

## The Great Depression? Acupuncture May Help

The headlines are dire. Our country is in economic turmoil. It is difficult to escape the daily media barrage of doom and gloom. Now, more than ever, people are depressed. Economist says this downward spiral was bound to happen after years of financial abundance.

I agree. Why? As an acupuncturist I practice an ancient Chinese medicine, which is based on the laws of nature and the observance of how these natural dynamics affect our lives. For example, we know the simple truth that what goes up must come down. The sun comes up and later it is followed by darkness. Qi, the life force that courses through all living things and is the fundamental principal of acupuncture, has two primary aspects. Yang, which is the light, high, fast moving aspect of energy is followed by Yin, which is characterized by a low and slower aspect of being. Acupuncture works by inserting fine sterilized needles in specific points in the body for the purpose of balancing Yin and Yang. Like our current economic depression, psychological depression can be thought of as a collapse of Yang or a stagnation of the life force, Qi.

While everyone occasionally feels sad, Clinical Depression, a western medical diagnosis, is estimated to affect over 14 million Americans. The diagnostic criteria is met when an individual experiences any combination of five of the following symptoms for a period of two weeks or more:

- Decreased ability to think or concentrate
- Sleep disturbances
- Alteration in eating habits and, or weight
- Fatigue or loss of energy or agitation
- Marked diminishment of interest in activities of daily living
- Physical aches and pains
- Recurrent thoughts of death
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt and anxiety

While anti-depressant medication, and psychotherapy are common therapeutic interventions in the treatment of this serious condition, Acupuncture is gaining popularity as an adjunctive and supportive treatment modality because it is non-invasive and is without untoward side effects. We are each unique and complex human beings and the ancient art of acupuncture addresses these individual differences as they relate to symptoms of depression. When the proper balance between yin and yang is achieved and the flow of qi is harmonized in the body, mind and spirit, depressive symptoms dissipate. The United Nations World Health Organization supports acupuncture as a treatment for depression. Additionally it remains important to get physical exercise, practice sound dietary habits by limiting sugars and refined foods, and limit your exposure to upsetting information as much as possible. Get outside and experience nature! Spend time with loved ones and treat your self to the joys of acupuncture!