

Bowenwork designed to let body heal itself over time

By M.P.A. Yun

Special Sections Editor

Of the bodywork modalities — massage therapy, acupressure, rolfing or yoga, to name a few — Bowenwork works best, according to Yvonne Fisher.

Bowenwork is designed to let the body heal itself over time, and it can take up to a week to be fully effective. Like many bodywork styles, it relies on a practitioner using his or her hands to deliver healing movements on the body. But that's about where the similarities end.

Bowenwork is a series of short, specific movements. Unlike a massage, it does not cover the whole body or aim to work out knots or kinks in muscles temporary.

"It's hugely different in moves. With massage, hands rarely leave the body," Fisher said.

She worked as a massage therapist for several years in Center City spas, where many clients thought of bodywork as a luxury.

"More often than not, they would enjoy it for an hour, and feel the same way the next day," she said of clients who were coping

with pain.

Fisher said she was searching for a way to help clients deal with pain more effectively in a lasting way. Fisher opened her own practice, Insight Body Therapies, in Fort Washington, when she discovered Bowenwork, which was created by Tom Bowen in Australia in the 1950s.

"This engages the body's own healing mechanism. It's gentle," she said.

An article by Liz Mackenzie, Ph.D., and Fisher states that "the basic philosophy behind Bowenwork is that the human body is 'hard-wired' to seek balance through the regulatory process of the autonomic nervous system."

In other words, the body functions on its own to heal, but is often too overwhelmed to work properly.

Bowenwork practitioners apply light pressure to specific muscles to relieve pain, increase energy or help a variety of illnesses. That attention to the muscles allegedly activates the body's innate capacity to restore balance and sends messages through connective tissue.

During a session, Fisher applies pressure to muscles, then leaves the room for a few

minutes so the body can process the information. She returns and focuses on a different part of the body. Most sessions last about an hour, and results can take up to a week.

One of Fisher's clients, Peter Stankiewicz, of Ambler, has been getting Bowenwork treatments for nearly two years. He had pain in many joints, including his knees, elbows, ankles and shoulders. At age 33, he said his body was starting to show wear from his active lifestyle.

"I wasn't sure [about Bowenwork]. I was skeptical — I am about anything that I don't understand — but at the same time, I wanted to try it because I hate going to the doctor," Stankiewicz said.

He said he feared that a doctor would either prescribe him painkillers or tell him he would eventually need surgery.

"I'm glad I went because I don't have pain anymore," he said.

Another client, Steven Greene, 50, spends much of his time at a desk. He has been getting Bowenwork for three months to help his knees and shoulders.

"It has helped my knees and my general comfort level. It has a tangible effect," he said.



Photos by M.P.A. Yun/Trend

At top left, Yvonne Fisher performs a Bowenwork procedure for the knee. At bottom left, Fisher uses techniques to heal the wrist and arm.