

Anxiety

Anxiety is an unfortunately common complaint. Anxiety may be a root, or precipitating factor in many illnesses and in ill health in general. In my experience anxiety can occur as part of the aging process. In Chinese Medicine we consider a number of possible causes, and thus diagnoses, in patients with anxiety.

As women age their Yin energy tends to decrease. This can be responsible for many of the symptoms which occur during perimenopause and once a woman is menopausal. One way to think of Yin is as water, as opposed to Yang which is fire. When the water is weak, the fire becomes relatively out of control. This leads to feeling warmer, and an increase in kinetic energy: irritability, sleep disturbances, and anxiety, for example.

When we diagnose someone in this type of situation, we also try to determine which organs are most affected. When we speak of the organs in Chinese Medicine we are speaking of functions more than the anatomical organs. Sometimes it may be the Yin of the Heart which is most affected, leading to more sleep disturbances and perhaps depression along with anxiety. If there is more emotional turmoil and perhaps anger, we would look at the Liver Yin. In a situation of more overall increased aging effects with hot flashes, anxiety, feeling dry and thirsty, we might focus more on the Kidney Yin. Often there will be more than one organ affected. But this diagnostic process enables us to fine tune treatment for the individual.

Acupuncture itself is found by most patients to be quite relaxing and calming for an anxious mind. Along with herbal treatment, these tools of Chinese Medicine may offer help for this malady. Chinese physical practices such as qi gong and tai ji quan, and meditation can also be useful for those wishing to learn to relax and find inner peace.