

LIFE'S NEWS: A NEWSLETTER ABOUT CHINESE MEDICINE FOR WOMEN



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LIFE'S NEWS IS A NEWSLETTER FROM LIFE HEALING LIFE, AN ACUPUNCTURE AND CHINESE MEDICINE CLINIC IN MINNEAPOLIS, MN SPECIALIZING IN WOMEN'S HEALTH & FERTILITY. WE HOPE YOU ENJOY IT!

THE MIND & THE BODY:

WHY HOW YOU FEEL AFFECTS HOW YOU FEEL



Does the title of this article make sense to you? Did you do a double take or wonder if you read it wrong? Maybe it made sense, but your not sure why. No matter what your response, read on to learn more about how a holistic view can benefit your body and your mind.

The greatest mistake in the treatment of diseases is that there are physicians for the body and physicians for the soul, although the two cannot be separated. ~Plato

Over 1,500 years ago one of the most influential philosophers in Western civilization, unequivocally stated that it is a mistake to separate the body and the mind. This seems simple enough and a bit like common sense, but with the dawn of medical advances such as autopsies and human dissection this concept was soon forgotten in Western medicine.

When patients died of pneumonia and autopsies revealed lung disease, or died of stroke and showed brain damage, there was a dramatic shift towards medicine only acknowledging what it could measure and see. Anything that could not be seen became psychology - a separate field of medicine (one that was often criticized as being "less legit"). Today, thanks to the development of new technologies and patient demand, the mind is slooowly making it's way back into Western medicine. But in Chinese medicine it never left.

In the Chinese medical model the body and mind are seen as one. Emotional symptoms such as anxiety, depression, irritability and fear are just as important indicators of health as blood pressure readings, hormone levels and other Western diagnostic measures. Here's why:

When you go to a doctor for Western medicine you are taught to view your body in pieces and told the pieces must be treated separately... You can see a reproductive endocrinologist for reproduction, a psychologist for emotions, a cardiologist for the heart, a podiatrist for the feet... When you see the right doctor who specializes in the right "part" you tell her only about your main complaint and her job is to find out what's wrong within that already narrow view. It's a bit like you handed her a microscope slide - you've already limited the area that will be examined and her job is to look smaller and smaller and discover the problem.



Chinese medicine on the other hand relies on the "big picture" or holism. In holism it is impossible to treat just one part of the body because the whole is greater than the parts and everything is interconnected. In holistic medicine, your main complaint isn't a microscope slide, it's a single puzzle piece. It wouldn't do to focus on the one piece and guess what it is, because it only makes sense when you get more pieces, put them together and look at the whole. So, what are all the other puzzle pieces? Every emotional and physical symptom a person has!



The benefits of this “big picture” holistic view are numerous: It is easier to see minor imbalances and treat them before they become more severe when you are looking at the big picture. It is easier to improve more than one health concern at a time when you focus on the whole. It is possible to see the interconnectedness and treat the physical and emotional as one. And, perhaps most importantly, it is easier for a patient to be aware of and in charge of his/her health. Where Western medicine often requires a detailed diagnosis and is doctor centered, holistic medicine allows the patient to see how they can take their health into their own hands and empowers them by showing how general changes can improve not only the big picture but specific concerns.



Begin with these simple suggestions and see how they can improve seemingly unrelated area of health - including emotions!

1. *Dietary Adjustments:* In Chinese medicine eating/digestion and breathing/respiration are the only ways to make more of the things your body needs to function properly. Improving the diet, therefore can improve every aspect of health immensely. Eat natural, unprocessed foods that are local and in season. Eat a variety of natural colors and flavors for a balanced diet. Enjoy your food and eat slowly and mindfully.

2. *Breathing Exercises:* Breathing is the other half of making what your body needs and how you breathe is just as important as what you eat. When we are stressed we tend to clench our muscles and hold our breath. The reverse is true too. When we breathe shallowly we tend to clench our muscles and feel stressed. This leads to a cycle of the breath supporting a perpetually stressed state. When we slow down and deepen the breath it allows more oxygen to revitalize the body, the muscles relax and we feel less stressed.

3. *Physical Movement:* Exercises such as walking, qi gong, yoga, and moderate aerobics can help you feel better all around. In fact, physical exercise benefits emotional health as much as it benefits physical health. Be sure to choose appropriate exercises and rest during your period.

4. *Emotional Movement:* Because the body and mind are interconnected, emotional “exercise” is just as important as physical exercise and just as beneficial. Journal, meditate, be creative, talk with friends and express your emotions in healthy and timely ways instead of letting them linger or stuffing them. Emotional movement benefits physical concerns as much as it benefits emotional ones!

Try to make small improvements for big results!

Whether you want to improve something physical such as your menstrual cycle or digestion or something emotional such as anxiety or stress making a change in any one of these areas will improve the whole and will support the changes you need. Good Luck :) Nicole

FENG SHUI CORNER

Feng shui (pronounced “fung shway”) is the ancient Chinese practice of arranging your environment to achieve balance and harmony. But feng shui can be about more than arranging furniture and hanging wind chimes, it is also a great way to be more mindful and aware of the many subtle ways you can improve your quality of life.

Try the following spring cleaning suggestions and see if you agree:

Instead of feeling overwhelmed by a long list of chores, make this year’s cleaning a practice in mindfulness. Be in the moment and enjoy the process.

Choose a warm day and open your windows, breathe deeply, enjoy the fresh air, feel the breeze on your skin.

Turn on your favorite music, dance as you clean. smile.

Buy natural cleaning products you can feel good about using and make sure you enjoy how they smell.

Dust, sweep, vacuum and shine while saying a mantra like, “joy,” “peace,” “thankful,” “new” or “spring.”

Consider the following:

Is there something you’d like to let go of?

Is there something you’d like to bring into your life?



How does your space reflect where you are right now?

How could your space reflect the changes you’d like to make in your life?

Are you trying to get pregnant with a mess in the would-be nursery? Wanting to sleep soundly in a chaotic bedroom? Wanting to lose weight without an inviting place to exercise? Wanting more energy in a bland beige surrounding? Make some changes to shift your mood.

Support your intentions, dreams and goals!

SPRING: A TIME FOR RENEWAL

Much of Chinese medical theory was established through careful observation of the natural world. An important concept is the idea of living in balance with the seasons. When you adjust your life and live in sync with the seasons you promote good health & prevent illness. Here are some suggestions for living in sync with spring.



Be attentive of transforming energy: In spring the cold and tranquil energy of winter begins to transform into the hot and active energy of summer. Use this emerging energy to be more active and cultivate personal growth. Take a class, plant flowers, go for walks, be creative.

Eat light foods and allow the body to detoxify: Spring is the time for a balanced and light diet. Avoid greasy, fatty and heavy foods as well as hot spices. Allow the body to refresh and renew by eating light soups and small meals.

Beware of wind: The gusty winds of spring bring sniffles and colds. Do not dress too lightly and be sure to keep your back and neck covered to avoid catching colds...it may sound strange...but it works!

Follow mother nature's lead: The energy of spring is supposed to be like a sapling tree, flexible, nourished and expanding. Be aware of factors in your life that contradict this (schedules, deadlines, lack of exercise, frustration, & stress) and see what you can do to be more balanced.

RECIPE: SPRING DUMPLINGS

This seasonal recipe follows the concept of eating lighter, easier to digest foods in spring. Try preparing it with friends or family...they are fun to make and delicious!

For the dough:

2½ cups unbleached all purpose flour
about ¾ cup cold water

For the filling:

½ lb. ground pork (not too lean)
finely chopped scallions (3 or 4 with the greens)
2 t soy sauce
½ cup grated root veggies (sweet potatoes, parsnips, etc.)
¼ cup finely chopped Chinese cabbage

Put flour in a large bowl and slowly add water while stirring with a fork until the flour forms into a ball (it should be moist but not too sticky)

Knead the dough on a floured surface until the dough is smooth and elastic, cover with a clean damp cloth and leave for 1 hour

Mix the filling ingredients in a bowl and squeeze out any extra liquids

After the dough has rested at least 1 hour divide it into 4 parts then roll each part into a long roll and cut it into 12-14 pieces

Roll each piece with a rolling pin until it makes a circle that is about 3" in diameter

Fill each circle with about 1½ t of filling, fold the circle in half and pinch the edges together to make a little pocket enclosing the filling

Bring a stock pot filled ½ way with water to boil. Boil the dumplings in batches of 5 or 6. When you put the dumplings in the water they will sink, once they float add 1-2 cups of cold water to the pot, bring the water back to a boil and let the dumplings float again, they should be cooked through (make sure the pork is cooked well).

Serve while still hot with soy sauce, red rice vinegar, chili oil or other dipping sauces.



“Spring has returned.
The Earth is like a child that knows poems.”

-Rainer Maria Rilke

ASK AN ACUPUNCTURIST

If you have a question you'd like answered please email it to nicole@lifehealinglife.com



Hello Nicole, Do you think acupuncture works because of the placebo effect? Cautiously Curious

Dear CC, Great question! It seems to be something that many people wonder, but don't necessarily ask. It's also a question that I love to answer :)

Let me start with this important piece of information: Studies show that no matter what is being studied, placebo (or mind-over-matter) accounts for 25-35% of people seeing some positive results. That's 25-35% of studies testing new drugs, procedures, holistic healing, you name it! 25-35% of people get better just *thinking* they are doing something to improve their health.

It stands to reason that people who receive acupuncture benefit from the placebo effect too, and they do. But, we also need to look at another statistic: Well designed unbiased studies of acupuncture show a success rate generally between 60-80%.

That 60-80% tells us that there is more than mere placebo healing occurring with acupuncture.

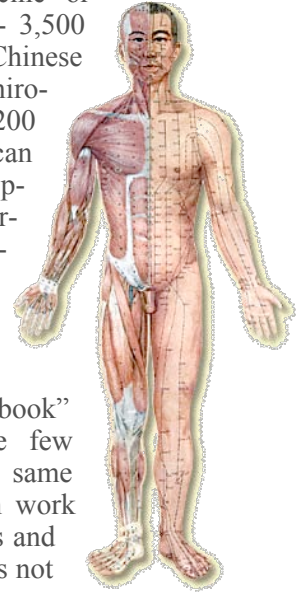
The part of this answer that I really love though is this: Chinese medicine (unlike Western medicine) embraces the placebo effect. Because Chinese medicine views the mind as just as important as any other organ and believes that thoughts are just as powerful as any other body function, it believes that engaging the patient's mind and thoughts in healing is a tool that can and should be used to further benefit the patient and improve results. After all, wouldn't you rather get rid of your back pain with your mind instead of surgery, or lower your anxiety with your thoughts instead of a pill?

Consider this: A recent study done by a California insurance company found that patients who listened to an inexpensive guided imagery CD before back surgery (which told them the surgery was going to be easy and successful), cost the insurance company (on average) \$2,000 less, had shorter hospital stays, less pain and took fewer medications. The mind is an amazing thing!

Hi Nicole, What is the difference between getting acupuncture from a Chiropractor, an MD and you? Thanks, Shopping Around

Dear Shopping Around, It is extremely important for you to know the answer to this question as you "shop" for acupuncturists.

While someone such as myself (who has a Master's degree in Oriental medicine or Acupuncture) has completed 2,000 - 3,500 hours of training specifically in Chinese medical theory and practice, most Chiropractors and MDs have had 100 - 200 hours of specific training. As you can imagine, the difference this discrepancy in training makes can be enormous. While a fully trained practitioner can analyze your whole body, health and needs using Chinese theory and will develop specific treatments just for you, lesser trained acupuncturist use "cook-book" acupuncture which uses the same few points on all patients who have the same main complaint. This technique can work well for some acute concerns (strains and sprains, colds, etc.), but it generally is not effective for chronic, deeper concerns.



If you are shopping for acupuncturists ask how many hours of training *specifically in Chinese medicine* each practitioner has (some MDs & DCs do have more). You may also want to find out how much experience a practitioner has in your area of concern and whether they have any additional training that is applicable. Beware of "board certified" as this may refer to an Acupuncture Board, Chiropractic Board or Medical Board and will tell you very little.

Good luck with your shopping!

DISCLAIMER: The information in this newsletter is based on classical Chinese medical theory and was written by a board certified, licensed acupuncturist. It is intended for use as general information and should not replace individual care or be used in place of a medical diagnosis or specific treatment (by an acupuncturist or western medical doctor).

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