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HIGHBURY

THIS MONTH WE TRY...

ACTIVE REIKI

More potent than standard Reiki, Active Reiki aims to reach the parts other healing systems can't, says **Eve Boggenpoel**

Sceptics used to call it 'flaky Reiki', but now this Japanese healing system is available in hospitals throughout the country, and GPs are increasingly referring patients for treatment.

I visited Andy Chrysostomou and Dawn Mellowship who practise Active Reiki in North London. 'Active Reiki is more effective than standard "passive" Reiki, where the healer merely acts as an inert channel allowing the Reiki energy to define its own course without consideration for the condition that requires attention,' explains Chrysostomou. 'Instead of channelling energy into the body and trusting it will go where it is needed, we channel energy at a specific frequency and amplitude, and direct it at the part of the body that needs treatment.'

Reiki practitioners attune themselves to

what they refer to as universal energy (the 'rei' in Reiki) and direct it into your body to help balance and unblock your life-force energy (the 'ki'). They also visualise symbols in different colours to vary the frequency of the energy they are channelling. 'We're able to narrow down the frequency range sufficiently to work on any particular condition,' says Chrysostomou.

To assess how the treatment is progressing, biofeedback sensations are monitored. 'Symptoms such as swallowing, muscle ripples and emotional release all give clues as to what is happening with the person's energy,' explains Mellowship.

'I'd heard that you can have a major catharsis during a Reiki session, so I felt a slight sense of trepidation when I arrived for my treatment. But my fears were unfounded – it was a very relaxing experience. As I lay on the treatment couch, I felt the tension unwind as Chrysostomou placed his hands in various positions around my head, while Mellowship worked on the rest of my body.

It was only once the treatment was over that I realised its full effect. I felt so comfortable with Chrysostomou and Mellowship, I was loathe to drive home. I felt more open, more myself, and the concerns I'd had before didn't seem so important.

As Mellowship says, 'Reiki can give you a different perspective. It's like looking into your life as an outsider, instead of being stuck in it.'

'Once the treatment was over, I felt more myself, more open...'

HISTORY

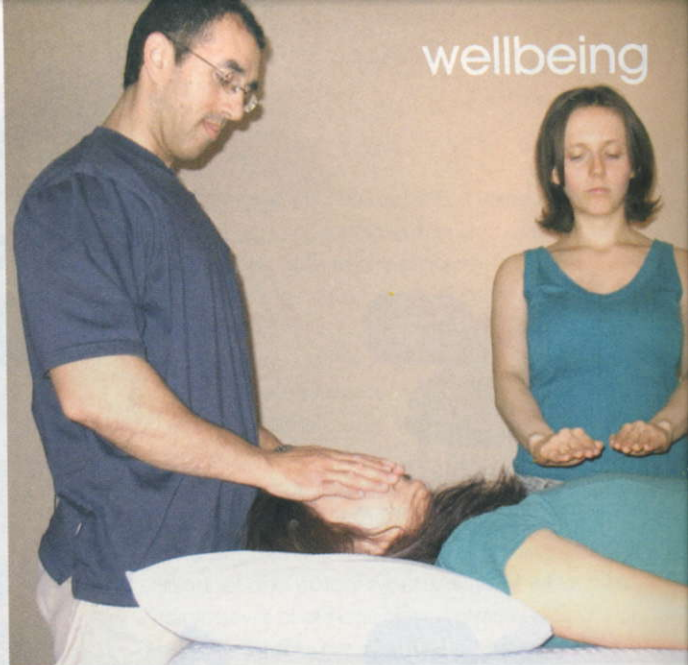
Opinions differ as to the origins of Reiki. Many believe it to be an ancient form of Tibetan healing, but it is generally agreed that Reiki was 'rediscovered' in the early 1900s by Mikao Usui. Brought up in a Samurai family, he dedicated his life to meditation and Japanese mysticism. While on a 21-day retreat and pondering on the question of how to heal another person without tiring himself, he had an experience in which he sensed energy entering his head and coming out of his hands. This contact with a source of renewable energy led him to work with healing others. By 1925, he was so successful that he needed a larger clinic to treat patients.

EVIDENCE

In 1995, doctors Siskin and Walker published an article in *Advances In Chemistry* (series 250) in which they recorded the frequencies of electromagnetic energy in different body tissues, such as bone (low) and connective tissue (high). The same frequencies of energy were then recorded in a healer's hands. Imperial College London is now interested in setting up a study with Chrysostomou and Mellowship, to test Reiki's effectiveness for treating stress.

WHO NEEDS IT?

Reiki can be used to treat all kinds of imbalance, whether physical, mental or spiritual. Chrysostomou feels it is particularly suited to emotional issues, as it aims to remove the



negative energy attached to a trauma, so that when you think of the event it's no longer associated with painful memories. Acute physical conditions, including sports injuries, cuts and burns are said to respond particularly swiftly.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

If you are taking prescription drugs such as thyroxine or insulin, you will need to be monitored while undergoing treatment, as these medicines may need adjusting after successful Reiki treatment. Pregnancy does not prevent you receiving Reiki, provided you have the consent of your GP or midwife. Likewise, if you have epilepsy you can receive treatment, as long as there's someone with you who can deal with a seizure. Reiki is not suitable for people with pacemakers, due to the electro-magnetic nature of the treatment.

COST

Expect to pay around £40 a session, although London prices can be as high as £125. Sports injuries may require up to five or six sessions, while emotional issues take longer – about 10 to 12 treatments.

RESOURCES

- *The Reiki Sourcebook*, by Bronwen and Frans Stiene (£12.99, O Books). For more details, visit www.thehealingco.com.
- For a practitioner near you, check out www.reikihealersandteachers.net.

'It worked for me'

Cheryl Lewis, a 34-year-old mother of two from Northamptonshire, has mild spina bifida. She tried Reiki after a seven-hour operation revealed that her case was more complex than the surgeon realised. 'While Andy was treating me I felt really warm – the tension just melted away. After only two sessions, I could come off some of the nasty painkillers I was on,' she says. Lewis had six sessions with Chrysostomou, and then trained in Reiki herself, so she could practise self-healing on a regular basis. 'I feel a tremendous difference in terms of pain relief. I can walk decent distances now, and I feel fitter than I've been in years.'