

What's the alternative?

Alison Ashmore tries the little-known therapy of Bowen Technique

For years I have suffered with a painful neck and shoulders, which a couple of years ago led to a frozen shoulder. So when county Bowen therapist Kate Fullerlove offered to see if she could help, I had nothing to lose.

Bowen is a hands-on therapy which aims to let the body heal itself. The theory is that the body will recognise problems and imbalance and make the necessary changes to bring it back to a state of equilibrium. Suitable for all ages, it can also help with emotional stress, and improve the quality of life for the terminally ill. Symptoms which have been reported to respond include everything from headaches to foot problems, sciatica to digestive conditions. Among those who have used Bowen are TV adventurer Bear Grylls.

Its founder Tom Bowen was born in Australia in 1916, although his parents were from Wolverhampton. Bowen is now taught in Australian universities to osteopathy students.

Kate, a member of the Bowen Therapy Professional Association, works out of Castle Clinic in Bridgnorth. She trained in Bowen after it sorted out the bad pain she had been suffering in her right hip. Badly injured some years previously in a car accident in Australia, osteopathy had given her short term relief but concentrated Pilates exercise over a number of years helped to finally resolve her back pain. Bowen Therapy was unknown in the UK at that time and only came over here about a decade later, after Tom Bowen's death. Kate says the benefit of Bowen over other treatments is that the body is stimulated to resolve the root cause of the problem and often on-going treatments are not needed.

My first visit lasted 90 minutes; the first half an hour was spent discussing in detail a client record I had filled in. Bowen is an 'holistic' treatment, aimed at getting everything in balance, and Kate was keen to learn as much about me as possible.

Then it was on to the 'massage table' for treatment. Bowen is administered through light clothing, and involved Kate using her fingers and thumbs to make small, rolling movements over precise points in the body. It's not massage, although in my case it did involve some fairly firm pressure being applied – Kate explained that the strength of the contact depends on the individual client.



■ *Kate Fullerlove*

I was also surprised that Kate did not spend all her time focusing on what I considered my problem areas – my neck and shoulders. Instead a lot of her work was based around my legs and back, and I was amazed just how tense and sensitive these areas were.

Between the sets of movements, Kate left the room for me to relax. The idea is that the body can absorb the information it has received and begin the healing process.

After an hour of treatment I left with a list of instructions to follow – drink more water, walk at least 20 minutes each day, don't cross my legs and so on. I have to say that I felt totally different to how I had when I arrived; much more relaxed, less stiff and less lethargic. A second session followed a week later, and again the difference was noticeable. However, I did not expect a long-term complaint like mine to be completely cured so quickly, and more visits are planned.

● A group of Holistic healthcare therapists, including local Bowen Technique practitioners, Reiki therapists, homeopaths and a Pilates and Yoga instructor, will be giving taster treatments to celebrate Tom Bowen's centenary year, at an open day at Low Town Community Hall in Bridgnorth on Saturday 16 April. Drop in between 10.30am and 4pm, have a cup of tea or coffee, and chat to the therapists to find out more about these different therapies. All donations will go to the Tom Bowen Legacy Trust Fund to help children with Disabilities. For more information go to www.bowentechniqueshropshire.co.uk