

SOUND

Sound healing, Soundbaths, Sound journeys are all gaining popularity as ways to relax. Less well known is the potential of the human voice to offer healing and connection: to ourselves, to others, to the world as we experience it and to the world that is beyond our knowing.

Nada yoga – ‘union through sound’ has many aspects which include mantra: today we’re going to explore more generally the effect of vocal sound

‘the body is not a solid structure, but an intense field of vibration with an infinite depth of resonance.’ [The Yoga of Sound, Russill Paul, p 152]

If we really take in that sentence, it’s easy to imagine how our bodies and minds can be deeply affected by sound, even by a sound as simple as a hum.

Humming can

- Increase oxygen in cells
- Lower blood pressure and heart rate
- Increase lymphatic circulation
- Increase levels of melatonin
- Reduce levels of stress related hormones
- Release endorphins
- Increase levels of nitric oxide
- Release oxytocin
- Take us into a parasympathetic state
- Tone the vagus nerve

The voice sits between the face and the heart – in the embryo, at 4-5 weeks, the face and heart are one, then this unfolds into pharyngeal folds. The vagus nerve ‘wandering nerve’ begins behind the ears, connects into the vocal folds and comes down the body connecting into the heart, the lungs, the gut and right down to the pelvic floor, forming an important part of the parasympathetic nervous system, and of the social engagement system.

We can imagine self created sound as a kind of ‘tuning up the orchestra’ – maybe there are parts of you that are vibrating at slightly different rates – when we hum, or sing, it can bring us into coherence, a sense of wholeness, bringing mind, body and spirit together. This coming into coherence calls on ‘entrainment’, a term from physics where things with different vibrations or rhythms affect the vibrations of a nearby object. When girls or women live together their monthly cycles begin to coincide, when people drum together or sing together, not only does the music come into rhythm, but heartbeats and breath rhythms entrain too.

When we sound with other people, there is this capacity for entrainment, but also the effects of oxytocin, known as the bonding hormone, are magnified. And entrainment becomes co-regulation – our nervous systems also entrain – just as a calm adult can soothe a crying baby, our nervous systems interact with the company we are in as well as with the rhythms of the music: a calm, steady rhythm, repetitive structure to the music are very beneficial in terms of calming the nervous system.

Sound + intention = healing [Jonathan Goldman]

We can add to the benefits of sound itself by adding intention to our sounding. Jonathan Goldman coined the phrase ‘Sound + intention = healing’. He cites the work of Masuru Emoto, who showed that words with positive or negative intentions affected the molecular structure of water in different ways: beautiful, coherent patterns for the positive, irregular or incomplete shapes for the negative.

In SELF CREATED SOUND we bring body, breath, mind, heart and voice together, deepening our connection with ourselves

SINGING TOGETHER brings us into our hearts, deepening our connection to each other

INTENTION strengthens our connection to the world around us and the world beyond, whatever we believe that to be.

SILENCE is also beneficial, and the silence that follows sounding can be very deep:

- Helps new brain cells to grow in the hippocampus – responsible for the formation of emotions
- Allows the brain to gather and process information
- Enables information to be transferred from short term memory to long term
- Allows us to integrate what we have experienced
- A natural anti stress remedy that we all need

The Humming Effect, Jonathan Goldman and Andi Goldman [or anything by Jonathan Goldman]

The Power of Sound, Joshua Leeds

The Yoga of Sound, Russill Paul

Mantra Yoga and Primal Sound, David Frawley

The Hidden Messages in Water, Masuru Emoto

How God changes your brain, Andrew Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman