

The Radical Practice of Being Still

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When you try acupuncture for the first time, you may be in for some big surprises in how very different this is from going to see your PCP or other medical specialist. For one thing, we aren't going to send you off for a series of tests or want to run lab work. Nor will we recommend advanced technological diagnostics such as an MRI or CT scan. You aren't likely to get an additional diagnosis from us either.

While Chinese medicine does have a unique and comprehensive way of diagnosing and differentiating one disease pattern from another, we generally find that sharing a pattern of disharmony based in Traditional Chinese Medicine theory, of which most Westerners are completely unfamiliar with, not only sounds strange, but it further mystifies an experience that we are hoping will bring you closer, not further away from, your own body and your health journey.

And to try to distill three years of advanced graduate study, based on a science and philosophy very different from what most of us grew up with (e.g., modern Western science, reductionism and materialism), into simple concepts that a patient will find both valid and reassuring, is a feat we have yet to accomplish, especially in the setting of a busy community acupuncture clinic.

And so, let's return to another one of those surprises, what *is* different with experiencing acupuncture, and why you may find it more enjoyable than you think!

One of the biggest surprises in trying out this type of medicine is in how **simple** it seems. The process generally goes like this: once we've spent time talking with you and done a health history intake, you are brought into a large,

softly lit room, with mellow music playing and lots of colorful artwork, and perhaps a few others having their “needle naps,” and you will lie down or sit in a recliner. And then your practitioner begins the treatment, placing those tiny, hair-thin, sterile needles at places in your body determined to help with your specific condition(s) you would like treated. After making sure you’re comfortable, you are then instructed to rest there, for 30-40 minutes. **That’s it.** Thus, the radical practice of being still.

As our modern, fast-paced, cell phone-bleeping, 24/7 engaged, multi-tasking world will attest, to stop what you’re doing in your day, join others in a room and sit or lie down quietly, and perhaps feel some mild sensations in your body, as your internal communication system becomes more front and center, an experience that is often subtle, hard to describe, yet “something” is happening... *And* to trust that this, in fact, is all that you are asking of yourself, your body, your mind - to trust in *your* body’s own powerful healing mechanisms, with the aid of these, strange, tiny needles... This is pretty radical.

For some of us, this is a VERY difficult task. Quieting the mind, especially if one is not used to doing this, as one might, for example, with a meditation or yoga practice, can feel near impossible. And this is why it is a Practice. It is the same thing for anyone who has a meditation or yoga practice, it is not something one starts out knowing how to do, nor is there one “right” way to do it. It is more a matter of surrendering to the experience, to trusting in your own body and mind, and listening. Before we had the Internet and imaging, and concepts such as serotonin and melatonin, we listened and observed - both as healers and as patients.

We invite you to re-discover this ancient, intuitive, simple, yet radical and self-empowering practice of Being Still.