

MEET THE FOOT READER

When ELLE's Alison Taylor tried the Grinberg method, she didn't expect her feet to reveal so much emotional upheaval

I get out my feet with trepidation. I'm sprawled on a treatment bed at the new Triyoga centre (all stripped wood and scented candles) in London's Soho, with my dry, unmanicured feet practically skimming therapist Victoria Oldham's face. I'm self-conscious, to say the least.

I'm here to try the Grinberg method, devised by Israeli paramedic Avi Grinberg in the 1980s. The gist? Your feet tell tales about you, physically and emotionally. Once diagnosed (perhaps long-term back pain or emotional stress), a programme of touch, breathing and movement techniques can help with any 'bad' habits you may have had for years. An intriguing mix of reflexology and therapy.

Oldham, the only Grinberg practitioner in the UK, is cupping my (hideous) size sevens and staring intently for what seems like the longest 30 seconds ever. It's not an intrusion of bikini wax proportions, but strangely intimate. She speaks.

Have I been going through an emotional time lately? Er, I guess. I have recently gone through a painful break-up, and my aunt has been ill. But I'm fine. Really.

Victoria smiles. 'You're very good at *talking* about emotional stuff.' My mind flashes back to numerous late-night chats with my best friend. 'The problem is, you talk and think about things that upset you, but don't deal with them,' asserts Victoria.

Apparently my feet reveal an 'incredibly sensitive person', but my slanting fourth toes indicate a blockage – in order not to feel any pain, I don't actually deal with it. This makes a lot of sense to me – hours of agonising, no relief or conclusions... The next question, I'm really not expecting.

'What happened to you aged 13 or 14?

You're carrying behaviour patterns set from back then. Was it something traumatic?'

I feel sick. Victoria's words trigger fear in the pit of my stomach. She's very soothing, but also very direct. Long story cut short: at age 13, I was bullied for three years at school for no discernible reason.

Victoria teases information out of me and we conclude that my survival mechanism has been to block out anything emotionally distressing. And according to Grinberg, my body still reacts to stress as it did when I had a perm and pearlised lipstick. And it isn't doing me any good.

Working with your Grinberg therapist, you identify and work on weak spots – for me, a sluggish, sore tummy (it's where I store stress), stiff shoulders and painful foot arches (relating directly to your emotional self).

We don't go far down the treatment side in the first session, although the diagnosis has been powerful enough. Victoria explains what she'd work on with me in future sessions – breathing techniques, recognising physical signs of stress and letting go of emotions. To give me a taster, Victoria massages the arch of my foot – it corresponds to my tummy and emotional centre. It hurts like hell and the weirdest thing happens – my tummy starts to gurgle. I feel hungry. 'That's you letting go,' she says. I'm sold. *Victoria Oldham practises at the Triyoga centres in Primrose Hill and Soho, London. Enq (020) 7483 3344; www.triyoga.co.uk*

THE VERDICT

NORMALLY A CYNIC, I'M TRULY AMAZED BY THIS ALTERNATIVE THERAPY. I FEEL LIKE IT'S TAKEN OFF A WEIGHT THAT I DIDN'T REALISE MY FEET AND I WERE CARRYING! IT'S HARD TO GET AN APPOINTMENT, BUT IT'S DEFINITELY WORTH THE WAIT.

RATING ★★★★★



FACT THERE ARE 3,000 SWEAT GLANDS PER SQUARE INCH ON YOUR FEET – THAT'S MORE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE ON YOUR BODY