

# TRUE LOVE

ALL A WOMAN NEEDS

EAST AFRICA

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## Sex

Embarrassing blunders in bed

## Read my hips!

What your body language says about your relationship

## Double act

The Barasa, Kittony, Kiplagat & Gachukia women model for us!

AT HOME WITH  
**Nyagoy Bloch**

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12 ways to find peace of mind

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Medicine or mumbo-jumbo?  
Alternative healers tell all

# Caroline & Regina

The Mutoko sisters on sibling rivalry, careers & family



**Mary Njambi, 27**

*Reflexologist*

**tell us about yourself.** I am a freelance reflexologist and I work with a variety of clientele in Nairobi. I have been a reflexologist for four years now.

**How did you get into reflexology?** I wanted to become a nurse to help people, especially those who were constantly in pain. But I ended up studying homeopathy, then reflexology, at the Abha Light College of Natural Medicine. After two years, I graduated with a diploma in reflexology. I got my first client through a referral and my list of clients has grown from there.

**What is reflexology?** It's a science that deals with the principle that there are reflex areas in the feet and hands that correspond to all of the glands, organs and parts of the body and that pressure applied to these reflex areas benefits the corresponding parts of the body.

**How does reflexology work?** By stimulating the reflexes, reflexology can help alleviate many health problems in a natural way. Reflexology improves blood circulation and relaxes the body. For example, clients with diabetes may encounter a blocked nerve in the pancreas and working on the part of the foot corresponding to the pancreas area will help to stimulate circulation in this area. However, reflexology is a complementary therapy, which means that it should never be used as a replacement for seeking professional medical advice.

**How different is this from foot massage?** Reflexology is a serious advance in the health field and should not be confused with massage. Unlike massage, reflexology concentrates on specific points of the foot that correspond to different parts of the body.

**So reflexology treats more than just the feet?** Yes.

Reflexology treats the whole body. It's a holistic therapy.

**What happens when someone goes for treatment?** After washing my hands, I, or the client, will clean the client's feet. Hygiene is very important because infections can be spread through contact with germs on the feet. Then I will apply a bit of powder or lotion, depending on whether the client has sweaty or dry feet. Then, if it is a first session, I will get a thorough medical history from the client. If it is a follow-up, I will get an update of their condition. Most clients fall asleep during the session so I will complete business matters at this time. After a silent moment for prayer or meditation, the session begins.

**So does spirituality play a big part in reflexology?** Yes. My clients come from different religious backgrounds and they will pray according to their religion for healing and guidance during the session. This also helps the client prepare mentally and get into a relaxed mood.

**Is reflexology painful?** Not normally. Some people with very soft feet may feel a slight sensation. However, if pain is felt then it is a sign that there is a problem with that particular area of the foot or the part of the body that corresponds to that area and I will work to solve the problem.

**Can I be treated at home?** Yes. In fact, it is better to have your session at home. Most of my clients fall asleep during the session and I will usually not wake them up at the end of the session. If you have your session at home, you can sleep as long as you want to afterwards and you won't have to walk or drive home, so you'll feel the full relaxing effect.

**What is the average length of a full session?** Ideally, a session should last 45 minutes. It can be shorter, depending on the client, but it shouldn't go above 45 minutes because then there'll be the risk that the session may have an exhausting effect instead of the desired relaxing effect.

**What are the challenges you face in practising reflexology?** Many people do not know about reflexology, especially with regard to its therapeutic value. Some confuse it with massage or think that it's a luxury, like a manicure or pedicure. Then, of course, there are those who just think it's a joke ... that it can never work. Another thing is that most of my clients are in areas that are not accessible by public transport like Muthaiga, Lavington, Loresho and parts of Parklands and Westlands. It can be tough for someone like me who doesn't have a car.

**What conditions do you treat?** Some of my clients have diabetes, arthritis, asthma, irregular menstrual cycles and fertility problems.

**Is reflexology for everyone?** No. Reflexology is not suitable for women who are more than three months pregnant. It is also not suitable for children under 12 years.

**What inspires you about your job?** Seeing my clients' health improve is very encouraging. It feels good to know that I've helped someone.

**What would you say to someone who wants to become a reflexologist?** You should be patient, and have a desire to help people. Don't go in it for the money. >

# Alternative healers



With the rising cost of modern healthcare services and medicines, many East Africans are turning to alternative healers. **Christine Koech** talks to five women who work with various forms of alternative and complementary medicine.

## Ananda Ruchira, 52

### Homeopath

**tell us about yourself.** I am the director of Abha Light Foundation and Abha Light College of Natural Medicine, and a fellow of the Kenya Institute of Alternative Medicine. I am also a yoga and meditation teacher. My title is Didi, which means "sister". I came to Kenya in 1997 as a social worker. When I saw the need for affordable medicine, I started homeopathic mobile clinics in the slums of Nairobi.

**What do you do at Abha Light?** We run homeopathy clinics, where we provide treatment and medicines. We also offer training in homeopathy, naturopathy, herbal medicine and reflexology.

**How did you train to be a homeopath?** I have a diploma in Homeopathy (DI Hom) through distance learning and did my student practice in India.

**What is homeopathy?** A system of medicine that was rediscovered about 200 years ago by a German doctor, Samuel Hahnemann, based on a few simple natural laws. "Like cures like" is the first law of homeopathy. It means that a substance that would produce symptoms in a healthy person will cure those same symptoms when they appear in a sick person. Another principle is "smallest dose possible" – that is, healers should use only the tiniest amount of medicine needed to bring about a cure.

**Describe homeopathic medicines.** Homeopathic pills are tiny – about the size of a millet grain. About 75% of homeopathy medicines are herbs, about 20% are elements and minerals and about 5% are from animal sources.

**Is homeopathy safe?** Yes. Only a tiny amount of medicine is needed to trigger the body's own healing response to a disease, so there is no chance of side-effects.

**What are the challenges you face in practising homeopathy in East Africa?** Letting people know that homeopathy works, that it's gentle on the system and that it has no side-effects. Another challenge is that many doctors of conventional medicine fail to recognise alternative healing methods. Also, some members of the public mistake alternative medicine for witchcraft.

**What conditions do you treat?** Infectious diseases, epidemics, mental ailments, childhood ailments and chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes and epilepsy. And where homeopathy doesn't cure, it eases the symptoms – more effectively, more economically and without the side-effects of more conventional medicine.

**What conditions are inappropriate for homeopathic treatment?** Western or conventional medicine has excelled

in emergency care and surgery. Homeopaths do not perform surgery. However, homeopathy has medicines that can speed the healing process after surgery.

**Why homeopathy?** Homeopathy is one of the greatest medical sciences ever discovered. I have witnessed patients getting cured after years of suffering, patients who have been to dozens of doctors or who have spent thousands on medicines that didn't work. I have witnessed people close



to death return to health.

**What or who inspires you to go on each day?** When I look into the face of a patient – man, woman or child – I see the face of the Divine. For me, it is God who appears as the patient before me, it is God who gives the medicine and it is God within the medicine itself that heals.

**What would you say to someone who wants to become a homeopath?** It's a calling as much as a profession. It's not a 9-to-5 job – it's a sacred trust.

## INSPIRATION

< **Martha Njama, 45**  
*Administrator of Prometra (Promotion for Traditional Medicine)*

**W**hat is Prometra? Prometra Kenya is a chapter of Prometra International, which aims to develop and promote the use of traditional medicine by training traditional African healers and through research.

**What is traditional African medicine?** The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines it as the sum total of knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures – which in our case is African – whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illnesses.

**How does traditional African medicine work?** It treats the disease itself and not the symptoms. In Kenya, the diagnosis depends entirely on the healer's opinion, which is often correct, but is not based on any tests. Rather, it is based on what symptoms the patient says he or she

them can be difficult. Some people also associate traditional African medicine with witchcraft, which is a result of ignorance. There is also a lack of policy to guide healers.

**What conditions does traditional African medicine treat?** Most traditional healers claim to have expertise in a wide range of conditions. We would like to see healers who are specialised in specific treatments. That way, if someone comes to us for a referral, we can send them to someone



## INSPIRATION

< **Musimbi M Ondeko, 48**  
*Chiropractor*

**t**ell us about yourself. I have been practising as a doctor of chiropractic at my chiropractic clinic in Hurlingham, Nairobi, for many years, and am a member of the Chiropractic Association of Kenya. I am married to Dr John N Ondenko, a radiologist, and we have four children.

**What does your work as a chiropractor entail?** My job is to locate and correct vertebral subluxations (spinal misalignments) which may cause nerve interference and resultant malfunction, discomfort and/or disease.

**So are you a doctor?** I am not a doctor of medicine; I am a doctor of chiropractic with a degree in chiropractic. The word "chiropractic" is derived from the Greek words "cheir" and "prakticos", which mean hand and practice respectively.

**How does chiropractic work?** The nervous system controls the function

**Is chiropractic safe?** It's very safe – so much so that even a newborn baby and a pregnant woman can receive chiropractic adjustments. I think the risk is *not* getting a much-needed adjustment!

**What are the challenges faced by chiropractors in East Africa?** To make chiropractic care available to more people in the region. Patients come from all over Kenya to see me, even from Tanzania, and they ask me to set up



## INSPIRATION

< **Nong "Nolly" LiBing, 36**  
*Doctor of traditional Chinese medicine*

**t**ell us about yourself. I am a director of East and West Medical Centre located at Jameson Court on Ngong Road in Nairobi, along with my husband, Dr Huang Yi. I treat many patients at the medical centre, which has a variety of prescription traditional Chinese medicines and health products. I have also been involved in research work that combines traditional Chinese medicines and conventional medicines for the past two years and have provided voluntary medical service in several hospitals in Kenya. I have a total of 12 years' experience in the management of various ailments.

**What training do you have in practising traditional Chinese medicine?** I trained at the Guangxi Medical University in China and thereafter worked in a provincial government hospital before I moved to Kenya.

**What is traditional Chinese medicine (TCM)?** TCM refers to health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral-based medicines, spiritual

Chinese medicine respects nature and in this way it is superior to Western medicine. Many members of my family, through many generations, have learned and practised traditional Chinese medicine in different times and places.

**What or who inspires you to go on each day?** My patients. I like to see them get well. ☺

