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### Keeping your New Year's Resolutions with Chinese Medicine

Well, the holidays, with all their build-up and excitement, are over. For some, it's been a lovely time, relaxing with family, enjoying good food and drink – a much needed rest. For others, it's been stressful: conflict with family members, dealing with the absence of a loved one, money worries, or rushing around trying to make the season perfect for everybody. Either way, it's likely we ate too much (and the wrong things!), drank too much alcohol, sat around too much visiting, and spent too much money. We've made some new year's resolutions, and just hope this year they'll last past January 31!

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) can help you keep those resolutions, be they to lose weight, quit smoking, cut down on alcohol or recreational drugs, or to exercise more and take better care of your health. Acupuncture, often combined with Chinese herbs, can help with overall balancing of the body and mind, leading to more energy, a more relaxed and positive outlook, and feeling better overall. When we feel better, we treat ourselves better, and are less likely to overeat (or binge on junk food), and engage in unhealthy or addictive behaviours. As well, we're more apt to get out and exercise instead of plunking ourselves down in front of the TV or computer all day!

As well as overall balancing, acupuncture excels at treating addictions, whether it's to cigarettes, alcohol, drugs or food, to name a few. Extremely fine needles are placed in five points in each ear that are associated with an organ system: the Liver points help us to move toward our goals, as well as helping with detoxification (physical and emotional); the Kidney points are associated with will-power and our basic energy; and the Lung points help us to let go of old, outmoded habits. As well, the points help to strengthen and clear the associated physical organs. Other points are chosen for general calming and centering. Clients have commented that they have never felt so relaxed and calm as during ear acupuncture, and the effect lasts.

Chinese Medicine is special in that it treats each client as an individual, and balances their whole being – body, mind and spirit. For this reason, each client is given a thorough diagnosis including a series of questions regarding physical and emotional functions, as well as a pulse and tongue diagnosis. This will determine which body points will be added to the treatment to balance their particular condition.

Acupuncture increases will-power and resolve, and cuts down on withdrawal symptoms, such as irritability, anxiety, insomnia and a feeling of loss. But you have to want to quit! Working with addictions requires looking at and dealing with the emotional factors that are at the root of the habit, and it's not easy. For those ready and willing to go through the process, acupuncture can be incredibly supportive – it can make the difference between drifting back to the familiar comfort of the addiction (again!), or quitting for good. Many clients have found their desire to engage in the addiction seems to decrease on its own after a few treatments. "I picked up my pack of cigarettes and I was surprised to find that I just didn't want one!" a client said recently.

The good news is that most extended health insurance plans cover acupuncture, and they usually renew in January! Just in time to keep those new year's resolutions and get yourself back on track for 2019!

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