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THE  TIMES

How are your chakras? Why everyone on the A-list has to have a healer



Singer Katy Perry slept with rose quartz crystals after her break up with John Mayer Getty Images - FilmMagic

Peta Bee
Published at 12:01AM, April 7 2015

For years, unloading your innermost thoughts to a counsellor was de rigeur for those undergoing the trials of celebrity. Everyone who was anyone had a shrink and the couches of the most coveted were as sought-after as the boutique studios of an in-form personal trainer.

Now, though, enlightened A-listers who have already embraced mindfulness are seeking alternative forms of therapy from gurus who promise to fix their chakras. The hippy-dippy has gone mainstream and its tell-tale signs — crystals and chunks of black tourmaline, said to create positive energy — have been spotted in the possession of stars such as Angelina Jolie and Victoria Beckham. If you want to impress, the question to drop casually into conversation over coffee these days is, “Who’s your healer?”

Far from being cornered in a church hall or back-street clinic, they are now cropping up in chic establishments such as the private-member health clubs Grace Belgravia in Knightsbridge, southwest London, and the swanky Wakeman Road in Kensal Rise, northwest London. Douglas Ballard, a healer based in Canary Wharf, east London, who charges £130 a session, says he’s seen “bookings boom lately among actresses and business people, mainly wanting to reduce stress in their lives”, while the healing guru of choice for Manhattan-based models, designers and politicians is Olivier Bros, who for several hundred dollars will “check their musculoskeletal, visceral and energy structures for blockages”.

Healers promise a spiritual balance via a somewhat diverse set of practices. Some use their hands to realign your energy patterns, others don’t. I once visited one who tapped my body lightly for what seemed like for ever to unblock my energy channels. It tickled and I had to stifle my laughter. Many offer the take-home trinkets that have become the status symbol of the new breed of healing devotees.

Celebrities seem to have bought heavily into the trend. After breaking up with John Mayer last year, Katy Perry was given the number of a crystal healer by Madonna and claims that she sleeps “with a rose quartz in my hand at night. It’s supposed to help

you find love and also heal your heart.”

Victoria Beckham has also revealed her ritual of using crystals backstage at her fashion shows, specifically pink quartz and black tourmaline. “I carry my crystals with me, which some people might think as odd, but it works for us,” she said.

And the Los Angeles-based Chanel make-up artist Kara Yoshimoto Bua is prone to whipping out lumps of black tourmaline or spraying essential oils on the set of shoots with Halle Berry, Naomi Watts and Jessica Biel to ensure that everyone’s on the same energy wavelength.

Ben Barnett, a former footballer, is based in Grace Belgravia. In addition to Kylie Minogue, he has treated top athletes and celebrities with a treatment that requires his clients to lie on a warm waterbed while he performs a massage with guided meditation. The technique, for which he charges up to £150 an hour, sounds odd, but he has honed it over 20 years and says he gets as many people claiming to feel emotionally healed as physically.

He works as a healer in centres of excellence for sport as well as in clinical settings. “My job is to get people to think outside of how they would normally,” Barnett says. “Some of my biggest successes have been with sports people who struggle to deal emotionally with injuries and non-selection or singers and actresses who have anxiety about their careers.”

All healers offer much the same outcome. They claim to treat everything from anxiety and depression to stage fright and relationship issues. Speak to them and they talk endlessly about “channelling energy” in order to “realign” the chakras (the body’s multiple, invisible energy centres, according to ancient Hindu texts). Some, like Ballard, claim to have cured asthma in one session or to have helped people to walk without crutches.

Sue Knight, the chief executive of the Confederation of Healing Organisations, a body that represents about 1,500 of the UK’s healers, says that healing is an umbrella term that encompasses everything from some types of massage to practices such as reiki and the use of crystals, all designed to coax the body back to working to its full potential.

Where does this energy come from? “Different healers use different channels,” Knight says. “Some believe in a divine power, others think of it as a universal source, but the aim with all is to enable your body and mind to heal themselves.”

She points enthusiastically to the publication in a healing journal called *Explore* of two new peer-reviewed studies, both meta-analysis trials on the effectiveness of the approach, carried out at the University of Northampton. One of the trials, on plants, seeds and animals, seems barely relevant to the new healing trend, while the other looks at the power of non-touch healing on humans but includes prayer and counselling, neither of which your average guru is offering. “Nobody is saying that healing is a cure for anything,” says Knight, “but these trials offer proof that it works better than chance.”

Not according to Dr Guy Staight, who runs a GP practice in South Kensington, southwest London, and dismisses the new studies as “very poor, not hard pieces of scientific research”. There is, he says, very little evidence that healing works, although he concedes that some elements of it — talking, meditation, belief — can offer relief to some people.

“In many ways it can be harmless because it has little effect, but there’s a certain sadness that people hang on to the belief that healers can offer a magic bullet and will spend a lot of money because of that faith in them.”

It’s a view shared by Dr Paul Ettlinger, the founder of the London General Practice in central London, who says that few healers have any medical awareness or training. “The best they can offer is a sort of placebo effect, that you feel better just because you are doing something about it,” he says. “The risk is that people are diverted from essential medical treatment because they have chosen this route and I have seen this happen among my own patients.”

Because the approaches across the board are inexact and unscientific, the medical profession tends to take a dim view of energy healers. Yet healing fervour is unlikely to subside any time soon. Knight sees the sharp increase in celebrity endorsement and crystal-carrying as “a good thing, provided it doesn’t make the industry look too wacky”.

There is, it seems, little chance of it appearing anything less. Ballard tells me that people ask him if he achieves miracles, and that his reply is: “I think I must.” Staight stresses caution: “Use it, but as an additional aid to conventional treatment, if you must,” he says. “Don’t expect accelerated recovery. When it comes to depression, anxiety, stress and grief, there is no shortcut.”

Who’s your healer?

Ben Barnett

£150 an hour; Grace Belgravia; 020-7235 8900

Clients include Kylie Minogue, athletes, footballers

Approach Hydrotherm massage on a warm waterbed, coupled with meditation. Clients select two words or a short phrase — eg, energised, uplifted, positivity — that sums up their desired outcome before treatment begins.

Katie Light

£85 an hour; Wakeman Road; 020-8964 6740

Clients include the Notting Hill set, fashionistas

Approach Reiki, a treatment in which hands hover over the body to realign your chakras and balance energy.

Seka Nikolic

£143 for half an hour; sekanikolic.com

Clients include Elite athletes, including Novak Djokovic; the actress Joely Richardson

Approach Bio-energy healing, said to remove negative energy from your body and to “flick” it away.

Douglas Ballard

£120 an hour; douglasballard.com

Clients include high-flying business and media types

Approach Uses a variety of approaches to realign energy. Claims particularly good results for conditions such as stress, asthma and migraine.

James Philip

£95 an hour at Neal’s Yard, central London; nealsyardremedies.com; £25 for a karmic zap energy-healing workshop at triyoga in Camden on May 8; triyoga.co.uk

Clients include actors, television presenters

Approach Energy healing (touch and non-contact) tailored to the client’s needs.

5 comments



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David Stoch

1 hour ago

On behalf of the Confederation of Healing Organisations:

Dr Guy Staight is quoted as stating “that people hang on to the belief that healers can offer a magic bullet and will spend a lot of money because of that faith in them.” Many healers within the UK work on a donations basis, and all registered healers work to a Code of Conduct that states specifically that they cannot claim to cure nor make false claims.

Secondly, with regard to Dr Paul Ettlinger’s quote regarding people being diverted from essential medical treatment, no registered healer would ever suggest that anyone stops their medical treatment. Healing is a recognised complementary therapy, and as such it works alongside mainstream healthcare. It is very important that anyone seeking healing ensures their healer is registered with a professional association. They can do this via the Confederation of Healing Organisations at www.the-cho.org.uk, via UK Healers, or either of the regulatory councils for complementary therapy – the GRCCT or the CNHC.”

Recommend Reply

Tom Bloomfield

April 07, 2015 13:15

My 93 year old mother always maintains that first you are born, then you die. In between it's not fair.

It is very unfair that people this dim should be so very rich when I and other ToLsters are so much more deserving of excessive wealth.

On the other hand if this is the price to be paid then I'll stay where I am.

Other than for the purposes of schadenfreude, enjoying ridiculing these clowns, do Times readers want this?

3 Recommend Reply

tony Bird

April 07, 2015 08:59

As Ross said, MMTS! I suspect that getting to the position they're in plays hell with their chakras to start with

1 Recommend Reply