

BEH PODCAST EPISODE 31

THE ART OF ACCUPRESSURE AND HEALING THE EYES – PART TWO

We did part of 1 of acupressure and acupuncture last time and we are just going to do a little bit more on oriental medicine, especially acupuncture. I'm spending two different talks about acupuncture, because there are many people out there who are promoting acupuncture for the treatment of eye disease. I've had numerous people who either come to me after having done some acupuncture or who are seeking out acupuncture now. Just to briefly recap last week's talk, when it comes to eye disease, we have found that acupressure, what we have you doing in the Better Eye Health Program, brings all of the benefits that you're going to get from acupuncture or acupressure. I do needle acupuncture, and if I thought that needle acupuncture was the only way to get you what you needed for your eyes to heal, I would find a way for all of you to get needle acupuncture. But that's not necessary.

There is a lot you can do with acupressure. Acupressure is not as strong of a stimulation of the points, but it is something you do it by yourself frequently and you can get very powerful results when you do it on a regular basis. That's why grace and I decided to use acupressure. Some of the acupuncture programs to be honest can be very costly without having much extra benefit. You can go up to one of the acupuncturist who has a residential program. You come and stay in a hotel for a week and they charge you thousands and thousands of dollars and treat you multiple times a day. It's not to say that people don't see benefits to that. They do. But then, people often have to go back multiple times a year. They get some benefit when they go, it falls off, they have to go back. I've had people spending tens of thousands of dollars a year for acupuncture. If that is what it was worth, if that was what it took for your eyes to get better, I would say, do it. But it's not necessary.

I do want to say something about the history of acupuncture in the West. I don't know if people remember James Reston. Reston was a journalist with the New York Times and he was one of the journalists who travelled with Nixon and Kissinger when they first started traveling to China to reestablish diplomatic relationships with China and Mao Zedong. Reston on this first trip had developed appendicitis and ended up having his appendix removed in China, which frightened him a lot. He didn't know if they were going to do a good job or not. They did an excellent job. What was interesting is that the anesthesia for that appendectomy was all done with acupuncture. He wrote extensively about that event because he had a place to write about it. He spread awareness of acupuncture through the New York Times, something read all over the world.

That first trip awakened the world to the fact that this very ancient medicine was still very much alive. It interested doctors, because doctors had completely dismissed the

idea that acupuncture was of any use at all. But when someone has an open abdominal surgery with only acupuncture as the anesthesia, doctors sat up and took notice. They said, "well maybe there's something to this." One of the things that Reston wrote about was that oriental medicine was also used to treat eye disease. This finding was notable because in the early 70s, when this all took place, there was really nothing being done in this country for Macular Degeneration. Grace wasn't doing anything, no one was doing anything other than some supplements. People were doing some supplements like zinc and things like that.

There are many supplements or herbs, Chinese herbs, that are used for the eye. But most of them have a parallel in what we're using. Chinese medicine talks about using foods that are rich in long chain omega 3 fatty acids. Things from algae, snakes and fish. They use Goji berries, which are gu chi zi, that's the Chinese word. They're little red berries, and they are becoming popular in this country mainly because they contain a lot of Lutein. The Lutein product that we use in the program is derived from marigolds which is proven better than the Goji berries, so I don't recommend using the berries as your source of Lutein. But if you needed a source of Lutein and there wasn't another source around, the Goji berries would work very well.

Another similarity between oriental medicine and our program is a focus on the entire person. If you're having a problem with your eyes, you want to go and treat the problem at its root and not just the symptoms, and to do that you have to make the person stronger. This approach is true not just for treatment of the eyes, but for everything in oriental medicine. You're really trying to look at how can we help make themselves complete, because if they're whole, if everything is working, they will heal themselves. After all, that is what the body is set up to do. This way of thinking and approach that oriental medicine takes to eye disease and everything else is worthwhile and effective.

I'm going to change gears, a little bit, and go back to a topic I mentioned last week. The question concerned when it is a good idea to see an acupuncturist. The only benefit of acupuncture is not just from the needles. Acupuncturists tend to be another kind of practitioner, someone who might have an idea of how to treat a problem without giving you drugs, or without starting with drugs. They might avoid starting with a toxic or dangerous therapy, and instead try something that might be safer, easier, cheaper and that has a good chance of working. Seeing an acupuncturist if you have other medical problems that might be treated by acupuncture is a good choice.

I'll go into some of the areas where acupuncture can be particularly effective, because I haven't talked about that very much. The kinds of things that acupuncture and Oriental medicine are very good for are things like allergies, digestive, nausea and neurological problems. Between the herbs and acupuncture techniques, oriental medicine is very effective for digestive diseases. It can help with everything from reflux and indigestion to constipation and diarrhea and mal-absorption. Oriental medicine is also very effective for nausea and vomiting associated with pregnancy or chemotherapy. It is also great at keeping the person strong during chemotherapy, and is useful for all kinds of

neurological problems. That includes everything from the pain associated with shingles, to trigeminal neuralgia, the kinds of things that happen around the face, muscle spasms and many other things like that.

Interestingly, some of the health plans around here that offer acupuncture as a benefit, don't let the acupuncture be used for what it is effective at treating. For example, Keizer, which is a big health plan in the Bay Area and in California, has acupuncturists on staff, but the only thing that they are allowed to treat are things like back pain and neck pain. In any medicine, back pain and neck pain, are difficult to treat. No one has ever shown that acupuncture is the best way to treat back pain or neck pain. It can be of help, but there is this connection that western medicine makes between the treatment of pain and the value of acupuncture, which is rather interesting and a bit erroneous and misplaced.

A lot of that comes from going back to the beginning of what I was talking about from that experience that Reston, the journalist, had. That fascination that doctors had with acupressure anesthesia. The idea that you could produce a level of anesthesia sufficient to allow open heart surgery or abdominal surgery caught the attention of doctors. They felt that acupuncture somehow blocked pain, so they were most interested in using acupuncture to treat things that involved pain. The truth is, acupuncture will treat pain, but it isn't necessarily the best way to use it. Pain is hardly the thing that acupuncture is best at. Again, it can be done, but like I say, there is much better data on its value in treating problems with digestion or other neurological problems other than pain. So, those are the kinds of things for which acupuncture should be used.

We're going to be starting something next year. Hopefully we'll get it going this year I have a whole slew of alternative medical books. I have virtual versions of some of them, and we're going to start putting those up as a virtual library. I have numerous books on acupressure and once we get those up, you will be able to go and figure out other points that might be helpful for you now that you have some experience doing acupressure. You'll figure out other points you might use for other problems that you have.