

## **What is Sound Healing and how does Sound Healing work? – Sarah Stephenson**

Sound Healing is a very ancient practise that is currently enjoying a resurgence. It has been used by the ancient Greek and Egyptian civilisations and can be found in the Vedic scriptures of India. There are Shamans in indigenous tribes that still use the practise today, such as the Native American Navajo people. The use of music and sound as a therapeutic tool is a simple, non-invasive process that can bring the mind, body and spirit into harmony and balance. This is realised by toning, singing, chanting, or using different instruments of sound: tuning forks, tibetan or crystal bowls, gongs and drums.

Everything in the Universe vibrates at its own individual frequency, including the human body and all of its complexities. If part of our body is unwell or we have a 'dis-ease', then the whole body responds and feels out of sync. We can bring the body back into alignment and to its natural harmonious state by using sympathetic vibrations and resonance. Every cell in our body enjoys sound, and also responds well to sound (if you strike a tuning fork and place it on your head or knee, you can hear and feel the vibrations the sound creates). Also, sound travels at great speed in water (3350 mph to be precise), and we are made up of 70% water!

One of the major principles of Sound Healing is entrainment; this was discovered by a Dutch scientist called Christian Huygens in 1665. He also happened to be the inventor of the pendulum clock, and this is where his concept started; after leaving two pendulum clocks hanging together on the same wall for several hours, they eventually synchronised, swinging at the same speed. When entrainment occurs, small amounts of energy are transferred between the two sources. Since it takes less energy to pulse in co-operation, the source with the less powerful vibration locks into the one with the most powerful vibration.

We see the use of resonance and entrainment at work in a Sound Healing treatment; if a person is out of balance (physically, mentally or emotionally), they will lock into the healing sound that is created. Certain sound frequencies have been identified in recent research, which relate to specific parts of the body; with the knowledge and application of these particular sounds, the Sound Healer is able to work on specific disorders.

When we use our voices as a healing tool, we try to articulate pure, soft vowels; we manipulate the tongue and mouth position to create a good resonating chamber, which boosts and emphasises the harmonics of a note. As we sound a pitch or fundamental frequency, there are a series of lighter sounds above that note, which are created by harmonically related wavelengths. This is called the harmonic series; all the notes in the harmonic series are related to the fundamental note, and created by exact mathematical ratios.

We become more aware of the harmonics when we are in a good, resonant, acoustic space, such as a church; here the harmonics are accentuated and a richer sound is produced. Ancient cultures understood the power of harmonics, and used this knowledge when creating the sound chambers in sacred sites, such as Stonehenge. When we hear music rich in harmonics, like Gregorian chant, Indian classical singing or A Cappella singing, it induces an altered state of consciousness; it changes our

brain patterns so that we feel more relaxed. The energy created by the harmonics gives us our tonal quality and is where we carry the information or consciousness.

The basic scale goes back thousands of years and is linked to the harmonic scale. Each fundamental note, interval and harmonic is created by a mathematical ratio; for example concert pitch 'A' has a vibratory cycle of 440 times per second; an octave produces a 2:1 ratio, and the mathematical ratios of the harmonic series are 1:1, 2:1, 3:1, 4:1 carrying on to infinity. These simple mathematical ratios can be found everywhere in life and the cosmos; from crystals, leaves, proportions of the human body, to the structure of an atom and in the orbits of planets. Many great cathedrals and ancient sacred buildings were erected by architects using specific ratios. Goethe described architecture as "frozen music"!

Musical Intervals are created by two notes played at the same time. Depending on the space between the two notes, different harmonies are created - these may be dissonant or consonant to our ears and senses. In our daily lives we feel and work with dissonance and consonance, depending on how we are feeling, what we are thinking, and how we receive the world around us. We are thrown many challenges in life, which can create tension and turmoil within us.

In a Sound Healing treatment, different scales and intervals are used to move energy and unblock imbalances that we may have in the mind or body (this can be with the voice only or with other instruments, such as BioSonic tuning forks); dissonant intervals may be used to stir up emotions, and consonant intervals offer the resolve. Space is very important in healing.

By using the different spaces created by different intervals, we can help integrate both body and emotion, and reconnect with our true nature. We need all intervals to make up the rich tapestry of life. It is from our difficult experiences that we learn and grow as human beings; we need them to live out our full potential. If we can learn to understand, accept and embrace the dissonance in our lives, we can heal our wounds and allow our souls to come back in to balance.

*"The process of moving into higher states of being begins with dissonance. During dissonance our life becomes challenged. The more we deny our challenge the greater the dissonance becomes. ....We must seek change and seek resolutions from a higher perspective.!" – John Beaulieu, N.D., Ph.D.*

Rhythm is a most important aspect of music. We can be influenced and effected by it in many ways: the drive of a rhythmic beat can energise us, encouraging us to dance or sing; on the other hand we can be moved by the meter of a beautiful piece of poetry or prose. In music, it has been proven that slower tempos slow our breathing rate, and our brain wave pattern can change; incidentally the frequency of brain waves determines our mood. A good example of this is 'Pachelbel's Canon', which has a rhythm of 64 beats a minute; the same as a resting heart rate! Interestingly, if we listen to this famous Baroque piece, our brain wave pattern will change from Beta to Alpha. The human heartbeat also has a tendency to match the rhythm of music. Our body also has a whole series of specific rhythms (heartbeat, breath, brain waves, etc.), which will all be affected by the drumbeat.

Many indigenous tribes and ancient practises, like shamanism, use drumming as part of their rituals. The repetition of the drumbeat allows the shaman or client to experience trance like states. From this altered state of consciousness they will be able to journey into other realms, and it is here where the healing takes place.

As human beings, we all have physical, mental and behavioral changes called circadian rhythms; these roughly follow a 24 hour cycle, and respond to light and darkness in our environment. It is clear to see that pitch, harmonics, harmony and rhythm, with their individual mathematical ratios and rhythmic cycles, have a positive effecting change on the body, and can heavily influence our emotions, feelings and general state of well being.

Our thoughts and actions can be influenced by our intentions; these can be conscious or unconscious. Thoughts are created by vibrating energy particles. If we choose positive thoughts, it creates a positive feeling inside of us, and the particles that form us vibrate at a certain frequency. It is therefore very important as part of a Sound Healing process that a clear intention is set to aid the client's progress.

It is helpful to think that you are treating a person in good health; this positive intention will change the nature of the vibratory tone that is produced for the healing; the intention is carried in the sound (especially in the harmonics produced from the tone) that is being given to the client. Following research into using sound as a healing force, Jonathon Goldman states "*Frequency plus intention equals Healing*"; if our intention is pure and we sing a pure tone, then healing will occur. It is important for the practitioner to trust their intuition in the healing process and let the Sound do its magical work.

*"A mantra is a sound, syllable, word or group of words that is considered capable of creating transformation" (Wikipedia)*

Mantras have been used for thousands of years; it is a very ancient system, which has a profound effect. In a Sound Healing treatment Bija Mantras can be used to create energy through the repetition of different seed sounds (Lam, Vam, Ram, Yam, Ham, Aum) which are from the ancient and sacred language of Sanskrit. When we chant in Sanskrit, we awaken dormant parts of the brain. Each seed sound also represents different elemental forces of nature.

By using a very clear intention to send these sounds into the chakras (centres of subtle energies that affect the whole body; mental, physical and emotional), it creates a great expansion of consciousness, working on a much deeper, spiritual level than other treatments. Each bija mantra is associated with a symbol of a lotus flower, each chakra having a different shape and number of petals; the number of nadis connecting to that chakra determines this. As the different mantra sounds in each chakra, it creates energy and purifies the nadis; these are subtle channels of energy that flow through the body – they can be physical, emotional, mental or karma/ past life. In working with the Bija Mantras, we can learn to connect with our higher spiritual power and realise our true potential.

The Sound Healing process opens and closes with a prayer; this is a most crucial part of the healing process. When we work with prayer we are working with true intention

and acknowledgement of working with Source. By creating a pure intention to heal the client, we are raising our own vibration, and through entrainment the resonance from the pure tone we produce unifies us. Gratitude is also a powerful process for shifting energy; we acknowledge and honour the sound that we channel from the divine. We offer our sound unconditionally with an open heart. Namaste.

### **What makes Sound Healing such an effective therapy?**

Sound Healing is probably one of the oldest healing forms known to man. It is a non-invasive treatment and drug-free solution, which is versatile for different situations: if someone has mobility problems, they can be treated sitting in a chair; in a distant or absent healing the person is not there in the same room as the healer. Sound does not discriminate: it always travels to where it is needed!

A Sound Healing treatment is deeply relaxing; music can calm the nervous system and improve metabolism. As a musician, I am aware how deeply moving and emotional music can be to the mind, body and soul. I quite often see a light on the faces of my student groups, as they sing together in blissful harmony; it is as though something deep inside of them has been ignited. I have a very touching story to share about a student group with whom I was working.

I had an opportunity to bring some of my Sound Healing work into one of my college classes; this particular group were quite fractious, with many different personalities and energies, and were having difficulty working together. I decided to start the class with the lights out and instructed them to lie on the floor in a comfortable position. I then asked them to sound how they were feeling. Although they were initially quite tentative, the dissonance and resonance began to build. I asked them not to ignore the dissonance, but to acknowledge it and accept it.

I then asked them to change tones freely as they needed. You could feel the atmosphere change as they resolved their differences through sound. The harmony became more consonant and the harmonics filled the air; a quiet calm enveloped the group. This was a profound moment for everyone in the room, and I believe some students' found their true soul note. They became one of the most solid and cohesive working groups in the college. It seemed that the silence gave them time to listen and assimilate each other's energy.

Sound, as a therapeutic tool, can be used in a group to benefit a mass of people (in a gong bath, sound meditation or choir), or alternatively as an individual treatment for personal development. The growing interest in choirs is an interesting phenomenon; people are becoming aware of the benefits to be reaped from singing in these collective harmonic groups. It is clearly documented that singing improves the metabolic rate and improves general well-being.

In individual sound treatments, the client is subtly encouraged to take responsibility for their own personal well being. The process of treating the whole energy body (integrating mind, body and soul) can help unravel mental attitudes to physical problems. In a particular case study, my client recognised that there were ingrained

patterns of her pushing past her physical limits and not listening to her body. After contemplation, she spoke about trying to eradicate old thought patterns.

I had another client who was reliant on pain relief drugs. After a second Sound Healing treatment with me, she was thrilled to report that she had the first complete pain-free day in four years. The next time I saw her, she had cast away the pills given to her by her doctor and was surviving without painkillers. Sound can help people assimilate, recognise and release old habitual negative patterns that serve them no longer.

It is also possible to support clients with the use of personal meditation and healing CDs. This can support the work of the Healer and empowers the client to take personal responsibility for their health and process.

Silence is very important in the Sound Healing process; it allows the client to retreat to the soul. It is in this space where the body, mind and emotions can integrate and heal themselves. The breath becomes slower and calmer. You can also hear and see energy moving during this healing time; in several of my case studies the stomach started to gurgle, and there were different cases of Kriya: spasms in the tummy, cheeks and vibrating knees. In today's modern society, most people lead very busy and frenetic lives, and are usually over-stimulated by the numerous sounds and images they process on a daily basis. It is important for us to find a space in our worlds, as it is in the silence that we listen to our hearts, minds, and ourselves.

There are several different Sound Healing treatments that work on different aspects of the being: physical, emotional and spirit bodies. As there are a wide choice of treatments, the healer can be more specific about how to treat the client. Different senses can be awoken by certain resonances and treatments. Here are a few examples from my case studies:

*“Viv experienced various beautiful smells at different times of the session: there was a smell of Vanilla at the beginning and roses later in the process. All the smells she said were cleansing and healing smells. She also noted that she has always had a very keen sense of smell, which seems to compensate for her slight loss of hearing.”*

*“During the toning Ian saw a gold light, then when the tuning forks were struck he described a clear silvery blue colour, likening to the edge of a bubble; he said it was also like he imagines it to be at the end of the atmosphere, where space begins.”*

*“She felt a sensation, especially around the spine; it was though the sound turned to liquid on the surface. She got a very strong visual sense from the sound: as I was toning into the heart, she saw purple and blue colour; she also had very strong images of the past, which she maybe perceived to be past lives.”*

Musical Scales, both in their Western and Indian forms, encourage a sense of opening and expansiveness. This can lead the client into an altered state of consciousness, where they sink into deep relaxation and heightened state of awareness. Here our imagination can be ignited and creative thought and action can follow. For some clients, it can open up their psychic channels to higher knowledge.

Sound treatments are starting to be used again in modern medicine: sound waves are used to break up and dissolve kidney and gallstones. In this treatment, there is no need for anaesthetic! There is a wonderful quote by Rudolf Steiner that shows his foresight on this subject:

*“There will come a time when a diseased condition will not be described as it is today by physicians and psychologists, but it will be spoke of in musical terms, as one would speak of a piano that was out of tune.”*

This certainly seems possible!

We are not only treating physical symptoms with sound; the resonance penetrates on a much deeper soul level. In a Sound treatment, we programme the body with all ratios of creation, bringing the subtler bodies into alignment. We need to understand our own individual mathematical equations and strike upon the perfect ratios; it is then we will understand ourselves and planet on a deeper soul level.

To bring to conclusion: Sound Healing can awaken people’s soul and lead them to a clearer understanding of their own true nature, self and purpose.