Dealing With Anxiety

Dr. Shaun Dumas

www.acupuncturewithdrdumas.com
941-364-4411

It seems like everyone has anxiety these days - working moms, executives, teens, and even kids. No one is immune to the modern American lifestyle of being overworked, overbooked and constantly connected via web, text and phone to a steady stream of negative, and often violent, news and “entertainment.”

One easy fix is a trip to the doctor for anti-anxiety medications such as Paxil, Prozac, Zoloft, Celexa, Effexor, or Wellbutrin. When prescribed correctly by a medical doctor, these medications can be a lifeline for patients whose lives are torn apart by anxiety. There is, however, an alternative that has already been treating anxiety for 5,000 years: Traditional Chinese Medicine.

The word *alternative* can be somewhat of a misnomer when describing Traditional Chinese Medicine. Mainstream science is just now studying and “proving” what the Chinese have known for thousands of years - that the body, mind, and spirit must be treated in an integrated way. The strength of Traditional Chinese Medicine is that it treats the entire patient without compartmentalizing the body, mind and spirit.

We do a detailed intake and ask about your stress level, your physical issues, sleep habits, moods and lifestyle. We won’t treat only your anxiety: we help you make appropriate diet and lifestyle changes while providing you with acupuncture and herbal remedies to support your shift to a more balanced, or homeostatic, lifestyle.

The World Health Organization cites 43 conditions, including anxiety, that acupuncture treats successfully while minimizing side effects. An abstract on Pub Med, “Treating generalized anxiety disorder using complementary and alternative medicine,” (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23981404) shows that a combination of acupuncture, yoga breathing, massage, journaling and nutrition counseling all helped significantly reduced anxiety in the patients who completed the study. A secondary effect of reducing medication levels was also reported, but not specifically addressed in the study design.

PubMed also has an abstract outlining how acupuncture is able to treat depression, a condition related to and often presenting with anxiety. “Progress of researches on mechanisms of acupuncture underlying improvement of depression in the past five years” (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24006675) details the specific neurotransmitters that acupuncture helps regulate in order to treat depression, which are usually the same ones that regulate anxiety.
**What you can do at home to reduce anxiety**

There are many simple lifestyle and diet changes you can make to enhance the effectiveness of your acupuncture sessions and bring balance back to your life:

1) **Unplug at least once a day.**
   Take a break from TV, the phone and the computer for at least 30 minutes a day. Try to schedule it so the whole family can participate at the same time every day.

2) **Reduce stimulants in your diet.**
   This includes caffeine, soda and alcohol. Replace with water or herbal teas such as chamomile or catnip.

3) **Time off.**
   Schedule one entire day off for yourself each week, or at least a half-day each week. Do not book club or social obligations on that day. Sunday used to be an enforced “day of rest” for a reason.

4) **Reduce or eliminate processed foods.**
   Things that come in a box are often stripped of nutrients in their natural form, so your body isn’t getting the vitamins and minerals as nature intended. Vitamins play a big role in mood regulation; we can talk about appropriate supplements, if needed.

5) **Try to go to bed at the same time every night.**
   Remove all electronics, such as TVs or computers, from the bedroom. There are only two things you should do in the bedroom, and they can both help you reduce anxiety.

6) **Lavender sachets and essential oil can help you sleep and promote a sense of calm.**
   You can put a sachet of dried flowers in your pillow, spray your linens with lavender oil and water in a spray bottle, and dab a bit of essential oil on your wrists under the pinky finger or between the eyes.

7) **Clean out the clutter.**
   Clutter promotes anxiety, whether it is unopened mail, dirty dishes and laundry, or just too much stuff. Devote fifteen minutes (or more!) per day just to clutter cleaning or filing each day.

Anxiety has almost become a badge of honor in modern life, but it comes at a big cost - your health. With Traditional Chinese Medicine and behavioral changes, I can help guide you back to the healthy, anxiety-free lifestyle you deserve.

*Call for your appointment: 941-364-4411*