



At home with *Anna Hunt*

This modern-day shaman is the contemporary face of an ancient spiritual practice - and her home showcases the best of both worlds

Luxurious scented candles dotted around every room, a rack stashed with wine, a bathroom shelf loaded with perfumes and a kitchen cupboard stocked with posh chocolate. Yes, Anna Hunt is definitely a woman who enjoys the finer things in life. But she also happens to be a shaman. After a decade of studying traditional techniques and traditions, she now runs a practice from her North London home, teaching others the art of self-empowerment by freeing themselves of negative emotions.

"Shamans call this "release" but I use the term "emotional detoxing", Anna explains.

There's a very natural feel about her home - it's filled with plants, natural wood, shells and semi-precious stones. This isn't surprising, given that Anna believes shamanism is all about connecting with nature.

Back in 1996, Anna began working as a celebrity journalist for a national newspaper, interviewing stars including Angelina Jolie, Victoria Beckham and Jerry Hall.

She lived the high life and was able to indulge in designer clothes and eat out in expensive restaurants whenever she fancied. But the long hours were exhausting and the pressure took its toll on her health. In 2003, at the age of just 29, Anna had the burnout that afflicts many high-flyers, and began suffering from chronic stomach cramps and severe stress. She went back and forth to her GP before he told her what she already knew: "You need some time out."

That time out came in the form of making a trip to her friend Gabby's home in Peru - an experience that was to change her life. On the wall behind her desk is a large framed photo of the ruins at Machu Picchu, a 15th-century Inca city. The picture has special significance for Anna because she had a healing experience at the site when she visited it on that life-changing trip to Peru over 10 years ago.

Gabby introduced Anna to the shaman Maximó Morales, who took her to Machu Picchu. When they were there he carried out a shamanic healing ceremony using Agua de Florida, or Florida Water, a Peruvian cologne used by shamans for cleansing, purification and healing, which cured Anna's stomach cramps. Made from bergamot, cinnamon, neroli, lemon, cloves, lavender, rose and orange blossom, it's an essential part of the shamanic medicine cupboard and a key element in the work Anna does today.

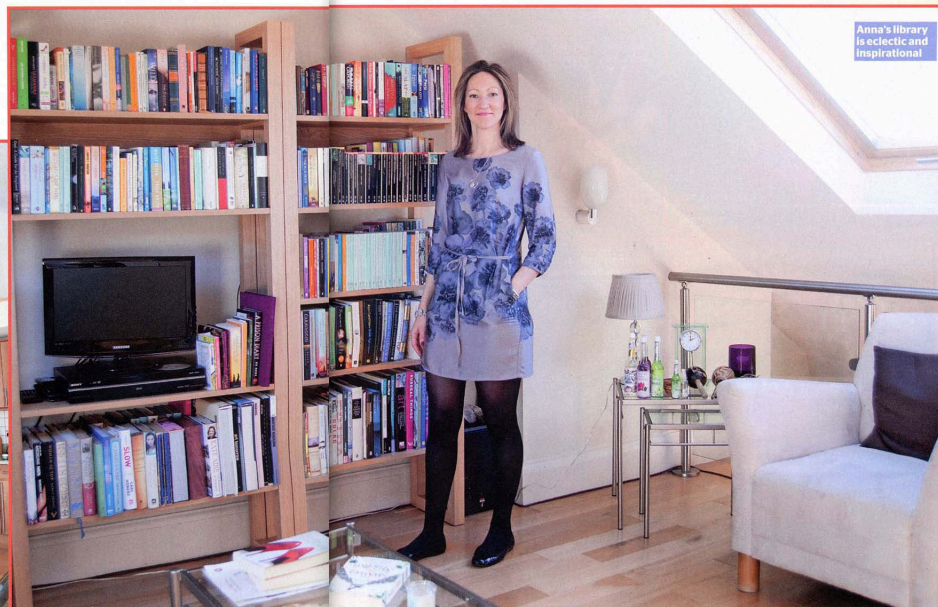
Anna uses ancient shamanic techniques to help people cope with a range of problems, from fatigue,



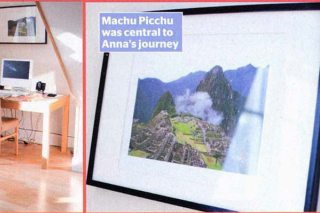
Anna loves to relax by cooking for friends



The dining area and workspace



Anna's library is eclectic and inspirational



Machu Picchu was central to Anna's journey

relationship issues and grief to health concerns that often have an emotional trigger, such as irritable bowel syndrome.

Florida Water is just one of a collection of healing waters clustered together on a little table in the mezzanine where Anna works with her clients. The little clutch of bottles looks beautiful, almost like an art installation, but each one is as useful as it is decorative.

"I buy all my healing waters from a shaman shop in Peru, and use them for different reasons when

I'm working with a client," explains Anna, who has been running her practice in London for six years.

"The Florida Water is good for making someone feel grounded and safe, while rose water is about blooming, so I use that when I've been doing deep emotional detoxing work with someone. Afterwards, they're in a better place to go forward in life, and "bloom". Then I've got ruda water (with extract of rue), which I use with people who are carrying anxiety that could be manifesting as something like acid reflux. The brown bottle is

cinnamon water and I use that to help my clients release toxic emotions like anger or jealousy.

"With all my waters, I'll either spritz them around the room while the person I'm working with is lying on a yoga mat or I'll get the client to rub a few drops on their hands."

Anna's workspace is full of fascinating objects gathered over the 10 years she has been gathering her shamanic skills. She passes her knowledge on

'I was a cynical journalist who was suspicious of all that shamanic stuff'

to her clients to empower them in life, particularly in times of stress and emotional upset.

However, it was some time before Anna embraced these shamanic traditions herself. At the end of her three-month stay in Peru, Maximó told Anna he wanted her to be his apprentice.

"It took a while for me to come round to the idea," Anna recalls. I was a journalist, and a typically

cynical one at that, who was suspicious of all that "shamanic stuff", as I used to call it."

But back home, as she re-immersed herself in her frenetic job, Anna couldn't shake the gut feeling that she did have a gift for healing and that shamanism was something she should explore.

So she started saving, and after 18 months of resisting the desire to splash out on designer labels, Anna packed in her newspaper job and flew back to Maximó. She began a six-month apprenticeship, moving into a wooden hut with no running water or electricity. Instead of high-end clothing, her focus was now on the tools of the shamanic trade, such as the healing rattles that sit on a table in her workspace.

"The one with the dolphin on was made by a shaman whose father began teaching him when he was 11 years old. There are pink river dolphins in the area where that shaman comes from, and the shamans call these animals to them so they can make a connection and receive their wisdom."

The stick was given to Anna by a shaman from Tucume, a village in north-west Peru, where these



A selection of healing colognes

A chonta healing stick from Peru

balsa wood sticks - called *chontas* - are used to cleanse auras.

"This *chonta* was given to me for protection and the figure on it is called the Warrior of Light. He's a powerful shaman. The *chonta* absorbs negative energies and lifts heavy atmospheres, which is important when I'm running a workshop and have anything between 20 and 50 people in the room," Anna explains.

Another aspect of this modern shaman's practice is energy work, using crystals to enhance the flow of energy in the body's meridians or pathways. There's a sad tale behind Anna's crystal collection in that the original assortment was stolen from her car two years ago.

"I was gutted," she admits. "I'd been collecting them since 2003, and Maximó had given many ➤"