

Guided to heal

Tania Ahsan tries out a massage that uses guided meditation for a unique experience

Walle's Court hotel and spa in Westcliffe, Dover, has all the usual pleasures of a nice country house hotel. The bedrooms have masses of character with four poster beds and antique furniture. The restaurant provides excellent modern European cuisine with a good wine list to boot. The spa has the usual sauna, whirlpool and a nice-sized pool and uses REN products and offers REN treatments. There are pleasant walks down to the beach for those who want to be more active. All wonderful but Walle's Court has an additional unusual draw: the Hydrotherm Transformational Massage that therapist Ben Barnett offers.

Ben has an interesting story, a former footballer, he has trained in several holistic therapies and has worked with a number of VIP clients, including Kylie Minogue and her team. His transformational massage is unlike anything else I have ever experienced in holistic massage.

What do you want?

At the start of the session Ben asks me what I want to achieve from the session. I say that I'd like to have more energy as my energy levels have suffered from a bout of illness and from burning the candle at both ends. I am asked to select an oil, in much the same way you would for an aromatherapy massage. Then I lie down on the Hydrotherm cushioned table and feel completely supported by the warm water beneath me. (See the boxout for more on this innovative piece of equipment.)

Ben believes that we hold 'concepts' and emotions in our body and, through massage and a form of guided meditation, we can reconnect the muscles with the brain to allow the body to release unhelpful ideas and beliefs. As he massages you, he talks you through what sounds like a meditation script, bringing your attention to different parts of your body.

You do not have to repeat anything yourself but you are asked to breathe with your attention going to the places where Ben is working. This means that you are as much part of the process as he is and so it is quite an active and fascinating massage, even while being relaxing.

I didn't register everything he was saying as the massage is really relaxing but was surprised when occasionally, on certain

What is Hydrotherm?

Invented by British therapist John Holman, the Hydrotherm massage system is one of the world's most versatile massage tools. The system uses special warm, water-filled pads that allow the client's spine to be in perfect alignment and the therapist to work under the back through the space between the water and the body. The weight of the client's own body allows the therapist to work deeply without injury. In fact it was invented specifically to solve the problem of wrist and lower back pain for the therapist. Hydrotherm is also great for the client as you don't have to turn over mid-way through the massage and you don't get those face welts from having your face in the massage table face vent.

Hydrotherm train therapists from many different disciplines on how to adapt and develop their skills when working with this innovative equipment. The Company believes in its products and training so much that it offers every therapist a 100% money back guarantee if they are not satisfied with what they learn or what their clients experience using Hydrotherm.

Qualified therapists can learn of an exclusive free equipment offer worth nearly £300 at www.hydrotherm.co.uk by calling Dale on 01296 714254 and quoting 'Kindred Spirit magazine'.

parts of my body, I'd feel suddenly tearful or remember some little thing from way back in my childhood. It was really fascinating how these emotional reactions were being prompted by a physical process.

I felt the way you do when you're in deep meditation or doing shamanic journeying and yet I was also aware of the fact that a massage was taking place. It was the strangest sensation of having both body and mind engaged. It really did put the 'holistic' into holistic massage.

Ben has a very soothing voice and you can see why the stars flock to him for this massage. By the end of it I feel relaxed and yet energised in the way that I had asked to be. It is interesting that he says it is entirely up to you whether you decide to believe that the effects of the massage will last or whether you decide to fall back into old patterns. It is very empowering and the effects do last.

More information

Hydrotherm Transformational Massage lasts 60 minutes and costs £75. Rooms at Walle's Court start at £129. Call 01304 852424, email spa@walle'scourt.com or visit www.walle'scourt.com for more information and to book.

