

► becoming the Barefoot Doctor by introducing all the “colourful, inspiring, innovative” teachers he has met



along the way.

“The self-improvement scene is awash with this banal, shopping-mall-level spirituality. I wanted to name-check the pioneers,” he says. Russell adopted the Barefoot tag in 1989 and has, since he first took up aikido as a boy, studied everything from yoga, meditation and t'ai chi to hypnosis, psychotherapy and baby massage — although he doesn't claim to be an expert in any one field. He has written numerous self-help books. He spent four years living with Native American Indians. He credits his late father, Victor, as his most important teacher of all, however, and the blue eyes well up when he talks about him. “His thing was to find whatever it is that's special about you, and then go, ‘Look at you, aren't you special?’ But he was also tough as shit. He taught me a combination of kindness and that ‘Don't f\*\*\* with me’ attitude.”

Wherein, it seems, lies Barefoot's charm. Because isn't that how we want our men these days? And our fathers? It seems as if you can call me a convert, then. When it comes to how we want our gurus, Barefoot certainly seems to fit the bill. He tells me that he thinks the human race is in crisis, but, “it's okay, it's growing pains. We're in the throes of evolution”. Which somehow makes dealing with the problems we face feel like an adventure. If the Barefoot Doctor has anything to teach us, it's that the world is what we make it. □

*The Man Who Drove with His Eyes Closed: The Making of a Barefoot Doctor is out now (Hay House £9.99); barefootdoctorworld.com*

## GURUS GALORE

### THE SEX GURU DR LAURA BERMAN

With the all-powerful Oprah endorsement, Dr Laura — as she is known — is the undisputed queen sexpert of US television, and has five sex guide books to her name. Plenty of celebs from all over the world fly in to her Chicago-based Berman Center for her intensive week-long retreats (just imagine), but she is also often collared by celebs for more urgent assistance in the green room of the Today show and Oprah. Berman's clients are typically given “homework assignments” to address their “sexual challenges”. And she prescribes her own range of adult toys. We await the memoirs.

### THE ENERGY GURU DR FRANK LIPMAN

Who wouldn't want more energy? David Letterman, Donna Karan and Gwyneth Paltrow, for starters, are all frequent visitors to Lipman's New York practice. The bestselling author of *Spent: End Exhaustion and Feel Great Again* says he is “what a GP will be like in 10 or 20 years' time”. Expect conventional medicine plus acupuncture, restorative yoga postures and music to achieve alpha and theta brain waves (most New Yorkers are pretty agitated, he says).

### THE MINDFULNESS GURU ECKHART TOLLE

He looks the part: a gnornish, bearded figure in buttoned-up shirts and waistcoats, German-born Tolle has all the magic and mystery of a good guru. Numerous fans (Jim Carrey, Annie Lennox among them) see him more as a heavyweight philosopher than the king of self-help. (Paris Hilton took his *The Power of Now* into prison.) And his philosophy? Abandon the past and the future (both burdens), and be mindful of your unconscious drives to be your truest (and best) self. Tom Cruise abhors his popularity. Can't imagine why.



Left, Gwyneth with Tracey Anderson. Madonna, above, is also a devotee. From top, lifestyle gurus Dr Laura Berman, Deepak Chopra and Dr Frank Lipman

### THE FITNESS FACE-OFF

#### DAVID KIRSCH V TRACY ANDERSON

Emergencies such as the need for urgent weight loss, the models Heidi Klum, Sophie Dahl and Linda Evangelista get onto one of Kirsch's “boot-campish” programmes in New York. Strategies to “sculpt” celebrities include his detox LemonAid diet (lemon juice, maple syrup and cayenne pepper) and “anywhere” exercise (including the chair you're sitting on). Meanwhile, Gwyneth, Madonna and Stella head to Tracy Anderson's TriBeCa dance studio for “teeny, tiny bodies” — her routines include squats and star jumps for, like, an hour a day, six times a week.

### THE SPIRITUAL GURU DEEPAK CHOPRA

Not a prophet, but a “proffit”, says Chopra himself (who earns a reputed \$3m a year). He is best friends with them all — Demi Moore, Madonna and Elizabeth Taylor — but then, he's big on immortality. He says you could increase your life expectancy by 30 years through ayurveda, meditation, massage, yoga and spiritual guidance at his Chopra centres. We must look after the deeper self, he says, because life is simply a projection of our consciousness. Perhaps it's the solipsism that the celebs love.

### THE SHAMANISTIC GURU MARY AVER

Psychics have undergone a rebranding — these days, it's about intuitive healing and shamanistic drumming. Trusted sources reveal that heads of state and LA celebrities fly in especially to see the London-based Aver, or even fly her out to wherever they need her. A session includes burning herbs, “rattling” (with the adult version of a baby's rattle) and connecting with “power animals” (a polar bear, for example, brings power and reassurance). Wasn't that David Cameron's mascot?

Fleur Britten