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Emotional Acupressure

Quick Relief for Mild Anxiety



Acupressure—applying pressure to key points on the body with hands or fingers—originated thousands of years ago to treat physical illness. Now it is also being used as a new form of self-treatment for many emotional problems.

Emotional acupressure combines aspects of cognitive therapy—to change distorted thinking—and acupressure techniques to relieve emotional distress.

For mild anxiety and everyday stress, you may not need antidepressant medication or psychotherapy. With emotional acupressure, you can perform a sequence of activities—such as tapping acupressure points and humming—to help you manage your emotions.

Sound outlandish?

To learn more about the new treatment, *Bottom Line/Health* interviewed clinical psychologist Peter Lambrou, PhD, an expert on emotional acupressure.

HOW IT WORKS

When body temperature rises, small blood vessels in the skin dilate to bring blood closer to the cooling air ... and the evaporation of sweat helps disperse excess heat.

The mind has similar feedback mechanisms. When anger, sadness or fear threatens to overwhelm us, an emotional "thermostat"—regulated by the autonomic nervous system—

starts working to lower the "temperature" of these distressing emotions.

Usually, it quickly restores the brain and nervous system to an even keel so that we can function properly. But if negative emotions are too strong—or chronic—the thermostat can't restore equilibrium.

Example: When someone experiences a devastating betrayal, such as a spouse's infidelity, the brain reacts so intensely that anger, grief and/or anxiety become activated each time the person thinks about the betrayal.

Result: The same emotion occurs repeatedly.

Acupressure can break this cycle. Research conducted at the University of California at Irvine has shown that stimulating the body's acupressure points—the same areas that Chinese medicine discovered for acupuncture 2,000 years ago—can trigger responses in specific brain circuits.

Of the 360 traditional acupuncture sites, researchers now use 15 points that influence emotions. Clinical experience with thousands of patients shows that stimulating these points can help reverse negative emotions.

Sometimes, just one 45-minute session can undo the emotional

Bottom Line/Health interviewed Peter Lambrou, PhD, clinical instructor of behavioral science at the University of California at San Diego, and a clinical psychologist at Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla, California.

He is coauthor of *Instant Emotional Healing: Acupressure for the Emotions* (Broadway).



patterns responsible for long periods of suffering.

LEARNING TO RELAX

To manage your emotions effectively, you first need to learn basic stress reduction. Two exercises release tension and induce a calm alertness that lasts up to one hour. This won't correct the causes of stress, but it can quickly reduce the distress you are feeling.

The exercises incorporate an unusual combination of activities to stimulate different body systems...

- Eye movements activate visualization regions of the brain, to help dissipate the distressing thought.

- Humming stimulates the right side of the brain-typically used for abstract or creative thought.

- Counting involves the left side of the brain-typically used for linear or rational thinking.

- Tapping stimulates specific acupressure sites.

These activities are believed to integrate the tapping effect into various regions of the brain.

Use these activities as follows—each one takes about 30 seconds. Throughout the exercise, stand or sit and keep your head level. Move your eyes—not your head.

- **Eye roll.** Close, then open your eyes. Focus on the floor directly in front of you. Without moving your head, raise your eyes to the wall in front of you, up the wall, and up to the ceiling right above you.

- **The bridge.** Close your eyes, open them and glance down to the floor on your right. Glance down to your left. Rotate your eyes in a full circle, first in one direction, then in the other.

Hum a few notes—from "Happy Birthday" or some other familiar tune. Then count from one to five. Hum the notes again.

Repeat the eye roll, That's it,

After you've practiced the sequence once or twice, add acupressure. To do this, repeat the eye roll and bridge while steadily tapping—about four taps per second—the back of one hand with four fingers of the other hand.

To locate the back-of-the-hand spot, make a fist. Then find the indentation between your pinky and ring finger and move about one inch back toward the wrist from the knuckle.

TREATING SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

Once you're relaxed, you can address negative emotions. You can do this by tapping a series of acupressure points linked to the troublesome emotion. Keep your problem in mind—or say it aloud—as you tap 10 times at each site.*

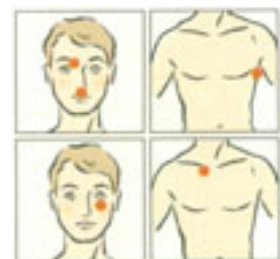
After the tap sequence for each exercise, perform the bridge (see above). Repeat the tap sequence, then perform the eye roll.



- **Anger, bitterness or resentment.** Tap the eyebrow, little fingernail and collarbone.



- **Anxiety, stress, worry or irritability.** Tap under the eye, nose, lip, arm and on the collarbone.



- **Phobias—claustrophobia, fear of spiders or fear of flying.** Tap the eyebrow, under the nose, arm, eye and on the collarbone.

*If an acupressure site, such as under the eye, is on both sides of the body, you can use the site on either side.