



CLINICAL ACUPUNCTURE

Calming the Mind: Three-Point Combinations for Anxiety and Insomnia

Anxiety and insomnia are extremely common patient presentations encountered in the clinic - undoubtedly even more so in today's challenging times. Often these patients are also apprehensive or sensitive to needling sensation; or blatantly afraid of acupuncture needles in general.

Let's discuss three of my favorite acupoint prescriptions that offer a minimalist approach for patients suffering from general anxiety and insomnia. These prescriptions use only three points apiece, yet provide highly effective results, allowing apprehensive patients to experience the benefits of acupuncture with minimal invasiveness.

Point Prescription #1

Benshen (GB 13) + Shenting (DU 24) + Sishentong (EX-HN 1)

This is perhaps my favorite point prescription for anxiety and insomnia in all patients; however, this three-point formula is particularly applicable for patients who are anxious about using acupuncture points on the hands or feet. All points are located on the scalp, and work quickly and effectively to calm the mind in cases of anxiety and insomnia. It is extremely effective for patients who suffer from anxiety / insomnia and/or chronic headaches, chronic nasal allergies, poor memory, poor concentration, mild to moderate depression, tense shoulders, and visual fatigue / eye strain due to daily work with computer screens.



Use of the GB point allows this acupuncture prescription to drain excess from the liver meridian that can accumulate due to liver depression *qi* stagnation; while the *Du* and Extra points target any symptomology expressed in the head area, both physical and symbolic. Each of these three points is named with *shen* in the title, connecting the points to important therapeutic implications in dealing with anxiety, insomnia or even stress over needling. If symptoms are particularly strong, the point *yintang* (EX-HN 3) or the ear points could be added to help.

These three points do not require excessive or extreme needle manipulation and can easily be inserted in a painless manner. Once patients experience the effectiveness of this gentle three-point combination, they will often be open to trying points on the hands and feet.

Point Prescription #2

Yintang (EX-HN 3) + *Shenmen* (HT 7) + *Sanyinjiao* (Sp 6)

This prescription is highly effective for calming the mind and resolving anxiety / insomnia due to such patterns as liver depression, heart fire and yin deficiency. It is also convenient for patients who are needle sensitive and request minimal needling.

The chronic nature of such symptom patterns tends to deplete the kidney yin and heart blood, and cause liver depression *qi* stagnation. These points supplement the kidney yin, nourish heart blood and course the liver *qi*.

If, after needling these three points, the patient experiences a sense of calmness, often another point can be added if the patient is receptive. I often add *Du 20* (*baihui*), the meeting point of the governing vessel with the bladder, gallbladder, *san jiao* and liver channel. *Du 20* pacifies wind, subdues yang, benefits the head and sense organs, nourishes the Sea of Marrow, benefits the brain, and calms the spirit. All these diverse actions are a wonderful complement to this simple three-point prescription.

Point Prescription #3

Anmian (EX-HN 16) + Shenmen (HT 7) + Taixi (KI 3)

This point prescription is highly effective for heart / kidney yin deficiency and "failure of the heart and kidney to communicate." I have found it to be one of the most effective acupuncture protocols for issues such as acute / chronic insomnia, poor concentration and focus, anxiety, and chronic worry. Over time, these symptoms deeply drain the yin reserves of the heart and kidney.

This prescription can also be easily modified if the patient feels open to other points; Du 24, Du 20 and *yintang* (EX-HN 3) can be added to help calm the mind and provide the patient with quick relief from the constellation of stress-related symptoms. Ear points can also be added if the patient is open to more points, with excellent clinical results in my experience.

Clinical Takeaway

I hope this short article inspires you to create your own three-point protocols for patients who may be hesitant or apprehensive about the use of many acupuncture points; and to also provide efficient and effective relief from stress-related symptoms that can cause emotional disturbances. Never forget the simple power of two-to-three acupuncture points in calming the minds of patients suffering in an increasingly stressful world.

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