

Would you try Psychic BOTOX?

The pranic facelift, an anti-ageing treatment with no touching, no needles and no pain, is the latest cosmic therapy.

Kate Spicer gives it a go

In the end, I lied and told my boyfriend the early morning and evening appointments were meetings. Truthfully, I was too embarrassed to tell him that I have been having psychic Botox – touch-free facials by a pranic healer called Toby Aspin. Some call it mystical, others mumbo jumbo. Still, I went twice a week and allowed Aspin to rearrange what the Chinese call my “chi”, with the single express purpose of making my face look less like a crumpled paper bag.

Aspin is one of the few UK practitioners of the pranic facelift, to use the official term. Pranic healing, from the Sanskrit word “prana”, for energy, is an alternative-medicine system that claims to heal by increasing and moving our life force or “vital energy”. It is my last-ditch attempt at a wholesome tactic before I return to modern medicine’s more brutal answers to the physical signs of ageing.

Among the angel-believers and the Goop set, mystical healing is a powerful trend, and it is increasingly gaining traction in the mainstream. I first heard about it from a property-developer friend who went to Aspin for healing when she was feeling a bit down.

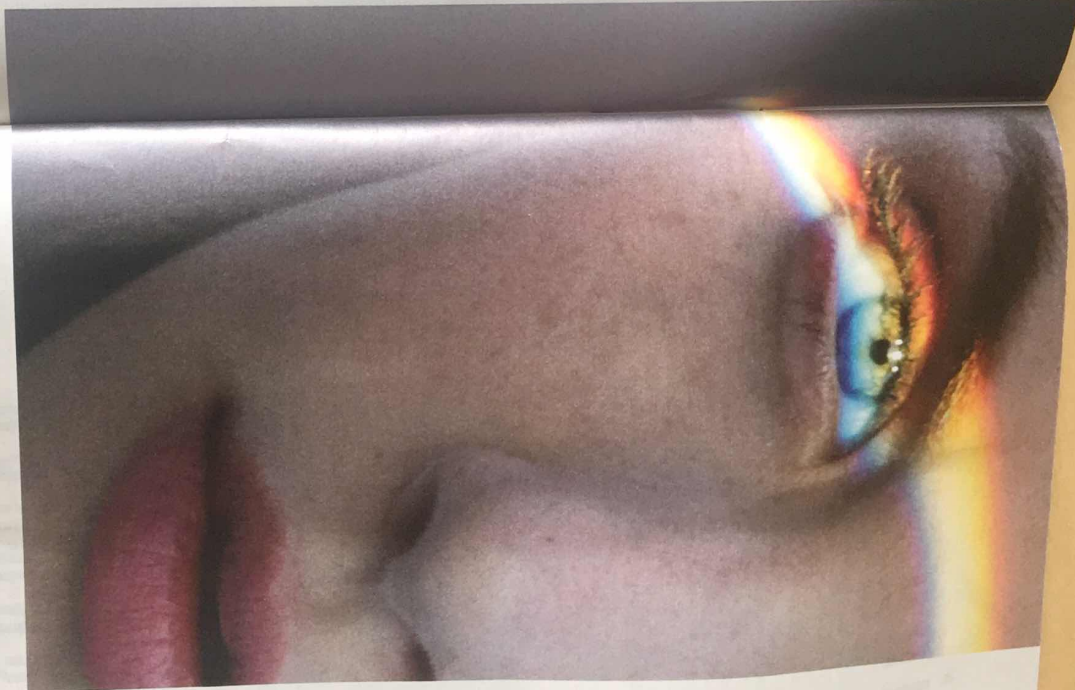
So, does psychic Botox work? Obviously, I’ll try anything that promises eternal youth while requiring no more than lying quietly and doing nothing for half an hour. I go to a clinical white treatment room in Kensington, west London. Aspin is an approachable guy, he doesn’t use

fritiating, impenetrable new-age lingo (although, like most holistic therapists, he offers unprompted insights into my life, such as the time he said I was putting up with “broken things”, referencing my phone’s screen and my car’s bumper as evidence). But in his trim grey and black work clothes, he looks more like a fairy bank manager from Tolkien’s Middle-earth.

We talk a bit, but not much. Sometimes, if I’m stressed, he is kind to me for five minutes beforehand, but mostly I just lie down while he warms his hands in all directions (in above my face, “You may feel some heat, cold or a light breeze,” he says. For 20 minutes, he performs motions of pumping, smoothing, shaping, patting and knotting, as if he is trying off like a surgeon. This last elaborate movement is called “scan and sever”, he says. “It’s releasing toxins and balancing the meridian pathways.” The only actual physical contact happens at the end of the session, when he opens his arms, cocks his head to one side and says, “Hug?”

I met or spoke to three people who have had a pranic facelift and endorsed it. Admittedly, one was the in-house angel-card reader at Soho House and Aspin’s wife, but the others were as humbly unspiritual as me. One woman, in her mid-thirties, who wanted to stay anonymous, tried it after being left with “scarring on the left side of my face due to extensive surgery to remove a tumour”. Two months ago, after 13 months of slow healing, she went to Aspin out of desperation on the recommendation of a friend. “I am into

PHOTOGRAPH: JASON LEE PARRY. MODEL: ASHLEY SMITH



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alternative therapies, but I also have high standards,” she says. “I noticed actual physical results from the second treatment – some of the scarring around my eye had flattened and reduced. It’s hard to tell how much is physically down to the treatments or the natural healing process, but I feel Toby’s treatments are beneficial and support my overall wellbeing.”

Aspin has many male and female clients who are far from being crystal-buggers, he used to have a practice inside the Lloyd’s building in the City of London, where he says he worked on mainly stress-related problems, the side effects of medicines and fertility issues. “A lot of men arrive, mumbling, ‘My wife says you’re good.’ These are the sort of middle-class people with letters after their names, who you would think are far too sensible to come to me.”

“I know the concept is off the planet for most people,” he continues, “but the results are real. I’m giving you the face you’d have without stress. It’s well known that you get the face you deserve – stress, anger and bitterness make you ugly. When you take that away and you have inner wellbeing, you look and feel different. You have an inner glow.”

Aspin is not the only person practising hands-free facials. Material for a two-day training course described pranic facelift as being supported by “tons and tons of researches [sic] and testimonials”, which is not entirely untrue. When 66 of these studies were entered into what the International Journal of Behavioral Medicine tentatively termed as “bioidfield therapies”, the authors concluded: “Studies overall are of medium quality, and generally meet minimum standards for validity of inferences.”

So, how do I look? Honestly? I don’t know. Aspin fixed some of my lower-back pain overnight, and he certainly calms me down after a stressful day. Sometimes, I think my skin looks unusually integrated and smooth, almost as if it has been airbrushed; other times, it looks exactly the same. What has changed, though, is the fact that I genuinely care much less about ageing. All I’ve been searching for is a way to age gracefully, without stuffing my face into an immobile arrangement of what I sort of once was. And if that’s how the little devilish bank manager has “fixed me”, then that’s as good as ironing out the wrinkles, if not better. ●

Pranic facelift, £100 for a 40-minute session.
healerhealer.org.uk