



^ THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT: Sound bath meditation at Illuminations Wellbeing Centre; Tibetan tingsha bells; Yin Aroma Yoga® & sound bath meditation at Inspire Yoga.

Healing harmonies

Cultures around the world have used sound for centuries for its therapeutic properties. We look at why it has suddenly become more mainstream

Words **Karen D'Souza**

We are surrounded by sound almost 24/7. And if you think about it, you've probably noticed how some sounds elevate your mood, while others can make your skin crawl. The secret lies in frequencies and vibrations. It's these properties of sound, which several cultures throughout the ages, have utilised to promote healing. Today this form of holistic therapy has hit the mainstream, but beliefs, principles and methods still follow what has been done in the past.

Singing bowls and gongs were used in Tibet long before they became popular in the West. Vedic chanting in India has been used for centuries to calm the mind. Perhaps the oldest known culture to harness the power of sound is Australia's Aboriginal people, who used the didgeridoo's low frequencies to heal injuries and stimulate brain waves.

Sound healers believe that the human body is made of energy, which resonates with certain frequencies. During a healing session a therapist controls the rhythms and frequencies produced by a variety of instruments to gently nudge an individual into a deeply relaxed trance-like state, which they say opens up the mind and body to deeper healing.

"Sound therapy works so well because with minimal resistance one can benefit from the shift in vibrations," says Bharti Jatti Verma, a holistic facilitator and corporate trainer at Illuminations Wellbeing Centre (@illuminationworld). Bharti decided to add sound healing to her toolkit of holistic therapies after experiencing first-hand the therapeutic effects the vibrations from singing bowls had on her body.

Sound healing therapy balances an individual's physical, emotional and mental state

with the aid of various tools such as Tibetan singing bowls, crystal singing bowls, Tibetan tingsha bells, chimes, shamanic drums, tuning forks and gongs, to name a few. Each instrument has a distinct tonality and their effect depends entirely on each individual's receptiveness to the frequencies produced by the instruments.

This is evident in group sound bath meditations. "There are some people who are restless throughout a 1-hour session. If the individual is in a receptive mode it can be a soothing experience. But if a person doesn't believe in it or they haven't made sense of it, they may remain restless and agitated," explains Bharti. "This is also a good sign because it means the sounds are creating changes and shifting things internally." I fell asleep almost instantly during my first sound healing meditation with Bharti, which I'm told is completely normal. Experts say healing occurs even while we're asleep as the sound waves are absorbed by the body.

At Inspire, Lizel Cameron (@thejunglephysician) combines sound healing with aromatherapy during her popular yin and restorative yoga classes. She left a career in the hospitality industry to become a full-time yoga teacher and was drawn to sound healing after a chance encounter. "I had just finished teaching a yoga class and I had a bad headache, so I lay down for a few minutes with my eyes shut. The sound therapy teacher entered the studio to set up for her class and began practising on her instruments. The sound caught my attention and within a few minutes of her playing, my headache was gone," recalls Lizel.

Sound healing therapists say it's the body's natural composition of up to 55-60 per cent

water, which is key to the healing. For example, when a singing bowl filled with water is played, the vibrations cause waves and droplets to jump on the surface of the water. Sound therapy has been used to alleviate pain, stress, anger and anxiety among other ailments. Many sound healing therapists let their intuition guide them when they work with clients. "One of my students was in a seated forward bend during class and I felt like using a tuning fork at the back of her neck. After class she asked me how I knew she had neck pain. I told her I had no idea about her discomfort. She said it had completely disappeared," says Lizel.

Often a therapist will mix different sound healing modalities during a session for an elevated experience. "I have recently added toning along with the crystal singing bowls. My voice is magnified and amplified when blending with the sound of the bowls. Sometimes I surprise myself with how it sounds," says Clare Pardoe (@the_divine_mirror), an intuitive healer and sound healing therapist. Toning has been around for centuries and harnesses the power of the voice to harmonise energetic pathways. An extended vocal sound is created, which produces vibrations that work to release negative emotions and stress from the body.

Has your curiosity been piqued? Why not try a sound bath meditation online? There are several on YouTube. Many sound healers host live sessions on Instagram nowadays. Each type of sound healing will work on your body differently, so you may want to try a few before you settle on one particular type. Or you may choose to go with several. There's no right or wrong choice. Let the sound work its magic. ●