

[00:00:00] **Tony Porreco:** Hi, this is Tony Porreco and this is the Mind and Body podcast series For seasons in our Life. Seasons in Our Life is a therapy practice dedicated to the wellbeing, healing, and self-improvement of individuals in Reston, Bethesda, and Washington DC Led by Dr. Carlos Durana. Dr. Durana has been cited twice in Washingtonian Magazine, as amongst one of the most highly regarded practitioners in his field.

Dr. Durana has provided practical, integrative holistic services since the 1980s in acupuncture, manual therapy, Chinese herbal medicine, life and wellness, coaching and counseling. Uh, Dr. Durana, it's great to be with you today.

[00:00:40] **Dr. Carlos Durana:** Wonderful to be with you, Tony.

[00:00:42] **Tony Porreco:** Uh, today's topic is integrative acupuncture and holistic wellness.

For those of us who, who aren't familiar with these practices and approaches, can you tell us a bit about, about them?

[00:00:51] **Dr. Carlos Durana:** Sure. I'd be glad to. Let's start with the holistic wellness. Uh, this is, uh, at least the, i the idea of holism has been around for a long time, not only, uh, in the east, but also in the west.

In the east, you see it in one of the first books, well, the first book that was, uh, um, on Chinese medicine by what, what's called the yellow emperor. This goes back over 2000 years ago, and in this book, the, uh, uh, the, the physician is asking questions and, uh, or responding to questions of the emperor, I should say.

And, and one of the things that's highlighted that's so important is that it emphasizes as, as the beginning of, of helping someone, the whole idea. Of, um, uh, how they're coping with life, how they're dealing with life, you know, and the importance of that. So that's, that's predominant, you know, how they look at life, how do they cope and so on.

And then after that, you know, there are other interventions that that can take place like acupuncture. Uh, massage, uh, herbal medicine and so on. But it's done in that sequence. That's, it's, it's sort of giving you an idea of how important they saw the influence of the mind and emotions and all of that in health.

Okay? And you also see that in the Greek, uh, back in ancient Greece as well. Some of these ideas in Hippocrates and other people like that. Um, so it's a very old concept. Now. It's become much more. Uh, prevalent in the last century in, in the West, right? And there's some basic ideas that I think, um, cut across different practices of holism.

Um, but some of these are, are really even more, uh, greatly, more greatly emphasized in, in, in Chinese acupuncture and Chinese medicine, for example, the idea that a person is much more than just a symptom, you know, and how do you attend to a person as a whole rather than just a symptom? Right? Another important idea, of course, is the, the, um.

This, um. Interconnectedness between the mind, the emotions, the body, and how to influence health. You want to address all aspects of a human being. You see, uh, so you're looking at the intersection of those different aspects of a person now, usually including that, not just the mind, body and emotions, but also our social life and the importance of that, the importance of other people in our life and how that influences our health as well.

And also even something larger than that, uh. Perhaps that some people might take that into a spiritual dimension. Uh, the importance, uh, perhaps of meaning and purpose in life doesn't have to mean that we, that we have to believe in a deity or anything like that, but in something larger that gives us purpose and meaning.

So all of these things will influence our health, and so we need to attend to all of those aspects in a personal, really in order to enhance what I refer to as holistic wellness. I see now, uh, another important tenant in in, in, um. And, and holism is this idea of, um, how to, uh, how to promote and support, uh, what might be called self-regulatory mechanisms or self writing mechanisms in a person, um, in order to restore health and wellness.

Um, um, because when we do that, when we're trying to influence these innate mechanisms that we have. So, you know, the organism, the person can do a better job. What that does is that we then allow, uh, we, we we're, we are promoting, let's say the the, or the cultivation of resilience in a person, the capacity to bounce back from stress and from illness and so on.

So that is, uh, that's, that is a highly important thing. Um, another aspect, uh, in all of this, of course, is how to deal with stressors in life and other factors that contribute to physical problems, right. I particularly in my practice, and I'll talk

a little bit more later about my own practice, but, but it, but I, I emphasize a great deal.

The, the importance of providing tools to people so that when they leave the office, they can, they can help take care of themselves and improve their own health. I. The idea. And for me, this is, this is where, where in part my, my life coaching in a sense comes into it. Um, how do we help people, uh, develop long-term habits in, uh, that, that they can then, uh, improve, uh, their own health and the quality of life.

And even more important than that, I think, is how do we empower people? To take control over their own health. Because very often when people go to a doctor or to a health practitioners, they may be taking a posture that's very passive. Very passive. Yeah. They're not taking an active role in terms of how do, how do I help myself?

What do I need to do to help take care of myself? Another aspect of all of this is, um, is how, how do we help a person develop more awareness, uh, of themselves, but not only of themselves, but also of their own bodies? And because the body will give us information, if we pay attention to the body, will give us signals even before we become really ill.

It's kind of like a light in the, in the dashboard of a car. And there there are lights that are popping up, but we're not paying attention to them. And so that's one of the things that I find that is very important to how to. Promote body awareness and how to, um, what I call body talk. How do we tune into our body and dialogue in a way?

I'll say a little more about this a little later. So these are some of the important, uh, ideas, you know, that come into, uh, holistic wellness and in particular to. To, um, Chinese acupuncture, Chinese medicine and and so on.

[00:06:38] **Tony Porreco:** So, doctor, uh, tell us more about your approach.

[00:06:42] **Dr. Carlos Durana:** Sure, I'll be glad to. Um, I have a, a broad range of experience.

I've been doing this for a long time, and, um. And I'm skilled in, in several, several areas that I tend to bring together, depending on what a person needs. So, um, I bring acupuncture, I bring manual therapy, Chinese herbs, um, uh, you know, my background in in, in helping people and life coaching and, and, and mindbody, uh, skills and so on.

And I, I will, I will integrate this depending on what the person needs. Um. Life coaching is, is one of the important features in all of this for me. As I was mentioning earlier, the this, uh, how do we, how do we, um, look at a person's life and see what's going well and what's not going well? Their habits, their.

Attitudes, their, um, how they're coping with life and so on. So I pay a lot of attention to that in, in what I'm doing. And, um, because of all of this, it, all of this enhances, um, life quality and, and, and wellness in general, uh, as well as, for example, um, exercise, um, nutrition, and so on. These are all things that need to be looked at.

Um, now, uh, I'll give you an example if you, if you want that, of someone that I think this may illustrates how, how I bring some of these different aspects of, of treatment together. Uh, this fellow was in his forties, mid forties, and he was a, I. You know, an athlete, you know, he was still biking and so on, and he loved biking, but he was having a lot of problems, problems with his back.

And that's initially why he came to me. And as I got to know him better and got more information, there were other things that were going on in his life. You know, in addition to, uh, the problem with his back, there were concerns about. Confidence and self-esteem and, and difficulties coping at work and so on.

So I started working with him, um, with, uh, with acupuncture initially. And also what I noticed right away as I started working with him, I. And looking at his posture, looking at his structure was that, um, you know, there were problems in his structure, in his hips. There was one hip that was higher. Uh, there was also some kyphosis in the upper back, you know, uh, sort of, uh, hunching a bit over and so on.

And some of this had to do with his work and being in front of a computer for so long and all of that. But there were all other factors that went into that, and I'll talk about that in a minute. So as I, as I work with him on helping him improve through structural. Manual therapy along with the acupuncture to improve the, say the, the, the position of the hips and not only the hips, but then the upper back, the tightness in the chest, loosening all that up along with the acupuncture.

Um, his condition in his back started to improve. I. And then, um, his energy also because there was also anxiety, there was also, uh, some, some mild impressiveness. And, um, he, um, as we began to dialogue, as I got to know him to know him, he became more, more relaxed with me. And, and he talked about his confidence on all of that.

And one of the things that was actually happening in his, in his athletic performance was that he was pushing himself way beyond. His capacity. And why was that happening? He wasn't paying attention, like I was talking about earlier, about body awareness. He wasn't paying attention to the signals that were there.

Now in sports, you know, uh, it's really important to push ourselves. That's how we, that's how we get better. But at the same time, you have to pay attention to. Um, you know, the state of your health, you know, how much can I go if I go too far, may not be good, you know? And that's exactly what he was doing it.

And as we talked, what, what, what came into the picture was that a lot of his pressure, I. Was it like an example of, uh, pushing himself so that, an example to show that he could succeed because underneath it all, uh, he did not feel very confident in himself in terms of his self-esteem and so on. And so as we, we did some life coaching and all of this, and to identify some of these things that came into the, into his awareness, that caused a lot of stress.

And so then we work with that, you see, uh, along with the acupuncture on the manual therapy to enhance the, that, um, um, his coping skills with some of these issues, and also to feel better about himself. I. And as we did that, he made further progress. Yeah. And part of the progress was, was his ability to then take better care of himself is what it amounted to.

Uh, to really read his body in a better way, to, to eat better, to take, uh, better care of himself in terms of, uh, his work and also not overdoing. And then that took care of a lot of his other issues. His sleep got better. He became less anxious. He felt better about himself. Uh, the back problem went away and so on.

So there are, this is, see this is a way that all of these different factors come into the, into, into play with one, one with the other.

[00:11:51] **Tony Porreco:** That's really edifying. Doctor, what can individuals expect from you in a first session or two? How do you do your intake?

[00:12:01] **Dr. Carlos Durana:** Sure, sure. Um, in the same way that, you know, I was talking about the integrate, uh, in terms of, uh, uh, the mind, body and so on and, and approaches to deal with that, I do that in, in, in my intake.

Uh, part of the intake is, is not only a history, you know, medical history and all of that, um, that includes mind, body and emotions, um, and so on. Uh, but also.

We are looking, I, I use two different approaches that are in, in Chinese medicine are, are the most, uh, well known approaches. One is called, uh, the five Phases or Five Elements, and the other one is called, called the eight Principles, and I tend to integrate them both.

And so just very briefly not to get into the weeds about this, but. In the five phases, uh, part of the diagnosis is, is to, you look at colors in the face, you look at sounds of the voice, because a person's voice can tell a lot, gives you a lot of information about their emotional state and mental state, uh, body odors, uh, and so on, you know?

Um, and there's other information that comes into that model. In the other model, the eight principles. We are looking at patterns of what called differentiation, patterns of differentiation in terms of symptoms and syndromes and so on. All of that, and you look at the tongue diagnosis, you look at the. The, uh, the particular symptoms and how they manifest in different ways.

So, so that's another approach that can be very useful. So I tend to integrate that. We look at pulses, uh, the 12 pulses that are paid attention to, uh, and each relates to an organ system. And that's some of the stuff that you're looking at in assessment. So there's a lot of, uh, you know, it's a personalized approach.

We're trying to fit in the treatment and to what the person needs. I, I certainly bring all of these different, uh. Uh, sort of methodologies, methods to, um, into my. My work. It doesn't mean that I'm using all of them with one person, depending on what it is that they're needing. And, and so you try to tailor the approach to that.

Yeah. Some people may need some acupuncture and some herbs, some people may need more manual therapy and acupuncture and so on. Or some people may need something more encompassing. Like the example that I just gave, uh, you see, so. Uh, so in that session we're, we're dialoguing again, you know, so the person feels comfortable with me.

I'm getting in a lot of information. And then sometimes, uh, if there is time there, there can be a bit of time to start it with a treatment, a brief treatment, if it's possible. If not, then we begin in the following session. Yeah. So that's more or less. The approach,

[00:14:52] **Tony Porreco:** doctor, as someone who's never had acupuncture before, does it hurt to be stuck with needles?

[00:14:57] **Dr. Carlos Durana:** Uh, you know, there's a little bit of a sensation. Let's put it this way. If we put a needle in a place where there is no acupuncture point, you will not feel anything. I. It is like going through butter, really. There's no sensation, pretty much, because the needles are very thin. When you do, uh, put a needle where there is an acupuncture point, you are gonna feel a sensation, a little bit of a bite, and so on.

And then when you manipulate the needle a little bit, there could be a bit of sensation, but it's something that is, it goes by very quickly. It's not something that stays with you. And it's not like a hypodermic at all. The hypodermic is much more, uh, painful that way. It's, it's a thicker needle. We use very fine needles, so there's not so.

Comfortable that way. Yeah.

[00:15:40] **Tony Porreco:** Doctor, what are some of the benefits? That patients can expect from your integrative approach to holistic wellness?

[00:15:47] **Dr. Carlos Durana:** Well, you know, some of the, th some of the things that I was just talking about earlier in terms of, uh, just general wellness, uh, improvement of, of symptoms, uh, um, um, clarity of mind, um, um, more energy, better sleep, um, and so on.

Acupuncture, you know, it is, has been researched quite a bit nowadays. Um, can be beneficial with many things. Um, not only pro problems related to pain, but also muscular, uh, musculoskeletal disorders, uh, insomnia, infertility, digestive issues in, um, addictions. Um, um, menstrual. Concerns in women menopause, menopausal problems and, and many other things.

Anxiety. So it even can have an influence, uh, with depression, uh, stress and and so on. There can be many, many things that it can, it can help with. I.

[00:16:46] **Tony Porreco:** Uh, doctor, this all sounds really great. What can you say about the, some of the research behind the validity of this approach?

[00:16:53] **Dr. Carlos Durana:** Well, you know, there's been a lot of research be, uh, that has been done over the past, uh, 70, 60, 70 years now.

Uh, and some of that was through NIH. Um, but there are also many other places that have done research and, and it's really interesting because initially a lot of the research that was done was around the endorphins, you know, the.

These are brain, uh, substances that, uh, are released, uh, you know, for, for pain.

And so it was early on, it was, it was found out that, uh, acupuncture releases the um, uh, the endorphin, you know, and, and that's one of the reasons why there's a change in, in pain. There's been research in identifying, for example, a substance called adenosine that is released in the cell and then it transmits it.

To other cells and then and so on, on to the, onto the spine and then all, all the way to the, um, to the brain. Uh, there has been research that has shown that cytokines, for example, that reduce inflammation, that acupuncture can release those, it can help with blood flow. Uh, some of the more important research that I have seen that's really of interest because of not only because of mood issues, but also.

With, um, um, menstrual issues. Um, so hormone hormonal regulation, if you will. Um, and some of the research is showing that that acupuncture will influence what is called the HPA access, which is a hypothalamic, uh, adrenal access in the brain. And that, and that, that's, that is why it seems to, um, impact, uh, or, or health problems with menopause and menstrual problems, fertility, uh, and even miscarriage and so on, painful periods, et cetera.

And that's, you know, and that's very interesting, that type of research. Um, also in the area of addictions, you know, uh, there's research that shows that, that acupuncture promotes, um. Uh, dopamine, which helps with, uh, pleasure and withdrawal and, uh, and so on. Uh, and the reduction of pain, um, and, and many other things that, that are being looked at.

Uh, so that whole field is, it just keeps growing the field of research into it. Yeah,

[00:19:16] **Tony Porreco:** it sounds like it sure does. Dr. Durana, thank you for joining us today. If you'd like any other information on this topic or anything else, please visit seasons in our life.com. Thanks again, Dr. Durana. I'm Tony Porreco. Thanks for listening.

[00:19:30] **Dr. Carlos Durana:** Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure.