

# Get well tones

Alternative therapy practitioners vouch for the healing power of vibrations including musical notes

BY SUJA NATARAJAN

**D**on't you feel a sense of calm when you hear the gentle breeze in the trees or wake up to soothing music? This is because sounds have immense power, not just to make you feel positive but also to heal problems of the body and mind. Ancient civilisations have healed muscle tears, broken bones and illnesses using rattles, drums and didgeridoos. Sadly, sound healing almost disappeared until the early 20th century when researchers rediscovered the medicinal properties of sound frequencies. Today, the ancient art has developed into a new science.

## How it works

Sound has a great impact on the body since the nervous system is designed to react to sound. Just like a symphony that goes adrift when there is disharmony in any of the instruments in the orchestra, a disease can occur when a single system or organ is not in harmony with the rest of the body. "As we grow, disharmony sets in with environmental pollution, noise pollution, conditioning, educational pressure, etc. The conflict first affects the mind and then slowly creates disruption in cellular activity, which, in turn, causes disease. Sound therapy uses the most optimal frequencies required to recreate and harmonise each and every cell," explains Poonam Dhandania, clinical sound therapist and meditation facilitator, Pune.

According to Chintan Dalal, *naad* yogi and *kriya* yogi, Spanda Healing, Mumbai, the use of right sattvic sounds can help heal all types of mental, emotional and physical ailments. "Samvahana, which is the ayurvedic process of sound healing, rejuvenates every cell of the body while releasing or burning its toxins," he says.

The human body is 70 per cent water and sound transmits faster through water than air. "Sound has two aspects, the audible and the vibrational. Both work together on the level of the interstitial fluid in the body and help muscles to loosen up. The relaxation effect subsequently transfers to the mind from where it again percolates to the cellular level. Sound works by changing the protein patterns and causes significant changes at the physical level. It also works on cellular memories through a change in the amino acid sequences," explains Kolhapur-based sound therapist

Prasenjit Kamble. "Sound therapy heals the mind, body, and spirit," adds Poonam. "As the therapy progresses, the cells receive optimal vibrations, making chronic issues disappear."

## Use of instruments

Traditional sound healing equipment include singing bowls, crystal bowls, pipes, didgeridoo, harp and gongs. Sound healers and practitioners believe that listening to percussive

instruments like the gong, singing bowls or tuning forks can help reduce stress. Even just chanting or singing has a calming effect on the mind.

"Samvahana uses Tibetan singing bowls, bells, gongs, conches, flute, sitar and chimes. Advanced techniques of using sounds for *marmas* (vital points of the body) or micro chakras help heal physical and mental ailments," says Chintan.



## Wide impact

For 64-year-old, Mumbai-based Hirachand Nagda, sound therapy came as a blessing for his chronic pain when nothing else worked. Due to a kneecap dislocation, he could not walk and knee surgery did not give him the relief he wanted. He was unable to move for several days and had immense pain in the knee. For relief he sought sound therapy. After the first session with singing bowls he felt calm and the pain

reduced to a certain extent. The second session gave him a deep sense of relaxation and he was pain-free by the end of the session. He confirmed that the pain did not recur after the third session.

Sound therapy helps heal conditions like chronic pain, sleep disorders, anxiety, extreme stress, allergies, headaches and blood pressure. "Women with hormonal problems have shown excellent results with sound therapy," says Poonam. "Sound therapy works well for

people with arthritis, sinus, migraine, menstrual cramps, colitis, constipation, depression, general anxiety disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, etc, to name a few," adds Priyanka Jay Patel, a Mumbai-based sound therapist and founder of Sound Healing India.

According to French physician Dr Alfred A. Tomatis, sounds dictate our energy levels and overall sense of well-being. He founded the Tomatis method in which sounds are used to



A session at Spanda Healing, Mumbai

stimulate the brain, which then helps cure many ailments including attention disorders, communication problems and even improve developmental conditions like autism.

Appropriate sound frequencies act on the hypothalamus and calm the mind. It is, hence, extremely useful in stress disorders and emotional problems. Raipur-based teacher Vikas Bhuvania was unable to sleep well for a long time owing to emotional turmoil. "I was unable to calm my mind but the sounds of singing bowls gave me the mental relief that I was longing for. It helped me even try to forgive and forget, thus releasing my emotional blockages. I am a much better person now," he says.

Studies show the positive effects of sound and music on a child's brain development. It is gentle and non-

invasive, which is safe for children. "I have worked with children as young as ten days old and have seen dramatic impact," says Prasenjit. "Sound healing is useful in many ways for kids, from strengthening a child's immunity to helping him gain confidence and improving academic performance," adds Priyanka.

### Music therapy

Sound healing is not the same as music therapy. While sound healing uses specific frequencies to heal the body, music therapy uses a mix of frequencies and harmonies that relax the body and mind.

Music therapy works on the principles of resonance and entrainment where it uses the structure of music and rhythm to address a particular health

### Everyday sounds

Tips to incorporate the beneficial effects of sound in your daily life:

- Laughing helps increase levels of serotonin, which, in turn, brings down stress.
- Listen to your favourite music or listen to some meditation music. One can also listen to binaural beats to soothe and balance brain waves. Or simply chant Om.
- Learn sound therapy. Use the bowls once daily.
- Take a few minutes to listen to nature—a bird singing, wind blowing through the trees, or a river or a stream.

issue. It is beneficial for pain control, relaxation, meditation, sleep, accelerated learning and enhanced productivity. "Listening to music increases alpha and theta parts in your brain waves. It also releases endorphins in your brain that reduce pain and give you a feeling of happiness," says music therapist Dr Bhaskar Khandekar.

The ancient system of *naad* yoga recognises the impact of music and its vibrations to uplift one's level of consciousness. Indian classical ragas have always been known to have healing effects. "Music therapy depends on the right intonations and use of the basic elements of music such as notes, rhythm, volume, beats and melody. Ragas have specific characteristics and different ragas are applied in different cases," says Bhaskar.



Poonam Dhandania, clinical sound therapist and meditation facilitator



Playing, performing or even listening to the appropriate ragas can work as complementary medicine. Our body and mind undergo subtle changes throughout the day, which triggers different moods and emotions. Therefore, one needs to listen to different ragas at different times for the right impact. "Different ragas create a balance of various elements as needed by the individual. Ragas harmonise the effects of climate and its impact on the physical body. While most ragas are like targeted medicine for a patient, you can listen to ragas to just relax and enjoy," explains Chintan.

### Growing awareness

Most sound therapists believe people in India are now becoming more receptive to alternative therapies. "Music therapy is slowly gaining ground in India as a potential supplement for the management of neurological disorders, across major

### Meridian sound healing

Ancient physicians discovered a framework where repetitive energy flows along the pathways, also known as meridians or points in the body. A particular organ or a system has an association with a specific channel. A blockage or a disharmony in the body's meridians gives rise to ailments. The meridians are accessible through touch or sound that relieves chronic conditions. "There are primarily two sound systems—one is the Chinese, followed by the Tibetan singing bowl therapists, and the other is the Indian, which follows the concept of marma

bindus (vital points in the body). The Chinese system places the bowls at the feet where all the meridians converge, and subsequently, the therapist plays the bowl. The Indian system uses specific marma bindus for a particular disorder. Meridians transfer the energy directly to the point where there is a disturbance, thereby saving time and effort for both the therapist and the patient," explains Prasenjit. "Most singing bowls make a deep tone like that of a penetrating Om sound," adds Chintan. "Om is the sound that one hears when we chant all the 50 Sanskrit syllables together, which is a truly harmonious sound."

hospitals," says Bhaskar.

"People are willing to look at what alternative medicine can do. But it will take a while to change the mindset of an entire nation, which is conditioned to take prescription drugs. Sound heal-

ing isn't that popular yet in India, but it's picking speed," says Poonam.

Sound therapists hope more people sit up and listen, if not to cure ailments, at least to calm down and de-stress. □