

What is Shiatsu?

Dr Hilary – Shiatsu is a physical therapy which originated maybe 2,000 years ago in Japan and incorporated some of the more modern physical techniques such as chiropractic and osteopathy and is now practiced by about 2,000 practitioners in Britain and it's applications would include things like anxiety and depression, low back pain, digestive complaints, even cancer, aids and substance abuse would benefit from it and indeed it is being used by some NHS Trusts now.

Interviewer – You're making the claim though that it helps to relieve symptoms of what are serious medical conditions. You mentioned HIV and Aids. How would it do that? What is Shiatsu? It's not drugs. What actually happens to you?

Dr Hilary – What it [Shiatsu] means is finger pressure, but the therapist would also use thumbs, elbows, sometimes knees and feet to manipulate the other person's body and release tensions, release pressures is strange to me. Do we know how it works, do we know how hypnosis works, and do we know how counselling works. The fact is, people feel a whole lot better. Now the Practitioner of Shiatsu would say the body is divided into 12 flow channels called Meridians. And there is a flow of energy around these meridians all the time. Sometimes the flow of energy becomes blocked and that leads to symptoms in the body. By applying pressure to these meridians it releases the blockages.

Now whether you accept that explanation or not there is no doubt that people feel a great deal better.

I think it means a great deal if it improves the quality of life for how ever long they have it.

Shiatsu and Stress

Interviewer – Firstly, you are going to talk to us about stress and certainly the problems. I would imagine in the modern world it's probably one of, if not the most fastest moving, growing complaint of all times. I should think it's certainly something we've all been affected with - stress.

Dr Hilary – The 21st century disease stress, can be encumbering, some degree of stress is good, it keeps us motivated. It gives us a buzz and helps us through the day. But in people who are over stressed our performance drops off, we feel anxious, irritable, we get road rage, we fight with the family. It's a horrible place to be and there's not many ways of coping with stress, or findings ways too if it's got on top of us. I don't like the idea of just dishing out pills, sedatives, and tranquillisers, anti depressants. Counselling is one thing but also that's difficult to get and very time consuming and Physical Touch Therapy. We're a very Victorian society still in terms of saying "I'm embarrassed if you touch me". But I think massage that is appropriate, that is given by someone who is trained to find places in the body that are tense and knotted, - gives people relaxation and is a very welcome thing. We

should embrace it. It's involved in many complementary therapies and Shiatsu is one of them.

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Dr Hilary - Yes, there's absolutely too much stress. It certainly gets in the way and makes people feel miserable. Very much a 21st century condition but of course you need some stress to gear you up to motivate you, to get you going and to get you to perform. But too much stress, excessive stress causes road rage, heart attacks, peptic ulcers, you name it. So dealing with stress, handling it in the right way is really important.

Interviewer - Is it the biggest killer stress?

Dr Hilary – To some extent yes. I think it can also be over exaggerated. But I think the important thing with stress is that if there is undue stress which you can't cope with, it makes you anxious, it makes you suffer from insomnia, it can exasperate aches and pains, it can make you feel absolutely miserable. So if that is the situation then stress definitely is one of the biggest killers and misery makers in our society today.

Interviewer – And Shiatsu is what we're talking about today because of Shiatsu week. What exactly is Shiatsu?

Dr Hilary – It's being used in this country for the treatment of various conditions including anxiety and stress and also back pain, neck pain, insomnia, cerebral palsy, and for stroke victims. It's even being used in centres for the treatment of cancer and HIV. So it can have very far-reaching applications.

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Dr Hilary – Well when people are anxious and irritable and depressed, I say to them look this isn't abnormal this is common and you know you've explored some of the other ways of dealing with these things, have you thought about a manipulative, physical treatment such as acupuncture, chiropractic, Shiatsu.

Interviewer - And finally Dr Hilary. I suppose you lose nothing by trying things if you go into them with an open mind.

Dr Hilary – If you try something and it works for you, if you find it effective and relaxing, I think it's good to open your mind and many people who have closed minds go along and try these things and say "Wow", I couldn't believe I felt so relaxed and my pain is better and I will definitely do that again.

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Dr Hilary – I have known hundreds of people going for Shiatsu, myself included, and end up feeling very relaxed, very well in a spiritual health and free of muscle and joint pains which we might get from the sport that we play

Shiatsu and the NHS

Interviewer – You just mentioned conventional medicine. How does the NHS regard Shiatsu?

Dr Hilary – Well we're accepting more and more. We've already accepted and embraced it in other therapies like yoga, like meditation, reflexology, acupuncture. These are used in most hospitals now in physiotherapy, on cancer wards and in coronary care units for example. Shiatsu is an example of physiotherapy a physical therapy that we could use more in NHS hospitals

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Dr Hilary – In fact it [Shiatsu] has got a good application for people with addiction and substance abuse. By making them feel more relaxed and more in tune with their psychological and spiritual health, it's also a very good help to counselling and helping them to steer away from what is doing them so much harm.

Shiatsu in the UK

Interviewer - And how long has Shiatsu been in the UK?

Dr Hilary – It's been in the UK since the 70's. The Shiatsu Society was formally set up in 1981, and since then it's gone from strength to strength. There are about 2,000 practitioners now all of who have a 3-year training, and they have a diploma. If you're going to somebody you want to make sure that they are registered with the Shiatsu Society, who will give you somebody whose local to you. And by going to somebody who's registered, you know that they have a code of practice and ethics and have insurance and will look after you.