

Sound Advice

Give tone therapy your ear and hear the difference. BY KENYA MCCULLUM

We usually don't think much about the sounds we experience every day. The birds singing, the hum of a computer or the laugh of a child all can become background noise. But sounds are not just things to ignore—the use of sound can have a powerful effect on your physical and emotional well-being.

“Sounds in your environment can affect how you feel—both psychologically and physically,” says Dr. David Simon, medical director and co-founder of the Chopra Center for Well-Being in Carlsbad, Calif. “It's as simple as if you're trying to fall asleep at night and you're hearing a neighbor playing heavy metal music—chances are it's going to distract you from

drifting off to a sound slumber—to knowing how it feels when you're in a place where there are sounds of nature, beautiful birds and flowing rivers.”

With this idea in mind, part of the work that Simon does at the Chopra Center is tone therapy, during which clients are exposed to sounds for the purposes of healing. These noises can include chants, sounds from

nature, soothing music and the ringing from Tibetan bowls.

Though we aren't accustomed to consciously paying attention to the sounds around us, Simon says that our bodies are focused on them all the time.

Tone therapy maximizes the effects of pleasant sounds on our bodies and can reduce such problems as anxiety and insomnia. In addition, tone therapy can help children with attention deficit disorder become more focused, enhance the immune systems of cancer patients and reduce the agitation of people suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

other and using profanity when you're upset, you just make an 'ah' sound together and feel better.”

Making sounds with another person causes the body to produce oxytocin—a chemical that is associated with trust. Goldman notes, however, that you have to agree on doing this ahead of time, otherwise it's not going to work—and it may make your significant other think you're a little nuts.

FIND YOUR MATCH

When looking for a tone therapist that is right for you, don't be afraid to shop around or turn to Google. Local Web sites that list

Immerse yourself in an environment and sounds that resonate with you.

TONE UP YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Tone therapy is not just good for your body and mind—it can also be good for your relationships. If you're having a fight with your partner, for example, instead of having a heated exchange that can ruin the day for both of you, making a sound together can help you turn down the volume on your anger.

“When we make sounds together, all of the barriers of difference between us disappear, which is so important in terms of breaking down those feelings of separation that we have. That's why it feels good to sing together in church or in a group,” says Jonathan Goldman, author of *The 7 Secrets of Sound Healing*. “So, instead of screaming at each

other kinds of holistic treatments can prove extremely helpful.

Once you've found a few options, ask the potential candidates what modality they use to treat their clients. Some treatment techniques include the use of mantras, where clients will chant specific words or phrases; the use of tuning forks, which are sounded near a patient's ear during the session; and sonopuncture, or the projection of sound to different points of the body (think acupuncture without the needles).

When you make a choice, set up an appointment. The most important thing to remember is that you want to feel better when you leave. If something about the treatment makes you uncomfortable, move on to someone else. ☺

De-Stress with Sounds

Enjoy the benefits of tone therapy without waiting for an appointment with a therapist. Try these ideas any time you are feeling upset or stressed and listen to the way your body responds.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE SOUNDS AROUND YOU

Are there sounds that make you feel good? Or ones that make you cringe? As much as possible, focus on the positive sound experiences in your life.

CONNECT WITH NATURE

Find an outdoor space that resonates with you, like the beach or a local park, and immerse yourself in that environment and its sounds. You'll leave with a soothed soul.

CREATE A “SOUND PHARMACY”

Just as you have a medicine cabinet stocked with pain relievers to cure headaches, you can make a CD or create a playlist for your iPod with sounds that make you feel good.

SING A SONG

Your own voice has powerful benefits for your body and mind, and when you combine it with the music in your sound pharmacy, you can count on feeling better.

