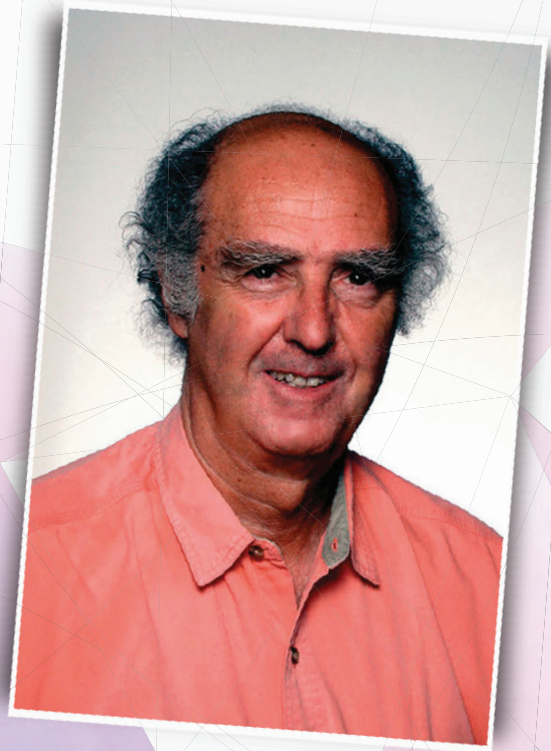


# Writing therapy

**AUTHOR AND ACADEMIC LEON CHAITOW** TALKS ABOUT RESEARCH, WRITING AND HIS LIFE IN CORFU



**Q WHEN DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY?**

My father's cousin, Stanley Lief, founded Champneys health resort, as well as the college that is now the British College of Osteopathic Medicine (BCOM). My uncle, Boris Chaitow, worked with Lief and together they developed the Neuromuscular Technique, now taught worldwide. Inspired by their work, I travelled from South Africa to the UK to train as an osteopath and naturopath at the BCOM. I worked as an assistant to Boris, and then as a consultant at Champneys after graduation.

**Q TELL US ABOUT YOUR WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

In the early 1990s, I was invited to join a team developing courses in manual therapies and naturopathy at the University of Westminster, where I remained until 2009 as a senior lecturer and course leader. I was awarded an Honorary Fellowship when I retired.

**Q HOW IMPORTANT IS RESEARCH IN YOUR WORK AND THE WIDER THERAPY INDUSTRY?**

As editor of a peer-reviewed journal, I see the vital importance of research to validate what we do and why we do it. This is as true for manual therapy as it is for nutrition, exercise, stress management or anything else.

Currently, I am particularly interested in the translation of basic science studies into clinical relevance – for example, demonstrating that when load is applied to the body (compression/stretch, etc), the degree, duration, direction and type of 'load' is dose-dependent – and when we learn how much is too much, or too little, results will improve.

**Q IS IT IMPORTANT FOR GPs AND THERAPISTS TO TAKE AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO HEALTHCARE?**

In many ways, GP practice has been transformed. In the 1960s, 1970s and even 1980s, suggesting that diet and health were connected was regarded as quackery – now it is mainstream (even if they have not yet got it quite right). In the 56 years since I graduated, I have transitioned from quack to alternative to complementary to integrated to (almost) mainstream.

**Q ARE YOU STILL A PRACTISING THERAPIST?**

I see a very few old patients when in the UK, just to maintain contact with reality.

**Q WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE THERAPY?**

Anything that assists in self-regulation. The truth is that nothing we do cures anything. The curative influence of any form of therapy lies in its ability to enhance self-

regulation, or to reduce adaptive demands on the system that may be hindering self-regulation. The body-mind does the rest, if it can. The art is to know how little to do, or to change, to achieve positive responses.

**Q WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?**

To teach, write, edit, treat – until I can no longer do so.

**Q TELL US A BIT ABOUT LEON...**

I love art, the theatre and travel. Fortunately, I can still indulge in all of these. Above all, I enjoy our time in Corfu where my wife, Alkmini, and I were married in 1972. We spend most of the year on the island. Our artist/author/teacher daughter Sasha also lives and works here.

**Q DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE QUOTE OR SAYING?**

It's a bit abstruse for some, but I love and try to live by Krishnamurti's dictum 'What is, is'.

**Q HOW DO YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?**

I've been a lacto-ovo vegetarian\* since 1960, and eat a fabulous Mediterranean diet prepared by my fabulous wife, and (reluctantly) I walk every day – because I have to, not because I want to. **LI**

\*Vegetarian diet including dairy and eggs, and excluding meat, fish and poultry.

*"The truth is that nothing we do cures anything. The curative influence of any form of therapy lies in its ability to enhance self-regulation"*

**Leon Chaitow** is a teacher and author of more than 80 books on therapy. He is editor-in-chief of the Journal of Bodywork & Movement Therapies and previously worked as a senior lecturer at the University of Westminster.