

Not long after Manon Bolliger and Jonathan Damonte opened the Be Well Now clinic on West Fourth Avenue, a woman limped in to pick up a brochure. “Excuse me,” said Damonte. “why are you limping?” It was, she said, a sprained ankle. “I believe I can help,” he said. And, after one short treatment, the woman was walking normally. Six months later, Damonte ran into the woman in a coffee shop. Extending her leg, she pointed to the ankle and said, “Ever since that first treatment, one hundred percent!”

Meanwhile, tough guy radio host David Berner was walking down another street crying. Years of tennis had led his body into sciatica, and he describes the pain as “beyond agonizing. It runs through the butt and the hips, then down the legs to the knees and feet. You lose nights of sleep.” Berner had gone through years of treatment with chiropractors, “but in this episode, they couldn’t help.” A friend in the communications business told Berner he should see Manon Bolliger.

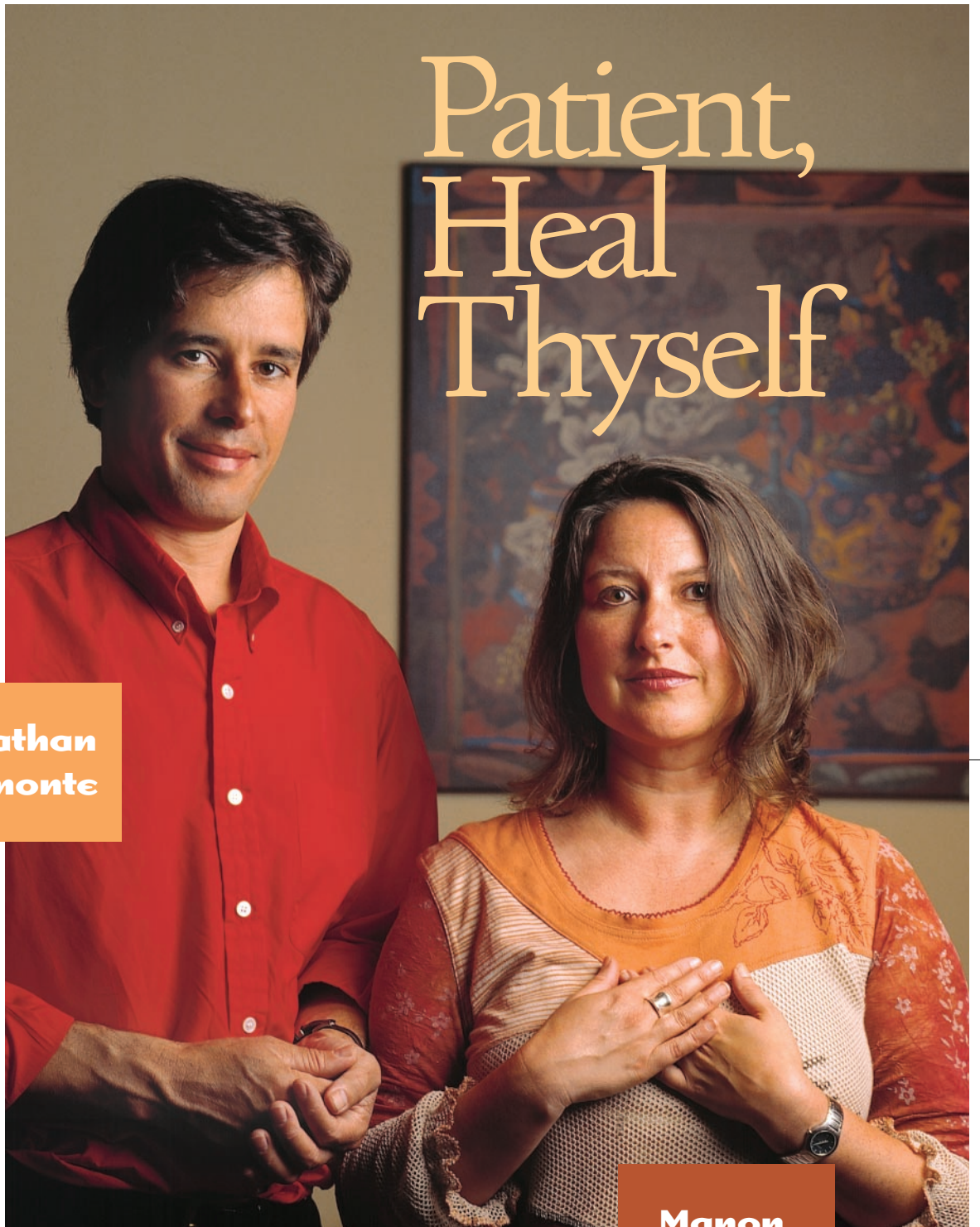
“So I saw her. And she just lightly touched muscles. She didn’t seem to be doing anything, but, I thought, she must be up to something. At first, I felt no difference. But the next morning, standing in my kitchen, I suddenly thought, ‘What the hell? I don’t feel any pain!’ It was gone.”

Berner saw Bolliger once more for his sciatica, and “the pain never came back. In the last ten days, I’ve played four tough, two-hour tennis games, gone for a three-hour bike ride, and I walk every day.

“I find her treatment a lifesaver. But I completely don’t get it.”

Damonte and Bolliger aren’t magicians, but, in addition to naturopathic and homeopathic medicine, they practice and teach the Bowen Technique, which has been called “the world’s best kept medical secret.” Developed by Australian Tom Bowen in the 1950s, who had spent a lot of time watching sports trainers work injuries out of athletes, it is a therapeutic method involving gentle, rolling hand motions on muscles, nerves, tendons and connective tissues. It works remarkably

**Jonathan  
Damonte**



**Manon  
Bolliger**

The human body has a remarkable capacity for self-healing. Vancouver’s **Be Well Now** clinic stimulates that process.

fast (as in the case of the limping woman) and it is used to treat an extraordinary diversity of conditions, from hernia to migraine headaches, fibromyalgia to Crohn's disease, asthma to hemorrhoids, scoliosis to infertility, chronic fatigue to bed wetting. "There are very few things," says Manon Bolliger, "that are not treatable by the Bowen Technique."

Because of a herniated disc, Catherine Bergamo had endured upper back pain for fifteen years and lower back pain for more than two years. She says, "I had been going to chiropractors for—like forever. I wasn't able to do much, with pain all the time. Then I met Manon on a retreat at Sasamat Lake. I noticed changes after the first treatment. After four treatments, the pain was almost entirely gone. Now my days are pain-free, apart from a little stiffness in the morning."

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Be Well Now can claim a ninety percent success rate among its patients, but Damonte modestly says, "The Bowen practitioner is merely a catalyst, setting the stimulus in motion for the body to heal itself. Because the human body is so amazing, self-healing can be achieved with minimal outside influence. A Bowen session, usually thirty to sixty minutes, is the essence of simplicity, and most people regain their health after two to five treatments."

So why isn't the Bowen Technique better known in British Columbia? Because there are so few therapists practicing it here—perhaps seven or eight. But, says Bolliger, who has taught well over 200 practitioners in Ontario, "That will change. More and more health practitioners are discovering it, as we offer classes throughout Canada."

Damonte discovered the Bowen Technique in the late 1990s, and Bolliger was his first teacher. The two had met at a conference in Ontario. Damonte was then practicing homeopathy and specializing in

nutrition. His father—John Damonte—was a renowned teacher of homeopathy in the United Kingdom, training many of the current elite of homeopaths. And, says his son, "I stumbled into his footsteps."

Bolliger began her career in 1984 studying law and alternative medicine at McGill. "I was interested in labor-related cases," she says, "asbestos sicknesses, that sort of thing. But I decided to concentrate on medicine, on prevention and cure, rather than litigation. I was fascinated by homeopathy and went to the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine in Toronto. Then I studied at the Canadian Academy of Homeopathy. And next I learned the Bowen Technique from Australian instructors."

Bolliger first practiced her naturopathic medicine in 1992 in Nova Scotia's Mahone Bay. One of her patients was Philip

Darmos, president of Darmos Toys, a company with offices and manufacturing facilities in Halifax and Cornwallis. "Six years ago," says Darmos, "I had pains in my chest." He had hospital tests, which revealed ischemia in two sections of his heart. Then he met Bolliger, and was treated with both homeopathy and the Bowen Technique. The results were good. Pain vanished, and a year ago, when Darmos had the hospital tests repeated, "they came out clean." Bolliger also helped the manufacturer alter his lifestyle. "I used to be sluggish," he says, "and I responded badly to stress. Now I don't smoke and I exercise. My energy level is high, my outlook is positive." Darmos since has sent some of his employees for similar treatments. Bolliger's effect on his life was, he says, "huge!"

Bolliger was still in the Maritimes when Damonte joined her practice. For personal and professional reasons, they moved their practice to Toronto. "We invested our heart and soul in a clinic," says Bolliger. "Then the building was flipped and

turned into condos. We got out of it what we could and established another practice in Vancouver."

For those who came in late, we should pause and define naturopathy and homeopathy. The first is "a distinct system of primary health care based on functional, physical and laboratory diagnoses that uses natural methods and substances to support and stimulate the body's inherent self-healing process."

In homeopathy, diseases are treated by the administration of minute doses of substances that, in healthy persons, could produce symptoms similar to those of the disease—a treatment comparable to the injections given allergy sufferers, although, says Bolliger, "in a more holistic and individualized way."

Seven-year-old Alexander Bowers was, "quite sick, very sick", says his mother, Jeanette. "He couldn't move off the chesterfield. The doctor said it was probably stomach flu or dehydration, but I was worried, because he'd had this before. Six months ago, he had similar symptoms, with continuing exhaustion. I decided to call Be Well Now. Jonathan talked to me for an hour, asking about symptoms, looking for all the details, all the clues. Then he recommended something I was able to get at a health food store. The next day, there was a significant improvement. And two days later, Alex was up and running." Then Jeanette Bowers became the third member of her family to call on Be Well Now. Jeanette's mother had been treated by Manon, and suggested to her daughter that the Bowen Technique might work for her lower back pain. "I went in," Jeanette says, "with all my aches and pains, and after three treatments, I was fine."

Leslie Douglas, a biologist with GVRD Parks, found homeopathy helpful in reducing stress. Then, under the Bowen Technique, an old back injury was relieved. In 1991, Douglas was on assignment in Muskoka, snowmobiling through the countryside, when the machine got stuck. She had to push it out, and the back went out, too. The Bowen Technique relieved

the pain and restored flexibility. Douglas now handles her job with ease, mothers two children, and gives classes in yoga.

"I'd had back problems for thirteen years," says Julie Hilton, "and after four treatments I was able, for the first time in years, to pick up my six-year-old daughter from a standing position."

Damonte and Bolliger have had their own problems with pain. Bolliger had chest and back pains, and went for chiropractic treatments three times a week for eight years. After two treatments with the Bowen Technique, she was pain-free. Damonte suffered misalignment of his hips, and endured pain from age 17 to age 35. He, too, was healed (or his body healed itself) with the Bowen Technique.

"People know the difference after a couple of visits," says Bolliger. And sometimes, the effect is immediate. "People," she says, "are so blown away."

"We had a tow truck driver with sciatica," says Damonte. "He couldn't work for three months. After our treatment, he was so thrilled he offered us a performance by an Indian dance troupe."

Damonte and Bolliger have a wide range of clients. He is sports therapist for a women's softball team ("who do things I could never dream of doing"). She has helped ballet dancers reach maximum performance ability. Both travel widely to see patients, and patients travel long distances to see them, flying to Vancouver from as far away as Australia.

Chris Shields was taking a French class with Damonte, and, to practice their linguistic skills, they began talking about their work and their lives. She confessed that she had a bad case of tennis elbow. "So my treatment came about by a fluke. At this time I was sick of seeing chiropractors and I was booked for a hydrocortisone injection.

But I went twice to see Jonathan, and the pain was gone—it has never come back. I was a total non-believer, I'm more of a traditional type—go to the doctor, get the drugs. I don't know where the medicine comes from in Jonathan's technique, but I was absolutely flabbergasted."

Word of mouth recommendations bring people to Be Well Now. "Most patients," says Bolliger, "have tried everything else and come in as a last resort." They're referred by other patients ("you can't hide the results"), by physicians, and by automobile accident adjusters searching for fast, cost-effective treatments.

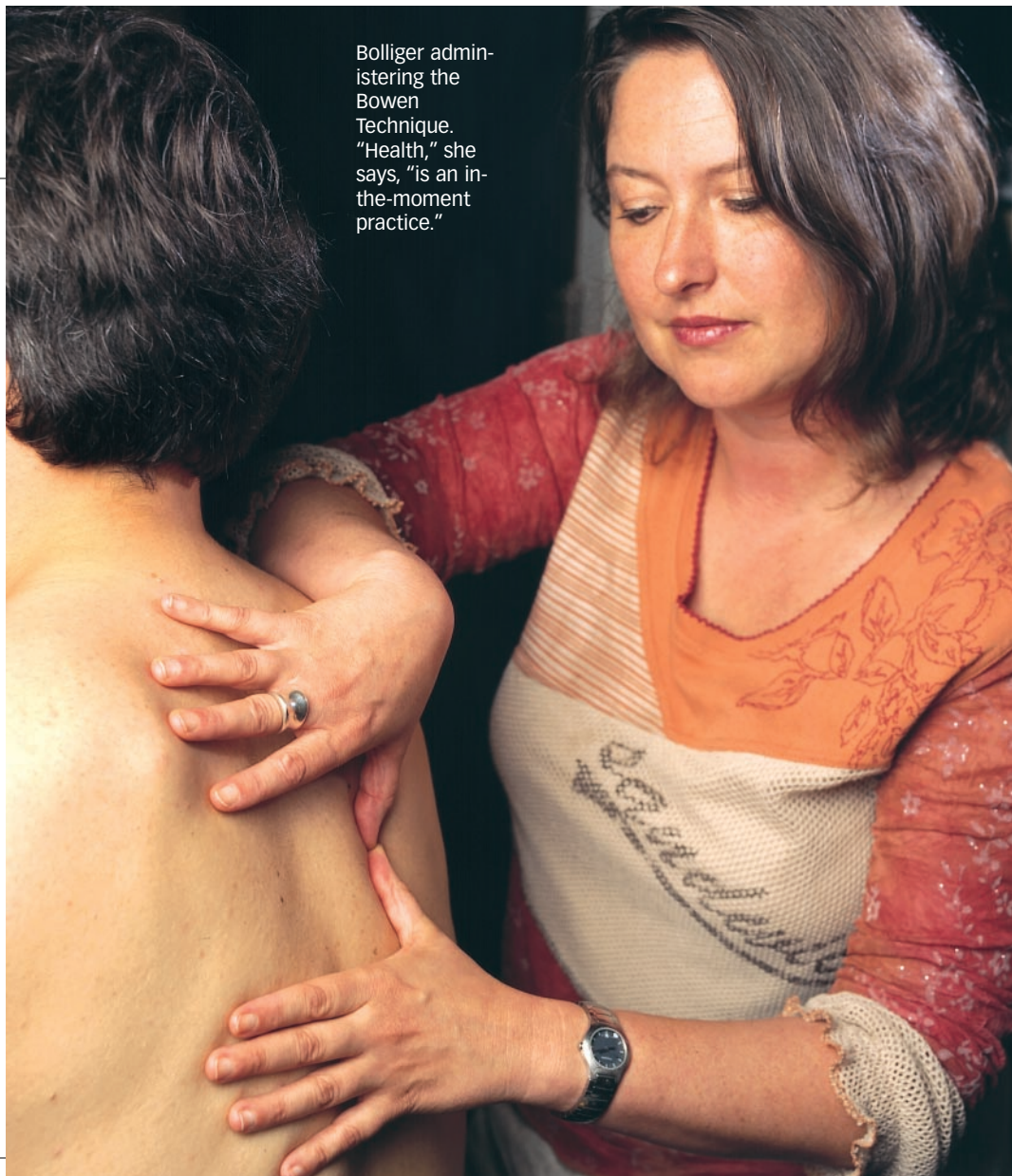
Fees are modest, though no longer covered by the province's Medical Services Plan. Some treatments, however, are covered by extended medical insurance. This fall, Bolliger and Damonte will meet with insurance companies to see what arrangements might be formed. "We're quite value conscious," says Damonte, "and Bowen offers great value."

Be Well Now sees patients five days a week, often from 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The clinic, at 3345 West Fourth at Blenheim, is set in an appropriate environment, with the Yoga Studio, Serenity Natural Foods, and even Happy Tails (grooming for dogs) in the same block. Consultations are arranged by telephone—(604) 738-6936—and detailed descriptions of the Bowen Technique, naturopathy and homeopathy can be found on the web site [www.bewellnow.ca](http://www.bewellnow.ca).

"Life," say Bolliger, as she and Damonte combine treatments with teaching across Canada, "is a balancing act."

They named the clinic Be Well Now under the influence of Eckart Tolle's *The Power of Now*, believing "health is an in-the-moment practice." And healing can take place anywhere at any time. One sunny day, Damonte took his daughter and her friends to an ice cream stand. He noticed that the server was wearing a brace on her forearm: carpal tunnel syndrome. "I can help that," he said. "Just step over here for a moment."

Within seconds, the woman's arm was free of pain. And the children got extra scoops on their cones. ✨



Bolliger administering the Bowen Technique. "Health," she says, "is an in-the-moment practice."