

REAL-LIFE HEALING

Bowen Technique



Severe migraines left Sarah Crickmore-Clarke, a software project manager, unable to function in everyday life. Here, Sarah, 38, explains how the Bowen Technique gave her back her life

When did you first start experiencing migraines?

I was in my early twenties. The headaches would come and go at different times of the day, and they were really inconsistent in terms of intensity. I suppose I just accepted them as 'one of those things'. However, in my thirties they started getting progressively worse, and I would get splitting headaches three times a week, each one lasting several hours. I avoided all the usual triggers such as red wine, chocolate and monosodium glutamate (MSG) but it didn't seem to make any difference. My GP prescribed the pain relief medication pethidine to help

me cope, but the migraines were still excruciating.

How did your condition affect your daily life?

The migraines were debilitating to the point where I could hardly function. It felt as if someone was sticking a sharp knife in the side of my head. I couldn't talk properly, was violently sick and would have to try and go to sleep in a darkened room. Sometimes, I'd go to bed feeling fine but wake up at 2am with a piercing migraine. I had a particularly bad one at work where my face dropped on one side and I looked as if I'd had a stroke. I was signed off work for more than a fortnight.

How did you come to try the Bowen Technique?

When it came to any kind of complementary therapy, I was a non-believer, but then I was introduced socially to Clare Handforth, who is a Bowen Technique therapist. We got talking, and she said she could help treat my migraines. At my first session, Clare took a full medical history and asked me about my lifestyle and dietary habits. We also had an in-depth discussion about what I wanted the treatment to do for me, and then she got to work.

What does it entail?

I would describe the technique as a very gentle yet precise 'rolling' finger massage, which Clare carried out while I was fully clothed. She applied barely any pressure to various parts of my body, but I could feel the heat radiating out from each area she was working on.

Were the results instantaneous?

I felt extremely relaxed after the first treatment, and that night, I slept like I'd never slept before. It was amazing. I had just one migraine in the following week, and even that was mild.

During my second treatment, Clare concentrated on the hinge joint in my lower jaw, which is known as the temporomandibular joint. I was grinding my teeth a lot,

and Clare felt this could be causing stress in the temporal area of my skull, making me have migraines.

Clare thought my history of chest and sinus problems could also be a factor, so in the next two sessions, she worked on my lymphatic drainage and respiratory function. After that, it was like a tap had been turned on - so much mucus came out of my nose! After four treatments over four weeks, I felt like I'd got my life back. I now only have one mild migraine a month, and it's far less severe than before.

Do you still have treatments?

I see Clare for various health and wellbeing issues. She treated me when I was trying to get pregnant, which seemed to do the trick, and also when I had pelvic pain during my pregnancy. The Bowen Technique is like health insurance for me and my family. My advice to anyone would be, 'Try it, you may just be amazed.'

WHAT IS IT?

The Bowen Technique involves gentle rolling massage movements, with practitioners using their forefingers and thumbs on precise points on the body. The theory is the movements trigger impulses to the brain to stimulate healing by helping the body balance itself, release blocked energy and improve blood flow and lymphatic drainage. More research is needed to prove its effectiveness, although there have been findings that indicate the Bowen Technique may be useful for certain conditions, including muscle and joint pain and migraine.

• Sarah was treated by Clare Handforth in Stockton-on-Tees. Clare is a member of the Bowen Therapy Professional Association (BTPA) and the Federation of Holistic Therapists. Call 07786-655381 or visit www.simply-phi.co.uk. To find a practitioner, visit www.bowentherapists.com

