

## Different Ways of Healing

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**By Don Cuddy / Standard-Times correspondent**

As modern life becomes increasingly hectic, stress exacts its revenge upon a generation that is working too hard, sleeping too little and driving too far and too fast.

In Japan, the stress of overwork started taking such a toll on workers in the 1970s that many suddenly just dropped dead from it. This phenomenon has a name. It is called "karoshi."

As the toll continues to mount in all of the industrialized countries, people are beginning to explore different ways to cope with the unceasing assault on their time, their attention and their sense of well-being.

To meet this need, a new group of practitioners has emerged to offer some alternatives. New forms of therapy and healing are available to those left unfulfilled by more conventional remedies.

Ellie Pechet is one area professional who represents this new movement. She operates the Phoenix Rising Counseling and Energy Healing Center on Main Street in Wareham, a location that testifies, in itself, to an increased willingness on the part of many to embrace change.

Although a licensed mental health practitioner with a master's degree in counseling from Cambridge College, Ms. Pechet prefers to emphasize her role as a guide and a healer, helping her clients to reduce stress by achieving a better understanding of who they are and the kinds of imbalances that lead to physical and emotional difficulties.

"I do practice traditional counseling and would probably adopt that approach when I see a client for the first time," Ms. Pechet says. "Traditional counseling helps to clarify issues and change unhealthy patterns of behavior. It's really a starting place for the people I work with."

But, she stresses, it is only a starting point. "Holistic counseling is more of a mind, body, spirit approach," she explains. Lifestyle, nutrition and diet, type and frequency of exercise, the use of prayer or meditation all factor in evaluating the needs of the people who come to see her.

"One woman came to me because even though she felt tired all the time she could not sleep," she relates.

In what has become a common scenario the pressure of juggling a career, family life and social responsibilities were simply proving too difficult for the woman.

"When she tried to sleep, her mind was racing and she was not getting enough rest," Ms. Pechet says. "So we looked at how we might change that. I made several suggestions. She began to take a 30-minute break when she came home from work to transition from her job back into the household. She also installed a water fountain in the bedroom to soothe her and began to write her thoughts in a journal at bedtime. This served to empty her mind before turning out the light. And it did work. I have a testimonial."

A session with a holistic counselor can also include hands-on therapies such as Reiki, a form of energy healing with origins in Japan. This is a technique that aims to restore spiritual harmony and balance. Ms. Pechet is a Reiki master. The word itself comes from the Japanese term for "Universal Life Force."

"Many of the people I see have had some acquaintance with Reiki but usually not in conjunction with counseling," she says. Clients at Phoenix Rising have the opportunity to avail themselves of different modalities, she says.

Next to her comfortably furnished office is the Healing Room, an inviting place of soft music, subdued lighting and oriental rugs. The sound of water can be heard rippling discreetly from a corner fountain and the warm air carries an exotic fragrance.

"Reiki is experiential," she says. "It's not an intellectual process. You can feel it in the body and in the energy field. You don't have to understand it. A big part of my work is helping people get out of their heads and into their bodies. Into their hearts."

Ms. Pechet believes that many common ailments such as neck pain, back pain and chronic headaches are physical manifestations of emotional distress. "I'm probably more of a healer than a psychotherapist," she says. "When people leave here they are more relaxed. They have a plan; they feel nurtured. The Reiki helps pull it all together and it adds a nice balance to the talk therapy."

Ms. Pechet traces her involvement with Reiki back to an encounter with a cat. "When I lived on the Cape, I saw this cat get hit by a car. It was after hours and I called a vet. While waiting, I was trying to comfort it and I remember wishing that I had the power to ease its pain. I had heard about Reiki so I began to study it."

That was back in the mid-'80s, and as she went on to pursue a career in counseling it became apparent that she could combine both disciplines to deal more effectively with the problems common to so many of the people she saw.

While the holistic movement in general has gathered many adherents, particularly in the last decade, there will be people who remain skeptical about the efficacy of any New Age practices. What would Ms. Pechet say to the unconvinced?

"I think that people should just keep an open mind. Once a person gives Reiki a chance to work, particularly as a means to relieve pain, they will be able to feel the benefits immediately. They just have to have that willingness to try something different."

Ellie Pechet can be contacted at (508) 295-9809 or on the Web at [www.phoenixrisinghealing.com](http://www.phoenixrisinghealing.com)