

RELIEVING STRESS & PAIN

with Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine

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Stress – we all experience it at one point or another. In my acupuncture practice, this is something that I see my patients experience more and more of on a daily basis. When these stress levels hit an extreme, or continue over a prolonged period of time, mental/emotional and physical well-being is affected. There have recently been several medical studies that demonstrate the relationship between stress and health and how Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine is effective. Acupuncture has been shown to 'reduce' levels of proteins linked to stress and this may explain the sense of well-being and relaxation a patient receives during the course of an acupuncture session.

From a Traditional Chinese Medicine perspective stress creates tension or blockages in the meridians and channels where the bio-electricity flows- often without our conscious awareness. These manifest in mental/emotional and physical symptoms.

Some common symptoms of stress

- Anger, frustration, irritability
- Insomnia
- Anxiety & depression
- Pain & stiffness in neck and shoulders
- Tension headaches & migraines
- Gynecological conditions
- Digestive disorders
- Decreased energy

Acupuncture can assist by allowing the body to go into a state of least resistance which allows the release of endorphins and serotonin within the brain. We know through science that the best conductivity of electricity is least resistance (**Ohm's Law $I=V/R$**). Ohm's Law states that if you require more power or energy you need more voltage over least resistance. The body has energy or bio-electricity that flows along the nervous system (acupuncture meridians). Elevated levels of stress create tension, resistance and blockages in the physical body at which point common symptoms become apparent. Acupuncture, the insertion of pre-packaged finely sterilized needles into those areas of blockages, help move the bio-electricity and put the body into a *state of least resistance*. Once this is achieved, sympathetic nerve activity decreases, lowering blood pressure and heart rate, leading to an overall feeling of relaxation and well-being with a marked improvement in symptoms.

Chinese Herbal Medicine is another effective approach that compliments acupuncture in managing stress and controlling the symptoms related to stress. Through proper diagnosis and consultation, a personalized herbal prescription is administered to further enhance the body's

functioning. Herbal medicine works by gently nourishing and moving energy in the body, enhancing digestive function and strengthening one's mental and physical energy.

Chinese Tui Na Massage is a form of Chinese medical massage translated as "press and grasp" used to treat a range of disorders from physical to internal. Focus is on the spinal column, in particular the para-spinal muscles beside the spine, as the central hub for blockages. If there is pain, there is a blockage and the Chinese proverb states "when there is free flow of Chi there is no pain, and when there is pain there is no free flow of Chi." Applying the theory of Ohm's Law to the body, blockages reveal themselves as muscular tension interrupting the free flow of bio-electricity from the nervous system to the muscles, glands and organs. When the tension is released, healing takes place and health is restored. Cupping is another effective therapy to add to treatment protocols when dealing with stress. With constant muscle tension, blood flow will start to stagnate and toxicity will build up within the tissue. Cupping helps to stimulate the flow of energy and blood in the superficial layers of the skin and muscles, drawing toxicities to the surface, which are then flushed through the lymphatic system. It is also used for common colds to draw the pathogen out of the body. The acupuncturist applies small glass or bamboo cups using heat over the areas that require attention; a vacuum is created by the heat and a pulling or suction feeling is induced as the tissue is drawn up into the cup. Sometimes small marks are left over the area where the cup was placed showing a sign of toxicity or blood stagnation (this is a good sign of an effective treatment). These marks can last up to 5 days.

There are many lifestyle adjustments that can be made to help lower stress and one of the most important is a regular meditation, relaxation or breathing practice. These exercises range from Tai Chi Chuan and Chi Qong, to Yoga or quieting sitting. These 'internal' exercises allow the body and mind to reach levels of relaxation and least resistance and improve one's ability to cope with stress. Food is another important factor to help our body heal; there are many dietary approaches that can improve a variety of conditions.

If life is presenting you with some stressful moments and those symptoms seem to be lingering for far too long, come in for a mini stress reduction acupuncture session at Thrive Therapeutics. Mauro will be offering 20-30 min stress reduction treatments for \$20.