

Sounding out stillness

I'm sitting low to the floor on a futon that is worn and comfortable, facing a healer who has just struck two metal tuning forks, one against the other, and held them up to either side of my head. A profound vibration is pulsing through me and, for a few moments, all I can hear is calm.

"I call this a tune-up," laughs Trisha Pope, who has been practising as a sound healer in the Montreal area since 1989.

Sound healing, also known as harmonic medicine, is one of the lesser-known alternative therapies. Practitioners use drums, singing bowls, the voice and countless other tools to improve the energy flow in the body and spirit.

"Sound connects through deep pockets of energy in our systems, which are designed to rise," says Zacciah Blackburn, director of the New England Sound Healing Research Center and founder of The Center of Light, a sound healing facility in Ascutney, Vermont. "It's through these hidden doorways that we truly connect to ourselves and one another."

Earlier this year, Blackburn organized the first East Coast Symposium on Sound Healing, which is where Pope first met him, along with 150 other healers who were gathered to discuss the subtle art of healing through sound.

"The human voice is multi-dimensional. It's connected to all the events of your life, your spirit, your physical health,

your self-esteem..." says Pope. "But singing is seen in North America as an aesthetic, and there's judgment about the voice — you're good or you're bad."

When this judgment is diminished, there is more freedom to explore the energetic possibilities of the voice, and of connecting through the inherent vibrational qualities of sound.

Blackburn gives the example of two tuning forks placed next to each other, tuned to the same frequency. They naturally resonate. As human beings, we work the same way. Resonance is the basis for the broad history of the spiritual application of sound, as well as its modern incarnation as a profession, which draws heavily on the many healing traditions that exist around the world.

"There's always been praise of god," says Pope. "All over the world, everybody sings for 'god', whoever that may be. Opening your heart and creating sound together in sacred space is a very powerful practise."

The very act of seeking through prayer brings us healing and opening.

Sound healing is an ancient and widespread art that is relatively new to the array of holistic therapies in the West. It was pioneered professionally in the early 1950's by Dr. Peter Manners, who was a physician and osteopath.

Since then, there have been several major contributors to the profession and its development. One of these important figures is Jonathan Goldman, who is the founder of the Sound Healers' Association, now based in Boulder,

Colorado, and a member of the International Society for the Study of Subtle Energy and Energy Medicine.

“Sound prepares a person for silence,” says Goldman, who believes that experiencing or participating in sacred sound is an essential part of spiritual development.

“A lot of how sound works is in releasing old patterns,” Blackburn agrees. “The sounds themselves are revealing answers to questions within that we probably didn’t know existed.”

Many of us are familiar with vague feelings of stagnation and dissatisfaction, often a result of disconnection within the self and restriction around the energy centres of the body.

“In getting disconnected from tribal practices, we move into a mechanistic universe rather than an intuitive one,” says Pope. “Intuitive cultures tend not to be the ones that develop computers and cars, however there is a much larger sense of self, and of living in harmony with nature and each other.”

Sitting in the calm of the reverberations that seemed to envelop me in Pope’s office, and feeling a space open where there was restriction, I feel I have come to an understanding of the importance of sound to the subtle mysteries we are living.