

DARE TO TONE

How does our soul sound when it gets a voice?

Veronica Bonilla Gurzeler discovers the therapeutic method called Soul Voice® and learns that it is unbelievably relieving – and a bit whimsical – to sound in a uncontrolled way.

A sentence from my French teacher more than 30 years ago, is one reason why I'm sitting on the oak floor in the city church of St. Jakob in Zürich.

"You should take singing lessons", the elderly schoolmaster had sniffed at me moodily. I knew why. I spoke too softly when I had to talk in front of the class. It was quite different from the teacher's voice, who enjoyed living out his passion for Voltaire's fables in front of us, his pupils. When he mimed the wolf, his powerful voice thundered through the room, so that even the sleepers in the back row would open their eyes.

Secretly, I knew that the teacher, notorious husband of an opera singer & father of the later blues musician Phillipp Fankhauser, was right. But I never did manage to see a vocal coach. My only success was a place in the second row of an amateur mother's choir rehearsing in the park while our children were playing hide & seek.

I've always felt the need to "do something" with my voice. When a friend told me about the sound & voice meditation with Soul Voice® Teacher Miriam Helle, I knew this could be a beginning.

Every tone is correct.

About 30 people made themselves comfortable on meditation cushions and stools in a circle. The church bells ring seven times. After a short silence, Miriam Helle greets us and off we go! Her full, booming voice directs us to make our breath audible, to stretch our bodies, to yawn and to emit 'aahs' or similar sounds as we exhale. "Every tone is right. Let everything come out without censoring", Miriam encourages us. Soon there is a single sighing and yelling in the church; most people are now standing up, stretching, bending, bouncing or shaking to the sounds that they make. Others lie, reel, roll on the floor. A mixture of alienation and embarrassment strikes me. I decide that it is better to keep my eyes closed as most others do, also to be less distracted.

I quickly notice how good every single sound, every liberating movement, feels. Miriam now directs our attention to blocked or painful areas in the body, showing how we can express the disturbing sensations with dissonant or shrill tones.

'Lucky, none of my work colleagues sees me here', I notice myself thinking. But the good thing is: When everyone is behaving all bizarre, bizarre is suddenly normal. And why not just leave the narrow paths of society's conventions?

"We are so limited in our expression as if we were caught in a tight box", says Soul Voice® founder Karina Schelde. "We always want to be nice, friendly and perfect. In this way we suppress our true feelings, which in the end, makes us sick."

Karina Schelde, originally an actor, developed her passion for authentic expression during her vocal training at the Roy Hart Theater in France. "Before, I had been trained by opera singers and I realized how much I am afraid of doing something wrong or not making the right tones. Now I can allow my voice to spontaneously express any sound", she writes in her book, Soul Voice. She understood that many of her feelings of unease had their origin in suppressed emotions and feelings of insufficiency. They were now transformed into blissful lutes and happy singing. "I found the voice that is directly connected to the source, the voice of my soul."

Karina Schelde, a Danish woman who lives in New Zealand, has been working with body therapy and alternative healing methods since the 1970s. With her accumulated experience, she has developed the Soul Voice® Method. It is about finding the blockades that prevent us from living our full potential. Karina understands traumatic experiences, suppressed feelings and negative belief patterns. Like other therapists, she believes that all of these experiences are stored in our cellular memory and ultimately lead us to become mentally or physically ill.

The knowledge of healing through sound & voice is scattered across the globe in all ancient cultures. Songs have always played a central role. Whether it is shamanic songs, mantras, lamentations, church or folk songs – the voice is always used for self-expression and support for certain rituals and healing ceremonies. Therapists working energetically understand that the voice has a self-regulating function, which increases the body's systems, so that they balance and harmonize. A free flow of energy is the prerequisite for the perfect interaction of all physical organs and systems.

The Soul Voice® method works mainly with the so-called toning, a form of singing that does not require melody, rhythm, or text. The client tones whatever wants to be released at the moment. "Sound awakens our spontaneous, untamed self and leads us beyond control and straightforward thinking. It is a creative force, a body voice that lives in each of us, which brings us back to our true physical sensibilities and allows us to live our true nature free from judgment and doubt", says Karina Schelde.

Meanwhile, therapists work in many countries using the Soul Voice® method. One of the first to be trained by Karina is Miriam Helle, who directs a monthly voice mediation in the City Church of St. Jakob, but also offers workshops, in addition to her practice. On this Monday evening she has led the group through the dissonant tones to the harmonic sounds. Now listening to each other and together creating a sound carpet – each participant with his or her vocal possibility, according to one's own estimation. A powerful angelic singing fills the nave of the church; some delights of joy are heard. After an hour and a half of sounding in all shades I feel purified from the inside, I feel freed and filled with new life. And I know: The journey to the voice of my soul has just begun.

Interview with Miriam Helle:

What happens in a Soul Voice® therapy session?

"After a short talk about the issues of the client we start with the voice work. Instead of using the hands, as for example in physiotherapy, with Soul Voice® we treat blockages, tensions or pain, with the voice. The client can either relax and receive my tones or become active. Often, there are repressed feelings such as fear, grief, or rage, which need to be released. After the voice work there is a moment of emptiness or rest and from there new sounds arise, which are connected with the own core and the basic trust."

What changes when we sound our feelings?

"We come closer to ourselves and learn to express ourselves freely. This results in a balanced condition. It is medically proven that singing and toning strengthen our immune system and release happiness."

For whom is the method suitable?

"For people who want to change something and who are ready to engage in a process. People who themselves take responsibility for their health and wellbeing and want to use the voice tool."

What are the concerns of clients?

"The bandwidth is large. There are children and adolescents with behavioral problems, which are not allowed to express their vitality in everyday life; pregnant women and their partners who want to prepare for birth. Or actors and singers who have not yet found their own personal expression. Likewise, people who are afraid of public appearances, people who suffer from panic attacks, or who realize that they are on a low-voltage basis for whatever reason. And then of course many people with physical pain or diseases of all kinds, from burn-out to depression to cancer. Some people opt for a path without school medicine, while Soul Voice® is an accompanying therapy for others."



*Soul Voice® Founder
Karina Schelde*