

ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

KICK IT WITH KINESIOLOGY

Who says taking care of yourself has to be all pain and no pleasure? In this new, weekly feature, we trial the very best therapies that promise to deliver sterling results, without even a hint of a needle



by Niamh O'Dea

SQUEEZING in a kinesiology appointment on a Friday morning sure beats real work but as soon as I settle on the Dart from Connolly to Blackrock, one question starts playing over and over in my head — what exactly is kinesiology?

In the back of my mind I'm worried that needles will be involved. I don't like needles and needles don't like me. Worse still, I'm concerned that I will be asked to explain every malady, stress and restless pang that has ever taken hold of me, as often happens when you start a new relationship with a masseuse/therapist/hairdresser.

Give me some soft music, a body scrub and enough moisturiser to quench the Sahara and I'm happy. Start digging deeper and I'm, well, bored and likely to become stressed.

A quick walk from the station up to Ellen Shilling's office and I discover that not only will there be no needles, there will be remarkably little talking — instead my body will be doing all the talking.

Kinesiology, as Ellen explains, is a way of looking for imbalances in the body using muscle tensions as a gauge.

The body or mind are not 're-traumatised' by reliving the negative emotions, instead the woes are gently teased out by the practitioner using touch and then rebalanced.

If it sounds strange, it feels downright weird. Ellen asks me to lie down on my back on the massage bed with my elbows touching the mattress, my forearms up and my wrists bent, much like a begging dog.

She holds my wrist and starts asking my body, not my mind, what needs work by listing some common complaints (work, home, career, relationship, etc).

While I find it hard to keep up, my arm seems to be right on top of it, letting her know exactly what bothers me by seizing or going limp to her touch.

It's an incredible feeling — even though I barely catch the questions, my arm responds almost immediately, bending or freezing at the slight pressure being applied.

It seems stress is my biggest issue and the most common complaint that Ellen comes across in her work.

She asks my body how I would like to proceed, with more kinesiology, life coaching or Reiki, just some of the

Let your body do the talking to tease out what's at the root of stress

therapies she offers at her homely office. No surprises that my body 'chooses' more kinesiology. Ellen continues with the treatment, and once my arm has answered everything she needs to know, I'm asked to sit down and, gasp, talk.

Nothing probing, just a few questions about some of the changes I would like to make in my life.

Without realising it, I'm being ever so gently life coached. This is a first but far from the forced optimism I expected, we just look at some things I would like to do with my life and make a loose plan to achieve them.

Cutting down on smoking, for example, is something that she urges me to aim for over the next month, rather than as soon as I walk out the door.

I also receive my first lesson in what turns out to be one of the most useful tools I've ever learned — tapping.

You simply tap certain parts of your body repeatedly, for example your cheekbone or breastbone, and repeat a chosen mantra.

The idea is that it helps to focus and thus rebalance your body and mind. Tapping your way out of a stressful situation may sound a little Gene Kelly but for me, it works a treat.

Concentrating on the tapping is both relaxing and distracting. And as far as stress-busters go, it's not only effective but easy to master.

It seems like those ciggie cravings are soon to become a thing of the past.

■ *Ellen Shilling, 57 Main Street, Blackrock, Co. Dublin. Tel: 086 682 4401 or visit Xhale.ie. A consultation lasting an hour to an hour and a half costs €80-€100*

Spruce up

Get your glow back in time for the big day with our fast-fix beauty guide

by Claire Coleman

SO IT'S Christmas week. You're tired after one too many parties (and glasses of fizz), the freezing weather has ravaged your skin, and a lack of sleep combined with gift-buying stress has left you looking less than your normal glowing self.

So, how can you get your glow back in time for the big day?

We asked top make-up artist Alice Theobald (who has just finished a marathon stint on this year's *Strictly Come Dancing*), to share her insider tips and tricks for creating perfect Christmas make-up, meaning you can whip up a fresh-faced, bright-eyed look that will last all day.

SKIN

LIZ EARLE'S Brightening Treatment Mask (€14.75, ie.lizearle.com) needs to be applied for only 30 seconds to two minutes, and instantly perks up pallid skin.

Follow with Aromatherapy Associates Instant Skin Firming Serum (€45.75, aromatherapyassociates.com), a divine-smelling and more effective version of Clarins Beauty Flash Balm, which tones and tightens. Then apply Illamasqua Primer (€26, Illamasqua.com, BT2) for a face that's perfectly prepped for make-up.

BASE

ALWAYS use a brush to apply foundation to get a smooth finish. Alice likes Mac's version (€35) or Chanel's (€44) and, for a flawless, dewy finish, the Chanel Pro Lumiere foundation (€45).

Applying highlighter on the brow bone and right in the corner of the eye will help open it up — try Benefit's Moonbeam (€27.50, House of Fraser).

But don't stop there. If you want to plump lips without a needle, try an insider's trick and apply highlighter as you would a lipstick, and layer a clear gloss over the top.

For a professional look, make sure your concealer is invisible. Laura Mercier's Undercover Pot (€38 Brown Thomas) makes it



easy, as each pot comes with two shades of concealer — so you can blend to suit your skin tone — and powder to set everything.

EYES

IF YOU'RE feeling bleary-eyed, try an industry secret, Boots Brightening Eye Drops (€4.99), which will soothe tired eyes and make them look clearer.

Another of Alice's tricks is sculpting eyebrows with a subtle arch that helps to open up the eye and give the face an instant lift. She recommends Paul & Joe eyebrow powder (€20.50, Brown Thomas) to create the perfect browline.

When it comes to shadow, look for Shu Uemura's cream version (€26.50, shuuemera.co.uk). It is non-greasy and won't crease — Alice used it on *Strictly Come Dancing* host Tess Daly on a long shoot under hot lights and it didn't budge.

Try using beige over the whole eye area, then applying a taupe colour up to the socket, and finally creating more definition

COLD COMFORT

Our pick of the best treats for the body and mind this winter:

Waterproof styling froth, €12.50, **Philip Kingsley**

Hydraquench rich cream, €32, **Clarins**

Complete comfort cream, €20.50, **Mac**

Weather-protect hair serum, €5.99, **Tommy Guns**

Mineral restoring serum, €205, **Giorgio Armani**

Relax candle, €24,

Aromatherapy Associates

Relaxing body serum, €42, **Decleor**

Wind and Cold Therapy, €16.50, **Elemental Herbology**

Ginzing refreshing eye cream, €20, **Origins**

Damage Therapy hair treatment, €18.50, **Aveda**

Weather-proofing styling creme, €4.99, **John Frieda**

