



ACUPUNCTURE ABROAD

The Medicine of Peace in a Land of Conflict

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We often read about violence, despair, and political stalemate between Israelis and Palestinians. It's easy to feel overwhelmed and pessimistic. And yet there are Israelis and Palestinians working together to transform conflict into cooperation. Acupuncturists Without Borders (AWB) is part of this hopeful effort. AWB has been providing trauma healing acupuncture treatments in Israel and the West Bank for the past four years. We believe that unresolved trauma is often the obstacle to individual, community, and national wellbeing.

A PTSD Country

Most people we work with in Israel say their country is a "PTSD" country. Palestinians say the same. The one thing that all people in this land share is transgenerational trauma: from war, displacement, dispossession of land, violence, and bigotry. Trauma keeps fear alive and prevents human contact, diminishing the chances for co-existence and peace.



You might ask how acupuncture treatment can change this dynamic? Acupuncture helps "reset" the nervous system and allows the rational part of the brain to work better. We don't think well when we're afraid. We are wired to fight, flee, or freeze to survive. While this is helpful when we have to deal with acute threats, it can undermine our ability to solve long-term problems, keeping us in an irrational response mode.

As one Palestinian peace activist from Jenin said, "Most of us just want peace. But often the leaders want to keep the conflict (going). They want us to be afraid so we don't see each other as people. It is not rational."

In Israel and the West Bank, AWB treats everyone: refugees, Palestinians, settlers, soldiers, survivors of terror, and at-risk youth. Our work is apolitical and inclusive, fulfilling a challenging mission given that everything in this region is politically and emotionally charged.

Israel has a thriving Chinese medicine profession with multiple AOM colleges and significant integration of TCM into the biomedical mainstream. On the other hand, there is no developed acupuncture profession in the West Bank or Gaza. After training more than 100 Israeli acupuncturists, and supporting the creation of AWB-Israel as a distinct non-profit, AWB has started training Palestinian health workers in the West Bank, where people suffer from one of the highest rates of mental health problems in the Middle East. In July 2018, AWB offered its first dedicated trauma healing training for Palestinian health practitioners in the West Bank—this training was the first of its kind.

NADA Five Needle Protocol

AWB offered training to health professionals in Beit Jala, West Bank, where Israelis and Palestinians can meet without security permit restrictions. Because the group included non-acupuncturist professionals, we taught the use of the NADA five needle protocol using ear seeds.

The group of 10 included people from diverse professions, backgrounds and places: acupuncturists, nurses, physicians, a physical therapist, a psychologist, and a meditation teacher. The AWB training team included two Arab-Israeli acupuncturists, an Arabic-fluent Israeli peace activist, an Arab-Israeli teacher who works with Creativity for Peace, and an AWB (U.S.) staff trainer. The training was in English and Arabic.

It was a perfect group in every way: open minded, curious, cooperative, heart-centered, and committed to serving people who have experienced trauma in this challenging place. Trainees have taken new skills back to their communities, offering treatments in their workplaces and in AWB mobile clinics in the West Bank under the auspices of Physicians for Human Rights.

One of the nurses said, "Just to say thank you for the course. It was beautifully organized: the theory, the working tools. I wish you success in bringing moments of quiet and skills in healing processes to trauma zones. In our area it is another thread in the good will and understanding carpet being woven, by people from both our peoples, towards living together in peace/justice ... Take care!"

AWB is offering a larger training for Palestinian practitioners during its World Healing Exchange Program trip to Israel and the West Bank in March 2019, and will continue to support collaborative trauma healing work in Israel and Palestine. This is the Medicine of Peace. For information about the upcoming World Healing Exchange trip to Israel and the West Bank, go to the AWB website at www.acuwithoutborders.org.

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