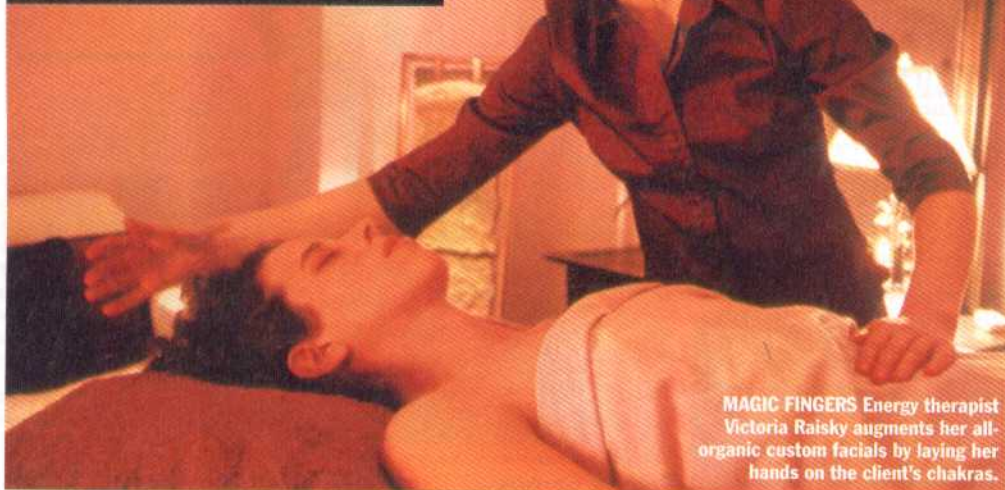


# ChillOut

WELLNESS FOR BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT



**MAGIC FINGERS** Energy therapist Victoria Raisky augments her all-organic custom facials by laying her hands on the client's chakras.

## Chakra treatment

Traditional disciplines combined with energy therapy are helping New Yorkers go with the flow **By Cathay Che**

It's not uncommon to hear someone say "I feel low-energy" or "He had weird energy." But for most New Yorkers, the mention of energy therapy is likely to be dismissed with a roll of the eyes as hopelessly New Age. The concept isn't as out-there as many would imagine, though. Energy therapy is an umbrella term for a range of healing methods that includes fairly standard practices like reiki (a Japanese system of touch that calls on universal energy to balance and heal). In general, the objective is to balance the flow of energy within a person by balancing the chakras (the body's energy centers, as mapped by yogic philosophy). Most therapists believe that negative emotions and memories deposit themselves in our bodies, causing blockages to the free flow of energy. The therapist is a liaison with the "universal flow," the life-force energy that animates all existence, thereby helping the patient to clear the blockages. This can be done with or without touching the body. It may feel similar to massage, but unlike massage, the focus isn't on releasing muscle tension. (Unfortunately, there's no governing body of energy therapists, and anyone can claim to be one. To avoid charlatans, Chris Merrill of the Universal Life Force Healing Center recommends getting a word-of-mouth recommendation.)

Much the way traditional Western medicine has evolved to integrate its nontraditional Eastern counterparts, energy therapy has expanded to embrace more mainstream formats. A growing number of practitioners in New York offer hybrid treatments that combine a familiar service—anything from psychotherapy to a facial—with energy-balancing work. This

allows folks to encounter a new method of self-improvement without feeling they've gone totally L.A.

"Believe me, I am the last person to embrace anything quackish," says Vickie Starr, the vibrant, 555 Soul-wearing businesswoman who cofounded Girlie Action, a music PR and marketing company. Starr and her business partner, Felice Ecker, handle hipsters such as the White Stripes and Björk. Last year, the partners "had become like ships passing in the night," Starr explains. They needed to communicate better during their chaotic workdays. That's when Ecker's energy therapist, Joy D'Andrea, stepped in to offer them what she calls conscious healing. The method is so named because D'Andrea believes that the client's conscious understanding of his or her own energy system is the key to health. "She made us sit facing each other and discuss how we felt about our relationship, what we'd been holding back—and we couldn't break eye contact," Starr says. D'Andrea, who says she can read energy fields, observed Starr's and Ecker's energies and pointed out instances when they were encountering blockages. The partners were able to reconnect in just two sessions. "The thing I like about Joy is that she's very peaceful, but she has a blunt New York edge and a very clear and precise way of giving feedback," Starr explains. "She never descends into New Age voodoo-speak."

Starr has continued seeing D'Andrea for sessions that are part talk therapy and part hands-on work. After discussing issues she's grappling with, Starr lies (fully clothed) on the massage table in D'Andrea's swank Chelsea

office, and D'Andrea gently touches her chakras and joints. D'Andrea explains that this practice brings up emotions and memories that the person might not ordinarily have access to. "The touch invites what might be held beneath the consciousness into the consciousness," she says. "And when something comes to the surface, we start exploring that." These formerly subconscious deposits are emotional blockages, and by recognizing them, the client can begin clearing them, leading to a more balanced energy flow.

D'Andrea trained under *Hands of Light* author Barbara Brennan, who runs a college in Florida that offers a degree in this work. D'Andrea says the majority of her clients are under 40 and basically healthy but want to address a sort of ennui. "They are looking at themselves as a whole," she says. "They want to know how to take care of their bodies, how their belief system affects their bodies and what they want to achieve in life." Starr believes that her twice-monthly sessions have made a subtle but substantial difference. "I'm more aware of what I'm feeling in my body and what kind of energy I'm putting out to others," she says. "And overall, I get a lot less overwhelmed."

A different kind of energy therapy is practiced by Victoria Raisky, 27, a licensed aesthetician who studied at the Archangel Healing Light Center in NYC and now practices at the Universal Force Healing Center. Raisky performs organic facials that begin with guided meditation and end with an energy-balancing massage. She believes that "your skin is a reflection of every emotion that's going on within." Balancing your energy flow by getting rid of blockages is a crucial step to improving the skin, and overall health. To this end, Raisky places her hands on the chakras, directing the flow of universal energy to balance them and clear blockages. She also discusses what your skin reveals. For example, unresolved anger is stored in the liver, and an excess of it may appear as blemishes along the jawline.

In addition to the facials, Raisky offers Emotional Release Therapy, in which she stimulates the chakras with touch. This process helps clients to locate their negative-emotion deposits and let go of those feelings. During a typical session, a client "goes through a certain emotional release—maybe she'll laugh or cry or bliss out, with certain revelations." Real-estate broker Roxana Arroyo, 34, has been seeing Raisky for facials and Emotional Release Therapy for a little more than a year. Arroyo claims that her adult acne has cleared up and that the energy balancing has helped her control (though not entirely overcome) her tendency to anger quickly. She's thrilled, she says, because when she originally went to see Raisky, "all I wanted was a facial."

To contact Joy D'Andrea, call 212-358-5991. \$115 per hour. To contact Victoria Raisky, call 347-526-2739. Facials, \$95; Emotional Release Therapy, \$125 per hour.