

Tibetan Singing Bowls: The Power of Sound Healing

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For centuries, the Tibetan people have practiced sound healing and consciousness transformation with a musical instrument known as a “singing bowl.” Modern science now reveals the healing secrets of these mystical metal bowls.

The resonance produced by these hand-crafted bowls can measurably improve human immune function, lower heart rate and blood pressure, soothe pain in cancer patients, and drastically reduce stress levels. Indeed, the bowls dissipate stress to such a tremendous degree that the body becomes *a perfect receptacle of deep healing*.



The Origins and History of Singing Bowls

Tibetan singing bowls first appeared in the areas surrounding the Himalayan Mountains. They are considered a symbol of “the unknowable,” and their vibrations have been described as the “sound of the universe manifesting.”

The bowls date back to the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha (560-480 B.C.), but the exact details of their origins are cloaked in mystery. Some say they are a gift from the shamanistic “Bon” religion, predating Tibetan Buddhism by centuries. Traditionally, monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists have used the bowls in rituals, prayers, and meditation.

Singing bowls produce a sound similar to a bell when struck with a wooden mallet. However, when the bowls are “sung” — that is, rubbed consistently with the mallet in a circular motion around the bowl’s edge — they produce what Tibetan master Gwalwa Kamapa calls the “sound of the void.”

Various sources report that the bowls are made from a consecrated alloy consisting of 5, 7, or 9 metals. The raw materials are smelted and purified before being cast, reheated, and hammered into shape. Sacred mantras or chants are sung to imbue the bowls with the proper intent. When played skillfully, each of the metals in the alloy creates a unique, resonating vibration that “dances” with the vibrations of the other metals.

According to local legends, one of the metals used in singing bowls is meteorite iron. Because the meteorites found in Tibet travel through a very low-oxygen atmosphere, their composition is said to differ from meteorites found anywhere else in the world. Perhaps this is one key to the healing powers of the singing bowls.

Physical Healing through the Power of Sound

According to *Shaman's Drum* magazine, shamanistic cultures use sound and chanting to induce trance states conducive to healing. Similarly, the tones of Tibetan singing bowls and other therapeutic sounds are thought to synchronize sentient brain waves and create a therapeutic effect on the mind and body.

Today, the Sound Healing Network (founded in 2002) says modern medicine increasingly recognizes sound healing as a therapeutic field. "Because we are vibrational beings, healing occurs through the effect of appropriate application of intentional sound," reports the Network. "Sound healers use voice, musical instruments, and modern technology to affect change in our well being."

Diane Mandle, a certified sound healer in California, plays Tibetan singing bowls for clients to relieve their pain and stress. "I work with different patterns of sacred geometry, cellular anchoring that creates a path to memory of well-being," she says. "Eventually, over a series of weeks, that pattern becomes hard-wired in the brain."

Mandle's clients describe intense healing experiences with the singing bowls. "Something profound happened," says Laura Gallerstein. "I felt a breakthrough, like something really shifted inside me and I had clarity." Another individual reported a pulse that dropped from above 80 to 68 after a singing bowl "concert."

Michael Verilli, an osteopathic physician from Northampton, Massachusetts, describes how his stress and anxiety disappeared completely in response to the singing of the bowl.

"I relaxed into a profound sense of inner calm, peace, and oneness which I know to be the essential core of my living as a human being, and a true experience of deep inner healing," Dr. Virilli says. "From this experience, I am convinced that the Tibetan singing bowls are an essential part of sound healing and an extremely valuable tool in integrative medicine today, especially for the healing of stress and for pain relief."

Sound Healing: Profound Effects for Stress, Pain, Immunity, and Cancer Recovery

Science stands behind the effects of therapeutic sound. Dr. David Simon, medical director of the Deepak Chopra center in California, found that sound vibrations from Tibetan bowls and chanting are chemically metabolized into "endogenous opiates." These substances act on the body as internal painkillers and healing opiates.

Dr. Mitchell Gaynor, director of medical oncology and integrative medicine at the Strang-Cornell Cancer Prevention Center in New York, was introduced to singing bowls by a Tibetan monk patient.

Dr. Gaynor soon began using the bowls and other sound therapies to help his cancer patients — whether to relieve the stress and shock of diagnosis or to soothe the pain associated with chemotherapy and other treatments.

Dr. Gaynor has also conducted extensive research on how singing bowls can stimulate healing. Evidence suggests that the tones of the bowls stimulate physiological immunity.

“Sound can actually change our immune system,” explains Dr. Gaynor. “Our Interleukin-1 level, which is an index of our immune system, goes up between 12 ½ and 15% after Gregorian chanting or listening to certain forms of music. And after listening to this music for 20 minutes, our immunoglobulin levels in our blood are significantly increased.”

According to Dr. Gaynor, therapeutic sound affects our bodies on a cellular and sub-cellular level. “There is not an organ system in our body that is not affected by sound, music, and vibration,” he says. “Sound can help people who are sick, especially cancer patients.”

Locate a Singing Bowl or Sound Healer

Authentic Tibetan singing bowls for home use can sometimes be found through import stores or online. Mastering the technique of playing them is easy, usually taking no more than a few minutes, and the experience can be deeply fulfilling.

For those interested in working with a practitioner, information about sound healers and healing concerts can be found through professional organizations and associations such as The Sound Healing Network. The music of Tibetan singing bowls is also available in CDs. Simply type the keywords “Tibetan singing bowl CD” in any search engine to find online CD retailers.