

SACRED SCIENCE

When practised by the truly gifted, energy healing becomes an art form.
Meet the individuals elevating both spirit and mind

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Lush jungles and spectacular scenes of nature serve as the backdrop of Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve's healing treatments

CRYSTAL HEALING FROM ANCIENT EGYPT. Qigong from Neolithic China. Reiki from 1900s Japan. Before tech-based treatments, there was the study of energy and the belief that certain individuals carried an otherworldly ability to realign it. Today, the pursuit of energy healing, aura balancing and vibrational harmony is finding new expression in modern wellness, reimagined through contemporary practices and sanctuaries dedicated to the unseen.

In the hubbub of modern life, we've discarded the ancient practices that once served as pillars of spiritual wellbeing. But for many, a need to return to the grassroots has emerged. From Bali's tranquil retreats to the wellness havens of the Middle East, properties around the world are spotlighting energy healing. Tucked amid the rice terraces of Ubud in Bali, Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, is one such sanctuary. Among its most celebrated experiences is the spiritual

treatment with Ibu Ketut Mursi, a blind healer born into a lineage of revered practitioners. Healing flows through her veins – her maternal grandfather was celebrated for herbal remedies, while her paternal grandfather mastered massage techniques.

Amid shared stories and mindful massages, Mursi's AED 771 treatment combines her innate intuition and healing touch with reflexology and sound therapy to release blocked energy. Perhaps her most impressive trait is her ability to empower energy into incense and water, cementing her status as a luminary of Balinese healing.

Across the region, a community of healers with similar gifts is redefining wellness through reiki, breathwork and more. "My first experience with an energy healer came when I was feeling really overwhelmed and had started to pull away from everyone around me," recalls Layla Kardan, the Dubai-based musician whose magnetic stage

presence mirrors her fascination with inner balance. The co-founder of Contrast Wellness continues, "I knew I needed to release this heavy energy, so I began exploring healing approaches." It was around this time that Kardan also noticed a blockage in her throat chakra and decided to give pranic healing, a technique that uses the body's energy to clear energy blocks and emotional ailments, a shot. "It wasn't like one session changed everything, but after a few I started to feel lighter," she recalls. "It helped me release the negative emotions I'd been holding onto. It also strengthened my singing voice."

For many, working with energy – the human life force that runs through our bodies – may sound froufrou. Many a doctor roll their eyes at the thought of someone opening chakras or unblocking energetic meridians with nothing more than a hovering palm. Yet those same palms, in special cases, carry an inborn gift. A firm believer in energy

healing, Kardan's scepticism vanished when she embraced the unknown. "I went in with an open mind and that's where the magic happens. The real misconception is that healing has to be visible or logical. Sometimes the most profound shifts happen quietly, on an energetic level. Energy responds to belief and openness; if you're closed off, it's hard for any kind of healing to reach you."

As the founder of Thyme With Charlie, Dubai-based sound and energy intuitive Charlie Christie seems to have grown up with the magic touch. "I've never known life without healing," she reveals. "I come from a lineage of powerful women. My grandmother was a psychic medium and my mother a gifted healer. While lineage shaped my path, I believe healing is an innate ability we all possess. It's simply a matter of choosing to believe and finding the right guidance to awaken those gifts within yourself." As her experiences with healing grew, so did a special method that made Christie a known figure. "Sōma Sound Therapy is a signature blend of sound and energy healing, spiritual hypnotherapy, ThetaHealing and intuitive bodywork," she explains. "This process works on the mind-body connection to reprogramme subconscious beliefs and release stored emotions through sound frequencies, movement and energetic rebalancing. Each session guides clients into a trance-like state where profound healing and transformation occur." The aim is to elicit a genuine transformation. "I want my clients to leave as a more aligned version of themselves," she explains. "Healing is like sifting through sand for gold. The insights and shifts appear exactly when you're ready to receive them, in whatever form they're meant to."

Stepping away from the world of healers, Dr Samineh Shaheem provides a different perspective on the power of esoteric healing practices. Looking at them more as complementary wellness science rather than an all-out cure, she shares, "Techniques like meditation, acupuncture and EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) have growing research evidence behind them, and some treatments can significantly support emotional and physiological regulation. Meditation and breathwork activate the parasympathetic system, reducing stress hormones and improving emotional stability. Acupuncture influences neural and hormonal

pathways, while EFT has been shown to reduce anxiety and cortisol levels." A key point to mull over is this – if entire civilisations once relied on these energy medicine traditions, are they not worthy of being celebrated? "While we don't have enough research on every modality, many of these are ancient practices used across cultures and their longevity and effectiveness deserve respect," Dr Shaheem notes. "Therapies integrate the body's energetic and physiological responses with evidence-based techniques, bridging science and spirituality in a powerful way."

Ask Zarine Dadachanji, a Dubai-based sound and gong meditation facilitator who's instantly recognisable by her vibrant kaftans and soothing smile, and the same science comes to the forefront in a more holistic light. "Having studied different healing modalities, I am now of the 'knowing' that sound,

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especially gongs, are the most potent instruments for healing. Sound is fast becoming the 'medicine of the future,'" she reflects. "It works when the vibrations of the instruments enter your body and work through the liquids within. Each organ can pick up the perfect frequency and align and balance itself. Each muscle, cell and tissue picks the right vibration and moves into a state of harmony. Physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing takes place, and there are no religious connotations to the sessions." Transforming her studio into a sanctuary, Dadachanji guides her classes (priced at AED 110 for 60 minutes) to undo the effects of stress, unresolved emotions and overexposure to technology using an array of tools from a conch shell to rainsticks and gongs. It's not as simple as playing an instrument – it's about doing so with intention, something that resides deep within her. "People usually leave smiling and promising to return for more.

On rare occasions, there are tears. Back pain has left several times, and tired bodies go numb and feel reenergised."

Among the many genres of holistic healing, the Wim Hof Method remains one of the most well-known across the globe. Within the region, Florine Baudoin channels her serene energy through the teachings of the Dutch wellness pioneer. "The Wim Hof Method lets people connect with themselves and find inner power. I also do IMD Breathwork, which goes to the root cause of why people feel frustrated, angry or sad. It's a two-hour session for AED 350 where people wear an eye mask and headphones. They listen to binaural beats, frequencies, different voices, music. People start with breathwork and may get triggered by a sound, sentence or the breathing itself. It helps release stored traumas, emotional blockages and anxiety."

A positive shift that's been noticed within the community is the collective recognition of energy healing and holistic wellness practices and their impact in the region. Be it aura balancing, guided yoga, floating sessions or mindful manifestation, empowering one's qi is becoming an essential expression of modern wellbeing. "There's been an incredible shift across the Middle East in how people view mental health and energy. What was once a private or misunderstood topic is now part of everyday conversation. More people are recognising that emotional, physical and energetic wellbeing are deeply interconnected and that true success includes inner balance. It's inspiring to witness this cultural evolution, a collective return to connection, awareness and conscious living which will also support future generations," says Christie. Dr Shaheem adds, "There's a greater openness to experimenting with different modalities, from psychotherapy and breathwork to sound healing and mindfulness. I've seen more men seek therapy and self-development programmes, and also witnessed a growing curiosity about the mind-body connection. This flexibility reflects maturity and an evolution towards an understanding that emotional wellbeing is personal, layered and dynamic; not linear or prescriptive." Together, these voices form a collective symphony – a reminder that true healing is both ancient and evolving, rooted as much in science as in soul. ■

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