

DEPRESSION

How Acupuncture Can Help



Depression affects about 121 million people worldwide and can be debilitating for those who experience it.¹ Prolonged feelings of sadness, discouragement and hopelessness greatly affect one's quality of life.

At one time or another, most of us have experienced some form of depression. It is a healthy response to events in our lives that seem overwhelming. When we are balanced, physically and emotionally, we can easily bounce back from a depressed state and move on with our lives. When negative feelings and emotions become persistent and consistent, depression may set in.

Research published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* in 2010 analyzed 207 clinical studies conducted on the effectiveness of acupuncture in treating depressive disorders. According to the study, the efficacy of acupuncture was comparable to antidepressants alone in improving clinical response and alleviating symptom severity of Major Depressive Disorder. Additionally, patients had adverse reactions to acupuncture treatments significantly less often than to antidepressants.²

How can acupuncture help? Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) incorporate thousands of years of

Here are some tips to help combat depressive symptoms:

- Develop a supportive group of trusted friends, family, and co-workers who can lend an ear and listen to you.
- Breathe, go slow, and think things through. Do not make too many life changes all at once. A few at a time will keep you from feeling overwhelmed.
- Try to get at least twenty minutes of exercise at least three days a week, if not more. Take a daily walk, breathe deeply, and let it all go.
- Remember, you are not alone. Others are having similar experiences.

experience in treating depression. Not only can they help to alleviate the signs and symptoms accompanying depression, they can address the root cause(s) and underlying imbalances that have contributed to the problem, safely and naturally.

Acupuncturists are aware of the powerful interplay between our bodies and

emotions, and that the two are inseparable. When we experience emotional upset, our physiological state may become disrupted. Likewise, when we experience physical problems, our emotions can become greatly affected.

Depressed Qi? Over time, this disruption leads to what an acupuncturist calls “stagnant” or “depressed” Qi (pronounced “chee”) or vital energy. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, Qi is the vital energy that animates the body and protects it from illness. Qi flows through pathways called meridians and provides nourishment to the body’s cells, tissues, muscles, organs, and glands. When Qi becomes stagnant or depressed, physical and/or emotional symptoms result. Practitioners of acupuncture and TCM are specifically trained to detect and correct imbalances in the human body. Treatments are focused on balancing and activating the Qi by manipulating corresponding points on the body.

Over time, if it is not addressed it can lead to a disharmony within our body, affecting our physical and emotional well-being, which may lead to depression.

What will an acupuncturist do? An acupuncturist will take a complete health history in order to find out where, why, and how Qi has become stagnant or depressed. They will develop a unique treatment plan tailored to the specific signs and symptoms of each individual.

Typically, the treatment plan goals will be to activate the movement of Qi throughout the entire body, as well as to address the root cause(s) and underlying imbalances. By treating the body as a whole and unique organism, your acupuncturist will support you in your recovery from illness and disease, moving you toward health and happiness.

Acupuncture and TCM provide safe, natural, and effective ways to address depression. The focus is to restore a balanced and continuous flow of Qi throughout the body and mind. Acupuncture is not a “quick fix.” You may need to receive weeks or months of treatment in order to see lasting results. Every person is unique so give yourself the time required to experience the maximum benefits that acupuncture and TCM have to offer.

References:

- 1 “Depression.” World Health Organization. 7 March 2011. <http://www.who.int/>
- 2 “The effectiveness and safety of acupuncture therapy in depressive disorders: Systematic review and meta-analysis.” Zhang-Jin Zhang, Hai-Yong Chen, Ka-chee Yip, Roger Ng, Vivian Taam Wong *Journal of Affective Disorders* - July 2010 (Vol. 124, Issue 1, Pages 9-21).