

## The art of healing Brittany Viar

It is a warm, inviting space where it is not only acceptable, but encouraged to transcend into a different realm and experience pure nirvana. Shungite necklaces, genuine quartz, amethyst crystals, painted stones and essential oils are peppered on shelves against the back wall. The beautifully crafted, walnut-colored wooden rocking chair and couch placed close in proximity to a stone-covered fireplace are embellished with soft, lightly-colored pillows that offer a certain homey feel. The lighting throughout the space is just dim enough to relax and renew. Scents of lavender and jasmine occupy the air. Gentle music, containing flutes, drums, harps and bells, can be heard overhead, allowing for good vibrations to permeate the area and promote tranquility. In this space, all are welcome, and healing opportunities open their arms, offering a cordial embrace.

The corner of East Dale Street in Flagstaff, AZ is home to a small, pleasant place of refuge, known as Heart and Soul Sanctuary. Opportunities for remedy of the mind, body and soul present themselves through the front door into the immediate welcome area.

“When you walk in the door, we honor each individual on a soulful and a mindful level, so whatever your beliefs are, that’s what we honor and support you in that,” said Heart and Soul Sanctuary holistic healer Dawn Marie.

A kind-hearted, Chicago native, middle-aged Marie enjoyed her time as a daycare provider for 12 years serving others and her community. As those years in daycare passed, she found herself wanting to do something different, but still in relation to assisting people. Massage therapy sparked her curiosity, leading her to attend healing arts school to study both massage therapy and holistic medicine.

Disbelieving in the hocus-pocus of energy medicine, Marie was intrigued to prove the people at the healing arts school wrong, or to even be proven wrong herself.

The history, theories and techniques of energy medicine are imperative concepts to learn about when studying alternative and energy medicine. Einstein’s discovery of quantum physics supports the idea that humans are composed of energy fields. The Human Energy Field, also called the Human Energy-Conscious System, “relates to our state of health on a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual level,” according to Anne-Chantal Misson, a Body Psychotherapist and Brennan Healing Science Practitioner of Barbara Brennan School of Healing in Europe. “It is the subtle aspect and extension of our physical body that holds our feelings, thoughts, reactions, attitudes, relationship patterns, belief systems, etc. All of us are always sensing and responding to one another and our environment through this field.”

Since the human body is composed of layers of energy, students attending any healing institution must learn about how to guide clients through physical, emotional and spiritual matters in natural, non-intrusive ways. A significant amount of knowledge regarding energy fields in the body, and devotion to assisting others is a crucial part of the profession.

Marie says her experience at the energy-based healing school from 16 years ago was life-changing; she was addicted to the practice from there. She was able to understand that each individual body has a mind of its own apart from intellectual self and makes its own decisions as to what it wants and needs to properly heal itself. She took this knowledge with her when she moved to Flagstaff in 2013, and has let it envelop her way of life.

“Energy work has changed my life because I was given up for adoption,” Marie said with an indifferent look upon her amiable face. “I was abused as a child, and then I was abused physically and emotionally by my ex-husband. I had abandonment issues, I divorced my ex and lost my entire family, as well as most of my friends. You would think I’d be an emotional wreck. I lost my house, I lost my car, I’ve [previously] been in poverty for seven years [but] all the belief work and all the energy work I’ve done has transformed me into who I am today, where I can talk about what happened to me without emotion, without anger, guilt, shame, regret—any of that.”

The way she spoke with her soft, pleasant voice about her turbulent past in such a composed and confident manner revealed that her time to grieve the things that happened to her had subsided. She said the burden of abandonment, abuse and loss did not phase her anymore. Energy work brought her the gift of letting go of past experiences, allowing her to continue her life and help others with their struggles.

Marie’s round face, green-blue eyes, light skin tone and short, red-brown hair all seemed to exude such an open, motherly energy. Her dark blue sweater sat just right on her body, as she clasped her hands and gently placed them on her lap. She smiled politely.

“I’ve seen and witnessed, scientifically as well, cancer being reversed,” Marie said. “I have seen families that have been separated come together. It’s hard to pinpoint anything specific because miracles happen every day.”

Marie is convinced that people have the ability within themselves to heal and attain wellness, no matter what form of medicine they personally use to get there.

“I had a woman who had back surgery, and she had a cage put in her back. Just by working with her [through massage therapy], I was able to inhibit scar tissue as well as dissipate scar tissue that had already transpired, and within six months it was like nothing ever happened to her. Plus,

the great thing is that they [clients] are happy to see you, and then they're happy when they leave," Marie said with a joyous laugh.

Marie's daughter, Brianne Panico, explained an injury she had that gave her scoliosis at a young age, which is an abnormal curvature in the spinal cord. Rather than turning to surgery to alleviate the issue, her mother would help to massage her back periodically.

"I got introduced to it [holistic medicine] when she [Marie] went to massage school," Panico said, now 21, looking at her mother proudly. "I kind of saw the benefits and saw how she was able to heal without having to do anything invasive."

Natural methods, like the use of hands, for example, inspired Panico to begin her own journey through mastery of massage and alternative healing methods as well, leading to her and her mother working as a team at Heart and Soul Sanctuary to foster the art of healing.

"It's quite rewarding as somebody who likes to help others to see the process for them [clients] and see that you're able to help them with an issue that they are not always able to [fix]," Panico said. "You can go to doctors and you can get a diagnosis, but they have to go through all these tests, and sometimes it's something simple."

Carpal tunnel, a syndrome that can be caused by overuse of the hands and wrists, for instance, is a common numbness feeling in the hands caused by a pinched nerve in the area. Many people get surgeries for this issue, but massage therapy can be an alternative way to alleviate the discomfort, according to Panico.

"That's why I got into massage, and that's why I keep growing, because I love the idea of being able to help others in very natural and very almost instant and beneficial way," Panico said.

After observing the things her mother could do, Panico knew energy medicine work was even more effective than strictly using handwork. Panico and her mother, as well as other healers, work together at the Heart and Soul Sanctuary, which not only offers massage therapy, but it also offers meditation, energy healing/shifting, Reiki, cranial sacral methods, theta DNA, drumming circles, angel readings, medium connections, crystal therapy, aromatherapy, hypnotherapy, readings and clinical sexology, which is the study of human relationships and sexual life.

"Right now, what I've been doing the most is I find that there's a lot of people in the area that are interested in energy work but yet they're intimidated to try it, or they don't want to make the commitment to do it, and so I offer energetic body work," Marie said. "I work with them on the table with a traditional massage type setting, however I incorporate Reiki, cranial sacral and theta DNA healing with them. Then, when they get off the table, they feel lighter, they feel like they

have more clarity and then they're more interested in what I'm doing and the modalities and how it can help them."

Reiki is a common healing mechanism. It is a technique formed through two Japanese words: "Rei", which signifies "God's wisdom or a higher power", and "ki", that means "life force energy." This technique creates relaxation through a patient's body, mind and spirit to improve the quality of life. A person can learn Reiki through the transfer of a Reiki master to the student. A Reiki master, once the transfer process is complete, is able to tap into a person's "life force energy" with the hands. It is all spiritually guided.

Marie explained that the process of healing is a mind over matter practice. What a person believes will help them, is going to help them. It is up to each person to decide if, how and when they want to heal their bodies.

"I've found that most of the time, I can heal pretty much everything, [such as] emotional traumas and physical [issues] with holistic medicine, with herbs, with massage [and] with energy work, but I do feel that there is a place for modern medicine. Obviously, we need ERs for trauma, and sometimes we do need assistance with other things. There are some medicines that I feel can be beneficial in that way too. I think in anything, there's always a happy medium," Marie said.

People like Marie and Panico are simply witnesses to each individual's healing process. They are there to guide the individual in their journey returning back to wellness.

"I had a cleansing session and yes, [it] was worth it," said Audrey Grainger, a client at Heart and Soul Sanctuary. "It was quite soul-searching and enlightening. She targeted a few spots on my body that were healing from injuries. Also, [I] had a cleansing experience with letting go as she picked up on that. I came out refreshed."

It is important to understand and keep in mind that healing and being cured are not synonymous concepts. Healing is temporary relief, while a cure is a permanent or semi-permanent fix.

"My experience from the phone call [to make the appointment at Heart and Soul Sanctuary] to the appointment time were both personal and warm. Probably one of the best massages I've ever had," said Robert King, one of Marie's clients.

Grainger also said she truly believes holistic medicine is very important and more effective than other forms of medicine, like pharmaceuticals.

"With the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) and with government restrictions, you're not allowed to say 'cure' or anything like that. Whether it's on a healing modality, a holistic modality or essential oils. That's completely taboo and against regulations," Marie said.

There is no guarantee that holistic products will “cure” the body. Although certain healing practices have intentional purposes, they can certainly affect people’s bodies differently, depending on their mindset, beliefs and body chemistry.

“The holistic industry is threatening the prescription drug industry. The FDA is really going hard after the holistic supplement industry because they can’t profit and control it, as well as the cottage industries. And by the cottage industries, I mean they’re going after the people that make soaps and bath salts in their homes, wanting them to put regulations in, so it makes it impossible for you to make something out of your home,” Marie said.

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) defines Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM) as “a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine.” This includes alternative medical systems, mind-body meditation, biological therapies, body-based therapy methods and energy therapies.

According to the NCCAM, “The agency’s ultimate goal is to build an evidence base that facilitates the integration of CAM therapies that have proved to be efficacious and safe into mainstream medicine. Although some CAM therapies and dietary supplements have been scientifically evaluated, important questions of safety and efficacy still remain for many others that have not yet been studied by the NCCAM or other investigators.”

“That’s why I think there’s a big challenge between traditional medicine and holistic medicine because traditional medicine is really only after squashing the holistic industry, and the holistic industry obviously is responding the way they’re responding,” Marie said. “I choose to not allow that to trigger me, and I choose to just keep myself educated and then work on whatever’s best for the individual.”

The National Center for Complementary Integrative Health shows that about 38 percent of adults and about 12 percent of children are using some form of CAM for healing purposes, displaying that it is a somewhat familiar concept. The practice is slowly gaining traction in the U.S., though it has been practiced in other cultures and various parts of the world.

“I think it’s important to be grateful for everything that you experience,” Marie said.

Although complex, alternative remedies will always be available for people that have a desire to heal and believe they are capable of healing. It is all about allowing the body to reap the benefits holistic medicine has to offer.

