



Talking with Sarah-Jane Attias of Living Osteopathy

The academic credentials that follow Sarah-Jane Attias' name are substantial - Principal Osteopath. BSc (Hons) Ost. London MONZ - but after spending an evening in her company, I can immediately vouch for the fact that she is even more than that.

I was lucky enough to be invited to the Grey Lynn home she shares with partner Tanah one Friday evening for a chat over a wonderful bottle of wine and some seriously impressive nibbles, having known her only from what is now a regular column in Ponsonby News.

United Kindom-born Sarah-Jane is one of New Zealand's most respected osteopaths, with over 20 years' experience. Her signature sense of empathy, warm nature and fine-tuned diagnostic skills are legendary, and word of her work continues to grow and grow. She believes in providing an integrated treatment approach for the whole family, sports people, pregnant mums, babies and toddlers, encouraging general good health, and youthful vitality for those growing older.

Unsurprising, given her friendly nature and impeccable taste in wine, she began her professional career as a chef and had her own restaurant for a few years in London. She was also well known for her private catering contracts, working often for the royal family and other such luminaries until one day she realised that the work was taking a toll on her wellbeing. "I realised that I wanted to actually socialise with my friends rather than just invite them into a restaurant to eat," she explains. "So I stopped chef work and set up an employment agency for catering staff, which was quite unique at the time."

After moving on from what became a very successful agency, she joined the family business working for her father, a pioneer in the area of export/import in the United Kingdom at the time. "It was actually the most wonderful experience, working beside my dad," she says with a smile. "He was a bit of a meddler when it came to my personal life but when it came to business he let me be."

As she approached the age of 30 she decided that she would like to retrain. "Although I didn't know what I wanted to do, I knew that I had a particular type of empathy and interest in people's wellbeing," says Sarah

-Jane. She began by exploring a degree in physiotherapy, having to first go back to college to complete her A levels more than a few years after her peers. "Learning to learn again in my mid-30s was definitely an intriguing process," she tells me with a laugh. "But I loved it and loved being challenged by it. My parents couldn't believe I was going back to school after spending my teenage years as the 'naughty girl!'"

She soon discovered the British School of Osteopathy where she subsequently trained, and found that the people there were "a little bit weird and quite different. As you get older you make wiser decisions about who you want your peers to be, and those type of personalities definitely suited me better." She also loved the fact that osteopaths are primary healthcare providers so a visit to a GP first isn't necessary, saying "that level of independence really struck a chord with me."

Which brings our conversation around to how on earth, after an already substantial career, she made her way to Auckland? "It was due to a friend who I had studied osteopathy with," she explains, "who had married in London but was coming back to her home in New Zealand for a blessing. I wanted to be here for that and to work as an associate here for six months or so, and I spent time in clinics in Titirangi and Mount Eden. I fell in love with the place immediately and knew that six months just wasn't enough. My story wasn't finished." After wrapping up her life back in London she made the move, and to use the well-worn cliché, the rest is history.

When I ask what her area of specialisation is within osteopathy, she tells me she works in the spectrum of cranial osteopathy, "which looks at the cranial mechanism and its effect on the body. I went on and studied further with the Sutherland Cranial Teaching Foundation and eventually became a tutor within that organisation." She is passionate about education, and loves that osteopaths have to do 25 hours of further education each year of their careers.



She has a particular interest in treating babies and pregnant mothers pre- and post-natally, as well as treating the elderly. "When I stop to think about it, I guess I really love treating people," she says with a smile. "Osteopathy allows me to treat the whole person. I will do a thorough diagnosis and look at a medical history, but ultimately I want to know how happy you are. I'm curious about people and really like to get an idea of who they are and how I can be of help to them." (HELENE RAVLICH)

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