

## HEALTH

## Lift Your Voice: Sing Into Healing Therapy

By TINA KELLEY

## WHITE PLAINS

**I**n this season of fa-la-la-la-la, dozens of people who practice alternative means of healing recently learned a theory of the healing powers of some less easily transcribable syllables: wo, ah, nda, a, ya, ya.

About 40 holistic practitioners, experts in arts including flower essence therapy, manual lymph drainage and tantric sex, gathered in White Plains on Tuesday morning to learn about the power of the voice from Naaz Hosseini, a psychotherapist who works in Nyack, Manhattan and Mount Kisco, and who was teaching the value of what she calls voice healing.

"More than 50 percent of the population seems to have had a music teacher who said, 'Just move your lips,'" said Ms. Hosseini, a petite woman with flowing hair, scarf, vest and dress. "It's appalling, the damage that has been done."

Paula Caracappa, the chairwoman of the Westchester Holistic Practitioners Network, which sponsored the meeting, said she could relate to such song squelching.

"My husband used to say, 'Don't sing to the baby, you'll make him tone deaf,'" she told the group.

Through the therapy she offers, Ms. Hosseini says she can teach people how to connect to their voice's energy,

"for releasing physical, emotional, and spiritual blocks to wellness, and for building greater awareness and deeper connection," according to her Web site, [www.soundshift-er.com](http://www.soundshift-er.com).

"Please know you each have a voice, and each deserve to use your voice, and whatever sound you make is right," said Ms. Hosseini, who has performed with the Meredith Monk Vocal Ensemble and the Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians.

The meeting began with Ms. Caracappa ringing brass Tibetan temple bells. People grew silent as the tones, almost painfully pure, disappeared in the air of their meeting room, two stories above the Fair Deal Café here. Brakes from a truck outside on Mamaroneck Avenue sounded, for a moment, like a snippet of whale song.

The morning required a teaspoon of that old willing suspension of disbelief, a winking of the right eye, an opening of the third eye. During introductions around the room, people mentioned specialties like holistic pet care and past life hypnotherapy. And then Ms. Hosseini introduced herself as the daughter of two opera singers. She was singing arias, in tune, as a 2-year-old, she said, and she played the violin in competitions when she was younger, but what she produced was not



Richard L. Hertox for The New York Times  
Naaz Hosseini, a psychotherapist, teaches the value of what she calls voice healing.

her true music.

"I was trying to do chin-ups to the bar society held up, but I was dead inside," she said. "I didn't let people hear my voice, my heart, my soul."

She told a friend, Sonya Shannon, that she knew there was a CD inside her, but she was terrified to let it out. Ms. Shannon then asked her how much she spent per week on services like psychotherapy, and suggested devoting just one of those hours, and its cost, to an

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near and sound studio. Ms. Shannon even came along with her and wrote in her journal as Ms. Hosseini sang joyfully, and in the flow of the moment.

"I set up another appointment for next week, like a good therapy patient," she said. "I like where I started. I like that I started." The CD, "SoundPath," was released, and she went on to study gestalt therapy, an interactive therapy aiming to balance mind, body, emotions and spirit.

Ms. Hosseini then developed what she calls SoundPath therapy, for individuals, couples and groups, drawing on the power of sound. It's a short-term therapy, she said, and then she demonstrated, creating a series of celestial, infernal and otherwise otherworldly tones.

"Watch how you receive the sounds, and the memories, and the impulses you may have," she said. "If you can, don't censor your experience, just have it." She swayed a little, then incanted a long series of syllables, ranging across the scales, some pure, some edged with vibrato, accompanied by sighs and a conductor's gestures.

Some listeners said they felt most uncomfortable during the highest notes, while others were comforted by them. One said she felt tingling in her left haunch, one felt light-headed. Others said they felt very connected to everything during the notes. One didn't know what to make of it.

"If we try to make something of it, we stop it," Ms. Hosseini said. "That's an act of courage, to stay with it."

Ms. Hosseini is not alone in her convictions that freeing the voice can be healing psychologically. The International Association for Voice

Movement Therapy lists a dozen practitioners in the United States, Canada and Israel, and the Voice Healing Center, at Kibutz Shefayim in Israel, teaches students about the voice as a pain reliever and the voice as an expression of disease, among other topics. And Paul Newham, who teaches a professional training course in therapeutic singing, has released a series of six cassette tapes called "The Singing Cure," as opposed to Freud's talking cure.

Fran Delahanty said these were sounds she never used. "I've limited myself," she said. "I want to shout. I want to make those sounds, too." And, with just a tiny bit of encouragement from Ms. Hosseini, she proceeded to do so.

Ms. Hosseini then encouraged the group to sing through a series of vowels, then to put their left hands on the part of their body where they felt the most vibration, and their right hand where they needed the most healing. She then told them to visualize the vibration moving from one hand to the other.

One woman reported feeling her lower vertebrae realigning. A nearby chiropractor exhaled loudly, beyond interpretation.

Accompanied by Ms. Hosseini's violin, and encouraged to think of personal, community, global, and even planetary healing, the group ended with a vocal healing circle.

Later, Janet Catalina, a life coach and therapist based in Scarsdale, said she was very moved by the exercises.

"In fifth grade I was the only person I knew who was not allowed to be in the chorus," she said. "The vibrations I found very powerful, personally. It lit something within me. I'm coming out in a very different place than when I came in."