

THE VOICE AS A TOOL FOR HEALING

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1 INTRODUCTION

Our voices are truly amazing. It is not only the range of notes and sounds we can produce but also the ability to add emotion and feelings into the sounds we make that separate us from purely electronic sound and into another realm of power for affecting health and wellbeing. There have been numerous studies within the practices of alternative or holistic medicine into the use of tones and vibrations for healing, ultimately leading to the use of machines in modern medicine such as sonic wands, ultrasound and infrasound. However, at a fundamental level, all these techniques originated from the use of the voice directly or with basic instruments to produce sound for healing.

Expression using the voice appears key to every society or religion; incorporating hymns, songs or chants into their daily lives. Even simple speech, confession, counselling or setting the world to rights with friends and family can be considered forms of healing. Singing and chanting are considered a medium for prayer or meditation and whilst there is an element of scepticism to these practices; that these are just music for the sake of enjoyment or a group of people chanting 'OM', one cannot deny that these rituals have undoubtedly been practiced since humans could first make sounds.

This paper looks at the dynamics of how healing can be achieved by the voice from physical, acoustic, emotional and spiritual perspectives as well as the common practices used in ancient and modern society.

2 SOUND AND VIBRATION

2.1 Healing and Dis-ease

Disease, or dis-ease as it is sometimes written, in terms of frequency and resonance, is characterised as unhealthy parts of the body having different resonant frequencies to healthy parts. Various analogies are used in texts but the simplest form is that of Pythagoras and the monochord. Imagine the fibres of muscles in the bicep, all with the same structure and length and therefore the same resonance. Regardless of whether the resonance of the muscle of the bicep is the same as muscles of the quadriceps, the two muscle groups being different length and density, the fibres within a single muscle group should be the same. The bicep is one single muscle with one single task; in order to work efficiently it must therefore work entirely together. If you imagine a knot within that muscle then those fibres where the knot exists will be shorter than the ones around it and so have a higher resonant frequency. They will be vibrating faster than the fibres around them and so will create an imbalance within the muscle group. Such imbalances are the cause of weakened muscles, lumps and localised pain and can be considered a 'dis-ease' of the muscle.

This concept can be expanded to include organs that aren't working properly, whether by injury (damage) of part of the structure, genetic defect or improper use (e.g. poor diet or excess alcohol intake) leading to reduced blood or nutrient flow. The concept within sound healing is that by 'retuning' the diseased area and restoring its natural resonant frequency, normal healthy operation can be restored.

All parts of the human body and overall the body itself have a fundamental resonant frequency, that can be said to be true by the laws of energy, matter and vibration (1). A study into body resonances found that regardless of age, sex and size of the people tested within a group of 113, the natural resonances did not differ greatly. The findings were that mean values (± 1 s.e.) were 12.2 ± 0.1

Hz for males and 12.8 +/- 0.2 Hz for females with an overall mean population value of 12.3 +/- 0.1 Hz (2).

Within healing practices, in order to stimulate healing within the body, practitioners will resonate whichever areas of the body that require healing or will benefit healing to the patient (organs, tissues, 'energy centres' etc) at their natural frequency or a higher harmonic. The result is to bring the dis-eased area back to a state of 'ease' (good health and balance).

A one example of using resonance for healing is for broken bones. Bones have a fundamental frequency between 25Hz and 50Hz (depending on the source material) with resonant frequencies at multiples. Stimulation of the lower resonances has been shown to speed up bone repair. The purring of cats has been found to have resonant frequencies within this healing range leading to the hypothesis that cats can help to speed repair of broken bones (3) (4). Further evidence suggests that purring is used by cats to heal themselves and is not just a sign of contentment. This factor is suggested to be the reason why cats have been found to have lower cases of disease and faster recovery times compared to dogs and could explain why even injured or sick cats will purr (5).

2.2 Entrainment

One of the key principles of healing by sound therapy is to 'retune' the body back to its proper resonant frequency. As discussed, this is achieved by playing, sounding or singing the fundamental frequency of the diseased body part and reinforcing or 'reminding' the body of the correct frequency (6).

An alternative concept is that by firing the correct resonant frequency at a body part or area you produce the greatest vibration effect (amplitude) in the area. For knotted muscles this vibration can help to release the fibres and gently ease the knot. For areas with low blood flow this vibration increases blood to the area, flushing the tissues with fresh plasma, white blood cells and oxygen and removing toxins and dead cells. For broken bones this vibration increases the piezoelectric charge of the area and encourages bone regrowth.

3 'MODERN MEDICINE' HEALING PRACTICES

At present there are no modern Western medicine practices that use the voice, the closest would be that of counsellors and psychologists, which are discussed below. The nearest medical methods that are used are those of infrasound (very low frequencies) and ultrasound (very high frequencies). Such methods are known to be highly successful and have led to further research into treatment of Alzheimer's, cancer, re-growing organs and even DNA recoding (7,8).

3.1 Infrasound

Defined as '*soundlike waves having a frequency below the audible range, that is, below about 16Hz*' (9). Current tests into infrasound have been related to the effect of inducing awe or fear by subjecting humans to sub-20Hz frequencies to test emotional responses (10). The tests have been linked to the reported effect of an infrasound resonance of a tiger roar to parallel its prey with fright.

3.2 Ultrasound

Defined as '*ultrasonic waves at frequencies above the audible range (above about 20 kHz)*' (9). As mentioned, the predominant use for ultrasound is for providing scans and images of unborn babies but further uses for breaking up kidney stones and muscle and tissue repair such as for tennis elbow. (11)

4 'ALTERNATIVE' HEALING PRACTICES

The most significant consideration for forms of healing by the voice is that they are all essentially the same. The following practices are examples of vocal healing, whether they are designed or even thought of as such is largely irrelevant to the overall healing effect when done properly and for the highest good.

4.1 Chanting: vowel toning, Bija mantra and prayer

Jon Goldman coined the equation of frequency + intent = healing and it is the intent that differentiates human produced sound and electronic sound. He worked and still works with various forms of vocal toning to heal energy centres as well as local injuries using traditional forms of toning from many cultures including Buddhist, Egyptian and Greek. Methods used include vowel and mantra chanting, the uses of which he has reported and documented in numerous books and presentations. He is one of many such practitioners in vocal healing around the world and is only mentioned of note in this paper due to his influence on the author.

An important consideration of these traditional methods is that they were often expended on 'natural' sounds that humans make in their day-to-day lives (6). For example the fourth vowel tone (used for the heart area) is '**AH**' and the Bija mantras all have this sound within them (with the exception of '**OM**' for the top of the head, although a variation of '**OM**' is '**AUM**' which closely resembles '**AH**-m).

This use of similar words and sounds is not limited to chanting and mantras; the Christian 'Lords Prayer' starts with 'Our Father who are't in Heaven' which can be re-written as it is sounded; '**AH** f**AH**ther who **AH**'t in heaven'. The prayer also ends with '**AH**men'.

In Hebrew, the word 'Shalom' (or sh**AH**lom) means 'peace'.

If we expand this concept to the sounds we make every day that may relate to the heart; the exclamation of pity, love, pain and even laughter, we notice that they are variations of '**AH**'.

These are just a few of the overlaps between ancient forms of meditation, prayer or simply conversation and those still used in modern society. The religion (or lack thereof) of the practices is entirely irrelevant as they are likely practiced by every culture in some way. It may not necessarily mean that our language has incorporated these ancient chants into everyday words and sounds but maybe that the original chants themselves came from everyday sounds.

4.2 Singing: Choir and music in general

As with chanting methods, individual or group prayer and choral music is a form of healing. Indian and Asian music forms have long since made the connection between sound and health and have made the practice a science in itself (12).

As with chanting and vowel sounds, these practices have been incorporated into modern music.

The Solfège (Sol Fa) scale was devised as a way to remember music notes over time but was simply based on the ascended tones of the Gregorian chant 'Ut queant laxis':

Ut queant laxis **re**sonare fibris,
Mira gestorum **fa**muli tuorum,
Solve polluti **la**bii reatum,
Sancte Iohannes,

'Sancte Iohannes' was toned as '**SI**'

Translated as:

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Do let our voices **re**sonate most purely, **mi**racles telling, **fa**r greater than many; **so** let our tongues be **la**vish in your praises, **Sa**int **Jo**hn the Baptist.

This was later re-defined as simply: **Do, Re, Me, Fa, So, La, Te** and then back to **Do**.

Which was in turn made famous by Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music* (1965).

Looking closely at these notes you find that '**AH**' appears twice but most noticeably across all three translations, as the fourth note, which, as already discussed, corresponded to the heart in the ancient Egyptian healing chant.

4.3 Speech

Whilst decades of study has been done on the use of vocal techniques, frequencies and tones, the simplest form of healing is still as powerful, if understood as such and used appropriately. Every parent or child is familiar with the concept of 'that tone' when saying 'sorry'. As already discussed, the intent of the sound can significantly change the effect of what is said. (6).

4.3.1 Counselling, psychology and conversation

The simple act of listening to a person and facilitating them to release tension, stress or anger is equally as valuable as any of the 'qualified' practices. We can all actively listen and help each other and ourselves to heal if we take the time.

With regard to talking and conversation, there is the tone or 'intent' with how words are spoken.

As an example I task you to repeat the simple phrase 'thank you' as if to a loved one, an acquaintance and an enemy. Whilst the words themselves and therefore the frequency are likely to be the same, the emotional 'weight' of the words will be vastly different and are even measurable (6).

There is an intrinsic knowledge of when you have walked into a room after an argument, or the feeling you are being talked about when in both cases no words are being spoken. This is the power of intent. Acousticians have long pondered the concept of how you can hear your name being spoken across a busy noisy room – the Cocktail Party effect (1). It is the belief of the author that you pick up on the intent of the words being said about you. They don't have to be good or bad but the frequency of your name is in tune with your personal resonance and so you notice.

4.3.2 Prayer

As with conversation, prayer has similar power to heal, if not more so because it is often done with good intention and love, but also it is carried out en-masse. Prayer and chanting have multiple key similarities; repetition of words with the intent and purpose to seek wisdom, guidance, love and healing.

5 STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

As discussed, all forms of individual vocal healing require frequency and intent to be effective. Therefore it stands to reason that the larger the group of people taking part in the healing the greater the energy available. In acoustic terms a doubling of the sound producing source results in a doubling of the sound energy and so the same principle can be related to mass prayer, choirs or group chanting. Provided the group has the same vocal frequency or harmonic and have the same group intent (for example to help a recovering person in hospital), then the effect of the healing is increased accordingly. As with many aspects of alternative medicine, the effects cannot be measured or qualified but regardless of the effect of intent, if the initial scientific effect of the use of

resonant frequency for healing is accepted, then the concept of a mass effect must also be accepted in principle.

6 DEFICIENCY OF MODERN PRACTICES

6.1 Lack of conversation and active listening

With the increase in modern technology, interactive phones, increasing numbers of television channels and the internet there has been a noticeable decline in conversation within society and public dynamics. Combined with a society that spends more time at work or commuting and less time with family and friends we are becoming a society that doesn't talk as much to each other as they used to (13). It may be that this lack of conversation or lack of interest in connecting when we do talk means that there is less healing going on with modern conversation. Current statistics show that depression is on a global increase (14), is this in part because of the increase in use of technology in the UK culture or restriction on children to say what they feel properly and freely?

Even the recent film 'Inside Out' demonstrates the value of conversation and allowing all emotions to play a part in our lives to keep us healthy. No-one can be happy all the time and if we are told that we can't shout and scream and cry then we constrain our interactions to those that are 'socially acceptable' and yet in direct conflict to how we actually feel. Allowing the expression of all our emotions is well known to help us heal (15) and is what professional counselling is based upon, and yet we potentially don't do it enough within family and friendship groups, or even with complete strangers.

6.2 Electrical production of sounds

Much of modern music is not as often created from a person playing a guitar, or drums or a keyboard. Instead it is often synthesised from electrical instruments and is felt to have lost the 'heart and soul' of the music by traditional healers and musicians. The original pieces of Beethoven and Bach are commonly prescribed for lowering heart rates and breathing and it is now considered that any music favoured by the person listening will speed recovery times (16) and even for pain relief and reducing recovery times of general surgery and even stroke victims (17). Admittedly this factor affects more to the use of instruments but the increased use of electronics is notable in its reduction of the healing effect of music in general.

6.3 Stigma

There are more than a few stigmas to such practices, although the objection differs depending on the point of reference. Objections that such practices are religious, alternative medicine, 'hippy', witchcraft or magic are but a few. Ironically, as previously discussed, such practices of vocal healing are essentially the same and are done by everyone. 'I wish I had that car', 'I hope your brother gets better soon', 'I'd love a holiday' are all versions of prayer, mantra or spell. In reference to the equation by Jon Goldman; they all have frequency by virtue of them being spoken words, and of intent by virtue of them being meant or wanted. Just because a deity is not invoked does not mean it's not the same thing as a prayer.

The actions of prayer and idle conversation are essentially the same but the symbolism and perception is vastly different. Indeed with the concept of spells and magic there is a positive disbelief or even persecution of such practitioners. But a question to pose to society then is then why does the perception of the wording "I hope you get better soon" differ so vastly when it's done by a priest, a druid, a guru, a high priestess or just a child. The meaning is the same, the wording is the same and the intent is the same.

It is the belief of the author that it is the stigma of such practices that have diluted not only their effect but their significance and reality. In some cases it is easy to see how improper use has even created negativity to such practices. Indeed whilst the intent of the methods shown in this paper are

for healing and improving wellbeing, it is just as easy to use the same methods and set the intent for harm or dis-ease leading to 'angry music', hurtful comments or even a 'curse'.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Whilst the practices of religion, alternative therapy and vocal healing may be brought under question, the mathematical and physical concepts of stimulating the resonant frequencies of the body are sound and measurable (1), as are the medical practices of ultra sound for healing and the effect in infrasound for inducing emotional reactions.

Regardless of the energy provided by 'good' or even 'bad' intent, provided vocal healing is done with the aim to help the person it is intended for then the voice shall continue to be a vital and versatile tool for improving health and wellbeing, irrespective of religious belief, medical practice or whether it is simply as a token of friendship or family connection.

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