

Patient Help Sheet

Handling Stress

Here are some tips that you can use to help balance and support your health during this time. Please feel free to call me if you have further questions or concerns.

"Good health and good sense are two of life's greatest blessings." - Publilius Syrus

The dictionary defines stress in multiple ways, but there is only one that matters when we discuss how stress affects our physical bodies. Stress is defined as a physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Stress actually does have a function in our bodies, it's the body's way of signaling for help or a break in the routine. If we don't listen to these signals, we can develop imbalances in our bodies, which can lead to illnesses.

Cortisol is the hormone most closely related to stress. Cortisol is a big component of the "fight or flight" response we feel when we are scared or threatened. In small bursts, cortisol is helpful. However, when stress becomes chronic, the cortisol levels become elevated. This puts the body in a constant state of being on edge, eventually causing insomnia, depression, anxiety, digestive issues and mental illness.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) provides many ways of combating stress and keeping our minds focused. Here are a few examples of how this ancient medical system can help.

Acupuncture for Stress:

Acupuncture for Stress: Acupuncture acts like physical therapy for the nervous system. The tiny needles retrain the nervous system and the brain to behave as it normally should. For the nervous system to act and respond accordingly, cortisol has to be at normal levels and only used when a true "fight or flight" situation occurs. Studies show acupuncture does this.

Acupuncture also helps reduce stress by keeping the heart rate normal. When the body is stressed, the heart tends to pump faster and in some cases, a person may even develop palpitations. The heart rate is closely connected to the vagus nerve. If the vagus nerve is stimulated, so too will the heart rate. There are specific acupressure points on the arms and hands that calm the vagus nerve and the heart.

Chinese Herbal Formulas for Stress:

Combinations of herbs, known as formulas are used frequently in TCM. Xiao Yao San is a popular TCM formula used frequently to address stress. This formula is known as "Free and Easy Wanderer" because it helps remove any stagnation in the energetic pathways that lead to stress and difficulty focusing or staying on task.

Nutrition for Stress:

Proper nutrition is vital for everyone. But when it comes to stress and focus, nutrition for the kidneys is crucial. The kidneys are the source of our vital essence and if they are damaged, our health will suffer. Foods like black beans, kidney beans, asparagus, plums, blueberries and blackberries are all beneficial for strengthening the kidneys. When the kidneys are strong, we are better prepared to deal with stress.

Acupuncture Points for Stress:

Yin Tang - Yin Tang is located directly between the inner edges of the eyebrows. It is a reflex point of the pituitary gland. Yin Tang calms the mind and relaxes the body by controlling hormone secretions.

Kidney 1 - Kidney 1 is located on the bottom of the foot, at the junction of the anterior one third and posterior two thirds of the line connecting the base of the second and third toes and the heel. Kidney 1 can sedate and calm the mind, while also regulating blood flow to the upper part of the body, aka the brain.

Du 20 - This point is located on the top of the head, midway between the apexes of both ears. Du 20 has been noted to improve mental clarity and awareness, while also enhancing memory.



As you can see, TCM is a great way to deal with stress. If you are having difficulties dealing with stress, don't wait to contact me.