

Using your voice to heal

Back in history humans communicated only through singing, sounding and body movement. To share a feeling or experience, people would express it using movement and sound. Then we developed words, and now we can convey things we don't feel. In this process we have lost a lot of our natural capacity to feel and specially to express feelings. We just have to take a look at babies and young children who can't speak, to see how they can get their message across without words. It is a natural talent, and it becomes dormant if we do not use it. Being dormant does not mean it is forever lost, but some work needs to be done to rediscover it.

In our society, only those with so called performing skills, get on "stage" and get the buzz out of using their voice. The rest of us become spectators, the ones who want to be entertained. With modern technology we simply push a button and music is provided through a set of speakers.

Listening to music can be very healing and pleasurable. But I feel it has become easier to be entertained than to be the entertainer.

In many of our distant cultures, singing, chanting, etc. is a part of everyday life for everybody, bringing about a community, a togetherness where the individual is an important part of the production.

In most religions the voice plays a big role, either in singing, chanting or through mantras. This has been going on for thousands of years and most people admit that when they are in a church full of people singing or enter a monastery where lots of monks are chanting, that it has a deep effect on them.

Sound and singing is so natural and necessary for our body and soul, that when we are exposed to these situations, it naturally awakens something deep within us. Something we lost somewhere along the line.

Have you ever been deeply moved either from listening to others singing or by hearing your own voice? When I give voice workshops, participants are often surprised and moved when we start to sing after some basic warm up exercises. We all have the potential for enjoying our own voice!

Often, in our childhood, we are told to shut up (children should be seen not heard). This create blocks in our voice. Were you not invited to join the school choir? Immense blocks towards singing are created in these situations. Also as grown ups, we are encouraged not to speak our truth. As a result, the voice shifts to the throat where there is very little resonance, because false speech that resonates in the whole body does not feel good.

We are all born with a natural beautiful voice. Have you ever heard a baby crying out of tune? They can produce very loud sounds for long periods without straining or losing their voice. They use their whole body as a resonator. It is this art most of us loose as we grow up.

So how can we use our voice to heal our voice?

The healing effect of our voice is immense if trained properly, and it can be used for healing both yourself and others. The ways and techniques used in different cultures are endless.

What seems to work well, also in this culture, is group singing. The most effective way is chanting, which is a continuous repetition of a few words or lines. After the words are learned and we start to relax, it is easier to sing in tune and we start to open up to listening. In this process healing starts to take place, a healing of our voice and therefore automatically a healing of our whole being. Our voice is our main means of expression, and it is partially blocked through hurts from the past. When we start opening up our voice, we start to heal these hurts. Healing with voice is the most joyful and gentle way I have come across.

Another way to heal with your voice is by toning. Toning is producing pure tones and holding them. The easiest sound to make is the Uh-sound. Just try it - put your lips right out with only a tiny little

opening. The mouth is wide open on the inside and the jaws are as wide apart as possible. We need a resonant and soft voice, and this Uh-sound is the easiest one to achieve for that. As you are doing it, you might want to close your eyes and start to feel where the sound sits in your body. Experiment with the same sound in the whole of your range, both low and high - and remember, you can't do this out of tune! It is very important to realise that it does not matter how it sounds, what really matters is how it feels.

If you want to continue, try with the Ah-sound which is created with a wide open mouth and then with the EE-sound.

For people who are really keen on this, it is time to move into harmonics. Harmonics, also referred to as overtones, are by some said to be the most healing sound the human voice can produce.

Harmonics are natural to many cultures, but in the western world are basically unknown. Initially harmonics sounds like a lot of noise to many people. But if we take time to listen and start to feel this sound running through the body, it becomes apparent why it is so powerful. It is the most fun, exiting and useful sound I have ever learned. A variety of harmonics have their own special effects.

Healing with voice has happened for thousands of years and is still happening in Third World countries. It is a lost art in the western world, but fortunately it is starting to come back. Voice courses and sound/voice therapy is becoming increasingly available as are tapes and books on the subject.

You can start right now by taking a big full breath... and a big sigh... And another big breath... and let go... Ahhhh! Deep breathing and letting go is a very good start, and it feels good.

Happy Singing

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