

Optimizing Physical and Mental Health Through Free Flow

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When the body is in free flow, with no blockage, there can be no imbalance, disharmony, or pain. It is only when the flow of *qi*, blood and fluids is compromised that a pattern of disharmony results. Thus, the goal for all acupuncture treatment is to restore the body to the natural state of homeostasis.

To illustrate this fundamental acupuncture treatment principle, let us discuss the nature of pain in the body.

If you are experiencing tightness in your neck, it may be due to an accumulation of stress in your shoulders and back. As your muscles get tighter, the free flow through that area of your body is being compromised. You may not be aware of the effects of this stress immediately. The holding pattern of your body and the manifestation in postural changes may not register as a problem until you wake up one day and you can no longer turn your head. Now the body has your attention, you are in pain. Acupuncture will open the areas of blockage, releasing the neck and restoring the flow through the acupuncture points and meridian channels and, as a result, your neck is pain is ameliorated.

When treating pain a variety of acupuncture points are utilized: local treatment to the affected area, trigger point release in the muscles, and acupuncture points distal to the affected area are chosen to reduce inflammation and increase circulation and healing. Often the muscles themselves need to be relaxed and, for this, a combination of acupuncture with additional modalities such as cupping, the application of cups to the skin to draw out deep inflammation, and massage are indicated. Achieving free flow through the acupuncture points is the treatment principle for all conditions. Determining where to place the acupuncture needles is the art of acupuncture combined with the experience of the acupuncturist.

When the body is open and balanced, there is no discomfort. This is manifested in the seemingly boundless energy of healthy children. As the body ages, we accumulate holding patterns of stress and fatigue, and it becomes necessary to remind the channels what free flow feels like. Originally designed to connect and circulate energy from the internal organs to the surface of the body and then back again, the meridian channels perform a very important job. Acupuncture treatment is designed to open the channels, resulting in being whole and complete again.

When viewing the body in this way, it is more difficult to understand how acupuncture and Chinese medicine can help more complex internal symptoms, such as infertility, fatigue and depression. Fertility enhancement acupuncture often treats both female and male patterns. To help prepare the body for pregnancy, the acupuncturist guides *qi*, blood and fluids to the reproductive system increasing the likelihood of a successful pregnancy.

The result is better circulation, fresh new blood and surging *qi* through the reproductive organs. In addition, the acupuncture treatments are designed to reduce stress levels in the patient, to

facilitate a deep sense of relaxation. As a result of this treatment, sleep, metabolism, and digestion often improve, a very welcome side effect of the acupuncture treatment.

In conditions affecting emotional health, Chinese medicine again teaches a simple principle, emotional balance is the ability to feel all emotions appropriately. Often when presented with heightened mental challenges, we get fixed in one emotional state. Often the patient suffering from fatigue and depression also feels unmotivated and lacking in self-esteem. It is by helping the emotions to move freely that the patient begins to feel less afraid and more motivated to take action.

A healthy emotional state can be observed in early childhood. A toddler will be happy one minute, screaming and frustrated the next, and then back to happy before the tears have time to dry. Unfortunately, as we age, our emotional responses become more and more predictable, rigid and neurotic. It becomes difficult to adjust our patterned responses and the free flow of emotions becomes blocked.

Fatigue is often a result of being set in one emotion. We yearn for change and freedom so we may feel better. Drug addition and drug dependency are often a result of a depressed view of oneself or one's current situation. Acupuncture can help to treat these conditions by opening the channels and freeing the emotions so that they can return to a more centered and balanced state.

In conclusion, the acupuncturist's main priority is to restore the natural free flow throughout the mind and body. Regardless of whether the patient needs stress and pain relief, support conceiving or holding a pregnancy, or emotional balancing, the guiding principle of acupuncture treatment remains the same; free flow promotes harmony and optimal health in the body.

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