

Do-it-yourself massage: Effective, convenient and free

Based on medical traditions more than 2,000 years old, Chinese self-massage techniques can help release tension and reduce anxiety - without the cost of visiting a professional therapist.

Called Dao yin (DOW-in), these techniques are part of a larger branch of Chinese medicine called qi gong (che-kung), meaning "energy work." The purpose of self-massage is to maintain and restore balance and harmony of the body's various parts. To help achieve this, the flow of qi can be stimulated or unblocked by kneading, rubbing, slapping, pinching or gently pounding the surface of the body.

Here are some examples of self-massage techniques included in the June issue of Mayo Clinic Health Letter:

Wash face - Start by rubbing your hands together quickly until they are warmed by friction. Place the palms on the forehead and, pressing into your face, pull your hands down until your fingertips touch your chin. Circle your hands around your face a couple of times as if washing it.

Palm eyes - Rub your hands together and cover your eyes with your warm palms. Hold for about 30 seconds with your eyes open to receive the warmth of your hands.

Ear rub - Use your thumb and index finger to gently rub your outer ears until they are warm. Gently pinch and press the whole ear.

Shoulder massage - Reach back to your shoulder and neck with one hand and press and knead the muscles in that area. Repeat on the other side.

Following a routine of Chinese self-massage can help relax the body, release tension and reduce anxiety. While it's not a cure all for a body that's not well cared for, according to research, massage can cause your body to release natural painkillers and may boost the immune system.

Source: Mayo Clinic