



KATIE BRINDLE

Anxiety Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



What is Anxiety?

Generalised Anxiety Disorder has become one of the most prevalent mental health problems in the world. On average 1 in 6 of us will contend with an anxiety disorder at some stage in our lives – women more than men. Anxiety and depression have increased by 75% in the last twenty five years amongst teenagers.

Anxiety can manifest in a multitude of different symptoms, including tense muscles, headaches, feeling light-headed or dizzy, a fast, thumping or irregular heartbeat, sweating, raised blood pressure, insomnia and panic attacks.

In addition to these physical symptoms, anxiety causes negative thoughts and feelings which can feel overwhelming. Western treatments for anxiety disorders include relaxation techniques and sometimes antidepressants or relaxants, depending on the severity of the case.

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The Yang Sheng perspective

‘Yang Sheng’ means ‘nurture life’. It is the ‘self-care’ part of Chinese medicine: the part you can do for yourself, as a complement to any other treatment you may be undertaking.

In addition to physical (visible) symptoms, in Chinese medicine we also consider what is happening with the body at an energetic (invisible) level. ‘Qi’ (pronounced ‘chee’) is the energy that runs through all of us. Even when you sit completely still, there will be some movement happening inside you: your heart is beating, your fluids moving – every cell is constantly in motion. All of these different types of energy, combined with your breath, is what makes up your ‘qi’.

Qi isn’t the same as circulation, but they are linked. When you stimulate your blood flow or move your lymphatic fluid, your qi is also stimulated. Everything flows together. The channels in which qi flows are called meridians. According to Chinese medicine, the quality and movement of qi through the body determines your health. The ideal state is one of smooth flow with no imbalances or blockages, which are called ‘stagnation’ or stagnant qi. If you have stagnation, whether physical, emotional or spiritual, this will eventually manifest as disease.

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The Yang Sheng perspective

Chinese medicine has a different way of looking at mental illness. Rather than viewing it as a problem of the mind, viewing it as a problem of the body can explain and treat emotional issues via the physical. Anxiety can therefore be seen as partly an issue with the heart and partly an issue with the blood, which the heart controls. Chinese medicine recognises that in addition to its biological function, every organ has a positive and negative emotion. For example, the heart is associated with the emotions of joy and anxiety.

The biological functioning of the heart is to pump blood around the body, and blood is responsible for circulating nourishment into your cells and removing waste. According to Chinese medicine, blood is also responsible for overall emotional stability (called shen). If the heart gets disrupted, by stress or for any other reason, two things can happen: anxiety symptoms can potentially occur as the heart functioning is compromised; or circulation can become disrupted which compromises the blood, which affects emotional wellbeing.

The physical symptoms of anxiety are almost identical to those of the sympathetic nervous response caused by stress - the racing heart, the sweaty palms, the tense muscles. Anxiety usually presents additional symptoms that relate to the emotional functioning of the heart as the heart becomes compromised by the stress response.

Self-treatment helps switch off the stress response, relax the body and improve blood flow, which is why even Western doctors recommend yoga and relaxation techniques. These recommendations help the flow of blood and qi around the body.

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Steps you can take to help

General advice

Chinese breathing and bodywork techniques have both been scientifically proven to be effective in reducing stress and supporting the body. They:

Engage your parasympathetic nervous system

Regulate blood flow

Reduce heat in the body

Calm the nervous system

Strengthen the organs

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Breath & Anxiety

The single most effective way to reduce your stress levels is to take conscious, deep, abdominal breaths. By moving your awareness out of your head and into your breath, your heart rate slows, your mind is calmed, and your blood oxygenated.

[View the Breath Guide](#)

Qigong & Anxiety

Qigong is a fundamental pillar of Chinese medicine. It is classed as a form of internal exercise. Internal exercise is any combination of slow, considered movements with breath and mental engagement, it's often referred to as 'Chinese yoga'. Qigong is, quite simply, the ultimate selfhealing technique. Whatever your issue, qigong will help to rebalance the body. By learning to manipulate qi around the body, you rejuvenate and energise, lower the heart rate and blood pressure and support the immune system.

[View the Qigong Guide](#)

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Tapping & Anxiety

Tapping with bamboo is an ancient Chinese therapy that works wonders for your general wellbeing. It's a simple, pleasurable, yet hugely effective way to support and maintain your health, no matter what your age or physical state. Tapping the skin on a daily basis enables the free flow of this all-important circulation. In as little as one minute a day, an all over body tap can clear areas of stagnation, support lymphatic drainage and encourage a smooth flow of blood and qi around the body. Think of it as a natural battery charger for the body.

[View the Tapping Guide](#)

Gua sha & Anxiety

Gua sha is a therapeutic healing technique that has been widely practised in China for thousands of years. It involves using a round-edged tool, traditionally made from materials such as jade or metal, to pressstroke the skin until redness appears. You can even use a jam jar lid! Gua sha has been used to treat a whole range of conditions from fever to chronic cough and migraines. It has been shown in studies to increase micro-circulation by 400%, and clear inflammation. Note that gua sha should NOT be used directly on broken skin. However, it can be effective to lessen the marks left by an acne outbreak. There are lots of how-to gua sha videos on my Instagram feed; and you can also download the Gua Sha Guide.

[View the Gua sha Guide](#)

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Meditation & Anxiety

Meditation is a fundamental pillar of Chinese medicine and studies have confirmed a host of health benefits. If you struggle with traditional forms of meditation, there are simple Chinese techniques that offer impressive results.

[Download the Meditation Guide](#)

Specific advice

Any symptoms of ill health will always relate to one of the five key organs we consider when we are treating in Chinese medicine. These are Heart, Lung, Liver, Stomach/Spleen and Kidney.

Depending on what your symptoms are, it will usually indicate an imbalance in a specific organ. For example, palpitations are concerned with the heart.

An energetic imbalance does not mean you have a dramatic health issue. This aspect of Chinese medicine is about prevention, not cure. That means reading the subtle signs and symptoms of the body daily. Imbalance starts at an energetic level and you rectify it at an energetic level.

The more serious the symptoms, the deeper the imbalance. If the symptom is mild – e.g. low-level anxiety before a meeting or mild rosacea after a glass of red wine, the imbalance will be easier to rectify.

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It is important to know that when I refer to organ imbalance, I mean energetic and not physical. So, for example, heart imbalance does not mean heart disease. It is a subtle signal that your body is not in balance and the strain of that is impacting your heart energy, which may eventually lead to an issue over time. In the first instance, it could be felt as low level anxiety, occasional palpitations or a lack of desire to socialise. We look for the low level signs to stop things getting a foothold in the body and causing a greater problem further down the line.

Use low levels symptoms as a barometer of your wellness. Address them to keep the body healthy and they are much less likely to become a deeper issue. This is the principle behind yang sheng and self-care.

As I mentioned earlier, Anxiety is largely connected to the heart in Chinese medicine.

[View the Heart Guide](#)

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Want to know more?

We will be delighted to support you as you continue along your Yang Sheng journey. The following will get you started:

'Yang Sheng: The Art of Chinese Self-Healing' available on Amazon, Waterstone and www.hayoumethod.com

Buy Yang Sheng Book

Live Qigong Healing classes (3 x each week) for a more in-depth, healing practice – full details on www.hayoufit.com

Free Masterclass "[Master Your Health](#)" – understand the 3- step plan for preventative health.

Free self-care weekly content [@katiebrindle](#) on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

Free regular gua sha demonstrations on [@thehayoumethod](#) Instagram. Purchase the accompanying tools from www.hayoumethod.com

DISCLAIMER:

Please note that any of these Yang Sheng techniques are designed to support your overall self-care and wellbeing and should not be used as a substitute for any Western medical advice or treatment that you may be receiving. You should not use the information in this Guide or on our website for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease and must always consult your doctor if you have any health concerns. Additionally, please note that there are a few contraindications to Yang Sheng techniques, so please visit www.hayoumethod.com to view our comprehensive FAQs.

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