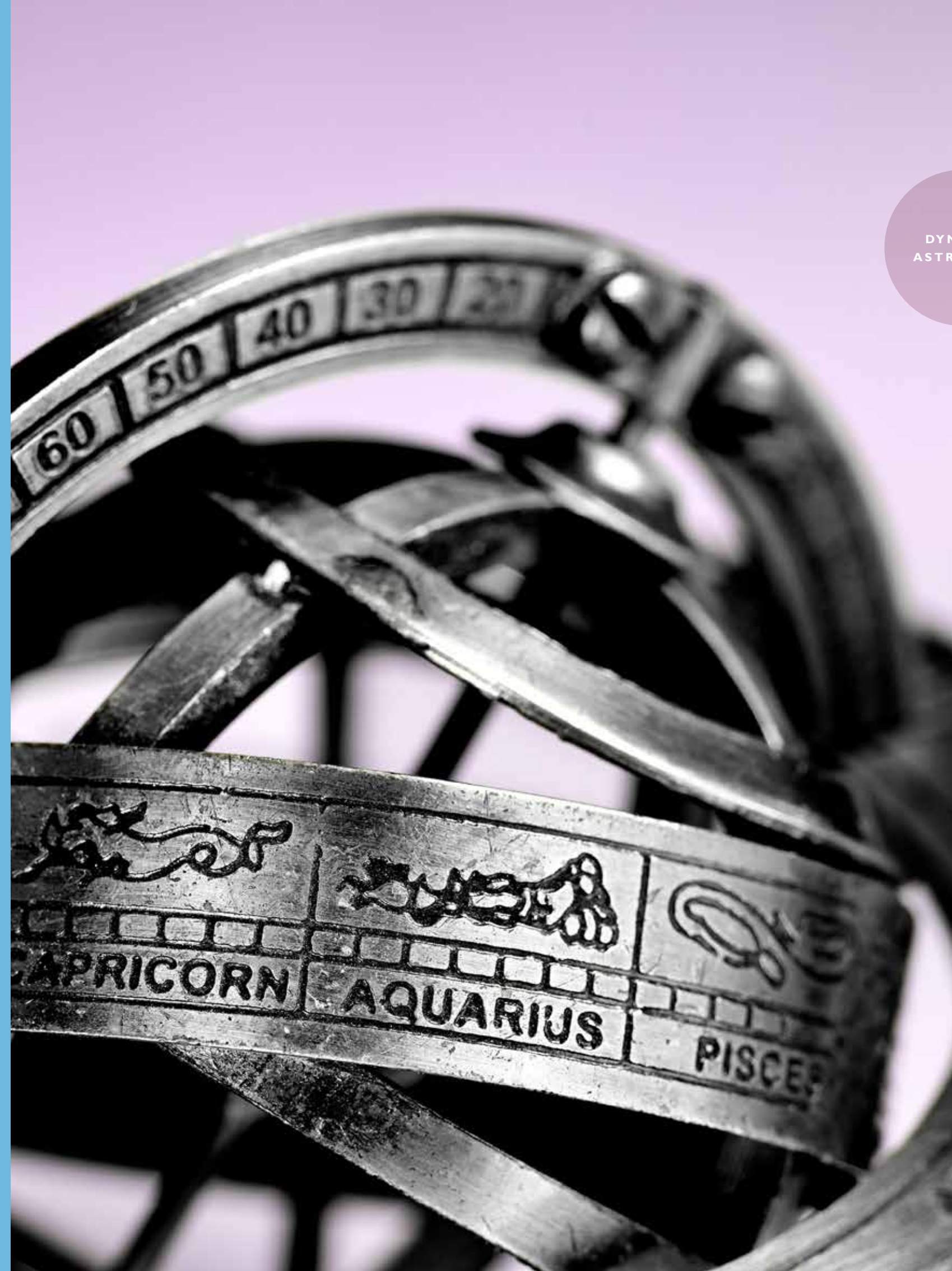


PHOTOS DAVID MARQUEZ

TIME TO GO WAY OUT

As the link between emotional and physical well-being becomes increasingly clear, 'alternative therapies' are on the up. Liz Hambleton road-tests five to see how they can help with our busy lives...



DYNAMIC
ASTROLOGY

BEST FOR Self-motivation and dealing with personal dilemmas.

We've all had those moments when we feel lost and confused – a career in crisis or a relationship on the rocks can leave you struggling to see the wood for trees. 'Sometimes the only way forward is to focus on yourself and the rest will fall into place,' says dynamic astrologer and soul coach Carolyne Faulkner.

If the closest you've come to astrology is reading your horoscope, then you may balk at the idea that it could have any significant impact on your decision-making process. According to Carolyne, however, the placement of the planets at the moment you were born will have an influence on everything from the energy you're attracted to in a partner, to the emotional struggles you'll face in your life.

'I'm amazed at the patterns I see in those with similar zodiac characteristics. It's nothing that I can prove scientifically, but experience has taught me to recognise what could be holding my clients back or forcing them to repeat similar patterns,' she says. 'I don't just show my clients their birth charts – I give them the tools to understand how it relates to their strengths, weaknesses and many of the issues they might be facing in their careers, relationships and friendships, too.'

EXPECT TO FEEL Fascinated and surprised. You'll come away from your session feeling like you understand yourself a little better. Carolyne will encourage you to look at things in a different way and by doing that you could find yourself in a more positive frame of mind.

CELEBRITY FANS Cheryl Cole and Robert Downey Jr are thought to dabble.

Visit pieceandplanet.com for more information on Carolyne. Book sessions with her through urbanretreat.co.uk ▶

⇒ REFLEXOLOGY

BEST FOR Addressing the effects of stress on the body.

Chances are you've seen it on the treatment list at your local beauty salon, but the difference between a relaxing foot massage and a holistic reflexology session is huge. One hour with reflexologist Andrea Hurst is enough to convince me of this. 'I like to think of reflexology as preventative medicine,' explains Andrea. 'Regular treatments can deal with niggling issues before they lead to the kind of serious health complaints that require hospitalisation. I can tell a lot about a person's health as I move through the parts of the feet that correspond to different areas of the body.'

Stress is where reflexology really comes into its own. I visit Hurst's clinic at the end of a particularly hectic week and in need of a serious destressing. Within minutes it becomes hard to stay awake as she gently runs her fingers over every inch of my feet and ankles, but it's when she hits the adrenal glands that I really experience the full force of reflexology. 'It's there that the body produces and regulates the stress hormone cortisol,' says Andrea. 'I can tell when someone is dealing with high levels of stress because these glands feel swollen, tender and blocked.' As she releases what she calls the 'build up', I experience a racing heart and intense surge of warmth. Andrea tells me it's not uncommon for her high-flying city clientele to have up to three sessions a week with her, in an attempt to counteract their extreme stress levels.

EXPECT TO FEEL Relaxed but aware of something shifting in your body. Feelings of warmth, tingling and twitching are fairly common. Our advice? Just go with it and make sure you're heading home to bed after each treatment. Oh, and you might feel a tad emotional...

CELEBRITY FANS Kate Moss and Elle Macpherson.

See reflexology.guru for more details on treatments with Andrea Hurst or visit aor.org.uk to find an accredited reflexologist near you

⇒ REIKI

BEST FOR Dealing with grief, anxiety or depression.

If life has given you what reiki master Susie Anthony describes as an 'emotional brick wall', then you'll understand the feelings of panic, anxiety and hopelessness that often come with it. 'People visit me because they can't seem to move past an emotion or a trauma, and it's common that these feelings come hand in hand with a physical ailment such as panic attacks or recurring pain. I see people of all ages and stages of life, most of whom are keen to understand why they feel the way they do and how they can let it go,' says Susie.

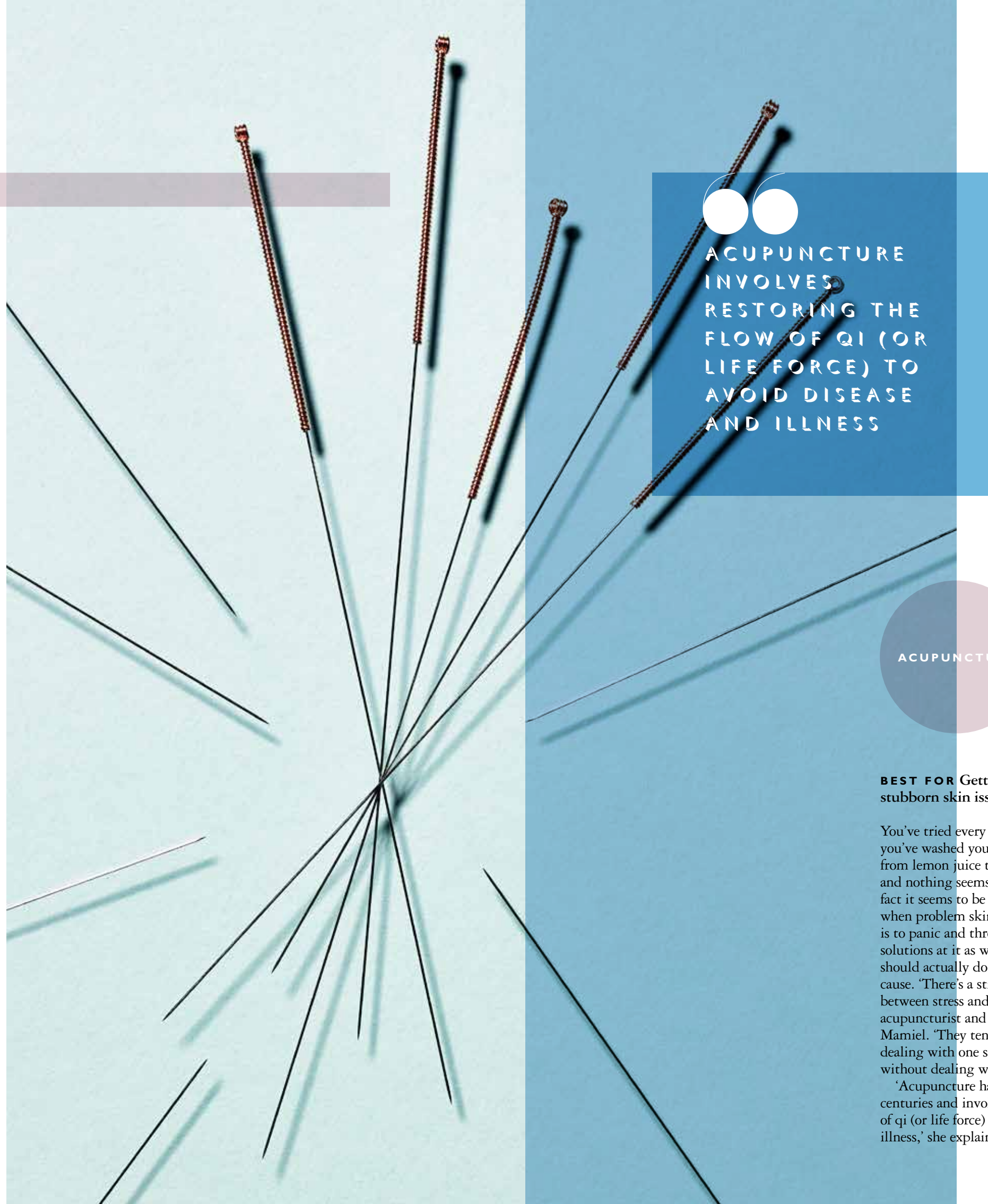
Reiki works on an energetic and psychological level to help clear what is known as a 'blockage'. Using their own personal energy, the healer moves their hands up and down your body to release these energetic blockages and allow you to begin to heal emotionally – and often physically as well.

As with most complimentary therapies reiki is all about personal recommendation and word of mouth. Susie comes highly recommended and is quick to address the danger of falling prey to someone who isn't quite so experienced or well trained. 'When you're working with someone's emotions and energies, it's important to be balanced and aware of your own personal energy,' she explains. 'I work on my own energy field twice a day to keep it clear.'

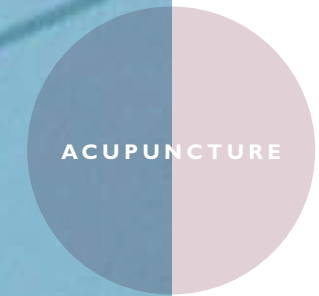
EXPECT TO FEEL Deeply relaxed. You may feel warmth in different areas as the treatment progresses and many people drift off into a semi-conscious sleep state known as REM (Rapid Eye Movement). Afterwards you'll feel peaceful, rested and energised.

CELEBRITY FANS Angelina Jolie, Kate Hudson and queen of wellness Gwyneth Paltrow, who has Gooped about it.

Visit psalifemastery.com for information about Susie, her treatments, workshops and retreats



ACUPUNCTURE INVOLVES RESTORING THE FLOW OF QI (OR LIFE FORCE) TO AVOID DISEASE AND ILLNESS



BEST FOR Getting to the root of stubborn skin issues.

You've tried every cream on the market, you've washed your face with everything from lemon juice to apple cider vinegar and nothing seems to be working. In fact it seems to be getting worse. Yep, when problem skin kicks in our instinct is to panic and throw as many cures and solutions at it as we can, when what we should actually do is address the root cause. 'There's a strong relationship between stress and troublesome skin,' says acupuncturist and skincare guru Annee De Mamiel. 'They tend to feed each other, so dealing with one simply isn't possible without dealing with the other.'

'Acupuncture has been practised for centuries and involves restoring the flow of qi (or life force) to avoid disease and illness,' she explains. Like most people ▶



CRYSTAL HEALING

who've struggled with their skin, I visit Annee after trying dermatological solutions, the pill and self-prescribing a plethora of lotions and potions. 'The beauty of Chinese medicine is that if the right diagnosis is made, the effects can be immediate. You don't have to believe in the treatment for it to work and often we see amazing results when people have completely given up,' says Annee.

EXPECT TO FEEL Calm. Needles are non-negotiable, however the ultra-fine acupuncture kind is nothing to worry about. Once they're in, they're in, and you'll feel nothing but zen. Your skin will thank you for it.

CELEBRITY FANS J-Lo, Mariah Carey, Gwen Stefani and Kim Kardashian (who loves the anti-ageing benefits).

Head to demamiel.com for more details on Annee, her treatments and skincare range. Visit acupuncture.org.uk to find a registered acupuncturist – many specialise in a particular area such as skin, fertility or digestive issues



IT'S BELIEVED THAT CRYSTALS ACT AS CONDUITS FOR HEALING AND GOOD HEALTH

BEST FOR Improving overall health and emotional wellness.

'People come to me because they want to feel better,' says crystal healer and author of *The Complete Guide To Crystal Chakra Healing*, Philip Permutt. 'It could be insomnia, it could be heartbreak, it could be a troublesome health issue, but the one thing that unites everyone I see is the basic need to feel better on a daily basis.'

After a consultation and a series of treatments, you'll be given a 'prescription of crystals' to take away with you along with specific instructions on how to use them. 'I may ask someone to sleep with a certain crystal under their pillow or to wear one around their neck or even to place one on their desk.'

So what exactly do the crystals do? It's believed that they act as conduits for healing and good health, allowing the good to go into the body and the bad to be taken away. Still with us? Every crystal has a different property and during a typical crystal healing treatment you'll have various stones placed on your head, throat, heart, chest, stomach and gut. Each will be put there for a specific reason based upon what you've told the practitioner.

EXPECT TO FEEL Everything and anything. I felt incredibly calm and serene, but it's common for people to experience intense emotions and even physical pain. Philip encourages his clients to stay with it. 'Sometimes things have to get a little worse before they get better.'

CELEBRITY FANS Katy Perry, Madonna and even Victoria Beckham, who uses crystals before her runway shows.

Visit thecrystalhealer.co.uk for details on Philip Permutt and crystal-healing.org to find nationwide practitioners ■