

# PULSE

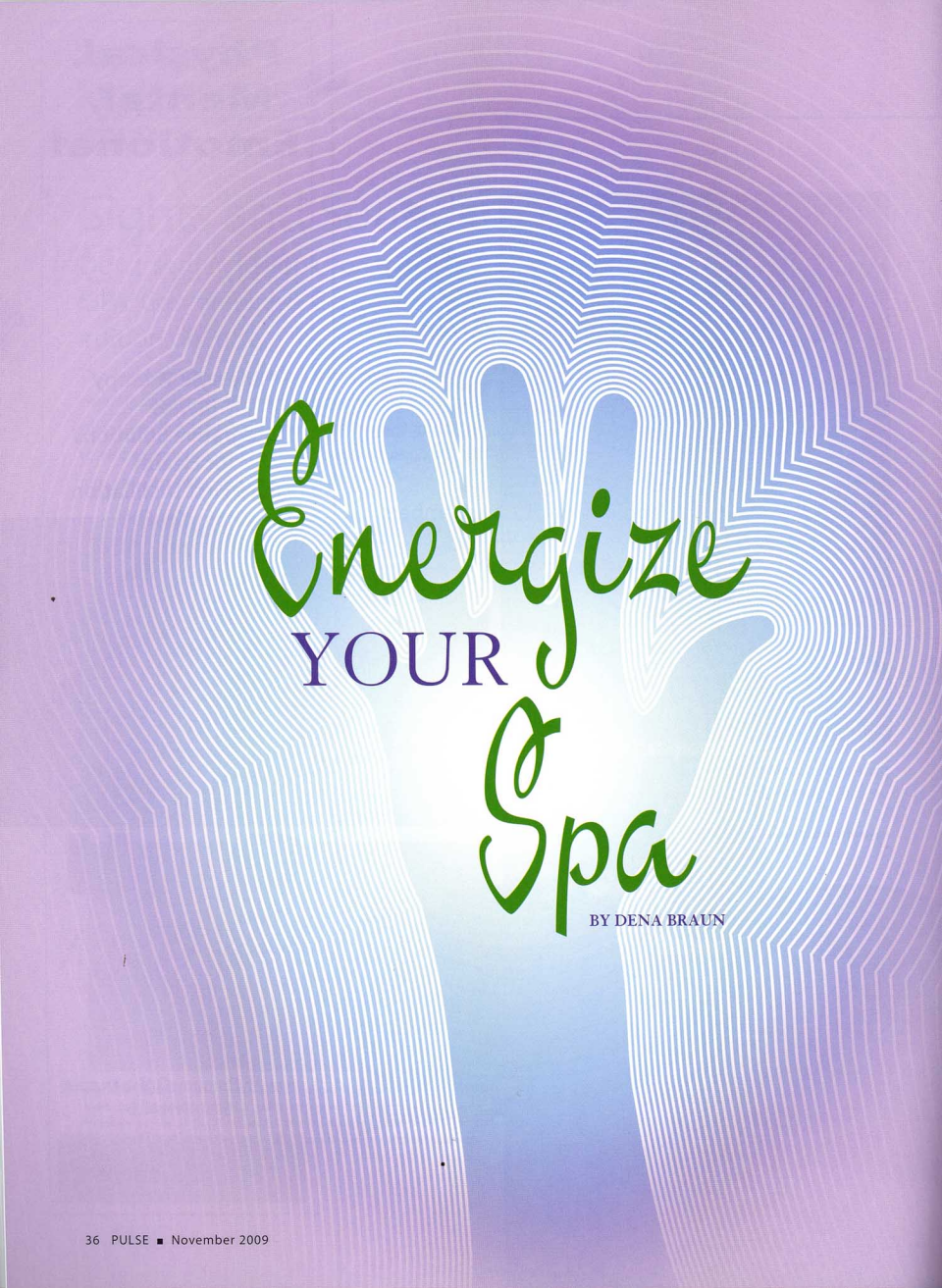
NOVEMBER 2009

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THE  
ENERGY  
OF

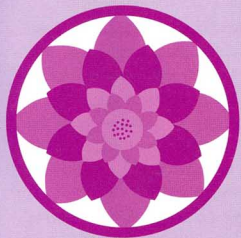
*Healing Touch*





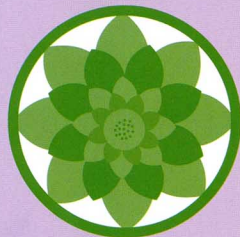
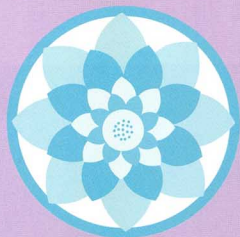
*Energize*  
YOUR  
*Spa*

BY DENA BRAUN



## ENERGY IS ALL AROUND US.

Turn on the lights in the spa, fire up the computer in your office or pop the soothing nature music into the CD player – energy is required for all of it, and no one would argue against its existence. But tell someone that the body itself is bristling with energy, and furthermore that it can be used to heal and soothe, and all of a sudden energy has become unbelievable.



*One of the best ways to introduce energy work into your spa is to marry it with some of your existing services.*

Or at least it had until just a few years ago. According to the 2008 ISPA Global Consumer Study, not only did 60 percent of spa-goers cite reducing stress as their main reason for visiting a spa, 17 percent were more specific and cited "therapeutic for my mind" as their primary reason for visiting a spa; 19 percent cited "therapeutic for my body." People are starting to embrace energy treatments as they look for more and more therapeutic ways to relax, de-stress and restore balance in their chaotic lives. And it's not just alternative trendsetters; Dr. Mehmet Oz has called energy work the next frontier in medicine. It doesn't get more mainstream than that.

As energy therapy becomes more mainstream, the spa is perfectly positioned to capitalize on the trend. "We're seeing an increase in the number of guests open to trying new things like energy work," said Helen Brown, spa director at the Mayflower Inn & Spa in Washington, Connecticut. "They're coming to understand the benefits of the work and comment on how they feel more supported and grounded after a treatment. At the spa, we're able to take things that people may think of as way out there and get them to try it because they've established trust with us," she continued. "They're willing to try things in this environment that they wouldn't in another environment, and they realize it's not as kooky as they thought."

Energy treatments include services like Reiki, healing touch, chakra balancing, light and sound therapy, acupuncture and craniosacral work. Each modality is based on the goal of bringing the body into balance. Energy enters the body via chakras and travels throughout along meridians. Acupressure points are places that can be manipulated to balance energy. Energy itself can't be destroyed, but it can be transformed, which the therapist does by moving energy around the body, increasing it in certain places, decreasing it in others. Studies have shown energy work lowers stress, decreases

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chronic pain and speeds recovery time after an illness or injury. In fact, healing touch and acupuncture are used as complementary therapies in hospitals across the country.

Energy can't be seen and it can be hard to define, but everyone knows it intuitively. People know when they feel exceptionally good and energetic, and they know when they feel depleted and run-down. This is the energy or life force that flows through us all, and it could be the next big thing for your spa.

"Guests aren't coming in and falling asleep during a treatment anymore," said Penny Kriel, spa director at the spa at the Mandarin Oriental Washington, D.C. "They're asking questions like, 'Why did you do that movement?' or 'Why did you use that trigger point?'" Energy work plays into the spa-goer's increased desire for a more healing and spiritual service from their spa experience, as opposed to a day of pampering.

One of the best ways to introduce energy work into your spa is to marry it with some of your existing services. "We decided to combine energy work with massage," said **Alexandra Robinson, spa director at the Topnotch Resort and Spa in Stowe, Vermont.** "The guest gets a peaceful mind, chi balancing, plus release of knots and tension. Once they understand it (energy work), they're more inclined to realize that's what they need." According to Robinson, people typically feel that to get rid of tension they need a traditional physical massage. But if that tension is mental or emotional, Reiki, a Japanese technique for stress reduction, relaxation and healing, is just as beneficial.

Because energy work is very holistic and spiritual, part of what makes the treatment a success is the connection between therapist and client. "As a spa director, you have to make sure your therapists can really do the service in a real, genuine, energetic, spiritual way," said Brown. "Sometimes a therapist can go through all the levels of training and still not be good at it."

As you begin to introduce energy services on your menu, it's important to start small and stick with some of the more basic disciplines. And because energy work is likely still unfamiliar to many of your clients, it's imperative that the spa reservation employees are trained to help guide clients to the right service. "We have all our receptionists receive each treatment," said Robinson. "In order to describe the service, they have to have experienced the service."

As people continue to embrace the mind-body-spirit connection, the popularity of energy treatments is poised for continued growth. With some planning and attention to what your clients need, you can embrace the trend. ■

**DENA BRAUN** is a freelance writer focused on the luxury and healthy travel industries.

## The Spa-goer Perspective

The sophisticated spa client – and they're becoming more sophisticated every day – is interested in learning more about energy work, and once they understand and experience the effects of the treatment, they're often hooked, becoming clients for life.

"I've been having energy treatments since 1985 when I was diagnosed with Epstein Barr Syndrome," said Betty Ann Heggie, former vice-president of investor relations for PotashCorp, one of the largest fertilizer companies in the world. "I was told there was nothing medicine could do for me, so I figured there had to be something I could do for myself."

That something turned out to be energy work. "It was like medicine," Heggie said of the energy treatments. "If I have a treatment it restores me. It's like taking vitamins; it strengthens my body. People have to care for the energy centers in their body the same way they care for their organs."

It also helps her to let go of negative baggage. "Energy work helps cleanse us of things we've picked up from others and helps remove unwanted stuff. It's the same as a shower for your physical body. As I got more attuned to energy work I realized how much better I felt after that type of treatment."

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