



Community Acupuncture of St Louis

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Acupuncture and Mental Health

Creating Mental and Emotional Wellness with Acupuncture

Occasionally we must all deal with major upheavals or emotional distress at some points in our lives. These events can trigger a host of unexpected feelings and behaviors from depression and panic attacks to major disruptions in sleep and eating. Not only can acupuncture and Chinese medicine alleviate symptoms associated with mental health issues, it can treat the root cause of the problem by helping to rebalance the body's internal environment.

What are Mental Health Disorders?

Mental health disorders are medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others, and daily functioning which result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life.

Serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and borderline personality disorder. Mental disorders can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or income. Experts estimate that almost a third of people in most countries report sufficient criteria at some point in their life. The good news about mental disorders is that recovery is often possible.

Diagnosis and Treatment of Mental Disorders

According to Chinese medical theory, a mental disorder occurs when there is imbalance within the body. Imbalance can come from an excess or deficiency of yin and yang that disrupts the flow of qi or energy through the body.

Chinese Medicine does not recognize any mental disorder as one particular syndrome. Instead, it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual using a variety of techniques such as acupuncture, herbal medicine, bodywork, lifestyle and dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, if 100 patients are treated with Chinese medicine for anxiety, each of these 100 patients will receive a unique, customized treatment with different acupuncture points, different herbs and different lifestyle and dietary recommendations.

If you or a loved one are experiencing a mental/emotional problem, please call us to see how acupuncture and Chinese medicine can help.

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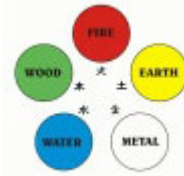
Dan Tian Breathing: Connecting to the Center

What does it mean to be centered? In Qi Gong, the ancient Chinese practice of self cultivation through movement and breathing, it signifies having energy in the center of the body.

The Five Elements and Emotions

The Principle of the Five Elements (known as the Wu Xing) describes the flow of qi and the balance of yin and yang. The Five Elements refer to wood, fire, earth, metal, and water in Eastern philosophy. They are used to interpret the relationship between the physiology and pathology of the human body and the natural environment.

In Chinese medicine, each element is associated with certain mental/emotional states. For instance, our memory, thought processes, emotional well-being, and consciousness are also attributed to the heart and fire element. When the fire element is in balance, the heart is strong and healthy, the mind is calm and sleep is sound. When the fire element is imbalanced, we may either lack joy (depression) or have an excess of joy (mania). Indicators of an imbalance in the fire element include agitation, nervousness, heartburn, and insomnia.



The Five Elements and Emotions

Wood (Liver) – Anger, jealousy, frustration, resentment, bitterness and stress

Fire (Heart) – Mania and over-excitation

Earth (Spleen) – Anxiety, pensiveness and worry

Metal (Lung) – Grief and sadness

Water (Kidney) – Depression and lack of will

Yintang: The Third Eye Point

Acupuncture has been found to be helpful with all types of emotional and mental disorders, from stress and anxiety to schizophrenia. Often used for such treatments is *Yintang*, a point located between the eyebrows - sometimes referred to as “the third eye.”



The Chinese translation for the acupuncture point, *Yintang*, is “hall of impression”.

“Hall” is defined as a corridor or passageway, or the large entrance room of a house.

An “impression” is defined as a strong effect produced on the intellect, emotions, or conscience. Thus, *Yintang* is the entrance or passageway to the mind.

Location: Midway between the eyebrows

Indications: Calm the mind, enhance one’s ability to focus, soothe emotions, promote sleep, and relieve depression.

This center is called the *Dan Tian*, which means “elixir field” is a place to store energy. Think of the Dan Tian as a reservoir and a place of inner strength.

The Dan Tian, located in the lower abdomen between the navel and the public bone, corresponds to the physical functions of digestion, elimination, and reproduction. Psychologically it functions by giving us a sense of stability and balance. It is also a source of power for physical energy, sexual vitality, and inner power.

Exercise: Deep Abdominal Breathing (Dan Tian Breathing)

1. Sit or stand with the spine straight and bring both hands over the lower abdomen.
2. Breathe in and out through the nose. Breathing through the nose helps to cultivate more “qi” out of the air.
3. Exhale all the way out to clear the lungs. During “normal” breathing, we usually only exhale 40 percent of the air out, which leaves little room to take in a deep breath. So, at the bottom of your exhale, see if you can exhale a little more.
4. Then, inhale down into the lower abdomen so that the belly expands. This allows the diaphragm to relax and air to move into the deeper areas of the lungs.
5. Again, exhale and squeeze the air out from the lower abdomen.
6. Then, take in a full deep breath down into the lower abdomen.
7. During this breathing exercise, keep the chest relaxed.

Study: Acupuncture and Depression

Psychologist John Allen, from the University of Arizona in Tucson, and Acupuncturist Rosa Schnyer, conducted the very first pilot controlled study on treating depression symptoms with acupuncture in the Western scientific world. In a double blind randomized study, 34 depressed female patients who met the DSM-IV diagnostic criteria were assigned to one of three treatment groups for eight weeks.

The first group received acupuncture treatment specifically tailored to their depression symptoms. The second group received a general acupuncture treatment not specific to depression, and the third group was placed on a waiting list for acupuncture treatment, but received no treatment. The study found that those in the tailored acupuncture treatment experienced a significant reduction in symptoms, compared to those in the non-specific treatment. Moreover, over 50% of the participants no longer met the DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for depression after the study.

The study findings suggest that using acupuncture alone could be as effective as other types of treatments for relieving depression symptoms typically used in Western medicine, such as psychotherapy and drugs.

8. Visualize a golden ball of energy, like a small sun, growing in your lower Dan Tian. With each breath see this light growing brighter and brighter.

9. Practice for at least 3 to 5 minutes (10 minutes is ideal). Throughout the day, take one or two Dan Tian breaths to recharge your internal energy.

10. Enjoy!