

Press down on your sole to map your body head to toe

"Don't hurt me," the patient said. The practitioner replied, "I shall act so you praise me."

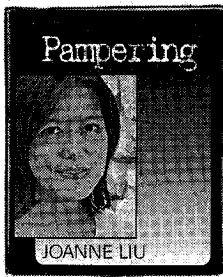
—Hieroglyphics on an Egyptian tomb dating back to 2330 B.C.

"This is your head and here, on the tip, is your brain," said **Trisha Miller**, certified reflexologist and owner of **Nature's Gate** (512-773-5775). I looked down at my feet. Miller was grabbing hold of the big toe on my right foot and using her thumb to push down on the padded tip just above the nail. It certainly didn't look like my head or brain. But then again, this was no ordinary massage.

Reflexology focuses on the feet and hands where nerve zones begin. By applying certain pressures and strokes, you can increase overall health and well-being in the rest of the body. Miller continued linking specific points on my foot to my organs and body. "The pads of the toes is the sinus area, so if you have allergies I'll feel some congestion there. With allergies you want to massage your lymph nodes to open them up; the webbing between your toes are pressure points for the lymph nodes." With cedar fever just around the corner, I was sure I'd put her advice to good use.

"I'll work the hip, the leg, and the spine areas on your feet. Then I'll go back and I'll work on

the toes for the neck area." By the time Miller finished, I'd gained a new respect for my feet. Sure, I've always appreciated them. I scrub, I rub, I slather lotion on them. But when the sun dims and the heat diminishes, my feet feel my neglect. They disappear into socks and closed-toe shoes. No more sandals, no more sun-kissed feet. Reflexology offered the perfect way for my feet to catch my attention again.



Miller also treats people with painful conditions related to carpal tunnel syndrome and the Achilles heel. This fall, she plans to obtain certification from the Carpal Tunnel Treatment Center in New York so that she can offer instruction on self-treatment for carpal tunnel syndrome. She finds that older cli-

ents with specific ailments find relief with reflexology where prescription painkillers fail. Some clients have even avoided surgery. And she does all this in a soothing, relaxing environment.

I spoke to **Zareen Shah** of **Nurturing Touch** (512-899-8495) who explained her fascination with reflexology in simple terms: "I'm interested in anything that's something ancient. Yoga, acupressure, reflexology. All of it derives from ancient signs and wisdom."

Shah, who is also a yoga instructor, noted reflexology's connection with yoga. "(Reflexology) gives a release," she said. "The release you get from yoga...the stretches and mind-body

connection, and conscious focus, is also got from pressure points which get activated from doing certain asanas."

I followed up with a visit to **Viva Day Spa** (512-300-2256) and placed myself in the care of **Shannon Mouser**, co-owner and registered massage therapist. In June, Mouser, along with sisters **Maya and Laurie Aroch**, combined their varied expertise and opened the spa doors to Austin. Laurie Aroch is a clinical nutritionist and pharmacist. Maya Aroch, an engineer, welcomed me with a tour of their beautifully renovated facilities. I made a mental note to return for a pedicure and sit in the custom-made deluxe chair fit for a queen (or king), complete with a whirlpool foot bath.

Mouser caters to the different layers of your whole person. She embraces your emotions, your skin, and everything underneath. It's no surprise then that she incorporates reflexology into massages. "I'll go ahead and start off with the foot scrub. I'll do that before the reflexology to get the dead skin off." The scrub was a delightful concoction of ginger, sugar, and lime that brought me close to tickles. Afterwards, she wrapped my feet in hot, herbal steamed towels. I was sure that if I could remember it, this is exactly how I'd felt in the warmth of my mother's womb.

Mouser explained how reflexology works: "You're trying to pinpoint the reflex point that correlates with the organ. By applying pressure you're actually releasing that chi blockage so that

you have an open chi, which is energy. It's the stagnancy that's causing problems within the organ."

"It doesn't always feel good," she cautioned. True, but the discomfort was of the healing kind. Her skill soon became apparent as I felt myself slip away and forget about the rush hour traffic I'd maneuvered through earlier. Her hands worked their charm as she opened up my chi blockages, and the only movement that registered with me were faint footsteps as she crossed the room to retrieve more hot, steamed towels.

In addition to reflexology, Mouser applied a deep-tissue massage. What makes Mouser exceptional is that her hands become completely attuned to your body. She feels for the slightest irregularity and identifies anything that's off-center. Once she identifies it, she gets to work on removing the imbalance and doesn't give up until your body has given in. Mouser spent extra time releasing the tension in my left shoulder muscles and also targeted the tightness stubbornly lodged in the pectoral muscles. Before I left, she demonstrated several stretches I could perform on my own that would loosen these muscles.

By the time she finished, I had only praise for Mouser's ability to send me and my feet to another level of health and awareness. ☺

Joanne Liu would like to thank her feet for keeping her in good health and promises to give them attention all year-round. You may e-mail Joanne at Jliu@goodlifemag.com.