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15

Percent of adults who are happy with their weight, according to a survey conducted by Albolene. Men are twice as likely as women to be happy with their weight (20 percent versus 10 percent, respectively). METRO/NC

lifestyle 27

Body & Soul

Beside the point

For the open-minded, acupuncture can help heal the body

LLANOR ALLEYNE
llanor.alleyne@metro.us



PROFILE. The Chinese medicinal science of acupuncture has been practiced for more than 2,000 years, and, if longevity is any indicator, it's here to stay. Concerned primarily with harmonizing the body's energy flow, or qi (chi), acupuncture has been used to treat everything from back pain to infertility by balancing this flow through 14 major meridians of the body, including major organs.

"The needle is placed at certain points of the body that trigger certain types of stimulation," explains Iris Netzer, an acupuncturist who runs Acupuncture Remedies in the holistic offices of Informed Fitness in New York City. "We learn that when you trig-

ger a certain point, a certain function will happen, facilitating the kind of flow that would give the optimal results you would like. The objective when I am inserting the needle is to obtain the qi."

BUT DOES IT HURT? While the answer to that question can vary from person to person, the straight answer, from personal experience, is no.

As a sufferer of migraines, I rely heavily on over-the-counter painkillers and dark rooms to get pain-free. A thin needle was far from intimidating when compared to the jackhammering pain of a migraine. Talking me through insertions in my legs, hands and head and instructing me to take and expel deep breaths at each point, Netzer guaranteed a

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virtually pain-free session that was both pleasant and calming.

"WHAT WE ARE learning more and more, especially in Western medicine, is how much the mind and body are connected," Netzer says. "That is what [acupuncture] is all about. There is no separation between the mind and the body. If you are under physical stress, it affects you emotionally and men-



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Empirical Point LLC
262 S. 16th St., Philadelphia
215-247-7100
www.empiricalpointllc.com

Website & Location:
www.philadelphia-acupuncture.com
1616 Walnut St
Philadelphia, PA 19103

when they are ready for acupuncture, they are also ready to make lifestyle changes all around."

THE EFFICACY of acupuncture is still under question, with some in the medical community arguing that it's a glorified placebo, while others assert that it is a viable form of fine-tuning the body to better defend and heal itself.

Netzer notes that people who approach their health from a holistic perspective, such as yogis, are often more receptive to the powers of acupuncture. Whatever your take, the point remains that maintaining a healthy mind-body balance usually bodes well for overall personal fitness and happiness.

In the practice of acupuncture, there are seemingly endless points on the body that trigger certain types of stimulation to harmonize the body's energy flow, or qi (chi).

tally. And your emotional and mental stress can affect you physically. "There are a lot of people who have a disconnect between the mind and the

body. I try to explain to people ways to listen to what their bodies are telling them. Other times, it just confirms what they already know, so that