

## Q: CAN ACUPUNCTURE HELP WITH ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION?

The Boston Globe

**Author(s):** JUDY FOREMAN **Date:** July 13, 2004 **Page:** E2 **Section:** Health Science

People who practice and enjoy it say yes. But this has not been proved scientifically.

Ted Kaptchuk, an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, acupuncturist and scholar of Asian medicine, put it this way: "As a practitioner, I would say that people who go to acupuncturists feel much less anxious and more calm, but that is experiential, not experimental." As a researcher, Kaptchuk runs randomized, controlled trials of **acupuncture** and has concluded that, at the very least, you have nothing to fear from **acupuncture**. "It's worth trying because you're unlikely to have any harmful effects." The World Health Organization has reviewed **acupuncture** for a number of purposes and states (on its website in a report titled "**Acupuncture**: Review and Analysis of Reports on Controlled Clinical Trials") that "**acupuncture** is being increasingly used in psychiatric disorders." It cites six studies, all of which were published in Chinese or **acupuncture**-specific journals.

The National Institutes of Health, through its National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, has stated that **acupuncture** has shown "promising results" for certain problems, including the treatment of postoperative pain and chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting. It lists other conditions for which **acupuncture** may also be somewhat helpful (including addiction, stroke rehabilitation, headache, menstrual cramps, tennis elbow, fibromyalgia, low back pain and others), but does not include **anxiety** and **depression** on this list.

The NIH report also states that some research into the "plausible mechanisms" by which **acupuncture** works including the release of natural painkillers in the body is encouraging.

Evelyn Fowler, president of the New England School of **Acupuncture** in Watertown, said that, in her experience, **acupuncture** can be helpful for those who have **anxiety** and **depression**. "It balances people's energy so their emotions can be more balanced."

[Perform a new search](#)