

Give depression the needle

Drugs used to be the only treatment option , but evidence now suggests that acupuncture is a safe and effective alternative. Nathalie Gibbons talks to three women who have been helped back to health by the ancient technique.

Sandra Sandys, 35 is a full time mum. She lives with her husband Tim, 36, a mechanic, in Guildford, Surrey. They have two children, Tom, two, and Alannah, now six months. Sandra had acupuncture to help her overcome depression after losing her mother while pregnant with Alannah.

When I discovered I was pregnant, in January 2004, my mum was already very sick with Alzheimer's and lung cancer. Last spring she took a turn for the worse and passed away on May 31. I felt very low afterwards and I think being six months pregnant made me grieve more than normal. I felt a huge loss because my mum wouldn't be there to share Alannah with me and Alannah would never meet her grandmother.

I became emotional and tearful and had terrible mood swings, which Tim took the brunt of. I kept worrying that my depression would affect Alannah and she would be born a sad baby, so I went to see acupuncturist Gerard Kite, who is also a fully qualified counsellor. I'd seen him before three years earlier after struggling to get pregnant with Tom for years. After just two months, I succeeded in getting pregnant so I know how incredible acupuncture could be.

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I saw Gerard every two months while pregnant and continued after my daughter was born last October. Sometimes the effect were instant, and when I walked out I had a totally different outlook on life, Other times it took a few days to kick in . Acupuncture didn't stop me from grieving but it gave me the strength to cope with my feelings. I was able to see things in a more positive light and remember Mum in a nice way. It's now a year since my mum passed away, which has been a difficult time, but know that if I need it, I can rely on acupuncture to help pull me through.

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