

Managing stress through relaxation and balance

by Ahnna Goossen



Ahnna Goossen, Licensed Acupuncturist and Studio Director of Yoga Bella has been practicing in the South Valley for the past 8 years at the Acupuncture and Herbal Clinic of Gilroy. 408-842-9688 gilroyacupuncture.com

With the current economic climate, an increasing amount of stress has affected many of our lives.

Although a little stress is not necessarily a bad thing, an abundance of stress can put you at risk for a number of serious illnesses. As an acupuncturist, I have seen an increased number of clients in my clinic seeking my services for stress related complaints such as; anxiety, worry, insomnia, headaches, muscle tension, anger,



frustration, digestive upset, depressed immune system and high blood pressure. These symptoms are simply your body telling you, that you need to find a better way to deal with your stress.

Acupuncture can help. Acupuncture releases natural pain-relieving chemicals called endorphins, which are the body's own "feel good chemicals." Most importantly, it calms the sympathetic nervous system. Within minutes of the placement of tiny needles, the nervous system switches over to the parasympathetic nervous system, which is involved in rest, recovery and regeneration of the body. We need

a balance between these two nervous systems for the body to function properly.

First time clients are often skeptical, questioning how the placement of fine needles along the energy flows of the body could affect their well-being? The problem starts with an over-active sympathetic nervous system triggering the fight or flight response. The fight or flight response is normally helpful in adapting to our environment. The problem arises when we are constantly bombarded with stress and our body is under constant influence of adrenaline (a hormone released during stress), which causes an imbalance in the body. Imbalances bring people into their doctor's offices everyday.

Acupuncture relaxes the body, allowing its physiology to return to homeostasis or balance. In the Western Medical model, anti-anxiety medications are used to address this imbalance of the nervous system. Chinese medicine and acupuncture is a more gentle, natural approach to maintaining homeostasis or balance within the body. The calming nature of acupuncture also decreases heart rate, lowers blood pressure and relaxes the muscles.

The balance of your nervous system is so important to your health. I try to educate my patients about the importance of maintaining balance in their lives. We may not be able to change our economic state, long commute, or the housing market but we CAN strive for balance within ourselves so that what is occurring in the outside world is not as stressful to us and our internal state of being.

Well-being is not about feeling good "once a week." People who exercise regularly, eat well, set aside time for themselves, and receive acupuncture "tune-ups" are those who experience the greatest consistent sense of well-being.