

ON HEALTH



Acupuncture... It's Retro!

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WHEN YOU THINK OF ACUPUNCTURE, WHAT COMES TO MIND? Initially, for most of us, its 'OUCH!!' or images of a person laying on a table like a dazed porcupine and a little Chinese man poking them with needles. I mean really... putting pins into someone... for therapeutics! Is this for real? According to the growing number of acupuncture consumers in the States, the answer seems to be a resounding, 'Yes!' A more than 5000 year old tradition quickly coming back into fashion, talk about retro!

So what's all the hubbub about? Well for one its about 'healing' in addition to 'fixing'. Let me explain. You're driving along in your brand new Ferrari and the dashboard oil light illuminates. You have a couple choices. You can plaster tape over the light or you can take the car to the dealership and have them check the engine and change the oil. Both choices make the warning light go out.

In ourselves, the oil light represents a symptom, a signal of an underlying imbalance, be it a headache, depression, or being



overweight. We have choices, we can mask our headache by taking an Advil (which is sometimes definitely needed!) or we can learn from our headache and correct the underlying imbalance its pointing out. Both ways can help the headache disappear.

Acupuncture is a way to 'tune in' to our body, mind and soul. One acupuncture patient, Jill remarks, "Acupuncture has helped me be in control of my back pain. Through treatments I have come to know myself better and I have more choices. I know if I get more sleep and breathe more deeply my back doesn't bother me as much. Sometimes I can do that and sometimes I can't, but finally the choice is mine...my pain has been a window deep into my life."

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Acupuncture works by creating movement, through inserting sterile, solid, hair-fine needles into particular points along the energy channels, called meridians, just beneath the surface of the skin. This energy a.k.a. Qi (chee) flows through us much like water flows through streams or rivers on the earth. Like clearing away tree limbs and boulders from a turbulent or stagnant river assists in the smooth flow of water, clearing blocks or imbalances in the meridians assists in the smooth flow of Qi. When Qi is abundant and flowing, we may experience balance, harmony and wellness in our body, mind and spirit. Once in balance we can begin to recognize and learn from the cause of our symptoms.

There are different styles of acupuncture and different kinds of practitioners. If you are interested call up a few local practitioners and chat with them. Trust yourself, you will know who is right for you. Costs in the Philadelphia area range from \$60 to \$100 dollars per hour. Your first session may involve an in-depth interview along with a physical exam, used to create a personalized treatment plan. Usually treatments are done weekly for the first few times and then are spaced out to bi-monthly or seasonally depending on your particular needs. The average number of needles used are about six per treatment.

As for the 'OUCH!!' factor... it varies from one person to the next and one point to the next. For the most part you will be surprised by its gentleness. So what do you have to lose? Be the porcupine and join in on this retro craze! All your friends are doing it... ▲

