



HEALTH & WELLNESS / LIFESTYLE

# Empowering Young Adults: Integrating Chinese Medicine and Collaborative Dialogue for Mental Health

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## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- In the realm of mental health, a profound crisis looms large, particularly among young adults, who grapple with escalating rates of anxiety and depression.
- A groundbreaking pilot program aims at addressing these mental health needs through an innovative fusion of Chinese medicine and the collaborative group approach known as The Way of Council.
- This fusion of acupuncture and council delivers a therapeutic experience that addresses the collective nature of the challenges faced by young people.

In the realm of mental health, a profound crisis looms large, particularly among young adults, who grapple with escalating rates of anxiety and depression. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy's resounding alarms about the pervasive epidemic of loneliness emphasize the pivotal role of nurturing social connections in fortifying overall well-being.

In response to this pressing issue, I, the founder of Acupuncturists Without Borders, along with partner organizations, have initiated a groundbreaking pilot program aimed at addressing the mental health needs of young adults through an innovative fusion of Chinese medicine and the collaborative group approach known as The Way of Council.

This program endeavors to create a sanctuary; a nonjudgmental and supportive environment where young individuals can courageously navigate their emotional challenges. It aims not just to acknowledge, but also to actively equip participants with practical coping strategies, fostering resilience and a deeper understanding of their emotional landscapes.

The program's journey took a significant stride forward in November 2023, hosting its inaugural Council 1 training at Yo San University in Los Angeles. The gathering attracted 23 participants, immersing them in a transformative experience focused on fostering open dialogue, building genuine connections, and providing a rejuvenating platform for experienced practitioners. This milestone underscored the program's commitment to creating impactful change within the mental health landscape.

Mandi Bartelle, doctoral student, said: "What a powerful weekend. The depth and connection that was created during our time in Council together made a deep impact on me and changed how I continue with my work. It was a personal and professional joy to participate in this weekend, I'm truly grateful."

With great thanks to scholarship funds provided by Mayway Corporation, Golden Flower Chinese Herbs, and Lhasa OMS, along with several individual donors, students were able to attend the training. Fueled by partnerships with institutions like Yo San University, Phoenix Institute of Herbal Medicine and Acupuncture, Circle Ways, and Acupuncturists Without Borders, the program aspires to broaden its horizons. However, the journey toward sustainability necessitates navigating initial financial constraints, urging an exploration of diverse fundraising avenues to support its mission.

The program's cornerstone is group acupuncture, followed by the unique council dialogue process. Council promotes mindful listening, authentic expression, and compassionate communication. This fusion of acupuncture and council delivers a therapeutic experience that addresses the collective nature of the challenges faced by young people. It underscores the dire need for both healing and relational practices to facilitate this transformative process.

The practice of group acupuncture is a potent somatic intervention, gently guiding the body toward equilibrium, promoting relaxation, stress reduction, improved mood, and enriching overall well-being. Concurrently, the council approach nurtures respectful communication and a profound sense of belonging, empowering participants to navigate the complexities of interpersonal connections with empathy.

In James Maskell's book, *The Community Cure: Transforming Health Outcomes Together* (2020), there's significant documentation from the Western medical world about the crucial role of bringing patients together in groups to share their experiences. This research illustrates the remarkable positive impact on health outcomes when health centers foster such group settings. There is a pressing need for this kind of connection; and for easily teachable and implementable group models.

Beyond the realms of acupuncture and council, the program encompasses a holistic toolkit that includes mindfulness exercises, stress and trauma teachings, and acupressure techniques. Our comprehensive three-day training program is available nationwide to support and empower individuals interested in establishing dedicated groups committed to the program's vision.

This initiative holds vast potential not only in transforming the lives of its participants, but also in cultivating broader applications within various organizational settings. Its impact extends to enhancing recruitment in acupuncture schools and fostering conducive environments within workplaces, promoting teamwork, productivity and overall job satisfaction.

In essence, "Empowering Young Adults" emerges as a beacon of hope for individuals navigating emotional turmoil. By synergizing the transformative power of group acupuncture with the empathetic essence of council dialogue, this program presents a distinctive and cost-effective

pathway toward profound personal breakthroughs. The steadfast commitment of collaborating institutions reaffirms the program's credibility and expertise, aspiring to empower young adults and champion emotional well-being within communities. For further details or inquiries, please contact me at [diana.fried@gmail.com](mailto:diana.fried@gmail.com).

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