



KATIE BRINDLE

Stress Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



What is Stress?

The “Health Epidemic of the 21st Century”, according to the World Health Organization, it is estimated that stress costs businesses millions of pounds a year. Modern day living creates stress, which creates inflammation. And inflammation is thought to be the culprit behind most modern day illness.

So what happens when we get stressed? The stress “fight or flight” response to events causes the body to produce adrenaline. While stressed, the body diverts blood flow away from the peripheral organs to provide muscles with additional resources. This causes inflammation so the body then produces cortisol to reduce this effect.

In small doses this is healthy, but excessive levels of adrenaline and cortisol disturb basic functions like heart rate, sleep, breathing and digestion. This can make us sweat, cause muscles to tense up, and encourage everyday ailments from weak immunity, poor sleep and the inability to lose weight, to premature ageing, skin disorders and pain.

Prolonged stress is further associated with a range of clinical conditions ranging from heart disease and cancer to autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease

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What is Chronic Stress?

Prolonged stress leads to chronic (long-term) stress, potentially resulting in chronic inflammation. While the stress hormone cortisol plays a positive role in regulating the inflammatory response, chronic stress can dampen the hormone's ability to do so, leaving the inflammation unchecked. In parallel, chronic stress also seems to increase the production of certain inflammatory white blood cells, which the body sends to sites of threatened infection. When the trigger is stress rather than an actual infection, these are either distributed around the body or focussed on old areas of historical trauma, causing muscle tension and pain.

An unbalanced immune system responding to unabated inflammation can stimulate or make worse most chronic conditions including heart disease, diabetes, obesity, autism, dementia, depression, allergy, and asthma and especially autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, multiple sclerosis, thyroid disease, and inflammatory bowel disease.

Chinese medicine recognises that the body has in-built systems to help us de-stress and will attempt to restore balance either through excretion through orifices and skin or by depositing the toxicity in joints and tissues. This is how stress ages the skin and creates tension in the body resulting in symptoms such as stiff neck, aching shoulders and backache. It leaves us feeling tired, appearing aged and with the early symptoms of stress such as disrupted sleep and digestive issues. These are the warning signs that the body is overloaded and urgently diverting stress away from the organs and unable to maintain balance.

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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.

In Chinese wisdom, stress affects the free flow of qi around the body. This results in stagnation, excess heat and impeded circulation. Chronic stress causes imbalance in the body and leads to health issues.

In particular, stress causes spleen qi deficiency and liver qi deficiency. In Chinese medicine, the liver helps to regulate our emotions. When the flow of liver qi is interrupted, it may manifest in feelings of depression, frustration or anger.

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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 & Stress

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 & Stress

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 & Stress

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 & Stress

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%, clear inflammation.

[View the Gua sha Guide](#)

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Meditation & Stress

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.

[View 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.

[View the Liver Guide](#)

[View the Stomach & Spleen 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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