



Turning point: Lydia Slater, right, with children, says acupuncture changed her life



Good points: I benefited from acupuncture

THE NEEDLES HELPED ME CONCEIVE, SAYS LYDIA SLATER

AS A doctor's daughter, I was brought up to despise alternative medicine. But then, about five years ago, I found myself struggling with a variety of conditions that my GP seemed unable to treat. I had developed irritable bowel syndrome; I had put on weight, was unable to sleep and full of unspecified rage at my unexplained failure to conceive. All that modern medicine seemed to offer was a course of soporific antidepressants.

Then I met a friend who was being treated for polycystic ovary syndrome by a Harley Street acupuncturist, a

practitioner who, incidentally, specialised in unexplained infertility. I booked myself in, without telling my parents.

The weekly sessions weren't cheap - some £80 a time. Initially, I was scared of the needles, but the acupuncturist was so skilled I felt nothing. I soon had them sticking out of my ears and in my finger joints.

As the needle went in, I sometimes felt a violent jolt of electricity in one limb, or flashing along my body's nerve networks. Often, I would be visited by a burst of exhilaration or was suffused with a feeling of calm.

The experience was positively addictive. I increased the sessions, sometimes to twice a week, which I could ill afford. Instead, I gave up shopping and eating out.

The effects were startling: first, the IBS cleared up; then I ceased to comfort-eat and lost weight. I booked sessions to coincide with difficult situations, such as prior to a work meeting at which I had to negotiate a new contract.

The acupuncturist told me that he would arrange the needles so as to boost my oestrogen levels, reduce stress and thus improve my chances of

conceiving.

It sounded like mumbo jumbo, but although I'm normally diffident, I found myself storming into the office and insisting on precisely the deal I was after. It was about the same time that I discovered I was pregnant. I now have two daughters, Asya, nearly four, and Rosie, two.

I can't believe that my return to health can be attributed to a placebo effect. So many people I know can attest to the

benefits of acupuncture: it has helped friends with everything from healing torn muscles to boosting low self-esteem.

These days when I'm ill, I still go to my GP. But if a problem is nebulous or intractable, I'll be straight back to the needles.

◆ Treatment by acupuncturist Gerad Kite costs from £85/session (020 7408 0341; www.kiteclinic.co.uk).