

Style

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Energy boost

Sue Thomas talks to Rhiannon Griffiths about the Chinese art of acupuncture and its benefits...

The last thing you would expect an acupuncturist to have is a fear of needles, but 27-year-old Rhiannon Griffiths believes it helps.

It makes her a better practitioner because she understands her patients' potential fears of the alternative therapy.

Acupuncture is said to work by rebalancing internal energy, often referred to as Qi. Ultra-fine needles are inserted into specific acupuncture points that are located along channels of energy in the body in order to restore the channels, which can be deficient, stagnated or blocked.

But needles? It's a natural fear and when Rhiannon started suffering migraines aged 18 she fought her own needlephobia to get some much-needed relief.

"I'd heard acupuncture was good for migraines but I was very nervous," said Rhiannon.

"I didn't relax for the first few sessions but then I began to feel the benefit – the pain started to go, I started to sleep better and feel well in myself.

"It really helped with the upheaval of leaving home and going to uni too."

After finishing her marketing degree, Rhiannon found a job in London but craved a more healthy

lifestyle. She decided to return to studying at The College of Integrated Chinese Medicine affiliated to Kingston University where she completed a BSc in acupuncture.

"We studied conventional Western medical sciences as well as Chinese medicine. I just loved the course. I really felt I was on the right path."

"And now I think it's the best job in the world. I really feel like I am making a difference to the people I treat."

Rhiannon deals with a wide range of issues – from scar pain, stress, headaches, menstrual problems to menopausal symptoms.

She's gearing up for Pre-Menstrual Syndrome (PMS) Awareness Week later this month. Women with PMS suffer many emotional and physical symptoms which can affect their quality of life.

"Contrary to popular belief, this is not something you have to put up with. Acupuncture can positively help symptoms," she said.

"For example, if a patient felt irritable, clumsy, and had a bloated abdomen before her period, it would indicate stagnant energy.

"Acupuncture is effective at treating many

emotional conditions that Chinese medicine believes can be the cause of illness.

"Fear, anger, worry, and grief can all disturb the flow of Qi, which can create an imbalance. Harmonising this flow of energy with needles stimulates the body's own natural healing."

I asked Rhiannon how this form of Chinese medicine sits with traditional methods used by medical practitioners in the NHS.

She said: "Doctors are starting to recognise there is a complementary role for acupuncture, and it is more widely available."

But what about those scary needles?

"I've treated a good few needlephobics, you have to take it really slowly, talk them through their breathing, explain exactly what you are going to do. It can be overcome."

Worry can disturb the energy flow

■ Rhiannon Griffiths is a member of The British Acupuncture Council (MBAC). She practises in Thame and Wendover. For more information telephone 01844 220227, visit her website at www.rhiannongriffiths.com or email info@rhiannongriffiths.com