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Our Patient Stories- Christy

The first time someone told Christy to try acupuncture she thought, "that's a load of crap." A corporate immigration lawyer in San Francisco, Christy was struggling with allergy flare-ups including hive outbreaks, seasonal hay fever, and skin that felt like it was on fire.

"As a partner in a corporate law firm, I am responsible for a lot of people, and always strive to do the best for my clients. Unfortunately, that means I don't always take the best care of myself," she reflects. Western doctors were unable to pinpoint the source of Christy's allergies, and prescribed pharmaceutical medication. While drugs knocked out the hive symptoms, they also brought unwanted side effects. Christy often felt sleepy. She stayed on the medication for a few years, but the outbreaks returned. Allergists did more tests and prescribed more medicine, and that's when Christy decided to try another approach.

"I wanted to understand what was causing my flare-ups, not just mask the pain with drugs," says Christy.

After trying a few different acupuncturists, Christy came to East West Health Services at Chinese Hospital in 2014, and began working with Sabine Huey, . Today, she not only has her allergies under control without medication, but she also feels better than ever.

"Sabine and all the providers at East West don't just do treatments; they help you understand what is happening inside your body, and how to feel your best," says Christy.

Sabine has helped Christy learn what triggers her allergies and her underlying stress. She now understands the impact that different foods, temperatures, and stressors have on her symptoms. This has given her more control to manage her own health.

"Sabine knows me in a way that I don't even know myself. There are times when I don't think I'm stressed, but my body says something else. She asks the right questions to assess what I need. I always trust her to get my body leveled out," says Christy.

Beyond stress and allergy management—Christy has been hivefree for years—acupuncture has helped this busy lawyer relieve aches and pains, regulate her menstrual cycle off birth control, and prepare her body to start a family.

Our Patient Stories- Laura

An avid spinner, Laura Andersen did not want her lower back pain, which had flared on and off for years, to keep her off the bike. Regular stretching, massage, and over-the-counter medication were only providing limited relief. Now, with regular acupuncture treatments at East West, she is finally free of the constant tightness, soreness, and achiness she had been living with. Laura loves the spa-like atmosphere in the clinic, and looks forward to her weekly treatments as relaxation and healing time.

Our Patient Stories- Stella

Stella Lochman is an active 34-year-old Public Engagement Manager for the SFMOMA. Last summer, she was diagnosed with hypertension. "I had the blood pressure of a 70-year-old obese man," she describes. Determined to feel better and not be on blood pressure medication for the rest of her life, Stella turned to acupuncture.

Stella is passionate about her work placing artists' projects in the community, and bringing community artists into the SFMOMA for residencies. "It's really fun. And it's also really stressful," she says. She was regularly logging 65-hour weeks, but wasn't taking any time for herself. "I was kind of a mess. My body was done with me," she remembers.

At the advice of her primary care physician, Stella quit smoking. She also went off of birth control medication. Despite these big changes, her blood pressure didn't budge. This contributed even more to her stress and anxiety. Stella started going to the gym five days a week, doing 45 minutes of cardio. She was prescribed two different types of blood pressure medication, but didn't like the way these drugs made her feel—tired all of the time. After a few months of struggling with these changes, she decided to try acupuncture.

Sabine Huey, , made Stella feel comfortable and confident from her first visit to East West Health Services. "She was sweet and professional, and I could feel her enthusiasm for her practice," Stella remembers. After the first session, Stella's blood pressure had dropped 20 points. She came back weekly, and noticed that the positive BP change lasted longer and longer after each time. "Sabine explained to me that with each session, I was building up my own army in my body."

The East West Clinic is conveniently located just steps from Stella's office, at the intersection of Chinatown and FiDi. "It's right by my work, so I can just walk there on my lunch break. I have yummy Chinese food for lunch," she says.

After three months of weekly sessions, Stella's blood pressure stabilized. Now, she is able to maintain her healthy BP with once-a-month treatments.

In addition to seeing her numbers go down, Stella has experienced other benefits from acupuncture. "It's a whole person treatment. On top of helping me feel better physically, Sabine is a life coach. When I came in with anxiety, she would tell me: 'We're going to work on making you feel more brave.' She really helped to build me up mentally and emotionally."

Sabine also helped Stella make the connections between different symptoms in her body. She showed her how her headaches and back aches were related to her stress and high blood pressure. "She's able to see the whole picture in a way that my Western doctors, as much as I love and respect them, can't always do." Thanks to acupuncture, Stella has been able to come to her primary care doctors more informed about her body and her needs. She feels like those visits are more productive now, too.

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Our Patient Stories- Karla

"I was not sleeping well, and feeling stressed and run down," describes Karla Zens, entrepreneur and owner of The JellyBus, remembering the first time she walked into an acupuncture treatment at East West Health Services. "When I stepped out into the street immediately afterward, I had a feeling of euphoria." Fast forward four years; today, Karla feels healthier than ever in her body, mind, and spirit thanks to Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM).

At first, Karla looked to acupuncture to address general malaise resulting from poor self-care.

"I was stuck in a routine: sitting in front of a computer, not breathing properly, not sleeping enough, and definitely not practicing work life balance," she recalls. After her initial appointment, Karla began walking five blocks from her office to the downtown San Francisco clinic regularly to experience the physical benefits of acupuncture, making space for health and well-being in her busy routine.

"The atmosphere at East West is so welcoming and positive. I spend a lot of my life attending to my work, responsibilities, and to other people. At the clinic, I always feel taken care of."

Sabine Huey, , looked deeply into Karla's chronic symptoms of sluggishness, bloat, sugar cravings, and cold hands and feet, in order to address their root cause. She determined that Karla had liver Qi stagnation due to chronic stress.

"Qi is that vital energy that contributes to our state of health. It is everywhere in our body from bone to skin. Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners direct Qi using acupuncture and other modalities in order to treat a wide range of health conditions," says Sabine.

Sabine utilized weekly acupuncture treatments alongside specific herbal formulas to smooth Karla's liver Qi and tonify her spleen Qi (the vital energy for digestion).

"We also replaced cold foods with warm soups, teas, and cooked vegetables in order to optimize digestive energy and replenish spleen Qi," says Sabine.

With Sabine's guidance, Karla is now cooking regularly with whole, seasonal ingredients. She enjoys creating and choosing warm, nourishing foods over cold smoothies, salads, and other trendy health foods that did not agree with her body.

"I have learned to adapt my diet and eat in a way that is more in harmony with what I need," Karla reflects.

Beyond nutrition, Karla has incorporated more mindfulness and physical exercise into her life, including breath work, yoga,

and qigong. As a result, she feels lighter than ever, more energetic, and happier.