

Ancient art that harnesses our natural energy

Do healing hands hold the answers?

Illuminated by a flickering candle, embraced by the soothing sound of music, people from all walks of life come together to practise and learn an ancient healing art.

Forgotten for centuries, this is Reiki and it could be just what the doctor ordered for the stresses and strains of modern living.

Originating from Asia, it is a form of healing where energy is channelled from one person to another through the hands.

Claimed to have a positive effect on many conditions from bee stings to chronic illness, it has only become widely available in the past decade.

Reiki teacher and practitioner Dr Dagmar Ebster-Grosz PhD runs an Understanding Reiki Workshop in Cheltenham where visitors can see how it works.

After introductions, an explanation of Reiki and 10 minutes of meditation and relaxation, group members of all levels demonstrate their skills.

Volunteers lie on a table while the group take turns giving a 20-minute Reiki session.

Participants are first asked if they object to physical contact, much of which is on the feet, before being told to relax.

Depending on how many people are at the meeting, two or three people surround the person on the table.

With soothing music as the only sound in the room, the practitioners pass their hands over and above the volunteer's body. As they move some people feel immediate and intense heat in the corresponding area before a gentle sense of well-being and relaxation pervades every pore.

Practitioners hold their hands a few inches from the body and head, changing position every few minutes. They simultaneously work on the feet, gently massaging each toe before moving up the ankle.

Dr Ebster-Grosz, who took up Reiki teaching and

Never heard of Reiki? A Cheltenham workshop is being run to introduce you to this ancient form of healing. Lystra Maisey found out more

practice full time in 1996, said: "The workshop is a way of introducing new people to Reiki and also provides continual training for those who are learning for themselves."

"The ever present natural healing energies around us are focused into the therapist's hands where they are channelled into the recipient."

Illness, fatigue and stress can restrict the flow of energy inside the body, which Reiki can help to release.

Following the session visitors can ask questions.

Dr Ebster-Grosz added: "There is a danger that all too often it is presented as a hands-on technique that will make one feel better. There is so much more to it than this."

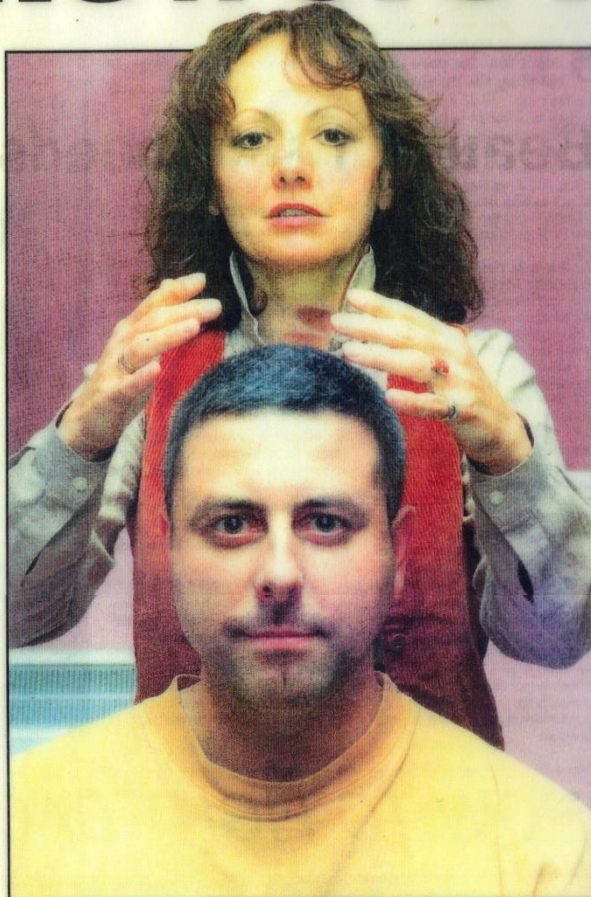
In a full session, lasting at least an hour, the treatment is much more thorough.

"It's like comparing a three course meal with trying something out at a buffet. The main benefit of the workshop is to allow those initiated in Reiki to practise and let visitors see how it works."

Dr Ebster-Grosz, who has written *The Nature of Reiki*, (*Green Life*, £10.95), combines methods of healing with the use of essential oils, crystals and herbal teas.

She offers private consultations at the Reiki Centre in New Barn Avenue and also runs a monthly Reiki meeting.

The workshop is held on the second Wednesday of the month at Parnoor House in Lypiatt Road and costs £4. For more details call 01242 580287.



Dr Dagmar Ebster-Grosz uses Reiki on Justin Alderman

Effects were just amazing

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Justin Alderman, 31, a carpet cleaner from Cheltenham, has had at least 10 treatments.

"I was sceptical at first but my friend mentioned how effective it was. I have never done anything like this before.

"I'm not one of those people who are really into this kind of thing but the effects were amazing. I was interested in my general well-being, it's not that I was ill.

"My arm and leg go completely numb during treatment. There is nothing wrong with them but it is a strange feeling.

"I am quite an agitated person as a rule but much less so than when I started the treatment three

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Karen Chater, 32, has been having Reiki for about six months.

"Reiki is the best thing I have ever done.

"I began going while being treated for allergies," said the insurance underwriter from Tuffley.

"Because of the allergy I felt generally unwell and nothing seemed to help.

"I was very sceptical but really surprised at how much better I felt and the sense of well-being I had.

"Since I started my attitudes have changed and my way of seeing things is different.

"I feel able to cope better and am more aware of

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Terry Butler, from Hucclecote, is a drugs and alcohol counsellor.

Mr Butler, 62, had looked into spiritual healing about four years ago.

He said: "My partner is a reflexologist and mentioned Reiki so I became involved but it wasn't really a conscious decision.

"Since I started I have experienced big changes in my life including changing my career. I now have a different perception of other people. I am less judgmental, and feel people are only trying to do their best for themselves.

"I have become more realistic, and am not so afraid of things any more."



Jane Maisey is in her late forties and lives in Arle Avenue, Cheltenham.

She said: "Reiki has transformed my life. I have suffered from high blood pressure for 30 years and have had all kinds of treatment including beta-blockers.

"I began having Reiki to see if it would help. I heard it was very relaxing and thought it may benefit me. Nothing else seemed to be helping.

"After I began having treatments I couldn't believe it, my blood pressure was normal for the first time in 30 years.

"I feel more relaxed but have a lot more energy now my blood pressure is

REIKI FACTFILE

■ Reiki (pronounced ray-key) is a generic word in Japan and is used to describe many types of healing and spiritual work.

■ The *ki* part is the same word as Chi or Qi, the Chinese word for the Universal Life Force energy which underlies everything.

■ It is thought to have originated around ancient China and Tibet and disappeared for centuries until discovered by a Christian boy's school teacher Dr Mikao Usui in the late 1800s.

■ If you have a medical condition it is recommended you see a conventional doctor in addition to Reiki.

■ Because Reiki is an art rather than a technique, each master and practitioner has a unique style.

■ There are more than 50,000 Reiki masters and one million

practitioners worldwide.

■ Children can learn Reiki while plants and animals can also benefit.

■ The ability to learn Reiki is transferred from teacher to student by a process called attunement.

■ During the attunement the Reiki master systematically works around the body and may use one or more special breathing techniques.

■ Once you have received the attunement you can treat yourself and others.

■ Reiki is practised and taught in three separate but corresponding stages.

■ Stage I concentrates on the physical, Stage II on the emotional and mental state, while the final stage focuses on the spiritual or soul.

She was the leader of the Cheltenham Reiki group from 1996 to 2002.