



Japanese Acupuncture for Weight loss or Stop Smoking

While Acupuncture itself is over 2000 years old, the use of Acupuncture to reduce physical cravings is a fairly recent development. In the early 1970s, Dr. H.L. Wen, a neurosurgeon on Hong Kong, was studying the effects of Acupuncture on post surgical pain. Coincidentally, he found that stimulation of certain points on the ear dramatically relieved withdrawal symptoms on one of his patients who was a long-term heroin user.

After learning about Dr. Wens discovery, the Lincoln Center in the South Bronx and the Haight Ashbury Free Clinic in San Francisco began using Acupuncture as part of their standard treatment for addiction. Following the success of these two treatment facilities, the technique was further developed and eventually became known as the “5 Needle Protocol”, referring to the 5 main points used in the ear. In 1985, Michael O. Smith, M.D. founded the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association (NADA) in order to promote the use of this protocol as a cost effective treatment for drug and alcohol users.

More recently, Acupuncturists in clinical settings have been using the same protocol to treat a wider variety of addictive behaviors. Whether the addiction is of a physical or so called psychological nature, there are certain common behavioral and biological mechanisms at work. For patients who are otherwise healthy but want to stop smoking or lose weight, the 5 Needle Protocol works equally well to stop the cravings and reduce the symptoms of withdrawal.

Exactly how Acupuncture works to reduce cravings is still under study. But it appears that stimulation of certain points in the ear has a direct influence on the brain to calm the nervous system and break the neuro-biological connections between the substance and the behavior. The result is like pushing the restart button on a computer. The person gets a break from the constant craving and experiences greater freedom to reestablish a new behavior pattern.

In the 5 Needle Protocol, the 5 basic points are used with other key points to direct the emphasis of the treatment. For example, the appetite control or food cravings, there is a special point that dramatically stops the craving for oral sensation, which helps to make the treatment more profound and longer lasting. Likewise, for smoking cessation, there is a special point that reduces craving for sensation in the lungs and nasal cavity.

From my experience, the key to dealing with an addiction, or any negative habit pattern, is to use two or three supporting therapies simultaneously. To stop smoking, I suggest a gradual reduction method combined with Acupuncture and licorice root, both of which help reduce the cravings. Likewise, most weight loss cases respond very well to a course of Acupuncture combined with appropriate exercise and a proven, gradual weight loss program such as Weight Watchers.

Acupuncture for addiction, is not a magic bullet. Several follow up treatments may be required during the withdrawal period. Its not a substitute for the desire and focus needed to change a well-established habit pattern. Nevertheless, over the course of several months, Acupuncture can provide the extra support people often need to make important and life saving changes in their lives. If you have a serious addiction or simply want to curb your appetite or stop smoking, Acupuncture can reduce the cravings and provide an important support to your new goals.