

QUESTIONS PATIENTS ASK



Do I have to believe in acupuncture for it to work?

I see nothing wrong with using a belief system to enhance healing, but that's another discussion.

Acupuncture is very effective in the treatment of animals, a situation where belief is not involved in healing. Animals don't know they are expected to get better with acupuncture, so they are not motivated to please us by doing so.

Animal studies are among the most convincing demonstrations of acupuncture's effectiveness, persuading many critics suspicious of therapies outside the mainstream of Western medicine.

How will I know that acupuncture is working?

When I was a child, I remember asking my mother how I'd know if I were in love. She told me, "Don't worry, you'll know."

It's the same with acupuncture. Your acupuncturist will take a medical history, from which you may learn some of the details of how your body works. After the first treatment you might notice changes that are very subtle (or not so subtle!). By the sixth or seventh treatment, you should be able to notice some very distinct changes and improvements in how you feel, some of which you might not have expected.

A patient of mine had felt no sensation in her breast since a tumor had been removed about ten years previously. After treatment started, she began to feel tenderness in her breast. She was irritated, until she realized that the soreness signaled a return to feeling that she had not experienced for over a decade!

Acupuncture is a natural form of healing and therefore is



Photo by Celia Pearson

usually slower than drugs or surgery. A compensation for the slowness, if you need one, is that acupuncture is more gentle and has no side effects.

CLAYTON E. SPIVEY

Clayton Elizabeth Spivey, M.Ac., M.A., teaches at the Traditional Acupuncture Institute and maintains a private practice in Columbia, Maryland.

Correction: In Meridians, Winter 1998, the answer to the first question in "Questions Patients Ask" should have been attributed to Clayton Spivey.