

Published in the Valley Harvester, February, 2019

Natural Help For February Blues

Ah, February...! It's cold and grey out there, and the snowstorms (and rainstorms!) seem to be a weekly event. Many people find it hard to get out, with the bad roads, icy sidewalks, and short days, and they can start to feel isolated and blue. It's a tough time of year, and there are 2 more months of winter to go, at the very least! Though winter is a natural time for hibernation and rest, enough already! Whether we've received a diagnosis of "Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)" or not, it's hard not to get a little down in February, if not downright depressed.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) excels at treating depression, whether severe or mild, as well as the lethargy, fatigue, anxiety, irritability or insomnia that may accompany it. By placing extremely fine, sterile needles under the skin, acupuncture helps the body's energy (*Qi*) to flow more smoothly, removing blockages and bringing balance to the whole system. As Chinese Medicine works on the whole person (body, mind and spirit), better *Qi* flow in the body leads to increased energy, a more balanced and lighter mood, better motivation, and a feeling of wellness. A Chinese herbal formula may also be prescribed to strengthen and balance the body. When we're feeling better, we're more likely to get outside and exercise, eat better, socialize, and live in a more positive way, which further improves our well-being.

Chinese Medicine treats each client as an individual, and there is no "one size fits all". For this reason, during the first appointment, a thorough diagnosis is given, to obtain a whole picture of the client's health. A series of questions regarding physical and emotional functions, as well as a pulse and tongue diagnosis, helps identify any weaknesses, blockages or imbalances in the system.

Everything is connected to everything else, and clients are often surprised when issues, seemingly unrelated, improve as a "side-effect" of acupuncture. For example, improved immunity comes about naturally when the body's systems are balanced and strong. Catching fewer colds and flus is a bonus for sure, when it seems everyone in town is coughing and sneezing! Digestion often improves too, with a decrease in bloating, gas, loose stools or constipation. As well, eating habits and weight tend to balance out. Body pain often decreases as the energy and blood move and blockages are flushed out. As well, sleep and energy levels often improve.

"I feel calm, energized, relaxed and alert, all at the same time," a client recently reported. "A sense of well-being is the only way I can describe it. I feel like I can finally get off my butt and go out in the world and do stuff now!"

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