



Chinese Medicine: Panacea for Stress & Anxiety

by Shoshanna Katzman

Most people experience occasional bouts of anxiety during their lifetime, although a growing number are plagued with anxiety on a regular basis to such a degree that it significantly interferes with their quality of life. In fact, 40 million people in the United States suffer from anxiety disorders, ranking as our country's most common mental illness. The level of severity ranges from a basic feeling of a pit in the stomach all the way to a feeling of fear, negative thoughts, restlessness, palpitations, and in many instances panic attacks. Fortunately, Chinese medicine offers various treatment options for anxiety at all levels accomplished by balancing and calming the energetics of the body to re-establish homeostasis.

Chinese medicine theory teaches that anxiety stems from disharmony between the kidney and heart meridians, whereby the water of the kidney is unable to quell the fire of the heart. When the fire of the heart is not contained it rises upward to the mind resulting in anxiety. This constitutional imbalance is rectified by addressing the root energetic cause via treatments such as acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, or via self-balancing through Tai Chi and Qigong exercise. One or a combination of these treatments results in alleviation, reduction or elimination of anxiety

whereby a feeling of centered calm is restored when the proper balance of energy within the heart and kidney meridian (energy) pathways is restored.

Acupuncture points are chosen to treat the root cause of anxiety stemming from the imbalance of the heart and kidney meridians. Additionally, acupuncture is also provided to treat the actual symptoms. A commonly used acupuncture point to allay anxiety is Pericardium 6 located above the inside of the wrist – one that restores movement of Qi (vital energy) and blood that promotes the interchange of yin and yang energy. This point is especially effective for reducing anxiety that is accompanied by the physical symptoms of palpitations or shortness of breath. Another acupuncture point that addresses both anxiety and worry is Heart 7 located on the wrist crease where the primary Qi of the heart passes and resides. Its Chinese name is shenmen, translated as 'spirit gate'. Treatment of this point "pacifies the heart and calms the spirit" as well as strengthens and regulates the heart meridian. It also has a sedative effect and addresses both the root energetic cause as well as physical symptoms.

Excessive stress stemming from high levels of work, financial and family pressures is another huge contributing factor of anxiety. Chinese healing techniques

helps a person to slow down and appreciate the moment as it gently opens innate Qi resources to promote centeredness, connection and renewed commitment to lifestyle steps necessary to regain homeostasis. This naturally helps an individual remain strong and balanced from within in order to withstand the outside pressures. Acupuncture and the practice of Qigong and Tai Chi are excellent for their palliative and preventative approach to stress management. In fact, a study published in the Journal of Endocrinology in March 2013 discovered stress hormones were lower in rats after receiving electric acupuncture. These treatments strengthen vital energy, nourish blood, boost immunity, nourish parasympathetic nervous system, calms the heart and spirit and balance hormones - providing the fortitude necessary to flow with stress, rather than allowing it to destroy mind/body integrity.

The Chinese medicine approach to health and healing can be received alone or in combination with visits to the primary care physician as well as a mental health professional - providing a comprehensive approach to management of excessive anxiety and stress in one's life. In a comprehensive literature review appearing in a 2011 edition of CNS Neuroscience and Therapeutics, acupuncture was found comparable to cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) in the treatment of anxiety.

Through Chinese medicine anxiety is resolved through gentle stimulation and re-balancing of the energetic system. This requires learning how to center oneself and hone the ability to maintain proper direction of Qi flow throughout the energetic pathways of the body. When this happens energy flows smoothly and freely in the appropriate direction to maintain overall sense of calm throughout the mind, body and spirit. Fortunately more and more people are learning about the virtues of this ancient, yet timely methodology for optimal health and healing.

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