

The Magic of AcuDetox®

by Brian C. Bailey M.D.

Part One, Chapter 5 : How Change Happens With AcuDetox®

Addictive attachments are a reaction to an inner sense of emptiness, so in an acupuncture paradigm, addiction is perceived as a condition of "empty fire." This describes the volatile impulsivity of many addicts. It also acknowledges the underlying feelings of weakness and fear that set someone up for addiction.

Katherine Otto; Acupuncture Today, Aug. 2001

Acupuncture is the use of very fine sterile, stainless steel, disposable needles inserted through the skin into specific points along the channels of the body. Each point has its own function and effect on the body's Qi. Wellness is when the Qi is full and moving smoothly, balanced. Symptoms are considered an indication of imbalance in Qi. Acupuncture's goal is to help the patient's Qi achieve balance. ...

There are two aspects of keeping Qi balanced: keeping it full and keeping it moving smoothly. One primarily keeps Qi full by adequate sustenance. Ideally, everything that goes into our bodies should keep our Qi full. The "Yang" aspect is the movement, or transformation, part of Qi. It is the heat that transforms the sustenance into Qi. The nurturing part of Qi is called the "Yin" aspect. Yin and Yang are mutually reinforcing. Unfortunately, those who abuse drugs and alcohol, or engage in other addictive behaviors, deplete their Yin, causing a "Yin deficiency."

The absence of inner calm that typifies the Yin deficient state is called "empty fire" (Xu Huo), in which the "heat of aggressiveness" is said to burn out of control. It is easy to be confused by the aggressiveness that many addicts exhibit, and conclude that the goal of treatment should be to "put out the fire" pharmacologically. In fact, addicts take this approach when they use highly sedating drugs.

In Western medicine terminology, acupuncture creates changes in the hormonal, nervous, muscular, and vascular systems. Auricular acupuncture is a rejuvenating experience, facilitating balance in the mind, body, and spirit. In a typical 45-minute session, a certified acudetox specialist inserts sterile acupuncture needles into five points of the ear: (1) sympathetic, (2) shen men, (3) kidney, (4) liver, and (5) lung. The sympathetic point balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. It has a strong analgesic (pain-relieving) and relaxant effect on internal organs, and it dilates the blood vessels. The shen men point translates roughly as "spirit gate." Needling this point generally helps to alleviate anxiety and nervousness, and produces a calming, relaxing effect. The kidney point in Chinese medicine is associated with growth, development, reproduction, and the aging process. It is believed to store the source energy and the essence, or "Jing." It is associated with fear, resolve/will power, and rebirth. Chinese medical theory associates the liver point with resolving anger and aggression and with keeping both the emotions and the body's systems moving smoothly. In addition to respiration, the lung point is involved in immunity and protecting the body from disease. It is associated with the grieving process and with letting go.

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Furthermore, "empty fire" syndrome is treated, meaning that the feeling of inner emptiness typical for drug users is replaced, over several treatment sessions, with a psycho-physiological feeling of inner fullness and solidness. Anne H. Berman, Ph.D. Division of Forensic Psychiatry, Department of Clinical Neuroscience, Karolinska Institutet



Every time I see the pins used for **AcuDetox** inserted for the first time in a new group of patients, I recall **Dr. Smith**'s 1990 injunction "*In the end, everything is addiction!*" It was 20 years ago that I heard this - but reminding myself establishes the necessary mindset that distinguishes what happens with **AcuDetox** from what occurred in the first 20 years of my psychotherapy practice. My patients are not often substance-addicted. So, one might wonder whether "*empty fire*" is in play here. Make no mistake. It is! Anyone who has been travelling down the pathway of coping with stress using the same threadbare methods year in and year out is in great need of replenishing their feelings of inner emptiness with something new and nourishing. In the modes of psychotherapy I learned, if something was going to break the mold, the onus was on me to play that role. But with **AcuDetox** the needed nourishment will soon begin to bubble up from within.

I had to adjust how I worked after I began using **AcuDetox**. At the outset I was in so much awe with the ease with which it worked, that I backed off, letting it weave its magic. But once I decided to embrace **AcuDetox** fully, my old interventionist methods crept back in. My sense was that if acupuncture could produce such remarkable results, the results would be enhanced if I pushed the patients to go faster and to strive for more. I soon found this overwhelmed and alienated people who most needed to understand and encourage what was unfolding. So I changed my ways!

Patients who undertake **AcuDetox** are engaging an aspect of themselves for which they have little or no previous understanding or experience. *The impetus for change will arise from within.* As it reaches the surface it will need no outside shaping, modifying or even perfecting, even though inexperience with accurate inner guidance will render the patient "clunky" for the first little while. I thought during the first several years that my patients coming out into the world after **AcuDetox** needed a lot of help to keep them on track. Yet I saw some people benefiting from **AcuDetox**, but unable to recognize it. Here the results quickly "*withered on the vine*" so I knew that I needed to do something to make sure that the deliverable was delivered. Still, I've been usually surprised how little is required - so little that I am now prepared to deliver it in this book. There may be no need for intervention on my part beyond what I write here. This is adventuresome. But I am not where I was 20 years ago, so I fully anticipate it can be done.

So shall we begin?

What you'll see throughout this chapter and throughout this book may be used either on its own as a standalone or in parallel to consulting with someone who understands the process as I have come to understand it. I have intentionally written it as if you were coming to me personally as a patient. But, as you will ultimately be the one who brings this through, and because, if you were coming to me personally I would be careful to make the process about you - and not about my expertise, that's the way I will proceed here. Sometimes it may border on overkill, as I don't want to "leave you in the lurch." While psychotherapy cannot be done out of a book, this is something different. This will be about what is arising totally from you!

Designing a Support Vehicle For **AcuDetox** for Stress Management

The expression "*You're putting the cart before the horse*" is commonplace. People are prone to do that! Many carts are designed - hoping that the right horse will show up to pull it. We're very fortunate indeed. Here we can put the horse first and design the cart around it, because our horse, **AcuDetox**, had a 20 year history of working well with substance addiction before we attempted to hitch it up to this application. Before **AcuDetox**, the vehicle of choice was a month or more of hospitalization in a location where the addicting substance was not available. This is called "*detoxing the patient*" - a time during which the addictive substance is flushed from the body, and the body learns again how to get along without the substance. **Smith**'s patients, however, were mostly from the ghettos of Harlem, and they were very unlikely to agree to hospitalization. So **Smith** designed an outpatient vehicle, essentially a drop-in center, and he forbade his staff from confronting the people who showed up with their addiction (*which was then*

the gold standard of addiction treatment) knowing that this, and forcing the patients to talk would be the “kiss of death” in this population. His vehicle works!



Dr. Ilya Prigogine

If we now return to **Prigogine's** widely acclaimed model for transformative change (see *previous chapter*), we see a role within the model for a “**horse**”- an agent that powerfully and predictably starts up the process of “**perturbations**” - which could then lead to the desired reorganization at a higher level of complexity. In chemistry, where Prigogine saw this phenomena first, the process is often made possible by a *catalyst* - an outside chemical which makes the process of chemical transformation possible without being changed in the process.

We do know that there are *catalyzing experiences* in life, usually in the form of situations which are intolerably stressful, which, under the right circumstances, push the individual to the limit, at which time the person, all of a sudden, acts differently (often heroically), never returning to their previous lower level of complexity.

Abraham Lincoln's life exemplifies such a process. Lincoln had failed at just about everything and was anything but a distinguished leader when he arrived at the White House in 1860, only to be greeted that day by the outbreak of the American Civil War. **Lincoln** dithered and fretted while battle after battle ran up casualties of 50,000+. In the early going he chose all the wrong people to be generals in the Union Army. Then one day, generally agreed to be the day he made his famous *Gettysburg Address*, everything changed for Lincoln. He was suddenly both incisive and decisive - a leader who never looked back.



The quest for human transformative change has been marked by the search for in the provision of something from the outside which allows the process of “**perturbations**” to reach a critical mass. Psychiatry and psychology are always hoping for that situation when the person rises to a new level of complexity. We call it “*rising to the occasion.*” But, it’s rare. Assuming that controlling the body’s internal chemistry with psychoactive drugs, the person will rise to a new level of complexity, has largely failed to live up to its promise. Few people can stop their medications having used them to pole vault to a new level of organization. Psychotherapy may cause people to return to “*being themselves*” after they have been slapped down by an external crisis, but it is not equally good at bringing the person to be “*beyond themselves.*” And then we have **AcuD detox**! There is nothing harder to treat than substance addiction - and suddenly **AcuD detox** arrives on the scene, and addiction just melts away – not all the time – but uncannily often. *The horse has arrived.*

AcuD detox in a stress management setting can be very confronting to its providers. And I sense that it should be! We healthcare providers have often been lulled into complacency by the fact that the tools we work with are all too often not all that powerful, and do not often deliver results we would really like. We become jaded - settling for less²⁹. So, along comes **AcuD detox**, and suddenly we are getting results which are twice as powerful, and twice as often as we have come to expect. It might have been easy for me to settle for twice as powerful had I not known that sometimes the way I proceeded when talking to patients was markedly more effective than other times. Further, as related above, I saw too that when I was overly interventionist, the results of **AcuD detox** could easily be muted. I began to see that the state of *increased complexity*, **Prigogine's** elusive goal, was a subtle “*tender reed*” which could all too easily be missed, dismissed, held to be beyond one’s worthiness, depending on how the provider handled its emergence. While it may be a mild exaggeration, the notion that **AcuD detox delivers 100% if the time**, keeps one on one’s toes when working with the people receiving it and in the few months afterwards, when the question of whether it will take like a healthy seed or lay fallow on the ground is still in question.

²⁹ **Eric Berne** the developer of *Transactional Analysis* saw this <http://www.ita-net.org/tajnet/articles/berne01.html>

The Cart Behind The Horse As The Determinant Whether AcuDetox Will “Take”

With such a powerful horse in tow, **design of the cart** becomes all the more important. *We have to deliver the deliverable - so that it lives up to its billing.* Arguably the current era’s leading developer of transformative change programs, Penn State Professor of Psychology, **Martin E. Seligman**, had taken on the challenge in the early 90’s of creating a program which, in short order, would move Grade 5 and 6 students mired in pessimism to the experience of optimism, with sufficient effectiveness so as to render them inoculated against depression. He had no idea how to accomplish the task, so he searched around within his field, and eventually built his program around the so-called **Hoving Effect** – by which one **Thomas Hoving** had purveyed an innocent-sounding experience into a life-changing career choice – in the matter of two minutes.



“Thomas Hoving, the formidable curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, was known for not only his exquisite taste but also his ability to sniff out fraud and his unshakable confidence in his own artistic judgment. But he was not always full of such confidence. He tells of being nineteen at Princeton University, flunking out, anxious, low of self-esteem, and unsure of judgment. Before dropping out, however, he decided to venture one more course, an upper-class sculpture seminar. on the first day, the professor placed on the podium a gleaming metal object with streamlined fingers.

“Gentlemen,” the professor instructed the eight Princetonians, “Comment on the aesthetic merits of this piece.”

“ Mellifluous fluidity,” asserted the Ivy Club senior.

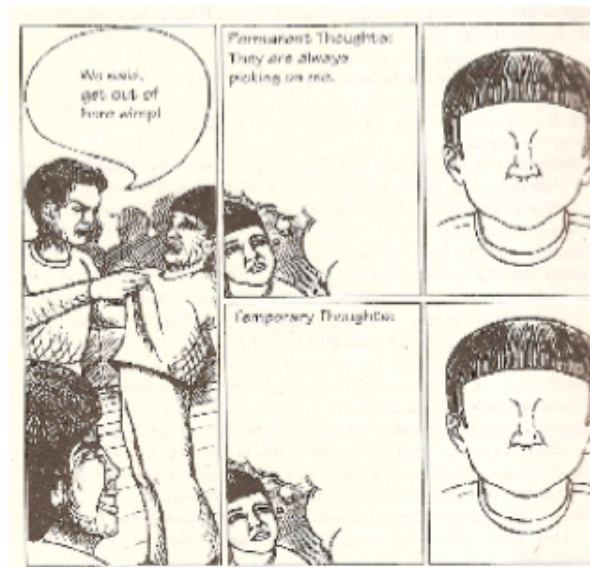
“Harmony of the spheres,” agreed a junior in plummy tones. On and on went the plaudits around the room, until the only until only the sophomore, pimply, quaking Hoving remained.

“Well, this is too well tooled, too cold, and too mechanical. It’s too functional. This isn’t art,” mumbled Hoving apologetically.

The object was an obstetrical speculum.

“After that,” Hoving tells us “there was no stopping me!” Hoving’s transforming event was a positive one, but I am convinced a single, crucial event that shatters the routine of childhood or adolescent life – for better or for worse – can markedly alter pessimism or optimism by changing the child’s theory of who he is and what he is worth.³⁰”

Seligman designed an intervention filled with events he hoped would shatter the pessimistic view of his youthful participants. He drew up a list of events which would have maximal significance to Grade 5-6 students – events like being invited to somebody’s birthday party, being picked on by one’s brother, being compared to a sibling by one of one’s parents – events which were loaded with the possibility that the young person would exhibit pessimism. Then he created a series of cartoons with bubbles representing young person’s thoughts. His researchers induced the young participants to use one series of cartoons to fill the thought bubbles with their usual response – which might be something like “it always happens to me.” and he added the second panel of cartoons with a thought bubble preceding a frame which indicated a positive outcome. By filling out both panels young people began to see that they had a choice, and when given a choice, they were better able to relate to the



³⁰ Seligman M.E.; *The Optimistic Child* p. 108-112. Seligman was chosen as *Psychologist of the Decade* for the 1990s

optimistic view rather than their usual pessimistic one. This turned out to be a brilliant coup. But would it still be having an effect a year later? The prediction based on extensive past research was that 44% of the pessimistic students would present with clinical depression a year later – and when a year later came, only 22% of them were depressed. **Seligman** was awarded the *Psychologist of the Decade* award for the 1990s for this work, and by 2004, variations on the exercises he had created were enshrined in every elementary school in Australia.³¹ So, **Seligman’s** answer, inspired by *The Hoving Effect*, is that if a person adroitly inserts new thoughts in place of recurrently negative thoughts, that positive experiences appear - and that they “catch on.” *Now that’s new learning!*

The Inner Dynamics of Transformative (or Evolutionary) Learning à la Prigogine



Knowing now that new learning can turn on a dime when the conditions are right, we can return to the **Prigogine’s** demonstration of how **transformative learning** (*in cases such as **Hoving** and in **Seligman’s** adolescent pessimists*) occurs. Transformative learning, it is very clear, is not merely a pickup of new information. Nor is it usually change directed towards one specific character flaw - like the pessimism targeted in **Seligman’s** adolescents. While we can learn from **Seligman’s** design, with **AcuDetoX** we’re talking about sweeping change that breaks old patterns and which then gives rise to *spontaneity, flexibility and resilience*.

Prigogine’s elucidation of how transformative change occurs is anything but simple and straightforward, but it has been well laid out in a way that has been rendered understandable by author, **Bill Harris**. I am going to lay out the steps below his left hand column, and in the right-hand column I’m going to lay out the corresponding steps which occur in the three-week process of receiving **AcuDetoX**. For anyone wishing a more comprehensive explanation, may I recommend **Bill Harris’s** original article, seen at: http://www.acudestress.ca/startup/WEEK_TWO.html

The Design of the AcuDestress Three Week Program and Post Session Followup

As suggested above, the energy with which we are operating here is a powerful horse. From the very first insertion of the five pins in each ear, recipients feel a marked feeling of alpha-delta-theta relaxation. If our goal was to help the person get over addiction to a substance rather than to manage stress better, other phenomena which happen may seem unimportant in comparison. But here, every phenomenon, from the first sense of relaxation will eventually congeal into an expanded ability to respond to the complexity of one’s life. Here it is good to know that all human beings have acquired ways of dampening down experiences, even pleasurable ones, which threaten the status quo.

The particular dampening defense varies greatly from person to person - but remains constant within that person. Some of these are known as structural defenses by which we hunker down like fortresses - impervious to the subtleties of the phenomena of our lives, while others are neurotic defenses, which characteristically exaggerate certain brain functions – such as tension in the person who becomes quite hypervigilant when anything new occurs.

To avoid following a rigid formula, we stay in tune with the participants at the level at which they are proceeding. This involves listening carefully to questions which arise. A well-answered question will often be the turning point for the entire group - as the atmosphere shifts from feeling apprehensive about what arises next - to feeling curious. The provider must not only be comfortable with questions, but the “cart design” involves seeking them out. It is advantageous at any time to explain anything being experienced in the room, simply and straightforwardly, so that the participants begin to look forward to the next phenomenon which occurs. **AcuDetoX** gives rise to a cascading progression of higher complexity experiences. We have ego defenses whose function is to maintain the status quo. Answering questions in a shared group environment simultaneously provides a milieu for verbal articulation, and turns the mood from apprehension to curiosity and a quickly accelerating the capacity for complex understanding.

³¹ Bailey Brian: *Life, Liberty and Leadership* Ch. 3 p.25 at: <http://www.yclc.ca/LoveLiberty&Leadership/TheBook.html>

OUTSET: No alpha, delta theta perturbations, apprehensiveness, ego defenses “at the ready”



Prepare participants in advance by explaining perturbations and the origin of ego defenses in early childhood

WEEK ONE: immediate onset of major relaxation as soon as pins applied. “Phenomena” arise. Courage and compassion.



Encourage participants to watch for perturbations as they arise, and speak of them in the group once they feel comfortable

WEEK TWO: Arising of non-fragmentary new phenomena, mobilization of ego defenses. Arising spaciousness and clarity.



Point out that new phenomena are met by defensive ego posturing; encourage storytelling. Promote group cohesion increases

WEEK THREE: problem-solving in a few group members at higher level of complexity. Arising joy and steadfastness.



Search out any stories of movement to higher complexity. Relate to these as examples of 3 specific types of RESOURCEFULNESS.

WEEK FOUR: individuals Observe own RESOURCE. Steadfastness and joy (curiosity) build. Group has ended.



Watch for one's own RESOURCE. Integrate.

WEEK FIVE: individual follow-up visit. Time to deal with the difficulties of perceiving or accepting RESOURCE.



Narrow search to one's own RESOURCE. Coaching to overcome ego defenses. Institute any “practices” which will make overt

SUMMARY: If this seems like a simple plan, it is! It acknowledges the fact that with AcuDetox new phenomena arise first in a fragmentary manner, secondly as more complete sequences – at which time the ego defenses are mobilized against deviations from the status quo. AcuDetox happens ideally in a group – where group cohesion can make the process less scary. I have alluded to the fact in Chapter 2 that the final step in the appearance of new phenomena is that competency and RESOURCEFULNESS appear in a specific form for each person, and that there are three specific RESOURCE groups. The specificity of resourcefulness into three discrete forms is immensely helpful - and is depicted on our website at: [http://www.acudestress.ca/AcuDestress In Depth/overview.html](http://www.acudestress.ca/AcuDestress%20In%20Depth/overview.html) Rather than just feeling more competent, each individual feels competent in their own way, and this allows the AcuDetox recipient to first identify and then encourage and expand the resource into something that is identifiable and useful in the process of everyday life. Once the RESOURCE has appeared several times (I arbitrarily tell people 30 times) the person will gain confidence. But both RESOURCE specificity and the gaining of confidence are subjects of the *Part Two*.