

NATURAL MEDIATOR FOR STRESS: ACUPUNCTURE

By: Sharon McDermott, M.S., L.Ac.

Divorce is considered one of the most stressful events a person can go through in life. The less amicable the divorce, the more likely you will feel the emotional and physical stressors of the situation. Physical manifestations can include indigestion, insomnia, high blood pressure and migraines. The emotional and psychological toll of separation and divorce can be felt with anger, rejection, sadness, irritability and loneliness.

Acupuncture as a Natural Mediator

How can acupuncture help to relieve stress? Acupuncture induces what is called the “relaxation response”. It allows the nervous system to calm down by decreasing blood pressure and heart rate. Acupuncture increases circulation, metabolism and the immune system response. When you meet with your acupuncturist she will start with your medical history. She will want to know your daily habits and what other ways you may be alleviating stress (good and bad habits). The acupuncture treatment will last for approximately 25-30 minutes. Your acupuncturist may provide other modalities such as cupping, massage or electrical stimulation. The total treatment time is about 55-60 minutes. Let us start with an understanding of stress on a physiological level.

What Is Stress?

Stress is a wear and tear on our bodies as we adjust to a continually changing environment. The primary stress hormone, cortisol regulates heart, lungs, circulation, metabolism, immune system and skin (i.e. physical response). Other hormones such as catecholamines release neurotransmitters in the brain to trigger an emotional response.

These physical and emotional effects can create positive and negative feelings. Positive stress can propel us into action and help us to gain new perspectives. Negative stress can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression. These feelings can lead to health problems: upset stomach, insomnia, fatigue, headaches, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

3 Ways to Identify Stress

Can you totally eliminate stress? NO. The goal is not to eliminate stress but know how to manage it and use it to help us. What is stressful for one person may not be stressful for another. 1) You must identify unrelieved stress. 2) Reduce or change stressors for short term exposure. 3) You can reduce your intensity of emotional reactions to stress by identifying your perception or expectations about a situation. 4. Moderate physical reactions by practicing breathing and meditative techniques. 5. Build and maintain your physical and emotional reserves.

Other Natural Methods

Go to your acupuncturist on a regular basis! Practice various movement and breathing exercises such as yoga, tai chi and qi gong. Other relaxation methods include meditation, muscle relaxation, massage, reflexology and biofeedback. Try to eat right and get proper rest. Sharon McDermott, L.Ac. will be teaching a Qi Gong class from September 19-October 24. Please contact Sharon for more information at www.healthyhealingli.com or 516-410-4297.