

The Healing Power of Sound

Posted on



A sound bath set up with multi instruments, where acoustic frequencies act as a gentle massage for the mind.

Sound healing is an ancient therapeutic practice that primarily uses instrumental vibrations as well as vocals to bring the body and mind into a state of deep relaxation and balance. In today's fast-moving and demanding world, it serves as a powerful antidote to chronic stress and burnout by slowing down overactive brain waves and activating the body's natural healing mechanisms.

Words: Shabna Cader.

Like many folks these days, I know what it's like to feel burnt out. It sneaks up in small, intrinsic ways. The weight on your shoulders that does not fully release. The heaviness in your chest only feeling tighter. The unassuming lock of the jaw. The constant whirring of repeated thoughts and negative emotions. The difficulty is simply sitting still for a few moments.

According to many reports, burnout is now a common occurrence, affecting productivity, sleep patterns, day-to-day activities, and even relationships.

As someone who operates, manages, and teaches at a yoga and Pilates studio, I have been well aware of the power of sound, its healing properties, and many benefits over the years; however, it takes falling into a rut of sorts to really experience it for oneself and truly understand how impactful it can feel. In its simplest sense, although sound healing can be rather multidimensional, sound healing or sound therapy is a guided meditation in the form of sound. Think Tibetan and crystal bowls, gongs, drums, chimes, sticks, cymbals, rain sticks, ocean drums, and even voice activation.



With precise intention, practitioner Nimesha uses glassophone in the form of vibration/acoustic therapy to release emotional blockages.

“Sound healing can be deeply grounding and peaceful,” explains Nimesha Palliyaguru, a lead practitioner and instructor. “It is a great sensory modality that is accessible-friendly. All you need is to be present. In today’s context, we’re constantly on the move and productivity is thoroughly encouraged on exceeding levels, and so with this practice, the invitation is to set things gently aside, completely letting go, processing what we’re going through in a serene setting and

environment.”



Nimesha holds a Tibetan singing bowl, ready to strike and swirl, releasing sound waves designed to down-regulate the nervous system.

Nimesha was one of the first practitioners to introduce multi-instrument sound journeys in Colombo over a year and a half ago, having received her training from Shantika Sound Healing Academy in Thailand. “I have continued to collaborate with Shantika and supported her in bringing down the training opportunity and making it available to others to learn and train as well. Each practitioner will approach sound healing in their own way – as for me, I was drawn to the gong and decided to invest in one some years back, and I enjoy combining Kundalini Yoga, Yin Yoga, and Breathwork modalities with sound,” she continued to share.

A combination of restorative practices and sound heightens a practitioner’s experience – whether they be drawn in due to stress, anxiety, overwhelm, or burnout – and the beginning of a session will be to be called in to let go and surrender, as Nimesha clarified. “We focus on tapping the parasympathetic nervous system so that will often be with the use of water based instruments like the water drum, which supports both the mind and body to ground, navigate thoughts and move the mind from beta to an alpha, theta or deep delta states (gentler mental frequencies) which help induce meditative states, quiet daydreaming, and profound

relaxation,” she added further. “We integrate multiple instruments to help participants deepen their practice and gently transition out of the experience.” She also practices and offers water therapy – known as Watsu – that taps into the parasympathetic nervous system. This aquatic bodywork is also a passive form of therapy that combines gentle stretching and massage inspired by the Japanese technique of Shiatsu. This modality helps soothe persistent discomfort while gently easing stiffness associated with arthritic conditions, and alleviates internal stress, subtle anxiety, and lingering physical tightness by inviting a sense of floating weightlessness.



Sound, water, and stillness come together in an

immersive floating sound bath experience.

Nimesha is currently one of the only instructors offering this practice in Sri Lanka. Hashini Silva, a psychiatric social work lecturer, psychosocial counselor and therapist, and sound healing practitioner, notes that many people find sound healing to be a positively impactful experience. Hashini studied sound healing in Sri Lanka with Shanthika International. She, too, received her training in Thailand, and her background as a counselor and therapist led her to explore sound healing and its therapeutic modalities. As she sees fit, in-person counseling or therapy is a surface-level approach to deeper concerns and issues. Sound healing taps into deeper states, enabling participants to slow their heart rates, release tension, and enter a light state, and dive into the unconscious mind where rooted negatives, like childhood trauma, may have been stored, bringing awareness into the body and calming the mind. “As adults, we may not often understand or remember past experiences, but the mind and body hold information in different ways. Sound healing stimulates the rest and digest part of the nervous system, essentially inviting a safe zone within, thus enabling a state of release and surrender,” she explained.



Sound healing and Watsu therapy create a sense of communion. Come as you are.

Hashini combines sound healing with art therapy and narrative therapy, which delves into each person's narrative of an experience and their emotions. We often tend to internalize an experience and create our own narratives – right or wrong, good or bad – and the combination of these therapies helps with understanding ourselves better, to share our stories with ease and comfort. “I use the gong, which is a rather powerful instrument and helps release emotions and invites the body to relax. I also opt for Tibetan bowls, which are another great ‘trigger’ instrument like the gong. I make it a point to introduce smell –aromatherapy – by lighting a fragrance lamp or candle, depending on the mood I wish to set for the client and their needs,” she added. While sound healing may share similarities with other healing therapies like meditation, mindfulness, and somatic movement, the difference lies in the absence of active movement, as noted by Nimesha. You could

be a person with a highly stressful corporate role, you could be a mum juggling the day-to-day of multiple roles at home, you could be a student or an athlete – whatever your lifestyle, physique, and diet, all you require is deep listening.



Practitioner Hashini Silva uses the instruments' rich overtones and vibrations to encourage relaxation and ease tension.

"Sound has a powerful and effective way of drawing one's attention and engaging a person, and this isn't something we tend to consciously do," explained Hashi. "During my sessions and with the way I combine it with counseling and therapy, it's really up to each individual if he or she wishes to share their experience or not; but every individual will have some trigger moment. As a relaxing activity, sound healing can be therapeutic for those who might feel nervous, uncertain, or even overwhelmed and be a more accessible route to recovery and release." Our island's rich history, rooted in holistic healing (Ayurveda), primarily focuses on keeping

one's body constitution in balance (the doshas). Although it has received little attention, ancient Ayurvedic scriptures highlight sound (nada) as a healing force. Traditional practice speaks of balancing the energy flow within a form or body – the chakra system that influences our emotional, mental, physical, as well as spiritual wellbeing. “This isn't to say, however, that one with health concerns and imbalances can fully depend on sound healing to recover,” Hashi explained mindfully.



Completely at ease and bathed in ambient amber light, clients surrender to letting go of cognitive chatter.

“Sound healing acts as a complementary practice and treatment, but will not offer a complete cure or replace medication. Given my background, I tend to meet individuals with a wide range of ailments, and while I am committed and honest in my practice, I do not promise a particular outcome. Each individual will have a different experience, and that is also the beauty of the practice.” If you’re a complete newbie and are unfamiliar with sound healing, the best advice from both is to research and read before deciding to give it a go. If your needs are based on medical concerns, seek advice from your lead health professional. If you’re a naturally nervous sort, tag along with a friend or partner for support.



Hashi holds a koshi chime just above the client’s forehead, allowing her to experience

the profound weightlessness of a sound.

Nimesha advises you to keep an open mind. “For someone with a highly stressful career, it might feel challenging to switch off, but that’s part of the experience as well. Within the first 20 minutes or so, sound vibrations should guide an individual into a restful state, supporting stillness of the mind. Your first session might not feel like much, but come as you are. Attend a group or one-to-one session with a trained and qualified instructor.”

Group sessions are typically light and general, unlike one-to-one sessions, which are more tailored to each person’s needs. The more experienced the instructor, the better the knowledge in knowing and understanding how to work the instruments thoughtfully, in what sequence to introduce them, and knowing the techniques of playing said instruments at varying volume, rhythm, and intensity. “It does pay to have a good ear, be able to read the room, and also ground yourself as an instructor.

As a yoga practitioner and teacher, myself, I found that the sessions I attended, led by Nimesha, combined Kundalini Yoga and Breathwork. True to my form, I have always been early and take the time to ground myself and find a spot that gives me a sense of comfort. During one of my first sessions, as soon as the class was guided into meditation and my eyes closed, I simply settled in. I assumed my mind was busy and felt many racing thoughts – my body, on the other hand, felt rather sunk in a state of heavy stillness. What felt like a few minutes to say the least turned out to be an hour of sound healing, and that was the real surprise. I understood, on some inner level, the strength of the gong. I wasn’t necessarily aware of the shift in instruments after, but I clearly remember the rain stick bringing my awareness back. There was a level of ease, a feeling of rest, and I may have drifted deeper than I expected, so coming out of the experience was rejuvenating, to say the least.



A carefully curated multi-instrument session creates a multi-layered tapestry of frequencies.

I think it's safe to say that real healing cannot be forced. Simply accept the invitation. Accept the stillness. Accept the frequencies. Welcome the sounds. Welcome the rest. In its most fundamental and purest form, sound comes down to pure physics. It exists as gentle vibrations traveling through air, fluid, and our physical bodies. Regardless of whether we consciously realize it, these acoustic waves interact with us every single day. And, while belief may not be a requirement, you can honor the traditions.

Nimesha Palliyaguru

+94 77 365 1364;

sama-collective.com/services Instagram: @samasoundhealing

Hashini Silva

+94 77 048 9481, +94 77 648 1989 Youtube: Arunya with Hashi

Facebook: Arunya (facebook.com/share/1FDdX95T5z/)