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| **Enhance Your Emotional Wellness**   |  | | --- | |  |   http://www.acufinder.com/images/articles/510/thumb_Fotolia_23002489_XScopy.jpgThe upcoming holiday season can be filled with a dizzying array of demands, visitors, travel and frantic shopping trips. For many people, it is also a time filled with sadness, self-reflection, loneliness and anxiety. Compound the usual seasonal pressures with economic strain, and you may find this to be one of the most emotionally trying times of the year.  At some point in life everyone deals with major upheavals or emotional distress. These events can trigger a host of unexpected feelings and behaviors, from depression and panic attacks to major disruptions in sleep and eating. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can alleviate symptoms associated with mental and emotional health issues by treating the root cause of the problem to help restore balance to the body's internal environment.  Mental health disorders are medical conditions that can disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, and ability to cope with the daily demands of life or relate well to others. Affecting people of any age, race, religion, or income, mental health issues are more common than you might think. In fact, experts estimate that a significant number of people report symptoms that indicate sufficient qualifying criteria of a mental disorder. Some mental disorders are less severe and can be easily managed with proper treatment. Other mental illnesses are more serious and require more extensive treatment, including major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and borderline personality disorder.  From an Oriental medicine perspective, mental health disorders can cause a disruption in the flow of vital energy, or Qi, through the body. These energetic imbalances can throw off the immune system or cause pain, sleep disturbances, abnormal digestion, headaches, menstrual irregularities and, over time, more serious illnesses. Acupuncture treatments can correct these imbalances and directly affect the way your body manages your mental health.  Oriental medicine does not recognize any mental disorder as one particular syndrome. Instead, it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual, using a variety of techniques including acupuncture, lifestyle/dietary recommendations and exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, if 100 patients are treated with acupuncture and Oriental medicine for anxiety, each of those 100 people will receive a unique, customized treatment with different acupuncture points, and different lifestyle and diet recommendations.  Mental health issues are best managed when health professionals work together to meet the unique needs of each individual. Acupuncture is an excellent addition to any treatment plan as it is used to help the body restore balance, treating the root of the disorder, while also diminishing symptoms.   Acupuncture and Oriental medicine practitioners have the ability to detect energetic changes that occur in the body and relieve symptoms by restoring equilibrium. The physical and emotional symptoms that you are experiencing will help create a clear picture for your practitioner, from which a treatment plan can be created specifically for you.  **Hope for Patients with PTSD**  Acupuncture has been getting more attention as a treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly from post-combat military veterans.  There are good precedents for the use of acupuncture to treat post-traumatic stress disorder. Walter Reed Medical Center, a military hospital, is investigating acupuncture as a viable treatment for returning veterans. The results from acupuncture have shown that it is an effective modality for treating the symptoms of PTSD.  How does acupuncture help the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder?   Correctly placed needles help the body re-regulate itself from the effects of stress, PTSD, depression and anxiety. In turn, this allows individuals to focus on their activities and enables them to better cope with daily events.    **Move Your Qi!**  When your Qi (life force energy) functions smoothly, physical and emotional activity throughout the body also runs smoothly. So, for optimum health, move your Qi!  **Stretch -** According to Oriental medicine, the liver stores blood during periods of rest and then releases it to the tendons in times of activity, maintaining tendon health and flexibility. Incorporate a morning stretch into your routine.  **Eye Exercises -** Although all organs have some connection to eye health, the liver is connected to proper eye function. Take breaks when looking at a monitor for extended periods of time and do eye exercises.  **Eat Green -** Eating young plants--fresh, leafy greens, sprouts, and immature cereal grasses--can improve the liver’s overall function and aid in the movement of Qi.  **Do More Outdoor Activities -** Outside air helps liver Qi flow. If you have been feeling irritable, find an outdoor activity to smooth out that liver Qi stagnation.    **Acupressure Points for Moving Qi**  A popular treatment for stress, anger, sadness and frustration, the following four acupuncture points, known as the "Four Gates," are thought to enhance the circulation of Qi and blood throughout the body, and have a calming and analgesic effect.  **LI 4** is located on the padded area of your hand, between the thumb and index finger, between the first and second metacarpal bones. Massage this point with your thumb on both hands for approximately 30 seconds.  **LV 3** is located in a hollow on the top of your foot, below the gap between your big toe and the next toe, between the 1st and 2nd metatarsal bones. To stimulate this point, place your right heel in the juncture between the bones that attach to the large and second toes, and gently knead the point for approximately 30 seconds. Then switch sides to stimulate the point on your other foot.  Massage acupuncture point, **Baihui**, for mental clarity. Located on the top of the head, midway between the ears, Baihui is used to clear the mind, calm the spirit and improve focus. Stimulate the point with your index finger for 30-45 seconds for a quick "brain boost."  **Yintang**, a point located midway between the eyebrows, is sometimes referred to as "the third eye." Stimulation of Yintang is known to calm the mind, enhance one’s ability to focus, soothe emotions, promote sleep and relieve depression. |  | **In This Issue**   * **Enhance Your Emotional Wellness** * **Hope for Patients with PTSD** * **Move Your Qi!** * **Acupressure Points for Moving Qi** * **Soothing Your Stress**   Soothing Your Stress   |  |  | | --- | --- | | http://www.acufinder.com/images/1x1spacer.gif | http://www.acufinder.com/images/articles/511/thumb_RelaxedLadyFlip.jpg | | http://www.acufinder.com/images/1x1spacer.gif | |   As a normal part of life, stress enables us to get things done. Left unmanaged, however, stress can lead to emotional, psychological, and even physical problems. Stress causes a disruption in the flow of vital energy, or Qi, through the body. This can throw off the immune system and cause new symptoms or aggravate already troublesome health conditions and, over time, more serious illnesses can develop.  Stressful situations that last over a long period of time can create an ongoing low-level stress that puts continual pressure on the nervous system and can cause the overproduction of stress hormones (such as cortisol).   The extra stress hormones sustained over an extended period of time may wear out the body's reserves, leading to fatigue, depression, a weakened immune system, and a host of serious physical and psychological ailments.  Stress is often the cause of illness and the deterioration of health. Finding a release valve for your stress can help you stay healthy.   According to Oriental medicine, stress, frustration, and unresolved anger can play an important part in throwing the immune system off and allowing pathogens to affect the body. Through acupuncture, these energy blockages can be addressed. Acupuncture points can help energy flow smoothly, and alleviate not only the symptoms of stress and anxiety, but the stress and anxiety itself.  Numerous studies have demonstrated the substantial benefits of acupuncture in the treatment of stress. Acupuncture improves circulation of blood throughout the body, which oxygenates the tissues and cycles out stress hormones like cortisol and other waste chemicals. The calming nature of acupuncture also decreases heart rate, lowers blood pressure and relaxes the muscles.   In addition to acupuncture, Oriental medicine offers a wide range of tools and techniques that can be integrated into your wellness plan to keep stress in check. These tools include Tui Na, Qi Gong exercises, dietary therapy, meditations and acupressure that you can administer at home.   While it isn't always possible to remove the external forces causing stress, the ability to effectively deal with stress is a choice. Take time for yourself to cultivate the energy you need to handle your stress more skillfully and effectively. |