

BodyTalk: Could a new therapy be the answer to all your aches and pains?

Rumoured to be popular with Oprah Winfrey and Barack Obama, BodyTalk is now finding converts in Britain.

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Published: 12:00PM GMT 22 Jan 2010

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Have you ever wondered how the superhuman among us – the **Barack Obamas**, the Oprah Winfreys – manage to appear so gleaming, so lucid, so centred apparently all the time? Don't they ever have an off day?

Obama, who this week celebrated his first year in office, shares a little secret with Oprah. They are reportedly both fans of "BodyTalk", the alternative healthcare system of the moment, now finding converts in Britain.



Tap stance: Britt Jorgensen practises BodyTalk on Tessa Boase Photo: JEFF GILBERT

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BodyTalk is based on the belief that the body knows how to heal itself but, like a computer, can get overloaded, leading to malfunction. A BodyTalk practitioner offers no diagnosis or prescription, just a "rewiring" session using muscle testing and light tapping on the head and sternum to re-establish channels of communication within the body. Then the body will start functioning optimally again.

Words like "innate", "healing" and "wisdom" set off alarm bells for me, especially when used together. But look past the jargon – and past the fact that this is a booming Florida business whose founder, Dr John Veltheim,

resembles an outsize elf with bushy beard and evangelical smile – and there is sense in recognising the body as a "whole" with interconnecting systems. After all, we know that when one thing goes wrong, diverse other symptoms can crop up.

Veltheim, an Australian, once ran a busy clinic for Chinese medicine, acupuncture, chiropractic and naturopathy. He became exhausted, got ill and couldn't recover. The long search for a cure led him to experiment with blending these and other alternative therapies, creating "acupuncture without needles".

His eureka moment came in 1995 with the discovery that you can literally tap into the body's energy circuits by using simple muscle testing to discover areas of sluggish communication. Tapping on the head then tells the brain to "fix" the faulty circuit, followed by tapping on the heart to "store" the fix, just like a computer downloading a programme.

Confused? Cynical? London-based practitioner Britt Jorgensen was when she first encountered BodyTalk on a yoga retreat in the United States four years ago. "People were talking about this miracle cure," she says. But no one could come up with a description that made sense to her.

Three weeks later, Jorgensen booked onto a BodyTalk course in New York and was captivated. She started practising on her husband, on friends and children, and says the results were demonstrable. Backache disappeared. Depression lifted. Skin complaints cleared up. Hyperactive children sat still. She continued training, gave up her high-powered job and qualified as a practitioner, treating people for complaints as varied as phobias, slipped discs and digestive problems.

I put Jorgensen to the test with a clutch of minor ailments: stiff back, aching wrist, sore throat – plus an unhealthy surfeit of anger. I lie on the treatment table and she wiggles my hand and arm, then lightly taps my head and chest bone. She also holds my feet briefly and lays a hand over my middle (she picks up straight away on the anger: the liver meridian apparently needs "balancing").

Does she have healing hands? No. BodyTalk is an "energy medicine", based on scientific principles. Veltheim has used neuroscience to back his findings, including a recent experiment in which the brain's responses to BodyTalk were monitored. I leave the treatment room still unconvinced. The tapping feels too much like knocking on wood – vague optimism rather than hard science.

But, one month later, the results of three sessions have shaken my scepticism. All physical complaints disappeared within hours of treatment. More surprising has been my change in mood: I feel increasingly clear-headed, light-chested, optimistic and energetic, as if the white noise of 21st-century urban life has been switched off in my head.

I still don't know how it works, but then I don't understand what my computer repair man does either.

- For your nearest practitioner and training go to www.bodytalkuk.co.uk
- Britt Jorgensen works in central London. Sessions cost £60, less for mothers and babies (0772 660 4020; www.thetaptapcompany.co.uk)

BodyTalk at home

The Access programme offers DIY techniques to improve health and wellbeing, and is taught regularly around Britain (see www.bodytalkuk.co.uk) Most simple is the Cortices Technique, intended to connect the right side of the brain to the left, eliminating "cold spots" of diminished blood supply or cellular activity. Do this regularly and, it

is claimed, you should find your head feels less foggy and your mental focus may sharpen.

1 Hold one hand sideways at the base of the skull. With the other hand lightly tap the top of the head and then the sternum, alternating for two full breath cycles.

2 Repeat this procedure until you have covered the whole midline of the head to just above the eyebrows.

3 Hold both sides of the head for a few second. Release one hand to repeat tapping procedure as above, then hold head again.

More ways to increase your wellbeing

E-rejuvenation

Group sessions for burnt-out professionals to reduce stress and increase energy, rooted in Chinese traditional medicine. Each participant has an "energy expert" and hour-long sessions include deep relaxation and the luxury of having energy "delivered" to you (www.erejuvenation.co.uk)

Colourpuncture therapy

Eleven colours are applied via slim quartz rods in a torch to specific meridian points on the body, like acupuncture without the needles. Different colours have different functions: blue is for headaches, red relieves colds, yellow for the intestines (www.schoolofawakening.com).

Metamorphic technique

Light touches on the spinal reflex points in feet, hands and head are a catalyst for the patient transforming himself for the better through his innate "life force". Good for shaking up old, stuck patterns of behaviour, addictions and negative beliefs formed prenatally (www.metamorphictechnique.org).

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