

NO PAIN JUST GAIN

How does getting stuck with tiny needles you can't quite feel benefit your health?
Samantha Wong consults Japanese acupuncturist *Galit Cohen Nagar*

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Acupuncturist Galit Cohen Nagar

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioners have been developing acupuncture techniques for thousands of years as a way to open energy channels within the body and release blockages. The aim is to relieve tension and cure ailments, while getting to the root cause of the problem.

Tracing its roots to early 17th century Chinese texts, Japanese acupuncture has been making ground since the 1920s, and it now gets as much publicity and credit as Chinese acupuncture. Complaints treated include aggravated stress (fatigue, insomnia, depression); localised pain (headaches); muscle and joint pain; sprains, strains and bruises; gastric problems; immunity support and women's health issues.

Japanese acupuncture is suitable not only for adults but for babies, children and the elderly. The techniques are often gentler and more subtle than those used in TCM. Another major difference is in the language of the treatment. Instead of the traditional concepts of the five elements as in TCM, Japanese acupuncture prefers Western medicine terminology meaning it is easier for patients to understand the diagnosis and the treatment plan.

"Japanese acupuncture is different from Chinese acupuncture in a number of ways, but most significantly there is no pain," says Galit Cohen Nagar, Japanese acupuncturist and reflexology practitioner at the Integrated Medicine Institute in DB and Central. "The needles for Japanese acupuncture are much thinner than the typical TCM needles, and the insertion is quite shallow compared to TCM. Some clients feel a prick when the needle is inserted, many feel nothing at all."

Diagnosis and treatment

Following the Kiiko Matsumoto method, Galit works on structural imbalances which can indicate areas of strength and weakness in the body, as well as energy blockages. To uncover the needs of a client and "find disharmony in the body," Galit uses pulse diagnosis. "While in the West doctors use the pulse to understand heart health, in Chinese medicine you refer to the pulse a bit differently," she says. "In fact, according to TCM, we can hear 12 different pulses and each of them represents a different organ system. This means pulse diagnosis allows us to learn about organ health."

Palpation, a form of touch diagnosis, is also used, allowing both practitioner and client to receive instant feedback on how well the session is going. Using palpations, the muscles and joints along the frame of the body are tested to investigate any structural imbalances. This is referred to as root treatment diagnosis. The practitioner then narrows in on diagnosing specific issues by palpating around the abdominal region. The client's reflexes, as well as the constant feedback he is asked to provide, allow the practitioner to determine the treatment protocol.

After the diagnosis and treatment plan have been discussed, the needles are inserted. Point selection, point location and needle



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technique are all important, and vary according to the client's presenting symptoms. "Needles are placed along the meridian, and sometimes in the painful area, but first we use a distal point to relieve the painful area," says Galit.

Japanese needles are incredibly thin and the insertion is shallow, but the effect is still powerful. Treatment lasts up to an hour, with the practitioner continuing to palpate around the areas the client is experiencing pain or sensitivity. After just 20 minutes of acupuncture treatment, most clients find that their pain has been significantly reduced.

Reaping the rewards

It is this immediacy of the result that encouraged Galit to move from TCM, which she practiced for eight years, to Japanese acupuncture. "Experiencing immediate relief is important because it enables the patient to play an integral part in his own healing," Galit says.

In most cases follow-up treatments are required, with many people choosing to return monthly to ensure that their energy channels remain open. Galit recommends clients combine acupuncture treatments with yoga, meditation or other lifestyle adjustments, to help them maintain improvements experienced during a session.

This holistic approach to healing also involves exploring the non-physical side of a client's issues. "Aside from understanding the mechanisms of the body, the function of the musculoskeletal system and inner organs, it is very important that I see how the body and mind work together," says Galit. "People often forget that physical pain can be linked to emotional issues. After a few sessions, patients realise that we can do more than simply correct the physical body through structural alignment and they begin to help themselves too." 🌿

Galit Cohen Nagar provides Japanese acupuncture and reflexology sessions at the Integrated Medicine Institute in Discovery Bay and Central. For more information, you can contact her on 2537 1087.