

## Holistic Health Care

This short guide is a starting point to assist you in choosing ways to take a more holistic approach to looking after yourself, your overall health and well being and also to share with you the ways in which you can use complementary therapies to help you along the way.

### HOLISTIC APPROACH TO HEALTH

To take a holistic approach to our Health means that we look at the whole of us – our physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual selves and see what positive actions we can take to create a state of balance in all these aspects of our self. These "parts" of us are inter-related for example, when we are overworked this will show up in many different physical, psychological and emotional "symptoms" such as: Headaches, Neck and Shoulder tension, digestive problems, back pain, increased irritability, anxiety, insomnia, poor mental clarity, exhaustion, weepiness, fatigue, lowered libido etc.

In making choices about key areas which influence your health e.g how much work and the type of work you do, the type of foods you eat, relaxation activities, exercise to take etc it is important that you do what feels right for you, what you enjoy doing and what you can realistically fit into and maintain as part of your lifestyle. Then you will find that you will be naturally incorporating health-enhancing activities into your Life without it seeming like a big effort or strict regime. All in all I would be realistic and choose what you know will make you happy and will work for you!

### KEY FACTORS WHICH AFFECT OUR OVERALL HEALTH

The key areas which influence your health & general well being are: your relationships with partners, children, family, colleagues and of course yourself; your Work (paid or unpaid); your Finances; your Leisure & Relaxation time; your Diet and personal habits e.g drinking, smoking etc; Exercise

routine; the environment you live in. In an ideal world all of these key areas of our lives would be in balance and would bring out the best in us. However, in reality this is not often the case and these key areas are often a source of stress and imbalance in our lives.

### HOW DO I IMPROVE MY OVERALL HEALTH & SENSE OF WELL BEING?

So, we need to take stock every now and again and look at these key areas – to see what is working for us and what is no longer working for us. It is a kind of assessment of each of these areas and once we have done this we will be able to see more clearly what practical & realistically attainable actions we need to take to try and bring more balance and harmony into that area of our life. Often we simply get stuck in certain habits & routines and when we take the time to re-evaluate what we are doing with our lives and how we are choosing to use our time then we feel we have the freedom & power within us to make positive changes in our lives.

Take the following fairly typical example: a woman who works part time during the days, has relationship, financial and family commitments. She works hard both at work in the day, at home & with family members in her personal life and has little leisure and relaxation time. She feels over-pressured, suffers from fatigue, occasional headaches, lower back & neck tension, sometimes she suffers from insomnia. Her diet is imbalanced and she often misses lunch and snacks on sweet things. She would like to have more energy, would like to spend more time relaxing & enjoying herself and would like to feel more relaxed in general.

Using this example, there are **many adjustments** which this person could make in their Life which would help improve her overall health and sense of well being. This may range from: letting go of certain tasks which she feels she "ought" to do to focusing on doing what needs to be done as a necessity; it may involve asking for the help and support of others in certain tasks at work

or in the home. Changes in her diet would be helpful in increasing energy levels by choosing to eat more fresh fruit & veg, increasing her carbohydrate intake and cutting down on the sweet, sugary foods. She could decide to dedicate one evening a week just for herself to relax choosing an activity that she finds relaxing and enjoyable and could perhaps treat herself to a massage or a facial once every 6 weeks.

So, in your own Lives it would be useful to sit down every once in a while – preferably before a crisis!! – and take an honest look at what you see to be key areas of your Life, how they are influencing your overall physical, emotional and psychological health.

- Then **make a list of what is working for you** – what makes you feel happy, healthy and contented and what is no longer working for you – **what brings you stress** and has a detrimental effect on your physical, psychological and/or emotional health?. **What would I like to change? How can I do that?**

- **Keep on with what is working and either modify or completely let go of what isn't working for you.** This may mean making small adjustments to your Lifestyle such as eating a piece of fruit a day, joining a meditation class, taking time to go for a walk in Nature at the weekend. This may also mean that you want to make "bigger" changes in your Life such as changing your job or relationship or letting go of certain friends in your world, to being more assertive with your boss, to letting go of tasks that feel like a chore or letting go of the need to pressurise yourself for not doing the washing up one evening! - the list is endless really.

Do what is right and realistically workable and achievable for you! It is your Life so enjoy it!

There are many self-help books available which can assist you in this process. Also local colleges & community projects run a

range of self-development courses to provide you with support & guidance along the way.

## **The Role Of Complementary Therapies In Creating & Maintaining Good Health & Wellbeing**

Complementary therapies have been known and applied for thousands of years by many ancient civilisations: by African people, Native people of North, Central, South America & the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand, the Egyptians, Greeks, Roman, Chinese etc. These ancient cultures recognised the benefits of using natural therapies in preventing and healing ill health and they also incorporated herbs, oils etc into their daily lives & spiritual practises.

There has been a resurgence of many "old" healing therapies as people have begun to recognise their value in their health and everyday lives. **The role that Complementary Therapies have to play in helping you to create and maintain a balanced state of health and well being is potentially very powerful.** They most certainly have many positive effects on our **WHOLE SELF** - our Physical, Psychological, Emotional and Spiritual beings. There are many, many therapies and practices to explore and find out about and - so have a look into whatever you feel drawn to.

## **Meditation**



is the practice of stilling and centring the Mind so that the endless Mind chatter quietyens down! This enables you to relax, switch off from the outside world and gives you the time and space to let go

and receive the inner healing that you need. Practising meditation also helps you to deal with the challenges of your everyday world, enabling you to respond to situations in a calmer, more centred, relaxed way – and boy oh boy do we need that!!

There are many different forms of meditation: using mantras (words) which

help to calm, still & focus the Mind; focusing on an object such as a candle or a flower either in your mind's eye or with your inner eye; guided meditations where you go on an inner journey e.g to a peaceful garden; colour meditations where you can breathe in a colour you feel you need e.g Orange to revitalise and energise or Blue to calm and relax. Your best bet is to attend a meditation class or buy a book that teaches you ways to meditate and then you can experiment with what feels right for you.



Many people find it a challenge to sit and be physically and mentally still – it does take practice but becomes much easier with time. **If it really does not suit you to be physically still, then you can do an active meditation...** For example, many people find gardening, painting or cooking a meal, maybe even cleaning (!) relaxing – **it is not what you do it is the way you do it!** – so choose whatever enables your Mind to switch off, so that you can simply enjoy and be absorbed in the moment.

## Reiki



Reiki is a powerful, natural healing method and is a Japanese word meaning Life Force Energy.

Each individual has their own Life Force (or vital energy) flowing constantly through them, which nourishes and maintains balance within the physical body and its' systems, the mind and the emotions. When a person falls into a state of dis-ease, the body, mind and emotions become imbalanced and their vital energy becomes disrupted and is unable to flow properly.

Reiki works by recharging the person with positive energy energy. This stimulates our natural healing mechanisms on ALL levels –

physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

## What Can Reiki Be Used For?



Reiki is effective in bringing about relief from the effects of stress, it accelerates the body's own natural healing ability, eases the pain of chronic illness and leads to greater physical, psychological and emotional balance and well being.

Reiki is a non-intrusive therapy – the client is fully clothed & the therapist can work both with hands on or off your body – thus making it more suitable for shy or nervous clients.

## Reiki & Other Therapies

Reiki can be safely used in conjunction with other therapies – either conventional or complementary – it will enhance the healing effects of all other therapies. As a practitioner then Reiki will help to enhance the therapeutic effects of your treatments. Once you are attuned to Reiki, you will naturally combine this healing energy with whichever therapy you practise. This will be of benefit to your clients in that during treatments their own inner healing process will be “doubly” activated. It also energises you whilst you are giving treatments helps to protect you from being drained out. Reiki can also be used as a treatment in its own right and can be used for working on yourself.

## How Do I Learn Reiki?

It is helpful to have some experience of meditation or complementary therapies before learning Reiki although it is **not essential** – the most important part is to have an open mind and heart!

There are three levels of Reiki training (1, 2 and Masters) and each stage involves practice, theory and an attunement to both the Usui and sometimes Tibetan systems. Teaching notes are provided for all levels of training and certificates issued on completion of the course.

Attunements are the process by which a Reiki Master transmits energy to the student so that they connect and open up to becoming a channel for the Reiki energy. Once a person is attuned, Reiki will flow in from the top of their head through the upper energy centres (chakras) and will flow out through their hands. The ability to channel this energy will then stay with you for the rest of your Life. Even if you do not use Reiki for several years, the moment you decide to work as a channel again, then the energy will begin to flow again.

## Aromatherapy



Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils to assist in the treatment and prevention of many physical, psychological and emotional conditions;

they are also lovely to use in your daily routine to maintain health and simply for their beautiful aromas.

Essential oils are extracted from the flowers, seeds, leaves, stems, bark and roots of herbs, shrubs, plants and trees and are – they are they are literally the life force in liquid, aromatic form. Each oil has its own unique aroma and therapeutic qualities, some oils have more effect on the Body whilst others have more effect on the Mind and/or the Emotions.



They are used in small amounts and can be applied through Massage, Bathing, Inhalations, Body and Facial Creams, Compresses, Oil Burners, even for cleaning and

washing clothes etc. The oils actually enter into our system via the nasal passages and also the skin when used in massage and bathing. It is important to use the correct dosage when using essential oils and also to make sure that you apply the safety precautions as certain oils cannot be used for everyone e,g pregnant women, people with

sensitive skin, children and babies. So before using oils, purchase a good basic book or seek the advice of a qualified aromatherapist.

## Massage



There are many forms of massage e,g Aromatherapy, Shiatsu, Indian Head, Swedish, Chinese, Thai etc which all use different techniques. However, all massage is based on

the principal of therapeutic touch which eases discomfort in the Body, Mind and Emotions.

On a physical level, massage improves the circulation and aids lymphatic drainage thus eliminating toxins and impurities from the body; it also improves the function of the nervous system ; improves the tone of the skin and eases the discomfort of tension which settles in the physical body often as a result of stress e,g in the back, neck, shoulders. Massage is also helpful for many other conditions such as arthritis, rheumatism, poor circulation, cellulite, headaches, eyestrain, general aches and pains.

On an emotional and psychological level, massage reduces the effects of stress by encouraging deep relaxation and a letting of mental and physical tensions. It is therefore a very useful therapy in treating conditions such as insomnia, fatigue, anxiety, depression, mental confusion, PMT etc

### Aromatherapy Massage

Is a very gentle form of massage and the overall effects of the massage are enhanced by the use of essential oils blended in to the base oil. The choice of oils used during a treatment will reflect the needs of the client and also their personal smell preferences. Depending on the oils used the treatment effect can be energising or deeply relaxing and grounding.

## Swedish Massage



This form of massage differs from aromatherapy massage as it is more invigorating and does not involve the use of

essential oils. Swedish massage is useful in cases where you still require the effects of relaxation but feel you need a more energising physical treatment for example, when you have muscular aches and pains following prolonged physical activity.

## Indian Head Massage



This massage focuses on the Head (Scalp & Face), Neck and Shoulders which are areas where many of us carry considerable tension. It has all benefits of all massage techniques but is particularly helpful for headaches, neck &

shoulder tension & stiffness, eye strain, sinus congestion. It can be carried out over clothing making it ideal for shy or nervous clients and for those who like the additional benefit of aromatherapy it can be applied with a nice blend of oils to relax and uplift you. It is also popular with less able bodied people and pregnant women as the treatment can be carried out whilst sat in a chair.

## Reflexology



Is a type of foot massage using talcum powder (some therapists use oils). Finger and Thumb pressures are applied to different parts or zones of the feet which correspond to different parts of the whole body. So during

a treatment, each organ and system of the body is stimulated in turn, this then encourages the natural flows of healing energy to be activated within the person's whole body.

Reflexology is not ticklish! It is actually a very relaxing experience with powerful therapeutic

effects: it improves circulation; helps to release toxins and impurities from the body; helps relieve stress and generally balances out the whole body and revitalises energy levels. It is helpful for many conditions such as back pain, headaches, digestive, circulatory and excretory conditions.

We trust that this short guide has been of interest to you and I hope that it inspires you to develop a more holistic approach to your Health (if you don't do already!) and encourages you to incorporate one or many of the great healing therapies into your Lifestyle. Enjoy the journey!!

### Interesting Reading:

**Anderton, Bill** "Meditation for Every Day" Piatkus

**Balkam, Jan** "Aromatherapy" Blitz Editions

**Markham, Ursula** "Managing Stress" Element

**Price, Shirley** "Practical Aromatherapy" Thorsons

**Tisserand, Robert** "Aromatherapy for Everyone" Penguin

**Gillanders, Ann** "The Family Guide to Reflexology" British School of Reflexology

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If you are a Stockport resident, have a mental or physical ill health condition and are on a low income, we are able to offer complementary therapies on a donation basis. The therapies available are:

Reflexology, Aromatherapy, Swedish and Indian Head massage, Reiki and hot stone therapy.

For further information please contact the coordinator or visit our website

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