

Getting the most out of your acupuncture session

Acupuncture can have profoundly positive effects, but I believe this is more likely when you fully enter into the treatment rather than seeing it simply as something been done to you. Below are a few ideas I've gathered over the years, some of which I hope you will find useful if you decide to have a course of treatment with me or another therapist. You may need to experiment to find the best approach for you, but you should get plenty of benefit from the process.



Consider committing to a few sessions

It is important to have realistic expectations about your treatments. Acupuncture is not a 'magic bullet', and although occasionally people have remarkable results from one or two visits, it is more likely to be a gradual process. The speed of your response will depend on many factors, including how long the problem has existed, your overall state of health, your willingness to make lifestyle changes etc.

Be as clear as you can about what you hope to achieve from your session

Many people have more than one symptom they're hoping to tackle with acupuncture, but in my experience it is generally best to concentrate on one or two of them in a session. It's my job to try to address the overall picture as best as possible, but clear guidance from you will add focus to each session.

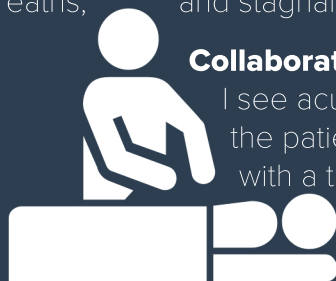
Start the session before you arrive

There are a few things you can do to prepare yourself for your treatment, and give yourself the best chance of a good outcome. Try to get yourself into a positive state of mind, and be open to the possibility that real change could occur during the session. Relax as much as you can, perhaps by doing some slow, steady, deep breathing ('4-7-8' breathing can be useful - see the 'Resources' page of my website for details). Also, make sure you've had something to eat.



Make the most of the treatment itself

Take the chance to use some of the principles of 'mindfulness' during the session, for example by trying to passively 'observe' your thoughts rather than actively engage with them. For example, if you find yourself thinking about work, or arrangements you need to make, let these things float by rather than taking them any deeper. There are many good resources available to help develop mindfulness, for example www.headspace.com. Once you feel relaxed, you can try thinking back to a time you were your happiest and healthiest - I believe this can 'remind' your body and mind that they can return to a similar state. You can also try 'tuning in' to the points being needled, or the areas being massaged/treated. What sensations do you feel, and do they change as the session progresses? Try visualising healthy energy entering your body with your in-breaths, and stagnant, unhealthy energy exiting with your out-breaths.



Collaborate in the session

I see acupuncture/tuina as a partnership between the therapist and the patient. When I'm working on a needle or pressing a muscle with a thumb, let me know how it feels so I can tailor the treatment better. And please let me know if there is anything I can do to make you more comfortable - lying there wishing you had a blanket will only reduce your ability to relax.



Continue the treatment once you leave

I will sometimes make suggestions about things you can try at home to improve your chances of success. Relaxation techniques, stretches, acupressure self-massage, qigong, and dietary changes can all be hugely beneficial, to name just a few. Make sure you drink plenty of water after your treatment, and try to avoid alcohol and other stimulants.

Try to see your course of treatment as a new start, as an opportunity to take back control of your own health. Please let me know if you have any other ideas or insights, and let me know if you have any questions!

For more thoughts and tips visit www.tomtheacupuncturist.com/resources