

Touch for Peace

from Bodywork to Touch Communication

...this is the motto of Margarete Eller and Massimo De Angelis, both teachers and practitioners of Ohashiatsu® at the GLOW Wellness Centre.

Based on an interview with Wataru OHASHI, the creator and name-giver of this method, the following article puts light on how Ohashiatsu® has taken Shiatsu to a different level.

"I would like all people to feel peaceful, happy and healthy, and the beginning will always be touch, says Ohashi, who understands his activity as the initiation of a learning process. He became an internationally recognized messenger of Eastern healing arts, a renowned teacher who inspires people from all over the world with humour, knowledge and his positive philosophy and vision.

"Most people today think that something is wrong with them. This attitude makes them feel bad and guilty. My way is different. I think we don't have to change ourselves. Every human being is unique and has already everything he needs for a happy life." For Ohashi, this is the key to happiness: to understand our weak and strong sides, to take care of our weaknesses and to make best use of our strengths. He is continuously encouraging people to engage in the adventure of "Ohashiatsu", or "Ohashi Method", as he calls his modality of healing arts, to discover the path of self-knowledge and self-awareness. For him, the integration of this ancient knowledge into modern life means to enable more and more people to contribute to a peaceful life on this planet.

Ohashi frankly talks about the despair that overshadowed his first years in America, in the early seventies. He was suffering from culture

shock, as he didn't speak English, didn't have money or work, and missed his family and friends. "I could not change the facts, but my way to look at it. For example, I thought to myself: I am little, short-sighted with slit eyes – that makes me an authentic Japanese for the Americans, who will give me lots of respect as a teacher for shiatsu and oriental diagnosis. Also, it is better that I don't understand English so well. Therefore, I will not hear people's complaints about me that could take away my peace of mind. Having no close friends and family gives me the freedom to live my life without their expectations and advice."

Ohashi successfully turned his problems into opportunities, a motivating force for growth and success. And eventually his success spread out all over the world. Besides the mother-institute there are more than 20 Ohashiatsu centres, in the U.S., in Europe, and now also in Vancouver, Canada, where two of his graduates opened a school in 2011. He is author of six books, translated into many languages, and the creator of several videos and DVDs. He also travels extensively to teach courses and give lectures.

Healing with the hands is a universal concept, a natural human instinct from which shiatsu and acupuncture have developed in the Eastern cultures. Whereas in acupuncture needles are used, it is thumbs, elbows, knees and palms in shiatsu. The common belief that shiatsu is nothing but applying strong pressure to points on the body is wrong. Shiatsu is based on a comprehensive Eastern healing concept, in which the human being is seen as the microcosmic reflection of nature. Like in a garden, where sunlight and water are transformed into living material, following the

cycles of the seasons, the human being is a dynamic self regulating system. In this process of transformation, the garden is continuously maintaining and regenerating itself. People have been observing and describing this natural interaction of human beings for many centuries. Shiatsu therapists don't provide medical or therapeutic aid. Instead of treating physical and spiritual symptoms, we see them as signs of a disturbed flow of energy in the body. With a shiatsu treatment, we mobilize, stimulate and harmonize this flow and thereby activate the self healing power of the person.

Energy – or Ki in Japanese – is a fundamental term in Eastern philosophy. Everything alive has Ki, it is our life essence. In human beings, as the connecting element between heaven and earth, an undividable entity of body, mind and spirit, there is a network of meridians or pathways deep within the body as well as on the surface, in which this Ki is channelled. A free flow of energy allows wellbeing, flexibility and development of body, mind and spirit. Any stagnation or imbalance within the meridian system can result in physical and psychological disease.

Ohashi has moved away from traditional shiatsu. Communicating through touch and the importance of working from hara are the basis for his practice. After learning from his Japanese teachers, Tokujiro Namikoshi und Shizuto Masunaga, he developed his own method based on years of experience with Western bodies.

Ohashi emphasizes: "Ohashiatsu is not pressing, but leaning and supporting each other. We don't call ourselves healers, and we are not *treating* clients. Our focus is on the giver, yourself, the person who is administering the techniques. This concept is not easy for people to comprehend or accept, and is one of the most difficult exercises for those starting the Ohashiatsu training."

"The giver never sweats, nor jumps on the receiver's back, doesn't scream and is never exhausted. Giving Ohashiatsu is a meditation, an exercise like Tai Chi or Japanese archery. As a result of 'supporting each other', the client usually feels great after a session; but our first goal is the wellbeing of the giver and to affirm that the giver also feels great after a session!" Such is the impression when we watch Ohashi move around the receiver's body in an elegant flow of movement, creating a session as a powerful dance, that arises when two life energies meet.

Most important is that the giver is well prepared, in good physical, psychological and spiritual condition. It is also essential to always move from the centre of the body, the hara. Through the hara we receive the echo of life and find out which meridians need to be rebalanced in order to help the body regain its own natural impulse to heal itself. The quality of an Ohashiatsu session depends not only on the technical skills of the giver, but also on the relationship between the giver and receiver, the compassion and respect for each other, and a mind-set, that every human being – unique in his individual patterns of strengths and weaknesses – takes full responsibility for himself.

"I think massage and bodywork will become extremely important in the future. In Western medicine, the body is touched only for diagnostic reasons. But touch also brings energy to the source of life, and can cure without expensive medicines and procedures. The human body is a reflection of our planet. If we learn to respect and take care of our own health, we will also respect other people and all life on earth." This is why Ohashi wants to unite people through Ohashiatsu, to show them a way for a healthier and happier life that may someday lead to peaceful world.

Note: This article is based on an interview with Ohashi by Winnie Abraham, which appeared in German in DAO magazine.

