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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**

Body & Soul

Beside the point

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

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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.

For some in Western culture, where a compound of organic and synthetic materials in pill form usually serves as a cure-all, the thought of bringing about physical and mental harmony while looking like a veritable hedgehog is not appealing.

"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 trigger 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.

On a visit to Netzer's unsurprisingly serene office, the question increasingly became irrelevant once our hour together drew to a close. Beginning with a series of health and personal questions aimed at identifying my individual needs of and expectations from acupuncture, I



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).

was accompanied to a small, neat room, where I derobed and hopped atop a comfortable table.

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 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

"What we are learning more and more, especially in Western medicine, is how much the mind and body are connected."

Netzer

you emotionally and mentally. 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



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what their bodies are telling them. Exercise is important. Sleep is important. Eating healthier is important. Pretty basic, but sometimes this sounds strange. Other times, it just confirms what they already know, so that 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 herself 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.

No More Drama

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The difference between love and lust

I am involved in a four-year affair at the workplace. Yes, it makes us both want to come to work daily. From day one, we agreed that neither of us would ever consider leaving our families. It's just fun. We are both married, but the excitement is incredible. I have fallen in love with him, but he says it's purely lust. What's the difference between love and lust? — Vanessa

Although you both were in agreement from day one about the nature of your workplace affair and saw it as "lust," that apparently has changed, at least on your part. The line between love and lust can be crystal clear sometimes. According to the trusty American Heritage Dictionary, love is: an intense affectionate concern for another person. While lust is: sexual craving, especially excessive or unrestrained. Life, however, particularly the part involving feelings and emotions, isn't always as simple as what is in black and white. If you were to hit the streets and ask 10 passersby to define love and lust, you'd likely get 10 different responses. Whether it's a marriage lasting a lifetime or a supercharged summer fling, each comes with its special memories and definitions.

In fidelity aside for now, as that may be a larger problem, how do you reconcile your love with his lust in this relationship? Lust can healthily occur within the context of a loving relationship and often provides a sexual spark, but love existing within a lustful relationship may prove problematic. Lust is more about getting one's needs met and usually selfishly placing them ahead of the partner's. This is counterproductive toward building a mutually loving relationship. More important than this difference, however, is probably the huge mismatch between what your husband thinks he has with you and what truly exists given your workplace activities.

Jonathan Alpert is a licensed psychotherapist. Have a question you want Jonathan to answer? Send an e-mail to jonathan.alpert@metro.us.

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Saving face

Is your facial cream safe?

SKIN CARE. New research suggests you think twice before using a cream that contains hydroquinone, the fastest-acting spot lightener. Although the FDA had approved the ingredient, it declared hydroquinone a potential carcinogen last summer and has proposed a ban of all over-the-counter products formulated

with it. (The European Union has already implemented one.)

But "on the whole, the dermatological community opposes the motion," says Jeannette Graf, M.D., a dermatologist in Great Neck, N.Y., who notes the EU is generally quick to bar controversial ingredients. "The cancer studies were done on animals that



Sure, it looks harmless, but make sure what you're putting on your face is completely safe.

cream. I don't think the ban should happen."

Even if it does, doctors can still dispense the fade fix at a prescription-strength level of 4 percent. (Supervised use of the ingredient would not be banned.) Or choose from alternatives, such as arbutin and vitamin C, which block melanin production and even out skin, albeit more slowly.

ingested hydroquinone in doses no person would ever be exposed to with a

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For more information, go to Self.com.

Back Pain?

Boston, MA – According to a recently released report, most low back pain (and disc, or leg pain) sufferers have difficulty getting rid of pain.

Some use heat, ice, and medication. From sleeping on the floor, to injections for pain, back pain treatments vary. But most people hope to avoid surgery and, thanks to a new report, back pain sufferers finally have better options. To get a copy of the free "Back Pain Relief Report", call toll-free, 1-800-441-6467. (Toll-free, 24 hour recorded message).