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IN MEMORY
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Cello healing

Celloist Elizabeth Byrd uses the sound of her instrument the way touch therapists use their hands: to heal. Byrd plays to specific parts of the body to release blockages, aid recovery and improve the overall health and well-being of her clients.

"The cello is the instrument closest to the human voice. Because of that quality, it can resonate in all areas of the body," Byrd said. "The body basically takes in the sound and uses it where it needs to be used."

She said she knows when the sound connects with her clients because it feels like "hitting the sweet spot on a tennis racket." When Byrd encounters a blockage, she said she hears her tones deflected.

"It's just like a stiff muscle; everything's kind of restricted," she said. "You're playing in an area, and it's just not going in. Sometimes you have to go in the back door."

"Maybe the blockage is an emotional blockage, so maybe I have to play to the heart to get to the tissue," said Byrd. "I always tend to play a lot to the heart."

Since 1995, the cellist has used tonal and vibration therapy at the Upledger Institute, in Palm Beach Gardens,



Photo by Jackie Casperci

Cellist Elizabeth Byrd uses the sound of her instrument to heal.

Florida, either one-on-one or in combination with CranioSacral Therapy (CST), performed by one or more practitioners at a time. The Upledger Institute was founded in 1985 to support CST.

"A lot of what we're facilitating is movement," said Sheryl McGavin, a staff therapist and clinical co-director at the

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Upledger Institute. "The vibrational therapy helps further that at the cellular level."

Byrd also offers tonal and vibration therapy at Beth Israel's Continuum Center for Health and Healing in New York City. Although she typically works one-on-one or in conjunction with CST, Byrd said her cello enhances many modalities, such as massage, acupuncture and reiki, by assisting in the activation of restricted areas in the body.

"I work with a lot of spinal injuries," she said. "If I'm working with another therapist, we can go right down to the cellular level, vibrate the scar tissue, shake it up."

Byrd said nonverbal autistic patients and stroke victims are highly responsive to her cello. "If I repeat the sounds they're making, the cello's communicating on their terms."

Debra Prout is the mother of 9-year-old Kamau, an autistic child. She said Byrd's cello adds another dimension to her son's CST sessions. "The energy of the cello, it zeroes in on an area," Prout said. "It's like she's talking to the cells themselves."

After a little less than a year working with Byrd in conjunction with CST, Prout said she has noticed several improvements in Kamau's condition. "His overall awareness is up," she said. "His eye contact, his attention span. He's becoming more and more vocal and verbal, as well."

Byrd's Healing Cello sessions, which she classifies as energy work, are usually composed of long tones or a progression of tones. "Sometimes I play a single note for three or four minutes if that's how long it takes the body to soak in the sound," said Byrd. "You have to have no rules; you have to be extremely intuitive."

On average, the sessions last 30 to 45 minutes, she said, but the length and nature of each session depends on the client. Byrd said she has used her cello to cure altitude sickness in less than one minute.

After a session, she said she suggests that her clients listen to "anything acoustic" for healing purposes but steers them clear of heavily synthesized sounds. Byrd's own CDs, *The Healing Cello* and *Breath and the Chakras*, were recorded for bodywork specifically.

At Byrd's Healing Cello clinics, she plays her instrument and trains people of many different modalities, from massage and physical therapy to acupuncture and energy work, to use sound in their own sessions. "The modalities with sound, with the cello, they get faster results," said Byrd. "I have not worked with one modality it did not enhance."

—Brandi Schlossberg



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