

## Praise for Alexis Brink and the Art of Jin Shin

“Having watched Alexis interact with clients from a diversity of backgrounds over the three decades we have known each other, I have always been impressed by her gentle confidence and natural inquisitiveness. A true healer who knows and implements both the science and art of medicine, she has always impressed me by her desire to break new boundaries and think beyond ordinary paradigms.”

—Deepak Chopra, MD

“For years, Jin Shin self-help has been my saving grace, pulling me and even my band-mates through a range of crises, from food poisoning on a twelve-hour flight to South America to a flu passing through our band bus. Once one becomes empowered by Jin Shin self-help, life starts afresh!”

—Maria Schneider, Grammy Award winner and  
leader of Maria Schneider Orchestra

“The Art of Jin Shin is an energetic healing modality that is a powerful complementary practice to Western medicine.”

—Maurice Preter, MD, integrative neuropsychiatrist

“The Art of Jin Shin is a powerful self-help tool that can be extremely helpful for dancers, as the unblocking and release of energy can aid in injury prevention and more rapid healing of injuries.”

—Nikki Feirt Atkins, founder and producing artistic director,  
American Dance Machine for the Twenty-First Century

“I have been seeing Alexis Brink for over fifteen years, and whenever I’m in New York City I make sure to get a treatment. I always leave a session more energized, yet calmer, and am better able to go about my day in a peaceful, joyful state. Alexis is a first-rate healer/practitioner and I highly recommend her to anyone suffering with a particular health issue or anxiety issue, or those who simply want to be at their optimal level of being!”

—Debbie Gibson, singer, recording artist



# THE ART OF JIN SHIN

The Japanese Practice of Healing  
with Your Fingertips

Alexis Brink



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To my children, Mara and Tyler Hutton, with unconditional love.

In memory of my omas—Carolina Venhof,  
the first person to believe in my path, and Hadasse Abram,  
whom I unfortunately never had the chance to meet.

Gratitude to my mentor Philomena Dooley.



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# Foreword

BY ELIZABETH CUTLER

I came to the Art of Jin Shin at twenty-one through Daniel Tucker. Daniel and I had recently both moved to Telluride, Colorado, where he was starting an art school called “Ah Haa”—as in that moment when we know we get it. I was a recent graduate of the University of Colorado, starting my first job as the receptionist in a real estate office.

By that time I had already developed an interest in practices that allow our bodies and beings to feel their best naturally. My best friend had died of cancer in high school, and her suffering led me to ask myself what else was out there. The medicines available at that time made her more sick than she already was, and I felt a deep yearning to explore and learn more. One that would not go away. One like I felt before my partner, Julie Rice, and I started SoulCycle.

I took off from college in Boulder to do my junior year abroad, living in a monastery in India to focus on meditation and traveling to Taiwan to study tai chi and herbs, figuring that these various ancient teachings would give me some answers.

The experiences were rich, and I learned a lot, but something was still missing.

“You go around the world to come home again” was a phrase Julie and I always used when we were in search of an answer in our SoulCycle business and found it right under our noses. It happened frequently, so much that we would laugh about it.

That is how I felt after my third Jin Shin class in Telluride. Jin Shin Jyutsu is a magical, somewhat esoteric form of energy medicine that Daniel had studied for many years with Mary Burmeister, the Japanese-American woman who brought the practice to the US. The school’s introduction of Thursday night “self-help” classes intrigued me. People showed up at 5 p.m., setting up cots to work on one another using a book Mary had written and compiled from her studies with her teacher, Jiro Murai. In that book, as in this one, there are ways to hold places on your own body, and other people’s bodies, to help restore energetic pathways that become blocked by everyday living.

We started each class by putting our hands under our armpits, reaching the back of the scapula with our fingers while our thumbs faced up on the front sides of our bodies. We dropped our shoulders and began breathing thirty-six times, noticing at the end of those breaths whether we felt differently now than we had thirty-six breaths ago. The answer was yes, always yes. Sometimes a big “YESSSSS,” and sometimes a smaller “yes.”

By simply placing our hands and getting out of the way in order to allow the source of life to come through us, we could become a “jumper cable” for our own bodies, or for someone else. (I know this sounds crazy, but we all have this source energy running through our bodies and it’s okay—just try some of the simple holds featured in this book, and I promise that you’ll feel it, too.) We could be a jumper cable for our own body or someone else’s, and use a series of holds on specific energy locations to unlock the incredible, ancient wisdom of the Art of Jin Shin.

The amazing thing was, each time we did this, we added to our energetic foundation and the body’s ability to find homeostasis more efficiently.

Thirty-six breaths and I was hooked, practicing on myself daily. I went on to educate myself as much as I could and eventually began practicing on others. I’m not exaggerating when I say that I have found this practice to be one of the

greatest gifts for all of humanity: accessible to everyone with breath, requiring no tools or special abilities.

In all the years I've practiced and loved Jin Shin, I could never understand why this healing art has remained so unknown—that's why I wanted to write this foreword. The Art of Jin Shin remains life changing for me, giving me the stamina and depth to build a big business, stay grounded in my core beliefs, and do my best to allow the freedom of energy flow through my life and work each day.

I had a thriving practice in Jin Shin for fifteen years before I started Soul-Cycle. I loved the practice and experienced many of the things Alexis references in this book. The biggest hurdle for me was how to explain what I did when sitting next to someone at a dinner party. Usually it worked out, but I am relieved that Alexis has written this book to help the Art of Jin Shin become accessible to people like my twenty-one-year-old self—and for whomever its pages may help today.

I am extraordinarily grateful to all the teachers and practitioners who have shared their wisdom so that the Art of Jin Shin can remain alive. Jin Shin has been the greatest, most consistent gift of my life.



# Introduction

The book you are holding in your hands is meant to provide a basic introduction to the foundation and principles of the Art of Jin Shin.

Maybe you already know a bit about the simple and effective form of energy medicine named the Art of Jin Shin, or maybe you've picked up this book without any prior knowledge of the energy healing modality we will be exploring in the pages that follow. Though the practice has many thousands of adherents all around the world—from my New York City–based clients, to the inmates at a jail in the Indian province of Gujarat, to several hospital programs in the US, and to the many men, women, and children who have been helped by Jin Shin in its birthplace of Japan—Jin Shin Jyutsu has not yet become a household name.

Initially spread throughout Japan through the hands-on work of Jiro Murai, the founding father of Jin Shin, in the early to mid nineteenth hundreds, then more widely through his disciples, most notably Mary Burmeister and Haruki Kato, the energetic healing modality was first introduced to the American reader more than twenty years ago by the book *The Touch of Healing* by Alice Burmeister and Tom Monte. Since that time, much has changed and evolved in the mainstream conception of health, with integrative healing and medicinal practices such as yoga, meditation, acupressure, acupuncture, Reiki, craniosacral therapy, and reflexology (to name just a few) becoming more and more popular in the West.

In comparison to its more widely known brethren, the Art of Jin Shin has remained a relatively well-kept secret. With this book, it is my intention to introduce a wider audience to its healing and restitutive powers.

With the modern world perpetually running at a breakneck pace, there has never been a better moment to spread the word of simple self-healing. Technology has become an inescapable part of our daily lives, and many of us find

ourselves seeking a more integrated relationship between our body, mind, and spirit.

Whether you have picked up this book in search of relief for a particular ailment, from a minor complaint to a major symptom, or you are looking to build a self-care routine that will keep your body, mind, and spirit healthy—or you are simply curious about Jin Shin’s holistic approach to self-care—you will learn simple and effective skills to address a variety of common complaints within the pages that follow.

You may also find a surprising depth emerging from the practice, as Jin Shin is an art that allows for connection, limitless growth, and exploring the creative artist in you. Coming from a family of Holocaust survivors with a legacy of historical pain, loss, and generational suffering, I found that my practice and study of Jin Shin opened my heart in ways I had not necessarily expected. Gifting me with an awareness of my relationship to a higher energy and consciousness, the philosophy and practice remind me of the presence of something bigger than myself, connecting me to an expansive universal energy and reminding me of the wholeness of my soul. Putting us in touch with our innate wisdom and bringing us to a place where our intuition can reveal itself, the Art of Jin Shin is both vast and complete.

When I had my first session with my most influential teacher, Philomena Dooley, I had little knowledge of the immensity of the art I would eventually encounter. I did, however, have an immediate premonition that I had found what would come to be a lifelong path for me. Twenty years after that first encounter, another important teacher with whom I had the good fortune to study, Pamela Markarian Smith, passed on a legacy to me as she appointed me to lead Jin Shin Institute just a few years before she passed away.

The core of the institute’s work consists of education as well as our wellness center, with a certification program for novice and seasoned practitioners as well as opportunities to become a certified teacher. Presenting the Art of Jin Shin in all of its breadth is among our foremost goals, which is why we have made certain modifications to the terminology in order to reach a wider

audience. For instance, those of you who have familiarity with the modality will know it as Jin Shin Jyutsu. In order to avoid a common source of confusion, we changed “Jyutsu” to its English translation, “art,” removing echoes to a martial art.

In writing this book, it was necessary for me to make choices on how to present the information as directly and accessibly as possible while maintaining the integrity of the work. At times, this was a challenge, requiring me to put multifaceted philosophical concepts into simple language. As all Jin Shin practitioners know, the healing practice we refer to as an “art” can encompass a lifetime’s worth of study and freedom to explore our own creativity. There are many paths leading to one goal. It is in my awareness at this moment that I am putting the practice into simple words so that it can be understood and used by many. If you decide to continue your exploration into the Art of Jin Shin after reading this book, you will find endless layers within the practice, along with links and similarities to other disciplines such as astrology and numerology. On the other hand, Jin Shin can be as simple as taking a breath and holding a finger. Both ways of practicing are equally wonderful and complete, neither one superior to the other. That is part of the beauty of Jin Shin, which can be practiced on all levels.

You can use *The Art of Jin Shin* to alleviate common ailments, such as bringing down your baby’s fever or helping yourself or your partner with a headache, or you can use it as a regular daily tune-up for general wellness. Most of my clients make Jin Shin self-help a part of their daily routines, many of them practicing before they get out of bed in the morning. Other great times to practice your Jin Shin include middle-of-the-night wake-ups, downtime while waiting for appointments, or couch time while watching movies or TV.

You never know when the opportunity will present itself. My college-aged son, who frequently calls me from school for some quick Jin Shin advice, phoned breathlessly a few weeks ago to tell me that a kid had collapsed outside his dorm. I gave him instructions for a simple hold and told him to stay with it until EMS arrived. A few minutes later I got a one-line follow-up text message:

“I did it!” The young man was okay, and Tyler had had the opportunity to be there for him by applying some simple Jin Shin.

As my teacher likes to say of Jin Shin’s library of self-help quickies and recalibrations: “Don’t leave home without it!” You will find everything you need to get started within the pages that follow. And since this simple energy work involves no tools other than your own two hands, you will always have everything you need in order to relieve your aches and pains or set yourself up for a great day.



THE ART OF  
**JIN SHIN**  
MURAI METHOD



# The Jin Shin Effect

**K**atie, a bright and studious sixteen-year-old, had been on antidepressants for three years when she came to see me. She faithfully kept her therapy appointments and meditated to reduce her anxiety. Still, her depression was so acute that she frequently needed to skip school or leave class in the middle of the day, felled by bouts of uncontrollable crying. Nothing seemed to be able to dispel the dark cloud of misery that enveloped her.

When she lay down on my table, I immediately noticed that her feet were completely pigeon-toed. More alarmingly, her entire body, especially her head, was rolling off to the right. It's not unusual for older clients to present with asymmetry, yet hers was the most extreme resting body position I had seen in someone so young. Given that she had no known postural issues, I asked her about prior trauma. Katie couldn't remember anything in particular. I made a mental note to schedule an intake with her mother after our session. Even without knowing her history, it was immediately apparent that I would need to start working my way through a descending sequence to move the energy down and out of her head. Slipping my right hand under her neck—a specific area known to clear mental and emotional blocks—I'd felt a large lump: the mass of knotted muscle and congested energy that was pulling her head to the right. I maintained a gentle hold on the area until I felt Katie's quiet, uneven pulse become more lively and even. I moved my left hand to an area above her eyebrow to clear the mind. Keeping my right hand where it was, I placed my left on her tailbone, to jump-start her body's source energy and harmonize the blood es-

sence. Holding on to the outside of her anklebone allowed her to ground herself physically and emotionally, and areas on the base of the ribs harmonized the digestive process and facilitated Katie's ability to process her emotions. Finally, releasing an energy blockage on an area beneath her clavicle strengthened and cleared her exhalations, allowing Katie to continue to move sluggish energy out of the body on her own.

We saw an immediate change on the table after that first session; her body aligned itself perfectly, and Katie began to feel better right away. During the intake, her mother told me a very illuminating story: When Katie was two and a half, she had fallen out of a shopping cart and hit the left side of her head. She still had a scar on her face in the spot where she'd needed stitches.

Mystery solved. The injury was located directly on the path where the gallbladder energy moves—a pathway any Jin Shin practitioner can address to treat a client with depression. Given the location of the trauma, it was no surprise that she was getting trapped inside her thoughts, or “stuck in her head.”

Due to the severity of her symptoms, I saw Katie twice more that week. Soon we were able to downgrade to weekly sessions, with a prescription for the daily self-help that is a hallmark of the Art of Jin Shin. Katie stopped taking her antidepressants within just a couple of weeks and never missed school again on account of her depression.

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Like Katie, the first time I encountered the Art of Jin Shin, I knew instantly that the course of my life was going to change. I had moved from the Netherlands, my native country, to pursue a career as a dancer in New York. At eighteen, I was a starry-eyed graduate from Holland's most reputable pre-professional academy for dance, ready to start auditioning and itching to begin my life. Another recent graduate from the academy made the move to New York along with me, and soon a third girl, a model, joined us in a small walk-up on Thirty-Eighth Street. Every day we would hop on the uptown train to take classes at studios like Steps on Broadway or Broadway Dance Center, scouring audition notices as we stretched in the hallways.

What I wanted most of all was to dance on the *real* Broadway, inside one of those theaters with the classic lightbulb-ringed marquees. So when I found my way to a well-respected dance company called Lee Theodore's American Dance Machine, I was exactly where I wanted to be.

Until one day during ballet class, when a turn I had executed hundreds of times suddenly sent me careening in another direction. As I rose onto demi-pointe and launched into a pirouette, a pop in my right knee brought me to an abrupt halt. I was sidelined for six weeks. Being young and resilient, I assumed my troubles would end there. Instead, that moment was the start of a recurring knee problem. At times I could muscle through. Periodically, however, the inflammation would get so bad that I would be out for weeks at a time, treating my symptoms with a combination of acupuncture and RICE (rest, ice, compression, elevation), as my teacher Lee Theodore insisted it was part of a dancer's discipline to heal oneself and nurture an injury back to health. I kept up this regimen over the next year, without much change for the better.

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My second year in New York, a friend who suffered from multiple sclerosis went to see a woman named Philomena Dooley over in New Jersey for a session of a mysterious Japanese healing art. When he came back, he handed me a little wire-bound self-help book and said, "I think this is what you are meant to be doing." Based on ancient Eastern principles of energy medicine and holistic healing, the modern day healing art uses nothing more than the gentle touch from a practitioner's hands to remove energetic blockages that cause physical and emotional pain and disease.

As far as I knew, I was still pursuing my lifelong dream of being a dancer in New York. My friend, however, sensed something that I would soon see for myself.

A renowned instructor and master practitioner, Philomena had a nursing career before she discovered Jin Shin in the late 1970s through health problems of her own—a host of serious issues related to phlebitis, a blood dyscrasia that caused clotting and could lead to pulmonary embolisms and stroke-like con-

ditions. She had been under medical care for nineteen years, a self-described “semi-invalid” who had been hospitalized several times before a chance encounter brought her to the Art of Jin Shin. As a nurse who was married to a physician, she had access to the best medical care. Still, a daily regimen of blood thinners and painkillers had done little to alleviate her discomfort. So pronounced was her exhaustion that her children frequently had to help her up the stairs at night.

Fate intervened in the form of an approach from a benevolent stranger at a convention. Taking in her poor color and obvious ill health, a man named Charles told her in no uncertain terms that if she wanted to get on with life, she needed to go see a woman named Mary Burmeister in Arizona—the teacher and practitioner who had carried the message of Jin Shin Jyutsu from Japan to the United States. Lacking any means of investigating the practice in those pre-internet days, Philomena bought a plane ticket to see an associate of Mary Burmeister’s. Patricia Meador would give her sessions twice a day for ten days.

Over a series of hour-long sessions, Pat gently placed her hands on various areas on Philomena’s body, occasionally telling her about the connections she observed. On the fifth day, after her ninth session, Philomena was sitting poolside, the Ace bandages and compression stockings in which she customarily wrapped her legs set aside so she could dip her toes into the cool blue water. Summoned to the house by a phone call, she gathered herself and headed toward the living room. Halfway there, she realized she was walking without pain—and without the aid of her compression gear.

Her transformation was profound. First, the cousin charged with picking her up from the airport in Newark failed to recognize her. (To be fair, Philomena had also switched out the baggy pants she usually wore to cover her bulky compression bandages for a skirt and heels.) Then, when she went to see her physician for her weekly blood test, the nurse who examined her chart was so puzzled by the radical change in her numbers that she feared Philomena’s chart had accidentally been switched with another patient’s. The doctor came in to examine her, and Philomena told him the story of where she had been. “Whatever it is you’re doing,” he said, “keep it up.” Philomena had weaned herself off her painkillers over the previous week, and her doctor also took her off blood

thinner, then and there. Her problems never recurred, and indeed she never found cause to return to see her hematologist.

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In the clean, spare practice room where she saw clients, Philomena asked about my reason for visiting her, and I told her about my knee problem.

“In Jin Shin Jyutsu, we call ‘problems’ projects,” she said as she paused to correct me. “Projects are fun, and we work with them.”

Philomena then took a firm hold of my little toes and tweaked them a bit. As she worked, she told me I could help my knee by simultaneously holding the inside and outside of the knee. The transformation from that one simple tweak right then and there was instantaneous. I returned to rehearsal the very next day and was never again sidelined as a result of knee pain. Occasionally, I would start to feel the stirrings of the old injury, and a little application of self-help would immediately resolve the issue.

Philomena also suggested I take a workshop with her that following week so that I could learn how to give sessions to my friend with multiple sclerosis. I took her suggestion.

Over five days, more than a hundred of us gathered from all over the world in a rented conference room at a New Jersey hotel. Though much of what Philomena was teaching went over my head, I instantly embraced Jin Shin’s profoundly simple, holistic philosophy. As Westerners we tend to think that ailments have a single cause, and that one person with fifteen ailments might require as many different kinds of treatments or prescriptions. In contrast, many Eastern philosophies suggest that everything, from energy in the body to events in the world, moves in a continuous cycle, with each individual part being connected. Looking at the body from an energetic point of view makes sense of even very disparate-sounding dysfunctions—like bunions and lung issues, as in the case of one of my clients, a jazz singer in her eighties. Yolande Bavan came to a case study of five sessions that I conducted with an apprentice. Her lungs improved and it was easier for her to fill them with oxygen, and we were lucky to witness her phenomenal performance at a tribute to Duke Ellington.

The practice itself is both simple and infinitely complex. What struck me right away was how much you can learn about the body just by feeling and looking. As Philomena talked us through her process, demonstrating on a volunteer, we saw transformations take place with our very own eyes. A raised shoulder, visibly out of line with the rest of the body, would sink down into the table as she gently held on to the underside of the opposing knee. Pigeon toes would gradually turn outward as she held the volunteer's upper thigh, and cupped hands would resolve with a release of the upper back. Philomena guided us through body readings, training our eyes to notice congestions within the body—a rolled-in knee, a locked shoulder, a distended abdomen.

I felt like a newly awakened being. The career I had trained for all my life flew out the window during that seminar. Soon afterward, I asked Philomena whether she would be willing to continue training me privately, and I became one of the few lucky people to benefit from her extended instruction and mentorship.

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In short order I was able to give comprehensive treatments myself, at times using specific protocols recommended by Philomena, and with astonishing results. I practiced as much as I could on whomever I could get my hands on, mainly dancers I knew from company and class. My first real clients were an artistic couple referred my way by Philomena: Milton Resnick, a well-known painter, and his wife, Pat Passlof, a professor of art and fellow painter. Milton dealt with arthritic conditions among other ailments, while Pat had vision and digestive problems, all of which were alleviated by our continued sessions. I started working with my ballet teacher, whose persistent neck problems resolved within a couple of sessions. Soon she was sending me any injured or ailing performers she came across, principal dancers from New York City Ballet and the Joffrey among them. My practice filled up immediately, and over the years my client base has expanded to people from all walks of life.

Sometimes the practice is used for maintenance, to alleviate conditions that are a natural by-product of the aging process or to support clients experiencing serious illness. Sometimes I find myself using it as a form of first aid. Once, on