



## A HEALER HEALS HERSELF FIRST....

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Acupuncturist

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On my first day at the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, we went on retreat to the Menucha Center in the Columbia Gorge. The first order of business was to go around the room, introducing ourselves and sharing why we were there. As each person spoke, I was humbled at what I kept hearing—that, in essence, the medicine had chosen each of us. We had all had some experience with the medicine, be it needles, herbs, cupping, moxa, or a combination. I heard stories about years of chronic pain, debilitating autoimmune disorders, and everyday life imbalances that had changed simply because each one of us had gone to a practitioner of Chinese medicine. Every story ended with “and I got better”—whatever “better” meant for them.

My own story goes like this, I was living the myth: I was a happily married mother of a three-year-old. I owned a home in NE Portland. I walked my dog daily. I had a successful full-time career as a photographer’s agent (which means I

represented photographers nationwide to advertising agencies.) Life was going well—in fact, I thought it was thriving. But deep down I was unhappy and didn’t realize it was manifesting as a cold I couldn’t get rid of (as I know now, phlegm is all about transformation.) I felt tired all the time. My adrenals were probably shot and I could not get well. I tried everything—massage, over-the-counter remedies, folk remedies, lots of extra sleep—but nothing could kick this monster feeling of just not being well. I was exhausted, phlegmy, achy, pale, and cold, not too mention cranky after being sick for weeks upon weeks.

One morning when I dropped my son off at his pre-school, his teacher looked at me and said, “You need needles!” I was like, “What?” She shared with me that her sister, an acupuncturist in Iowa, had told her that Chinese herbs are great for kicking the flu, common colds, and much, much more.

In that moment, as I looked at her, something came over me. I thought, yeah, I am going to do this today—what do I have to lose? I called a friend who recommended acupuncturist Shannon Chawla. I saw Shannon the next day, and the rest, as they say, is history. I began weekly treatments and was put on a weird concoction of Chinese herbs: twigs, sticks, withered orange peels, flowers, and dust, which I had to decoct (boil the herbs down) into a tea. What an adventure for my health and well being. I had no idea what I was taking, but I trusted I would get better. At times the tea was easy to drink, at other times not so easy. Within a few weeks, I was back to feeling normal. Actually, much better: not only was I not tired, I was no longer phlegmy and did not have my cough, running nose, or watery eyes. The color came back to my face and life back into my eyes. I felt a calm I had never experienced. I felt an ease that I could not put into words, a new presence in my body and in my world. I was coming into my power.

I went from weekly treatments to going once a month for what Shannon called “tune ups.” And when life got a wee bit out of balance, I would go back to my weekly visits. The very next year in the beginning of fall, I again felt a dis-ease. My husband had embarked on a new career, I was no longer thriving in my career, and I wanted a change. Yet I did not know what that meant exactly . I was on my usual morning run after dropping my son at pre-school when an overwhelming feeling told me to go to acupuncture school. I dismissed this thought almost immediately. I had a nice life, great job, I was 38 years old, and I was too old to go back to school. But, something kept nagging at me, so I went online and saw that Oregon College of Oriental Medicine (OCOM) had an admissions seminar coming up. I went, and when I came home I told my husband this was something I thought I might want to do. I again looked at the OCOM website to see what the pre-requisites were. I needed a psychology class, so my husband signed me up for one that started the very next week at PCC, and my application was in before the holiday season. I found out I would be a student the following fall.

I chose to complete the four-year program in three in order to get a move on this second career as soon as possible. I will forever cherish what the professors and colleagues taught me, healed in me, and shared. The medicine brought me back into well-being and I was grateful to learn the theory passed down from thousands of years ago. It is a beautiful medicine. Shannon told me my life would never be the same after going to Chinese medical school; at the time, I had no idea what she meant—but she was right. Becoming an acupuncturist gave me the courage to make the necessary changes I knew I needed to make in my life for balance to be restored.

The focus of my practice is women’s health—something near and dear to my heart and my own life journey. I treat from the first onset of a young woman’s menstrual cycle through perimenopause (my own state) and menopause. Symptoms may include painful periods, irregular periods, heavy flowing periods, insomnia, hot flashes, night sweats, and mood disorders. The root cause of all of these symptoms is that Qi is not flowing as smoothly or as optimally as it could. It is my job as the practitioner of this sacred medicine to hear from my clients where their energy is stuck. With the help of needles and herbs, balance can be restored. Our cycle can be seen as a source of our innate Power—not a monthly burden.

I am honored to humbly sit and watch my patients’ lives change like mine did so many years ago, to be a trusted guide in their individual healing process. Whether it is chronic or acute pain, migraines, fertility issues, irregular menses, insomnia, or the everyday stress of life: I listen to people, treat them with respect and help them get better. I am now a single mother of a vibrant pre-teen who attends middle school. I live in North Portland with him and our two cats. I am also a firm believer that, through acupuncture and Chinese medicine, you will get better—whatever that may mean for you.

-Danielle Melanson is a licensed acupuncturist and board-certified Chinese herbalist with focus on women’s health. She practices in the homey neighborhood of Sellwood at the integrative Elixia Wellness Group clinic.

Go to [melansonacupuncture.wordpress.com](#) to learn more about her practice and read testimonials from patients who have found healing and relief or call 503-232-5653 to schedule a free consultation today.

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