

Sound therapist John McElderry can read energy, and move it, with special tuning forks.

JOE DEL TUFO/MOONLOOP PHOTOGRAPHY



THE SOUND OF SILENCE

DELAWARE TODAY STAFFERS TURN TO TUNING-FORK **THERAPY** (AND A TAD OF **SHAMANISM**) TO TURN OFF THE NOISE AND FIND **BALANCE**.

BY ASHLEY BREEDING

When Berklee-trained musician and yogi John McElderry suffered a head injury many years ago, he relied on sound therapy to help him heal. And recently, when my colleague Ruth Gilbert told me about this ancient acoustic modality, which she discovered from McElderry, I was eager to go under the tuning forks.

Gilbert and McElderry earned their Yoga Alliance teacher training credentials together, and “shared a passion for all things holistic,” Gilbert tells me. “The one area that John was also studying that was unfamiliar to me was sound therapy. One day he brought in a set of tuning forks (two-pronged devices that vibrate when struck) and offered to use them on me. I was skeptical—until the soft vibrational sensations resonated down my arm.”

Gilbert felt foolish for believing there might be something to this, but after a few minutes, she couldn’t deny the obvious. Intrigued, she agreed to become McElderry’s practice client while he finished his practicum, and she has since become convinced of the forks’ ability to both heal her aches and pains, and induce intense relaxation. (She also swears the tool, when used habitually, offers a noninvasive face-lift.)

In her book *Tuning the Human Biofield* (Healing Arts Press, 2014), Eileen Day McKusick defines sound therapy, or

“balancing,” as a therapeutic method that makes use of the frequencies produced by tuning forks to detect and correct imbalances within the biomagnetic energy field, or biofield, that surrounds the human body.

It is based on the premise, she writes, that our biofield—stretching about 5 feet from both sides of the body and 3 feet above the head and below the feet—contains the records of all our memories, embedded as energy and information in standing waves within structure. Just as the different areas of our brain are responsible for specific functions, areas of our biofield hold information related to certain emotions or relationships.

While sound therapy alone cannot cure illness, it has been shown to benefit those suffering from such ailments as PTSD, anxiety, depression, chronic pain, digestive hullabaloo and headaches.

In general, sound balancing employs various instruments—gongs, crystals, Tibetan bowls—but McElderry uses tuning forks, as well as other shamanistic tools in his mixed-modality healing.

Lying across a blanketed treatment table in his Rockland home studio, I’ve opted to go barefoot and bare-armed, as if less clothing will erase any barrier between myself and the healing vibrations.

McElderry knocks his tuning fork against a hockey puck, its back-and-forth vibration sending tingles from head to toe as he “combs” through my biofield, my energy supposedly influencing its sound.

“I’m moving the energy around,” he explains, “herding it like a sheepdog.” He asks if I can hear him dragging it as he sends it up through my seven chakras. By reading these energy centers—are they balanced or no?—he knows where work needs to be done.

“From the heart up, you’re good,” he says. Everything from my sacral to root chakras? That needs tuning.

Things that plague me, McElderry determines, are stress, too much time indoors and not connecting with nature to the level that my spirit requires. He also senses some powerlessness, challenges with letting go and frustration.

The body reads like a musical scale, he explains. My sacral chakra is at 417. He brings in the 417 fork, its higher pitch lightening things up.

The forks can also read ancestral information and pinpoint stressful times

going all the way back to birth. Starting a few feet away and slowly working toward me, he occasionally asks things like, “What happened when you were 4 ... 17?” and “What’s your relationship with your mother?”

Sound therapy is a beacon to change our DNA coding, McElderry says. “You don’t even have to think about it; the sound just does it electrically.”

Preferring to incorporate some “shamanistic stuff,” he asks me to think of a word that represents something I need to work on. Then he hands me a metamorphic rock (his “serpent stone”) and has me repeat the word three times, blowing deeply into the rock each time before resting it below my naval.

“You are earth. This is earth. We are doing something earthly here,” he says of the rock’s weight.

Next, he opens my chakras with an Incan rattle—shaking and swirling upward to remove anything “goopy” and make space for the positive energy he’ll pour back in. He whispers affirmations as he goes, asking from time to time what I am experiencing—

physically, mentally, emotionally.

I feel calm, at times excited, and always tingly. When I open my eyes, it’s 33 minutes past our stopping point—the “biofield time warp,” McElderry calls it. Time flies when you’re having fundamental breakthroughs.

When I ask Gilbert how she feels at the end of her sessions, she says each one is different.

“I always feel light and airy and at peace even while sharing emotional pains,” she says. “Just being heard by someone who is paying attention is therapeutic in and of itself. Afterward, I feel a sense of spaciousness and a desire to connect more intimately with nature and the world around me.

“Sound is vibration, and vibration is energy. My sense of well-being and health seem improved, as I am reminded that everything is an energy that affects not only ourselves but also others in our lives in both physical and nonphysical ways.” **DT**

As tuning forks are said to reset the body’s rhythms, those with a pacemaker should not use this form of sound therapy. For more information, visit bodysystemtuning.com.



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