

CUPPING - FOR YOUR FACE?

Most people associate the ancient Chinese art with painful red welts, but not only can it be pain-free, it can be just as effective as Botox

WORDS KIM WATSON

A friend once told me that as long as the lines on your face are laughter lines and not frown lines then you should embrace them. It's a mantra I've lived by since. But a few years ago, one frown line in particular put all my laughter lines to shame.

Those little lines that appear between your eyebrows, you know the ones I'm talking about, your 'thinking lines'. I'm guessing I must do a lot of thinking because mine have deepened – a lot – in recent years. In particular, the one on the left-hand side for some reason.

The left brain/right brain theory surmises that those with left-thinking brains are analytical and methodical, which would describe me, so maybe I just do most of my thinking on that side.

Whatever the reason, it's a line that has been increasingly mocking me over the years. Granted, while it seems like a crevice to me, when I pointed it out to my other half recently, he insisted he'd never even noticed it before. And this is a man who spends a lot of time looking at my face, for his sins.

I'll be honest, it's got to the point where I'm considering Botox. However, tales of botched procedures and permanently surprised-looking

celebrities have made me wary, so I'm prepared to explore all other avenues first.

Which led me to the Dublin Holistic Centre, where Amanda Nordell practices a mix of facial cupping, gua sha and acupuncture. When I pointed out my problem area to Amanda, she believed that she could help me.

She first inserted acupuncture needles in my feet, legs, arms and hands, at points designed to promote balance and general wellness. She then began the gua sha treatment. This is a traditional



Chinese treatment in which the skin is massaged with specially crafted pieces of smooth jade or scraped to invigorate the skin, smooth out wrinkles and increase blood supply.

Amanda uses a number of instruments, pictured below, which for all the world look like a small hurley, a fish and a foot.

These are used in a gentle massaging motion all over the face, with particular attention paid to problem areas – yes, you, forehead.

She then uses two rolling tools, one with protrusions, the other smooth, to again force the blood around the face.

This promotes increased circulation, which helps to detoxify the face and move stagnant blood and inflammation, which can occur particularly under the eyes. The skin is then better nourished and healthier: Acupuncture points on the face are also massaged with the tools, which benefits the internal organs.

It can treat skin conditions such as acne, rosacea, melasma and dark circles, as well as cosmetic issues such as wrinkles, sagging and puffiness. It can also address those hard-to-tighten areas such as the neck and jowls.

The massaging motion also relaxes the muscles

The gua sha treatment is incredibly relaxing and effective



and, surprise, surprise, the more relaxed the muscles are, the more relaxed you feel.

So in much the same way that smiling causes you to feel happier; having a tensely furrowed brow can elicit worry, pensiveness and anger. I really need to smile more.

The second part of the treatment involves facial cupping, which much like the body version, uses suction to increase blood flow, but unlike the body version, it won't leave huge welts all over you.

Amanda uses two suction cups, both thimble-shaped, one smaller than the other; to massage the face in vigorous but painless motions. On a very

basic level, the cups increase blood flow and circulation to the skin, but on a deeper level it also drains stagnant fluids, thereby easing puffiness and making skin appear younger:

The treatment is designed to bring collagen to the surface, reducing puffiness and dark circles, diminishing lines, and draining nasal sinuses and the lymphatic system.

Tied in with the acupuncture, this is one of the most relaxing treatments I've ever had – in fact, I had some of the deepest sleeps of my life in the nights after our sessions.

My skin was glowing and smooth, and the

puffiness in my face reduced to such a point that I even looked thinner – in face-only selfies anyway.

As for my frown line? It all but disappeared. I couldn't believe how much better it made me feel when I looked in the mirror – it certainly made me smile, keeping those laughter lines out in front once more... ❖

■ *THE combined facial cupping and gua sha treatment costs €65 for one hour; contact Amanda directly on 086 811 5877 for reduced rates for a course of treatment or the Dublin Holistic Centre, South William Street, Dublin 2 on 01 633 0063*