

# The Barefoot Doctor

## Ancient wisdom for current concerns

Stephen Russell, better known as The Barefoot Doctor, wasn't always known for his sense of calm. The 54-year-old author of several books including *Pure* says, "I was a real little tearaway at school. Always getting into scraps."

By Eve Menezes Cunningham

**S**tephen started studying Aikido when he was 11. All his classmates were adults but they influenced him positively. "They were all interested in healing and channelling energy for healing. I learned to meditate and started doing some yoga. My yoga teacher was close friends with R D Laing, an amazing counter-culture psychotherapist," says Stephen. "He talked about accommodating your own madness before thinking about others'. I spent three years studying psychotherapy with RD Laing. And from Aikido, I went to Tai Chi. I got interested in Taoism in general, Chinese medicine and acupuncture. I trained as a doctor in Chinese Medicine."

Stephen spent time travelling and studying. He learned about Shamanism while living with Native Americans in New Mexico for four years and kept looking for ways to apply what he was learning to the world he knew here.

Since 1983, Stephen's focus has been on helping stressed, busy people fit some ancient wisdom and relaxation into their heavily scheduled lives. Because he'd come from a musical family, he decided to use music and visuals to make the information more entertaining. Drumming was an important part of this.

He started calling himself the Barefoot Doctor because he says he used to work barefoot: "Otherwise you're getting sweaty feet in your trainers. It's humbling yourself in front of the patient, too. Barefoot doctors in China were mostly women. They'd travel around the country and give acupuncture and healing, making people's lives more comfortable and enjoyable. I had all the credentials to call myself a Barefoot Doctor."

Stephen continued to add to his toolkit. This included NLP and he became friends with Paul McKenna. "It's not the technique, it's more about the person practising it, expressing it," he says. "I was presenting something ancient and profound in a modern idiom. It had to be in a light-hearted enough way to appeal to short attention spans. This was the challenge. As an artist, I was developing all areas. My craftsmanship was increasing."

He says his time with Laing taught him "to be aware of how everything's connected rather than separated. So watching someone do EFT I think, 'OK, they've taken that from Chinese medicine'."

As he looks back, he says, "I wish I'd known how to relax but then I wouldn't have gone on this path to learn it. It's been so exciting." ●

**Keep your eyes open for opportunities – whenever there is great movement, whether towards boom or bust, there are more opportunities**



**SPECIAL READER OFFER:** For one month, Stephen is offering his eight week online training course in the Principles of Personal Power for just £187 (normal price £307). This course is delivered in a series of 48 films and is backed up by text and audio. Visit [www.schoolforwarriors.com](http://www.schoolforwarriors.com) for more information (and mention *Rapport* magazine when signing up).

## The Barefoot Doctor's School for Warriors

The Barefoot Doctor recently launched his School for Warriors. He says, "Unless you're incredibly temporarily powerful, you can't change the course of the economic flow externally. It's traditional to work on yourself as your primary focus every day.

The more you train, meditate and exercise, the less concerned you get with the ups and downs of fortune. You take things as challenge to your metal as a Warrior.

"The School for Warriors teaches you to train harder, to situate yourself properly within your body, meditate, breath properly, relax your body, situate your mind properly within your skull, increase your mental focus and confidence. You learn to trust yourself more as you go into battle everyday."

The way he explains it, it sounds like the NLP choice of being at cause rather than effect. Stephen says,

"The warrior learns how to master battle with oneself. There's balance and disharmony and the warrior is always working on mastering that swing. To remain centred at all times.

It's about personal ethics, being decent, respectful, generous and helpful to other people. Warriors are willing to take command rather than seeing themselves as a victim: 'OK, I'm here on the planet with all my brothers and sisters rather than just looking out for myself'. There's a sense of responsibility to the rest of human race."

## The Barefoot Doctor's prescription for surviving the current economic situation

Stephen says, "The UK economy has been running on air and the two most recent booms have been sustained artificially beyond their natural spans. Since the last recession, the world economy has become fully globalised so no one territory is untouched. No market exists to take up the slack. On the plus side, because it's globalised, the collective effort to reignite the cashflow will eventually have an equivalent impact on the upturn.

"Personally, I trained myself out of borrowing two recessions back so am not overly exposed. Being peripatetic in my sphere of action, I have my bets more spread. Though concerned about how deeply this contraction will bite in terms of potential for mass unemployment and the knock-on domino effects on a global level, I am, so far, fairly optimistic and confident we'll pull out of it and into a new more sensible, sustainable way of operating.

"In many ways, I feel it's nature's method of getting us to stop consuming so much. Her way, perhaps, of saving us from immanent extinction by preserving the rapidly dwindling vital resources a while longer, thus affording us the chance to develop the requisite alternative technologies and energy sources.

"Reduce all overheads to the minimum. Eschew emotional spending and only allow yourself one small treat a week. Be willing to let go of everything and always trust that whatever's happening is meant to be and will lead to something better if you trust it. Use it as an opportunity for living a totally different life.

"Attune more to your relationship with the underlying mystery

and its driving force (the Tao/the spirit/the ineffable).

This produces magical results regardless of external circumstances. Be open to connecting with others on a more profound and meaningful level. Use it as an opportunity to learn about love. Recessions reduce vanity levels considerably and so offer a perfect opportunity to explore what really counts - sharing the love.

"Instead of investing the majority of energy and cash in external diversions, invest in self-development. Learn a martial art, make your body and mind strong, develop the capacity for holding your nerve and generally train yourself into a superhuman state. And keep your eyes open for opportunities. Whenever there is great movement, whether towards boom or bust, there are more opportunities. It's only when things are relatively settled that the opportunities diminish. Remain positive, optimistic and cheerful in other words, rather than succumbing to recession-malaise."

