
JUNE REVIEW

by Anna Knight

Bowen Technique



[Diane and her relaxed assistant]

Wearing one of her several complementary hats, Diane Kendrick gave an information-packed presentation on this gentle method of treating muscular problems. Within the short time allotted to a speaker we discovered a little about the history, a great deal about the theory and practice of Bowen technique, and watched a short demonstration. The treatment looked so good that I would happily have changed places with the lucky person lying on the couch.

Bowen Technique is a non-manipulative and non-invasive form of very gentle body-work. As usual in complementary health care, the list of conditions successfully treated is much greater than one initially supposes – but we all know that, don't we!

Founder Tom Bowen, an Australian masseur who developed the technique in 1906, is reputed to have carried out 280 treatments a week and worked for a donation rather than a set fee – rather like spiritual healers do now. If my arithmetic is correct that works out at 56 treatments a day working a 5-day week. Quite an achievement for someone who left school at the age of 14! Tom Bowen did not allow any one else to teach the technique until after his death, and it was not until 1980 that it became more widely taught. Now the number of practitioners is increasing fast.

Bowen Technique has some important bonuses for clients. Ideally the client is lying down but this is not essential. Also there is generally no need to undress as all the basic moves are performed through clothes (although it may be easier to treat some areas of the body if some clothes are removed).

So many of us work with energy in different ways and I particularly liked the following analogy. "One possible theory of the underlying mechanism of the 'Bowen Technique' is the resonance model demonstrated by stringed instruments. A string held and played at a particular point will establish a resonance that creates a distinctive tone. Changing the point where the string is held creates a vibrational pattern that correlates with a specific frequency. . . Just as a string must be played carefully to create the required sound, so must the structures of the body be activated correctly to effect a full response".

Watching Diane work, it was clear that she used a very gentle technique with small rolling movements being made on the surface muscles of the body and the similarity of plucking a stringed instrument could be seen. The pressure used in a treatment varies from firm to very light and it is important that these moves are performed carefully and precisely and that the therapist does not over-treat. The moves allow relaxation of the muscle to take place; some also divert the energy flow within the body and Diane told us that she feels this as a small electrical charge. A vital part of the technique is that the practitioner makes several moves and then leaves the room in order to allow the energy to settle before returning to do another sequence of moves. During a typical treatment of an hour there may be several breaks of two minutes or more.

Diane said it is recommended that the client receives no other form of body work at the same time as Bowen in order not to confuse the messages that are being sent to the brain, however flower remedies and homoeopathy work well alongside the technique. It seems that the practitioner is working at both physical and energy levels and the effect on the client as with so many complementary therapies is on the physical, mental and emotional bodies.

I was delighted to hear that Bowen practitioners are carrying out research into the effects of treatments on frozen shoulders, which Diane tells us is a condition that responds well to the technique. In fact it was through listening to a talk on radio when the interviewer had a dramatic curative response 'live on air' for this very condition which prompted Diane to train in the technique.

