



You may not have heard of Hana Somatics, but this holistic approach to healing and pain relief could just turn out to be the next big thing. **By Caroline Cook**

You may not have heard of Hana Somatics, but this holistic approach to healing and pain relief could just turn out to be the next big thing. **By Caroline Cook**

As we get older, we all expect to get a few extra aches and pains. Our joints and muscles may not seem as flexible as they once were and that old sporting injury or niggling back pain seems to stay with us longer and longer.

But while many of us may just accept it as a sign of aging and learn to live with or manage our pain in the long term, former footballer, Jonathan Hunt says there is an alternative.

Jonathan is one of only three people in the UK to qualify as a practitioner in Hanna Somatics, a method that works to eliminate pain by releasing chronic contractions in muscles. Devised in California by Thomas Hanna, the method is based on the idea that different forms of stress can cause us to contract our muscles and in time, these contractions become habitual, causing pain and tension in different areas of the body.

“The initial stress may be caused by something physical such as an injury or by something emotional like anxiety or worry”, explains Jonathan. “It can even be just down to the way we move our bodies, perhaps sitting hunched over a computer or standing in a particular way.”

As a former sportsman, Jonathan has had first hand experience of how effective Hanna Somatics can be.

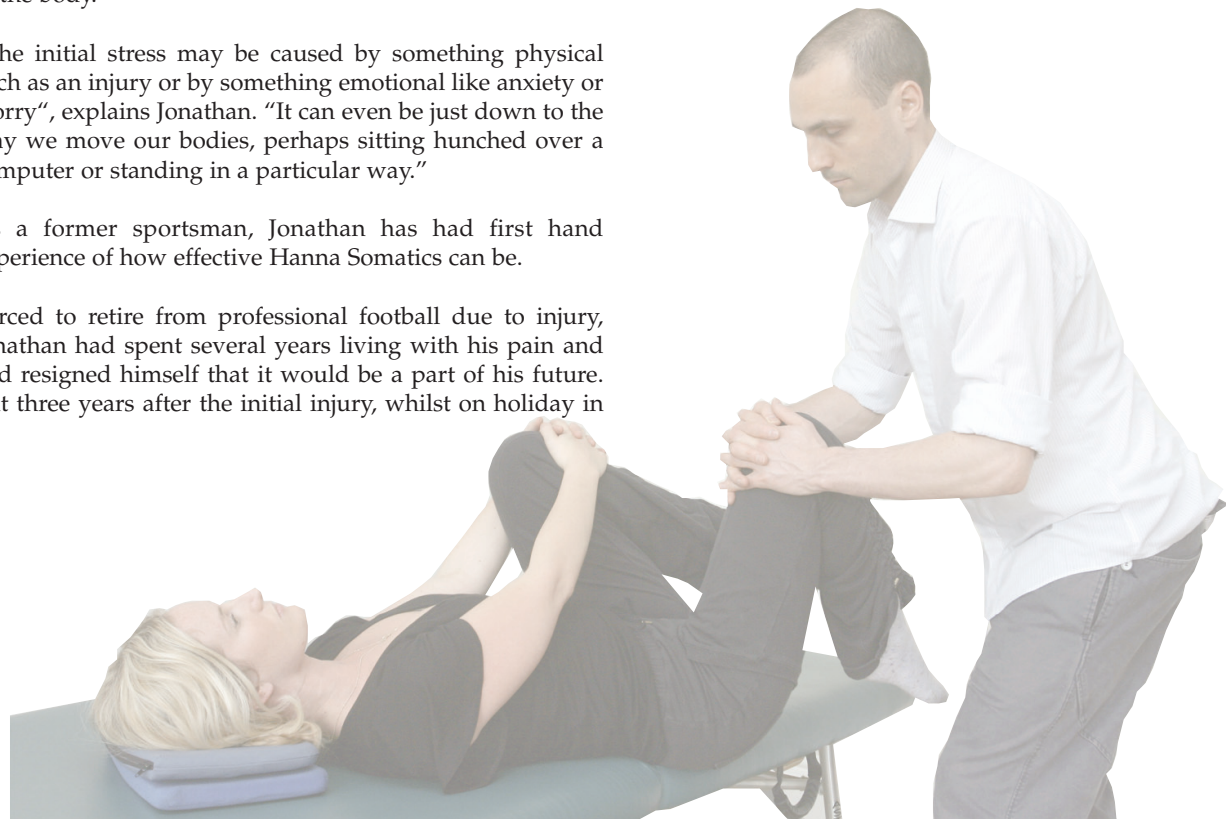
Forced to retire from professional football due to injury, Jonathan had spent several years living with his pain and had resigned himself that it would be a part of his future. But three years after the initial injury, whilst on holiday in

Thailand, a friend introduced him to a Somatics practitioner and after just one session he says that he was 80 per cent pain-free.

“It was amazing,” he explains. “I had really accepted that I was going to be in pain for the rest of my life, so this really was incredible.”

Impressed by what he had experienced, Jonathan immediately began researching Hanna Somatics and within two months he was in California to begin his training.

Today, Jonathan treats all kinds of people suffering from everything from back and neck pain to sciatica and headaches. He also uses Hanna Somatics for prevention as well as cure, helping professional sports people improve their performance by maximising their flexibility and strength. He has even returned to the pitch himself, playing football at a semi-professional level - which is something he would have considered impossible just a few years ago.



So how does it work?

In common with some other alternative treatments, Hanna Somatics takes a very holistic approach, viewing the body as a living process that has the potential to be self-healing. But unlike many other treatments which rely on the practitioner to move and manipulate the body, Hanna Somatics allows people to take control of their own healing and teaches them to become aware of their whole muscular system. This means that after just a few sessions, patients can practise the movements at home, avoiding the need for lengthy courses of treatment.

By assessing a patient's posture, how they stand, walk, lie down and move around, Jonathan is able to determine how the muscular stresses can be relieved.

“Physical and emotional stress leave our muscles in a chronically contracted state, so they are constantly working,” he explains. “Hanna Somatics helps you to be aware of these contractions and then let the contraction go very slowly to give the sensation of release.”

Jonathan is keen to point out that the movements are never forced: “It is very subtle and gentle and we never push someone beyond their natural limits.” Because of this, it is suitable for people of all ages and abilities and he says he has treated a child of 10, right up to people in their eighties.

In an interesting extension of his work, Jonathan is also one of only a few people worldwide to train in Equine Hanna Somatics. He uses the technique to treat muscular stress in horses and says that very often he ends up treating the owners as well.

As a passionate advocate of Hanna Somatics, Jonathan firmly believes that the method becomes more well-known, more and more people will come to see the benefits of this system.

“Hanna Somatics really is a modern type of practice,” he says. “It's truly about self help and how we deal with stress can determine whether we age positively or not.”

To find out more about Hanna Somatics visit www.somaticliving.com, email info@somaticliving.com or call Jonathan Hunt on 07801 440 729.

