



Healing with acupuncture at CMHC

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by Lucile Bruce



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It's simple, relaxing, and effective. It involves no medication, no talking, and limited interaction with other people. The time commitment is minimal. You can even experience it while sleeping.

To try it, all you need is a little inner motivation (to get yourself there), a doctor's order, a caring practitioner, and a very comfortable lounge chair.

The treatment is auricular (ear) acupuncture and it's one of the most popular offerings at [Connecticut Mental Health Center \(CMHC\)](#).

Originally launched at the Substance Abuse Treatment Unit ([SATU](#)) under the leadership of the clinic's associate director Katurah Bryant, RN, acupuncture recently expanded to CMHC's main building at 34 Park Street where it is administered by Nina Makaridina, APRN and Laurie Edwards, PhD, two staff members with an interest in alternative healing practices. (Visit [this link](#) for an earlier story about acupuncture at CMHC).

What is auricular acupuncture?

Auricular acupuncture uses five points on the outside of the ear corresponding to different organ systems in the body. The points, originally chosen by a psychiatrist in an addictions program, have unique

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What to expect in a session

At CMHC, a one-hour acupuncture session includes settling into a comfortable reclining chair and awaiting for your turn for needles or acupressure seeds/magnets.

“Overwhelmingly, everyone says it helps.”

— Nina Makaridina, APRN

When each participant has received his or her treatment, the lights dim and people recline quietly for at least 30 minutes. Sometimes, they fall asleep (practitioners call this “needle sleep”).

On Fridays (10-11 AM), Edwards, a psychologist and yoga teacher, plays a Yoga Nidra relaxation audiotape. On Tuesdays (2-3 PM), sessions are silent. The final fifteen minutes of both sessions are spent transitioning: adjusting to the light, having needles removed, getting ready to go.

Is it safe?

Yes. However, “CMHC clients need a doctor’s order to participate,” notes

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"We find that clients can't always put a finger on what's changed for them, but they keep coming back," notes Makaridina. "Overwhelmingly, everyone says it helps."

"With mental illness and addictions, treatments tend to require a lot of activity," observes Laurie Edwards. "Clients are encouraged to keep their minds off the cravings by going running, doing this, or doing that. But when people are in recovery, their bodies don't always feel well. Physical movement, a lot of activity, can be difficult and tiring for them."

"Acupuncture is a way for people to relax their minds without wearing out their bodies," she says. "They can rest and be at peace."

As with any relaxation activity, it takes twenty minutes to invoke the body's "relaxation response," explains Edwards. This state, once reached, helps reduce stress, a major factor in mental and physical illnesses.

Over time, Makaridina and Edwards hope to expand the acupuncture program at CMHC by training more staff in the five-point protocol and attracting more clients.

"We have these excellent chairs, and they're almost always full," says Makaridina with a sparkle in her eye. "We have eight but we would like to

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Fridays, 10-11 AM

Thursdays (beginning November 4th), 2-3 PM

For more information, please contact Nina Makaridina, APRN at (203) 974-7371

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