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Tuning up for winter with Traditional Chinese Medicine

Winter is a tough time of year – no doubt about it. Those endless snowstorms, icy roads and long cold nights can take a toll on our energy, both physical and mental. In my Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and acupuncture practice, I find that my clients are more tired, less upbeat emotionally, and that imbalances that were under control during the summer tend to resurface in winter.

As winter really starts to set in, it's important to be as strong, resilient and healthy as we can be. Like tuning up our car; putting the winter tires on and topping up the fluids, the body and mind also need to be tuned up and prepared for this challenging season. TCM and acupuncture can give us the boost we need – getting us in ship-shape to make it through till spring.

Energy: Winter can be an energy drain. There's less sunlight, and we tend to get outside and exercise less. As well, it takes energy just to keep the body warm! In TCM, we say that the Kidney energy gets used up in winter. Acupuncture and Chinese herbs can help to boost this vital energy and keep us strong and resilient. My clients are often delighted to find that with TCM treatments, their energy gradually increases, and that they just feel better overall, even as the winter storms rage! This is because in addition to tonifying the energy of the body and mind, acupuncture also improves the flow, removing blockages and bringing overall balance.

Mental health: Winter tends to be the hardest time of year for those with emotional imbalances such as depression and anxiety. Whether we've received a diagnosis such as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), or just tend to get a little down and lethargic in winter, TCM can lift and balance the mood, increase motivation and balance sleep cycles. The body's organ systems are each connected to an emotional state – by strengthening and balancing these systems, the mind is naturally energized, moving back toward its natural state of calm and contentment.

Immunity: With all those cold and flu bugs floating around this time of year, it is important to keep our immune system strong. Acupuncture and Chinese herbs excel at boosting immunity. I've had clients who used to get sick four or five times a year. After coming in for a series of treatments leading up to winter, they've reported getting through the season without getting sick once! And that's with travelling on airplanes and being around grandkids!

Body pain and injuries: They're back – those aches and pains that'd you'd almost forgotten about over the summer. With this damp and cold weather, we're once again reminded of that arthritic knee, that sore back, that sciatica. Acupuncture removes the blockages that cause pain, as well as nourishing the tissues and joints. Also, it helps injuries to resolve faster – that sore shoulder from shovelling, or that hip you wrenched slipping on the ice doesn't have to become chronic!

Addictions and weight loss: Acupuncture can help you keep your new years resolutions! When it comes to addictions, ear acupuncture is a great adjunct to body acupuncture. Using five extremely fine needles in each ear, it increases will-power, helps with detoxification, cuts down on withdrawal symptoms, and helps with general calming and centering. Whether you are dealing with an addiction (to cigarettes, alcohol or food, to name a few) or just want to get back to a healthier lifestyle, acupuncture can help you get back on track. With weight issues, TCM strengthens the digestive system and balances appetite and mood, allowing excess weight to come off naturally. With more energy and a more positive outlook, we're less likely to engage in unhealthy behaviours such as overeating or addictions. We're more likely to eat better, exercise more, and treat ourselves well.

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