



TREATING STRESS WITH ACUPUNCTURE

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Stress is that miserable sense that you are just too tired, too buzzed, too frazzled, to enjoy life, including that “how did I get myself into this?” kind of feeling. People who are stressed lose track of their emotions—they may be irritable, snap at family, cry ‘for no reason’ or wake in the night with their hearts racing. Stressed people are more likely to get infections (which enforce rest for a few days), and stress also paves the way for serious chronic disorders. The end point of stress is exhaustion and collapse—not amusing and definitely a downer for work, earning, and family life!

It’s hard to avoid stress in our urban world, but most people can learn to control it with good self-care. Self-care you do at home includes getting a good night’s sleep, as well as doing meditative exercise, eating a high quality diet, and finding time for laughter and spiritual growth—see my Handout on *The Big Seven!* **Self-care also very appropriately includes choosing health care methods that enhance wellness—such as acupuncture.**

Acupuncture enhances wellness because it gently encourages balance—physiological balance to support life processes, and mental/ emotional/ spiritual balance to enhance life pleasure. Using acupuncture regularly allows the body to ‘practice’ remaining in balance, practice responding to stressful situations with calm and physiological ease, and so, over time, the person can heal the stress reaction, and actually prevent disease. I call this the ‘training effect’ of acupuncture—it isn’t merely offering a brief intervention (“Take this drug and see you in six months”) but *encouraging the body-person to learn new physiological ways of being...and this has subtle but big effects all over one’s life.* This is why I encourage people to use acupuncture regularly not only to deal with immediate problems, but to heal deeply.

Here are two examples. One of my patients had asthma almost from birth and was stressed both by the asthma and by the biomedical treatments of drugs and allergy injections. Worst, she had developed a frightening & fatiguing sense that no medical care that could help her. Fortunately she decided to try acupuncture. Gradually, her asthma symptoms decreased enough that she could stop all drugs and injections. She learned what it felt like to be healthy, and was finally able to recognize the moment when her breathing began to worsen. Acupuncture intervention at that point prevented asthma from developing, and now, at age 55, she is so well she almost forgets she is “an asthmatic.” Another highly stressed patient was a man in a demanding job who suffered from weekly cluster headaches. He began regular acupuncture care, started herbs to prevent migraines, and added qi gong as a meditative calming exercise. Over six months both the frequency of headaches and their intensity diminished, and two years later he felt nearly always well. During this time he successfully identified the triggers for his headaches, and learned how to avoid them. He was now back in control of his life.

So--If you suffer from pain or feel stressed out, whether it’s caused by tough work, a family situation, or a chronic condition, get acupuncture care. You’ll be glad you did.