

**HOLY BASIL, BATMAN** Used in Ayurvedic practices to increase immunity, reduce fever and lower blood-sugar levels in diabetics, tulsi (also known as Indian basil or holy basil) is recommended by reiki master Jennifer Brinn, who serves clients a tea made with its leaves to calm nerves and balance the mind.



## HEALING HANDS **REIKI**

I'm a congenitally skeptical person, especially when it comes to New Age-y healing. So when I step up to Noe Valley's SpiralMuse Home of Wellbeing—a Victorian with peace signs on the welcome mats—for my first-ever reiki treatment, I'm a little hesitant, to say the least.

My reiki master, Jennifer Brinn—a brunette with piercing blue eyes—g greets me at the door with a cup of basil tea, immediately putting me at ease. In the center's waiting area, decked with Buddha statues and tea lights, we discuss the philosophy of the ancient Japanese healing method, which aims to open the flow of energy in the body. "There are plenty of things that push the electromagnetic field out of line," Brinn explains. "You feel it on an emotional level first, then it manifests itself physically."

For first-timers like me, Brinn recommends the "Balancer" treatment, which begins with a 30-minute massage followed by a full hour of reiki. After loosening my muscles, she works her way from my head to my feet, placing her hands on each of my seven energy centers, or chakras, and then holding each position for a few minutes. Though Brinn uses little or no pressure, at moments it feels, somewhat shockingly, like a weight is placed on my body.

After the session, we discuss her findings. According to Brinn, my energy is balanced, with just a little bit of tension around my adrenal glands (near the kidneys). This is one of the first places that anxiety manifests itself, Brinn says, since these glands help the body react to stress by controlling blood pressure.

"Western medicine looks at the symptoms," Brinn explains. "Eastern medicine looks at the cause, which is usually on the energetic level." But while some strongly believe that reiki helps to alleviate certain medical conditions—one client of Brinn's saw a dramatic reduction of swelling to an injured ankle after a targeted session—it's a matter of contention. I can't say that my results are revolutionary, but I feel more relaxed and centered, if you will, for the rest of the day. Perhaps regular treatments are the key for lasting benefits: "Keeping a balanced energy is about shifting consciousness and allowing layers of stuff to fall away so the core energy can remain clear," Brinn says. "A reiki session is a wonderful way for a person to feel held and supported while receiving a nourishment of pure energy." \$70/HOUR OR \$95/90 MINUTES; JENNIFER BRINN, SPIRALMUSE HOME OF WELLBEING, 3389 22ND ST., 415-285-0885, WWW.JBRINN.COM. —Karen Palmer

