



# living in resonance

London 2019

The Language of Touch

*'One's life is conducted by one's spirit...a treatment has to move the spirit to restore wellbeing  
....Well-rooted presence and virtue of the practitioner are key to this environment. Close  
windows and shut doors to create a space that is calm and quiet enough for concentration, so  
you can promote a relationship of unity between your spirit and the patient.'*

*Ling Shu (1,8,9) and Su Wen (27)*

# The Language of Touch: refining our sense of 'touch' with Sei-ki and Clean Language

Alice Whieldon & Nick Pole

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## Introduction

In Shiatsu, we know the power of touch and, these days, the medical world has evidence to support what we know through our work. Yet despite this, for centuries manual therapy has been considered the lowest of the healing arts, across cultures and remains so. Our ways of thinking undermine felt certainty; touch is so ordinary and natural that it is overlooked until we are arguably in a state of crisis and alienation. This is part of the damage we have done to our wider environment through imagining ourselves separate from it as well.



It is urgent we reconnect and take responsibility for how we are in the world. Our part in this is to put Shiatsu and/or Sei-ki in its proper place as the King (or Queen) of medicine, as described by Masunaga, a great innovator of Shiatsu.

Touch is the missing piece of the mindfulness revolution and without its grounding reality that work is at times untethered and flimsy. We have a great opportunity to present the power of touch to the world. To do so, we must become more skilled with language and develop sesshin, felt understanding and our inner space of authority from which to speak.

This workshop is the first of many to explore language and touch and the questions we must ask ourselves, alongside the language of touch, in the exploration of sesshin. In this combination of Sei-Ki and Clean Language, Alice Whieldon and Nick Pole bring a collaborative approach to teaching and learning, with the aim of helping you find your own best way to explore the sense of yourself as person and practitioner.

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# A Short History of Sei-ki

## Kishi Akinobu (1949-2012)

Sei-ki is the name given to his work by Kishi Akinobu. While training at Namikoshi's Japan Shiatsu College, he became interested in the work of Masunaga Shizuto who was looking for ways to describe and teach Shiatsu that would be in tune with its foundations in eastern philosophy, rather than continue to try and fit it into a medical model.



When Masunaga founded the IOKAI postgraduate Shiatsu school in 1968, Kishi was among the first to enrol. He swiftly became indispensable to his teacher, travelling with him and demonstrating while Masunaga lectured. In 1971, he journeyed to Paris and there began his career as an international presenter. For the next 10 years he set up practices and presented workshops in places as far flung as Hawaii, Munich and Switzerland, always staying in close contact with Masunaga.

However, the more successful he became, the more dissatisfied he also was with Shiatsu. Although clients regarded his treatments as miraculous, he questioned whether the cures were as fundamental as they aimed to be. On a personal level he realised his own development was not being served. Finally, he stopped Shiatsu and dedicated himself to self-examination and Shinto soul-shining practices, culminating in a profound realisation.

Following this transformation, he and Masunaga agreed to part. In the Japanese model in which the student first dedicates him or herself to the fulfilment of the art, makes it their own and finally transcends the form, Kishi's mastery of the Shiatsu tradition demanded he take a new name for himself and for his work. He called the latter, Sei-ki.

Kishi demonstrated Sei-ki until his death in 2012. He insisted he was not a teacher but one who showed his research for others to take as they wished. Many people have been touched by that work, sometimes not quite knowing why. But they kept finding their way to him and continue to find inspiration and a home in Sei-ki.

## Alice Whieldon MA PhD FwSS SFHEA

Alice worked with Kishi from 1997. She initiated the collaboration which produced the seminal book, *Sei-ki: Life in Resonance, the Secret Art of Shiatsu*, with the help of his wife, Kyoko. Published in the year before he died, this book has ensured that Sei-ki continues to reach people worldwide.

As soon as she met Kishi, Alice knew Sei-ki was what she had been looking for in Shiatsu and was resonant with her own realisation. She stopped her Shiatsu work and set out to learn Sei-ki. Within a couple of years, she became the helping 'voice' of Sei-ki and medium for Kishi's wish to describe and disseminate his understanding.



In addition, since the 1980s, she has been involved with the work of Charles Berner and Lawrence Noyes in the Enlightenment Intensive workshop, a fusion of the zen sesshin and western communication techniques, as well as Mind Clearing. She wrote the first book on the latter: *Mind Clearing: the key to mindfulness mastery* 2016.

Alice has worked for the Open University for over two decades and is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She was Chair of the Shiatsu Society (UK) 2016-18 and oversaw a major restructuring and renewal. With degrees in philosophy, theology and religious studies, she is skilled in presenting workshops and supporting learning. She established Living in Resonance in 2018.

*I was first introduced to Sei-ki by Kishi Akinobu and took a number of workshops with him in the '90s, as well as organising some workshops for him in the UK. ... I attended many Sei-ki presentations and demonstrations over long years. However, it was only through Alice's work that I finally felt I really 'got it'! Alice's clarity, and the keen intelligence she brings to presenting the work, make it fully accessible. Her breadth of understanding, her authenticity, presence and integrity are impressive – and are balanced with a style that's delightful!*

**DJ, Norwich, UK**

# A Short History of Clean Language

*David Grove (centre) with Penny Tompkins and James Lawley.*

In the 1980s, working with clients suffering from trauma, New Zealand-born psychologist David Grove noticed that while they found it difficult or impossible to speak about their traumatic experience directly, many were able to translate that experience into some kind of metaphor.

He also noticed that metaphor can be one of the key ways the cognitive mind and the bodymind communicate: there seemed to be a direct link between the words and images the client used and the way trauma was somatically stored inside them. But exploring these metaphors with his clients, he found his own attempts to describe them got in the way of his client's internal process. How could he help the client explore this very subjective internal landscape without importing his own constructs and intentions? It was this challenge that led him to start searching for the kind of questions that would eventually become Clean Language; questions that could, as he put it, 'elicit information without polluting the client's model of the world with the presuppositions and characterizations of the therapist's model of the world.'



Clean Language cultivates mind-body awareness because the questions are specifically devised to focus on the simplest elements of human experience – directly through the senses and in the moment, rather than indirectly through the many layers of abstraction the thinking mind constructs. So Clean Language brings the mind back to a state of pure perception - it reawakens the ability to experience things in a more childlike way, with the openness and curiosity of what, in the Zen tradition, is called Beginner's Mind.

Psychotherapists James Lawley and Penny Tompkins spent several years modelling David Grove's work and developing their own way to explore metaphor with Clean Language, called Symbolic Modelling. Their book 'Metaphors in Mind' (2000) brought David Grove's work to the attention of psychotherapists worldwide and together with other leaders in the field, such as Caitlin Walker, has inspired the use of Clean Language in corporations, academic research, education, police work and many other fields. Nick Pole's, *Words That Touch* (2017) is the first book on using Clean Language in bodywork therapies.



## Nick Pole, MA, MRSS(T)

I went to Kishi's workshops when he was teaching in the UK in the mid-90s, and one thing that really impressed me was the way he would just sit and listen before he started a treatment - a kind of embodiment of pure Zen presence - a bottomless emptiness, just listening. Soon after that I heard about Clean Language and got really interested in how these very simple 'Clean' questions helped people to explore the inner resonance of the words they themselves had just spoken. With great simplicity, and without appearing to do anything except repeat the participant's words in the form of another question, the facilitator helped people make what seemed like profound shifts in their relation to behaviour, beliefs and sense of self.



There was a practical and a philosophical attraction for me in this. In a practical sense, it was just so simple - with a handful of very open questions you invite the client to listen to what they just said and explore the deeper resonances that those words unlock, both metaphorically and somatically. In that way it seemed like the perfect introduction to a shiatsu session. And in a philosophical sense, unlike almost every other form of therapeutic dialogue I'd heard of, this Clean approach had no agenda, no framework, no diagnostic system of its own to impose upon the client. That simplicity resonated for me with the Sei-ki I had experienced in Kishi's workshops.

For David Grove, the originator of Clean Language, a New Zealander with - perhaps it's significant - a mixed Maori and European heritage, the ability to invoke that emptiness as the facilitator was also an essential part of the process. His aim in asking Clean questions was, as he put it, for 'the 'I' of the therapist to disappear'.

*Nick has over 25 years experience integrating eastern and western approaches as a mind-body therapist. With a background in Shiatsu, NLP and Clean Language, he trained more recently in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy at the Oxford Mindfulness Centre and is the director of London Mindful Practitioners, a non-profit support group for health professionals who use mindfulness in their work. He has taught his course on Clean Language for Shiatsu therapists for over ten years in various countries and is the author of 'Words That Touch - How to ask questions your body can answer' (2017, Singing Dragon). [www.nickpole.com](http://www.nickpole.com)*

## The Workshop

Nick Pole and Alice Whieldon will be collaborating to offer a creative space in which to explore Sei-ki and Clean Language and the resonance between them. Keen to support others in developing their authority and autonomy within a vibrant community of like-minded people, the emphasis will be on drawing out authentic touch and speech using all their years of experience and skill.

This is the first workshop of its kind and will start with the basics of Clean Language and Sei-ki, exploring the resonance both approaches share and demand.

We will look at how we use language with our clients and in our self-development and how to do so more effectively. We will explore the unconscious messages of our touch as clients and practitioners.

By the end of the workshop you will have language and touch tools and understanding to take into your professional and personal life.

## The foci of this workshop are:

- Quality of contact through 'touch' with vocal expression and hands
- An exploration of resonance with reference to kotodama and in contact
- The play of discipline and surrender through inner work and an outer professional practise
- Speaking the body
- Being a practitioner and what that means in relationship, in language
- Becoming an open space for others...usefully
- Finding our truth and expressing it

## We will

- develop listening touch (sesshin) to let the body speak
- with a few simple questions, invite the verbal mind to listen and resume its role as the intelligent servant of the heart
- will sharpen your skill in language to develop discernment and authority
- will place the role of practitioner within a wider context of history and society
- facilitate you in building your practitioner identity and ability to speak about what you do
- give you tools to work with your clients with language, complimentary to your touch

This is a collaborative space where you are supported in experimenting; together we can experience the joy that comes from breaking down the walls between us



## Requirements

This workshop is open to anyone interested in connection and resonance, however, it is preferable that you have some prior experience of therapy, talking or touching.

We will be working on the floor, so you need to know you can be comfortable in this environment.

## Training Fee and Dates

The Fee: £250

10% reduction for Shiatsu Society (UK) members

The Deposit: £80

## Times and Dates

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March 16.00-19.00

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March 10.00 – 18.00

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> March 10.00 – 17.00

## Contact

[info@living-in-resonance.com](mailto:info@living-in-resonance.com)

Please contact us before paying your deposit to check availability

## Bank details

Deposit: £80 non-refundable

Payment – by bank transfer to:

30-90-59

07121503

IBAN: GB04TSBS30905907121503

BIC: TSBSGB2AXXX

Please put your name as reference



# Testimonials

## Sei-ki

*For me every workshop with Alice feels like a meditation class where I let go and focus on the breath and keep asking myself like a koan "What is it?" One of the most interesting parts in learning Sei-ki is to see Alice working on another person – **this is an art!!!** It feels like reading and listening to a poem! Everyone in the class resonates, stays quiet and attends living art in front of our eyes. Thanks, Alice!" **PPG, Athens, Greece***

*"Over the last three years I have attended several Sei-ki weekend workshops with Alice. What has always struck me is the degree of focus expressed by Alice but also by the participants. Alice and Kishi's method seem to attract people with that quality, that maturity. I find that this sobriety, this intent, have helped me come closer and closer to the aim of Sei-ki i.e. a simple, true, profound connection with the "receiver" where I feel closer to myself, my true self I would say and where both "giver" and "receiver" equally benefit " **PB, London, UK***

*Learning Sei-ki isn't straight forward. You go around corners quite a bit and need to learn to read between the lines. We practised that a lot and her feedback helped me become more aware of what I'm doing on the one hand and also become more confident with my touch on the other hand. I highly recommend her work for anyone who wants to dive into the Mystery of the authentic, energetic bodywork called Sei-ki-Shiatsu. **RF, Heidelberg, Germany***

## Clean Language

*In my opinion, what is facilitated by using "Clean Language" with a Shiatsu client is an opening up of the field. Using the method with some skill, the practitioner will know when "enough has been said". So, by the time the client is lying down, the field is tuned and vibrates at the level the client has chosen to work on. The focus appears to be easy to maintain, because the client still plays with the echo of the truth they have just spoken and are happy to let unfold further – supported by Shiatsu. Having witnessed the patients spoken truth, the practitioner is being asked to also witness the "felt experience" encoded, but not directly represented in the spoken word. The patient thus listens more intensely, staying with the treatment and its focus, even guiding the practitioner – rather than being taken by him or her – to the places where change can happen."*  
**Dr RF, Brighton**

*'Clean Language has brought out far more expression and information from my clients than I ever thought possible. I've just been quite amazed by some of my clients who I've been working on for sometimes 20 years who've told me things in the last year that they've never expressed before.'* **CA, Norwich**



# Books and Articles

## Books

Kishi, A. & Whieldon, A. 2011, *Sei-ki: Life in Resonance, the Secret Art of Shiatsu*, Singing Dragon, London and Philadelphia

Whieldon, A. 2016, *Mind Clearing: the key to mindfulness mastery*, Singing Dragon, London and Philadelphia

Pole, N. 2017, *Words That Touch: How to ask questions your body can answer*, Singing Dragon, London and Philadelphia

## Articles

*Women in Shiatsu: Empowering us all* (2018)

*Diagnosis & Treatment* (2018)

*Soul Medicine* (2016)

*Kishi Akinobu Sensei (1949-2012)*

*Shiatsu and the Myth of Meridians*

*The Condition of Spring* (2002)

The above articles can be found at: [www.living-in-resonance.com](http://www.living-in-resonance.com)

‘Very, very traumatic’: working with Trauma using Clean language and Shiatsu (2017)

Podcast on Clean Language for Acupuncturists

These are at: <https://nickpole.com/book-articles-2/>

## Other

The work of Carlos Castenada is also recommended.

This series of books, written between the early 1960s and mid 1990s, documents the relationship of the author with his teacher, Don Juan. They have been highly influential in the self-development world and yet discredited at times as being ‘merely’ fiction. Whether or not they are literally true, they undoubtedly contain many truths and resonate strongly with Sei-ki.

