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HEAD OVER HEELS

When even a trip to the world's most swooned-over destination couldn't cheer her, *Tatler's* travel and lifestyle editor, Delilah Khomo, delved deep with London's best therapist to bring the sparkle back into her life

I KNEW THAT SOMETHING was up when the Amalfi Coast just didn't deliver. The vongole? Tasteless. The lemons? Not as yellow as I remembered. The sea? Too choppy. And then the finale, when one of the world's most romantic views from Le Sirenuse made me cry for all the wrong reasons. It was then that I realised it was time to seek 'help'.

Cut to a few months later, and on a cold spring morning, I find myself sitting cross-legged on a sofa in the west London practice of hypnotherapist Dr Shomit Mitter. What the spiritual guru Deepak Chopra is to LA, Shomit Mitter is to London, except even more erudite and scholarly (and far more self-effacing). Friends have raved about his extraordinary ability to figure out exactly what is holding you back in life (without having to discuss your wounded inner child or, indeed, your past emotional baggage). His practice is where miraculous life changes seemingly unfold, thanks to his no-nonsense approach, sage advice, cognitive exercises and knack for listening intently. Over the years, Shomit has amassed a glittering clientele of CEOs, Hollywood stars and power players, who consider him nothing short of a miracle worker. That's especially true if you want to take your life to the next level – be it your career, your business,

love or money. If Socrates himself had needed a therapist, he would no doubt have sent for this man. The man with the cure for all cares? I was sold.

Sessions are an hour long, where you set a desired goal, or an area of your life that you would like to improve. There are discussions around this, followed by a tailored guided meditation that Shomit prescribes – and off you go. Some

floored by life. But he doesn't like to linger on the past: 'Focus not just on healing wounds but on what you'd like to achieve once you've healed that wound,' he says, tilting his head to one side. 'It is easy to fall into the trap of being so preoccupied with healing the past that one forgets to create a future to replace the past,' he says.

And so, with the onset of spring came the urge for positive change.

Shomit doesn't linger on the past: 'It's easy to fall into the trap of being so preoccupied with healing the past that one forgets to create a future'

clients come weekly, others once a month, or as needed.

You cannot help but instantly warm to Shomit. There is something about his eyes and openness. I am particularly taken with his very pragmatic way of listening intently, which immediately softens the tension as I take a while to answer his question of what it is exactly that I want. True to what I had heard, Shomit did not ask what the problem was. In fact, it took until three sessions in for me to talk about the bereavement and breakup that had left me feeling

I wanted to have a clean-out of my life – as well as my psyche – in order to make space for new habits and, ultimately, to feel better about myself. I'd read somewhere that, according to Dr Fred Luskin of Stanford University, we can have around 60,000 thoughts a day: on average, 80 per cent of those are negative and as many as 90 per cent are repetitive, mirroring those from previous days. This cycle is a major barrier to personal change.

How does one truly instil belief in the power of the mind? Well, there is a special sort of magic at

play with Shomit's sessions. He asks a lot of questions that focus on how and what you have been doing. This leads to fascinating discussions and anecdotes – which can range from everyday stories to quotes from psychotherapist Carl Jung. Also incorporated are some complex philosophical elements of Tibetan Buddhism. (Adding to his MPhil from Oxford University and Cambridge PhD, Shomit is now deep into a five-year Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition course of study, discussions and meditation based upon sutra and tantra texts.)

A conversation about William Blake lingers in the memory, specifically on the topic of the power of the mind, especially in Blake's poem *London*, which refers to the limitations that people impose on themselves. Quietly, with a theatrical flourish, Shomit tells me: 'Blake said, "mind-forg'd manacles" – which has, over the years, powered much of my thinking as a therapist.' He shrugs modestly, adding: 'For, if the chains that bind us are largely products of our own minds, surely those very minds can be recruited to dissolve what they have created?'

Shomit's work goes deep, accessing your subconscious as part of his electrifying medley of rituals, which combine hypnotherapy and meditation into his own 'yogic ▷

◁ hypnotherapy’ – a pioneering concept that blends the profundity of Indian meditation techniques with the efficacy of Western hypnotherapy. His argument is that the two practices work with fairly immediate effect: ‘It’s faster than old-style talking therapies, which work with the conscious mind, looking for pins marked “unconscious” in a gigantic haystack,’ he explains succinctly.

I ask him what he thinks about manifesting, the latest new-age buzzword everyone seems to be talking about, including Dua Lipa, who said she had ‘manifested’ headlining Glastonbury last year. The basic idea is that you harness the powers of the universe to create your dream life. ‘Obviously, it’s very attractive,’ he says. ‘I want this wonderful job, house, partner or whatever... Yes, that’s fine, but ultimately, you want to go beyond “manifesting” – to a place where you don’t need to manifest that “thing” in order to be happy. You’re happy regardless of whether it manifests or not.’ Then, fixing me with a slightly mystical look, he adds: ‘And, of course, the wonderful paradox of that is that you are in the place where those things

manifest very easily, so you can have your cake and eat it too.’ What about the other M-word *du jour* – ‘mindfulness’, with its promise of enabling you to think faster and remember more, and even of boosting intelligence? ‘It goes beyond that too...’ he answers.

The immediate after-effects of a session with Shomit feel almost as if you’ve been turbocharged with multiple vitamin B12 injections and gained the mental clarity – and oomph – of having done a 10-day fast. Most astonishing is how relatively simple it is, especially when it comes to the homework Shomit sets you – to listen to a daily meditation first thing, for a month to start with.

Even after your first week following his advice, you start to feel amazingly well. In my case, so well that when assessing at the end of each day what has happened, I begin to see things more positively, with more detachment and peace, so obviously something has clicked. Simply ruminating and replaying negative incidents no longer holds the attraction it once did. It’s this ‘double vision’ that Shomit is trying to strengthen within the minds of his clients:

‘Feeling something but not getting triggered, that’s the key,’ is how he puts it.

He explains that it is specific aspects of the unconscious that the meditations are targeting. Shomit has devised them to bring one back into a state of complete balance. He explains: ‘Each of those exercises is more complex, there are three levels to them. First, you practise. Second, you get so conversant with it that you get bored as it becomes more and more ingrained in you. Then the third stage is going back to it much later – a year or six months – when it will mean something completely different to you.’

It’s a journey of self-discovery that felt at times like being at a Wimbledon-standard tennis match with Shomit as my dependable doubles partner – very much the Roger Federer figure, elegant and solid in his approach. ‘The whole process is a bit like being a sportsman, as in creating a solid practice and foundation. Physical fitness is measured when the heartbeat comes back to its standing state after you’ve worked out. Similarly emotional fitness – how quickly do you bounce back?’

It is obvious why his devotees believe he is capable of a certain kind of magic. ‘Magic is when you can’t see a direct link between cause and effect. You think the two possibly can’t be linked,’ he says. ‘But I know in my work that it is the invisible connections in the unconscious that affect those changes. The stuff that goes on is massive – and so much bigger than my clients realise.’

To call Shomit a therapist misses the point. What stands out in his multilayered practice is his humility. He simultaneously whips your mind and spirit into shape – and to such an extraordinary degree. In his philosophical and poetic way, Shomit remarks: ‘As TS Eliot said, “Teach us to care and not to care.” It’s that duality which is at the core of human experience, to turn pain into opportunity, defeat into learning and fear into love.’ Yet despite the scale and loftiness of such a statement, it’s entirely possible for you to ‘work out’ and ‘get fit’ mentally, therefore ensuring you are armed with the tools for whatever challenges you face today and in your future.

Yes, you can religiously train with Tracy Anderson, detox at Lanserhof, have cosmetic surgeon Rajiv Grover on speed dial – but the one thing sometimes not considered in our quest for perfection is our mind. Or rather, our mental health – and if that’s out of kilter, everything else is knocked completely out of balance.

So what did I want? Ultimately, to not feel so sad. To feel sane, seriously snatched and with some sparkle back in my life – ready for next summer at Le Sirenuse. Plus, Shomit made good on his promise of an ‘inner-outer glow’ by offering plenty of emotional release – all while helping create a core of inner stability and the ultimate brain upgrade to push me to the next level. Yes, Shomit bestows a peace that passeth understanding. And guess what? The Amalfi Coast never felt so good.

shomitmitter.com □

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