



# Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress. It's safe to say all of us have or do from time to time suffer some level of anxiety. If it becomes excessive it can be completely debilitating in the form of panic attacks or other more chronic issues such as insomnia or short breath. The number of symptoms included within the definition of anxiety is wide and varied, but "freaking out" or feeling generally lousy covers most bases.

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) the body and mind are inseparable and anxiety is a result of an imbalance in the body.

The reason why anxiety develops is due to the body having to deal with some form of stress or trauma. Hopefully through lifestyle and support most stress can be processed without having a huge impact on our health. However, certain issues or experiences can be just too much for the body to deal with, or we haven't always learned the right coping mechanisms.

Two body patterns recognised in TCM as being quite commonly related to anxiety are:

## Heart Qi deficiency

In TCM the concept of the heart is not only concerned with issues of blood flow and vascular health but is also said to 'house the mind'. If someone is exposed to stress or excessive worry it can drain the energy or Qi of the heart commonly leading to Qi deficiency and the development of anxiety. Key symptoms of this pattern are palpitations, fatigue, and a restless or excessively thinking mind. Excessive thinking can often make someone feel a little dissociated or removed from their environment.

## Liver Qi stagnation

Living with constant stress either emotional or physical (viral), the energy flow of the Liver becomes affected and possibly obstructed. In TCM the Liver plays a key role in the health of our emotional state. If the Liver's Qi becomes blocked it creates a state of angst and possibly pain in the body. Irritability or even anger will be felt daily. This is emotionally draining and can lead to a heightened state of anxiety.

## Treatment

Western medicine will usually treat anxiety through forms of psycho-therapy and medication. Establishing good strategies to cope with stress and anxiety is important but it is crucial to balance the body to prevent the state of anxiety continuing or increasing.

Acupuncture is an excellent treatment to help with acute or ongoing anxiety. The effects of acupuncture can be very grounding and calming. Often a few successive treatments can really curb anxious feelings.

If acupuncture needles make you feel more anxious...Chinese herbal medicine can also be very effective in the treatment and in creating a sustainable change in the level of anxiety. Everyone will present a little differently and herbs are individually prescribed according to particular body patterns and requirements.

It is true we cannot control everything that happens in our life, but through the use of TCM we can help reduce the effects of events that lead to anxiety.

## Something to try now !

**A great trick to switch off stress and deal with anxiety** is deep belly breathing. Whilst inhaling focus slowly expanding your tummy then slowly exhale and visualise the tension draining from you. Try to this at least five times as often as you can.