although it may appear that the three categories above are divided into three action plans, they are not. It's one plan and one plan only. A good practitioner should have one business plan including short, medium and long term actions. This is how you keep up and manage change and stay ahead of the competition. You simply include short medium and long term actions in the same plan and review the plan every month. The key is to apportion your time in a sensible way as often, short term actions seem more pressing than an action you have five years to complete. The key is to dedicate your time to your business plan using the following time weightings:

- Short term plan 70%
- Medium term plan 20%
- Long term plan 10%

Think of these as three juggling balls you have to keep in the air – all three all the time. Writing a business plan is important, writing a meaningful business plan that captures the short, medium and long term future of your business is paramount to the long-term sustainable future of your practice. ■



**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>



# USING PEOPLE POWER TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

*Magdalena Vonk shares her approach to attracting new customers through word of mouth and referrals...*

**I**N the UK, the massage therapy industry was growing considerably prior to the pandemic. This has slowed down since early 2020. However, I strongly believe that with time this will change again, and holistic therapists will be in demand again.

As with all businesses, holistic therapy businesses need to invest time and money into marketing, but there are two inexpensive marketing tools that can help you to grow your business. These are word of mouth and referrals. I do not use the word free when I write about these methods as they require a considerable amount of your time in order to make them succeed and your time is valuable.

After the last two years it might be hard for you to think about growing the business. In times when so many holistic businesses have had to close or have suffered losses it is even more important to invest your time in trying to grow your business.

## **Word of mouth**

In the past it was commonly accepted that word of mouth is a tool suitable for small companies and holistic therapists who are starting off and do not have a large marketing budget. In theory, word of mouth is the use of communication to convince friends, family, neighbours, and everyone else you meet to use your business.



With the development of social media, this method expanded to be much more than just talking about your services and sharing your business card with people you meet.

## Organic and Amplified word of mouth

When we talk about organic word of mouth, now, we refer to a situation when your followers and clients become advocates of your business simply because they are happy with the services you provide and have a natural desire to share their support and enthusiasm.

Amplified word of mouth, on the other hand, occurs when a marketing campaign designed to encourage word of mouth is launched. In this article we will focus on the organic word of mouth and ways of promoting and encouraging it.

## Word of mouth means a trusted business

According to Nielsen, 92% of people trust recommendations from friends and family over any other type of advertising. Trust, therefore, is extremely important when people choose to buy from you. Businesses can now encourage that trust online via social media. As people often ask for a recommendation for various services on social media. Social media platforms like Facebook and apps like Nextdoor can act as a way to make it easier for clients to become your advocates.

How do you make it easier for your business to be “tagged” as worth recommending in this way?

Make sure you have an active social media site which can be easily tagged when people ask for a recommendation. Make it easy for your clients to recommend you. Recommendations from others on social media can increase individuals' trust in your business and in turn significantly increase individuals' intention to buy your services or products.

You do not have to post a lot on your social media site/s, however, it is important that you post quality content regularly e.g. once a week.

Share your clients' transformations and reviews – ensure that you have your client consent before posting their comments online, though.

When you see clients, ensure that they feel a valued member of your community and not just another person going through your door. Think about this quote from Maya Angelou before you interact with your clients - “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how

you made them feel.” If you spend time on making sure that your client is happy with the service you offer, they are more likely to refer you to their friends.

## Client Referral Program

This is seen as one of the better ways in which a therapist can grow their business. In this method, you use your existing clients to spread the word about your massage therapy business by offering them an incentive to do so. You might offer a discount or even a free session for every new client a client brings. In theory, this way of getting new clients can help you grow your client numbers and deepening the relationship with your existing clients. In referral programs your current client receives something back for their recommendation. This can, however, be perceived as being biased and therefore not as trustworthy and successful as word of mouth.

**In the past I would use this method by giving my client a small business card which said:**

“Thank you for being awesome!

30 mins free when you book 60 mins session”

(Limit 1 per person)

I would give my client two of those cards and asked them to pass on to a friend who needs a massage. I found it being somewhat successful and I did receive new regular clients from it.

## Professional Referrals

Holistic therapists can often benefit from referrals from other practitioners.

It is a good practice to have a list of therapists to whom you can signpost your clients when their problem is outside of your scope of expertise and you cannot help them. Signposting list should include other therapists with different expertise e.g. TJM, sport therapist, reflexologists, as well as medical professionals like chiropractors, physiotherapists. Remember that developing referral relationships with other health care

providers doesn't happen overnight. It takes time, effort, and the willingness to make prompt referrals for clients with issues outside your scope of practice. However, doing so will help you at succeeding in how to get more clients as a therapist.

The more you consistently, reliably, and professionally interact with them, the more comfortable they'll feel putting their clients and their reputation in your hands. Other business owners can be a good source of referrals. Holistic therapists can meet other business owners either by joining a networking group or by creating one.

**There are various networking groups across the country some of the better known include:**

Chamber of commerce (look for one in your area)

Federation of Small Businesses

4Networking

The Business Network

No matter which networking event you choose, remember that you need to build relationships with people before they start recommending you. It might be useful to organise a taster session e.g. chair massage or short presentation of a case study of one of your success stories during an event you attended.

Remember that those who benefit from your services are generally willing to let others know about them. They can be a great marketing resource that's there for the asking. ■



**MAGDALENA VONK** is

a therapist and tutor in

Cheltenham. Her passion is helping

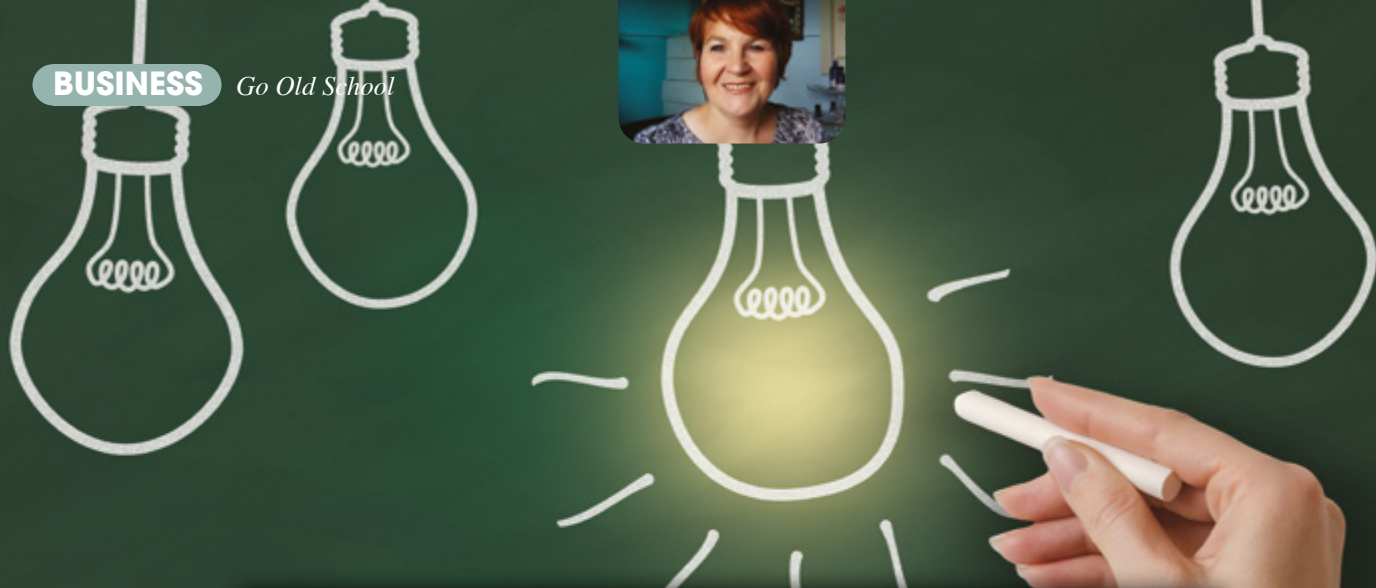
other therapists to get as much as

possible out of their businesses. If you

have any questions related to running a

massage therapy business email her at

[magdalena@wellnessinmotion.co.uk](mailto:magdalena@wellnessinmotion.co.uk).



# OLD SCHOOL marketing FOR A NEW ERA

*Elizabeth Ashley shares some sure-fire offline marketing techniques...*

I don't know about you, but I am sick of staring at a computer screen, wondering if the internet cats might deign to bring me a social media customer. I thought we could go old school for some thoughts for how to push some sales. Forget finding a new broom to sweep clean. Let's find the dustiest old broomstick and see if we can weave some retro marketing magic.

## Get SWOTTING

I'm so square, I get rather excited about doing a SWOT analysis. After I have left my tax return to the last possible minute, it's an opportunity to get real about where my business is at, and to set specific goals

for the next quarter and year ahead.

A SWOT analysis looks at Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Try to identify your five best competitors in the area. Be honest with yourself about how you compare. Appraise what they are doing better than you and see if their ways of doing things inspire you to implement some of their methods and processes. What are their strengths, but also what are yours? Once you can see where you are winning, try to find ways to play to your strengths.

We all have one obvious clear threat with the pandemic, but there will be others. What structures do you have in place if you get set sick or injured? How

are various bits of equipment fairing? Might there be costs that could smack you in the face? Stare into your crystal ball to see what might be lurking around the corner. Forewarned is forearmed.

Likewise, what are the threats looming on the horizon for your competitors? Maternity leave? Ailing parents that might need extra help? Even noisy construction taking place nearby, or limited access to their practice rooms because of roadworks. Their loss is your gain...plan for it and be ready.

Just as they have threats, they are going to have opportunities, as are you.

## Get Creative

Future proofing is a science in its own right, and part of doing that for your business is acknowledging the reality of potential unplanned closures in the future. The silver lining of these, of course, is

when you're locked down, so is everyone else. So, your customers stay safely yours, at least for a while.

But while you're not trading, you're not earning, but potentially you could be. Think about methods of training your customers to look after themselves better while you can't.

Create pamphlets, or even books, designed to get your clients actively involved in their self-care. Build authority in your niche as an expert they can rely on for help.

Crystal therapist? Show them the ins and outs of different stones, and make these available to purchase online.

Massage therapist? How about some stretches they can do, or even how to do self-massage when you're not available. What about reflex points they could use, and warnings of which ones to leave alone. Make sure they know which oils and bath products you recommend for aches and pains.

Books are a marketable commodity in their own right, so that's income coming in, but you'd be amazed at how differently people treat your advice and services once they consider you an expert.

### Get Out and Speak To People

I guess this is a bit controversial amongst all these restrictions, but when spring comes everyone is going to be so excited to see their friends again. How about constructing a talk that you can take on tour? Do you have a special technique people might be interested in hearing about, a different angle you can give? Community groups like Women's Institutes are always on the look out for interesting speakers. Imagine a one hour lecture where you can advertise exactly what you like.

You'd be amazed where opportunities pop up from. I've spent the last four years researching the Lemon Balm plant also known as *Melissa officinalis*. Ancient herbals gave me the nod that there used to be ancient Green priestesses called *Melissae*, whom I discovered were bee shamanesses. Bizarrely, for an aromatherapist, I already have four talks

booked with beekeeping associations next year. Get creative about different slants of ways to talk about your work.

### Know Your Ratios

Did you know that it costs eight times as much to attract a new customer as it does to get a sale from an existing one? That vicious statistic serves as a reminder that there can never be a more important client than the one who is in front of you. Be present and focused on delivering on what your client needs.

There are two extremely important sales questions that are often left unasked, but I would urge you to get confident in probing and really hearing their answers.

"What is the most important thing you are looking for?" This might be followed by, "from this treatment/ from your therapist/ from the place you choose?"

## Did you know that it costs eight times as much to attract a new customer as it does to get a sale from an existing one?

Never imagine you know why anyone buys anything, because if you're wrong, it's very easy for your competitor to steal them. When you know why they come to you, it's much easier to know where to focus your attention to ensure that you over-deliver.

"If there were one way that we could have improved on our service today, what would it have been?"

This question does sometimes get asked, but people make the mistake of making it sound like a checkbox. Big mistake! I love to tell people that we have an electric blanket under the sheets on my couch, because one lady had had it at another practice.

The example creates a space where people

feel comfortable sharing where you might be going wrong. It's how you improve, and cumulatively, how you steal all your competitors' clever tricks and leave them standing.

### Referral Marketing

Another reason for asking if you could improve, is that if someone says that you couldn't, then that's the time to ask for a testimonial. Get their quotes on your leaflets and pamphlets. Use it on social media. Never waste a good compliment. But also, think of ways you can leverage your client's pleasure.

Do you have ways they can save on their next treatment if one of their friends come in? Have you ensured you have given them extra tickets to your next event, so they can bring along a crowd? Would they consider hosting a party plan event maybe, or suggesting you as a speaker somewhere? Happy customers are your very best advertising. Use every opportunity you can.

Come on then...

Try and think of ten small marketing tricks you can implement through this year. You'll be amazed how the little things add up! ■



**ELIZABETH ASHLEY** is a world renowned Clinical Aromatherapist

and essential oil researcher. The author of The Secret Healer series of aromatherapy manuals, she has had 12 Amazon category number 1 best sellers, including her business book, *Sales Strategies for Gentle Souls*. Details of her work, including her books and Prosperous Therapist Video Course are available on her website

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# TAKE PART IN COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY WEEK

*Give your business profile a boost by taking part in  
Complementary Therapy Week this March...*

**T**AKING part in Complementary Therapy Week is a great way of raising your profile with local media and potential customers.

As Carole Preen of the Complementary Health Professionals membership organisation puts it, 'With all the disruptions caused by the pandemic, this is a great platform from which to shout about your success stories as a therapist and maybe even re-launch your business if you have had to take a break due to Covid.'

'We need to let people know just how valuable our services are and how we can support them, physically, emotionally and mentally. It is an opportunity to spread the word about our profession, not only to the general public, but also to the medical profession and the media.'

Although the CHP came up with the idea, you don't need to be a CHP member to get involved. CHP members can get an

information and support package that's packed with ideas to help make a splash.

This year's event runs from March 20th to 27th. As well as local events and activities run by individual holistic therapists, the CHP has a programme of online seminars featuring popular and more unusual holistic therapies. These could also serve as an introduction to new modalities that could be added to your own portfolio.

Complementary Therapy Week started in 2019. The CHP felt that although there were awareness days for some modalities already, that it would be helpful to create an Awareness Week to boost awareness of lesser known therapies and the profession as a whole.

Carole added, 'Everyone can use this week to promote what they do and how it can help. We chose March because nothing much else in our industry was running at that time and it would be just prior to the Easter holidays

and at a time in the year when spring is just around the corner. Of course, we had no way of knowing in 2019 when we booked the week that we would be in the first lockdown in March 2020. Sadly, the same situation existed in March 2021 and that is why we want to really get excited about 2022.'

The CHP website will feature one family of therapies each day with pre-recorded videos followed by an expert webinar at 7pm each evening. We are also looking at putting on a webinar about how complementary therapies can support long Covid sufferers that will be a paid seminar on zoom for up to 500 people, with an expert panel from lots of different therapies at the end of it.

The CHP stress that there is no requirement to stick to their schedule. Complementary Therapy Week can act as a focus for promoting and celebrating your own therapies. You can also contact local media, such as newspapers or radio stations well ahead of the event to see if they'd be interested in featuring your business as part of the awareness week.

The CHP will be posting more information about events as the Awareness Week draws closer and you can find lots of ideas and inspiration on their website. If you're taking part, you can use the hashtag #complementarytherapyweek to build traction. ■



Find out more at <https://www.complementaryhealthprofessionals.co.uk/national-complementary-therapy-week>.



# WHAT CLIENTS WANT NOW

*We take a look at what clients want and expect now, based on the latest consumer trends research...*

**T**HINGS have changed. The past two years have seen a major reassessment of what people want from their lives and how we go about the simplest of activities. It's now obvious that things won't go back to what we thought of as normal, because we are no longer the same people. We think differently, our comfort zones have changed, our worlds have contracted and we are increasingly anxious and stressed about social interactions that would previously have felt routine. Understanding these changes, which not only affect our clients, but also our own approaches to our practices and our own wellbeing, can help

us adapt to become more successful. We each define success in our own terms, so while one therapist may regard taking on additional clients as their success, for others it may mean seeing fewer clients, operating online or moving to a different modality.

## **Trend 1: Touch as a luxury and source of anxiety**

Around one in three people in the UK live alone. Factor in lockdowns, bans on hugging or close contact and fear of passing on the virus through touch and a great many people were, and still are, cut off from human touch.

Given that touch in itself is hugely beneficial for stress-relief and supporting the immune system, the fact that so many people have lived without it for so long and that many of us now feel anxious when touched is problematic.

For some people, touch is now regarded as a luxury, for others, there is a trust barrier to be overcome before permitting touch and for yet another group, touch has become a source of anxiety rather than pleasure or relaxation.

There are several ways of reframing your touch-based services to reconnect with these various consumer mind-sets. For those who regard touch as a luxury, then the experience should become a premium service, perhaps taking longer and using bespoke products or increasing the pampering aspect of treatment. For others who are more wary of touch, recasting massage as a therapeutic treatment, such as sports massage or deep muscle treatment, might be the way forward. For anxious clients – who may be in greater need of touch-based treatments than others – then making sure they are comfortable and understand what you plan to do are key. If you can sense their tension, then further communication is needed. It may also be less anxiety-inducing if your work starts in areas of the body where the client can see what you are doing, or low-stress areas.

You might also consider offering no-touch treatments, which are technology led, such as light treatments or those which rely on sound healing.

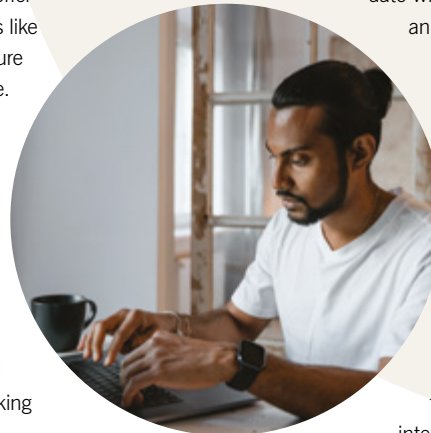
### **Trend 2: Increasing diversity of delivery channels**

Prior to the pandemic, most holistic therapists delivered hands on one-to-one treatments. Now, just consumers expect to be able to make purchases online, so they expect to be able to access holistic therapy treatments through a variety of channels. While many therapists pivoted to remote working, there are still many who could do so, yet have not explored the possibilities. It may be worth considering how you could add some remote services to your portfolio. Doing so will also mean you are better prepared in the event of future pandemic situations.

Depending on your modality, delivering therapies online can offer many advantages. Firstly, you can access clients from all over the world, rather than your local area, secondly,

you may be able to deliver a one-to-many service, thus increasing your revenues and it also allows you to access a younger clientele. Many of your existing clients may be interested in streamed sessions such as sound baths, yoga classes, supervised recovery exercises, Reiki or coaching sessions.

This move to online working, with meetings on Teams and Zoom, can also provide a boost for holistic therapists who offer appearance-based services like facials, cosmetic acupuncture or facial lymphatic drainage. It also offers opportunities for problems which have become more common with working from home, such as bad posture or tech neck. Consider reframing or designing some services to make the most of the trend for online delivery and working from home.



### **Trend Three: Sustainability and beyond green**

Increasingly, and particularly with a younger cohort of clients, there's an expectation that holistic therapists will set a good example when it comes to their approach to business. It's about authenticity, sustainability and making the right choices for ourselves and our planet. That may mean looking at ways to reduce your carbon footprint, trying to source locally to save on air miles, using vegan or vegan-friendly products or cycling to work. It's about demonstrating your commitment to take responsibility for positive environmental change. We may not have the same impact as huge businesses, but we are expected to walk the talk when it comes to health and wellbeing, not only our own and that of our clients, but also that of the planet as a whole.

### **Trend Four: Here comes the science bit**

New research in the supplements market suggests that since COVID, consumers are now taking more of an interest in the scientific provenance of what they consume. That is to say that supplements which have proven clinical effectiveness are becoming more popular. In a world which is increasingly

filled with influencers and disinformation, consumers look to science to provide a reliable source of information when it comes to health and wellbeing.

Obviously, how you align yourself with this trend will depend very much on the interests of your client base and the nature of your modalities. Ongoing CPD and magazines

like HTM should help you keep up to date with the latest research and studies in your own modality and add to your credibility and that of the industry as a whole.

Building industry-wide credibility, based on a strong research foundation, is essential if we are to move towards an integrated form of health care that encompasses both the allopathic and holistic approach.

### **Trend Five: Mind, Body and – increasingly – Spirit**

One of the major impacts of COVID has been to give rise to a major increase in concern over mental wellbeing. The Office of National Statistics reports that rates of stress, depression and anxiety have risen sharply since the start of the pandemic.

The impact of rising prices, worries over fuel costs, wage stagnation and the spiralling costs of renting or buying a home has created a situation where far fewer people feel optimistic about their future and the standard of living that they and their children will enjoy.

Many holistic therapies have been proven to help offset stress and anxiety, so we could do more to incorporate elements that are designed to improve mental wellbeing into our treatment menus. This might mean mindful massage, combining a guided meditation with relaxing strokes, working with crystals as well as essential oils, or introducing breath work as part of an aftercare package.

People are also seeking to reconnect with their spiritual side, so this, too may offer opportunities to create a business in harmony with not only the latest consumer trends, but the practice you want to create. ■

# PRICING FOR profitability

*There can be few holistic businesses who haven't had a turbulent couple of years. Rising overheads and an uncertain business climate mean that we need to reconsider pricing models in order to receive appropriate recompense...*

**W**E talk of charging a fair price for our services, but setting prices can be one of the most awkward things for a holistic therapist to get right. Women, in particular, are often reluctant to increase their prices. It's similar to the pay gap between men and women, where 2020 figures suggest women are paid an average of 15.5% less than men for doing the same jobs. Women ask for pay rises less often, ask for smaller rises and get rejected more often than men. In effect, women are conditioned not to discuss income levels and that asking for more money, whether that's a pay rise or putting up prices in their own businesses is not quite nice.

Holistic therapists are often highly skilled and have invested heavily in their own training. They deal with the health and wellbeing of their clients, yet charge less per hour than skilled tradesmen such as builders, plumbers or car

mechanics. It's about skills being recognised and compensated for at an appropriate level.

## **COSTS ARE RISING**

One of the main reasons that you need to consider whether you should increase your prices is that many of your overheads are likely to increase significantly in 2022. In April, the cap on energy prices appears set to rise by at least 51%. Not only is the average household energy bill set to rise by £600 this year, but your practice room will also be more expensive to heat and this may factor into your rent or running costs. Add in increases in mortgage rates or rents, council tax, business rates, income tax and National Insurance, as well as supply issues and spiralling costs for essentials like food and you may well be forced to deal with increasing overheads and living expenses. There are two options in this situation. You can either keep prices as they are and thus reduce your income

at a time when the cost of living is rising, or you can raise your prices. Essentially it comes down to whether a short-term discomfort about asking your clients to pay more is more concerning than the long-term discomfort of not being able to keep your business running or pay your bills.

## **DON'T GO FOR A MINIMAL APPROACH TO PRICING**

Often, we're tempted to use a cost-based approach to pricing. This involves working out what it costs us to run our business on a monthly basis and then factoring in how many clients we see in a typical week. While adding in more clients can lead to more income, it can also impact on things like work/life balance and having time to develop and market your business. The danger is that we keep our prices so low, or use discount sites like Groupon to grow client numbers and then find that we are constantly busy, continually exhausted but not making much money.

## **UNDERSTAND YOUR WORTH**

Firstly, examine your banking records for the past three years and determine what you actually paid yourself. Go back further if the pandemic has had a major impact on your income, discounting this period. Next, work out how many hours you spend at work each week. This should include admin time as well as when you are working with clients and waiting time. Use this to work out your hourly rate. It may sound very obvious, but don't confuse what your client pays you with what you pay yourself, because you need to factor in the costs of operating your business, like rent, utilities, training, advertising, business rates, National Insurance and professional fees.





Some people will have a fixed salary, while others pay themselves dividend or a mix of salary and dividends, so working out an hourly rate is often the best measure when setting prices.

*Researching other therapists' prices is an essential part of setting your own prices.*

Once you have your hourly rate, visit a job site and look at salaries for holistic therapists and for other jobs. Choose ones in your area, because rates vary considerably with location. How does your rate compare? What sort of jobs have the same level of hourly pay as you do? If you discover that you are paid surprisingly little then it's time to reconsider what you charge your clients. Keep in mind that the National Living Wage for those over 22 will rise to £9.50 per hour from April this year. You need to pay yourself at least this much to survive. It may also be worth exploring if you are eligible for any benefits or tax credits.

**Here are some hourly rates for jobs in my part of the country:**

The other aspect of knowing your worth is understanding the difference you make to your clients' health and wellbeing and the value they put on that. You may well be underestimating what you are worth to them. How much is being in less pain worth? How about recovering more quickly from an injury? Having the appearance of a scar reduced? Sleeping better? Feeling truly relaxed? Discuss what impact your work has with your clients to get a feel for this. It may be that they can help you rethink your worth.

Researching other therapists' prices is an essential part of setting your own prices. Keep in mind that other therapists may be afraid to break a perceived ceiling on pricing and may also have a tendency to undervalue their skills. There will also be a considerable spread of prices based on factors like the comparative skill level of practitioners, the degree of specialism and the location of the practice room. Obviously, clients expect to pay more in a luxury spa setting than a small backstreet practice or converted shed in your garden.

*Once you have your hourly rate, visit a job site and look at salaries for holistic therapists and for other jobs.*



**DON'T FEAR THE FALLOUT**

It may feel wrong to raise your prices at a time when many people are struggling with their health and mental wellbeing and when prices are rising. You may fear that you will lose clients, who will migrate to a cheaper therapist. If you are providing a service that your clients value, this is unlikely to happen. Even if you do lose a couple of clients, you may end up with more money in your pocket and more time to work on growing your business.

The key is to recognise that your work has worth and that you should charge for your skills accordingly. Do your research, understand the numbers and make the changes you need to make to reflect that. ■

JOB	PER HOUR	JOB	PER HOUR
Labourer	£9-18	Catering assistant	£9
Support worker	£14.51	Bar worker	£8.65 -£10
Phlebotomist	£14	Admin assistant	£11.08
Massage Therapist (Self-employed)	£20	Trainee Hydro colonic Therapist	£16
Retail team leader (CO-OP)	£10.45	Retail assistant	£9.60
Team member (Nando's)	£9.42	Holistic Therapist (Self-employed)	£18
Slaughter house worker	£13 - £16.50	Relief cleaner	£9.78



# TAKING MORE PLEASURE INTO YOUR WORK LIFE



*Julia Paulette Hollenbery explains how to add pleasure to your working day...*

**A** great many people get no pleasure from their work. Many hate it, but as a holistic practitioner, you probably don't just want to facilitate health, wellbeing, and happiness for others - you want to really live it, lit-up by your own inner smile of vitality, delight and joy.

Whatever modality you practice, it is easy to fall into the modern normality of busy business, rush and stress. Working in a wellbeing practice can be

full-on, needing to attend to admin, marketing and bookkeeping, with the demands of time pressure and interpersonal dynamics, as well as doing the actual work of being a therapist, opposite a client or a group of clients.

Culturally, we all tend to deny and delay pleasure until after the hard work has been done! Yet pleasure is an important aspect of life, a grounding resource, freely available to you at any time. You are worthy of enjoying every bit of your life, including your time at work.

How can you reclaim the essence of yourself, amongst all the work tasks to be done?

Underneath the professional clothes and persona, we are all sensitive, sensual, playful beings. Pleasure is lovely, comforting and calming. Whatever the challenges of your current situation, some small healing pleasure is always available to you -- perhaps a walk, stretch, meal, drive, music, art, nature, conversation, touch... there are many causes for enjoyment!

### Seven points for reflection

Here are seven points for you to reflect upon, to begin to introduce more pleasure into your work life:

**Humility matters.** As a holistic practitioner, it can often seem that you need to know all the answers about wellbeing, relaxation, and peace. And while you do know a great deal about these things, you are not, of course, perfect. We all have dishes in the kitchen that need washing. The expert stance can be exhausting to maintain. Many of us are often only a few years ahead of our clients. It can be a relief to admit you do not know it all, are a vulnerable human. This is a first step towards pleasure.

**Body awareness.** You are already aware of the body. And there is still more for all of us to learn. We are living in an unsensual culture (when seen in the huge zoom-out context of global history). In the modern world, the body is objectified as a thing to look good, as judged by others - rather than a personal home that feels good to inhabit. Your body is full of sensation, feeling and wise intelligence. Deepening awareness of your own body, is the path to more pleasure... wherever you are, whatever you are doing.

**Consciously choose comfort.** Just as in yoga we first find a stable foundation for the posture, you can choose to begin your day with delight rather than dash. Begin happily filled with pleasure, rather than emptily needy. One friend looks at pictures of her baby nieces and nephews before starting work, another takes his dog for a long walk. Many of us have serious morning meditation practices, can you choose to add a pivotal pleasure practice too? What is fun for you? Perhaps a dance to a favourite song, a particularly delicious morsel such as coffee with cream or fruit and chocolate, or maybe cuddling your lover, child or pet? Go to work with a smile, share your joy.

**Pleasure within performance.** The body functions on the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out. You can choose to nourish your life with the pulse of give and take. For every client attended to, you can attend to yourself. For every admin task done, you can gift yourself some pleasure. It can be small, quick and simple. Perhaps a big exhale or shoulder shrug. Sense yourself... bring kind attention to your own hand, arm or foot... chest, back or belly... What do you notice? Find a small pleasure you can expand upon, by adding gentle breath, movement, imagination or gratitude. Enjoy.

**Find pleasure despite pain.** Sometimes we get upset, frustrated or angry. Stuff happens. And within the grit, is often also a nugget of gold. The pathway is to stay with the difficulty, with the feeling, with gentle respect to yourself. It is moving closer to yourself, giving yourself a hug, allowing what is, to be as it is. Enquiring: *How am I right now?* Often, surprisingly, the difficulty breaks open, revealing a melting, arising pleasure. This is the entrance to the subtle, sensual Universe of Deliciousness.

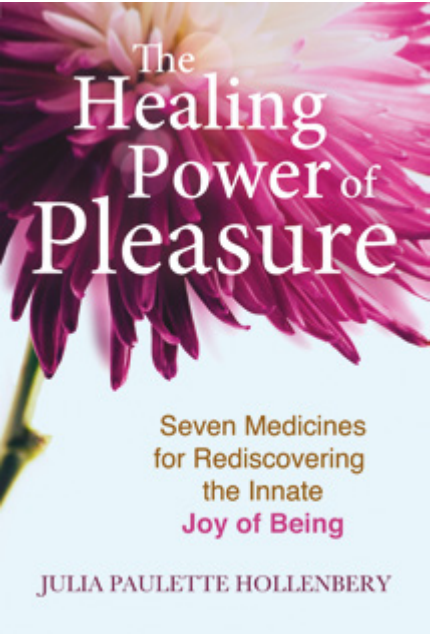
**Pleasure arises in freshness.** When we are stuck in something, after a while, it feels stale and boring. Just like our clients, we too can hunch over our devices – and can stay hunched until done. We wear our professional personas and can stay in them all day long. I want to remind you of what you already know... Movement of all kinds can open us up to pleasure. A touch of playfulness is refreshing and enjoyable. Welcome in the unexpected, unknown and creative! It can be a skip or a funny face, a shower with hot and cold water, even brushing teeth or applying face cream can be pleasurable breaks. What brings aliveness into your life? Give your arms a quick squeeze or place a hand on your own face. Or perhaps it's just stopping and doing nothing for a bit, staring out the window or resting. That's often not a waste of time, but empowering, dreaming visionary time.

**Pleasure is in the space.** Cultivate a working room that is ordered and harmonious. Remove excess clutter from your environment and add decorative touches that uniquely please you. Perhaps you like the look of a particular plant or flower, find a favourite fountain pen you enjoy the sensation of writing with, or a little picture or object that delights you when you

see it or touch it. What matters, is tuning-in to what precisely really pleases you. And it might not be the same for you in the winter as in the summer. A simple colourful scarf added to a table or bookshelf can make a positive tangible difference. It may seem like a minor detail, but attention to small detail can shift your mood, health and stress. It doesn't have to be incense or feng-shui to be uplifting. Trust your instinct. Choose your pleasure.

At the end of the day, remember that you are just as important as your clients. Just as worthy of receiving your own good, kind, gentle, playful, loving, attention. You can serve them and attend to yourself at the same time. In fact, the best therapists do just that!

Pleasure is magnetic. It transmits. There is no shortage. We can all be pleasurable happy! ■



**JULIA PAULETTE HOLLENBERY** is Author of  
*The Healing Power of Pleasure: Seven Medicines for Rediscovering the Innate Joy of Being.* Over 25 years as a bodyworker and therapist she's enabled countless clients to create happy relationships, meaningful work and a vibrant life.

[UniverseOfDeliciousness.com](http://UniverseOfDeliciousness.com)



# GETTING THE MOST FROM GOOGLE ADS

*Online advertising can help you get the most from your budget with some careful planning...*

**W**HILE personal recommendations are still the most cost-effective and reliable way for holistic therapists to get new clients, online advertising should be one of your main marketing channels when actively building your client numbers. In this feature we're going to look at using Google Ads, but much of the advice given applies to Facebook and Microsoft advertising too.

## **What is Google Ads?**

Google Ads is the mechanism for running display ads on Google search results and its advertising network.

When you search on Google, the top results are paid for ads. There might be four or five of these before the search engine results. This is why you might see competitors' details first even when searching for your own business. These companies have selected a location and various keywords and pay Google a fee when someone clicks through to their website.

Because advertisers can define the audience they want to reach, this is more targeted than say, advertising in your local paper, because you are only reaching people who are interested in what you provide. This does not necessarily mean they are ready to buy. It's the job of your website and perhaps a phone call to convert them into clients. Smart campaigns, which help you target your audience are said to be three times more efficient than normal advertising.

## Defining your audience

We all know that one of the essentials of business success is knowing your customer base and why they buy from you. Think about where your audience is physically located and consider their social demographics. Try to think of different groups of customers. Do you see older people with chronic pain, golfers with sport injuries, or busy mothers in need of pampering and relaxation? If, for example, you specialise in pregnancy massage, you would target pregnant women, perhaps aged 20-40, living in your town. The tighter you can make your definition and the smaller your intended audience, the less money will be wasted.

## Getting started

Setting up what Google calls a Smart Campaign doesn't take long, even if you've not used the tools before. You simply choose your business goals and select appropriate keywords and define how you want to spend your budget. For example, let's imagine you are an aromatherapist working in Plymouth who wants more people to buy essential oil blends and bath products from your online store. With online essential oil toiletries purchases selected as the desired campaign outcome, the Smart campaign in Google Ads will prioritise this type of conversion when it calculates how much to spend on each bid. Over time, the Smart campaign will prioritise spending the store's allocated budget on buying ads directed at Google users who are searching for essential oils. If you have several different things you do, say offering yoga classes and yoga retreats, you would create different location ranges and audience criteria for both, as people would travel further for a retreat than a weekly class.

Google uses automated auctions to bid for slots that appear at the top of search listings and refines the amount it bids depending on your campaign goals and the results the campaign achieves. The tools also monitor performance for you. This is not surprising given that Google only collect your money when someone clicks on your ad. In Cost-per-click bidding, you set a maximum cost-per-click bid - or simply "max. CPC" - that's the highest amount that you're willing to pay for a click on your ad.

Once you have set up your campaign, you can use Google Ad's dashboard to see how

your ads are performing. This helps you decide which ads work well for you and which details need tweaked a little.

## Budgets and auctions

You don't need to spend a huge amount of money to get a good return on your investment. It's simply a matter of choosing your payment settings and how you pay. You can either choose a set monthly spend, which is then invoiced monthly, or use automatic payments, which are charged after the campaign runs or when you reach the spending limit you have set. It's worth looking out for promotional codes or vouchers that can enhance your budget or let you try a small campaign for a much reduced cost.

*If you're just starting to advertise online, then Google's Local Services Ads are a good way to minimise your costs.*

If you're just starting to advertise online, then Google's Local Services Ads are a good way to minimise your costs. Here businesses only pay for leads, as opposed to per click. A lead is when a customer gets in touch directly from your ad, making your budget stretch further and the money you spend more likely to have a tangible business benefit, like making a purchase or booking an appointment. You can decide how many new leads you'd like in a week and how much you are willing to pay for one. The actual price of a lead will vary depending on your location, the type of job and the type of lead - but you can guarantee that each lead received will count towards your budget and won't go over it. Once the budget is reached, the ads won't appear for the remainder of the month.

You can also pause your ads, if you are away or fully booked.

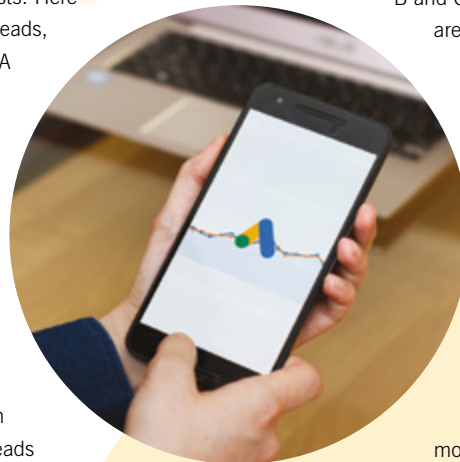
## Monitor your performance

If you connect your Google Ads and Google Analytics accounts, it is easy to discover what types of ads, timings and other variables work best for you. Google Ads will tell you how many times your ads have shown in searches (called 'impressions') or when they've been clicked. Google Analytics will show you whether those clicks led to conversions on your website - customers buying, calling, filling in a form, or whatever action you want them to take to help your business reach its goals.

For example, say you get ten new leads in a given week and the ads take people to your website's home page. You might discover that seven of those leads then went to your services offered page. It might, therefore be more effective to change the landing page to your services offered page. If your analytics show that people leave the site immediately after arriving, it may be time to reconsider your web design or that the keywords you are using don't really fit well with your services. For example, let's say you offer massage in town A, but your location includes towns B and C. If there are many other massage clinics in towns

B and C, potential customers are more likely to choose a therapist who lives nearby. You could look at your existing clients' post codes and reduce your catchment area. However if you specialise in something more unusual, a wider catchment area may be more useful. Monitoring your results and making

tweaks as needed means you are spending your budget more effectively. As with all forms of advertising, the results depend on what you put into your campaign and how you adapt it as you start to get results. Keeping on top of it should bring a steady stream of new clients to your door. ■





# BOOSTING YOUR ENERGY LEVELS

*The FHT's Chief Executive Officer and Nutritional Therapist, **Monica Price**, offers six top tips to help you and your clients boost your energy levels...*

**N**OW that the holiday season is over, one of the main concerns that people have is low energy levels. As winter is often a time spent indoors eating lots of food and generally hibernating, here are my top tips to help you and your clients kick-start the New Year...

## Start exercising

This doesn't have to be a workout in a gym - it could be taking up your favourite sport or a pastime that you haven't done in a while, such as golf, tennis, running, walking, dancing or kickboxing. When you exercise your brain releases a surge of chemicals called neurotransmitters, which include endorphins, also known as the 'happy hormone'. The increased blood flow will make you feel more alert and focused afterwards and will benefit your heart and muscles, too, leaving you feeling more energised.

## Stay hydrated

It sounds simple, but not drinking enough water could be the reason you are lacking energy, as it affects your metabolism (your body's ability to convert food into energy). Aim for six to eight glasses of water or healthy liquids a day

and remember that there is water in fruit and vegetables. If you have an intense workout, drinking coconut water can help replace the electrolytes your body has sweated out.

## Up your intake of B vitamins

Known as the 'vitamin B complex', these eight vitamins play a vital role in boosting our energy levels through the synthesis and repair of DNA and RNA (which keeps our cells healthy) and by metabolising protein, fat and carbohydrate in the body. They are water-soluble, which means the body doesn't store them, and certain lifestyle factors including stress mean we often need to up our daily intake. Good sources include green leafy vegetables, wholegrain foods, beans, lentils, fish and supplements.

## Eat more wholegrain carbohydrates

Healthy carbohydrates give your body energy, but if you are eating a lot of refined sugars, processed food and sugary drinks, these can leave your body feeling sluggish and bloated in the long run. Eat more wholemeal bread, pasta, oats and rice, as these are low glycaemic carbohydrates that take the body longer to digest and will allow your body to have a more consistent source of energy throughout the day.

## Get more sleep

Sleep is so important for our health and wellbeing. Try eliminating any intake of caffeine after 5pm as this is a stimulant and your body will be fighting to go to sleep if you drink it before bedtime. Inhaling lavender essential oil is also good for calming the body and mind and promoting sleep. Turn off your mobile, read a

good book, and try and empty your mind. I keep a notebook by my bed, to write down all the things I need to do or I am worrying about, which means I can then allow my body and mind to relax and unwind.

## Do things that make you happy

Doing things that make you happy will have a positive effect on your body and energy levels. Ask yourself every day, 'What have I done today to make me feel good?' Doing the things you love energises your brain, whether it's painting, salsa dancing, or simply seeing friends (never underestimate the power of a good conversation). Our bodies need this positive energy as much as a healthy diet. ■



The FHT offers students and qualified practitioners a range of membership benefits to help support them, every step of their therapy career.

For further information, visit [www.fht.org.uk](http://www.fht.org.uk) or call **023 8062 4350**.





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*Ran Janda explains how to access the media and position yourself as a thought leader in order to grow your practice...*

**T**O grow in any business, you need to be seen, heard and known. It's easy to think that you need a big marketing and PR budget to do this effectively, but this just isn't true. Even as self-employed practitioners and small business owners, we can leverage public relations to help grow our practices.

Getting media coverage doesn't have to be a complicated subject and everyone can utilise it to promote their professional brand, get more visibility and attract more clients. If a journalist mentions you or publishes a story about you, then readers will look to you as a thought leader in your industry and this is something that you just cannot achieve from marketing alone. It's a public endorsement on what you do best and who doesn't want that?

### **Targeting the right journalists**

One of the easiest ways to find journalists who are looking to speak to health and wellbeing experts regarding a particular therapy or condition is by conducting a simple search on Twitter. Create an account if you haven't already, then use the search bar in the top right-hand corner to search for specific terms that relate to your practice. The main terms that journalists use when looking for expert comments are #journorequest and #prequest so try both separately and add in a few keywords to find any eligible requests that you can pitch for.

# BECOMING A THOUGHT *leader*



For example, as an acupuncturist, some keywords I would try would be “#journorequest acupuncture”, “#journorequest health experts”, “#prrequest eczema”. Use a variety of keywords that relate to the therapies you practice, the conditions you specialise in and anything that relates to what you want to promote.

You will need to sift through the Tweets, and most will be irrelevant, but you should be able to come across some that relate to what you offer and that you can pitch for. You can also use the advanced search ability which allows you to filter the search even more, so for example if you are location specific, then you can choose to see Tweets that are local to you only.

This is not a one-time task; it is a task that should be performed at least weekly and shouldn't take more than 15-30 minutes to sift through the Tweets to see if there is anything relevant for you.

## Case studies

Another technique that is quite popular with journalists and editors is to offer them a free consultation or several consultations in exchange for a feature or case study in the newspaper or magazine they write for.

National women's and health magazines are great to target if you offer remote treatments as you will reach a wider audience and you will also have a larger choice of publications to target.

If you provide in-person sessions only then you will want to target local journalists, especially those that have an interest in health and wellbeing. Again, you can use Twitter and its search function to find these journalists. Many of them have their email address in their profile description, alternatively you can send them a direct message with details of your proposal.

This strategy is usually well received as the journalist gets a free treatment, or multiple treatments, so is prepared to give you more space in a write up which is a great opportunity to share some detailed information to the public on the services you offer and what they are likely to expect if they choose to book a treatment with you.

## Points to consider

What's your story or angle? Journalists will be looking for a hook for their readers, so try to put yourself in their shoes when communicating what your key message is. Are you trying to warn readers about something or trying to inspire or motivate them? Are you offering

something of value that could benefit them or their family? You could ask friends or family members if they would find the story interesting if they were to come across it in a publication to gauge what impact it could have.

Is your story topical? Can you relate it to what is currently happening either locally, nationally, or even globally? Check what stories are making the headlines and use HTM's guide to upcoming awareness days to see what you can potentially focus your key message on.

Is your story timely? Timing is crucial and journalists plan stories in advance. There is no point trying to get piece published on hay fever in August, plan your pitches in well advance based on the time of the year. For example, PR companies start pitching products and ideas for Christmas in July and August.

What evidence do you have that supports your key message? Do you have quotes or statistics from respected sources that will back up your message? If so, ensure you include them in your pitch.

Ensure your key message is reflected in your headline so journalists and readers will know straight away what the piece is about.

## Writing your pitch

When you either come across a journalist request that you want to pitch for or decide to pitch directly to relevant journalists with a newsworthy story, there are some main points to consider when writing your pitch. However, something to point out is that a journalist may have their own specific guidelines on how they would like to receive a pitch and if they share this then be sure to follow their advice. If not, you can use the following suggestions as basic guidelines for your pitch.

Get to the point straight away, you want to grab the journalist's attention in the first couple of sentences. They should reinforce why the journalist or editor should care about publishing your story or article right now.

Summarise the article and the points you will be making. This section should

answer why you are a trusted expert on the topic and what makes this article stand out from other content that's been published on the topic.

Include any sources and evidence.

Include a clear call to action by asking “would you be interested in publishing this article?”

The whole pitch should be a few short paragraphs.

Thank them for their consideration.

Include your name and contact information.

One final note, please don't be discouraged by no thanks responses and no replies. A journalist may only be looking for one comment or response and has potentially received hundreds of pitches. There is always next time, so keep persevering as even one feature can have a tremendous effect on your practice and for the relatively small time commitment, it is worth being in the game! ■



**RAN JANDA** is the founder of

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GETTING TO

GRIPS WITH

# GUT HEALTH

*Good gut health underpins our mental wellbeing as well as physical health. Many of your clients may suffer from gut issues, so we take a look at how to get to grips with gut health...*

**W**E talk about someone having guts when they are brave or decisive. We talk about gut reactions, which draw on our instincts and of feeling things in our guts, acknowledging that our guts often have a physical reaction to our emotional and mental states. Some experience anxiety symptoms such as butterflies in the stomach, while others find they experience nervous diarrhoea in stressful situations. The gut, then, is rather more than just the body's primary processing plant, turning food into nutrient molecules powering our minds and bodies. Many of the world's traditional medicine systems recognised that the gut had a direct impact on mood and vice versa. Until relatively recently, however, the gut was only considered to impact on physical health rather than mental wellbeing in modern Western allopathic medicine.

Unsurprisingly, it's an area of health research that has been undervalued and underfunded for over a century, despite factoring in as many as one in eight deaths in the UK and symptoms affecting as many as 40% of the population, according to UK specialist charity Guts UK.

### The evolution of the gut

Adult humans have about 25 feet, or 8 metres of gastrointestinal tract. If this were to be spread out, it would cover an area of between 250 and 400 m<sup>2</sup>. As such, it is one of the largest interfaces between an individual and surrounding environmental factors and antigens. In an average life time, around 60 tonnes of food pass through the human GI tract, along with an abundance of microorganisms from the environment which impose a huge threat on gut integrity. The gut has evolved from a simple tube designed to extract nutrients from food and excrete waste products in the simplest organisms to something rather more complex and specialised.

In early animals, who often lacked locomotion capabilities, the gut essentially functioned as a simple brain, which controlled not only digestion but other functions. Later organisms with higher brains evolved. Even today our Enteric Nervous System, a network

of cells similar to the neurons found in the brain and neurotransmitter chemicals that occupy and surround the gut, is sometimes called our "Second Brain". This network of nerve cells is thought to number somewhere between 50 and 100 million, which is similar to the amount found in the spinal cord. This means that there is a lot of signalling from gut to brain and from brain to gut going on. The Enteric Nervous System communicates with the brain through the vagus nerve. This means that, just as ancient medicine suggested, our gut can influence how we feel mentally and emotionally and, conversely, our emotions, physical health and mental wellbeing can influence how well our gut functions. Recent research shows that our guts, and in particular the composition of our gut microflora has an impact on a great many physical health problems, including some forms of arthritis, obesity and Parkinson's disease as well as mental issues such as anxiety, depression and autism.



### The gut microbiome

Currently, scientists believe that each of us has around the same number of bacterial cells in and on our bodies as we have human cells in our bodies. As individuals, we are actually complex microscopic eco-systems comprising a collection of around 10<sup>14</sup> microbiota including bacteria, archaea – microorganisms which lack cell nuclei and are principally concerned in methane production as part of digestion - and eukarya which live in the gastrointestinal tract. In good health, we live in harmony with our microbiota. In poorer health, the numbers and diversity of our microbiomes

often become reduced. These imbalances are often associated with poorer health and wellbeing. Our knowledge of the composition of the microbiome is changing rapidly. For example, in 2021, researchers discovered 140,000 viruses, many previously unknown, which are part of the human gut microbiome.

We can think of ourselves and our microbiomes as symbiotic systems. A healthy microbiome offers many benefits, from strengthening gut integrity or shaping the intestinal epithelium to harvesting energy, protecting against pathogens and regulating the immune pathways. However, the balance is easily upset and this can contribute to a large number of intestinal and extra-intestinal diseases and health issues.

*In early animals, who often lacked locomotion capabilities, the gut essentially functioned as a simple brain, which controlled not only digestion but other functions.*

There is considerable debate around when we develop gut microbiota. Some studies show it is passed on through vaginal delivery, while other research shows the some microbes are present in womb tissue. Infants delivered by C-section tend to have less diverse gut microbiomes.

What is clear is that our microbiomes change as we age. Given that few of us live the same way or eat the same foods as we did as teenagers, this should come as no surprise. Life events such as illness, antibiotic treatment and changes in diet can result in chaotic shifts in the microbiota. In individuals over the age of 65, the microbial community shifts, with an increased abundance of Bacteroidetes phyla and *Clostridium cluster IV*, in contrast with younger subjects where cluster XIVa is more prevalent. In the elderly population, a significant relationship has been identified between diversity and living arrangements, such as community dwelling or long-term residential care.

## The scale of the problem

Gut health issues are common. Interesting, a study published in 2020 in the BMJ (<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/10/7/e036584>) acknowledges that the aetiology of chronic inflammatory bowel diseases including IBD; Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and IBD are of unknown origin, so we have no real idea of the underlying cause.

The study notes that in North America, over 1.5 million individuals are living with IBD and in Europe it is estimated that 2.5–3 million individuals are affected, with an estimated direct healthcare cost of 4.6–5.6 billion Euros/year. The researchers note that the rate may have plateaued in western countries while rising rapidly in newly industrialised countries.

*Ulcerative Colitis cases rose considerably in children under the age of 17, increasing around 2.5% each year of the study.*

The results, which were based on data from 2010 to 2017, showed crude incident rates of 725 cases per 100,000 people for any form of IBD, 276 per 100,000 for Crohn's disease and 397 per 100,000 for Ulcerative Colitis. It is not clear what impact the pandemic and rising food prices may have had on incidence rates, but it is fair to say that many people's eating habits have altered significantly over the past two years. In Scotland, IBD prevalence is estimated to reach 1.0% by 2028.

The researchers found that incidence of Crohn's disease was highest in Northern Ireland, Scotland and the North West and lowest in Wales, London and the West Midlands. Perhaps surprisingly, there appeared to be no association between social deprivation and incidence of Crohn's Disease after adjusting for sex, calendar year, age and geographical location.

Ulcerative Colitis cases rose considerably in children under the age of 17, increasing around 2.5% each year of the study. The rise in incidence was largely driven by adolescent

boys aged 10–16 in whom incidence rose by 3.4% (95% CI 0.8% to 6.2%) per calendar year ( $p=0.01$ ). No significant change in incidence was observed in girls aged 10–16 years or children of either sex aged 0–9 years.

Incidence of Ulcerative colitis was highest in the North East, the East of England and the East Midlands and lowest in Wales, the South West and London. Unlike Crohn's disease, Ulcerative Colitis cases were more frequent amongst those in the most deprived 20% of the population compared to better off people.

The researchers stress that this one of the largest observational studies undertaken to investigate trends in IBD epidemiology. Although incidence of IBD remained relatively stable for those aged 17–40 years and those aged 0–9 years, they observed a 38% fall in incidence for those aged over 40 years and a 94% rise in incidence in the adolescent population. These figures are in line with the highest reported global incidence rates and the findings are concerning, particularly in regard to adolescents.

## Main conditions

**Leaky Gut:** Leaky Gut is not yet entirely accepted by all allopathic practitioners despite growing research evidence that supports the premise that an unhealthy gut lining may have large cracks or holes, allowing partially digested food, toxins, and bugs to penetrate the tissues beneath it. This may trigger inflammation and changes in the gut flora that could lead to problems within the digestive tract and beyond. Obviously, the gut needs to be permeable to allow the normal passage of nutrient and other molecules, but some people are believed to have a genetic predisposition towards a leaky gut and the increased digestive sensitivity and health problems this can bring. Diets which are low in fibre and high in sugar and saturated fats, heavy alcohol use and stress also seem to disrupt this balance.

Endurance exercise, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, pregnancy

and surfactants (such as bile acids and dietary factors such as emulsifiers) have been shown to increase gut permeability.

Some studies suggest that leaky gut may be associated with selected autoimmune diseases as well as chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, arthritis, allergies, asthma, obesity and mental illness, though few studies argue that poor diet is a direct causation.



**Irritable Bowel Syndrome:** IBS is generally characterised by episodes of abdominal cramping, constipation or diarrhoea, excessive flatulence, loss of appetite and weight, tiredness and fatigue. Some people also experience anaemia and mouth ulcers, joint pain and eye inflammation.

**Ulcerative colitis, Diverticulitis and Crohn's disease:** these are chronic inflammatory bowel diseases which can be cyclical, with alternating flare-ups and periods of remission.

**Ulcerative colitis:** is a long-term autoimmune condition where the colon and rectum become inflamed and small ulcers develop on the lining of the colon which may bleed or produce pus. The symptoms include repeated episodes of diarrhoea, abdominal pain and the need to defecate frequently and sometimes with urgency. Severe cases

are defined as those which involve defecation six or more times a day. It's thought that a combination of genetic and environmental factors may fool the immune system into treating harmless colon bacteria as if they were hostile.

Ulcerative colitis is most commonly diagnosed in those ages 15-25 and it affects around 1 in 420 people in the UK. Statistically, it affects men and women equally, but is rarer in those of Asian backgrounds.

**Diverticulitis** also affects the large intestine. Diverticula are small bulges that can develop in the lining of the intestine, particularly as we age. In some cases (known as diverticulosis) there are no noticeable symptoms. Cases of severe inflammation are known as diverticulitis. Abdominal pain which may be eased after defecation or breaking wind, cramping, constipation or diarrhoea are typical symptoms. Some people experience fever and mucus or blood in the stool.

**Crohn's disease** is an inflammatory bowel disease which most often affects the end section of the small intestine and the colon. Patches of ulceration and inflammation range from a few centimetres in length to larger areas and there are generally some normal areas of the gut left unaffected. In some cases, the ulcers become quite deep causing abscesses or fistulas.

### The gut and mental wellbeing

In addition to the physical and social impact that gut problems can present, it is increasingly clear that the gut-vagus-brain pathway also influences our mental health. For example, 95% of our supplies of the neuro-transmitter serotonin, which is often imbalanced in cases of clinical depression, are made in the Enteric Nervous System, rather than the brain. This manufacturing capability is affected by what

we eat, the state of our microbiome and the signals sent along the vagus nerve to the brain. Studies have found that sending electrical pulses along the vagus nerve can influence the brain's use of serotonin, helping to alleviate severe depression.

Other studies have established that the gut, and imbalances in the diversity of the gut microbiome may be indicated as potential causes of anxiety, ADHD and autism.

### Current research

One thing that sticks out in current research is that each of us is different and reacts in a different way to the unique interaction of genetic, dietary and environmental factors that surround us and the precise compositions of our gut microbiomes. For example, new research shows that for some people in Greenland, sugar consumption is actually healthy, rather than detrimental to health. A small study published in December examined faecal samples from 50 healthy people and 52 people with IBD from different geographic regions of China. Analysis of the samples showed that faeces from IBD patients contained about 1.5 times more microplastic particles per gram than those from healthy subjects. The microplastics had similar shapes (mostly sheets and fibres) in the two groups, but the IBD faeces had more small (less than 50 nm) particles. The two most common types of plastic in both groups were polyethylene terephthalate which is used in bottles and food containers and polyamide found in food packaging and textiles. People with more severe IBD symptoms tended to have higher levels of fecal microplastics. People who drank bottled water, ate takeaway food and were often exposed to dust had more microplastics in their faeces. It is currently unclear whether this exposure could cause or contribute to IBD, or whether people with IBD

accumulate more fecal microplastics as a result of their disease.

The importance of individual difference is one that will be familiar to most Holistic Therapists who are aware that the pathway to health is often different for each client, even when they have similar conditions. Even common drugs can have a radically different degree of effectiveness on different subjects. A new study published in Nature by a team of researchers in three European countries examined the relationship of 20 different kinds of ordinary medicine with the abundance and function of intestinal bacteria and their connection to the severity of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, obesity and type 2 diabetes.

*People with cardiovascular disease were also more likely to harbour a healthier combination of various gut bacteria if they were also prescribed statins, a common class of drugs that lowers the level of harmful LDL cholesterol in the blood.*





The team found that a combination of loop diuretic tablets and beta blockers used to reduce blood pressure were associated with increased levels of health-promoting bacteria belonging to the bacterial genus *Roseburia*, which breaks down dietary plant fibre.

People with cardiovascular disease were also more likely to harbour a healthier combination of various gut bacteria if they were also prescribed statins, a common class of drugs that lowers the level of harmful LDL cholesterol in the blood. A particularly interesting finding was that the combination of statins and *magnyl* was associated with lower levels of harmful fats in the blood.

***The presence of oral bacteria in the colon is associated with an increased risk of developing some types of colon cancer.***

On the other hand, the scientists also discovered that gastric acid medication, so-

called proton pump inhibitors, are linked to adverse changes in the intestinal microbiome. The team reported relatively high levels of bacteria that are normally only present in the oral cavity. Stomach acid usually kills bacteria from the oral cavity that try to escape to the gut where they do not belong. But this is not the case when you use these gastric acid inhibitors. The presence of oral bacteria in the colon is associated with an increased risk of developing some types of colon cancer.

Not unexpectedly, the researchers found that repeated antibiotic treatments over the past five to ten years is associated with a less diverse gut microbiome. Healthy people tend to have a diverse gut microbiome, whereas the microbiome of people who live with chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, tends to be less diverse. This lack of diversity may reduce the capacity of the gut's 'chemical factory' to produce health-promoting molecules. The researchers stress that they have only discovered associations between the consumption of common drugs and changes to the gut microbiome. These results do not indicate any causal relationships.

### **How to help your clients**

Given that as many as 40% of clients may be suffering from some form of digestive issues, we are often reluctant to discuss subjects such as IBS symptoms because they are socially embarrassing. It can be helpful to add appropriate tick box questions to your initial client intake forms of histories.

Abdominal massage techniques, such as Arvigo, which combines herbal treatments with bodywork and healing can help alleviate IBS symptoms. If you have appropriate training, then supplements and, in particular, probiotics and prebiotics can make a world of difference. Some clients may benefit from a referral to a nutritional therapist, naturopath or for specialised testing. Others may appreciate being referred to a colonic hydrotherapist as some studies show that treatment can be beneficial. Where gut health issues are impacting on mental wellbeing, talking therapies may be of use.

As ever, a healthy diet which favours fruit and vegetables and natural foods over processed products, exercise, mindfulness and being in nature offer a fundamental prescription for better health. ■

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# NEW STUDY LINKS LACK OF MICRONUTRIENTS TO INCREASED RISK OF INFLAMED BOWELS

*Bjørn Falck Madsen reports on a new study on the impact of selenium and zinc on children with inflammatory bowel disease...*

**A**CCORDING to a recent study of Japanese children, individuals suffering from inflammatory bowel disease tend to have deficiencies of certain micronutrients such as selenium and zinc. This is particularly true for sufferers of Crohn's disease.

IBD (irritable bowel disease) is a blanket term for conditions that involve inflammation of the bowel and includes such ailments as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. A variety of different symptoms like bloody diarrhoea, abdominal pain, weight loss, and fatigue

may occur at regular intervals, and stress is thought to bring on flare-ups. There are many factors that contribute to IBD and genes are also known to play a role. Another thing that appears to increase the risk of inflammatory bowel disease is lack of certain micronutrients.

## **Low selenium and zinc in IBD patients**

According to a recent study<sup>1</sup> of Japanese children under the age of 17 years, the risk of IBD is significantly greater in those who have low levels of selenium and zinc. Apparently,

this is particularly true for Crohn's sufferers. The study which was published in *Digestive Diseases and Sciences* was carried out on 98 patients with Crohn's disease, 118 patients with ulcerative colitis, and 43 healthy controls without any of the two conditions. The researchers compared the prevalence of the different types of IBD with the participants' micronutrient status, and that gave them a clear picture of how levels of selenium and zinc were inversely related with the disease risk.

*Another thing that appears to increase the risk of inflammatory bowel disease is lack of certain micronutrients.*



## Spanish scientists found similar results

It is not the only study to show a link between micronutrient status and IBD. A Spanish study<sup>2</sup> published in 2016 looked at selenium levels in the blood in 106 patients with irritable bowel disease and 30 healthy controls and found that the selenium status was significantly lower in patients with ulcerative colitis and patients with Crohn's disease compared with healthy controls. In addition, it turned out that selenium levels in the blood of Crohn's disease patients were significantly lower than in patients with ulcerative colitis. The Spanish researchers underline the importance of having adequate levels of selenium in these two patient groups, among other reasons for the sake of cardiovascular protection.

## Inflammation and heart disease

Both selenium and zinc are effective antioxidants that ward off potentially harmful free radicals, which are highly reactive and very aggressive compounds that generate what is known as oxidative stress. All types of IBD are associated with oxidative stress, which is what causes the inflammation. It is also known to be a major contributor to cardiovascular disease. In fact, one of the best studies to demonstrate selenium's potential with regard to cardiovascular protection is the KiSel-10 study<sup>3</sup>, where daily supplementation with Pharma Nord's patented selenium yeast, SelenoPrecise, given in combination with Bio-Quinone Q10, which is Pharma Nord's coenzyme Q10 formula resulted in a 54% cardiovascular mortality reduction. A total of 443 older men and women participated in this double-blind, placebo-controlled study that was published in 2013. By analyzing the more than 50,000 blood samples that were collected over the course of the five-year intervention period, the scientists have been able to conduct no less than 18 follow-up studies.

## Important for regulating inflammation markers

A variety of these sub-studies revealed significant reductions of different inflammation markers in the supplemented group, offering scientific reasoning to the Spanish researchers' concern about an increased cardiovascular risk among IBD patients with low selenium

levels. One of the markers that goes up with both cardiovascular disease and irritable bowel disease is C-reactive protein or CRP. Selenium has been seen to reduce CRP levels significantly. But there are other mechanisms at play. Selenium supports well over 30 different selenium-dependent enzymes called selenoproteins. Two of them, selenoprotein S and selenoprotein K, have a role in dialing down inflammatory signaling pathways and that could very well be relevant for different types of IBD.



## The role of zinc

Zinc also plays a vital role. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that zinc deficiency increases the number of pro-inflammatory cells and promotes intestinal leakage of certain inflammatory cytokines (white blood cells) that are known to worsen inflammation in the intestinal area.

It is therefore essential for people with bowel inflammation to make sure to get sufficient quantities of selenium and zinc, as this helps control their symptoms.

The problem is that irritable bowel diseases negatively affect the absorption of micronutrients from food, as the inflammation has a harmful impact on the intestinal mucosa.

Therefore, IBD sufferers have difficulty with getting the much-needed nutrients into the bloodstream, simply because the mechanisms that allow micronutrients to pass through the intestinal membrane are flawed.

Supplementation with selenium and zinc appears to be a rather obvious solution, as this is an easy way to access therapeutic doses of both nutrients.

## A role in cancer protection?

Besides a proven protective role in inflammatory bowel disorders, selenium and zinc have been shown to have a prophylactic effect on colorectal adenomas, which are

benign tumor growths that can potentially develop into bowel cancer if left untreated. In a randomised controlled Italian study<sup>4</sup> that was published in the *Journal of Gastroenterology* in 2013, supplementation with selenium and zinc plus vitamins A, B6, C, and E was shown to significantly reduce recurrence of adenomas in the large bowel in patients who had undergone surgical removal of adenomas prior to supplementation. The five-year intervention period where participants were randomly assigned to either active supplementation or placebo turned out to reduce by approximately 50 percent the risk of adenoma recurrence. ■

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## BJØRN FALCK MADSEN

is a freelance journalist and a health and medical writer with a particular interest in the fascinating world of micronutrients and their impact on human health and quality of life. For a considerable number of years, Bjørn has written articles about diet, nutritional supplements, and disease prevention for magazines and websites in a number of European countries.

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JOURNEYS:

# Radhia Gleis

*My concepts of God and spirituality were in fact confused at best, in some cases downright fallacious.*

**Radhia Gleis** talks about her journey from cult member to Wellness Director...

I grew up in Los Angeles CA, (Brentwood). My parents were part of what I would call the entrepreneur class. Although we were not super-rich, we hung out with lots of the super-rich. My brother Nick and I went to private schools. I was presented as a debutante. We were members of several country clubs, attended polo matches and parties.

I went to Catholic school. One day, in our comparative religions class, I came across a word in italics: Nirvana! I asked what this word meant. My teacher explained, "Some yogis in India, through a certain practice of meditation, experience God directly. From that day on I went searching for Nirvana. After many years, I finally found someone who could teach me those meditation techniques. Unfortunately, it also took me into the orbit of a narcissistic sociopath cult leader.

It's tempting to judge cult followers as weak-minded and gullible. It has nothing to do with how smart or educated you are; it's about human nature. The more empathetic and sincere a person you are, the more likely you are to be conned by a narcissist. Why? Honest, trusting people find it hard to believe anyone else can be so deceitful—so self-centred.

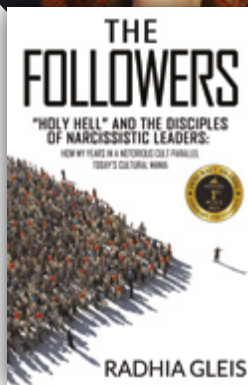
Narcissistic sociopaths have one goal, and that is to serve themselves and their insatiable appetite for

self-aggrandisement, by whatever means possible. They are chameleons, they figure out what you want or fear; then they become whatever you need them to be—until they have you firmly in their web. The leader makes you feel safe and insulated from the dangerous world, which is usually an illusion he creates through lies and propaganda. Cult members truly feel righteous in their convictions and belief. They often look upon the "others" as ignorant of the "real truth" and perhaps even dangerous to them, the country, or to the world as a whole, thus the followers feel special, exceptional, creating an "us and them" scenario. Everyone else is painted as a threat.

Besides my work as the Wellness Director for a compounding pharmacy and as a Board Certified Clinical Nutritionist and biochemical analyst, I'm working on another book entitled *Harder to Fall*, about the addiction to power and money.

If there's one thing that life has taught me and I'd want to pass on, it's To thine own self be true. From my personal experience, living a lie is a frightening prospect. We want to feel safe, so we go along to belong. In time we must bury our doubts, our questions, our imagination, and our individuality. We let the status quo dictate what is real, what is right—who is right and who is wrong. And to shore up our righteousness and avoid being exposed, those whom our tribe teaches us are wrong can become the enemy—the target to avoid or even eliminate.

My concepts of God and spirituality were in fact confused at best, in some cases downright fallacious. The last vestiges of an immature society that needs a paternal intermediary between you and your God-self is false. The notion that we must strive to be someone greater than ourselves, more holy, more illumined, more perfect is erroneous thinking. ■



For more information, please visit

[www.radhiagleis.com](http://www.radhiagleis.com). The

Followers: "Holy Hell" and the Disciples of Narcissistic Leaders: How My Years in a Notorious Cult Parallel Today's Cultural Mania is available from book sellers or online retailers.



# Easy Ways to **IMPROVE** GUT HEALTH

*Jordi Mascio of Goldman Laboratories shares his top five supplements to improve gut health...*

**G**UT health is determined by the balance of microorganisms present in the gastrointestinal tract. It's now recognised that maintaining a healthy gut is not only vital for overall physical wellbeing but also mental health, immunity, and much more.

Many aspects of today's modern life, such as too little sleep, high-stress levels, consumption of high-sugar and processed foods, and intake of antibiotics, can adversely impact normal gut flora. An unbalanced gut microbiome can affect brain, heart, weight, skin, and hormone levels in the body.

This article highlights five significant

ways to naturally help to improve the gut microbiome and enhance overall health.

## **Glutathione**

Glutathione, which has been called the "mother of all antioxidants," plays a key role in maintaining the overall health of the gastrointestinal tract. It helps to eliminate toxins, free radicals, and heavy metals. Glutathione is the primary detoxifying agent in the body. It plays a crucial role in enabling the nutrient metabolism, immune system and regulation of other essential cellular reactions. It is a very minute-sized protein that is synthesised in the cells. The deficiency of glutathione can lead to the development of oxidative stress.

The fundamental role of glutathione is to protect cells from oxidative stress. The mucosal cells of the gastrointestinal tract contain an abundant quantity of glutathione.

The gut lining is considered one of the most crucial barriers present in the body. It is an integral component of the defense system that protects the body from the induction of dangerous and unwanted particles. When the gut lining is compromised, there is a high risk of developing leaky gut and other numerous gut disorders. Glutathione supports the natural process of healing in the body and assists in the renewal of gut lining cells.

Normally glutathione is recycled in the body. But when this mechanism is insufficient, the glutathione levels can fall drastically. This increases the risk of developing numerous gut diseases. Hence, glutathione recycling is an important process to maintain a healthy gut.

### Vitamin C

A clinical study found that vitamin C plays a key role in improving gut barrier function. This is crucial for absorbing nutrients and protecting the body from certain toxins.

Other than enhancing the gut barrier, vitamin C is also considered to help balance the gut microbiome. Studies have shown that vitamin C had the most significant effect on gastrointestinal health when compared to vitamins D and B. It helps in enhancing microbial diversity - a pivotal factor in maintaining a healthy gut.

Like glutathione, vitamin C is also a very potent antioxidant. It enables the body's natural defenses and helps to combat infectious gut diseases.

Clinical studies indicate that consumption of vitamin C can enhance the blood antioxidant levels by up to 30%.

### Vitamin D

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin that plays a very important role in maintaining the gut microbiome. Lack of adequate vitamin D in the body can substantially increase the risk of developing Crohn's disease. Vitamin D is also considered to play an important role in lowering the risk of colon cancer and ultimately extending the life of colon cancer patients.

Colon cancer is now the third most common cancer. It is also the second-highest cause of cancerous death for both women and men.

For more than two decades, clinical studies have shown that vitamin D offers protection

against colon cancer. Now it is also found that colon cancer patients with high levels of vitamin D have a reduced risk of death compared to patients who are vitamin D deficient.

### Quercetin

Quercetin is an abundant flavonoid present in the food supply. It is found in kale, onions, and apples. Quercetin is well-known for its anti-cancer effects, anti-allergy properties, and as an antioxidant. Moreover, it is also a potent healing component for leaky gut.

Studies have shown that quercetin has the potential to enhance the gut barrier function. This is made possible due to its role in the expression and assembly of tight junction proteins. The intestinal permeability is regulated by the tight junctions connecting intestinal cells. This ensures that only essential nutrients are allowed inside the body while keeping everything else out.

### Curcumin

The gut microbiome is now believed to impact numerous aspects of the gastrointestinal and overall health. Studies indicate that curcumin possesses great potential to have a positive influence on gastrointestinal (GI) health and function.

Increasing scientific evidence from numerous preclinical and clinical studies indicates that curcumin is a natural agent with positive influences on GI health and function.

*By adopting appropriate dietary and lifestyle changes, one can naturally alter the diversity of the microbes in the gastrointestinal tract for the better.*



An Indian research study evaluated colitis (colon inflammation) and found that curcumin offers great beneficial effects by mediating the inflammatory processes. Hence, it is considered to be useful in the treatment of inflammatory bowel disease.

Turmeric itself is a very cooking popular ingredient. However, it also plays a very vital role in the digestion of food. With the help of its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant potential, turmeric can help maintain healthy digestion. However, people using anticoagulants or warfarin should not use curcumin as it can drastically amplify the effect of these medications.

### Bottom line

The human gut is a very complex system and has a huge influence on overall health and wellbeing. A properly functioning and healthy gut contributes to heart health, strong immune system, improved mood, brain health, healthy sleep, and effective digestion, and it may even help prevent some autoimmune diseases and cancers. By adopting appropriate dietary and lifestyle changes, one can naturally alter the diversity of the microbes in the gastrointestinal tract for the better. Simple lifestyle changes such as getting enough sleep and exercising regularly can significantly improve the gut health. Moreover, gut health can also be boosted through supplementation. ■



**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](http://www.goldmanlaboratories.com)



# TECHNIQUE: Spiral Stabilisation

*Jana Mitackova, Spiral Stabilisation's UK Director and teacher trainer introduces this gentle exercise therapy...*

**S**PIRAL Stabilisation is a revolutionary exercise method invented by a Czech expert in myoskeletal medicine, Dr Richard Smisek. He has worked closely with patients suffering from spine-related pain in the lower back, chest and neck regions and also with acute disc prolapses and scoliosis for over 40 years.

The method has been extremely popular in Europe for over 20 years, especially in Germany where treatments are provided through medical insurance. The number of Spiral Stabilisation trainers and practitioners using the method has also rapidly grown in Europe, due to Dr Smisek's continuous development of the method, coupled with his passion to educate and share his knowledge and experience around the world. There are thirty Spiral Stabilisation therapists in the UK with a valid certificate.

Spiral Stabilisation is highly effective,

curative and preventative. It is an extremely versatile method and it can therefore be used by anyone who wishes to improve their posture, treat back pain, prevent injuries, maintain good health and well-being or to improve sports conditioning.

Spiral Stabilisation effectively and permanently treats spinal disorders and disorders in the main joints. More specifically, it treats back, neck, shoulder and hip pain, chronic pain, sciatica, disc herniation, scoliosis, lordosis, kyphosis, headaches, migraines, flat feet, hallux valgus, back pain in pregnancy and other conditions. It is a non-invasive and non-surgical treatment that achieves lasting results, especially for clients with disc herniation and scoliosis.

The method is suitable for children, adults, the elderly and athletes. Simple exercises can be taught in person, on an individual basis, then comfortably performed at home or under

the supervision of a therapist in small classes. I worked through all lockdowns with my clients online and have been teaching online therapist courses and working with clients worldwide.

In each therapy the face-to-face aspect is very important so for clients who are able to do a session in person it is highly recommended.

Some of my clients who live further away did a few sessions face to face at the beginning of their programme and then we continued online. I recommend doing another session in person from time to time to check their exercise technique to benefit more from our method.

### How it works

Spiral Stabilisation is based on an understanding of how muscle connections - which we call muscle chains, work. We divide these into two groups - vertical and spiral muscle chains.

The body was originally designed to use the spiral muscle chains to spirally stabilise the body during movement such as walking and running. Only in this way can the body maintain a pattern of completely natural human movement whilst regenerating the spine and the body.

The shape and function of the spine are



standing and kneeling positions as required.

Initially, we perform the exercises on two feet, then continue on one foot to develop a sense of balance and increase the effect of spiral stabilisation, strengthening the abdominal muscles and glutes and supporting the arch of the foot. We then progress to intermediate and advanced exercises using the Spiral Stabilisation balance mat.

We can also use manual therapy techniques such as soft tissue massage, which releases tensed muscles, manual stretching, post-isometric relaxation, traction and mobilisation. This means that Spiral Stabilisation can be a great addition to a bodyworkers' skillset.

### What happens during a session?

The first consultation lasts 60 minutes, including a health questionnaire

eliminate bad exercise habits. Clients who are only able to attend a limited number of sessions can follow online exercise videos which will help them to progress with the exercises.

The follow-up session lasts 45-60 minutes, depending on a client's individual requirements. It involves checking and correcting the exercise technique, assessing ability to set a pace at which to progress through the exercise programme and introduce a wider range of exercises. Treatment can include combination of Spiral Stabilisation exercises and manual therapy techniques depending on the client's specific needs.

As with every therapy, the price you can charge for a session depends on the area where you live. In London, I charge between £60 and £75, but this is more than a therapist in Brighton or Belfast might do. Many therapists incorporate Spiral Stabilisation within their therapy so I would recommend sticking with their normal hourly rate. Having said that, being able to offer a new skill/therapy for their clients and getting results, means they could charge more.

I work with clients on an individual basis and run regular online group sessions which proved to be very successful during lockdown. Spiral Stabilisation can also be performed in small or large groups as exercise to music.

### Where to train

Spiral Stabilisation UK offers a range a two part foundation course as well as a course for offering the modality online, regular workshops and CPD refresher courses. From 2-5th June, the founder of Spiral Stabilisation, Dr. Smisek, will be delivering a four day course on Muscle Chains covering their anatomy, function, training and their application within treatment, prevention and sport. This carries 20 CPD points, accredited by the CHP.

To ensure continuous learning our CPD certificate is valid for 2 years and can be renewed by attending a workshop, refresher sessions or a course. ■



For further information please email [newmindfullife.info@](mailto:newmindfullife.info@spiralstabilization.co.uk)

[spiralstabilization.co.uk](http://spiralstabilization.co.uk) or visit the website at [www.spiralstabilization.co.uk](http://www.spiralstabilization.co.uk)

affected by the movement of the arm and shoulder. It is the backward movement of the arm and the shoulder (also the shoulder blade) that initiates the contraction and activity of the spiral chains – mainly the muscles between the shoulder blades (latissimus and trapezius muscles) and the external and internal oblique abdominal muscles and glutes.

Unfortunately, technology and inactive sedentary lifestyles often result in muscle tightness or shortening in the vertical muscle chains – mainly paravertebral muscles along the spine and hip flexors. This tightness causes flexion/bending in the joints and incorrect posture. In addition, muscle weakness causes muscle imbalances in the body that result in spinal and joint compression which, in turn, causes back pain.

Spiral Stabilisation exercises eliminate those muscle imbalances. The exercises are performed with an elastic cord. The cord allows for extensive movement against a low, but gradually increasing, resistance that will activate the muscle chains. Each client's programme is tailored to their abilities and health conditions and can be performed in sitting,

covering the client's medical history and current health conditions, along with an explanation of the Spiral Stabilisation method and its benefits, a posture assessment and an exercise session.

If the client allows, we take images of their posture before the exercise session, for future reference and comparison. The client is taken through a series of personalised basic exercises in order to correctly learn the exercise technique. They are then supplied with a full training programme which will include a video of exercises to practice at home in preparation for the follow-up session.

In general, clients should practice once or twice a day for 10-15 minutes using the elastic cord at home. They also come in for a supervised session once a week or every second week to help them learn the exercise technique correctly and to





# MARKETING TO MEN

*Before the pandemic, men overtook women to be the largest consumers of massage and spa services in the USA. It's a trend that the UK seems to be following, but many holistic therapists are failing to take advantage of a growing market segment...*

**T**HERE are, of course, many reasons why you may feel reluctant to work with male clients. Principal amongst these is the requirement to deal with requests for services that you don't offer, such as happy endings. The dangers of sexual assault or detailing with the embarrassment of a visibly aroused client also mean that many female bodyworkers opt for a female customer base. Fortunately, many of the risks

can be reduced or designed out of your practice by making it clear on your website and during the booking process that professional holistic therapists do not offer such add-ons and by taking reasonable safety precautions before working with new clients.

### **The trends in the USA**

It's often the case that the US market is ahead of the UK ones in terms of health and wellbeing trends. In 2021, the American Association of Massage Therapists (AMTA) noted that men were more likely to get a massage than women. 25% of men and 21% of women had a massage in 2021.



Clients with children were more likely to have a massage than the childless. This is probably related to younger people remaining in the parental home for longer, delaying starting families and having less money to spend on relative luxuries like massage, rather than the need to destress when you have children. 17% of those without children had a massage, compared to 36% who had children.

36% of those earning over \$100,000 had a massage, compared to only 19% of those on \$50,000 or less. Because of historical pay gaps, those with higher salaries are more likely to be male, while women make up the majority of those in the lowest income groups. In terms of location, 46% of female clients and 23% of males booked their massage at a spa, while 34% visited a massage therapist's practice room, 24% used one of the US massage franchises and just 7% used a mobile massage service which came to their home or that of someone they know.

### Masculine motivations

One of the most interesting trends concerns the different reasons why men and women have massages. 75% of men and 71% of women did so for health and wellness reasons. Women were marginally more likely than men (28% vs. 25%) to cite pain as the reason for choosing a massage treatment and, at 63% men were more often likely to have chosen massage treatment after a discussion with their doctor or healthcare provider. In the US, half of massage therapists noted that they received at least one referral call from a doctor every six months. It would, therefore, be useful to reach out to local NHS medical centres, GPs and associated healthcare providers to make them aware of the help you can offer.

While we often associate massage with pampering treatments, just 16% of US clients gave this as their primary reason for booking a massage treatment. That said, treatments which incorporate relaxation or a little luxury are often appreciated, but pampering may be more effective if it is disguised or kept private. While women may adore the use of aromatherapy or exotic oils, men may prefer unscented products as this keeps treatment firmly in the psychological domain of medical treatment, rather than beauty services.

Men are often focussed on finding a solution to a particular health issue, so a results-based approach can work well compared to a generic massage treatment. Similarly, a set number of

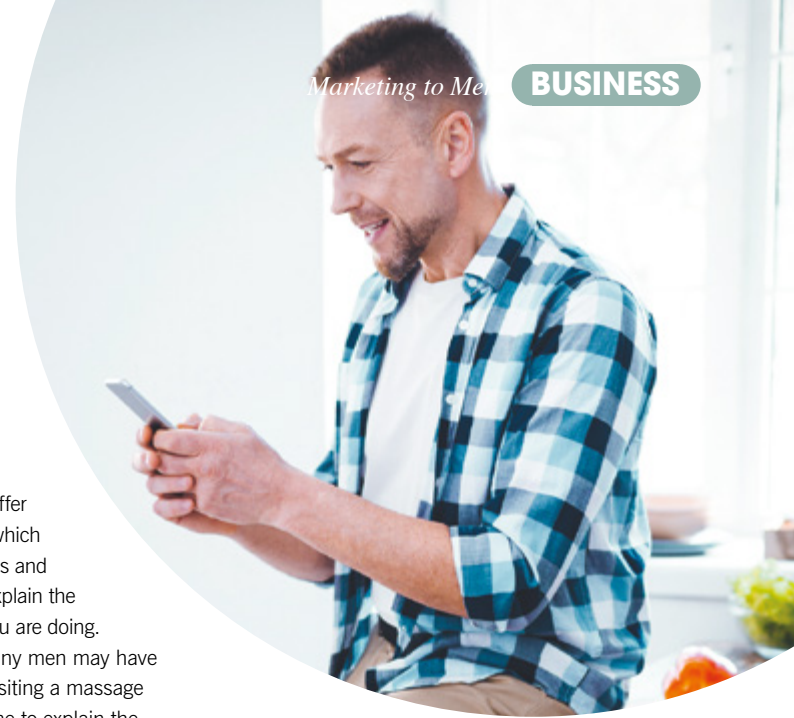
sessions designed to achieve specific, measurable improvements followed by a progress review, rather than an open ended approach with fuzzy goals such as, feeling a bit better." Focus on the improvements you can offer and set specific targets which include at-home exercises and aftercare. Take time to explain the rationale behind what you are doing.

Keep in mind that many men may have no prior experience of visiting a massage therapist, so take the time to explain the process well. The last thing you need is to be confronted with a naked client because he isn't aware that shiatsu clients normally remain clothed. Don't assume that your client will be familiar with the social conventions involved or that they understand the differences between one form of massage and another. Similarly, men may be less likely to admit that the degree of pressure being applied is painful, so reading the client's body language and communicating the importance of letting you know if you need to apply more pressure or ease off is important if you are to gain a repeat client.

*Keep in mind that many men may have no prior experience of visiting a massage therapist, so take the time to explain the process well.*

Men often wait for longer than women to seek holistic treatment. One recent survey of patients with arthritis showed that 27% of men had never tried any form of CAM treatment compared with just 11% of female patients. The figures of those men with no experience of CAM was even higher when the patient was of Hispanic or a Latino background. Overall, this means that men may require more treatment sessions over a longer period of time, because they have delayed seeking treatment until it has become a major issue.

While a significant percentage of female clients will disclose all manner of information



about their private lives right from the outset, it can take longer for many men to open up about their health issues. A carefully structured intake form, careful listening and a few intuitive probing questions can help you understand what your client needs from you, even though they may have difficulties expressing this himself. Even the words men and women use to describe the same health and wellbeing issues differ. Where women are diagnosed as suffering depression, men may be signed off as having stress, for example. There is still some stigma around admitting physical pain and mental illness for men.

### Finding male clients

The US survey also suggested that 85% of male clients found their way to their massage therapists through personal referrals from other clients, yet this way of generating new business is often overlooked by many holistic therapists, with under 40% of us actively asking our clients to pass details of our services on to those who might benefit from them. Word of mouth may be even more effective in recruiting male clients as often they don't have the social media network and structures that many women have access to.

Men are less likely to use Facebook or Pinterest than women, but LinkedIn can be a useful platform to target this customer segment. Think in terms of thought leadership pieces and practical advice. For example, if your clients are continuing to work from home, provide advice on good posture while sitting at their desks, or a piece on hand strain injuries, such as RSI.

It is also good practice to ask your male clients to provide testimonials you can use of your website and social media posts.

Online ad campaigns that specifically target men, or local community events such as charity walks, 5K runs and cycle rides can also be a useful source of clients. Consider advertising in gyms, tennis clubs and other sporting activity venues, from leisure centres and five-a-side football pitches to golf clubs.

Make sure your website appeals to men as well as women. For example, the use of some stock photography that includes men, or the avoidance of anything overly pink or floral may make your services more accessible. 80% of clients will search online for a local holistic therapist before making an appointment, while 76% will use social media. It's fair to say that many men find fluffy content such as inspirational quotes rather off-putting.

Think about where you find your clients currently. The US figures suggest that 56% of clients find their way to their massage therapist via internet searches or their website, so spending time making sure your website performs well in terms of SEO makes sense. Also make sure that your content specifically references services for men and shows suitable images. You may also like to consider

registering your practice with online directories of holistic therapists and making sure your listing with membership bodies is up to date.

### Keeping safe

It's sad that we have to think about personal safety, but this must be kept at the forefront of your mind when dealing with any client. The vast majority of holistic therapists are sole practitioners. Around a third work from home or work in practice rooms where they are the only person present apart from the client. This can make us feel vulnerable.

The first thing to say is learn to trust your instincts. If you don't feel at ease with a client, whether male or female, then you should find a way of discontinuing your work with them. If you feel endangered, take immediate action to leave the room and contact someone to come to your assistance. Yes, you may be misinterpreting the situation, but we often sense things that we can't quite put into words and it is better to lose a client than feel threatened, uncomfortable or placed in a traumatic situation.

Always check that you have a clear exit path, make arrangement to have a colleague or friend provide assistance and a system where you check in by phone or text before and after

each client visit. This is particularly advisable if you visit clients in their own homes or offices or if you work from home.

### Treatment preferences

Where a new client's doctor has suggested that they seek massage therapy as a therapeutic option the commonest reasons for this are the existence of pain, or the need for pain relief (57%), as a rehabilitation treatment or as a means of recovery from injury (36%) and because of soreness, stiffness or muscular aches, pains or spasms (47%).

Research shows that most men prefer a straightforward treatment approach, without a lot of distractions such as scented candles and feminine décor. For this reason, therapists who work in a clinic or sports-related environment may find it easier to attract male clients than those with practice rooms in a glittery beauty salon.

*Research shows that most men prefer a straightforward treatment approach, without a lot of distractions such as scented candles and feminine décor.*

Once a male client is comfortable with the benefits of massage, it may be possible to cross-sell other treatments, such as Indian head massages or reflexology. Increasingly men are becoming more willing to experiment, particularly expressing an interest in acupuncture, mind/body treatments and relaxation treatments to help them de-stress.

Again, it makes sense not to assume prior knowledge on behalf of your client. Make sure your website and social media feeds explain the differences from one treatment and the next and how to choose the correct option.

Male clients represent a considerable opportunity provided that time is spent on understanding the needs of this demographic, education and communicating the benefits that treatment can offer. ■



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# LOOKING AFTER YOUR HANDS

*They say a bad workman always blames his tools. For many holistic therapists, our hands are our tools and failure to take good care of them can result in career-ending injuries. We look at some of the most common problems....*

**W**HILE some forms of bodywork involve other parts of the body, such as forearms and elbows in Shiatsu, and most bodyworkers use their hands and fingers to apply pressure to their clients' bodies. A great deal of movement and force goes through what are comparatively complicated and delicate constructions. The human hand contains 27 bones including the phalanges of the fingers, metacarpals and the eight bones which make up the carpus at the wrist. Add in the tendons, ligaments, many of which pass through the carpal tunnel and a host of nerve endings which make our fingertips so sensitive, and the range of movement our wrists, hands and fingers are capable of and it's clear why a lot can go wrong.

While we use our hands while treating clients, it's fair to say that we also spend more time on our computers and keyboards and increasingly spend our leisure time using our phones, tablets or gaming. Where previously they might have been rested in the evening while watching TV, now scrolling through a phone, shopping online or reading on a kindle all add to the wear and tear our hands experience.

Up to date statistics are hard to come by as musculoskeletal injuries are generally bundled together. According to a TUC report 1 in 50 (half a million) of all workers in the UK have reported an RSI condition and six people a day have to give up their jobs because of the impact the condition has on their work. If hand strain, joint pains or RSI are impacting your ability to work, then it makes sense to start with reviewing the ergonomics of your workspace and the way you physically interact with clients.

Using a massage tool can be a career saver. It's probably best to buy a few different tools and find which is most effective for your clients and most comfortable for you. Massage guns are becoming increasingly popular and there are many ergonomically shaped wooden and plastic tools to choose from. Similarly, there are keyboards designed to minimise the occurrence of RSI as well as ergonomic computer mice, wrist rests and similar tools which could make your work day easier. Leaving extra time between clients or leaning techniques that don't involve the hands can also mean you can keep working. There are a number of UK course providers. You may want to check that any training you undertake is acceptable to both your membership body and insurer.

### Overuse and misuse

Broadly speaking, the problems that bodyworkers experience stem from either the overuse or misuse of the hand and wrist.

### Tenosynovitis

Tenosynovitis is an inflammatory condition that affects the sheath (synovium) that surrounds the tendons. While it generally results from repetitive motion, it can also be the result of a bacterial infection through a cut or wound.

There are variations of tenosynovitis such as De Quervain's tenosynovitis which affects the thumb and stenosing tenosynovitis (sometimes called Trigger Finger) which usually affects either the middle finger, fourth finger or the thumb. Symptoms are synonymous across the different types of tenosynovitis in that the sufferer will usually feel pain, stiffness, aching, swelling and a dysfunction of the area which includes the

inability to straighten the affected area or a loss of grip or strength.

Treatment options include anti-inflammatory pain killers, rest, ice, shockwave therapy and injections of autologous blood taken from elsewhere in the body and injected into the tendons. This is an experimental treatment.

Tenosynovitis is more common amongst the middle aged and affects women more often than men. The tendons are often slow to recover, which can mean time off and clients switching to another therapist, so self-care is essential.

### Saddle Joint injury

One of the commonest problems that body workers experience is pain and swelling in the thumb. It's not surprising as so many massage therapists think of the thumb as their primary tool for applying pressure or working to unknot areas of held tension. The muscles which stabilise the thumb can mislead us into assuming that they are stronger than they really are. Generally, the carpometacarpal joint is the focus of the pressures on the thumb when we use this in massage. This is the saddle joint at the radial end of the carpal bones. It allows the thumb to be opposable. When pressure is put on the thumb tip, the thumb base muscles contract, stabilising the joint by pulling the metacarpal bone down into the CMC joints, creating 10-12 times the amount of pressure experienced at the thumb tip in this joint. It's not unknown for a therapist dealing with a trigger point to apply 10 pounds of thumb pressure to the client's skin, resulting in 100-120 pressure on the base of their own thumb.

This can easily lead to a saddle joint injury. The saddle shape of the joint allows the thumb a great deal of rotation. Saddle Joint Injury can manifest as a dull ache or a throbbing pain. When a therapist uses a gliding motion, but leaves the thumb out to the side and pulls back away from the rest of the hand, puts a the joint under excessive strain. Working mindfully and monitoring the position of the hands can help prevent this happening. If an injury occurs, anti-inflammatories and rest are the best options for recovery, but such injuries can reoccur if technique is at fault.

Another common type of misuse is

massaging with a bent wrist. While this can be tempting where minor discomfort is being experienced, it stretches the muscles and tendons, creating alignment issues which exacerbate existing problems. This is why ongoing training and monitoring your own movements is so important. It's easy to fall into bad habits or take shortcuts, but these can often be damaging in the long run.

The type of massage or bodywork performed can influence the probability of developing a hand or wrist problem. Those who specialise in treating trigger points, deep disuse massage or neuromuscular massage all use more forceful movements and this, combined with inattention to correct alignment and posture increase the risk of injury.

### Self-care

Fortunately, there are a few simple self-care preventative techniques that can be used to lessen the chances of developing hand or wrist issues.

- Using the correct alignment and considered movements when working with clients should be at the forefront of your mind during an appointment.
- Before your first session of the day, make time for some stretches. Rotate your wrists and open and close your hands for a minute or two, then stretch warmed-up tissues.
- Use tools that make your life easier. This might mean using an electric table to position and move clients without straining yourself, or exploring the use of massage guns and hand tools.
- If possible, space out your treatment sessions or limit the number of higher risk treatments each day.
- Ice, heat and paraffin hand baths can all provide some relief.

Your hands are one of your most important tools, so take good care of them. ■

# OOOHHH! THAT'S NEW!

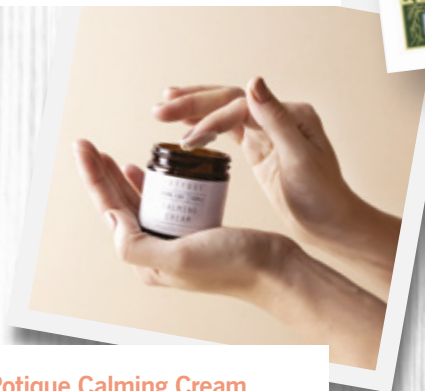
*Our pick of the latest products to make your life a little brighter*

## ► Earthsong Seeds

Earthsong Seeds is the latest venture from Sebastian Pole, herbalist and co-founder of Pukka Herbs and ethnobotanist and head seedsman Ben Heron. The pair have put together six seed collections to create a home apothecary. Choose from collections for happiness, soothing digestion, scent, breathing, sweet dreams, massage, kitchen, tea or first aid.

All of Earthsong Seeds' herbs are grown using organic practices, and they are currently undergoing certification with the Soil Association. Find out more at

[www.earthsongseeds.co.uk](http://www.earthsongseeds.co.uk)



## ▲ Potyque Calming Cream

British company, Potyque, has launched a Calming Cream packed with full spectrum CBD which provides a soothing response to topical irritation. The ingredients include cocoa butter, limonene, Alpha-pinene and Beta-caryophyllene, a common terpene found in hemp but also in black pepper and cinnamon which acts as a very potent anti-inflammatory. The Calming Cream is paraben and SLS free, certified vegan, and not tested on animals. Calming Cream is priced at £56 for a 50ml jar and must not be used on broken skin. Order online at

[www.potyque.com](http://www.potyque.com)



## ◀ Liforme Year of the Tiger Yoga Mat

Liforme has launched a special edition of its popular yoga mat. 5% of the sales of its Year of the Tiger mat are going towards the WWF, which aims to double the world's wild tiger population by the end of the year.

The striking mat's tiger stripes double as Liforme's signature, intuitive and physiology based alignment design, which assist solo practice by working as a navigational tool to help ensure you're the correct form during asanas.

Liforme is known for its eco-friendly, best-in-class mats, featuring GripForMe technology, high quality, non-toxic and planet-friendly materials. There's a patented waterproof barrier layer which prevents any moisture from making its way through the top surface and into the rubber base - making it much more hygienic and easier to clean.



## ► Sakrid Naturally Nourishing Organic Body Wash

At £15 for a generous 300ml tube, this is a great multi-tasker, combining practicality with great organic credentials. The invigorating citrus and mint scent will kick-start your mornings if you use it in the shower, but it also works well as a relaxing bubble bath and the formula includes lots of plant extracts and essential oils offer natural anti-bacterial and skin-soothing qualities. The ingredients list includes aloe, licorice root, vetiver, neroli and pomegranate seed oil. Unlike many body wash and bath products, there are no preservatives or harsh ingredients. Sakrid products are available at

[www.sakrid.com](http://www.sakrid.com)



## ◀ Zephorium Vitamin A Holistic Deep Cleanser

This cleanser is blended with wild carrot oil and orange oil and infused with carnelian crystal energy. It comes in a cheerful orange recyclable bottle and packs a high dose of Vitamin A to give a healthy, glowing skin. It's natural, organic and cruelty free and great for all skin types including scar tissue and aging skin. It does contain a little beeswax, so it's not 100% vegan. Zephorium say it's tuned into the sacral chakra with homeopathic carnelian crystal in 3 frequencies, which brings joy, motivation and creativity. £24 from

[www.Zephorium.com](http://www.Zephorium.com)





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# WINTER WELLBEING

*Donna Booth urges us to take comfort in the colder weather...*

**H**OW do you feel about winter? Do you shut yourself away and pray for sunshine and lighter nights or do you wrap up warm and embrace the chill? If you lean towards the second option, you have a head start on winter wellbeing.

At this time of year, it can feel as though we get up in the dark, go home in the dark and very rarely see even the slightest glimpse of daylight in between. This can be a disaster for your mood and your Vitamin D levels will be very quickly depleted. Taking even a few minutes a day outside with as much skin as possible bared to the elements will help you soak in every drop of natural Vitamin D. The exposure to natural light will keep your circadian rhythm ticking over, helping to avoid

that draining tiredness that can be a feature of the colder months.

Billy Connolly once said, 'There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes.' In my home county of Caithness, we are lucky to get four hours of daylight in a winter's day. A warm coat, hat and gloves are you're ready for anything the elements can throw at you. A hat with a built-in light and nothing will hold you back! No matter how stressed you are, a walk in nature will always help, in any season.

*Billy Connolly once said, 'There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes.'*

We think of winter as being a grey time of the year, but once you venture out, with the intention of being mindful of colour, you will

find colour everywhere. A leafless tree with red branches, the jewels of berries scattered through bushes, the different shades of silver reflected in puddles. If you are lucky enough to catch a frosty morning, there is nothing more beautiful. Every single thing seems touched with magic... sparkling and fresh. Make an intention to be mindful of patterns during your frosty walk - the magic will really come alive, and so will you.

It is not just walking that can be enjoyed during the winter months. Wild swimming goes on through all the seasons. Making sure you're well prepared - not swimming alone and paying close attention to the sea state and the time you spend in the water is an absolute must. Come out of the water as soon as you feel a slight ache in your thumb. Have plenty of warm clothes to change into and a warm drink. Don't rush to jump into a hot shower. Give your body time to acclimatise. A hot shower will drive the cold surface blood into your core, making it much more difficult to warm up. If you can find a group of swimmers local to you, even better. The cold water is wonderful for inflammation, immunity, pain, depression, anxiety and even the menopause. The sensation will force you to be present with the experience - in nature, in the cold, with other 'brave' people, enjoying the most magical season of the year.

Whether it is mindful walking, wild swimming or the more traditional snowy sports like skiing, skating and snowboarding, embracing nature is one of the best ways to boost your winter wellbeing. ■



**DONNA BOOTH** 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 [www.vitality-retreat.com](http://www.vitality-retreat.com) or

[www.vitality-inner-sanctum.com](http://www.vitality-inner-sanctum.com)





# GREENING *your* workspace

Garden designer **Jack Wallington** shares how to create a greener environment in your practice room...

**R**ESearch in hospitals has proved that live plants reduce stress and anxiety among patients, leading to an improved and shortened recovery. If plants can do that for people recuperating from illness or surgery, they must improve our daily wellbeing in our homes and workplaces. They make sense in the practice room as plants reduce physiological stress, making us feel more comfortable, reminding us of nature and providing an interesting, calming distraction.



palm (*Beaucarnea recurvata*), which sit next to my desk at home now, many years later, bonsai'd through limited repotting. I've had plants growing on my desk in each job ever since and, now I work from home, the indoor jungle has grown.

I've found that not only do desk plants look more aesthetically pleasing and personal (especially in open-plan offices), but also they are essential to my wellbeing.

I enjoy this tiny, easy-to-care-for garden on my desk, bringing a little piece of nature indoors.

To grow houseplants on a desk, you will need to be fairly close to a window for sunlight. If your desk is in direct sun for most of the day you can easily grow cacti and succulents, which are perfectly suited to life indoors; houses and offices have dry climates most akin to arid deserts. Shadier desks can

grow tropical plants that come from dark forest floors. One desk plant is good, but I'd recommend growing a few, because you increase the chances of one of them doing something interesting at any given time of the year.

On my desk *Rebutia 'Apricot Ice'* grows in spring and

## Desk gardens

I spent fifteen years working in shared open-plan offices, and most of my week involved sitting at a small desk, staring at a computer screen and, quite often, a blank wall. For me, indoor plants played a crucial role in making those spaces bearable and even exciting – some days I'd rush to work to see if a new leaf had unfurled or if a flower had opened. At my first office job I remember ordering three succulents to grow on my desk, including a ponytail



flowers in summer, while *Lithops salicicola* grows new leaves in spring and flowers later in autumn.

## Meeting rooms

We spend a lot of time in meeting rooms, yet they can be empty, boring spaces that aren't at all conducive to collaboration and productive thought. Many are lucky to have windows. Occasionally a token palm will be added (*Chamaedorea elegans* is a good one), but I see meeting rooms as an opportunity to grow several large indoor plants together as a pot collection, exactly as plants in pots are arranged outside. With space for indoor trees and shrubs, carefully planned meeting rooms can house a sizable volume of greenery. In meeting rooms I've used *Strelitzia reginae*, the bird of paradise plant, with beautiful paddle leaves and striking orange flowers, and different species of large *Ficus* trees.

## Office gardens

Office gardens and outdoor spaces, such as balconies, rooftop terraces and courtyards, are more important for our wellbeing at work than we give them credit for. As populations migrate to cities, these outdoor areas may be one of our few chances to see nature and make connections with the outside world. Adding plants is obviously a good thing for those physically using the spaces, but they are often seen from office windows too, making them doubly important. ■



Jack's new book *A Greener Life* is published by and

available from your local bookshop or online retailers. Find out more at

[www.jackwallington.com](http://www.jackwallington.com)





# GOING GREENER

## *at home and work*

*Going greener is a complex balancing act, but one we will all have to get right for a sustainable future...*

**M**ANY holistic therapists already have smaller carbon footprints and higher levels of sustainability awareness than the UK average. An FHT survey conducted in 2019 showed that just over half their members already use sustainable and environmentally kinder products into their practices and lives.

We also recognise that the bulk of the problem lies not with individuals or small businesses, but with large multinational companies. Let's be clear, 20 global companies are directly or

indirectly the source of a third of the world's global carbon emissions. The list includes oil giants like Saudi Aramco, BP and Shell, as well as coal companies. 90% of this is because we all rely on these companies to provide us with fuel for our vehicles and heat for our homes. Just 100 companies were responsible for 71% of global greenhouse gas emissions since 1998 according to the Carbon Majors Database.

### **A complex issue**

Just because we, as individuals and an industry, do comparatively well, doesn't mean we don't need to consider the environmental impact we have and do more to reduce this. It's difficult, because the issue is complex and each action we take can have negative impacts on other areas of our lives. Take green energy suppliers, for example. It may be easy to advise switching to a supplier who offers 100% green energy, but often that energy is from carbon credit trading, rather than

renewable resources. Additional factors include the increased cost of green energy at a time when many holistic practices are trying to recover from enforced closures and the danger of energy companies collapsing. We are, for the most part, reliant on energy companies, particularly if our premises are rented.

Renewable energy sources such as solar panels, biomass boilers and ground or air source heat pumps often bring their own issues. Currently, a mid-sized house would need over a decade to recoup the £5000 or so outlay on solar panels and they are unlikely to fully meet household needs. Similarly, relatively few homes have space for a biomass boiler, which generally needs to be housed outside. Ground source heat pumps require either a bore hole several hundred metres deep or around an acre of horizontal piping while air source pumps are noisy and only make a home feel truly warm if combined with AC units and sealed window systems.



the world and eating healthily is rarely less expensive than eating junk food.

**CONSIDER YOUR TRAVEL** - Getting from A to B can often be complicated. Public transport can be slow and not take you to where you want to go, but petrol and diesel fumes cause air pollution and emit greenhouse gases. Similarly air travel involves a considerable carbon footprint and cruise liners discharge large amounts of waste into the oceans.

If you live further than a comfortable stroll to the shops or your practice room and your roads aren't too busy, then a bicycle may be quicker and cheaper than using the car, especially if you factor in congestion charges, low-emission zones and parking fees.



This then creates the potential for indoor air pollution as well as increased running costs resulting in higher electricity bills.

**What steps can we take to go greener?**

**DITCH PLASTIC, ESPECIALLY SINGLE USE PLASTICS**

- Again, this is not an easy step. Try looking for zero waste resources online, buy fewer processed and packaged foods, or look for packaging which is reusable or recyclable.

**MOVE TOWARDS PLANT-BASED EATING**

- The EAT-Lancet study suggested that shifting to plant-based diets—more than doubling consumption of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes, and reducing by more than 50 percent the consumption of less healthy foods like sugar and red meat—could prevent 11 million deaths per year. Additionally, because emissions from livestock agriculture are so high, changing our diets could have a significant impact in the fight to slow climate change. That said, the benefits are reduced if our plant based foods are highly processed or come from half-way around

Car clubs and electric vehicles can also be worth exploring, depending on individual circumstances.

**GIVE THINGS A SECOND LIFE** - Most of us accumulate stuff that we don't need or use, but that other people might want. Try posting on local social media groups and buy nothing groups if there's something you might otherwise send to landfill. Charity shops appreciate decent clothing, while clothing banks can save less desirable shoes and clothes. If there's something you need, then ask around or post your request on similar sites, or use Freegle or Freecycle.

**GO LOCAL** - Where possible, buy locally. This might mean ordering from an independent bookshop and waiting for a while, rather than getting a next-day parcel from Amazon. Sometimes we're so used to instant

gratification that we buy things that we might not have done if ordering involved more than a couple of clicks. Try to shop mindfully and in a planned way, supporting your local stores. Again, it may be more expensive, but these stores may well be helping keep the area around your practice viable as a location.

**EVERY LITTLE HELPS** - Not every change needs to be dramatic. For example, swapping out your practice room lightbulbs for compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) use around a quarter of the electricity of traditional bulbs and last ten times as long. However, they may be too harsh for the ambience you are trying to create, so LED bulbs and a dimmer switch could be a better option. Use brands that have good sustainable credentials and quality ingredients without sacrificing performance. There's a lot of greenwashing out there, so do your research carefully before settling on products for your practice room. As a bonus, customers are often looking for treatments with natural, vegan and certified organic products, so you'll be meeting an area of increasing demand.

**PLANT SOME TREES OR GROW SOME HOUSEPLANTS**

- If you have outdoor space, consider planting some native trees. One of the agreements to come out of COP26 was that of ending deforestation and planting more trees. Fruit trees are often a good choice for smaller gardens, with additional benefits.

Growing some of your own food can have health and wellbeing benefits, but don't expect it to be a bargain. If you have less space or want something for the practice room, consider giving room to a houseplant or two. Cacti and succulents are trendy and difficult to kill, as well as helping to remove indoor air pollutants like soot particles from scented candles.

No-one expects you to adopt all these practices. There are very few of us who can resist buying anything online, or who complete avoid the temptations of a new pair of boots, or a summer dress. We don't all only eat seasonal produce grown within a few miles of our homes, live off-grid or conserve our bathwater to use in our organic veg patch. Not everyone will be willing to take a cycling holidays in Wales rather than flaking out on a sun-lounger for a week's recuperation somewhere warm.

No-one expects perfection, but most of us can do a little better than we are at present. ■

# NEW FRONTIERS: RESEARCH ROUND UP

## THE LATEST SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OF INTEREST TO HOLISTIC THERAPISTS AND THEIR CLIENTS...

### PAIN: ANTHRAX TOXIN COULD BE A BLOCKER

A new mouse study from Harvard Medical School shows that proteins isolated from anthrax microbes target pain receptors, altering signalling and blocking the sensation of pain.

Injecting the toxin into the lower spines of mice produced potent pain-blocking effects, preventing the animals from sensing high-temperature and mechanical stimulations. Importantly, the animals' other vital signs such as heart rate, body temperature, and motor coordination were not affected suggesting that this technique was highly selective and precise in targeting pain fibres and blocking pain without widespread systemic effects.

The anthrax injections were also shown to combat inflammation and pain caused by nerve cell damage, often seen in the aftermath of traumatic injury and certain viral infections such as herpes zoster, or shingles, or as a complication of diabetes and cancer treatment.

Anthrax causes serious lung infections in humans and unsightly, albeit painless, skin lesions in livestock and people. It has been used as a bio-weapon and caused the death of a maker of traditional drums in London in 2009. *Ref: 10.1038/s41593-021-00973-8*

### EYE HEALTH: NEAR-SIGHTEDNESS ON THE RISE IN UK

Rates of myopia in the UK are increasing considerably according to a study of more than 100,000 adults whose details are held in the UK Biobank. Previous studies showed that myopia was affecting more

people and had an earlier onset than previous generations, as well as greater severity.

The participants were born between 1939 and 1970 and had an ophthalmic exam and provided sociodemographic data as well as information on their history of glasses and vision problems.

Overall, myopia frequency increased from 20.0% in the oldest cohort (born 1939-1944) to 29.2% in the youngest cohort (born 1965-1970). There was a greater increase in adult-onset myopia compared to childhood-onset myopia, and a greater increase in low myopia compared to high myopia. The measure of severity also increased over time.

The association between higher educational attainment and myopia increased over time, from an adjusted odds ratio of 2.7 in the

oldest cohort (95% CI 2.5-2.9) to an OR of 4.2 in the youngest cohort (95% CI 3.3-5.2) with the greatest increase seen for childhood-onset myopia (OR 3.3 (2.8-4.0) to 8.0 (4.2-13)). *Ref: 10.1371/journal.pone.0260993*

### MINERALS: MAGNESIUM IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE IMMUNE SYSTEM, INCLUDING IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

Over the decades, the amount of magnesium in our foodstuffs has decreased considerably, meaning that many more people suffer a sub-clinical level of magnesium deficiency without being aware of this. In the UK for example, there has been loss of magnesium in beef (-4 to -8%), bacon (-18%), chicken (-4%), cheddar cheese (-38%), parmesan cheese



(-70%), whole milk (-21%) and vegetables (-24%). Magnesium deficiency is associated with lowered immunity and the ability to combat infections such as flu.

Previous studies noted that the level of magnesium in the blood is an important factor in the immune system's ability to tackle pathogens and cancer cells. T cells need a sufficient quantity of magnesium in order to operate efficiently.

Researchers from Basel and Cambridge have now discovered that T cells can eliminate abnormal or infected cells efficiently only in a magnesium-rich environment. Specifically, magnesium is important for the function of a T cell surface protein called LFA-1, which acts as a docking site, which plays a key role in the activation of T cells. If magnesium is present in sufficient quantities in the vicinity of the T cells, it binds to LFA-1 and ensures that it remains in an extended, active position.

The team is now researching the best ways of increasing the concentration of magnesium in tumours in a targeted manner and planning prospective studies to test the clinical effect of magnesium as a catalyst for the immune system. *Ref: 10.1016/j.cell.2021.12.039*

### DYING WELL: FEW COUNTRIES OFFER A GOOD PLACE TO DIE

End of life care is an often-overlooked part of health and wellbeing. Previous advice from the NHS has noted that there are few mechanisms and almost no training in providing spiritual and psychological comfort to those facing death.

A new survey of end-of-life care ranked 81 countries on how well their health systems provide for the physical and mental wellbeing of patients at the end of life. Only six countries earned grades of A, while 36 earned Ds or Fs.

Specialist palliative care listed factors that included including proper management of pain and comfort, having a clean and safe space, being treated kindly, and treatments that address quality of life, rather than merely extending life as key factors.

The United Kingdom earned the highest ranking in the study, followed by Ireland, Taiwan, Australia, South Korea and Costa Rica, which all earned A grades. The United States earned a C, ranking 43rd of the 81 countries.

At the bottom of the rankings were 20 countries earning failing grades, many of which are low- or middle-income countries with fewer health resources than the top-rated countries.

The study stressed the importance of discussing death with friends and family and making a death management plan outlining preferences such as Do Not Resuscitate Orders or pain treatments. *Ref: 10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2021.12.015*

### MEDITATION: SHOWN TO HELP US MAKE FEWER MISTAKES

A new study from Michigan State University has revealed that meditation could help us to become less error prone. Open monitoring meditation, which focusses awareness on

feelings, thoughts or sensations as they unfold in one's mind and body, alters brain activity in a way that suggests increased error recognition. Co-author of the study, Jeff Lin, commented, "It's amazing to me that we were able to see how one session of a guided meditation can produce changes to brain activity in non-meditators."

"Some forms of meditation have you focus on a single object, commonly your breath, but open monitoring meditation is a bit different. It has you tune inward and pay attention to everything going on in your mind and body. The goal is to sit quietly and pay close attention to where the mind travels without getting too caught up in the scenery.

The participants, who had never meditated before, were taken through a 20-minute open monitoring meditation exercise while the researchers measured brain activity through electroencephalography, or EEG. Then, they completed a computerised distraction test.

Just 20 minutes of meditation can enhance the brain's ability to detect and pay attention to mistakes. It makes us feel more confident in what mindfulness meditation might really be capable of for performance and daily functioning right there in the moment. *Ref: 10.3390/brainsci9090226* ■





# THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

*Kat Maier shares the importance of being in harmony with the changing seasons...*

**I**NDIGENOUS seasonal celebrations have been vital touchstones of community life for millennia. Some herbalists have revived such traditions as a way to incorporate ceremony into their medicine harvest and their apothecary practices. Cultures all over the globe have celebrated their own walk through the year, following the seasons for planting, growth, and harvest, engaging organically with the environment. Their lives and daily activities are defined by cycles of life and death through the planting of seeds and harvesting of foods and medicines. Cycles of nature are the cosmology that defines a culture, whether that is island life in the Pacific, or hunting season in Alaska. No matter where we live on the Earth, there is still the turning of the wheel as it is influenced by forces larger than ourselves.

The Wheel of the Year is a calendar

of seasonal celebrations revived by neopaganism and contemporary Druids. We know the major celebrations of ancient Celts were called the four fire festivals and were of the greatest import. These include Samhain, which takes place on November 1, Imbolc on February 1, Bealtaine on May 1, and Lammass on August 1. To the ancients these dates marked the beginning of the seasons. Contemporary practices blend these with celebrations of the solstices and equinoxes. However, we also know that ancient Celtic peoples placed great importance on the quarter days, because we can see how the ancient sites at Newgrange and Stonehenge align perfectly with the rising and setting of the sun on winter solstice. In the revived Wheel of the Year, these quarter festivals include Yule/Midwinter, Ostara/Spring Equinox, Litha/Midsummer, and Mabon/Autumn Equinox.

Engaging in these seasonal rituals is a way to tap into very old energies and Earth wisdom, and in this time of ecosystem fragility, I believe that this is part of the calling for those who work with healing plants. It's also important, though, to develop your own ways of marking these celebrations in a respectful manner. As with Native American traditions, there is the risk of disrespecting Celtic and other wisdom traditions—of appropriating rather than honouring.

### Samhain

The Celtic year traditionally begins with Samhain (SOW-in) or Hallomas on November 1. This is the time when the veils between the worlds are the thinnest, which is why this time is chosen to pray for the departed in many cultures.

Ancestors are our connection to our past, and when we have had good relations or have a favoured ancestor, their presence can support and encourage us. To know that we are future ancestors allows us to cultivate wisdom and skills so that we too may serve generations to come. This celebration at this time of year serves to remind us to give thanks for those that have come before us.

We let go of what no longer serves, allowing us to prepare our soil for planting the seed of the winter's dreamtime. A ceremony at this time can be as simple as creating a beautiful space to display or to sit and contemplate photos or gifts bestowed to us from loved ones who have passed on.

### Yule/Midwinter/Winter Solstice

Winter solstice, which occurs between December 20 and 23, is the longest night of the year and heralds the return of the light. Winter is the time to rest and dive deep into the silence of the black and starry nights. The time to seed the dream and nourish our dreamtime visioning.

### Imbolc/Candlemas

Imbolc falls on February 1. Ancient Celts celebrated the beginning of spring, when the sap is rising. Imbolc was also known as Saint Brigid's Day. Brigid was originally part of the Celtic pantheon, being the daughter of the Dagda. At Imbolc, an sacred indoor fire honours Brigid's role as a goddess of hearth and fertility.

At this time, we rekindle our intentions, recollecting our dreams and nourishing them with remembrance and focus. In our apothecaries, the catalogues have arrived and the ordering of seeds has begun. The dreaming time continues.

### Ostara/Spring Equinox

Spring equinox is a time of perfect balance between light and dark. This occurs between March 20 and 23. It brings to mind the spring focus in Five Phase Theory on the element of Wood, the growth and maturation of life. Partaking of early spring tonics clears the stagnancy and dampness that may have accumulated over the winter months. Internally, we shine light on the dream seeds that were planted at the winter solstice, and outwardly we begin the gardens or projects for the year to come.

### Bealtaine/May Day

Bealtaine translates roughly as "bright fire." May 1 marks the beginning of summer. Traditionally, hearth fires were extinguished then relit from the communal Bealtaine fire. This way the community was connected through the sacred fire of this celebration. Bealtaine was a time of passion, courtship rituals, and fertility.

### Litha/Midsummer/Summer Solstice

On the longest day of the year, the sun stands still for a moment and the light is fully infusing the land. Midsummer, June 20 to 23, was a traditional time for weddings, as the work of planting had passed and the long warm nights invited the magic of a midsummer's eve. We can draw another connection to Chinese medicine here, with the element of Fire associated with the summer. This is the season we nourish the heart and support joy in our lives.

### Lughnasadh/Lammas

Traditionally, Celtic people regarded August 1 as the day of the first harvest festival. This is the time of year when baskets are brimming with late summer berries, gardens are full of a wide range of vegetables and herbs and flowers and grains grow heavy in the fields. This festival put the emphasis on games and matchmaking activities as the burdens of an agricultural life seemed a bit lighter once the harvest was in.

This period of summer is still a joyous and appropriate time to give thanks for the harvest.

### Mabon/Autumn Equinox

The autumnal equinox, around September 21, is when day and night are balanced. There's a last opportunity to make sure all that is needed for the winter has been gathered in. Many field medicines are ripe for harvest, and herbalists begin noting root plants we wish to harvest later on. This may also be a time to gather seeds and store them for next year's planting.

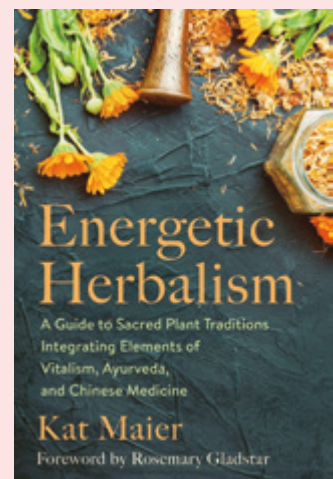
In Chinese medicine, autumn is the season to honour grief. All of nature seems to be slowly returning to the earth to begin the descent into winter.

Our lives are so enriched when we step beyond the walls of our homes and routines and realize there is a rich and meaningful world the plants are calling us to engage with. No matter the region one lives, there are subtle and not-so-subtle teachings and whisperings from the tides of the seasons. The seasons are the ebb and flow created by the movement of the stars, planets, and heavens above. Within us all are the stirrings of nature and the power of the transforming energies each season holds. ■



This excerpt is abridged from Kat Maier's new book

*Energetic Herbalism: A Guide to Sacred Plant Traditions Integrating Elements of Vitalism, Ayurveda, and Chinese Medicine* (Chelsea Green Publishing, January 2022) and is reprinted with permission from the publisher.





# Recipes from the MOON CYCLE COOKBOOK

*Devon Loftus and Jenna Radomski share some recipes from their new book which helps you eat in sync with your menstrual cycle...*



## ROSEMARY SAUSAGE QUICHE WITH APPLE CRUST **Serves 4-6** | 15 mins prep, 35mins cooking time.

*This quiche is a breeze. It uses thin apple slices as the crust, balancing the savory flavors from the rosemary and sausage. Bonus: Apples are a great source of pectin, a type of soluble fiber that slows digestion, which gives the gut more time to eliminate harmful toxins and excess hormones that may build up during the follicular phase.*

### Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons coconut oil, melted
- 1 Granny Smith apple, cored and quartered
- 1 teaspoon avocado oil
- ½ pound bulk breakfast sausage (sausage meat)
- ½ medium yellow onion, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
- 8 large eggs
- ¼ cup cream or almond milk
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

### Method -

- Preheat the oven to 180°C. Brush a 9-inch pie dish with 1 teaspoon of the coconut oil.
- Slice the apple quarters into 1/8-inch-thick slices. Form the crust by placing the apple slices along the outer edge of the dish, rounded side up, overlapping the edges slightly. Once you have encircled the dish, continue to spiral the slices toward the center until the dish is covered. Gently brush the apples

with the remaining 1 teaspoon coconut oil.

- Bake the apple crust for 10 minutes, then set aside.
- Meanwhile, heat the avocado oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the sausage and use a wooden spoon to break into crumbles. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the sausage has browned and is no longer pink, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in the onion and sauté, stirring occasionally, until the onion is fragrant and has softened, 4 to 5 minutes. Toss in the garlic and rosemary, and sauté for 30 seconds longer. Remove from the heat
- Whisk together the eggs, cream, salt, and black pepper in a medium mixing bowl until fluffy and uniform in color. Stir in the sausage mixture, then pour the filling into the pie dish with the apple crust.

- Bake for 22 to 25 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool for 10 minutes before slicing and serving. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days.

## CHILI-MANGO FRIED BROWN RICE BOWL WITH SESAME **20 mins prep, 25 mins baking time.**

*Cosy up with this big, nourishing sweet and savoury bowl. Mangoes boast high levels of vitamin A, magnesium, vitamin B6, and soluble fibre. The sesame seeds add magnesium, calcium, and protein.*





### Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups brown rice
- 3 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon avocado oil
- 2 medium mangoes, peeled and diced
- 1 medium red pepper, sliced
- 4 spring onions, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons liquid aminos or coconut aminos
- 1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
- 4 eggs
- ¼ cup sesame seeds

### Method -

● Combine the rice and broth in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 35 to 45 minutes, or until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed. Alternatively, combine the rice and broth in a rice cooker and cook according to the manufacturer's directions. Transfer the cooked rice to a large bowl and chill in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour or overnight.

● Heat the oil in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the mangoes, red pepper, and spring onions, and sauté until lightly browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the chilled rice, liquid aminos, and pepper flakes, and sauté for 5 minutes, mixing occasionally.

● Crack the eggs into a small bowl and whisk until uniform in color. Move the rice mixture to one side of the saucepan and gently pour the eggs into the other side. Cook, stirring frequently with a silicone spatula, until the eggs begin to come together, 3 to 4 minutes. Combine the eggs with the rice mixture and cook for 1 minute longer. Remove from the heat, stir in sesame seeds, and serve immediately.

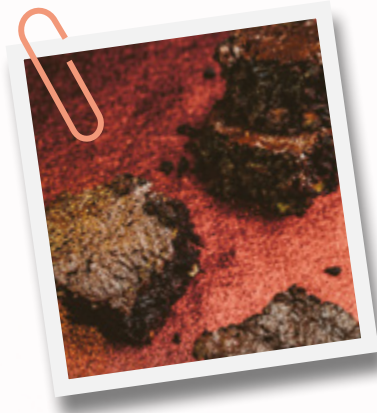
## HAZELNUT BROWNIES

**Serves 4-6 | 10 mins prep, 50 mins cooking time, 1 hour idle time.**

*This recipe is as decadent, moist, and gooey as it is nutritious.*

*These brownies contain boron and magnesium—two nutrients that help stave off troublesome period symptoms. Boron is found in*

*hazelnuts, and its anti-inflammatory properties can combat the severity and duration of menstrual pain. These are magical brownies for the menstrual phase. Dig in.*



### Ingredients

- 2/3 cup dark chocolate chips or chunks (70% cacao or higher)
- 5 tablespoons avocado oil or coconut oil
- 1/3 cup coconut sugar
- 1/3 cup pure maple syrup
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2/3 cup almond flour
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cacao powder or cocoa powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¾ cup chopped raw hazelnuts

### Method -

● Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line an 8-inch square baking pan with parchment paper or grease it with a bit of extra oil.

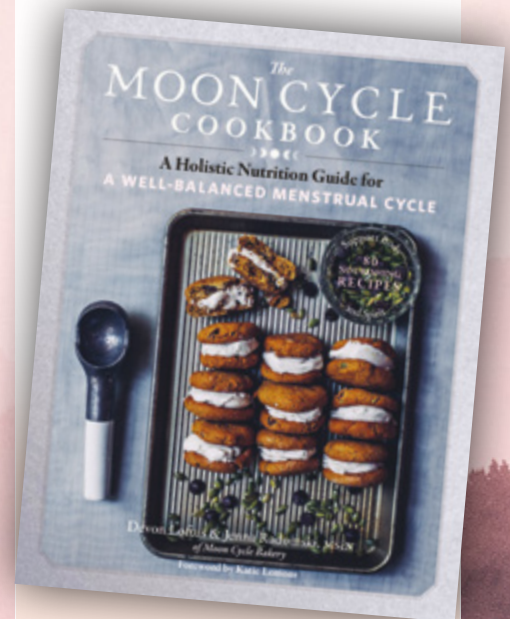
● Place the chocolate chips in a microwavable bowl. Melt the chocolate in a microwave at high power for about 1 minute, stopping to stir every 20 seconds, until smooth and shiny.

● Whisk together the oil, sugar, maple syrup, eggs, and vanilla in a small bowl until well combined. Pour in the melted chocolate and stir well.

● Whisk together the flour, cacao powder, baking soda, and salt in

a large bowl. Add the chocolate mixture and mix with a spatula until smooth. Gently fold in the hazelnuts.

● Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface. Bake for 22 to 25 minutes, or until the edges are set and the center is still ever-so-slightly underdone (the center will set as it cools). Let cool for at least 5 minutes before slicing and serving. Store leftovers in an airtight container at room temperature for 3 to 4 days.



**DEVON LOFTUS** is a writer, speaker and the founder of

*Moon Cycle Bakery* in New Jersey.

**JENNA RADOMSKI, MScN**, is a holistic nutritionist, recipe developer, and the voice behind Jenna Bee Basics, an online space for exploring the everyday elements of a nourished life. Photography by © Poppi Photography

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# EXERCISING YOUR CHI

*Chi Kung Master Lizzie Slowe introduces some Chi Kung techniques to aid in your practice...*

**A**S holistic practitioners we have much to offer. We're qualified in our field, our skills and knowledge are learnt and honed and embodied. There's a "but". In my experience, my best treatments

have always been when I paid attention to myself, been in my centre and connected to my source. How we carry ourselves energetically and our connection with whatever we know as the larger whole has a huge impact on every client we see as well as our ability to see clients.

Chi Kung was taught to me when I first trained in Shiatsu, as a way of maintaining my own health as a practitioner. It has seen me through 30 years of professional practice, as well as an awful lot of life experiences, both internal and external. A practice before and after seeing clients (either as a Shiatsu practitioner or an Equine Facilitated Therapist) helps me to come back to myself, to reconnect with my source (the Tao), and to release any sense of grasping at or attaching to outcomes.

One of the wonderful things about Chi Kung is that, although not necessarily easy, it is fairly simple, and the same form can be practised with one day of experience or 10 years, with equal benefits. We benefit in body, heart, mind and spirit with every practice and the experience deepens over time.

### The roots of Chi Kung

Chi Kung is rooted in Taoist philosophy. The Tao (or 'the way of all things') is the flow of Chi, of nature, of life, the universe and everything. If we pit ourselves against this force, we'll encounter unintended consequences and likely struggle. If we acknowledge the Tao and choose to flow downstream in harmony with nature, we'll experience less friction and more ease. This doesn't mean we can't be intentional and steer as we flow downstream, but we should avoid paddling against the current!

### How can Taoism help me?

Having a felt understanding of the Tao is vital, otherwise how do we know how to orientate ourselves? How do we know if we're paddling upstream, or simply guiding ourselves (and others) downstream, or if we've even just shipped our oars? With practice is the answer. You may already have a good feeling sense, but we're all human and we all have busy brains that like to take over!

Some of the practice of Chi Kung is letting go of micro-managing ourselves. We love attaching to outcomes, and we also love feeling that we have control over ourselves and our situation. I'm not saying we don't, however much of the time we can try a little too hard – trying to force health and happiness on our own schedule, instead of going with the timing of the Tao. This does require a little faith, which comes more easily with experience. We can experience the Tao through moving with it; we can also experience it through being still, and noticing.

### Standing practise

Zhan Zhuang is a powerful and very simple practise in Chi Kung. For all of its simplicity it can be demanding and endlessly fascinating. It basically requires you to stand still, in good posture. Initially it may be uncomfortable, but the more you practise, the more your body has the chance to re-align and recover. We simply get out of the way of the Tao, and allow Yin and Yang to move towards balance uninhibited.

Stand with your feet hip width apart, your feet parallel – as if on train tracks. Allow your knees and ankles to be soft, but not falling inwards. You can imagine Chi from the earth flowing up the inside front of your legs, and then continuing up through your pelvic floor and into the lowest part of your belly; effortless strength and lift. Imagine your sitting bones moving in towards each other, and your belly button pulling slightly towards your spine. This should allow you to let your sacrum / tailbone to hang towards the earth, lengthening your lower back. Your spine rises easily up through your body in its own gentle curves, and your head is balanced artfully on top of your spine, the crown of your head moving up towards the heavens. Your gaze is soft and ahead at eye level. Arms and ribcage relaxed, shoulder blades flowing down your back.

*Trusting what we experience in our Chi Kung practise comes over time.*

Allow your brain to relax inside your skull and take your balance and awareness down into your belly, to your Dan Tien – 3 finger widths below your belly button and in the centre of your body. Breathe easily.

There's a lot of information in setting up the stance but now... nothing. Just stand. This can be done for a minute, a few minutes or you can work up gradually to 15 or 20 minutes.

As you stand still, and stop making demands on your Chi, it starts to re-organise, allowing yin and yang to flow into a balance. In practical terms you re-centre in yourself and in the Tao.

### Simple moving and breathing

Stand in balance (as described above). Inhale and without engaging your shoulders let your

arms rise up to about chest height. Your arms are softly rounded as if holding a large, light ball. As you exhale your arms sink back down. Keep your breath smooth and even. Inhale, you expand, rise, energise; exhale you contract, sink, relax. Continue ebbing and flowing, as you follow your own rhythm. At the top of the in breath you might notice a moment of lightness, or weightlessness; at the bottom of the out breath you might notice a moment of stillness, or space.

After a few minutes (or when you've had enough) stand still and notice your sensations. You have re-aligned yourself with your own breath and pace, and with infinite easy coming and going, the movement of the Tao.

### Bodyful, not mindful

Whatever modality we practise as holistic therapists, it's easy to get into our heads, and try to think our way forward, for ourselves and our clients. Chi Kung and Taoism remind us that our wisdom lies in our felt sense - our direct experience. Trusting what we experience in our Chi Kung practise comes over time. We start to have more confidence in the felt sensations that come from our body – our experiential understanding of the fluctuations of life. It means that we can't always plan our sessions or responses, we have to trust our reactions in the moment, and we can hold change and uncertainty with more confidence. That's where Chi Kung is such a powerful and useful practice; it reminds us, body heart and mind, of what health and harmony and ebb and flow feel like. As practitioners we often put pressure on ourselves, to be our best for our clients. With Chi Kung we remind ourselves; our best is to practise from our centre and our connection with the Tao – our true north. ■



**LIZZIE SLOWE** is a well-being expert, fully qualified Equine

Therapist, Chi Kung Master and author of *The Living Art of Chi Kung*, available

now priced £12. Find out more about

Lizzie and her practice at <https://www.lizzieslowe.com>.

[lizzieslowe.com](https://www.lizzieslowe.com).

# Winter bookshelf

Our pick of the latest titles to entertain and educate...

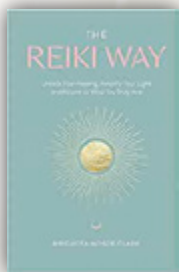
## Herbal Antivirals (2nd edition)



This is the second edition of Stephen Harrod Buhner's book on using herbal remedies to combat emerging and resistant viral infections. We've

all had a salutary lesson on the capabilities a virus has in terms of mutation and contagion, so this is a welcome update on the previous edition. As an experienced herbalist, Buhner has studied the antiviral properties of plants for many years. He profiles the plants that have proven most effective in fighting viral infections and in depth advice creating formulations to strengthen immunity, safely and naturally.

## The Reiki Way



There's no doubt that many forms of energy healing are gaining public attention and acceptance. Author Brighitta Moser-Clark is a celebrated Reiki

Teacher with a wealth of experience, so she's well-placed to provide this accessible introduction to Reiki that will appeal to newcomers, but also offer insight to more seasoned practitioners.

The book combines meditative poetry, soulful prose, and carefully crafted prompts to guide the reader along the Reiki Way,

leading to a deeper understanding of the nature of the self and freeing up our healing capabilities.

## Kundalini Yoga Demystified

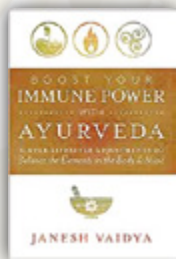


Erin Elizabeth Downing's introduction to Kundalini Yoga is an exceptionally accessible and straightforward

guide to Kundalini basics, with over sixty hands-on practices for specific physical and spiritual needs, such as detoxifying, pushing past blockages, and expanding your vital life-force energy.

If you need to sharpen the focus of your mind, find balance in your daily life, increase your body's strength, and develop a sense of connection to the divine, then this would be a great starting point. The exercises are often short and combine breathing techniques with gentle poses, as well as mantras and mudras to help direct the intention of your practice and create lasting change.

## Boost Your Immune System with Ayurveda



Foods that boost the immune system have been cited as one of this year's top consumer trends, but Ayurveda has been on to this trick for thousands of years.

Traditional Ayurveda practitioner Janesh Vaidya introduces Ayurvedic immune support in a way that is

easy to understand and practice, combining food, lifestyle, yoga, and mind development to strengthen your immune system. We particularly liked the quizzes which help identify your core nature and imbalances and follow the exact food and lifestyle recommendations that will work for you.

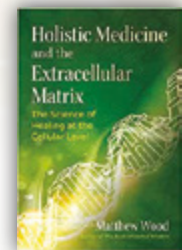
## Blast from the Past



This is an interesting take on using past-life regression for transformative healing. Shelley A. Kaehr draws on fascinating research on spontaneous past-life regression,

numerous case studies and stories, to provide guidance on applying these to your own life. The key concept is the idea of 'supretrovie' spontaneous past-life recall, triggered by places or objects. Kaehr demonstrates how to recognise when this happens and use it to explore your past lives without needing a regression session, then using this to heal negativity from your previous lifetimes.

## Holistic Medicine and the Extracellular Matrix



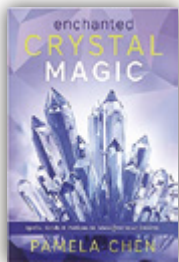
There will be very few, if any, of our readers who are not well versed in the superior approach of treating the whole person in their own environment, rather

than as walking symptoms in need of the latest drug.

In this book, Matthew Wood shows how the extracellular matrix can explain the actions and efficacy of holistic therapies. He explores the ground-breaking research of Alfred Pischinger, who discovered the ECM in 1975, as well as the role of the matrix in transmitting and enacting the genetic code, including the roles of the mitochondria, the nucleus, and ribosomes.

Wood explains how modern drugs, directed at specific receptors on the cell membrane, interfere with bodily self-regulation. He details how holistic therapies modify the environment of the cell and strengthen the whole, bringing the body back to homeostasis and consequently offering true healing.

### Enchanted Crystal Magic



A change of pace from the extracellular matrix, Pamela Chen's book is a primer on how to start your own crystal enchanter practice to help improve

your love life, manifest more money, heal emotional wounds, and connect with your true self. It covers creating and activating crystal grids, potions and spells, colours and how they relate to powerful chakra energies. This would be a good choice for a teenager interested in exploring crystals.

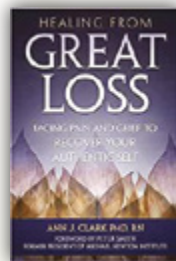
### Self-love Superpower



Many of us are guilty of thinking negatively about ourselves and our capabilities, self-imposing limitations on

what we can achieve. This book promises to help you experience the liberation, healing, and empowerment that come when we make a spiritual practice out of learning to love ourselves. It's quite practical in that it offers a step by step action programme designed to support the journey from paralysing self-criticism to expansive self-adoration. Whether you want to develop greater respect and belief in yourself, connect with your intuition, or regain a sense of excitement and enthusiasm for the things you care about, this guide provides the empowering boost you need to help you get there.

### Healing from Great Loss



Death, loss and grief are things we tend to sweep under the carpet, precisely because they make us uncomfortable in a world obsessed with youth and beauty.

Most of us will endure some form of loss, whether of a parent, partner, friend or pet, even a job, a relationship or our sense of self. Ann J. Clark offers a path to healing and setting a new course for your life after enduring a great loss. Progress may be slow and painful, but she regards loss as the soul's invitation to return to the purpose we have set for this life after we have lost our way.

### Restorative Rituals and Morning Rituals

These pretty little books are part of a series by Leslie Koren that are filled with rituals and mindful activities to practice self-care, whether we need to retreat into ourselves to find the time to restore our equilibrium or



get each day off to a good start. You'll find a collection of activities from making a face mask to yoga poses, making a self-care kit or setting an intention for the day.

### Natural Wellness Every Day



This would make a thoughtful gift for a friend or relative. It's a beautiful collection of tips, recipes and self-care forming a complete mind-body approach to wellbeing. Ermine

Rushton has worked with the experts at Weleda, who marked the company's first 100 years last year, to offer a complete guide to natural care of earth, skin, self and health, guiding you towards a routine that will activate your wellness from within and care for the planet at the same time.

All titles are available by ordering through your local bookshop or from online retailers. ■



# Back

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

# PAGES

## THAILAND'S DEPARTMENT OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE SAYS IT CAN TREAT LONG COVID WITH THAI HERBS

The Bangkok Post reports that the Thai government is funding free herbal treatment for some of



the estimated 400,000 people with symptoms of Long Covid. A mobile unit in Northern Thailand is offering a variety of traditional herbal treatments. Department chief Dr Thiti Sawaengtham noted that cannabis oil is a base ingredient in the treatments as it helps with insomnia and appetite loss. He adds that patients should be properly diagnosed by an alternative medicine specialist as symptoms can vary from one person to another

and some herbal treatments are prescription-only.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTONOMY IN HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING

A new study published in the Journal of Positive Psychology suggests that the recipe for



wellbeing is having a life that is pleasant, engaged and meaningful. In order to achieve this, people must have a high level of autonomy - from having the experience of choice, to endorsing one's actions at the highest level of reflection. Autonomy is often associated with doing something because it's interesting, enjoyable, and naturally satisfying, rather than being extrinsically motivated by rewards or punishment.

The new investigation of autonomy and wellbeing involved 68 subjects who were prompted by their phones to answer questions on their activities and state of mind at the time of the alert.

The results showed autonomy was a significant predictor of engagement, meaningfulness, positive affect, and mood. Furthermore, autonomy was consistently found to override activity type in predicting well-being. A moderate level of autonomy was sufficient for engagement. Results also indicated autonomy was the strongest predictor of momentary experiences of meaningfulness. Regardless of what people were doing, greater autonomy was associated with more meaningfulness.

## WORDS OF WISDOM...

*Good health is not something we can buy. However, it can be an extremely valuable savings account.*

Anne Wilson Schaeff

## Try this... NoWa's Bamboo electric toothbrush

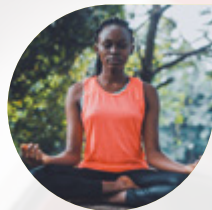
UK brand NoWa has launched an eco-friendly electric toothbrush. The toothbrush comes with three fully compostable, FSC-certified bamboo heads and bristles and features a long battery life of 6 weeks per charge, up to 40 hours standby life, and 5 smart modes with different brushing capabilities. It's also scratch-resistant, low noise, and 100% waterproof. £54.95 from [www.nowasite.com](http://www.nowasite.com).



Nowa also have a range of vegan, dentist-approved, mouthwash and toothpaste tablets that are great for travel. A month's supply of either is just £3.50 from their website. The brand is all about reducing the use of water and waste in dental health.

## WOODLAND MEDITATION AND MASSAGE TAKES OFF IN DARWEN

Wild One Adventures have begun hosting medication and relaxation sessions in Sett End Woods in



Darwen, Lancashire. The woodland wellness sessions, entitled Wild Whispers, offer an hour long moonlit guided meditation in a hammock. They combine relaxation with the sounds of the woods, creating a deeper connection to nature. The founder commented, "The people that come to our events have such a beautiful energy and they're just so positive about it."

The meditation session is followed by warm drinks and toasted marshmallows around the fire, Indian Head Massage, crystal healing and reflexology. Find out more at [www.facebook.com/wildoneadventures](http://www.facebook.com/wildoneadventures)

## BANNATYNES LAUNCHES FIRST AIRPORT SPA

The Bannatyne Group has opened its first airport spa at Teesside International Airport. The travel spa is located in the departures lounge and is open to passengers as well as airport workers who are being offered a special corporate rate. The spa will specialise in 15 and 30 minute treatments including chair massage, manicures, pedicures, hands-on massage and LED face masks as well as treatment using Elemis products.



## COVID CHANGES CONSUMER ATTITUDES TO SUPPLEMENTS

A US study suggests that COVID has resulted in a change to consumer behaviour that sees a move towards clinically validated supplements, when looking for immune health boosters.



The consulting agency SPRIM Global, which surveyed more than 1,000 people across the United States, Mexico, and Brazil, reported that consumers are prioritising scientific literature and clinical trials to determine product effectiveness when choosing dietary supplements for immune health.

The study also found that 61% of global consumers who have purchased dietary supplements in the last 12 months either began or increased their purchasing for immune health supplements during the pandemic. Fifty-seven percent of consumers also claim to be concerned about their immunity due to the pandemic, and 83% say they take immune support supplements every day and buy more when they run out. When it comes to specific supplements they are buying, vitamin C is the mainstay immune health ingredient they look for, with vitamin D coming in second due to studies demonstrating the correlation between low

vitamin D levels and higher risk of contracting a serious case of COVID-19. The findings may indicate that scientific validation is becoming more important for holistic therapies too, as such trends often cross the Atlantic.

## EARLY STAGE STUDY SUGGESTS YOGA PROVES BENEFICIAL FOR PROSTATE CANCER

It's estimated that around one in every eight men will develop prostate cancer. It's relatively rare in men under 40, with the mean age at diagnosis being 66. While it is the second biggest cause of cancer deaths in men, it is relatively slow growing. Around 30% of those with a diagnosis of prostate cancer report experiencing fear, depression, and anxiety among those with the disease. US figures show the risk of heart attack and risk of suicide are four times higher and doubled, respectively, in the year after diagnosis.



A number of studies have found yoga to be beneficial for patients with cancer. The practice improves quality of life (QOL) as well as emotional and physical well-being, with a special emphasis on improving mindfulness. Patients practicing yoga have been found to have more flexibility and muscle tone, and less anxiety and stress. A recent pilot study at the University of Texas Health San Antonio saw 29 men (aged 30 to 80 years) with a new prostate cancer diagnosis who were scheduled to undergo radical prostatectomy randomly assigned to a yoga intervention or standard care prior to surgery. The yoga group had two sixty minute Hatha yoga sessions for six weeks before surgery and 3-6 weeks post-surgery.

"The greatest impact of yoga was on sexual function, fatigue, prostate cancer-specific Quality of Life and physical, social, and functional wellbeing," the researchers reported. Plasma analysis revealed that yoga modulated a number of key immune cells that are important in antitumor activity, with a statistically significant reduction in expression of inflammatory cytokines in the yoga group. **Ref: 10.1038/s41391-021-00470-w**

# Water with a difference

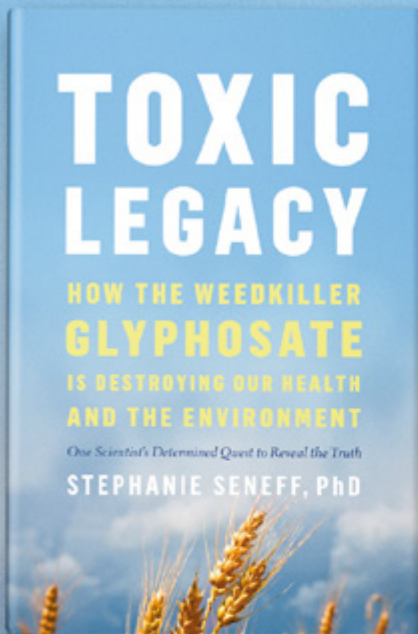


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## The Silent Spring of Our Time

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Patrick Holden, founder and chief executive, Sustainable Food Trust

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A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a bright green hoodie with the Weleda logo, is smiling and holding a small green product tube. She is standing in a kitchen, with white cabinets and a countertop visible. In the foreground, the backs of several people's heads and shoulders are visible, suggesting she is presenting to a group. On the counter in front of her are various Weleda products, including bottles and tubes.

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