



The idea of using energy to heal can elicit extreme opinions: mention the words “crystal healing” and “colour therapy” to someone and chances are they’ll either dismiss it as New Age poppycock or be keen believers. However, while the concept may be relatively new to the West, energy medicine has been around for thousands of years. The modalities that harness the power of energy are many, ranging from reiki to meditation to sound therapy, and can be powerful tools you can use to transform your life.

HOW DOES ENERGY WORK?

Energy medicine, also called vibrational healing, homes in on the subtle energy systems that animate the body, known variously as chakras, meridians, nadis

and biomagnetic fields. According to ancient philosophies such as Chinese medicine and Ayurveda, these systems can get blocked as a result of emotional and mental stress, trauma, false beliefs, environmental and physical stress and other barriers to self-development. Energy blockages can, adherents believe, cause the body to function at a sub-optimum level and eventually lead to disease. Energetic healing techniques aim to clear these roadblocks and re-establish balance in the body.

Margaret Spicer has been teaching energetic healing at Nature Care College since 1998 and is an international speaker on the subject. A Bowen therapist herself (healthartisans.com.au), Spicer says, “We’re looking at mind-body medicine in many aspects, in the fact that your being

is affected by the way you are thinking.

“If I said to you think of anger or fear, somewhere in your body is going to contract. If you hold that contraction for 20, 30 years, it’s going to gradually affect the health of your body.” When there’s equilibrium in the body’s energy system, however, the mind, body and spirit are capable of healing themselves.

The depth of scientific research into energy medicine’s effectiveness depends on the modality, as does the findings. The ancients must have been onto something, though, and science is catching up. In the 1970s, Dr Valerie V Hunt, professor at University of California, showed that energy field disturbances are linked to disease and emotions. The emerging field of epigenetics also seems to support energy medicine’s beneficial effects.

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James L Oschman, a US professor with a background in biophysics and biology, wrote *Energy Medicine: The Scientific Basis* to demonstrate that energy medicine works. He says it taps into the life force energy offered by the practitioner or the vibrational tools. “The living matrix is a continuous and dynamic ‘supramolecular’ webwork extending into every nook and cranny of the body. ... In essence, when you touch a human body, you are touching a continuously interconnected system composed of virtually all the molecules in the body linked together in an intricate webwork.”

Spicer puts it more plainly. “A simplistic thing to say is, ‘If I picked an apple straight off a tree and put it next to one that’s been in cold storage for months, could you tell the difference?’ Most people will say ‘Yes,’ and they’ll pick the one that’s been plucked off a tree.

“There’s an energy component that’s not measurable. The apples may have the same vitamins and minerals, but there’s this *other* aspect about them.”

The five practices below can help you access energy’s healing powers. You don’t need to consult a practitioner — you are all you need to support your personal transformation.

COLOUR THERAPY

Each colour the human eye sees emits light rays of a particular wavelength, frequency and quantity of energy, which are believed to exert subtle effects on our energy systems.

The ancient Egyptians reportedly loved colour and used it for its healing properties; in the 1500s, European physician Paracelsus advocated the powers of the spectrum. Research into the effects of colour, such as Alexander Schauss’s pink-prison experiment of the late 70s, shows that colour can affect people’s emotions and their wellbeing.

Barbara Pritchard, a registered nurse and healing touch practitioner, has been working with colour therapy since 1995. Now an international speaker on the topic and founder of Alchemy of Colour (alchemyofcolour.com), Pritchard believes colour works on three levels:

1 It connects us to nature. “We associate blue with the sky and water, green with trees, red with the earth of the outback etc. When we see that colour we recall how we feel in nature, which is healing.”

2 It connects us to our emotions. “From an early age, as we are experiencing situations and emotions together with colour, the brain may bypass the detail and focus on the experience of colour

Introducing a crystal into the body’s energy fields acts like a “tuning fork”: it emits a single tone that guides the discordant vibrations back into harmony.

alone,” says Pritchard. “I have seen many cases ... where there has been a toxic experience associated with a colour but that memory has been lost and the colour aversion replaces it.”

3 It connects us to our culture. “All cultures have colour associations and these are strong iconic images stamped into our consciousness.” For example, in the West, white is associated with purity, cleanliness and weddings; in many Eastern cultures it is linked to death.

Colours for change

Pritchard suggests two techniques for harnessing the power of colour:

■ Some colours have universal effects: red makes us feel angry or powerful, blue is calming etc. When you feel affected by toxic emotions arising from toxic thoughts, visualise yourself in a sea of calming blue or nurturing pink.

■ Picture yourself connected to the Earth by a golden column of energy running through your body. As you inhale, imagine golden energy streaming into you, flowing over your head, surrounding you. This “brings a sense of connection and can help to eliminate fear, which often blocks our path to transformation”.

CRYSTAL HEALING

Healers have known of the energetic impact of crystals since about 1500 BCE, when Egyptians first recorded their curative powers on a papyrus. Crystals are widely used in modern inventions such as solar cells and transistors, but science is yet to explain their mind-body benefits.

Here’s how they’re thought to work. Each crystal is made of one molecule, repeated in an ordered structure, which allows it to emit a steady electromagnetic pattern. The human body, however, is made of thousands of molecules, each vibrating differently. In *Illustrated Elements of Crystal Healing*, Simon Lilly likens the body to an orchestra. When your body is stressed, the vibrations become slightly disharmonious, like one instrument going out of key. Adding a crystal into the body’s

energy fields acts like a “tuning fork”: it emits a single tone that guides the discordant vibrations back into harmony.

Holistic wellness blogger Jess Ainscough discovered crystals when she was diagnosed with cancer about six years ago. A friend took her to a crystal shop and bought her crystals for healing, bravery and courage. “They just gave me comfort in a strange way. I felt as though I was doing something to help myself,” Ainscough says.

These days, she has crystals dotted around her home for their beauty. She keeps a citrine on her desk for abundance; a fluorite near her computer to help with electromagnetic radiation; a rose quartz in her bedroom for its self-love properties; and an amethyst in her meditation room to help her tap into her spirituality. She also wears a crystal-containing necklace and wristlet she co-designed with jewellery creators Sanctus Stones, plus a moonstone ring.

“I can’t say that crystals have helped heal my body, but ... just surrounding myself with beautiful, energetic things like this has definitely played a huge part [in my healing process],” Ainscough explains.

Crystals for change

“Go to a crystal shop and just walk around, noticing the ones you’re drawn to,” suggests Ainscough. “I knew nothing about crystals, yet with the ones I was drawn to, the meanings always matched what I needed.” Read what the crystal means and then place it in a fitting place in your home or on your body.

Simon Lilly recommends placing a quartz crystal on a pulse point to recharge your body and spirit. Hold its largest side on your skin and imagine pulling the light of the sun into your body through the crystal. If possible, do this in direct sunlight to boost the energy you receive.

FLOWER ESSENCES

Flower essences work on the subtle energy pathways that run through the body. The tools in this form of healing are liquids that hold a minute “essence” of a particular flower or plant, similar to homœopathic formulas. Each flower is said to possess properties that make it useful for a certain emotional state.

The history of flower essences can be traced back thousands of years, but the accepted father of their modern-day use in the West is Dr Edward Bach. A British doctor who specialised in bacteriology, immunology and later homœopathy, Bach believed a person’s mindset was central to their health and recovery from illness.



In the early 1900s, he identified 38 basic negative mind states and created a plant- or flower-based remedy for each one. Bach essences are widely available today. Two other popular ranges are Australian Bush Flower Essences and Flower Essence Services (FES) from the US.

Melbourne-based naturopath-homœopath Mark Wells (markwells.com) researched flower essences as part of his Master's degree in health sciences and has written several books on the topic. He says flower essences have a "selective sensitivity". "If the remedy is right for you, you will respond to it. If it doesn't match you, nothing happens; in the same way some nice music can make one person feel good and have no impact on another."

There's no clean scientific explanation for *how* flower essences work, but studies show they can positively impact on people's emotions beyond the placebo effect, particularly in the areas of anxiety and tension. According to Wells, essences can affect people's physical health and help them change their attitudes and gain a different perspective, "as though they're working like a little counsellor within".

Flower essences for change

When selecting a flower essence, think of an issue or ask yourself what you want more of in your life. Read the description of each essence and choose one that's most appropriate. (For directions on taking remedies, visit bachcentre.com, ausflowers.com.au or fesflowers.com.)

Wells suggests two essences he uses commonly in his practice:

- "Elm is for overwhelm. If you're coming into a time when you know you'll be under the pump but you want to be in the best state of mind for it, elm is fantastic."
- "Hornbeam is for when you feel like it's a Monday morning every day. You're getting through the day but feel as though you're really pushing it."

MEDITATION

Meditation dates from the Indian Vedas, which mentioned meditation techniques as far back as 5000 years ago. A form of energy medicine that's received much attention in the scientific community, meditation has been proven to reduce anxiety levels, increase compassion and benefit the body in multiple ways, from lowering blood pressure and cholesterol to promoting faster healing.

Lynda Kerr, a meditation teacher and past faculty head at the Australasian College of Natural Therapies (thereikiandmeditationproject.ntpages.com.au), says the benefits extend

“Transformation happens naturally when we establish a balance between mental and physical activity and quiet contemplation.”

beyond the physical. "The practice of meditation can help you change your life and provide peace of mind, clarity and happiness. It can help you achieve a better understanding of yourself as well as others and can have a profound and positive impact in all areas of your life."

When you meditate, your brainwaves gradually slow and you're able to reach a far more relaxed state of mind. According to Kerr, when our brainwaves slow down to alpha frequency, "We are at our most productive because we are fully awake, yet completely and totally relaxed. This is where the practice of meditation can have such a powerful and positive effect on the wellbeing of our mind, body and spirit."

Kerr says her clients report a raft of changes from the physiological — lowered blood pressure, reduced pain levels — to reduced stress and anxiety, increased happiness and improved relationships. "Transformation happens naturally when we establish a balance between mental and physical activity and quiet contemplation. Meditation is the secret ingredient to attaining this balance."

Meditation for change

When starting out, Kerr suggests you meditate at the same time each day so it becomes part of your daily routine. She also suggests beginners try the following easy yet effective meditation technique.

Choose a word that is part of your belief system, for example "love" or "om". Use this same word each meditation session. Sit comfortably, then close your eyes and bring your attention to your breath. Say your focus word silently to yourself as you exhale. Repeat for a few minutes and, when other thoughts come to mind, bring your awareness back to your breath and focus word. Be gentle with yourself and go easy.

MERIDIAN TAPPING

Meridian tapping works on the same basis as acupuncture but, rather than use needles, you tap lightly on points that correlate with the body's inner energy pathways. Through helping release emotional pain and distress, practitioners believe tapping can help

improve psychological and emotional dysfunction as well as physical disease.

US psychologist Dr Roger Callahan, a student of acupuncture and kinesiology, developed the concept of tapping — he termed it Thought Field Therapy — in the 1980s. Gary Craig built on Callahan's work by creating Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), which combines tapping on eight acupressure points with affirmations. Robert Smith extended this method, blending it with neuro-linguistic programming to create FasterEFT (Faster Emotionally Focused Transformations). FasterEFT users pinpoint the core memory behind an emotional issue and tap on five pressure points while reliving the painful feelings tied to that memory.

Nuala White, who teaches FasterEFT via Skype from Northern Ireland (learning-for-living.com), says tapping works on the body's physiological response to threat. "Our unconscious mind doesn't discriminate between what's true and not true; it just records everything we've taken in through our senses ... When we experience threat, or are reminded of something in the memory file, our body plays out that information stored in our unconscious in a fight-flight response."

According to White, tapping is a quick and powerful method to interrupt and change the unconscious mind-body messages. "FasterEFT and EFT allow us to tap into those stored memories through reactivating our response to threat. When we are in that heightened state, we tap on the meridian points that will clear the fight-flight response."

Tapping for change

There are five meridian points in FasterEFT. You tap systematically between the eyes; beside the eye; under the eye; and on the collar bone. You then squeeze the wrist.

According to White, everyone's body responds to trauma differently. "People don't need to know why they think what they think or what caused how they feel; they just need to ask, 'How do I know I feel like this?' Eventually the key memory will reveal itself and when you feel your body respond, you just need to start tapping."

If you have a phobia of spiders, for example, think about a spider. Tap as soon as your body starts to react. "Even if you don't know what else to say, say, 'I let go of the sweating, I let it go, I let it go,'" says White. "Grab your wrist at the end, take a deep breath, blow it out and say, 'Peace.'" Repeat this until the feelings subside. 🍷

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