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**Create Lasting Resolve to Reach Your Goals with Acupuncture**

The start of the new year is a time of looking back at what we have achieved in the past year and looking forward to the future. This period of remembrance and resolution may be challenging but it is both productive and rewarding. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help achieve the change you seek as it assists in illness prevention, stress relief, minimizes aches and pains, improves energy and nurtures balance. This calm and clarity strengthens your resolve as you take the next step in achieving your goals.



**Here are a few ways that Acupuncture can help you achieve your goals:**

**Lose Weight**

Losing weight is the most common New Year's resolution. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you reach your goal weight and maintain it by promoting better digestion, smoothing emotions, reducing appetite, improving metabolism, and eliminating food cravings--all of which can help energize the body, maximize absorption of nutrients, regulate elimination, control overeating, suppress the appetite and reduce anxiety.

**Get in Shape**

Renewed enthusiasm to exercise in order to enhance fitness levels, train for a competition, or lose weight can come at a painful price for those who try to do too much too quickly. Recent studies show that acupuncture effectively treats sports injuries such as strains, sprains, musculoskeletal pain, swollen muscles and shin splints.

**Eliminate Stress**

Stress reduction is always on the top ten list for New Year's resolutions and for a good reason; it is often the cause of illness and deterioration of health. Numerous studies have demonstrated the substantial benefits of acupuncture in the treatment of stress, anxiety and lowering blood pressure. In addition to acupuncture, Oriental medicine offers a whole range of tools that can be integrated into your life to keep stress in check.

**Improved Quality of Life**

If pain is keeping you from living life to the fullest, acupuncture can help as it has no side effects and can be helpful for all types of pain, regardless of the cause or where it is located. Increasingly, people are looking for more natural approaches to help relieve painful conditions instead of relying on medication. In addition to reducing pain, acupuncture also hastens the healing process by increasing circulation and attracting white blood cells to an injured area.

**Call today to see how Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine can help you keep your resolutions and prepare for the year ahead!**

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**Mental Clarity Boost**



**Feeling a little foggy?  
Having trouble concentrating?**

Massage acupuncture point Du 20 for some mental clarity.

Du 20 is located on top of the head, midway between the ears. It is used to clear the mind and improve focus.

Stimulate the point with your index finger 35-40 seconds for a quick "brain boost."

## Healthy Brain Habits

Keeping the goals we have set for ourselves in addition to outlining and completing the tasks needed to accomplish those goals can be overwhelming. Here are a few steps you can take to help optimize brain health and sharpen your memory:

**Eat More Produce** - Studies that focus on food and memory show that the more produce you eat, the better. One 25-year Harvard Medical School study of more than 13,000 women showed that the participants who ate relatively high amounts of vegetables over the years had less age-related decline in memory. Cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, and leafy green vegetables had the biggest effect on helping women retain their memory during the course of the study. In another study, the phytochemicals, anthocyanin (found in berries of all colors and cherries) and quercetin (found in onions, kale and apples), actually reversed some of the age-related memory deficits in laboratory animals.

**Take Care of Your Heart** - A healthy heart makes for a healthy brain. Because oxygen and nutrients are carried in the blood stream, anything that impedes blood flow will starve those all-important brain cells. Review your blood pressure and cholesterol level. Know your numbers and if they are elevated, take immediate measures to bring them down.

**Get a Good Night's Sleep** -When we sleep, the brain has time to recharge. Studies show that 7-8 hours of sleep a night helps to strengthen memory. Practicing good sleep habits helps keep the brain and the rest of the body functioning at its best.

**Exercise** - Regular physical activity has been shown to decrease the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease by about half. Exercise increases blood flow to the brain and helps regulate blood sugar levels, both of which improve brain function and memory. Aim for 30 minutes a day.

**Challenge Your Brain** - Keep your mind active and challenged. Brain function decreases with age. Studies show that cognitive exercise can improve blood flow to the brain. Spend at least 15 minutes each day on a mental exercise such as a crossword puzzle, journaling or learning a new language in order to slow memory loss.

## THE THYROID GLAND: The Master Regulator - Part IV

The conventional medical treatment of hypothyroidism involves the use of synthetic thyroid hormones, most commonly Synthroid. Levothyroxin is also sometimes prescribed. Both of these drugs are pure T-4, or thyroxine. Occasionally synthetic T-3, usually as Cytomel, will be utilized.

As I said in earlier articles, blood levels of TSH only are used by most physicians to determine hypothyroidism. If the TSH falls between 0.2 - 5.5 mU/L of blood, the thyroid is considered normal and no treatment is given. Many other healthcare practitioners believe a TSH level above 2.0 mU/L is more indicative of hypothyroidism, and that the conventional lab values are too broad.

Many hypothyroid patients have difficulty converting the less active T-4 into the more active T-3. This conversion largely occurs in the liver. So giving a poor-converter T-4 can often make the person feel worse, as they convert the now excess T-4 into Reverse T-3, which slows their metabolism further. It is sometimes not a T-4 problem to begin with, but a conversion issue. For poor converters, T-3 can be a better choice.

## The Will Power Connection



### Is there a body/mind connection to will power?

According to the principles of Acupuncture and Oriental medicine there is. Will power, or "Zhi," is said to reside in the kidneys and the state of the Kidney Qi directly correlates to the fortitude of our will power.

In Oriental medicine, disease prevention begins with a protective layer around the exterior of the body called wei qi, or *defensive energy*. If you catch colds easily, have low energy and require a long time recuperating from an illness, your wei qi may be deficient.

Nourishing Qi can help greatly enhance the body's ability to thrive in times of stress, aid in healing, prevent illness and increase vitality. According to Oriental medicine, recharging your battery and regeneration of vital energy, Qi, will help you live, look and feel your best!

Some more enlightened physicians, in my opinion, will give their patients Armour Thyroid, which is a desiccated pig thyroid extract. Armour, and other similar products, contain T-4, T-3, and other thyroid gland components that often makes for a more effective treatment. However, if the patient is a poor converter of T-4 to T-3, they can run into the same problem as those on the synthetics, like Synthroid.

Regardless of which prescription drug is ultimately given, the underlying cause is not being addressed by the medicine. The underlying cause is often a nutritional deficiency. Sometimes it is simply a matter of not enough protein. In other cases, iodine or selenium or other nutrients are needed. Pharmaceutical drugs, don't contain iodine or one of the many other nutrients needed. For instance, your thyroid needs sufficient amounts of iodine to produce its hormones.

If you are concerned that you might be hypothyroid, start by taking your basal temperature. Using a non-mercury, non-digital thermometer, place the thermometer in your mouth when you first wake in the morning. Leave it for five minutes and record the temperature.

Do this for five consecutive days and average the five readings to arrive at your basal temperature. Menstruating women should begin taking their basal temp on Day 2 or 3 of their cycle. People with a cold or sinus infection should take their temperature after the infection has resolved. A normal basal temperature is between 97.8 - 98.2 degrees Fahrenheit. If your temperature is below 97.8, you may be borderline hypothyroid. If it's below 97.4, you are definitely hypothyroid and should be treated.

Most physicians don't consider basal temperature an accurate assessment of thyroid function anymore. So if your temperature is below 97.4, ask your MD to order blood tests which include TSH, Free T-3 and Free T-4, Reverse T-3, and Thyroid Antibodies. At the very least, check the TSH, Free T-3, and Thyroid Antibodies.

Conventional medicine does not think the levels of thyroid antibodies are important because they don't know how to treat them if they are high. But, they are very important! If the thyroid antibody blood levels are high, it means your immune system is attacking your thyroid gland and most likely other organs! It's important to correct this situation so your body is not damaging itself. Makes sense, right?

If you have blood tests done, the level of TSH should be < 2.0 mU/L. The thyroid antibodies should be < 20 to be considered normal, and not Hashimoto's Thyroiditis. Free T-3 levels should be between 3 - 3.5 (or 300 - 350, depending on the lab), and Free T-4 levels ideally will be between 1.4 - 1.7, but no less than 1.2 to be considered in the normal range. The reverse T-3 levels should be < 30 to be ideal. These blood values are the ones many practitioners use to assess thyroid function. Conventional doctors may not agree, especially with the lower TSH range.

Some alternative practitioners, including some MDs, will prescribe bio-identical hormones for hypothyroidism. These hormones are made from plants and are more identical biochemically to what your body produces. These work for some people, but I prefer to see patients use more natural substances like herbs, foods, and whole food supplements to improve thyroid function.

To your continued good health!

Happy New Year!

David Mortell, L.Ac.

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