

Make Aging a Pleasant Experience By Eliminating the Effects of Stress

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As life gets more complicated and faster paced, many people can benefit from some form of stress management. Enter acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

Acupuncture and other Oriental medicine therapies can minimize the negative effects that stress has on the body. We are all familiar with Liver *Qi* Stagnation (LQS) caused by intense and/or blocked emotions. The pressure builds, channels are blocked, *qi* rebels, and the entire energetic system becomes compromised. Add in the modern toxins that contribute to the creation of LQS (caffeine, the evening cocktail, pollution, too much cold weather, poor dietary habits) and we find the root of a number of medical conditions. And, with aging come some "naturally occurring" forms of stress from within.

As we know, stress is linked to a number of illnesses or conditions from which our populations suffers including insomnia, eating disorders (eg., obesity caused by "stress" eating), IBS, depression, anxiety, and panic attacks. It has been implicated as a cause for heart and other circulatory diseases, hypertension, and illnesses that result from an impaired immune system including some cancers. I am speaking of "modern" stress, the unrelenting stress from which there is no relief.

Scientists have known for decades that continuous stress depletes the body's energy and prevents our immune system from working at its best to protect us from frequent colds, flus, and other viral or bacterial infections. Not only that, but studies at Princeton have demonstrated that aging itself leads to a rise in the levels of stress hormones that are the likely cause of a decline in our ability to form new neurons. So it turns out that aging is a cause of stress! The good news: once the stress is relieved, the brain still has the ability to generate the new neurons (*Nature Neuroscience*, March 1999). Another study published in the same journal in October of 1999 found that high levels of stress hormones produced by the adrenal glands in old age negatively affects our production of neurons. One can find any number of articles about the causes of stroke commonly in the form of exaggerated blood pressure reactions to stress.

Talk about a mind-body connection: our sympathetic nervous system responds to emotional/mental stress by raising our blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration. Does anyone see a relationship here between stress and the development of atherosclerosis ... the number one cause of death in the U.S.? Even chronic low level noise has subtle but insidious effects on the brain and body. Traffic, the humming of machinery, voices from the cubicles in the office, the never-ceasing music coming from the ear buds - all may be considered low level noise. Last but not least, it turns out that these same mechanisms that are impacted by sustained stress make it difficult to learn new things, solve problems, or retain memories. There are sufficient studies showing us that both short and long-term

changes to the body and mind result from the negative impact of unrelenting stress. Our bodies are adapted to deal with short, intense stress but not the chronic stress that many endure in the modern world.

Practitioners of OM and acupuncture can help. Our therapies can support the health of our patients who are suffering from the lasting effects of chronic stress.

It is true that some stress responses are caused by a lack of self esteem or a feeling that one's life is out of your control, but our therapies can still help maximize the body's ability to heal well. We can help the body better cope with the stresses of modern life. We can give treatments and herbal prescriptions that will help people sleep well and rejuvenate. Sleep deprivation causes a cycle of stress leading to more stress leading to the inability to get good quality sleep. Hormones go off balance, moodiness can occur, and it may even become harder to make good decisions. One of the poor decisions can be eating more fatty or comfort foods thereby leading to obesity, higher blood pressure, and even diabetes. Our medicine offers a wealth of nutritional knowledge that we can pass on to our patients who are dealing with the negative effects of stress on their diet and weight. With regard to exercise, the "too tired" sleep deprived person is not going to exercise and we all know that being physically active not only helps resolve LQS but it helps keep the body in generally better shape and our minds are better able to deal with stressful demands.

How does our skin respond to long lasting stress?

It is commonly known that our body produces more cortisol under stress. Increased cortisol levels make the skin more oily which can be the cause of skin congestion and break outs or other related skin problems. It is even possible to suffer from "stress-related acne." Take a look at where acne breaks out on your patients' bodies and see which organ systems are especially impacted by stress. I read a research article entitled "*Psychological Stress Perturbs Epidermal Permeability Barrier Homeostasis.*" The authors concluded that stress makes the barrier function of the skin not work well enough to keep the skin moisturized leading to dryer skin (that is more apt to wrinkle or look wrinkled). This also contributes to the skin's slower wound healing ability. Another conclusion was that stress can cause hair loss because it can make the hair go into what they call the "fall out phase" - a phase during which the body is dealing with things more important than growing hair. Good news: hair usually grows back in within six to nine months after the stressor passes and the body feels generally healed.

Aging puts enough stress as it is on our skin with its reduction in the production of collagen, elastic, and moisturizing oils. Let's help our patients overall health as well as their largest organ through nutritional counseling and acupuncture as well as other therapies that will minimize the negative effects of their stressful lives on their bodies.

We live in a generation of a large flow of information. People often spend time online, computer, mobile phone and every second draws the flow of information. By the end of the day the people's excitement is very high, and the nervous system is impaired. But if you don't solve the problems of the nervous system it is easy to obtain such a disease as depression, sadness, apathy, irritation, uncertainty. [Neuroscience Professor Thomas](#) helpsto answer all the complex issues and to find solutions to these diseases. [Treatment of apathy, anxiety](#) is the most exciting topics in neurology. Sometimes fear is only imposed on the internal state, distorted perception of the real world, in consequence of the frequent neurological problems and internal closure within themselves. Professor Thomas at your service!

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