

## Learning the techniques

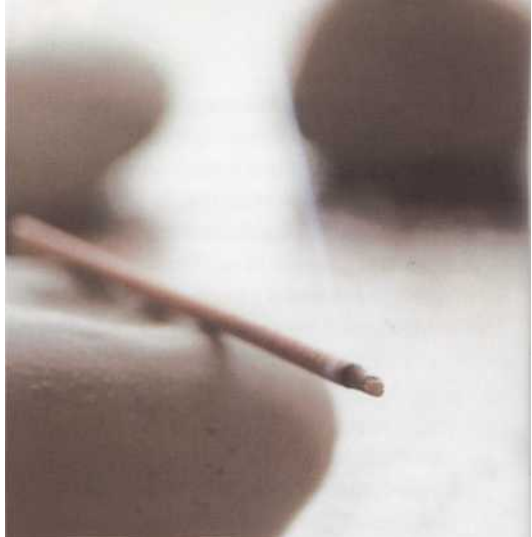
Anyone can learn and use self-help techniques such as acupressure and reflexology. It is up to you how far you want to take it. This book offers a full reflexology treatment and enough acupressure training to deal with everyday problems. You could take it further and go on a short course to improve your skills and ensure all your movements are correct - no book can teach that as well as a qualified instructor running a course.

Having some professional treatments is also well worth the money. Although you can choose either reflexology or acupressure to relieve symptoms, both are holistic therapies; what they are really good at is balancing your whole system. You may find the problems you have been treating yourself have other aspects you had not thought of, which a professional can quickly pick up. Many practitioners are happy to give you guidance on self-help maintenance routines to practise between sessions.

To find a qualified practitioner, ask friends if they can recommend anyone, or send a stamped addressed envelope to a reputable organization (see Useful Addresses on page 125). When you contact a practitioner, before making an appointment ask how much they charge and whether they will expect you to have a series of treatments. Some acupuncturists also practise acupressure, but if you are thinking of having acupuncture treatment it is particularly important to make sure that the practitioner is qualified and uses sterile needles.

## Working miracles?

In using complementary therapies, we are taking responsibility for our own well-being. That is not to say we are going to refuse a life-saving drug or healing surgery - or even



an aspirin to dismiss an intractable headache. It means we are weaning ourselves off the idea that illness is something that just happens by chance and is cured by a prescription from the GP.

Taking responsibility for your health includes listening to what doctors say - they spent a lot of time training for their work. Whatever you feel about some of the drugs they prescribe, they are the experts when it comes to diagnosis. Remember too that therapies such as reflexology and acupressure work alongside orthodox medical treatments and may enhance their effects. It's not an either/or situation.

Taking this responsibility also includes taking whatever steps you need to improve your health in other ways. It goes without saying that smoking is bad for your general health, and not just your heart and lungs. Drinking too much alcohol is also harmful, especially if you have slipped into having a drink every day. You can also become addicted to caffeine, from cola drinks as well as tea and coffee. Your daily diet should include as few processed foods as possible; the majority should be a selection of fresh vegetables, fruit and cereals (including