



THE MAGIC TOUCH

BY AMY PATUREL

When my son Jack was 14 months old, we discovered he had a congenital heart condition that caused constrictions around both his esophagus and his windpipe. Even pea-sized bites of food sounded my maternal alarm bells. By the time Jack turned 2, we had dialed 911 three times, driven him to the emergency room four times, and had him airlifted to the hospital twice. Each time, he was choking.

Jack suffered from complications during surgery to repair his heart, and the various medical assaults to his system almost seemed worse than his obstructed airway. I worried about the trauma he was enduring (he was in tremendous pain and

was inconsolable) and the long-term effects of his medications. He often looked petrified—almost like a caged animal.

So when a nurse suggested a therapy called Healing Touch to calm Jack's wild energy, I was on board. With Healing Touch, practitioners use light or near-body touch to balance subtle energy fields and support the body's ability to heal itself. "It's a bit like acupuncture, but without the needles," she said.

It sounded like a longshot, but I was willing to try anything to minimize my child's suffering. So I sat in the hospital recliner with Jack on my lap while a pediatric nurse named Lisa Thompson stood before

HEALING TOUCH IS A FORM OF ENERGY MEDICINE THAT ANYONE—EVEN A SKEPTIC—CAN LEARN TO USE EFFECTIVELY.

us and began moving her hands a few inches above our bodies.

Within minutes, Jack's breathing slowed, beeping machines quieted, and I felt an overwhelming sense of release. For the first time in 10 days, Jack and I took a collective breath, and before the 30-minute session was over, he was sleeping peacefully in my arms.

While the concept of "laying on of hands" is as old as humanity, I never imagined I'd sit in a pediatric ICU as a nurse scanned my son's energy field, calmed his overworked nervous system, and alleviated his pain without even touching him. And I certainly never fathomed that years later, I would be on the receiving end of this type of healing during my own health crisis.

GETTING IN TOUCH

Throughout history, healers have used hovering hands to identify ailments and provide relief. Therapies that aim to modulate *prana* and *chi* (terms referring to energy) are central to traditional medicine in India and China. More recently, energy therapies like Healing Touch have begun to take root at respected medical institutions, such as Memorial Sloan Kettering and Mayo Clinic—and for good reason.

More than 400 clinical studies suggest that energy therapies produce perks such as reduced pain and enhanced immunity. Research suggests Healing Touch helps relieve depression and fatigue while also boosting immune activity in cancer patients. And energy healing, especially when combined with spiritual intention, has been shown to reduce pain and anxiety and improve range of motion in women with osteoarthritis.

But Healing Touch's greatest impact is in areas such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder where Western treatments frequently fall short. "Healing Touch helps modulate our stress and relaxation responses to position the body in the best place for healing," says Rauni King, a former ICU nurse and cofounder of Pacific Pearl La Jolla, an integrative healing center in San Diego. "And unlike medication, it addresses the whole person—physical, emotional, and spiritual."

While surgery corrected Jack's heart defect, doctors warned me that it would take months for his trachea to expand to normal size. *If Jack responds to Healing Touch, I thought, maybe I can use it to help him in the interim.* Thompson stepped up, teaching me simple techniques at his bedside, and invited me to attend formal classes at a steep discount.





LEARNING TO TOUCH

Admittedly, I had zero experience healing anyone. I couldn't feel energy, sense auras, or ground myself. I wasn't even sure what chakras were. But Thompson assured me that we all have the ability to heal with energy, and during 30-plus hours of training spanning two weekends, she would show me how.

In class, I learned to sense energy with my hands (Is it hot? Sticky? Thick? Cool?) and attempted to shift a classmate's biofield. Thompson also taught us how to use a pendulum.

"If the pendulum swings clockwise, energy is flowing freely," she explained. "If it's side-to-side or counterclockwise, there's a block." I stood over my classmate and held my pendulum steady above her belly. It stilled first, then moved side to side. My task: to work with her energy field so the pendulum swung clockwise. I rubbed my hands together until the friction produced some heat, then hovered them over her body where I sensed warmth and stickiness.

I'm sure I looked bizarre, and I'm not sure I did anything that produced physiological change, but my classmate said the session relaxed her. According to King, that's the expected experience for people new to Healing Touch.

"In the beginning you think you're imagining what you're feeling," King explained, "but you're probably already sensing energy. Some people perceive energy through hearing; some through touch. Some even see a person's auric fields."

Thompson assured me that if you approach the practice with an intention to heal, you can't do it wrong. So I began practicing on Jack at home. Using a technique called magnetic clearing, I imagined my fingertips as tiny magnets. I felt heat emanating from his body as I attempted to clear sticky energy near his throat—and the sessions seemed to calm him.

Intrigued by the "hand tricks" I was doing with their little brother—and especially the pendulum—my 3-year-old twins wanted to try. They learned to ground themselves, pull energy up through the earth, and imagine themselves as vessels for healing.

"Children make excellent healers," King says. "Their hearts are open, and they're not swayed by doubt." In fact, some kids transform the practice into a game, challenging themselves to work their magic so the pendulum swings in a clockwise direction.

Like Jedis, my boys imagined themselves channeling "the Force" for their brother's highest good. "Let's work our magic on him,"

Max whispered to Brian, as their hands hovered above Jack's small body. I stood a few feet away marveling at how we landed here, with my boys attempting to heal their brother with intention and energy.

Since Jack's breathing after surgery still sounded like a truck motor, one or more of us practiced Healing Touch on him almost daily (with and without light sabers). By the time Jack returned for his follow-up visit four months later, his airway was normal.

I began turning to Healing Touch to help other loved ones too. I used it when my children were congested from the common cold and on my dad after his heart surgery—and later, when he was dying. Even my highly stressed husband, an alternative medicine skeptic, said he felt more relaxed after a session.

I like to think Healing Touch nudged the needle toward wellness in these instances, but even if it didn't, it helped me feel less helpless. So when I faced a new health challenge myself some seven years after Jack was hospitalized, I turned first to Healing Touch and to King, who was Thompson's Healing Touch teacher, for guidance.

RETURNING TO TOUCH

I arrived at my first session a ball of frenetic energy. But when King asked me about my deepest desires, what I hoped for my healing, what I wanted my life to look like one year, five years, 10 years down the line, I felt myself relax a bit. She was interested not in my illness but rather my vitality.

I slipped off my shoes and lay on the table fully clothed. I had no idea what she was doing during those moments since my eyes were closed. But I heard soothing music, inhaled

the scent of lavender, and felt King's healing presence all around me. My breathing slowed, and I felt enveloped in a cloud of comfort. When I was in an almost-euphoric state, King said, "Imagine yourself on a sailboat. It's a perfect day, not too hot or too cold. All you hear are the sounds of the ocean and my voice."

I felt like I was taking a trip inside my own psyche—like getting in touch with my higher self at a supernatural level, between worlds. In that hypnotic state, King planted the seeds of my deepest desires. I saw myself healthy and whole, collecting seashells on the beach while my husband and children played in the ocean. I imagined myself traveling to Greece, Paris, and Rome. And soon, I began to believe my dreams could become reality.

After a few sessions, I was like one of Pavlov's dogs that began salivating at the sound of a bell. The sight of King steadied my heart rate, and my mind and body quieted and stilled. Over time, King taught me to imagine myself as a tree deeply rooted into the earth, connected to divine energy. And that medical malady? It's behind me. But the tools I learned are ingrained in my psyche.

Now, at the first stir of nervous energy, I visualize myself as a tree, with sunlight streaming through its branches, flooding my body with healing light. And without fail, I can feel my anxiety lessen and my breathing slow. I share this image with my kids. Now 11, 11, and 9, they no longer pretend to be Jedis saving the world. But they do show up for me, each doing their own version of magnetic clearing, the same technique I taught them when Jack was a baby. While I've glimpsed a few eye rolls during our impromptu sessions, I hope some of the teachings stick. But even if they don't, at least my boys know that healing can come from within—light sabers optional. 🌌