



Right click

Vicky Green had always been curious about osteopathy, but never quite found an excuse to try it. However, as Dave Inman tells her, you don't always need a reason...

Osteopathy provokes a range of responses, from devotion to scepticism to downright fear. To some, the idea of being clicked into place is about as appealing as root canal surgery; by contrast, I'm one of those annoying types who take pleasure in realigning myself, as I like to call it. I've always been conscious of my posture (we shorties try to stand as tall as we can) and I like my massages vigorous, therefore the prospect of a session with an osteopath has always been positively alluring.

And if there's one person to convert the sceptic, it's Dave Inman, founder of Oldfield Osteopathic Clinic. Straight-talking Dave, with his matey London accent, who's off to the rugby once he's done with me, and who shies from the label 'holistic' – "it makes me think of open-toed sandals".

Dave prefers the word 'integrated': osteopathy is designed to assess and treat the whole person, not just the symptom, like all holistic practices, but osteopathy has one up on the others: it's the first complementary therapy to be accorded statutory regulation by Parliament.

Therefore you can rest assured that when you visit an osteopath, they'll have completed a degree-level course and be registered with the General Osteopathic Council. Dave studied at the British School of Osteopathy, following a 22-year career in the Army. A keen sportsman – he once represented Great Britain in karate – his interest in osteopathy grew from having often been on the receiving end.

Having established his first clinic at Oldfield Surgery in 2004, he set up the sister clinic on Livingstone Road in June ▶



Above: Fred the skeleton – "A trusted companion who never questions my diagnosis!" says Dave



Joanne “the baby guru” and left, Dave Inman

2007. Here he, Joanne and Tom treat a range of clients from the elderly to newborn babies – as well as back and joint pains, migraines, whiplash and sports injuries (the list goes on), osteopathy is said to help childhood complaints such as colic and teething troubles. “Joanne’s the baby guru,” says Dave; “I tend to get the rugby players and bricklayers.”

The clinic is a cosy, welcoming place, in an understated, modern way: Richard Burel paintings on the wall, Molton Brown in the toilets and *Bath Life* in the waiting room. I’m therefore already at ease when Dave welcomes me into one of two treatment rooms. I’m in for what he describes as a ‘body MOT’, something he recommends healthy people go for three or four times a year: “We only go to the doctor’s when there’s a problem, but with cars you take them in for a service anyway. Osteopathy is prophylactic: it picks off problems before they build up.”

The session begins with a health questionnaire – Have you ever had a serious illness? Any broken bones? – after answering many of which I find myself compulsively touching the wooden picture frame on the wall above me. I then strip down to my underwear so that Dave can assess my muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints using what the clinic’s brochure describes as a ‘specially developed sense of touch’. (He tells me of an intriguing experiment in which a hair was placed under the pages of a book and a group of osteopaths asked to say where it was; those who had practised the longest could detect it through the most pages.)

Although afterwards Dave discusses the difficulties of getting people to relax, he’s actually very skilled at it. “Don’t worry,”

he says, “there’s no such thing as the perfect body.” Now, ordinarily, if a man said that to me after I’d just taken my clothes off, I’d probably find myself putting them straight back on. But he’s not talking about my vital statistics; as he prods my back he identifies subtle asymmetries: right shoulder blade slightly higher than left, hips slightly uneven, and so on.

It’s then on to the couch where he treats me from foot to head with a combination of stretches, massages and manipulations. The pressure and rhythmic movements are very satisfying – you feel yourself limbering up – while the high-velocity, low-amplitude thrusts are the fun bits: they start off with a slow, careful positioning before – crunch! – a quick push and you’re clicked into place. “It’s like pressing the reset button,” says

“The high-velocity, low-amplitude thrusts are the fun bits”

Dave (he talks you through the whole process, and has a particularly good line in analogies). “It sends a sensory overload to the brain, which causes a reflex relaxation of muscles.”

Afterwards, he pronounces me in fairly good nick if a bit stiff in the mid-thoracic and tight in the lower lumbar. I don’t feel tight though, quite the opposite, and for a couple of days afterwards hear unexpected clicks as I move an arm or leg, it’s as though I’ve been loosened up. I’m more than usually conscious of my posture and I find myself almost wishing for some minor muscular discomfort just to have the satisfaction of Dave sorting it out. Of all Dave’s analogies, the body MOT one makes the most sense; as he says, the car that’s regularly serviced is the most reliable, and osteopathy is all about efficiency, the mechanics of the body, things doing their job. And best of all there’s little chance of being charged £250 for a new part. □



Above: Richard Burel paintings on the wall and *Bath Life* on the shelves

OUR VERDICT:
A satisfying procedure carried out with smooth professionalism and a great bedside manner

Treatment details

Treatment: Initial consultation
Time: Approx 1 hour
Price: £40
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