

# COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES FOR COMPLEX PTSD

INFORMATION FOR SUFFERERS

By Bedfordshire community organiaation – Recovery Code X



Survivor led  
For the people  
By the people



WORKING WITH A counsellor who specialises in complex trauma can be beneficial on your road to recovery. You might also like to experience complementary therapies to help transform the influences of Complex PTSD.

This factsheet provides information on therapies accessible locally at the time of publication through the professional associations listed. It is intended as a general guide only.

These therapies are not recommendations or intended as a substitute for personal medical advice or professional medical care.

## What is Complementary and Alternative Medicine?

'Complementary' is when conventional medicine is used together with non-mainstream practice. 'Alternative' means when a non-mainstream practice is used instead of conventional medicine.

*The US National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)*

## Recovery in Mind, Body and Spirit

Prolonged interpersonal trauma may be dismissed, denied or forgotten. However, left untreated, the effects are powerfully felt in mind, body and spirit.

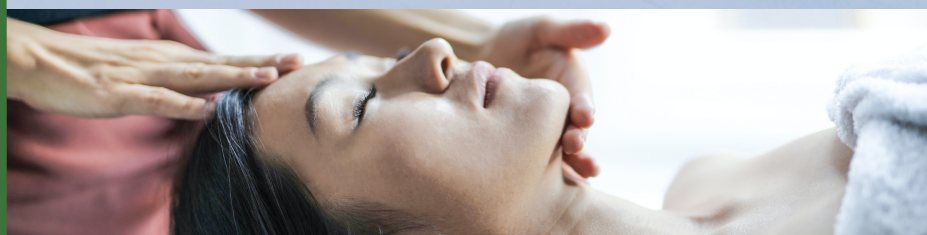
Complementary and alternative therapies generally focus on a 'holistic' or wholeness approach to healing. They recognise the interconnectness of biological, psychological, subtle energy and spiritual systems. Some of the therapies have ancient origins and others are modern innovations.

## 1. Therapies to aid relaxation, emotional calm and de-stress

If you are still experiencing a state of fear which stems from your childhood, your nervous system may be stuck in a hypervigilant adrenalised state. This stresses the whole body and creates feelings of restlessness, hyperactive behaviour, anxiety, panic and anger.

The following approaches can help calm an over-active nervous system by incorporating physical postures, different ways to breathe, and learning how to be present.

- **Mindfulness meditation** The NHS's Recovery College may provide free online courses and workshops. Call 01234 263621 for a brochure or see [mindrecoverynet.org.uk](http://mindrecoverynet.org.uk).
- **Sound therapy** A therapist facilitates the session with a particular outcome in mind, such as reducing anxiety. The College of Sound Healing has a practitioner directory. See: [collegeofsoundhealing.co.uk](http://collegeofsoundhealing.co.uk)
- **Craniosacral therapy** Helps reintegrate the residues of trauma so that they don't overwhelm the body/mind leading to a fight or flight response. Find an accredited practitioner at the Craniosacral Therapy Association: [www.craniosacral.co.uk](http://www.craniosacral.co.uk)



## Systems of 'energy healing'

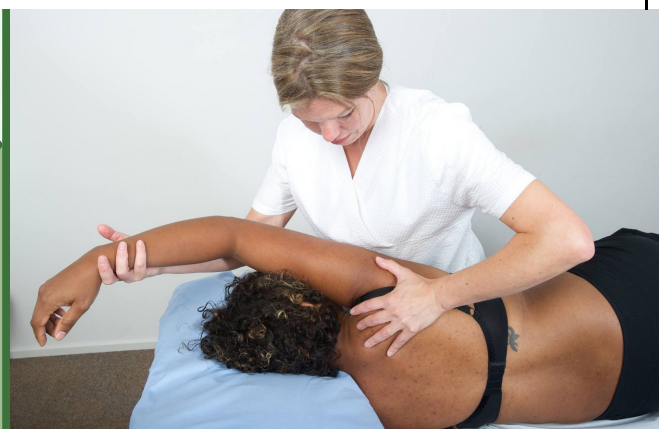
- **Reiki** The therapist uses touch to channel energy into the person's body to activate natural healing processes. See the UK Reiki Federation for local practitioners: [www.reikifed.co.uk](http://www.reikifed.co.uk)
- **Spiritual healing** Many religious centres and churches offer hands on healing as well as the network of spiritual churches. See: [www.thehealingtrust.org.uk](http://www.thehealingtrust.org.uk)
- **Crystal healing** Crystals are placed around the body to help correct energetic imbalances leading to greater physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.



## 2. Releasing residues from the past

When the emotions of past events are not expressed and are suppressed, they can influence how we feel today, e.g. feeling low, anxious, stressed. Here are a few other therapies that can help:

- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)** Helps you process the negative images, emotions, beliefs and body sensations associated with traumatic memories that seem to be stuck (BACP). Ask your GP for a referral or find a local practitioner via the EMDR Association: [www.emdrassociation.org.uk](http://www.emdrassociation.org.uk)
- **The Emotion Code** Locates 'trapped emotions' in the body using muscle testing techniques. To find a local practitioner, see [www.drbradleynelson.com](http://www.drbradleynelson.com) or go to [www.discoverhealing.com/certified-practitioners](http://www.discoverhealing.com/certified-practitioners)
- **Emotional Freedom Technique** Works by gently tapping different parts of the body that may be storing the stuck emotions. See: [www.eftinternational.org](http://www.eftinternational.org)



### NHS Availability

The availability of alternative and complementary therapies on the NHS is limited. There are 5 approved treatments (by NICE) that you may be able to access by contacting your GP surgery. Here are 3 of them:

- **Acupuncture** applies needles to acupressure points to relieve headaches, chronic pain, depression and anxiety.
- **Osteopathy** helps to relax you physically and therefore mentally, using gentle, holistic methods such as joint mobilisation, soft tissue massage and stretching, and cranial osteopathy.
- **Herbal medicine** Plant-derived substances prescribed for physical and mental wellbeing.

## 3. Reconnecting to self and life purpose

If you learned to disconnect from your feelings to survive in a hostile environment, and found true self-expression too dangerous, you may feel lost and directionless in life – even despairing. If you decide to take the plunge, and rediscover the essence of who you are, the rewards can be life-changing.

- **Inner child work** Exploring and creating interaction with the traumatised parts of self to enable integration and wholeness.
- **Transpersonal therapy** explores your spirituality to help you find meaning and purpose in your life.
- **Psychosynthesis**, or 'psychology of the soul,' combines the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual. Helps you develop a 'spiritually oriented vision of yourself to enable change and growth' (BACP).
- **Peer support groups** with a holistic approach can give you the confidence to find your gifts and move forward in life. They can also teach symptom management and healing tools to help you reconnect to self.



### Questions to ask before you start

Once you have found a practitioner, it's a good idea to ask them some questions before you go ahead. This checklist has been suggested by the NHS.

- cost of treatment or sessions
- how long the treatment or sessions will last. E.g. 1 session or needing regular sessions every week/month
- are there any people who shouldn't use this treatment?
- are there any side effects?
- is there anything you should do to prepare?
- what is their complaints procedure?
- documentary proof of their qualifications
- proof of membership of their professional association
- proof that they're insured

### NHS via GP or needing to go private?

Discuss with your GP or mental health team your desire to try particular therapies, as some are approved to be accessed via your GP/surgery. For other therapies you will need to pay privately. Professional therapists will be registered with at least one official association or society for that therapy. They may or may not be registered with the Professional Standards Authority (PSA).

Associations to consider:  
Complementary Medical Association [www.the-cma.org.uk](http://www.the-cma.org.uk)  
Complementary & Natural Healthcare Council [www.cnhc.org.uk](http://www.cnhc.org.uk)  
Federation of Holistic Therapists [www.fht.org.uk](http://www.fht.org.uk)  
British Acupuncture Council [www.acupuncture.org.uk](http://www.acupuncture.org.uk)  
British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)  
UK Council for Psychotherapy [www.psychotherapy.org.uk](http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk)



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Also available as a podcast on our website: [www.recoverycodex.org/factsheets](http://www.recoverycodex.org/factsheets)