

60. ACUPRESSURE 101 -- A PRIMER

One of the beauties of "alternative" healing is its wealth of "self-health" techniques to be used for first-aid or between visits to the doctor. One of the most simple yet effective of these methods is acupressure. This is a form of acupuncture ... but without the needles. Instead, a fingertip, bent knuckle, eraser tip of a pencil, etc., is used to "trigger" or deeply massage one or more of the tiny therapy points used in acupuncture (and in some cases, the Oriental martial arts).

There are more than 1200 of these therapy spots on the human body -- many of them buried in small hollows or depressions (say, between two bones), so that you must usually search a bit to find them. These points are located on so-called meridians of energy, which lead from one organ to the next in a continuous loop throughout the body.

When energy flows too quickly or slowly throughout the body, various symptoms -- pain or other kinds of distress -- are produced in response. But when the right acupressure point is triggered properly, energy is allowed to return to its normal flow and the symptoms disappear. That, in a nutshell, is the theory of acupressure.

In practice, how does it work? Let's say you had a headache: instead of reaching for an aspirin, you might try triggering a point between the thumb and pointer finger on the back (hairy side) of the hand. Probing deeply in the general area would eventually bring you in contact with an area of sensitivity -- it would feel like a toothache or pinched nerve when deeply pressed (and later, massaged). This is the spot known in China as hoku, or in acupuncturese, Large Intestine Meridian Point #4.

Then, once the point is located, deeply massage the spot in a digging, goading manner for a few seconds. By the time you finish, the headache would often be gone. It seems almost too easy; yet millennia of experience in the Orient have proven that not only headaches, but literally hundreds of other common ailments can be successfully relieved with this age-old technique.

Strangely, although the point is on the hand, its underlying meridian is connected circuitously to the colon or large intestine. Welcome to the complex world of "energy medicine, the "parent" theory behind acupuncture and acupressure.

Energy medicine is based on the belief that there are many ways to restore balance to the body's vital energy (known as qi or ch'i in the Orient ... the same force that makes the heart beat). Acupuncture and acupressure are two such methods; homeopathy, and such Oriental practices as tai chi ch'uan and qi gong are others. Chiropractic, too, could be considered a form of energy medicine, since it ultimately affects the body's energy.

There are even a variety of forms of acupressure. Shiatsu and Jin Shin Do are both very effective, but can be rather complex, and may need a trained partner or therapist for proper application. The simplest form is called G-Jo. This means "first-aid" in its native Chinese, and has been the mainstay of Oriental families for many generations.

G-Jo is a simple, three-step process: find the point; trigger it until an "acupressure reaction" - - warmth, clamminess, perspiration, or such -- occurs; then duplicate the find-and-trigger process on the opposite side of the body (nearly always, acupuncture/acupressure points are duplicated bilaterally). With G-Jo, only one -- or at the most, several -- points are used; other forms of acupressure usually call for a number of points to be stimulated during a treatment session. (All the many G-Jo Acupressure points and their hundreds of uses are found in the G-Jo Institute's *Master of*

G-Jo Acupressure Home-Study Certification Program -- see www.g-jo.com).

Done properly, the G-Jo process takes less than a minute in total; and relief is immediate! Your headache, for example, would be literally "erased" by the time you finished triggering the point on either hand ... assuming it was the right point for your kind of headache. Actually, there are more than 20 different acupressure points for the more than 60 types of headaches that Western doctors have identified. Download a free Basic G-Jo Training Chart from The G-Jo Institute's website www.g-jo.com for illustrations of six important G-Jo points.

While it is safe and easy to use, self-applied acupressure, such as G-Jo, has certain limitations and precautions. Normally, pregnant women -- especially beyond the third month of pregnancy -- would avoid using acupressure without professional guidance. The same holds true for chronic heart patients (especially those with pacemakers and such), as well as people on daily medications for serious health problems, such as cancer, diabetes, etc.

But aside from common-sense precautions -- such as seeking professional help if symptoms persist -- there is virtually no downside to acupressure, but tremendous upside. The need for costly (and potentially dangerous) medicines is reduced, when you begin incorporating acupressure into your "healthstyle." And most common symptoms -- nausea, menstrual distress, digestive problems, pain of nearly any sort, etc. -- can be relieved, and often eliminated, with acupressure.

But does acupressure actually heal? Yes and no. According to doctors of energy medicine (such as acupuncturists and homeopaths), it is the body -- and *only* the body -- that heals itself. Acupressure simply accelerates this natural, self-healing process. Bottom line: it makes sense to try acupressure and other safe, but possibly effective self-health methods first; if those fail, then it is time to take the next steps.

GLOSSARY WORDS

ACUPRESSURE: acupuncture without needles; finger-pressure acupuncture -- acupuncture points are massaged for up to several minutes with its goal being the symptomatic relief from pain and suffering; and stimulating long-term healing. Acupressure may also be used for adjusting functional processes within the body-and-mind, such as controlling hunger, eliminating fears and phobias, etc.

ACUPRESSURE REACTION: the response which occurs when a "good" acupressure point is "triggered" (deeply massaged) properly; typically these sensations include feelings of warmth or clamminess in various parts of the body, perspiration, belching or the release of gas, etc.

CHI: see QI.

G-JO (pronounced "GEE-joh," from the Chinese characters that mean "first-aid"): the most basic form of acupressure, popularized in the U.S. by Michael Blate and The G-Jo Institute; may always be self-applied and is characterized by brief, deep (slightly painful) massage upon one, or at the most several, key acupressure points; particularly useful for self-treating any given symptom which might otherwise call for medicines (especially over-the-counter remedies, such as aspirin) or emergency treatment of cuts, burns, wounds, etc.

HOKU: a main acupuncture/-pressure point located in the on the back of the hand, between the

thumb and pointer (index, first) finger, midway between the webbing and "V" near the wrist where the two finger bones meet; also known as "Large Intestine Meridian Point #4" and "G-Jo point #13."

KI: see QI

JIN SHIN DO: a form of acupressure popularized in the U.S. by Iona Teegarden which, in its basic form, may be self-applied but normally requires a trained partner/therapist for its more advanced applications; relies on a series of acupressure points to be triggered for a complete treatment.

MERIDIANS: the nerve-like pathways (thought to be cellular) along which flows the KI or QI from one organ or gland to the next, in a perpetual circuit. Along these meridians are found the acupuncture points used in acupressure.

QI (pronounced "chee" or "jee"): the vital energy which is responsible for how we feel; the force that makes the heart beat. When QI is moving too quickly or too slowly along one meridian or another, symptoms of this "imbalanced flow" manifest themselves, in the form of pain or other types of suffering.

QI GONG (pronounced "chee-KOONG"): a program which combines breathing, visualization of energy (QI) moving and, in some cases, various movements; its goal is the inner harmonization of energy to improve/restore health and to maintain balance (wellness), once inner harmony is achieved.

SHIATSU: a form of acupressure popularized in the U.S. by such practitioners as Wataru Ohashi, Katusuke Serizawa and William Schultz; relies on a combination of triggering acupressure points and stimulating the underlying meridians.

TAI CHI CH'UAN (or simply TAI CHI): a series of movements, specifically designed to harmonize the inner flow of energy (QI); the routine -- which looks like a combination of dance and martial arts exercises -- is done very slowly. Unlike most Western exercise, whose goal is to build muscle, develop aerobic strength, etc., the goal of TAI CHI is the harmonization of inner energy (QI). And unlike most Western exercise programs, TAI CHI is ideally suited for the elderly.

RESPONSE TO A CLIENT WHO ASKS, "WHAT CAN G-JO ACUPRESSURE DO FOR ME"?:
G-Jo acupressure can relieve pain and suffering in a matter of seconds, in most cases -- especially for the sort of problem you might otherwise take an aspirin or other OTC remedy to relieve. G-Jo has no known side-effects, although it may be slightly painful to apply (a "good" acupressure point is normally quite tender to even moderate finger-pressure). Not only will G-Jo bring prompt relief; when used at the first signs of suffering -- or as soon as a symptom returns -- G-Jo will also stimulate self-healing.

G-Jo is safe for people of all ages, requires nothing more than the touch of your finger for application, and is effective on symptoms ranging from mild discomfort to heavy bleeding and the results from serious injury. That's in its "basic" form.

In its "advanced" form, G-Jo is effective in balancing the energy that vitalizes the organs and

glands, meaning that it can be used to maintain wellness, improve vitality and extend one's useful years. This is especially true when certain changes are made to one's "healthstyle," such as improving the diet, avoiding known abuses, adding regular, mild exercise, and such. And both the basic and advanced forms of G-Jo, combined, are remarkably easy to learn: G-Jo can be mastered in its entirety in a very short time -- not years, months or weeks, but actually in a matter of a few hours of study.

Being that G-Jo is self-applied, it can be used any time, any place, and the results are consistent, when properly applied. And since G-Jo works on a physical, not psychological, system of the body, it works as well for skeptics as for "believers."