



MELISSA BEARNS

Needles Nix Nicotine

Acupuncture and other options to help smokers quit.

By Emma Juhlin

The waiting room in acupuncturist Malvin Finkelstein's office has a sense of calm about it, with soothing, mellow Asian strings playing in the background. Herbal and medicinal teas are stacked on a shelf next to the doorway, and a coffee pot full of hot water sits on a nearby table. The wall behind the table displays assorted magazines like *Natural Health* and *Spirituality*.

A woman with bracelets stacked up her forearms and long, sandy blonde hair streaked with silver enters the waiting room. Her name is Sandy. She and her husband, Ted, have endured a long, smoke-free drive from Vida to meet with Finkelstein in Eugene. Both have appointments to receive acupuncture to help them quit smoking. She's the lighter smoker of the two: A pack can last her three days, while he can smoke up to half a pack per day. They've tried to quit cold turkey in the past, but one of them has always given in. Sandy got the idea to try acupuncture when she started coming to Finkelstein for neck problems. Ted's lackadaisical demeanor suggests he was coerced to come this afternoon by his more enthusiastic partner.

Soon Finkelstein appears from behind a dark curtain. He is small in stature and sports a professional look with a khaki button-up dress shirt, green pants and glasses. He greets the couple with handshakes, then breaks down the basics of the procedure, explaining how to follow up the treatment physically and psychologically.

"Be as gentle with each other as you can,"

he says, adding that the symptoms of withdrawal can include irritability and impatience. A couple that quits together has cranky fits together, he says. "We're already irritable with each other," Sandy says, referring to their car ride into town.

Finkelstein escorts them through the dark curtain to their own rooms at the end of a hall. Sandy is up first and Ted retreats into his room. Her room is full of soft sunlight spilling through large windows. A green, padded table with oak legs sits in the middle of the room, and wall hangings dressed in Chinese calligraphy surround her as she lies down on the table. She closes her eyes and Finkelstein asks her to relax as he collects his needles.

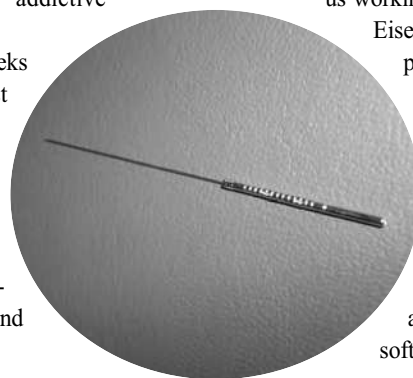
"Relax? If I could relax I wouldn't be here," she says jokingly. She seems to manage, however, and when the needles poke through her skin she doesn't even wince. Finkelstein inserts six needles in each of her ears and two in each arm. Then he quietly leaves the room to let her relax, even possibly fall asleep, for about 20 minutes. The lights are out, and she lies peacefully still.

This may be a painless, relaxing experience, but the word "acupuncture" still sends chills down the spines of many people. "Virtually every person comes in with some apprehension about the acupuncture, and virtually every person by the second needle says, 'Oh, that's no big deal,'" Finkelstein says. "Acupuncture is done on children; it's done on babies; it's done on animals, and they all do fine with it."

The hair-fine needles are scary to some, but they can help with the challenge of quitting smoking. A report in the journal *Preventative Medicine* states that acupuncture may help with cravings. It targets the symptoms of withdrawal easing the cravings and tension, Finkelstein says, and it "helps detoxify the body more efficiently and easily." But it only works if "people have actually made the decision to stop — that they're doing it for themselves and not for somebody else," he says.

The use of auricular acupuncture, or acupuncture of the ear, for various types of addictive problems started in China in the 1950s. "It was discovered that as people woke from certain types of anesthesia they were having an easier time getting off various things they were addicted to," Finkelstein says, referring to tobacco, alcohol and various other drugs. "They figured out certain points in the ear had very strong effects on helping people through the addictive process."

It's been three weeks since Sandy's first acupuncture session, and she's still smoke free. But success has meant more than better breathing for Sandy. It's meant sacrifice, lifestyle changes and personal challenges.



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— Malvin Finkelstein

Her husband, Ted, picked up the habit again because of work-related stress. His relapse makes quitting more difficult for Sandy. "We have to avoid each other now," she says. Ted must be out of her sight to light up. She admits that she's also suffered physical discomfort, possibly due to withdrawal.

"I had a really bad headache for about five days," she says. But ironically it helped take her mind off smoking. Sandy says those first five days she and her husband quit smoking together were a serious strain on their domestic tranquility. "It was five days from hell in our house." As Finkelstein predicted, the first five days were the toughest in terms of withdrawal.

Sandy drinks water consistently now as a substitute for smoking, which Finkelstein recommended. She attributes her success to a dedication to be healthier, refocusing her former preoccupation with cigarettes onto a more positive, healthful outlook. "I want to be addicted to feeling better," she says.

Nicotine loading

For smokers who are serious about kicking the habit, many alternative, natural treatments including hypnotherapy, support groups and herbology are waiting to aid them through the struggle to quit (see below). But these methods are often passed up for nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), including the nicotine patch or Nicorette chewing gum. Susan Pfanner, cardiac respiratory therapist and director and creator of PeaceHealth's Options: Tobacco Cessation Program, says people can end up consuming even more nicotine through replacement therapy than

through smoking. "I've had people get up to the equivalent of three packs a day," Pfanner said of NRT gum. She says many people are able to quit smoking without NRT, but still rely on it. "Twenty percent of smokers don't have the generic predisposition to nicotine addiction." But Pfanner says quitting cold turkey can be difficult, and she advocates the use of acupuncture for smoking cessation, which she used to treat her own withdrawal symptoms when she quit smoking years ago.

Look into My Eyes

"Can you really hypnotize me?" Rosemarie Eisenberg asks, cringing as she repeats the words she hears all too often. Eisenberg, a certified hypnotherapist, says the answer depends on the chemistry and cooperation between patient and therapist.

"It works, but it's not magic," she says. "It's not me zapping someone. It's the two of us working together to bring change."

Eisenberg, who began a private practice in Eugene in 1985, specializes in smoking cessation, stress management and weight control, and has helped many people quit smoking through hypnosis.

"I have a gentler approach," she says, in her soft, bedtime story voice. "I put

the client in a relaxed state of awareness." The idea is to associate relaxation with quitting. Then Eisenberg helps the client visualize him or herself as a non-smoker through guided imagery. The suggestion of them achieving their goal, she says, is the key to helping smokers quit.

Eisenberg's Stop Smoking program consists of three sessions. The first two are a week apart and the third is three weeks later, and serves as reinforcement. A typical session begins with 45 minutes or so of talking, establishing what the client wants to achieve. The next 45 minutes involve hypnosis. The client closes his or her eyes and listens to soothing music, while guided imagery "takes them to a really beautiful spot," she says.

The client must have their last cigarette the day they first come to her office. In order for hypnosis to be effective, she says, the client must be firm in their decision to quit. "You have to want to live to stop smoking," she says. She encourages clients to come back if they start thinking about cigarettes.

Many of her clients are successful, but Eisenberg says the treatment is not guaranteed. Different patients and therapists work better together, she says, and some people are naturally more open to hypnosis than others. According to the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, "Some individuals seem to have higher native hypnotic talent and capacity that may allow them to benefit more readily from hypnosis." The ASCH does, however, claim smoking addiction is treatable through hypnosis.

Eisenberg loves helping smokers quit because it changes their lives. "I care about my clients and that comes across," she says.