

Don't go to the health gurus – let them all come to your home

HOMEOPATHY

Orly Moyal, homeopath, nutritionist, herbalist for natural-supplements company Higher Nature, 0870 066 0236; £90 for two-hour appointment.

Orly, a medically trained South African dressed in black, takes my blood pressure, feels my glands and looks at my tongue, eyelids ("ooh anaemia") and nails for vitamin deficiencies. Perched together on a sofa in my sitting room, Orly then takes a detailed medical history including about family details.

She asks questions concerning my dreams and the foods I prefer, getting into every aspect of my life. This takes two hours. My symptoms (from sinusitis to premenstrual stress) point to an imbalance in the endocrine system.

She prescribes homeopathic Chelidonium tincture (to balance my body after anti-malarial tablets) and four supplements from multivitamins to something called Mood (for adrenal support for chronic stress and fatigue). All are geared at rebuilding my endocrine system. That's £97.60 a month on supplements! Ouch.

Verdict: Impressive. Very thorough and committed. Followed up the appointment with several emails explaining the treatment in detail, and offering extensive nutritional, life strategy and supplements guidelines. The supplements are expensive, but I feel well and realise this figure is the amount I spend on cappuccinos.

HYPNOTHERAPY

Max Kirsten, clinical hypnotherapist (quitting smoking to phobias and depression), 020 7917 9878; £280 for a 90-minute session. Max, who has a look of Elvis Presley and piercing eyes, arrives with a stainless-steel suitcase. He asks for a small table, takes it into the medical

If you can't bear the trek to the homeopath acupuncturist or masseur, just put your feet up and ask them to deliver. **Caroline Phillips** samples the lazy route to feeling good

suite (my husband's office), then places on it a small DJ's mixing box from his suitcase.

The builders are banging away next door and I'm wearing my outdoor coat because I can't work the heating. Perhaps not ideal conditions for my Easy Weight Loss hypnotherapy session. We talk then about my eating habits — my long-term recovery from

ACUPUNCTURE

Robert Ogilvie, 020 8969 5262; £175 (at £70 per hour, work and travel time)

It's an odd experience having a man I don't know sitting in my home asking me about my menstrual flow and faeces, then probing my emotional make-up with gentle and expert persistence. I feel tearful.

Afterwards, Robert inserts ultra-fine needles into me on his portable couch. "It strengthens your metal element." (This relates to the lungs.) Robert, who featured in Tatler as one of Britain's 150 best private doctors, ends the treatment soothingly with reflexology using essential oils and an Indian-head-cum-Zero-Balancing face massage, which works on energy at a skeletal level. All pleasingly holistic.

A first appointment lasts two hours. Robert treats everything — but his main interests are obstetrics, gynaecology, fertility depression and insomnia. He uses Chinese herbal medicine, astrologically — and Five Element-based (emotionally focused) acupuncture. As I've lived in Hong

an eating disorder, recent hormonally caused weight gain and passion for full-fat cheeses. Max explains that he's going to help me eat less, exercise more and deal better with stress.

I put on his headphones to shut out distractions. He tells me to close my eyes, breathe deeply, relax and then he counts me down, while music be



Kong, this seems natural to me. He says: "I like to tackle the spiritual distress that is the cause of disease."

Verdict: Very proficient with a great manner. It's difficult having a medical therapist working on me at home, particularly with the children running around nearby. It's hard to rate the results after one consultation: he'd prefer to see someone like me (not ill, but concerned about my health) for five sessions. But I trust him.

has composed plays in my ears. "Imagine seeing yourself standing on a beach exactly the way you want to be... imagine a time when you felt happy and confident... now let the breath out." The music and voice fade then crescendo in unison. "Imagine yourself making healthy choices, enjoying exercise..."

Forty-five minutes later, he gets me to open my eyes. I feel relaxed.

Verdict: Even though he has top credentials, I don't feel entirely relaxed having someone I don't know in my house while I sit with my eyes closed, wearing headphones to shut out external noise.

His Neuro-Linguistic Programming (the science of how the brain codes learning and experience) and hypnotherapy abilities are very sound. I like the creative visualisations and the positive suggestions he makes. Since treatment I've noticed a healthy change in my daily eating habits and reduction in appetite.

TEETH WHITENING

Tim Bradstock-Smith at The Smile Clinic, home-whitening system for teeth, 020 7255 2559; £470 (including £45 consultation fee)

Since teeth-whitening products from chemists don't really work well — they contain less than 0.5 per cent bleach — I have a dental consultation with Tim. He sticks something like cold Play-Doh into my mouth to make a mould. From this he creates a plastic cast of my teeth.

I take home these transparent plastic fangs and a Day White Excel home-brightening kit, containing nine syringes filled with bleaching gel and desensitising agent.

After building my courage, I inject a rice-grain-sized piece of gel into each tooth compartment in the trays and fit my new plastic teeth on top of my

old yellow ones. Despite the safety declarations, I feel anxious about putting peroxide in my mouth. The gel tastes like bitter toothpaste and there's a warming sensation on my gums, bubbling in the trays and a slight sensitivity as my teeth are being whitened. I can't eat, drink or speak while wearing my whitening trays — it may dislodge them.

I wear the fangs for one hour daily, for 10 days. My teeth respond well. I get a natural-looking smile.

Verdict: Easy to do. Really effective and half the price of having it done at the surgery. The procedure is safe as the amount of hydrogen peroxide used (7.5 per cent) is tiny.

There's a view held by many dental technicians that the dental whitener can erode the enamel and make the teeth more porous — weakening them and making them get dirty more quickly after treatment. Tim says there's no clinical proof of this. I'm a convert.



PSYCHOTHERAPY

Lili Tarkow-Reinisch, through Unlisted London, 0870 2255 007; £150 for a 60-minute appointment. Lili arrives clad entirely in Chanel and her driver waits outside during the consultation. A Family Systems

Psychotherapist (family history and interaction are included in the individual's therapy), this strong American specialises in crisis management in families. Her style of kicking down psychological doors may not be to everyone's taste. As a veteran of psychoanalysis, I'm used

to a slow process. She is, however, adept at picking up clues from the home environment — in my case, order indicating mental equilibrium but also hiding chaos; pictures in my office revealing the conflict of trying to be simultaneously a mother, wife and career woman.

FOUR-HANDED MASSAGE

Paul Dunn and Lisa Gagan, through Unlisted London, 0870 2255 007; 60 minutes. Mandara £160, 15 minutes Bluesbuster £30. The duo arrive clad in black with wheeled trolleys. I ask Lisa to protect the carpet by putting a towel under its dirty wet wheels.

Paul places a red amaryllis in a glass of water and a "China black tea" candle on a tray. "We bring our own ambience," he says. An inflatable bolster is blown up for lumbar support while Paul sets up their massage table with its electric blanket.

They recommend their Arnica massage lotion, but find they don't have any I

undress, hop onto the massage couch and the treatment begins with a CD being played rather more loudly than is relaxing. They didn't ask whether I'd like music.

I soon wear an eye-mask of LED lights, designed to bust the winter blues by replicating sunlight but which I imagine duplicates the experience of being on acid on the motorway at night. Paul then puts "warm mitts" on my feet, that feel like kettle-hot boots. And when the massage starts, I realise they come from the "no pain, no gain" school.

Verdict: The masseurs were charming, but the treatment was gimmicky. The massage isn't synchronised or relaxing.



FITNESS CONSULTANT

Wendy Spence, 07803 084 265; £75 per working and travelling hour

A healthily glowing brunette with a Swiss ball arrives on my doorstep (see picture left). Wendy, a veteran of six marathons, asks about my medical history, diet and lifestyle. I declare a need to lose weight and that rapid eye movement is my usual exercise routine.

Wendy, who makes exercise fun, gets me to do press-ups on the ball. "It strengthens your core" — the muscles responsible for the body's balance. My face doesn't clonk into the floor, but my dog licks it. Next we emulate performing seals, lying on a big Swiss ball and balancing a smaller medicine ball in the air for resistance training.

Then I wear elastic round my ankles, prison-tagging style, to do lateral leg raises. The main problem is the absence of space for rolling around on a ball at my place. And the fact that sometimes this former Harbour Club teacher talks in sports jargon: "Brace your core, squeeze your glutes, be confident with the ball."

But I've agreed to another workout — sans dog — in the Notting Hill Harbour Club. Obviously she drugged me with endorphins.

Verdict: Brilliantly encouraging and inspiring but would have been easier in a larger space.

FOOD

The Pure Package healthy, freshly prepared, up-market meals-on-wheels, 08456 123 888; breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks for 10 days, £29.99 a day

I can now tell you that I dislike roast-tomato-and-spinach soufflé roulade for breakfast. After a dietary consultation over the phone, nutritionist Tori has personalised the freshly prepared (and often organic) meals that appear overnight on my doorstep in a Pure Package cooler bag. I forgo their training support, allergy



management and pregnancy options for a weight-loss diet. They suggest drinking lots of liquids, especially water, and cutting out caffeine. They recommend eating three light meals and two snacks a day.

There's portion control (dishes are on the small side) but no calorie counting. A sample day's food includes that spinach breakfast, kiwi with pistachio snack, Greek salad, corn chips and salsa snack and smoked haddock barley risotto. It's tasty with healthy ingredients devised by a nutritionist to sustain energy levels. Menus declare things such as, "seeds are a good source of polyunsaturated fats".

Verdict: Good telephone nutritional chat covering my medical requirements, dietary goals and food preferences. The black shoebox — stylish cooler-bag containing my day's supply of fresh food — is always on my doorstep in the morning.

The fare is Virgin Upper Class meets Neal's Yard — imaginative, nutritious and delicious. The lunches are lighter than my normal trough, but only once do I feel hungry. I really prefer warm lunches in November. (Theirs are always cold for office convenience.) And I've lost two pounds.



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