

## Acupuncture and Depression



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What is depression? Can acupuncture and Chinese medicine help people suffering from depression? Depression is a term that has been commonly used to describe a variety of ailments, ranging from minor to incapacitating. "Clinically significant" depression, termed major depression, is a serious condition characterized by an ongoing depressed mood, in addition to many other somatic, cognitive and motivational symptoms such as the following:

- significant weight loss or weight gain
- insomnia
- fatigue or loss of daily energy
- feelings of worthlessness
- excessive or inappropriate guilt

- diminished ability to think or concentrate, indecisiveness
- recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying) or suicide.

Everyone, at some point in their life has experienced some form of depression. Often, depression is actually a healthy response to some drastic change in our life. Sometimes feeling depressed it just simply the body's way of handling what some might call prolonged "everyday misery". Depression or the state of unhappiness can pass quickly or it can be debilitating for those who experience it. Prolonged feelings of sadness, discouragement and hopelessness can greatly affect our quality of life and can turn into major depression. The American Psychiatric Association now recognizes over 300 mental disorders, including depression. Current studies show that approximately 17% of the population (estimated at 19 million American adults) will experience some level of depression within their lifetime.

Western medical treatments for depression include both psychotherapies and drug therapies (such as Prozac, Paxil and Zoloft). While numerous studies have delineated the

clinical effectiveness of these therapies, a great many patients are not significantly helped. There can be numerous side effects from the drug therapies so one may ask "could acupuncture help?"

Acupuncture has traditionally been employed in China to treat most illnesses, including what we would today call major depression. In addition to centuries of clinical experience, there are now a number of controlled medical research studies confirming that acupuncture is an effective therapy for the treatment of major depression and its related conditions. Acupuncture and Chinese medicine provide safe, natural, drug-free and effective ways to address depression.

The focus of your acupuncturist will be to restore the balance of the body's yin and yang and therefore maintain the continuous flow of Qi throughout the body and mind. When the body is in balance, both physically and emotionally, patients are able to bounce back from their depressed state and thus move on with their lives in a more positive direction.

If you are suffering from depression, consider calling an acupuncturist today.