

Woman&Home

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hello

from the editor

Putting this issue together has been an emotional roller coaster for the team – one minute we were giggling over who wears what type of knickers (page 12), the next moved to tears by the stories of breast cancer survivors (page 90). Not that these inspiring women are without a sense of humour; read what Gloria plans to do if her prosthesis ever pops out at a disco and you'll see what I mean!

I always argue – usually while pouring a third glass of wine – that those of us fortunate enough to have stayed reasonably healthy until now owe it largely to fate (and good genes). But even I was forced to concede that there comes a time when you need to pay a little bit more attention to yourself, as our special section this month, Your Health MOT (page 99), demonstrates. With so many exciting opportunities in life, and new experiences to try, it pays to keep yourself in good nick so you can enjoy them all.

It was a great pleasure to help judge the Avon/Woman & Home In Praise of Women Awards recently. The judging panel (which included Baroness Jay and Edwina Currie) had to choose five overall winners from a shortlist of 24 – not easy, and there were some “lively” debates! Thanks to all of you who nominated hundreds of exceptional women – read about the winners in the November issue.

I know you're going to enjoy your free Estée Lauder lipstick (it's so smooth). Don't forget you can collect an extra bonus in store when you pick up your lipstick – see page 53 for details.

See you next month!

Sarah



Yes but, Minister – Baroness Jay and I try to reach a decision!

This month's contributors include...



Mary McCartney was the photographer for our breast cancer survivors on page 90. Her lovely shots of baby Leo Blair – the only official ones taken – charmed the world.



Caroline Phillips recommends destress treatments on page 118. Caroline has worked on ES Magazine and The Express and is now a freelance journalist. She is currently working on her first novel.



David Thomas explains why it's not so easy to befriend the famous on page 64. Formerly the editor of Punch, David's book Show Me The Money (Ebury, £9.99) has just been published.



All the stress in my life should keep the Millennium Bridge from swaying. I've spent months being a housewife superstar while writing the Great British unpublished novel, coping with a family less functional than the Queen's, while living in rented property and house-hunting in a market in which prices increased so quickly it was imperative to purchase your home before viewing it!

If I were a Tibetan monk, less highly strung, or had something serious about which to worry, I'd handle these demands on my physical and mental energy with ease. Instead, I get stressed and Eeyore-ish, fret for Britain about things that may never happen and always see a glass that's half-full as half-empty.

Over the years I've tried acupuncture, Ayurvedic nutritional advice, aromatherapy massage and learned Alexander Technique. I've visited a Chinese kinesiologist (tests allergies), had my feet treated by a Metamorphic Technique practitioner (for whom the foot corresponds to the prenatal period), tried colour and gem therapy, popped homeopathic pills and horse-sized vitamin tablets and tried psychotherapy, reflexology, Bach Flower Remedies, flotation tanks, herbalism and iridology.

Success! With these following four therapies, I've handled my depression, stress, 12 years in recovery from multiple addictions... and managed to avoid ever having colonic irrigation.

LaStone Therapy

In the heavenly, Oriental monastery-style atmosphere of SPACeNK, I'm lying naked on a massage couch on top of hot volcanic stones which press

into the main postural muscles of my spine and, apparently, into the chakras to open my energy channels. Sarah, the therapist, uses other stones – which conduct heat and thus warm the muscle – to massage me, penetrating deeply. This is LaStone Therapy.

She asks me to turn over and puts a warm stone under my tummy, then works on my back with the essential oil-suffused rocks in her hands.

All the stones are in pairs ("Yin and yang, Mr and Mrs," explains Sarah). They're found in areas of volcanic rock in Arizona, then machine-tumbled smooth. The treatment uses hot basalt rocks to relieve tired muscles and cold marble stones to alleviate strains.

It's amazingly therapeutic, combining a physical, spiritual and sensory experience. But, at the end of the hour-and-a-half, I feel wiped out. Sarah burns sage to clear my energy and the smell of oils from the room. I then drink Chinese persimmon tea in the Spa relaxation room. Afterwards I feel uplifted. Spring-cleaned, even. A 90-minute treatment at SPACeNK, 127-131 Westbourne Grove, London W2 costs £70. For bookings, call (020) 7727 8002.

Manual lymphatic drainage treatment

Jenny Towhill caresses my face and her fingertips tiptoe like a troupe of fairy ballerinas, dancing across my neck, then moving over my abdomen and back, giving me the gentlest of gentle massages. This is a manual lymphatic drainage treatment (MLD). The ultimate

stress-buster, MLD is both a beauty and medical therapy.

Started in France in the 1930s, MLD began here in the early 1980s, and Jenny is one of only a handful of fully-qualified practitioners in the country. One of the therapists involved in the first trials at the Royal Marsden Hospital into the effects of MLD, she has also helped clients wear themselves off sleeping pills using this technique.

The lymphatic system is the body's method of purification and this treatment stimulates it to its optimum potential, speeding the removal of waste and the supply of nutrients and oxygen to the cells. The ultimate detox.

Perhaps the treatment reaches the parts that other cosmetics cannot reach – certainly it nourishes the skin at cellular level, reducing lines and making the complexion glow. Afterwards, my face looked as if I'd had a vision. MLD also has an effect on the nervous system, relaxing the body into a parasympathetic (sleep-like) state. Or, in my case, into a state of actual sleep. When I awoke, I floated, bursting with endorphins. A treatment lasting up to one-and-a-half-hours costs £50. Jenny only does home visits, believing this to be the most relaxing environment for treatment. For details of where to contact her, and a list of qualified MLD practitioners, send an sae to MLD UK, PO Box 14491, Glenrothes, Fife, Scotland KY6 3YE.

Dr. Hauschka facial

My feet are soaking in a bath of sage and warm water, apparently clearing the energy from my head and taking it down to my toes and expelling it. I lie on a couch and, with the golden fingers of an angel, Elizabeth King relaxes my legs, arms and neck to wake up my lymphatic and circulatory systems. Next follows a cleansing ritual with warm and cold compresses – the aroma of a pine forest on my face, wafts of lemon and lavender – the light touch of make-up brushes being stroked across my cheeks, a steam infusion of witch hazel and nasturtium as she massages my lower back, an oat-and-almond face mask and a regenerative chest massage. This is a Dr. Hauschka facial.

Clients such as Madonna and Stella McCartney luxuriate in Elizabeth King's treatments, while devotees of Hauschka include Cher, Joan Collins, Jerry Hall and Jack Nicholson.

Dr Hauschka's treatments started over 30 years ago, after he had worked with philosopher Dr Rudolf Steiner to develop his

holistic system, which is both spiritual and scientific. Elizabeth King recommends these preventative facials every 28 days.

Soothing, relaxing, transporting... and anti-ageing. Afterwards, I thought I could buy myself a student travel card. Dr Hauschka facial with Elizabeth King. She can be contacted through Elysia on 01386-792622. Treatments in her North London home cost from £60 for two hours. She offers home visits from £130 and out-of-London treatments are negotiable.

Seiki Soho treatment

I'm lying fully clothed on a futon on the floor at home. I'm being given a Seiki Soho session by Dr Alice Whieldon, one of only five practitioners in the British Isles. This treatment, which grew out of the Japanese tradition of Shiatsu, is a form of massage that has as aficionados Anjelica Huston, Ruby Wax and Jack Nicholson.

Looking like a meditative Buddha, Dr Whieldon is kneeling and holding my hand – apparently getting acquainted with my aura and energy flow so that she can resonate with it. "Is there anything I should know about you?" she asks. "Dodgy back, bad neck," I respond. She becomes very attentive, feeling the movement and vibration of tension in me.

She alternates strong Shiatsu-style strokes with subtle touches – and encourages little movements by pulling gently. Very calming. My ears and nose start popping when she presses the spleen point in my foot. And feelings and emotions rise to the surface. She finds sluggishness in my ovaries, a tight sacrum (a large bone in the lower part of the back) and stagnation in the liver due to emotional stress. (In Seiki Soho lore, stored emotions are as bad as accumulated toxins.)

Seiki Soho promotes the relaxation of deep tensions, theoretically enabling clients to release layers of stored-up pain and old patterns of physical and mental tension and stress. It is a kind of psychotherapy for the body, helping clients feel less burdened and more comfortable with themselves. Dr Whieldon considers it a journey of self-discovery. I'd be happy to buy a return ticket.

A one-hour treatment with Dr Whieldon at The Life Centre, 15 Edge Street, London W8 costs £45. To book, call (020) 7221 4602. Or she charges £40 per hour at her clinic, (020) 7727 5768, and from £55 per hour for a home visit. She also offers treatment at workshops around the UK.

Polished volcanic stones, which are placed on and under the body in LaStone Therapy

Photograph: Tom Dobbie Stones courtesy of The Self Centre. Call (020) 7224 2393 for treatments and training

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