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— HAVE YOU TRIED —

THE BOWEN TECHNIQUE

THE BOWEN TECHNIQUE IS A GENTLE THERAPY THAT CAN HELP PROMPT
THE BODY TO SELF-CORRECT UNDERLYING PROBLEMS

Words: Karen Young

The Bowen technique is named after Thomas Bowen, an Australian who began developing his approach in the 1950s. Bowen worked at a local cement works, but his interest in helping to alleviate pain and suffering in others led him to notice that subtle movements applied to the body could generate profound effects. He had no formal training in any health disciplines or therapies, but at his peak was performing around 13,000 treatments a year.

The technique was brought to the UK in the early 1990s by Julian Baker and after a quiet start, harnessed huge interest when an article was published in the national press. Even today, the appetite for Bowen continues to grow, no doubt because of reports that this very gentle ‘hands-off, hands-on’ approach can produce lasting results.

Like all complementary therapies, a Bowen session begins with a full consultation. Then, once you are lying back comfortably on a couch or other flat surface, the practitioner will start applying a range of subtle ‘moves’ across specific areas of muscle, ligament, tendon and connective tissue.

“Each move used by the practitioner will also gently work the superficial fascia, directly beneath the skin,” says Paula Esson, a Bowen technique practitioner and trainer and member of the Federation of Holistic Therapists. “This layer of tissue, a bit like ultrafine bubble wrap, encases and connects every tissue in the body and is neurologically and hormonally rich. As a result, even the gentlest palpation



of the superficial fascia can enable the practitioner to reach tissue much deeper in the body and direct the brain’s attention to where an underlying problem lies, so that it can assess and self-correct this. To aid the process, the practitioner will leave the room for a short while, so that the body has some ‘quiet time’ to respond and the opportunity to reset itself.”

A key skill of the Bowen practitioner is knowing which area of a client’s body to apply moves to, in order to trigger the necessary cascade response that helps to restore function. Clients often report feeling deeply relaxed during treatment, along with sensations of heat or tingling where the practitioner has applied moves – even after they have left the room.

Sessions last from 45 minutes to an hour and cost between £30 and £85, depending on the length of treatment, location and therapist.

The Federation of Holistic Therapists (www.fht.org.uk) is the UK and Ireland’s leading professional association for complementary, holistic beauty and sports therapists. ☪

Five benefits of the Bowen technique

1 Suffer from tight hamstrings? A study in 2011 involving 120 asymptomatic subjects showed that just one session of Bowen improved hamstring flexibility.

2 As the Bowen technique prompts the body to relax and naturally realign itself, it can help to relieve aches and pains resulting from poor posture or function, including headaches and joint pain.

3 A small pilot study in 2011 showed that the technique helped to improve shoulder mobility and associated function in all 20 participants with frozen shoulder.

4 Struggling to sleep? Many clients report an improvement in their sleep quality after a Bowen session.

5 Equine Bowen therapy is popular with horse owners. Sessions are said to help with unbalanced gait, uneven wear on shoes, stiffness on one rein and shoulder and back problems, with the practitioner treating both the horse and rider together, as a single unit of movement.

BEFORE YOU GO

The Bowen technique should only be used alongside standard medical care and not as an alternative. Consult your GP or other health professional for medical attention and advice.