

Sound therapy

Susan Lever
runs her own workshops and
you can order DIY tapes
(01287 636350).

RESEARCHERS have found that making or even hearing particular sounds can have a neurophysiological effect on the brain, either stimulating or soothing the central nervous system and the cortex of the brain, depending on the type of sound. Research at the Southern Methodist University in the USA revealed that listening to harmonic music (such as Gregorian or Tibetan chanting) reduced respiration and heart rates, calming and relaxing the whole body and brain.

Work by Dr Herbert Benson, the president of the Harvard Medical School Mind/Body Medical Institute, revealed that repeating a single word (such as the well-known mantra "Om") produces a measurable effect: heartbeat and pulse rates decrease; breathing slows down and the body

uses less oxygen. The brainwaves become calm and relaxed.

DIY SOUND THERAPY

Experiment with "Om" or try toning (making long, resonant sounds) with vowel sounds such as "uuh", "aaah" or "eee".

The sound therapist Susan Lever suggests "noisy yawning" if you are feeling tense. "This frees the jaw," she says. "If you are feeling stressed, anxious or nervous, try humming — it does not need to be loud, you could quietly hum anywhere — and it is very soothing."

The musician and sound healer Chris James recommends deep, heartfelt groaning to release stress.

"Find somewhere you will not be disturbed and really let it all out," he says. "Groaning is a natural human response and can remove tension from the body."