

# Health WellNews

WINTER has arrived...

## Acupuncture for Harnessing Willpower

However, fear frequently gets in the way of this balance and tends to override our purpose and goals. Why? Because fear is the mind's way of keeping us safe and protecting us from harm. But anybody who has ever overcome adversity can tell you fear probably never entered their mind or they did it regardless. All because of the willpower to attain their goals.

The reason TCM works so well at addressing and correcting problems with willpower is because it addresses the body holistically. TCM looks at everything: the body, mind, environment and the emotions. This allows for treatments to be customized to the needs of the patient instead of a one size fits all approach. Customized treatments allow for better outcomes.

Ever had one of those days or weeks where you just can't pull yourself out of bed in the morning? Or perhaps you just can't say "No!" to the dessert tray. Regardless of the activity, willpower is what keeps some people disciplined. But it doesn't make you a bad person if you have dessert with every meal, buy more shoes than you really need or take longer to get going in the morning. It just means your willpower isn't strong. And just like any other habit, that can be changed.

Willpower is like a muscle. It can be trained. Willpower also uses energy and is limited, just like muscles. Exerting self-control uses energy and over time, this

energy can become depleted, making it easier to have the dessert, buy the shoes or sleep in past your alarm. So if you're somebody who has difficulty with willpower, what can you do?

Believe it or not, regular acupuncture treatments can increase your willpower. Acupuncture is just one subset of an ancient medical system known as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). But it is by far the most commonly known and used. In TCM, the word for will is Zhi. In TCM, Zhi is associated with the kidneys. So if the energy of your kidneys is strong, the will is also strong. This is how acupuncture can help increase willpower. The needles used in acupuncture treatments actually stimulate the energy of the kidneys, thus increasing willpower.

There are two sides of the coin for every organ in TCM, the yin and the yang. With regard to the kidneys and willpower, the yin is the substance that provides the drive, while also accepting the circumstances we're given. And the yang aspect of will power is our expression of ourselves in terms of goals, vision, ambition and aspiration. When both yin and yang are in balance, will power is strong.



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## 5 Reasons to Try Acupuncture This Winter

Winter is one of the five seasons acknowledged by Traditional Chinese Medicine. The ancient Chinese followed the belief humans should live in harmony with the cycles of nature. During the winter months, darkness and cold indicate we should slow down, take care of our health, conserve our strength and replenish our energy for the upcoming spring and summer months.

Each season has multiple associations that help us adjust our habits as things change, which makes it easier to keep the body and mind balanced. Winter is ruled by the water element. The water element is associated with the kidneys and urinary bladder. According to Traditional Chinese

Medicine philosophy, the kidneys are the source of all energy found within the body. This energy is what keeps us alive and allows our bodies to function properly. During the winter months, it's vital we nourish and nurture our kidney energy.

Winter is typically a time when we decrease our daily activities. For many people, this coupled with longer hours of darkness, can lead to Seasonal Affective Disorder. This form of depression occurs during the winter months. It can be very debilitating for those who suffer from it. But acupuncture can help. Studies show regular acupuncture treatments can be as effective as prescription medications for treating depression and seasonal affective disorder.

The most common ailment that occurs during the winter months is the cold. The cold is a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract, nose and throat. Because we're not as active during the winter months, our immunity tends to be lowered and this is when the cold viruses can attack. While colds usually have to run their course, acupuncture can help shorten the length of the cold and drastically decrease the symptoms.

Over the past decade or so, the norovirus has become more prevalent during the winter months. This particular virus causes gastroenteritis or gastrointestinal tract disorders like diarrhea. During the initial few days of a norovirus attack, people need to stay home and hydrate themselves.



But once the diarrhea becomes less frequent, acupuncture can be very helpful in decreasing the symptoms and boosting the person's immunity.



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## 5 Ways to Help You Wake Up and Get Active

Everybody experiences times where they have no motivation. Lack of motivation can be caused by many things: the weather, depression, nutritional deficiencies, rejection and even not exercising. For many, this seems contradictory. If I have no motivation, how am I supposed to go exercise? Well, it all comes down to choices and doing what is best for your body.

Lacking motivation can be detrimental to your health. Even though everybody knows they should be exercising, eating right and getting proper sleep, many of us choose not to. This becomes a bad habit that can actually develop into depression, fatigue, insomnia and even nutritional deficiencies that cause worse physical problems. We tell ourselves we don't have time or we have no motivation or willpower. These are just stories we tell ourselves. Everybody has time to care for themselves. It's just a choice we have to make. So here are some ways to help us wake up, get motivated and get moving.

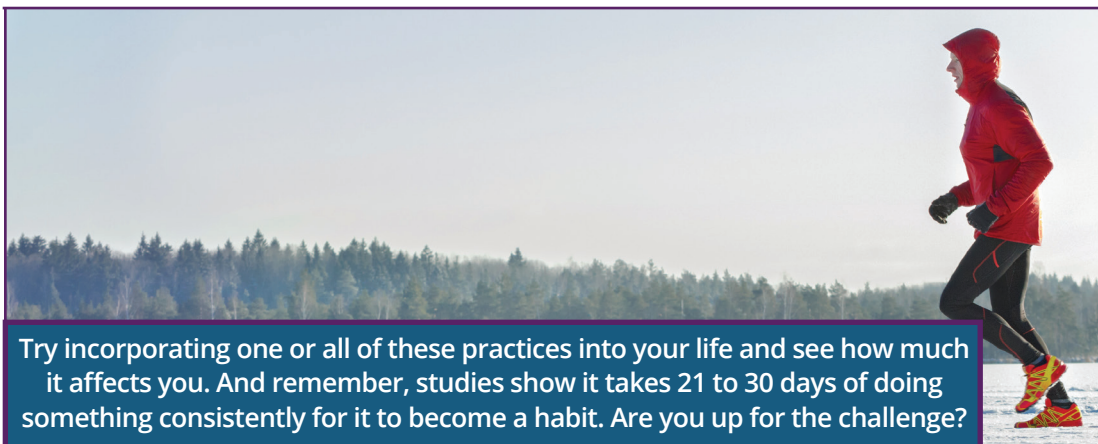
**1 ACUPUNCTURE** - Acupuncture can help put the pep in your step when it comes to motivation. In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), lack of motivation is considered a sort of blockage along the energetic pathways that run throughout the body. Most commonly, this affects the gallbladder and liver pathways. Over time, this lack of motivation frequently develops into depression. When the body is depressed, nothing seems possible. But there are underlying causes to depression that begin with lack of motivation.

**2 FENG SHUI** – This ancient art is used to energetically balance the home through the placement of the furnishings inside. The bedroom is particularly important because we spend so much time there. Feng Shui tells us your bed should be placed where it allows you to see the door without being in the direct path of the door opening. This allows for a sense of security, which can lead to more restful sleep.

**3 GRATITUDE** – Being thankful for everything you have in your life really does make a difference. Instead of seeing the day ahead of you as a burden and worrying about everything you have to do, be thankful you woke up again. This will shift how you look at things throughout the day and the rest of your life.

**4 EXERCISE** – Whether you're a gym rat or not, exercise is vitally important. Going for a walk or a jog first thing in the morning can be refreshing and get the blood pumping. Studies show regular exercise in the morning can actually lead to more energy the next day.

**5 MEDITATE/PRAY** – Meditation and prayer allow the body to relax and the mind to calm down. Using this tool shortly before going to bed can be very beneficial. And as we all know, when the mind is quiet, the body relaxes more and we get better, more restful sleep, which gives us more energy and motivation to tackle the next day.



Try incorporating one or all of these practices into your life and see how much it affects you. And remember, studies show it takes 21 to 30 days of doing something consistently for it to become a habit. Are you up for the challenge?

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## How Weather Affects Pain

Almost everybody has heard one of their relatives complain about how painful their joints become when the weather changes, especially when it gets cold or rainy. But is there any validity to this claim? And what about people who live in consistently cold, rainy or damp climates? Do they have the same complaints about body aches and pains? The short answer is both yes and no. There is some truth to this, but it might not be what you think.

Achy joints, arthritis flare ups and intense migraines are just some of the ways people can predict the weather coming. And while it may seem far-fetched, there is something going on there. Scientists have studied this, but even they can't agree. There are however, several theories why weather affects pain. The most common theory is air pressure, or barometric pressure, is what is actually affecting pain levels.

Barometric pressure is the weight of the atmosphere that surrounds us. Just before a storm hits, barometric pressure drops. The lower air pressure allows the tissues to expand and this can lead to added pressure on the joints. This may increase pain in those areas.

Another theory is more psychological. It is well documented weather can affect a person's mood. When a person feels gloomy or depressed, their perception of pain can be increased. This happens frequently in areas where winters are long and cold. It even has a name: Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD.

One thing for certain is our bodies adjust to our environments.

A recent study looked at people in four cities: Nashville, San Diego and two cities in Massachusetts. The study concluded people experience changes in their pain when the weather changed no matter where they lived. Pain worsened when the barometric pressure fell, which occurs right before a storm or drastic



weather changes. And since our bodies adjust to our environment, it is safe to say no matter where a person lives, their pain will go with them. They may not notice it as much at first after moving to a new climate, but eventually it will come back.

The weather affects our bodies in other ways too. High levels of humidity can thicken the blood over time. This can increase the pressure in the blood vessels and the heart. This causes the heart to work harder to pump the blood throughout the body and may ultimately lead to a stroke or a heart attack. Those living in high humidity climates also have to worry about excessive sweating that can lead to dehydration. When the body is dehydrated, the joints ache more. This is why drinking water is so important, not just in high humidity areas, but everywhere.

Regardless of the cause, acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine can be very helpful in the treatment of aches and pains. No matter where you live, Traditional Chinese Medicine can help.



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## TCM and Seasonal Affective Disorder



Seasonal Affective Disorder, also known as SAD, is a form of depression that affects people all throughout the world. Most commonly experienced during fall and winter months, the symptoms of SAD include depression, hypersomnia, lethargy, difficulty concentrating, negative thoughts and decreased social interaction. Higher levels of anxiety are experienced at the end of the summer season as those who suffer from this ailment start to anticipate the coming months of less sunshine and increased symptomatology.

Studies suggest many people who suffer from SAD may also be afflicted with other forms of mental imbalance such as addiction, personality disorders or anxiety. This makes Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture great choices for treatment of this condition.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is very effective in treating depression, including Seasonal Affective Disorder. Modern medicine usually treats depression with antidepressants and psychotherapy regardless of the presenting symptoms. In contrast, TCM diagnoses each patient on an individual basis and treats the specific symptoms, while also addressing the root of the illness. TCM incorporates multiple modalities such as acupuncture, Chinese herbs, tuina massage, cupping and exercises like qi gong to help restore balance to the body. TCM also treats the person holistically instead of treating mind and body separately.

Acupuncture is one of the tools used in TCM. Acupuncture needles move energy throughout the body and releases endorphins. By doing so, acupuncture improves the flow of energy throughout the body, while eliminating blockages and bringing balance to the mind and body. Endorphins counter the symptoms of depression and allow the person to resume a normal life.

Physical activity is also important to combat SAD. One of the best forms of physical activity is tai chi. Tai chi is an ancient Chinese tradition practiced today as a graceful, fluid low-impact form of exercise. Tai chi involves a series of movements performed in a slow, focused manner accompanied by deep breathing. This form of martial art is practiced all over the world and can be performed by anybody, at any age and in almost any physical condition. Many studies show physical activity like tai chi can improve mood and sleep quality, while also improving immune system function. All of these things are important to address when feeling the grasp of SAD.

Nutrition is another vitally important aspect of Traditional Chinese Medicine. During the fall and winter months, when the weather tends to be cooler and the hours of darkness are more abundant, it is recommended to eat less fruit and increase the intake of warming foods like soups and grains. Many studies show depression and SAD can be attributed to nutritional deficiencies, like fatty acids and vitamin D. So during the fall and winter, these nutrients need to be increased to combat the feelings of depression and sadness. Fatty acids can be found in fish and nuts. Vitamin D is also found in fatty fish like tuna and some dairy products.



If you or somebody you know suffers from SAD or depression and are looking for a natural way of dealing with it, contact me to find out more information on how acupuncture can help.



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