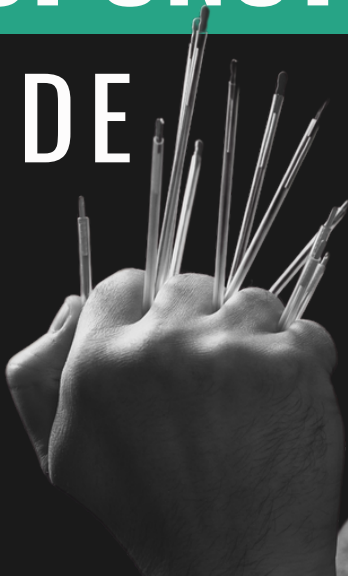


# LAZY

# ACUPUNCTURIST

# GUIDE



Valley Health Clinic

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Specialized Acupuncture: From Pain Management to Athletic Excellence

Website: <https://valleyhealthclinic.com/>

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# CHAPTER # 1

## THREE TIPS FOR ACUPUNCTURIST JUST STARTING OUT

Starting out can be overwhelming. There's so much to consider: Where will I practice? How will I make money? On top of this, there's the challenge of limited experience in treating patients and the worry about achieving results.

It can be overwhelming with all the decisions you have to make, so let me give you some foundational tips.

Early in my career, I received some advice from my mentor, Harry Oxenhandler. At the time, it was overly simplistic, but it proved to be invaluable in helping me focus on what is important.

**As beginners, we should concentrate on three key areas:**

- 1. Make sure your space is clean.**
- 2. Make sure your patient is warm.**
- 3. Make sure you are listening to your patient.**

**These may seem simple, but they cover the three main areas of your practice:**

- **Your space**
- **Your patient**
- **Your treatment**





## KEEP YOUR SPACE CLEAN

We often worry about picking the right space. Does it have enough rooms? Will I be able to afford it? Is it too fancy? Is it not fancy enough? It's hard to make the right choice, and often what you do have access to is out of your control. But what is within your control is the ability to keep whatever space you choose clean.



The clinic doesn't need to be fancy or expensive; cleanliness is what matters. This includes emptying trash cans, keeping bathrooms clean, and ensuring the space is dust-free and odorless.

If you can clean your space, your patients will notice that you care about your space. Patients will lose trust in a practitioner who operates in a dirty clinic.

**A clean space shows a sense of pride in your work and instills a sense of trust in your patients.**



**A clean space helps maintain a clear mind for you.**

When your surroundings are organized and free of clutter, it reduces distractions and mental overload, allowing you to concentrate more effectively on the task at hand. Moreover, a tidy space can significantly decrease stress levels, as it eliminates the subconscious burden often caused by a chaotic environment.

Having a place for everything and establishing daily and weekly cleaning rituals can prepare you for the day. For me, morning cleaning before patients is a good way to get in the right mindset. It doesn't need to be much, just straightening up.

## KEEP YOUR PATIENTS WARM

The next step involves focusing on your patient's comfort, with the most fundamental aspect being to keep them warm. A comfortable temperature is essential for effective treatment as it enhances the flow of Qi. A patient who is warm and relaxed becomes more receptive to treatment, which aids in achieving better results.



Whether it's using TDP lamps, infrared lamps, table warmers, light blankets, or simply maintaining a warm room temperature, have a plan in place.

Ask your patients about their temperature preferences as part of the check-in process.

Most patients don't really understand the question, so I ask, "Are you warm or cold right now?" or "Would you like some heat?" Most patients have cold feet, so focus on ways you can warm those toes up.

**One tip is to put their socks next to a heat lamp or under a heated table pad if you have one. Nothing feels better than some warm socks after treatment.**



Warmth is not just physical comfort;

The greater meaning of keeping your patients warm is about keeping them comfortable. A part of being comfortable is having clear expectations for the treatment and its results. Even if there is pain with the treatment, you should let them know what to expect, like some pressure, a muscle twitch, or a nerve zing. Being warm and comfortable and establishing trust go hand-in-hand.

# BE A GOOD LISTENER

In the beginning, you may have more time than experience. Use this to your advantage by listening attentively to your patients.

Allowing patients to share their story builds trust and a relationship. Even if your treatment isn't immediately effective, they're more likely to return if they feel heard. Many patients come with frustrations from previous medical experiences; listening to them is the first step in their healing process.

**One tip for effective listening and treatments is to ask them questions until you feel like you can visualize the problem as if it's physically manifested in the person. This approach requires a deep level of engagement and empathy.**

By asking detailed, thoughtful questions, you delve into not just the surface symptoms but also the underlying issues that might be contributing to the patient's condition.

Visualizing the problem in this detailed manner helps in formulating a more accurate and tailored treatment plan. It shifts the treatment from being a generic application of techniques to a personalized therapeutic process that addresses the specific needs of the individual.

Furthermore, this method of questioning and visualization demonstrates to the patient that you are fully invested in their care..This can significantly increase their confidence in the treatment, improve their comfort level, and enhance the therapeutic relationship, leading to better overall outcomes.





# SO REMEMBER

I hope these simple steps help you build trust and confidence and serve as a guide when you go out into the world.

- **Make sure your space is clean.**
- **Make sure your patient is warm.**
- **Make sure you are listening to your patient.**

**Our medicine is amazing. You are amazing.  
Keep kicking ass.**





## CHAPTER # 2

# HOW TO KEEP YOUR SPACE CLEAN

## A CLEAN SPACE MATTERS

Whether you have a fancy, upscale clinic or an approachable, homey community clinic, you can be successful. Each type of clinic, whether fancy and modern or homestyle and community-oriented, has its own charm. Success is achievable in any space. So don't worry too much about what is the best space focus on keeping your space clean,

You can't be successful in a dirty space. A dirty space is not just unsanitary; it also decreases patient trust and negatively impacts your mental health and stress levels. So, let's talk about keeping your space clean.



# A CLEAN SPACE STARTS WITH A CLEAN MIND

Starting a practice comes with stress. Business owners face endless possibilities, inconsistent income, and doubts about their ability to help people. Keeping a clean space can help you deal with these challenges.



## ■ Make sure your space is clean.

My cleaning routine actually begins before I even step into the office. It starts during my drive to work. While driving, I engage in a mental mantra where I say positive things about myself. Sometimes I do this silently and sometimes aloud. It takes me about two blocks to complete, and I recite it at the same part of my drive every time.

This practice is crucial because negative thoughts often dominate due to a phenomenon known as negativity bias. This bias results from our brain's evolutionary development, which prioritizes negative information as a survival mechanism. We naturally tend to think negatively about ourselves and have negative narratives. Negative thinking tends to narrow your focus and decrease creative problem-solving. You can overemphasize potential negatives, leading to a more risk-averse approach. In business assessing risk is important to being too focused on it will cause you to stop growing.

Balancing this with positive thoughts is especially important as a new acupuncturist. It will improve your mood. Patient interaction, problem solving, and business growth.

### **My mantra goes like this:**

**"I am a good acupuncturist.**

**I care for my patients, and they care for me.**

**I am an amazing acupuncturist.**

**I help people and am amazing at what I do.**

**I am an amazing business owner.**

**I am successful and productive.**

**I am thankful for today.**

**Today is a blessing.**

**I am thankful for work and my patients."**

Sometimes, if a good song comes on, I forget, but nine times out of 10, I remember to do it.

It might seem like a silly mantra, but what's important to me is that it helps me say positive things about myself.

It's a common misconception that positive emotions should arise as effortlessly as negative ones. However, that's not true. We often need to actively work on developing positive thoughts, particularly since we are prone to having many negative ones. This practice is not only beneficial for personal well-being but also enhances your ability to be more productive and an effective problem solver and creative thinker for your patients.



# MY MORNING CLEANING RITUAL

Space equals a clean mind. It's hard to feel calm, relaxed, competent and grounded when you are surrounded by disorganization. Clutter can cause cognitive overload, making it difficult for the brain to focus and prioritize tasks, leading to a constant feeling of unfinished work.

Also, It sets the tone for the day; getting an easy win early on encourages further productivity. It's about the snowball effect of completing small tasks leading to larger ones.

## Physical space is organized

In the morning, I have a quick cleaning ritual that is setting up my space and making sure I have everything. I walk through to make sure everything is picked up, that I have everything I need for the day, and that the trash in the treatment room and bathroom is empty. Basically, everything is in its space and clean.

## Electrical Space is organized

Then I check my voicemail and email. I don't have to answer, but just delete the ones that aren't important and write down the ones that I need to call or reply to.

## Goals are organized

Lastly, I make a short list of any other goals I need to do outside of the normal routine of treating patients. This normally takes 20-30 minutes, and it helps me get ready for the day so that I can 100% focus on the patient and set aside any other thoughts.

Why is it important to have an easy cleaning routine in the morning? "If you clean every morning, you will have accomplished the first task of the day. It will give you a small sense of pride, and it will encourage you to do another task and another, and another," "By the end of the day, that one task completed will have turned into many tasks completed. Cleaning your space reinforces the fact that little things in life matter. How you do small things is how you do big things. It is a snowball effect.

Let this become a keystone habit, something that kickstarts a chain of other good decisions throughout the day and gives you a sense of taking charge.

# CLEAN SMELLS

A clean space is not just about the surroundings; it's also about presenting yourself in a manner that respects both your profession and your clients. It's crucial to keep yourself clean and odor-free. It's surprising how often this needs to be emphasized, but personal odor control is a must in any medical or health practice. Many acupuncturist prefer to avoid commercial deodorants due to their chemical compositions. Thankfully, there are numerous natural alternatives that are just as effective without compromising health or environmental values.

**Don't forget your patients smell as well, and oftentimes acupuncture treatments will make people smell more. When you are switching patients,**

have some sort of way to clean the air. In my room, I have a Honeywell HEPA air purifier. If that is too much money, get some sage essential oils to spray. Sometimes I will just use some topical liniments like Zheng Gu Shui to spray into the air. Most people don't like or can be sensitive to strong smells so keep something light on hand.

Don't go overboard. It is important to avoid colognes, perfumes, and other highly scented products, including certain laundry detergents. Many individuals are sensitive to fragrances, and a healthcare environment should aim to be as neutral as possible concerning scents to ensure comfort for everyone.



# SOME CLEANING TIPS

Wash hands. Use hand washing to ground yourself between patients. As the water hits your hand, take a deep breath in and out. Simple, easy, and helps you stay grounded.

- **Wash hands. Use hand washing to ground yourself between patients. As the water hits your hand, take a deep breath in and out. Simple, easy, and helps you stay grounded.**
- **Clean Short Nails. Another aspect of personal hygiene that cannot be overstated is nail cleanliness.**
- **Use a foam dispenser. You will waste much less soap, and if you are washing your hands as much as you should, you will be using a lot of soap. Oftentimes, a normal dispenser will give you much more soap than you actually need.**

**There are two types of soap:** hand soap and detergent. Hand soaps are oil-based and easier on your skin but have a difficult time cutting through massage oils. Detergents are synthetic but made specifically to emulsify fats and will clean off massage oil much better. It only needs to be used in a very small amount, so cutting it with water and using a foam dispenser is a must. But it works so much better for cleaning.

In conclusion, the success of your clinic, fancy or homely, hinges significantly on maintaining a clean and organized space. This practice not only assures health standards but also sets a positive mindset for both the practitioner and the patients. Remember, the little things in life, like a clean space, can make a big difference.





## CHAPTER # 3

# BEST WAY TO KEEP PATIENTS WARM DURING AN ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT

## WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO KEEP A PATIENT WARM?

As a new acupuncturist, one of the biggest mistakes you can make is not keeping your patients warm enough. Walking into a cold clinic sets a less inviting and welcoming tone. It can also undermine all your hard work on the treatment table. If your patient is shivering, the acupuncture needles seem to conduct the cold deeper into the body. Fortunately, this is an easy fix.

*As a new acupuncturist, One of the easiest yet most significant mistakes you can make is letting your patients feel cold during their treatments.*



After all, there's nothing more unpleasant than feeling cold while receiving acupuncture. Picture your patient shivering; those acupuncture needles can feel like they're carrying the cold right into their body, which is the last thing you want. Cold patients tend to tense up, making it difficult for them to relax and fully benefit from the treatment. But don't worry, this is an easy fix and can make a world of difference in your practice.



# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KEEP PATIENTS WARM

Keeping your patients warm is one of the simplest ways to enhance their experience and improve clinical results. It shows consideration for their comfort and can build trust and help new patients relax.

During treatment, keeping a patient warm significantly enhances the therapeutic experience. Warmth is excellent for relaxing tight muscles and shifting the nervous system from "fight or flight" to "rest and digest." It helps with massage by relaxing muscles, reducing spasms and tension,

■ **Ultimately, a warm patient experiences less pain and anxiety during treatment and will be happier.**

There are two major things to consider when thinking about keeping your patient warm: the general warmth of your clinic or the ambient temperature and the therapeutic application of heat or more spot-specific heat application.



## ROOM TEMPERATURE

When considering room temperature, the ideal temperature is to keep your clinic slightly warmer than a typical home.

Clinics and homes typically keep their temperature from 68 to 76 degrees. The lower range is better for hygiene and decreasing bacterial growth, while the higher range is better for patient comfort.

Keeping the clinic at a higher temperature makes sense because most people will be removing layers of clothing and lying still. You'll often see people coming in from outside starting off warm because they had to rush into the clinic, but once they lay on the table and relax, their body temperature naturally drops, and they can get cold.

I also need to point out that I live in the Pacific Northwest, which is often cold and damp, so heat is important. I don't know what it's like living in hotter and drier climates, but I imagine things are different. I can only speak from my personal experience.

## GENERAL HEATING OPTIONS

Other than adjusting your thermostat to an appropriate temperature, there are two key things you need for general heating options: a massage heating pad and a portable oil radiant heater.

- **Massage Heating Pads:** Affordable and easy to adjust, they can be placed under the table coverings for consistent warmth.
- **Portable Oil Radiant Heaters:** Ideal for warming up the room and patient, these can be positioned at the table's foot.

If you find yourself in a clinic where you don't have control over the thermostat, then an oil radiant heater is great for warming up a room. What I've seen in clinics is practitioners placing the heater at the foot of the treatment table. Not only does it heat the room, but during treatment, they will lay a light blanket over the heater and the patient, letting the heat flow up and cover the patient.



I've seen people use emergency space blankets, which are very light reflective and very warm, but I find they are noisy and don't look pretty.

I've also seen people use silk cloth, either purchased at a fabric store or repurposed curtains from a store. The point is to find something light that can lay over the body and not aggravate the needles when they touch it.

The second option is a massage heating pad. This is the most affordable and easiest thing to use. When a patient is lying face up the heat in their back feels great. It's nice because it can be adjusted and turned on and off, but it does little to warm up a room.

If your clinic room is cold, I recommend getting a heating pad for the table and a radiant heater that you can place at the end of the table. This not only warms up the room but can also be used to lay a blanket over the patient.



## THERAPEUTIC HEATING OPTIONS

During the treatment, there are many options for applying therapeutic heat or spot-specific heat. The most common are far infrared heat lamps, TDP heat lamps, and hydrocollators or wet heat.

- **Infrared Heat Lamps:** Provide immediate warmth and allow for simultaneous acupuncture treatment.
- **TDP Heat Lamps:** DP stands for "Teding Diancibo Pu," which loosely translates to "specific electromagnetic spectrum. Despite claims of deeper penetration, they tend to heat up slower and are more prone to breaking. Hence, infrared lamps are generally more effective and reliable.



The TDP lamps are the most common in acupuncture clinics. They use a mineral plate to project electromagnetic waves or light to warm the patient. They claim that this wavelength penetrates deeper into the body. I've seen some reports of 2 to 3 inches, but my research and experience show that this is a lie. When we talk about light and heat penetrating the body, we are talking in terms of centimeters, from 2 to 6, or at most an inch. I do not like TDP lamps; they take a long time to warm up, their field of heat is more specific and doesn't cover a large area, and they break frequently. You will rarely have one last longer than a year.

That brings me to my next topic: the infrared lamps. These are the most useful in an acupuncture clinic. They warm up the patient immediately and have a large area of heat. If you turn the lamp on a patient, it will warm their whole back. I find that they don't break as easily and are easier and cheaper to replace. They may not penetrate as deep as a TDP lamp, but again, we're talking about a centimeter difference. These are my preferred choices for heating up and keeping a patient warm.

The next common option is moist heat or hydrocollator packs. You will find these most commonly in physical therapy or chiropractic offices. Although moist heat does warm up a patient quickly and effectively because water is a better conductor of heat than air, they are not practical in an acupuncture clinic. You cannot use them over an area that has acupuncture needles; you would have to apply the heat first, then do massage or acupuncture. This is not an effective method for most clinics.

**So, I recommend using a heat lamp.**





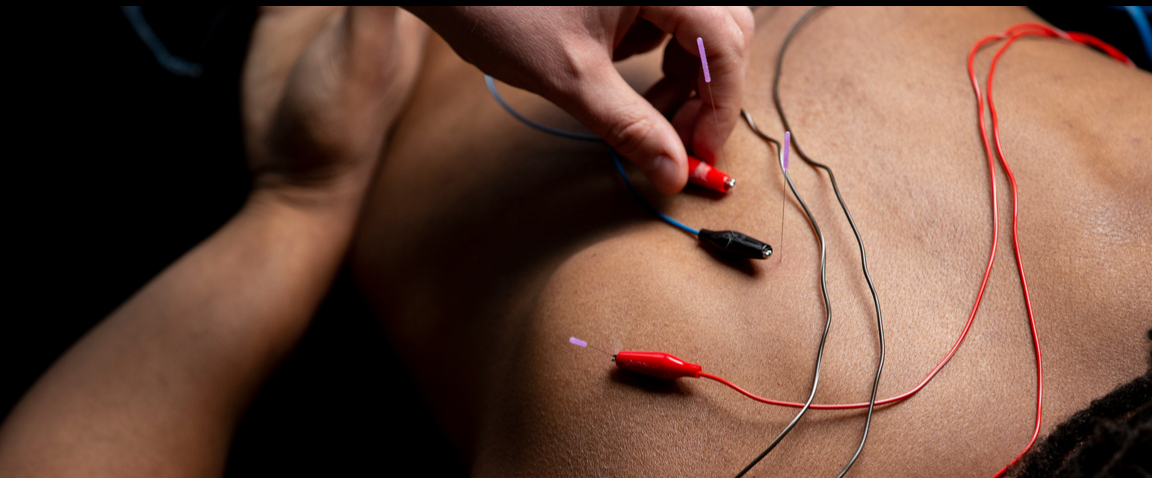
# WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CHECK IF YOUR PATIENT IS WARM?

How to check if your patient is warm enough: if you just ask your patient, "Are you warm enough?" Most people will just say yes, especially men, because they don't want to sound needy or be difficult.

It is much more effective to ask your patients specific questions. A great example of this is when going out to eat. When a waiter or waitress asks you, "Is there anything else I can do for you?" Most people say no. But if they ask, "Can I refill your drink? Would you like guacamole with your chips? Shall we take a look at that dessert menu? Why don't we have some chocolate cake?" These questions are much more likely to get yeses or direct feedback.

Patients don't know what is available to them unless they've come to acupuncture many times. So, general questions like "Are you warm enough?" or "Is there anything else I can do for you?" are great, but like I said, most people say that they're fine and that they don't need anything.

So, I like to ask patients, "Are your feet cold? Would you like heat on them? Would you like me to turn the table heat on? Would it be more comfortable if I put some heat on your back or neck?"



## **PRACTICAL TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACUPUNCTURE**

During the treatment, there are many options for applying therapeutic heat or spot-specific heat. The most common are far infrared heat lamps, TDP heat lamps, and hydrocollators or wet heat.

- **Keep your clinic slightly warmer than you would your house. Use a radiant oil heater for cold rooms. Treat patients with a light blanket.**
- **Use infrared heat lamps.**
- **Most patients have cold feet, whether it's from poor circulation or stress. It is such a treat to have warm socks waiting for you after an acupuncture treatment. This can be done by placing the socks on the treatment table under the heat lamp or tucked under the heating pad, which you can then take off and put on your patient after the treatment.**
- **Be sure to avoid drafts, making sure that your air conditioning or fans aren't blowing directly on your patients.**
- **Communicate by asking specific questions like, "Would you like some heat on your feet? Would you like me to turn the heat on?"**
- **If you have the option, keep one room warmer and one room cooler to give patients options.**
- **Also, make sure patients have enough pillows or bolsters of various sizes to help the patient get comfortable.**
- **Step stool to enable short people or those with mobility issues to be able to make it up onto your treatment table safely is a good idea.**





Keeping your patients warm is a crucial aspect of acupuncture that goes a long way in enhancing their treatment experience. A warm clinic not only sets a welcoming atmosphere but also ensures your patients are comfortable and relaxed during their sessions.

These simple steps can significantly improve patient satisfaction and the overall effectiveness of your treatments. For more insightful tips, especially for those starting in acupuncture, don't forget to check out our other articles focusing on maintaining a clean space and actively listening to your patients.

## CHAPTER #4

# LISTENING TO ACUPUNCTURE PATIENT

Acupuncture often isn't a patient's first stop. By the time they reach you, they've likely journeyed through a maze of healthcare options. This experience can leave them with a heavy load of emotions and expectations.

When patients feel truly heard, it can alleviate feelings of isolation, reduce pain, and improve mental well-being. Your attentive listening can foster a connection that not only enhances the therapeutic relationship but also bolsters the healing process. Even if acupuncture doesn't provide immediate relief, the trust and understanding you've built listening can keep patients committed to seeing you.

Listening is one of the easiest things you can do to give better treatments and have happier patients. Remember, your first tool isn't the needle; it's your ability to listen. Let's talk about how to make every patient feel heard, understood, and comfortable from the get-go.

## CREATING A SAFE SPACE

Patients won't open up until they feel comfortable. The first step is to make sure their physical needs are met. Before diving into the nitty-gritty, Show them the restroom, offer water, and address any immediate physical needs. This gesture sets the stage for a trusting relationship. It's about meeting their physical needs before you address the deeper layers of their health.



# GUIDING THE CONVERSATION

Patients often come with a lot to say, and they don't know what or when to say it. They might veer off into various topics even before you're ready or say something super important before you have a chance to write it down. Setting a clear structure for your conversation can help steer these discussions effectively.

- **Verify Info**
- **Share Their Story**
- **Dive Deep Into Complaints**
- **Explore Overall Health**
- **Evaluate**
- **Treat**

I will often say. Firstly, I'm going to make sure all your personal information is accurate and up-to-date. Next, I'd like you to share the reason for your visit and describe any issues you're experiencing. Following that, I will ask you targeted questions about your specific complaint to understand it better. Then I'll inquire about your overall health and any other concerns you may have. After gathering this information, I'll conduct a thorough evaluation, which will then lead to your treatment.



## SHARE THEIR STORY



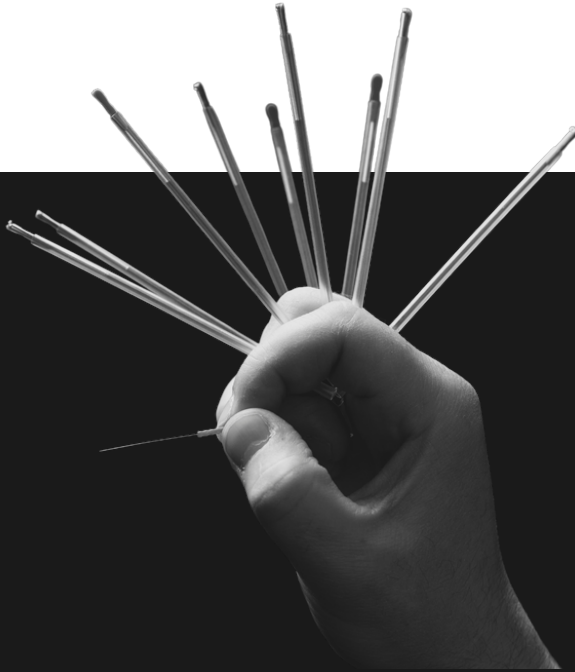
Let your patient speak first about what's pressing for them. This approach validates their feelings and provides insight into their primary concerns. Lead the conversation with a structured flow: listen as a patient shares their story, acknowledging their feelings, frustrations, and pain. Building trust is crucial; patients often continue their visits even if initial treatments don't yield the expected results because they feel understood. This understanding can afford you a few grace treatments to achieve results before they lose confidence in you.

## DIVE DEEP INTO THE COMPLAIN

Going beyond the surface of patient complaints by engaging in a deep, detailed inquiry allows you to form a sharper, more accurate treatment plan. It's not just about listening; it's about understanding the nuances of each patient's experience. This depth of understanding is what sets apart good practitioners from great ones



A vital exercise in enhancing your listening skills involves asking questions until you can mentally visualize your patient's problem both in your mind and on your patient. The better you get at visualizing their pain or issue as they describe it, the sharper your treatment plan becomes, and it is easier to ask questions to clarify.



Another suggestion is try recording the exact location of their pain or discomfort (e.g., from SI15 to BL 10) with as much precision as possible. It's common for patients to report feeling the same overall, even when the primary area of discomfort they initially presented with has improved. Often, a nearby area may emerge as the new primary concern. Patients might not recall their original complaints or realize that their pain has shifted due to the improvement in the initial problem area.

## EXPLORE OVERALL HEALTH

Even when treating something as straightforward as an acute ankle sprain, which may not require an in-depth constitutional diagnosis, it's crucial to gather comprehensive details during the first appointment. Remember, it's much easier to collect this information upfront than to circle back for more details later. Plus, initial appointments typically allow for more time, so make the most of it.

Understanding that healing is optimized when the body is in a 'rest and digest' state highlights the importance of inquiring about sleep and digestion patterns. If a patient's sleep or digestion is compromised, it may slow their healing process, and it's essential to manage their expectations accordingly.

Incorporating questions about the upper, middle, and lower jiao can also provide valuable insights, as most individuals will exhibit issues predominantly in one of these areas. This approach not only aids in a more targeted treatment plan but also helps in building a holistic understanding of the patient's health.

For those ready to enhance their practice, consider downloading our SOAP Note Guidelines. Designed with new acupuncturists in mind, these guidelines provide a structured method to document patient visits thoroughly, whether you choose to use them as they are or adapt them to suit your specific needs. By streamlining your documentation process, you ensure that every patient encounter is captured in detail, paving the way for more effective treatments and patient care. Download the SOAP Notes Guide today and take a significant step towards improving your practice's efficiency and patient communication.



## EVALUATE



Patients don't know what you are doing and why you are doing it. They will appreciate you sharing your understanding of what you're doing.

Take the time to share your observations. This not only validates their experience but also engages them in the process.

Frequently, you'll discover that simply highlighting your observations prompts patients to self-correct. For instance, when you mention, "It seems like this shoulder is higher or tighter than the other," patients often instinctively relax the mentioned shoulder. This immediate feedback loop not only demonstrates the power of keen observation but also actively involves the patient in their own healing process. By pointing out these subtle imbalances, you help them become more aware of their body's posture and tension, leading to an instant adjustment that contributes to their overall comfort and the effectiveness of the treatment.



When you are sharing what you are noticing, patients will often ask what that means.

You are welcome to share with them your thoughts but if you don't know. That is ok. Just tell them that, at this point, you are just noticing and gathering information. I have had many patients compliment me on what a thorough evaluation and treatment they had and how much they learned about themselves. I am pretty sure I didn't do anything that special it is just that no one else took the time to explain it.

## ■ My evaluation process goes as follows.

### ■ Stretch

### ■ Muscle Test

### ■ Palpate feel

## STRETCH/ ROM

Start by observing their range of motion. This can reveal which acupuncture channels and fascial systems are affected. For example, does neck pain improve with forward flexion (stretching the Taiyang channel) or worsen with extension (affecting the Yangming channels)? This step not only identifies restrictions but also how they connect to the broader network of the body, determining whether treatment should be localized or more systemic.

For example, does neck pain with forward flexion of the neck also cause decreased range of motion in the lower back? If it does, that indicates that the pain, while originating in the neck, has repercussions throughout the body, necessitating a holistic treatment approach that addresses the entire pattern of tension.



On the other hand, if the neck pain appears to be an isolated issue, with forward flexion affecting only the neck area without influencing the lower back or hips, the focus can remain on treating localized points.

This differentiation is vital as it informs whether a targeted or more comprehensive treatment plan is required, ensuring that your approach is tailored to the specific needs and conditions of the patient.

## Muscle Test:

This takes a muscle viewpoint

Can you isolate muscle weakness or pain with the contraction of the muscle?

## Palpate:

Palpate the area. What do you feel? Is the area swollen from inflammation?

Can you push on an area and cause pain similar to what the patient feels? You can assume that the injury is local to the area of palpation. If pushing on the area is not painful,, then look at referral patterns from possible neuropathies.

Remember to keep the patient informed about what you're doing and what you're discovering. The goal is not just to treat but to educate and build a relationship based on trust and mutual understanding.

## Treat:

For first-time patients, explaining the treatment flow is crucial. It eases their nerves, helping them understand what to expect. For acupuncturists looking to enhance patient care and treatment outcomes, can be a game changer

Research has shown that incorporating psychological preparation techniques can significantly reduce pain, boost behavioral recovery, and expedite the return to normal activities. By utilizing strategies that affect a patient's emotions,

thoughts, or actions, acupuncturists can create a more holistic treatment experience.

## BEFORE TREATMENT

### ■ Procedural Information

Start by clearly explaining the acupuncture process to your patients. Inform them about what steps will be taken, the sequence of these steps, and how each part of the treatment will be carried out. This demystification helps in reducing anxiety by setting clear expectations.



# SENSORY INFORMATION

Share with patients what sensations they might experience during the acupuncture session, such as the feeling of needle insertion, any mild discomfort, or the sensation of Qi. This prepares them mentally and reduces surprise, making them more comfortable with the process.

## ■ Relaxation Techniques

Before beginning the acupuncture session, guide your patients through relaxation exercises to alleviate any tension or anxiety. Techniques might include progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing exercises, or guided imagery to evoke a serene setting. These strategies not only calm the mind but also enhance the body's receptivity to treatment.

## AFTER TREATMENT

## ■ Behavioral Instruction

Guide your patients on what they can do to support their treatment and recovery. This might include post-treatment care instructions or how to engage in activities that promote healing. Providing clear instructions empowers patients to take an active role in their healing journey.

## ■ Cognitive Interventions

Employ cognitive strategies to help patients reframe any negative perceptions about the treatment. Techniques like highlighting the positive outcomes of acupuncture—can ease patient concerns and foster a more positive treatment experience.





## EXAMPLE

Here's how you might start: "We'll begin with some cupping and massages to ease into the session. Before starting acupuncture, I will let you know so you don't have to worry the whole time about when you will be getting poked. You might feel a quick point like a hair being pulled or a dull achy pain. All these sensations are good and helpful. If you feel anything that is ouchy or burning or does not go away after a while, let me know, and I will adjust the needle."

Before the needling, have them take a deep breath. Just pointing out what to do by saying the more you can relax, the better the treatment. Then, you'll have a relaxing 20-minute rest period."

Understanding that individuals in significant pain might find it challenging to remain still on the treatment table is essential. Simply asking them in what position they sleep in can reveal the most comfortable position on the treatment table, making the experience more pleasant for them. After treatment, you can let patients know You don't need to do anything too special after treatment just to listen to their body. If you feel tired, rest If you feel like they have more energy great.

You don't do anything you normally don't do. So no, it is not a good time to try rock climbing if you haven't done it before Patients often don't understand what you are doing or how it will benefit them. They can't easily judge if a treatment was effective. Ideally, they would leave the table noticing significant improvements, but this isn't always the case. However, reassuring them about the effectiveness of the treatment is crucial. I frequently conclude sessions by saying, "That was a good treatment, and I'm pleased with how it went." This affirmation can be very reassuring for them and can significantly impact their satisfaction.



# STORY TIME: A LESSON FROM THE DENTIST

Consider my experience at the dentist: I knew they were cleaning my teeth, but the details were murky. After paying, I left feeling uncertain about the value of the visit. A simple "We've cleaned your teeth, and everything looks good" would have left me feeling more positive and assured. This highlights the importance of communication in fostering a good patient experience.

Even when treatments do not yield immediate results, the trust and rapport built through these interactions can encourage patients to stay committed to their path to wellness. The goal is not only to treat but also to educate and empower patients, enhancing their overall health and well-being.

## TIPS AND TAKEAWAY POINTS

- **Make Every Patient Feel Heard: Your first tool is your ability to listen.**
- **Create a Comfortable Environment: Address physical needs to set the stage for trust.**
- **Guide the Conversation: Structure your conversation to cover all necessary areas—personal information, main concerns, overall health, and specific complaints.**
- **Evaluate Thoroughly: Use stretching, muscle testing, and palpation to understand the patient's condition fully.**
- **Share Your Observations: Keeping patients informed about what you're doing and why helps them feel involved and validated.**



- **Adapt Treatment to Patient Comfort: Asking about preferred sleeping positions can help find the most comfortable treatment position.**
- **Reassure Patients About Treatment Effectiveness: Ending sessions with positive affirmations can enhance patient satisfaction.**
- **Educate and Build Relationships: The end goal is to foster a partnership based on trust and mutual understanding.**



By incorporating these practices, acupuncturists can not only improve their patients' experiences but also enhance the effectiveness of their treatments. Remember, the key to a successful acupuncture practice lies in the quality of the patient-practitioner relationship, underpinned by empathy, communication, and a deep commitment to understanding and addressing the patient's holistic health needs.

## CHAPTER #5

# WHY YOU SHOULD TELL PATIENTS YOU ARE AMAZING

## PATIENTS DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING.

Let's talk about the power of affirming words and positive reinforcement from the practitioner's side, not only to enhance patient experience and trust but also to bridge the knowledge gap.

Most patients often lack any knowledge about acupuncture and need reassurance that their treatment was successful.

They may be uncertain whether coming to you was the right choice and need encouragement that seeking out Traditional East Asian Medicine treatment was a wise decision. Talking about how amazing you are is an effective way to reassure patients that they made the right choice and improve their experience and trust in you.

## CHIROPRACTOR STORY

I first noticed this technique after getting a chiropractic adjustment. After the adjustment, the chiropractor said, "OK, that was a great adjustment". I remember leaving feeling like, hey, this was a good adjustment. Still, I don't remember necessarily feeling a lot of change in my pain. It got me thinking, wow, that was a very quick and easy statement. That really changed how I felt about the treatment.



This concept isn't limited to healthcare. I mentioned this to one of my friends who does design and web development. He also noticed that when working with clients, they often will be unsure or don't know how to interpret the work he's doing, He noticed that just by saying, "This is a great design, and we are building a very functional website" cause them to be happy and confident in the results and what they were doing.

This made me realize that there is a benefit in telling your patients. What a great job you are doing. The majority of people have no idea what you are doing, what to expect, or what to think. They rely on you as an expert to tell them.

### Evil Bone water example:

Another example is I sell a product called Evil Bone Water, which is handcrafted using high-quality herbs and using the original formula, adding in seven extra herbs. Patient will often ask why is this so expensive why is it \$40 when I can go on Amazon and get a similar bottle Zheng Gu Shui for \$10.

This question is reasonable, and It is asked because they don't know the difference between the products. You have to educate them of the value you are offering. You are not bragging, and you are not lying to them. You are just letting them know that they are paying for quality.

### Hospital Story:

Research in hospitals on postoperative care supports this idea. It shows that psychological preparation in patients can reduce pain, hasten recovery, and promote a quicker return to normal activities. Cognitive interventions, such as reframing thoughts positively and distraction, are particularly effective.

Surgeons often employ this technique post-surgery, offering patients a concise overview of the procedure's success. This reassurance is crucial, given patients' lack of expertise and consciousness during surgery.



After surgery. It is common practice for the surgeon to come in and debrief you on how your surgery went. They will say things like your surgery went well. Your hip replacement looks good. Everything was in alignment. Everything went well. They do this because you have no idea how the surgery went. You are not an expert in surgery, and you were knocked out during the treatment. Can you imagine what surgery would be like if you went in for hip surgery, you got knocked out, and then you woke up, and no one told you how it went?

## DON'T BE HUMBLE

It might feel like manipulation or bragging because we are good humans and taught to be humble but think of it this way. You can honestly be doing a fantastic job, getting great results, and taking really good care of your patients, and go unnoticed because your patients don't know any better. They don't know the extra steps you're taking to ensure you're giving them the best care.

They don't know about all the work that you do to go above and beyond. Most of the time, you are their first acupuncturist, so don't think of it as bragging. Think of it as assuring them that they are in good hands. Here are some things that I say that I feel come off as honesty rather than bragging.



# HERE ARE SOME HONEST WAYS TO COMMUNICATE YOUR EFFECTIVENESS:

- Highlight true statements about the care provided.
- Express excitement about working with the patient and observing their progress.
- Acknowledge their dedication to health and commend them for trying acupuncture.

## HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES

- We have a good plan of attack
- You did great during your first visit.
- I am excited to work with you.
- I think I will really be able to help you
- You were able to relax and go into a healing state.
- We are seeing signs of improvement.
- We got a really good detailed intake, and I have a good idea of what is going on.
- We learned a lot today, and each treatment will just get better and better.
- You are dedicated to your health and willing to put in the work to get there. I am happy you gave acupuncture a shot.
- It was great meeting you, and am excited about our next visit.





## ONE MORE TIP

- This is one of the best ways to grow your practice quickly, and it doesn't cost any money to ask for referrals.
- If a patient is happy after treatment and lets you know how good they feel, don't let the opportunity to ask for a review slip by.
- "I am so happy you are feeling better. It would help me if you could fill out a Google review. I will email you the link."
- "It has been really cool working with you. If you have any friends as cool as you that you think I can help, let them know."

"I am just starting out and would greatly appreciate any referral you can send my way."

### ■ OK, This is the last Tip.

- Start collecting referrals for your Google page while you are in the student clinic.

As practitioners, acknowledging the power of our words to shape patient experiences is paramount. By focusing on genuine, positive dialogue, we not only elevate the patient's journey but also reinforce the value of our expertise and the treatments we provide. Ultimately, this approach is not about manipulation or self-aggrandizement but about affirming the quality and care inherent in our practice, ensuring that patients feel valued, understood, and in the best hands possible.



## CHAPTER #6

# DEALING WITH THE OVERWHELMING POSSIBILITY OF BEING YOUR OWN BOSS

## CREATE A CLEAR VISION

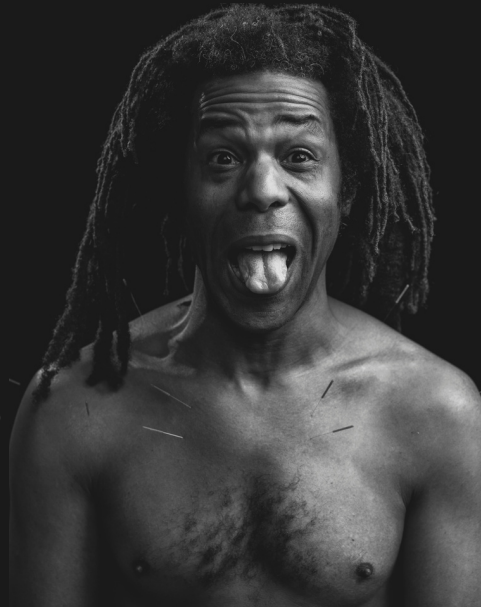
How to deal with the realization you can do anything? The answer is creating a clear vision.

The first step is having a clear vision.

People will often suggest creating a complicated business plan, but what is most important is to have an idea of where you want to go.

When you are your own boss, you can do anything.  
You can start work at 6 am or you can start work at 12:00pm.

You can play rock music in your clinic, or you can offer online distant Qigong. And that anything can be overwhelming and terrifying. At best, it is exciting at worst, it can cause decision paralysis and stop all steps forward. So, one of the hardest and easiest things to do is creating an image of your ideal clinic/life. Don't underestimate the simple but important goal of coming up with a clear vision that inspires you. It will make selling yourself and attracting customers easier.



A clear vision also allows you to start making goals for yourself. Once you have a clear vision, you can start taking steps to make that dream come true. A clear vision also will allow you to make decisions. Once you have a clear vision, you can make better decisions.

When faced with the overwhelming possibility of being able to do anything, having a clear vision will help you know what hours you want to work. What style of acupuncture do you want to do? What type of advertising would be effective? How do you want to decorate your clinic, how do you want to present yourself Etc? This vision and goals can change, so don't get overwhelmed. This vision can and will change.

## QUESTIONS TO HELP CREATE A CLEAR BUSINESS VISION

- **What are you good at? You don't have to be the best, but what comes easily and naturally to you? Herbs, acupuncture, massage, qi gong, classics? People tend to like things that come easily, so another way to ask yourself that question is, what do you enjoy doing?**
- **Ask your friends or family what they think your best qualities are. Sometimes it is easier to just have others tell you good things about yourself than it is to tell yourself good things (please work on that :)**
- **If you don't know what you want in a clinic, ask your self what you want in a lifestyle. Where do you want to live? How many kids? What do you want to do? What do you want to wear?**



# BE INSPIRED



Inspiration is contagious. When you're passionate about your work, it shows. People want to be a part of something inspiring.

Your enthusiasm will attract clients and make it easier for you to face the daily grind.

I notice this while fundraising. The more aspirational a goal and specific the more likely people will give you money. If you are doing a bake sale to raise money for your school, people won't want to give you money. But if you are doing a bake sale for a field trip or to buy new computers, people will.

Is it easier to sell yourself and your clinic if you are passionate about it. It is more natural to talk about things that get you excited and you enjoy. It is easier for you to get up every day and grind it out if you are inspired by the work you are doing and what you are building.

# QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU BE INSPIRED:

- **What inspired you to start your business? Reflect on the passion driving your venture. Understanding your initial inspiration can help clarify your long-term vision.**
- **What would I do if I knew I couldn't fail? This question encourages you to think beyond limitations and fears, opening up possibilities that align more closely with your aspirations.**
- **What am I curious about right now? Following your curiosity can lead to new and unexpected sources of inspiration.**
- **What would I advise someone else to do in my situation? Sometimes, stepping outside of your situation and considering advice you would give to another can inspire new solutions and perspectives.**
- **What project would I start today if I had the resources and time? Dreaming about potential projects without constraints can uncover hidden passions and inspire action.**

## BUSINESS TIP

- **Meet with someone you admire.**

Understanding the qualities of people you admire can help you identify values and goals that inspire you. Find someone you want to be like and call them up or email them. Ask to take them out for coffee. People love to talk about themselves and are flattered.



Oftentimes, when you are done asking them questions they will start asking you questions and you will have an informal interview. If you hit it off they might offer you a job.

Or end the conversation with a simple question. Thanks for meeting with me. Is there anyone else whom you think it would be beneficial for me to talk to?

## Do What You Love.

Pursuing work that brings you joy is not a cliché but a strategy for success.

### Happy acupuncturists attract clients.

I know it sounds like privileged nonsense to do what you love, but it is easier to be successful if you can create work or find work that makes you happy. People don't know what they want until you tell them :) So you need to know what you want. And the more detailed, the better.

Most people don't know what they want or are passionate about. This causes people to be attracted to your passion. Another way to look at it is people like to be around happy people. A genuine smile to see someone and a feeling of love really makes a big difference. In keeping and attracting patients.

Ask yourself, Am I Happy, and if the answer is no, then what can you do to be happy?

One day in my clinic I found that I wasn't happy. The daily grind had caught up with me. It was because of a lot of little things. My schedule was too full, and I did not appreciate the patients who came into the clinic. I was tired from having a new baby at home. I was uninspired by my treatments and what I was learning and practicing. It was at that moment. I had a simple realization that I am my own boss and that if I am unhappy at work, it is my fault.



So I started to think about what would make me happy, and it was as simple as changing my schedule so that I had time to work out in the morning and prepare myself for the day. I decided to take some CEU course that I was interested in. That change in my mindset was very helpful and empowered me to create and work towards the life that I wanted rather than feel like I had to just work myself to the bone.

I also noticed that when I wasn't happy and was tired, I would make unconscious choices to slow my schedule down and push patients away. I was less likely to schedule them for a series of treatments and was happy to kind of let patients not reschedule or drift off my schedule.

I share this story to make the point again that if you are happy, you will naturally make choices to grow your clinic and attract people and if you're frustrated, angry, or grumpy, you will make unconscious choices that will push patients away. So remember that you're happiness matters.

## TIPS

- **Find and keep front office staff that like people. They are worth it. I would rather have a front office person who remembers everyone's names than someone who remembers everyone's insurance information.**
- **Be Happy to see your patients. Before you go out to get each patient try to take a second to remind yourself how thankful you are to have patients and what a blessing it is to be able to help someone.**





# QUESTIONS:

- **What activities make me feel most like myself? Activities that resonate with your core self are likely aligned with your genuine passions.**
- **What topics do I find myself constantly researching or talking about? The subjects you're naturally drawn to explore in your free time can indicate areas of passion.**
- **What did I love to do as a child? Childhood activities often reflect our purest interests before life's responsibilities reshape our priorities.**

## DON'T OVERTHINK IT

It's more than likely you are already doing the things that you love and inspire you.

When I was starting out, I had a lot of experience with martial arts, which made me pretty good at doing manual therapy, palpating the body for injuries, and thinking about movement mechanics and sports injuries.

So that is where I directed my training and energy. I focused on doing orthopedic continuing education. It was easy for me to digest and apply what I learned in class. I set goals to work with athletes and designed my site website to be directed at sports performance.



# YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCE MAKES YOU AN EXPERT:

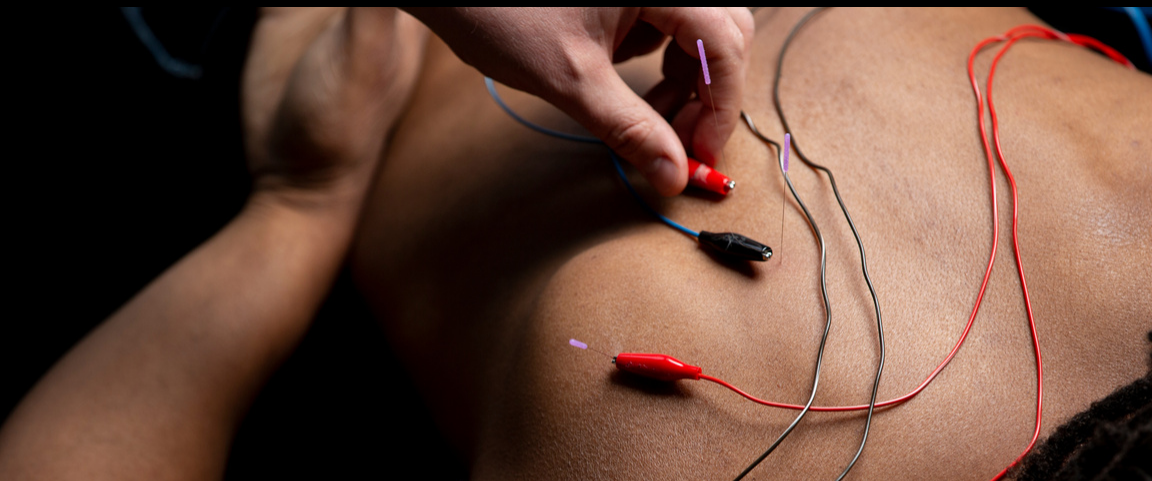
Use your personal experiences and interests to connect with and treat your clients effectively.

Do you rock climb? Do you ride bikes? Do you swim? Do you work in a corporate office? These life experiences make you better at working with those individuals because you can relate. You know what they've gone through and you've dealt with it yourself, and more than likely you're passionate about similar things.

Have you had an ankle injury, lower back pain, hurt knee, chronic migraines, or digestive problems in your own health journey?

Your own personal struggles have made you an expert in those areas, so lean into your life experiences.

Although they seem mundane to you, they're actually a great wealth of knowledge and by default, will make you an expert in that area.

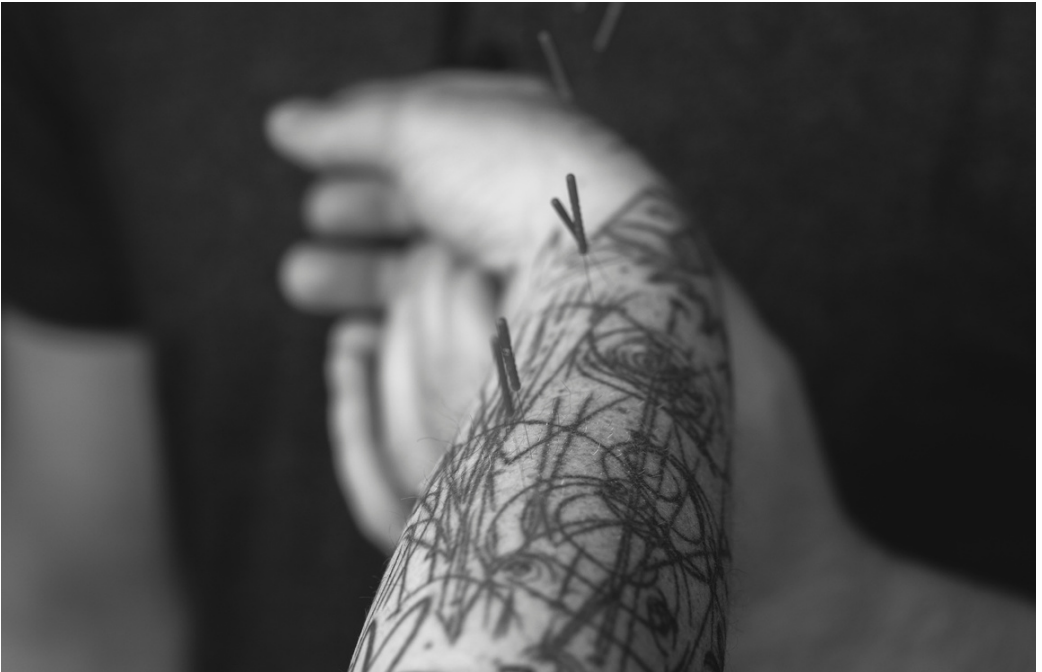


## ADAPTING AND GROWING

Over the years, I took steps to become an expert in the field of sports acupuncture, but I was flexible and quickly realized that most high school college athletes I was treating didn't have any money. I found that adult athletes and retired athletes have disposable income and are more likely to get hurt during their activities so my focus shifted and I adjusted.

## YOU ARE GOING TO BE AMAZING:

Just remember by crafting a clear vision, staying inspired, and adapting to change, you can build a successful practice that reflects your passion and expertise. Remember, the most important aspect is to do what you love and create a space where both you and your clients thrive.



## CHAPTER #7

# ACUPUNCTURE TIPS FOR TREATING

## LOWER BACK PAIN

Lower back pain is a common problem you will encounter in your clinic, and gaining proficiency in treating it can significantly boost your confidence and patient satisfaction. As acupuncturists, you possess a powerful tool to alleviate this discomfort. Here are some straightforward tips to enhance your treatment efficacy.

### NEEDLE TECHNIQUE FOR ACUTE PAIN

Encountering a patient who walks in with extreme pain can be daunting. It's natural for you to feel uncertain about your skills and techniques and worry that your treatment might cause more pain.

A simple yet effective approach is to lightly tap the acupuncture needles into the skin. Let the patient rest for about 10 minutes in a comfortable position, and then insert the needles deeper. This insertion technique can ease them into the treatment, leading to quicker and more effective pain relief.

Slow insertion, gently pushing the needle in deeper as tissue relaxes, takes time. Superficial insertion and waiting works much better and faster. Just insert the needle lightly where you normally would ensure your patient is comfortable, and let them rest for 10 minutes while you finish up chart notes or start another patient.



Then come back when they are relaxed and do follow-up needle manipulation. It's simple, but it works. My best guess is that it eases an overactive nervous system. Needling the ectoderm layer sends powerful signals through the meridian/nervous system. Light stimulation of the sympathetic nerve endings just under the skin generates a parasympathetic response.

After 10 minutes, your patient will have relaxed somewhat, the pain they endured to get to your clinic will have eased, and you can needle much deeper with little to no pain.

## Don't Forget About the Sacrum:

For lower back pain, the importance of treating the sacrum cannot be overstated. Even if a disc issue at L4 or L5 is suspected, palpating the sacrum can reveal tight muscles and connective tissue on the same or opposite side. The sacrum is a critical attachment point for many muscles and is rich in fascial tissue, which responds well to acupuncture due to its innervation by proprioceptive and sympathetic nerves. It is easy to needle, and your results will last longer, with patients less likely to reinjure their back when that area is addressed.

## Don't Forget the Neck:

Similarly, the occiput is a crucial attachment point for many muscles. From personal experience, when training for a powerlifting competition and developing sore lower back from squats and deadlifts, none of my stretching could alleviate it. Then I noticed a lot of tension in my neck and upper back during a forward bend. After stretching this area, my lower back pain disappeared.

So, if a patient has lower back pain and neck pain (or vice versa), make sure to treat both. Typical B10 will help HTJJ L4-5 or Gb30 pain, and Gb20 helps with QL and glute medius areas.



# UNDERSTANDING LOWER BACK PAIN CATEGORIES:

Lower back pain can be simplified into three categories: degenerative back pain (bilateral center), SI joint unilateral pain, and bulging disc radiating pain. Here are some generalizations that work about 75% of the time.

## ■ Degenerative

Degenerative back pain commonly presents as stiffness in the morning due to inflammation centered in the lower back, often with a taiyang presentation.

Ninety percent of the time, the patient will have an anterior pelvic tilt and tight quadriceps, putting pressure on the facet joint and aggravating with prolonged standing in that forward tilt. Advising patients to squeeze their buttocks when standing, rather than locking their knees, can greatly decrease their back pain.

A straightforward way to determine if someone has an anterior pelvic tilt is to ask if they can lay supine on their back with their legs flat without experiencing back pain. If this position causes pain, it's likely because the tight quadriceps pull the pelvis forward, pinching the lower back.

## SACROILIAC JOINT

**sacroiliac joint or SI joint pain usually affects one side and will be painful upon palpation, with cross-pattern tension between the lats, QL, and the attachment of the gluteus near the SI joint.**

**Treating the liver and gallbladder channels can be particularly effective for SI joint pain.**



# BULGING DISC:

Disc pain or bulging will have a referral pattern of pain, causing the patient to move slowly. An injury near the spine makes a patient very guarded, moving stiffly due to the body's attempt to protect the spinal cord. If a patient reports back pain but jumps up off the chair to walk into the waiting room, it's more likely to be hip or muscle pain away from the spinal cord.

Bulging discs often aggravate a nerve that refers to pain down to the foot, SI joint pain refers to the thigh and calf, and degenerative pain refers to the hips but not often far down the leg.

## ■ Additional Tip

Needling the eyes of the knees when the patient is prone is straightforward. Bending the knee creates the perfect 45-degree angle, and getting it right allows you to gently place the leg back on the bolster. This technique has been a game-changer for many patients, especially veterans with neck, back, and





## CHAPTER #8

# TEST IT OUT

We would all like to be able to nail the treatment or diagnosis on the first visit and the more experience you have and the more times you see a condition more likely that you'll be able to diagnose someone as soon as they walk into the clinic but until then it is a good idea to test out your theories. It is a good idea to have a fun and playful attitude when trying to diagnose a person.

## DON'T ACT LIKE YOU KNOW EVERYTHING.

When you are new you are often masking your insecurity. You can do this by acting like you know everything. This can slow your learning and make you come off as cold. Instead, if you take an attitude of interest and exportation, you be able to learn faster and grow confident quicker. Most patients will treat inquisitive questions as a willingness to understand them.

## TEST EACH TREATMENT

You need to be flexible If you want to get results be willing to change strategies. The easiest but least effective way of doing that is to try a treatment, and if that doesn't give you positive results at the next visit, you can try another one.



## TREATMENT CAN GO A COUPLE OF WAYS.

- One is when you hit the nail on the head, and the patient gets up immediately feeling better. In that case, you were on the right track keep going down that road.
- Another one is when the patient feels a little bit better, and then the pain comes back or has moved. That means you were on the right track, but you can fine-tune your treatments. You could add stronger stimulation, or you cleared the first layer and now need to fix the next layer.
- You can also aggravate the symptoms and have the patient feel worse at some level. This is good because it means you are affecting the area or body in some way. Your treatment is doing something it's just not what you wanna do. You can make an adjustment.
- The last you've made no change that means you've missed the mark Acupuncture is pretty effective, and most of the time a patient should feel something. If they feel nothing. it's a pretty safe bet that you missed the mark and should try something different.

### TIP:

Not often doing the same treatment twice in a row will give you results the second time. It is not likely you will get no result the first time and a better result the second.



The few times this has happened was because my needle technique was not precise and I didn't hit the target tissue. I had to fine-tune and be more precise in communicating with the patient and palpating the area.



## TEST DURING THE VISIT

Exploring and trying new things during each visit can get expensive and waste time, although it is something that we all do we want to work to become more efficient.

Here are some other ways to test theories during treatment that are quicker in confirming or disproving your approach. They will allow you to dynamically adjust real time and enhance patient outcomes. Here are several methods to consider:

# STRETCH OR PALPATE THE CHANNEL.

If you suspect an acupuncture channel is involved, try having the patient move or stretch that channel to see if there is pain, tightness, or asymmetry.

You can also palpate the acupuncture channel to check for bumps or lumps. If you think a specific muscle is involved, use a muscle test to see how it responds when contracted or simply press on it.

## ■ Press or touch

One of the simplest and most helpful methods is to press on an acupuncture point and anatomical structures and ask the patient if this alleviates their symptoms.

## LOCAL TREATMENTS

**When pushing on acupuncture points for local treatments,**

if pressing a certain area makes it feel better, it's generally a good indicator to insert a needle there.

**However, if pressing on the area causes pain, you need to ask a specific question: "Does this feel like your pain, or is this a different kind of pain?"**



The question isn't just whether it hurts but whether the pressure recreates their specific pain. Many areas may be painful when pressed, but you're looking for the pain that matches the patient's complaint, so ask your patients, "When I press here, does it feel like your pain?"

## Distal Treatments:

Pressing on points can also be useful for distal treatment.

If you're unsure which point or system to use for a balance method treatment or for ear or scalp acupuncture, simply press on it and ask the patient if it makes them feel better.

Distal points that are hyperactive or particularly tender upon palpation tend to be more effective than non-tender points.

Be specific in your questioning. Don't just ask, "Does this help when I press here?" You need to ask more precise questions.

I like to give patients options. I'll say, "I'm going to test some points, and I want you to let me know if they help. You won't hurt my feelings if they don't help you, so please be honest." When I press on a point, there can be no change, some change, or a lot of change. Most often, any change will be a slight improvement in pain or range of motion.

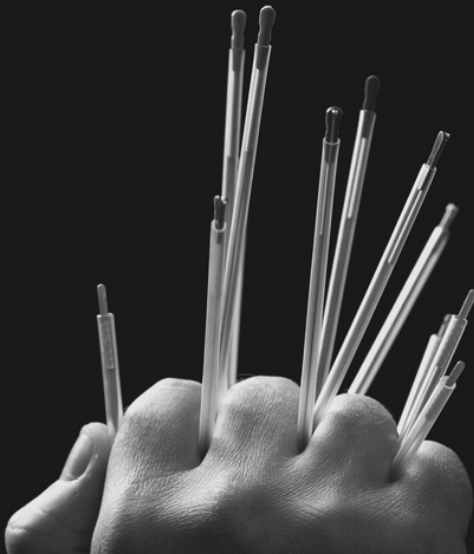


# CHEAP AND EASY FIRST.

Adopting a "cheap and easy first" approach to testing therapeutic interventions can be both practical and cost-effective. This strategy involves starting with the most accessible and least expensive options to test their efficacy before progressing to more costly or complex solutions. This approach not only conserves resources but also allows for a more gradual exploration of treatment possibilities, minimizing potential risks.

Consider the scenario of a patient with elbow pain contemplating the purchase of a brace for nighttime use. Instead of immediately investing in a potentially unnecessary or ineffective brace, a simpler and more cost-effective step is to try taping the elbow.

Taping provides support and stability similar to a brace but at a fraction of the cost. If the patient finds relief from taping, it could indicate that a brace might offer further benefits, justifying the investment. However, if taping does not provide relief, it saves the patient from spending money on a more expensive option that might not have worked either.



The same principle applies to the use of herbal remedies. The market offers a wide range of herbs at varying price points and qualities. When considering a particular herbal formula, starting with a less expensive version allows for a trial period to observe any improvements. If the patient experiences some benefit from the cheaper herb, it suggests a potential for greater efficacy from a higher-quality, albeit more expensive, version of the herb. This method not only makes the treatment more affordable initially but also builds evidence for the effectiveness of the herbal formula before committing to a more significant expense.

This "cheap and easy first" approach empowers both practitioners and patients to make informed decisions about treatment strategies. It prioritizes patient safety and cost-effectiveness while fostering a culture of thoughtful experimentation and personalized care. Moreover, it underscores the importance of a stepwise approach to treatment, where interventions are scaled based on their success, allowing for a more tailored and responsive healthcare experience.

## Testing with tools:

Tools that I'd like to use for testing

Three tools that I'd like to use for testing are a

- **Compression or massage vibrating gun**
- **Suction cups**
- **Pointer Plus**

The compression gun is excellent for gently applying over areas where muscles are tight or hyperactive. Muscles that are tense or hyperactive are more likely to twitch and spasm when vibration is applied due to a tendon reflex. This makes it possible to massage an uncertain area and observe which muscles exhibit the most twitching, helping to identify the tight and painful muscles.

# SUCTION CUPS:

Suction cups, especially silicone ones, are a favorite tool of many acupuncturists due to their ease of use. Before inserting needles, I often use suction cups as a quick way to massage an area. One technique for testing involves placing them on a suspected area of pain while the patient performs a range of motion exercises.

This method is particularly useful for neck and shoulder pain treatments, where the complexity of muscle interactions can make diagnosis challenging. The shoulder and neck pain treatments are tricky because the muscles in the back can affect the front and the muscles in the front can affect the back, there are many layers,

If someone has pain in the front of the shoulder, you can put a suction cup on the front deltoid and have them move their shoulder around to see if it's better or you could put the suction cup on the upper traps or posterior deltoids and have them move the shoulder around and see which locations provides the most relief. It is a quick and easy way to test

## THE POINTER PLUS

The Pointer Plus is another invaluable tool for testing, although its use is less about determining if a point is effective and more about confirming that the needle is in the correct tissue layer. By inserting an acupuncture needle and then touching it with the Pointer Plus, you can see if the correct muscle contracts. Given the many layers of tissue in the human body, it can sometimes be challenging to ascertain needle placement by feel alone.



The Pointer Plus can confirm not only if the correct tissue is being stimulated but also if the needle is in an optimal location. It's important to keep the device settings low, never exceeding a level two, and to touch the needles lightly. Needles placed correctly will cause muscle fasciculation, whereas needles that could be better positioned will cause little to no muscle fasciculation.

Utilizing these tools allows for a more nuanced approach to diagnosis and treatment, enabling practitioners to refine their techniques and offer more effective, personalized care to their patients.



## TEST BY ASKING QUESTION

It's important to acknowledge that patients have likely been trying to diagnose and address their issues on their own or have received various treatments from other practitioners.

Often, the most effective way to test a theory is simply to ask your patients what they have already tested.



During intake, ask about the treatments they have pursued to alleviate their condition. Ask whether they have undergone massage therapy, chiropractic care, or physical therapy. Also, find out if they are currently taking any supplements.

If they have received massage therapy, discover how they responded to it. Was the pressure too strong or too gentle? Identify which areas the massage therapist worked on and whether it was helpful. What worked what didn't work?

Inquire about their experiences with chiropractic treatments as well. Find out what seemed to alleviate their pain and what did not.

Ask about the exercises they are doing in physical therapy. How is their body reacting? Does it appear to be beneficial?

I have found it effective to assume that other practitioners are skilled and that if they have tried something that hasn't worked, it is usually not advisable to repeat the same approach but instead try something different.

Therefore, if massage therapy and physical therapy have both concentrated on calf pain without results, it might be wise to begin your approach by not focusing on the calf pain but rather addressing the lower back.

## STORY TIME

For example, I had a patient come in with what seemed like Achilles tendinitis. She described experiencing pain while walking and pointed to her Achilles tendon, describing the pain as achy and tight. She also told me that she had received massage therapy and physical therapy on her calves and that deep, strong massage provided relief, but the pain returned almost immediately after treatment.

This situation suggested a tight calf muscle, but the quick return of pain also indicated a possible involvement of the nervous system. Thus, I had two approaches to consider: treating the nervous system and treating the muscle. Since everyone had been focusing on the muscle, I decided to take a different approach and address the nervous system.

This was the patient's first appointment, and I always aim to progress from least invasive to more invasive treatments because I don't want to aggravate the condition or deter the patient during the first visit. I started by testing distal points, pushing to find tender spots on the opposite limb. I often find that balance treatments work best when overactive or exceptionally painful spots are identified.





However, palpating the opposite limb revealed no exceptionally painful or tender spots, and applying pressure on balance points did not improve her pain. I then palpated her scalp for similar painful spots and found none. However, palpating her ear did yield some improvement. I inserted acupuncture needles in her ear and had her test the area again, but there was little improvement. Dissatisfied with the results, I decided to test locally.

Since I wanted to avoid repeating what others had done, I chose to examine her back. While she was in a face-up position, I slipped my hand underneath her and began palpating her lower back. Finding no tenderness there, I palpated her sacrum, where I discovered a tender spot. Pressing on the sacrum resulted in improvement in her leg.

Consequently, we changed the treatment plan. I positioned her on her side and applied points for the sacrum and hip.

After the treatment, she got off the table feeling much better, was impressed, and very happy.

The moral of this story is the importance of flexibility and willingness to test different treatment strategies.

# TESTING CHECKLIST

## Embrace Curiosity and Flexibility:

- **Adopt a playful and inquisitive attitude towards diagnosis.**

## Testing Treatment Effectiveness:

- **Test each treatment's effectiveness and be prepared to change tactics based on outcomes.**

## Practical Testing Methods:

- **Stretching and Muscle Testing: Use for suspected muscle or acupuncture channel involvement.**
- **Pressing on Specific Points\*\*:** Helps determine the best areas for needle insertion or further treatment.
- **Using Diagnostic Tools:** Enhance accuracy with tools like compression guns, suction cups, and the Pointer Plus.
- **Cost-Effective and Safe Approaches:** Start with "cheap and easy" methods before progressing to more costly or complex solutions.
- **Engage and Inquire:** Ask specific questions about the response to previous treatments and what has or hasn't worked.
- **Flexibility and Willingness to Test:** Be open to testing different treatment strategies based on patient feedback and clinical observations.



## CHAPTER #9

# BUSINESS STORIES

## IS IT TRUE THAT YOU CAN'T GRADUATE SCHOOL AND START ON YOUR OWN?

Everyone is different and has different experiences in business, but for me, it was very helpful to work for someone else in the beginning. Acupuncture School is not easy; you should be proud of all the work that you put in. It is OK if starting your business right out of school seems overwhelming because it is.

When I graduated from Acupuncture School, one of my best friends in school and I decided we were going to open a practice together. We did a lot of the hard work registering the business, creating a website, and creating a business plan. We had every intention of coming out of school and hitting the ground running. It wasn't until very near graduation that fatigue really set in, and the idea of starting to practice became too much, so we went our separate ways.

### SIDE NOTE

One thing I did in school, which was super valuable, was volunteer at an acupuncture clinic. I just went in and observed, helped out where I could, and learned how they ran a business.

I moved back to my hometown and started calling Acupuncture practices in the area, asking if they needed help. Ultimately, I ended up working for a local practice for a couple of years.



During that time, I started off at the front desk, learning how to bill patients and do front office stuff. This was valuable knowledge as I slowly built up my clientele. By year two, I had transitioned out of front-office work and was seeing patients full-time.

My schedule was full, and the money I was bringing into the clinic was capped I didn't want to or had the time to work more hours. I was starting to feel like there were no other areas for growth.

Around that time, I started to look into starting my own practice.

Side note: Having run my practice and hired a couple of employees of my own, I have found that 3 to 4 years is about what it takes for a smart and competent employee to learn everything that you have to offer and to develop the skills to start their own practice unless you make it attractive to stay. Most people will leave.

I knew it was time to leave when my schedule was full, and there was no way for me to make more money other than working longer hours. I think our agreement was that I got 40% up until \$2000, and then anything over \$2000, I got 50 or 60%; I don't quite remember, but I believe it was something close to that.

It was a fair agreement but. It basically meant that even if I lost half my clients, I should still be grossing about the same amount of money if I started my own practice. I am a non-risk-taking individual, and it wasn't until a friend of mine supported me to start my own practice that I was willing to jump out on my own.

Leaving was hard, and I never would have done it without the support of a friend who pushed me to do it. I was terrified, and it was a lot of work, but starting my own business was worth it

Are they giving me an opportunity or just cashing out at the end?

Now having had employees, I realize It is a lot of work to get someone established. For the first year, a lot of employees are more of a liability. After they learn the system and pay for the increased overhead from the equipment you invested to get them going, they start to make money. By the end of the first year, you have paid your employer back. By years 2-3 your employer has taught you everything you need to know and will learn from them. At this point, you are just making them money, and you should negotiate for a better cut or look to start your own clinic.

## TIPS

Switching over to a flat-rate rent model is better. Figure out what here overhead is and cover half of it or a percentage of it and keep your profit. Working for someone else, you will make more sooner, but it will cap off. Working for myself, you make less for the first year but more overall. So, over your life, you will make more as an owner than as an employee.

When I started, I didn't know how to run a business, and I didn't know how to treat patients. It was very helpful to be a part of an established clinic to get my feet under me, but as a driven and smart person, I quickly learned what I could. My schedule got full, and I hit a ceiling of not being able to make more money because there were not enough hours in the day to see any more patients.





# BASICS

**General Rule of Thumb:** A common approach for small business owners is to follow the 50/30/20 rule, where 50% of the net profits are reinvested into the business, 30% is taken as the owner's draw, and 20% is set aside for taxes or saved as a reserve. However, this is just a guideline and should be adjusted based on your specific situation.

## TIP

Setting aside 25% for taxes is appropriate. Also, in your first year, you have a lot of write-offs, so usually, you don't have to pay a lot.

## Startup Phase:

If your business is in the early stages, reinvest a significant portion of the net profits back into the business to fuel growth. In this phase, take home only what is absolutely necessary to cover the basics.

## Savings Phase:

Once you are making enough money and everything is going well, remember to save. A good rule of thumb is to have enough cash to cover 3-6 months of business expenses. It just makes things less stressful. As a business owner, you can take as much time off as you want, but you just don't get paid for it. So get some savings.



## TIPS:

Vacation Really take advantage of a 3-4 day weekend. A 3-4day weekend doesn't impact your workflow and patient schedule and is a great way to have time off without feeling like your falling behind.

- **1 week vacation.** At first, you will be worried that patients wont come back to you if you take time off, don't worry. 1 week off is totally fine.
- **2 weeks vacation.** This is totally doable, but you will come back to a lot of extra work and voicemails and for me starts to get a little stressful and encroach on my vacation vibes.

## MATURE BUSINESS

For a mature and financially stable business, owners can take home a larger portion of the profits. This could be from 50% to 70% of the net profits, depending on the business's needs.

When you stop investing in your business, you can pull a lot of profit out of it. This is a benefit of being your own boss that employees don't have. Owners typically do this when they are raising kids or closer to retirement.



## TIP:

The easiest way to increase your patient load is to see them more frequently.

When I was a student, I observed in the Taipei hospital and saw that most patients were receiving acupuncture 3 to 4 times a week. Quite frequently in the United States, seeing patients twice a week is on par with chiropractors and physical therapies.

It would not be unreasonable or out of the ordinary to see your patients twice a week. I am currently busy enough that I only see patients once a week unless it is very acute. While you're starting now and growing your practice, you definitely should be seeing patients twice a week.

