

How To Thrive In the Modern World

A LAYPERSON'S GUIDE TO CHINESE MEDICINE

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Introduction

You have likely picked up this book because you are looking for ways to live a healthier, more balanced life. Maybe you have been struggling with your health and are in need of a new approach. If you are like most of our patients, you do not want to choose between being on medications for the rest of your life or suffering with nagging health problems. Instead, you want to live a life that is unlimited in its potential. You want to be full of energy. You want your body to be a symbol of vitality, strength, and longevity.

If you are fed up with not being able to enjoy the quality of life that you deserve due to various health problems, then the information in this book could change your life. Within these pages, you will learn about a fascinating ancient treatment method called Chinese medicine. This is an ancient form of healthcare that has been practiced for thousands of years and has helped literally billions of people. Our goal in offering you this information is to:

- ♦ Offer you a clear overview of this incredible healing system
- ♦ Give you a sense of empowerment that there are indeed natural solutions to your current health problems
- ♦ Encourage you to be proactive about your health and treat it as a top priority for the rest of your life

Having treated many patients with numerous health concerns, we know how frustrating and challenging it can be to struggle with chronic health issues. We have learned that health problems are often warning signs from a very intelligent place within ourselves that we need to change our current way of doing things. Learning how to thrive in your life has a lot to do with learning from your health concerns, not just pushing them away or judging them as negative. This approach is, for many of our patients, where true healing begins. The information contained in these pages is your blueprint for a new way of understanding your body and mind.

If you have any questions or would like to pursue this form of healthcare, please refer to the end of the book on page 25 where there is information about our practice. Let's begin!

Chapter 1

INVESTING IN YOUR HEALTH

When you think about it, there is nothing more important than your health. Even if every other dimension of life is going well (work, marriage, finances, etc.) we really can't enjoy life if we are struggling with our physical or emotional health. Investing in and making a commitment to your health can feel like a big step to take, especially when many of us tend to put everyone else's needs before our own or to just 'suck it up' and deal with our stressful lives.

This is the starting point for learning how to thrive, as investing in your health is one of the most powerful steps you can take to dramatically enhance the quality of your daily life. It sets the stage for success in every dimension of life. When you have more energy, confidence, mental clarity, and improved physical health, you are more able to gracefully handle daily stressors and challenges that would have previously overwhelmed you. Composure, control, and peace become the foundations of your life rather than isolated experiences.

Committing to and being proactive about your health in this way will lead to not only immediate improvement in your life, but will also set the stage for greater vitality and resilience as you age. In this way, there is a strong preventative aspect to claiming optimal health right now. Most of us have been taught to put off our own needs until our bodies and minds are screaming at us for acknowledgment. We wait until we are given a wake up call that usually comes in the form of illness or worsening health problems.

But what if you were to be proactive right now? What if you decided to care for yourself enough to take the steps necessary to optimize your current state of health, thereby preventing future problems? What is preventing you from living a life of boundless energy and radiant health right now?

These are powerful questions to ask yourself. You see, most of us are caught in a constant game of negotiation with ourselves to buy more time to put off the most important things in life. We think we have time to postpone our

deepest needs for health, peace, and balance.

What we are getting at is that, in order to thrive in the modern world, it is essential that you commit right NOW to your health as a top priority. This means:

- ♦ Partnering with the right holistic and allopathic (Western) medical practitioners
- ♦ Eating an organic whole foods diet
- ♦ Exercising 3-4 times a week
- ♦ Taking time each day to be present using relaxation techniques
- ♦ Freeing yourself of any limiting beliefs that undermine your health and quality of life

As with all important priorities in life, it is essential that you surround yourself with a community of people that can inspire and guide you in the direction of optimal health. We all need this kind of guidance or else we easily feel alone and confused. As you will see, a skilled acupuncturist can be an incredibly helpful resource in this regard.


Let's summarize the main points here, then we will jump into an exploration of Chinese medicine and how it can help you achieve your health goals:

- ♦ Your health and quality of life depend on the choices you make every moment you are alive
- ♦ You can choose to claim a much higher level of health right now
- ♦ You do this by freeing harmful beliefs, establishing healthy lifestyle patterns, and allying yourself with a team of skilled holistic and allopathic medical practitioners
- ♦ NOW is the only moment we have; putting off your deepest needs will create bigger problems down the road

How do I know if I'm a good candidate for acupuncture treatment?

You would likely receive great benefit from this form of care if you are:

- ♦ Struggling with chronic health issues that haven't responded to other forms of care
- ♦ Interested in reducing dependence on Western medications
- ♦ Looking for alternatives to conventional forms of treatment
- ♦ Seeking ways to optimize your health on all levels of being

- 
- ♦ Fed up with the conventional healthcare model
 - ♦ Looking for ways to grow spiritually and emotionally
 - ♦ And perhaps the most important point: You are interested in taking responsibility for your health to make the changes that will create a life of greater balance and purpose

Chapter 2

THE MANY BENEFITS OF CHINESE MEDICINE

As we mentioned, Chinese medicine has been practiced for thousands of years and is used around the globe by millions of people. The reason that it has survived for so long and adapted to different cultures is that it offers a vast and potent repertoire of healing benefits that are so widely needed in our modern world.

You may have noticed that acupuncture has enjoyed an enormous surge of interest lately, as the media is really catching onto the widespread benefit that this treatment option is offering to so many people.

Just what are some of these benefits? Well, the list could expand over many pages, but here is a condensed version of what our patients are expressing and what clinical evidence is suggesting:

- ♦ Substantial increase of energy
- ♦ Relief and resolution of chronic pain
- ♦ More restful sleep patterns
- ♦ Less cravings, habitual behaviors, and addictive tendencies
- ♦ Reduction or elimination of chronic illness and stress
- ♦ Emotional balance, increased joy and motivation
- ♦ Increased mental clarity and memory
- ♦ Improved athletic performance
- ♦ Enhanced metabolism

Chinese medicine can effectively treat a number of chronic health problems, from anxiety and depression to chronic pain and PMS. The list of conditions treated by this medicine is vast to say the least.

Many people report a deep feeling of peace that stays with them for many hours or days after acupuncture treatment. Many patients find that this feeling of peace becomes the foundation for their life rather than an occasional experience.

Chapter 3

WHAT IS CHINESE MEDICINE AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Chinese medicine is an ancient form of healthcare that has been practiced throughout the Asian world for 5000 years. Historically and up until this very day, Chinese medicine is perhaps the most widely used form of medicine throughout the world, as billions of people have used it as their primary form of care. There are five main branches of Chinese medicine (we will be covering the first two of these in some depth):

- ♦ Acupuncture
- ♦ Chinese herbal medicine
- ♦ Nutrition
- ♦ Qi gong
- ♦ Feng shui

According to Chinese medical theory, these five branches form the foundation of a healthy and balanced life.

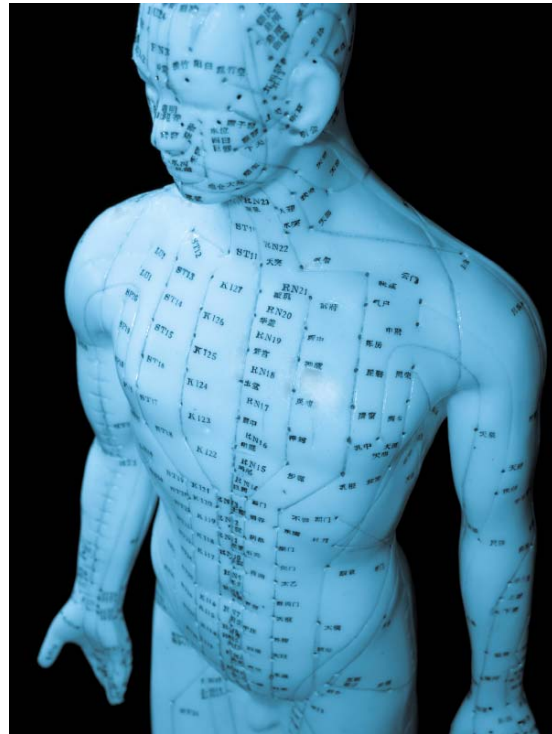
Acupuncture theory is premised upon the concept of Qi (pronounced Chee), which loosely translates as energy, life force, or function. The main point when trying to grasp the concept of Qi is to consider the possibility that there is an immaterial level of reality that Western science cannot quantify or categorize. Acupuncture theory suggests that many of our physical and emotional problems begin at a level of function that is more subtle than our brain chemistry or organ function.

Quantum physics has come to a very similar understanding of the material world and the human body by proving that when we break down any material object into its smallest components, it is reduced to pure energy. So, many of these ancient Eastern cultures have long understood what Western science is finally beginning to accept. Our bodies, while seemingly solid, are actually energetic configurations that are constantly changing. Acupuncture is premised upon this understanding. The point of treatment is to manipulate the flow of Qi within our bodies in different ways to induce a therapeutic

effect. By working on the energetic level, the physical or material level can be directly affected. In fact, according to acupuncture theory, many forms of imbalance or disease cannot be fully healed simply by intervening on the material level. The underlying energetic component has to be addressed in order to treat the root cause of the problem.

Now, according to acupuncture theory, the Qi in our bodies is said to pool and gather at specific locations that are spread out from head to toe. The specific locations where Qi gathers are called acupoints, or acupuncture points. These are typically the places where acupuncture needles are inserted to induce various therapeutic effects. There are approximately 365 basic acupoints on the human body. These numerous points are located on acupuncture meridians, which are channels of Qi that flow throughout the body. The meridians correspond to the major internal organs. Here is a list of the 12 major meridians that run through the body:

LUNG
LARGE INTESTINE
SPLEEN
STOMACH
BLADDER
KIDNEY
HEART
SMALL INTESTINE
SAN JIAO
PERICARDIUM
GALL BLADDER
LIVER



There are numerous acupoints on each of these 12 meridians. For instance, the Lung meridian has 11 acupoints while the Bladder Meridian has 67 acupoints. Each of these 365 points have names, metaphors, and images associated with them that help the acupuncturist utilize them in different ways. The meridians travel through specific regions of the body; they have definite origins and end points. Typically, an acupuncturist will insert tiny needles into a number of the acupuncture points on the meridians that are most in need of balancing.

What does the needle do?

Acupuncture should be a relatively painless, deeply relaxing experience. Some people are reluctant to pursue it because it involves the use of needles. Rest assured, a skilled practitioner can treat you with minimal, if any, discomfort. It is common for the patient to ask, 'did you *really* just put a needle in?' after it is inserted because the procedure is so gentle. Most patients are surprised by how little they feel as the needles are inserted. After the needles are in, there is typically a sensation of dull pressure or a mild achiness. Other patients report a feeling of tingling or warmth, while others feel a tangible and strong presence of Qi coursing through the body. In any regard, acupuncture should be a pleasant, tranquilizing, and safe experience. The needles are hair thin and are used only once, then disposed into a biohazard container.

Most acupuncturists use stainless steel needles which are said to disperse energy and get the Qi moving effectively throughout the meridian that is being worked on. The needle is used as a medium for transferring and manipulating Qi in various ways. There are some acupuncturists who are so skilled at working with Qi that they don't even need to use a needle to do so. They can simply use their hands or, even more remarkably, the power of their faculties of awareness, to induce the desired energetic shift that needs to occur for healing to take place. Most acupuncturists prefer to use needles, simply because this is the easiest medium to utilize for changing the energetics of the body.

In acupuncture theory, all of the major organs of the body are believed to work interdependently. This means, for example, that the function of your kidneys can have a direct impact on the function of your lungs. This is one example of the holistic nature of Chinese medicine. Western medicine tends to reduce the focus down to one isolated component without regard for how the organism is functioning as a whole. In acupuncture theory, all of our internal organs are part of an inseparable matrix of function; they all have important roles to play that directly influence the health of the other organs in the body.

Therefore, the acupuncturist can insert a needle into the Spleen meridian that will have a direct effect on the Heart meridian. Or, the acupuncturist can sedate or disperse Qi by using a point on the Liver meridian to help the kidneys function better. Other times, the acupuncturist works directly on the meridian that reflects the person's symptoms. For instance, acupuncture points on the Lung meridian can be used for treating asthma. How an acupuncturist chooses which points to needle is based on their training, expertise, and knowledge. It is very

likely that if a patient with a specific health condition were to see three different acupuncturists, they would receive three unique styles of treatment, **all of which could effectively address their presenting health issues.**

Many acupuncturists assert that the ritual of needling specific points is primarily a way of making therapeutic suggestions to the body. It is like offering the body some new input to work with so it can disentangle itself from the feedback loop and habit of chronic pain, imbalance, or weakness. Our bodies are miraculous self-healing organisms. When prompted and guided in the right way, the body has the amazing ability to heal itself. This is what all forms of holistic medicine intend to induce: A non-invasive, gentle, yet potent method of intervention that naturally offers to the body what it needs to heal itself.

As with all forms of holistic treatment, Chinese medicine begins with the theory that every human being has an innate resource of wisdom, strength, and health that can be tapped into at any moment. Acupuncture is a way of making contact with this incredible resource. In this sense, it emphasizes the truth that each of us must be held accountable for our health and quality of life. If life circumstances have caused us to feel alienated from this inner wisdom, then we can certainly turn to acupuncture as a way to reconnect with ourselves and awaken to our full potential. But acupuncture is not intended to be a cure-all for our health problems nor is it a magic bullet that will make all of our pain go away. A skilled acupuncturist will engage in a therapeutic relationship with the patient to help educate them about how they can take responsibility for their symptoms or imbalances.

This approach is very different from Western medicine in which the patient is typically offered a pill to suppress or alleviate their symptoms. While allopathic care is certainly warranted for acute and life-threatening conditions, it fails at truly offering a deep level of support to the millions of patients with chronic, stress-related issues like anxiety, insomnia, pain, and digestive disorders. By putting the responsibility and power in the hands of the patient through effective education and treatment, Chinese medicine is mainly intent on treating the root cause of our health conditions.

Now, this does not mean that you have to believe in these techniques for them to work. It does mean that you have to believe in yourself to reap the full benefits that these strategies have to offer.

We have already touched on the fact that Chinese medicine is one of the few

truly holistic medical traditions in the modern world. What does this mean exactly? Well, a skilled acupuncturist looks at health and illness differently than does a typical Western doctor. A holistic form of care is one that focuses on:

- ♦ The effects of the mind (beliefs, perceptions, attitudes) on the human body
- ♦ The role that nature plays in health and disease
- ♦ The relationship between emotional and physical health
- ♦ The subtle ways that energy is distributed through the human body
- ♦ The energetic processes that underlie physical and emotional imbalances

When we normally think of holistic medicine, we think of the connection between body, mind, and spirit. While this is certainly one dimension of any truly holistic paradigm, holism implies a much broader usage as well. For instance, when diagnosing your various health issues, the acupuncturist will look at:

- ♦ The relationship between your beliefs and predominant emotions
- ♦ Physical imbalances that may be contributing to emotional hardship
- ♦ Dietary habits
- ♦ Exercise habits
- ♦ The degree to which you are engaged with and loving your work
- ♦ Social support systems
- ♦ Spiritual awareness
- ♦ Intimate relationships

All of these factors are potential inputs into your current level of health. From a holistic perspective, anything that we have attracted into our lives that strengthens the momentum of our current health issues needs to be considered as a potential avenue for therapeutic intervention. In this sense, a skilled acupuncturist often is seen as a health or life coach as much as they are a healer or a doctor.

The beauty of holistic medicine is that it truly does account for your individual and unique makeup. For instance, you may have noticed in Western medicine that there are three or four medications that are used for all kinds of anxiety and depression. Prozac, Paxil, Effexor, etc. are standard treatment options regardless of the patient's specific energetic, physiological, and emotional makeup. In holistic medicine, anxiety and depression are considered generic labels that do not capture the unique dynamics of the individual. For instance, one person can experience a grief-based depression due to the loss of a loved one while some-

one else is depressed because they are internalizing a lot of anger and don't know how to express themselves. In Western medicine, these two very different patients would likely receive the same medication. In holistic medicine, there are entirely different approaches used to compliment the specific emotional dynamics of the patient. Grief and anger are very different emotions and need different therapeutic inputs in order to be liberated. In this sense, holistic medicine really does treat the person, not the disorder.

Chinese medicine asserts that the body mirrors the mind. To the extent that we are spiritually connected and free of distorted beliefs, our bodies will thrive. Contrarily, gradual physical decline is the result of attachment to limiting viewpoints that suppress the spirit. Many people blame their failing health on the aging process. From a holistic perspective, chronological age has very little to do with the health of the physical body. The reason that the body tends to decline as we age is because of the chronic and stubborn nature of our conditioned beliefs and habits. If we choose to enable these beliefs to run our lives year after year, rest assured the body will inevitably undergo a process of degeneration that can be gradual or sudden. The body becomes less tolerant of imbalanced perceptions and behaviors over time. This is the main reason that age-related physical issues become apparent. It is inspiring to note that many elderly people in the world have maintained a state of thriving physical health that seems to defy their actual age. What accounts for this difference? Positive attitude, self care, strong faith and empowering belief systems.

What can I expect during treatment?

Many patients have been amazed by the sensations they feel during treatment, as if there their body is pulsating with a pleasant electrical current that they have never felt before. Acupuncture helps people feel their internal energy. It gets them out of their head and restores a kind of intuitive connection with the body. Acupuncture has a way of dropping one's attention deep into the body to feel the subtle currents of sensation that are created by the movement of Qi.

Many people also describe how quickly the acupuncture session goes by. Even though they had been laying on the table for 45 minutes, they literally feel that only 10 minutes have passed. This happens because acupuncture has a way of taking people out of linear time. As the patient's awareness becomes more body-oriented, the normal thought process of cause and effect ('I have to make that meeting at 12') falls away, and a sense of timelessness ensues. This alone can be a profoundly healing experience.

If you try acupuncture, you will very likely fall asleep or simply sink into a deep relaxation. For the rest of the day (and possibly for several days after that), you will feel energized and refreshed, as if your body has just gone through a period of deep rest.

Chapter 4

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF ACUPUNCTURE?

While a detailed analysis of the history and theory of acupuncture is beyond the scope of this book, it is important to know that there are two main traditions of acupuncture used throughout the world. The first one is called eight principle acupuncture, which involves harmonizing imbalances that have developed in the body. The eight principles refer to:

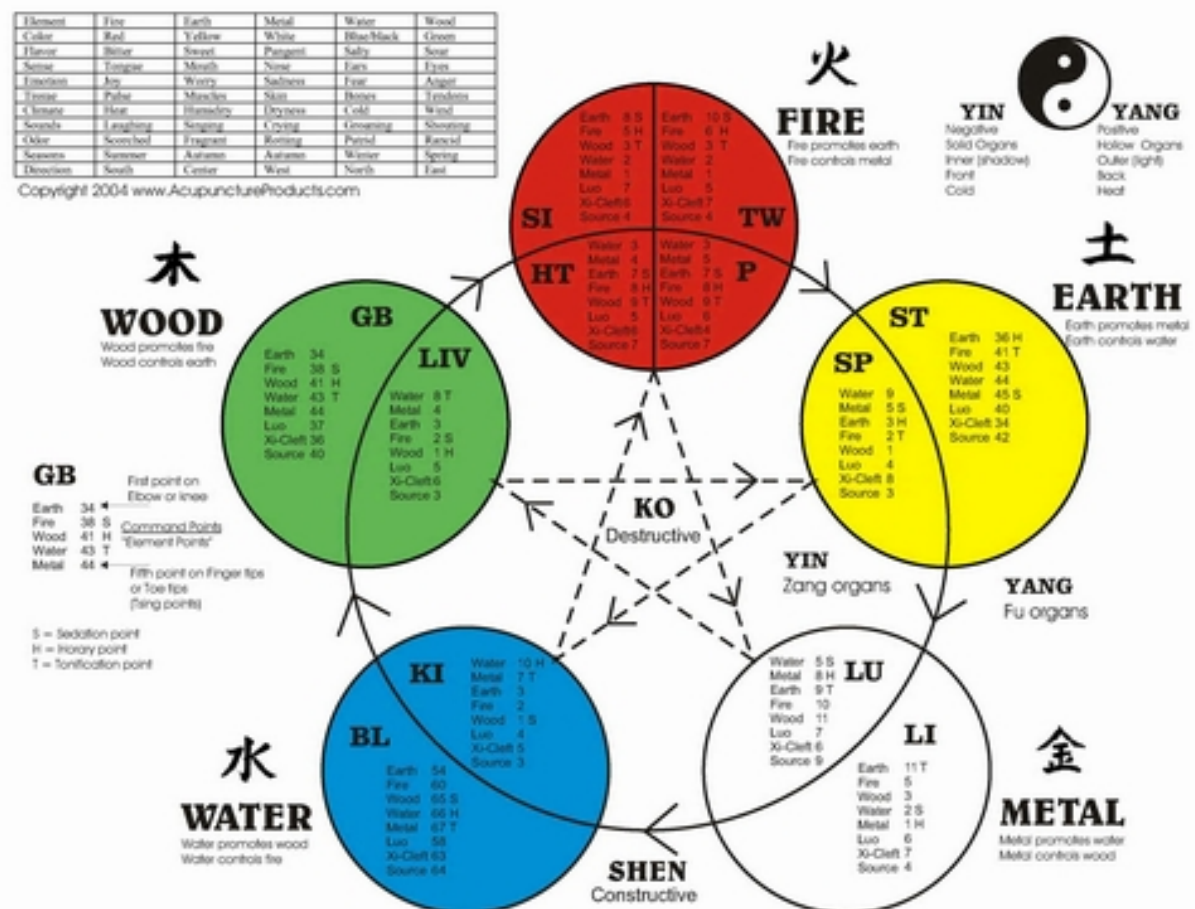
- ♦ Damp
- ♦ Dry
- ♦ Hot
- ♦ Cold
- ♦ Excess
- ♦ Deficient
- ♦ Yin
- ♦ Yang

An eight principle acupuncturist will use these parameters to assess the relative degree of balance within the patient's body. For instance, a patient can have a deficiency of yin, which means that the calming, moistening, and cooling aspects of their physiology have become depleted. In this case, the acupuncturist will nourish yin in order to calm and cool the patient.

Eight principle acupuncture is the predominant form of treatment in the modern world. Most acupuncturists are trained in this manner. It is an effective way to clear out various symptoms by harmonizing their underlying imbalances. This style of treatment is widely regarded as being able to quickly offer symptomatic relief. Many acupuncturists rely on it for treating pain-related concerns such as frozen shoulder, headaches, low back pain, and sprains and strains. Eight principle acupuncture can often be used to reduce or eliminate pain medications. It has no side effects and is considered a very safe and effective form of treatment for both chronic and acute pain.

Eight principle acupuncture can also be used for internal medical conditions,

Five element acupuncture has its roots in pre-Communist Chinese medicine. This tradition was born out of a cultural viewpoint that embraced the powerful reality of the invisible world and the effect that Qi and the emotions can have on our physical health. According to the five element model, every human being has a constitutional type that is created at the moment of conception that is aligned with one of five elements: earth, metal, water, wood, and fire. Each of these elements has within them specific associations that are found throughout the natural world. As such, there is a color, sound, odor, emotion, season, and belief system ascribed to each of the elements. Below is a basic chart that illustrates the Five Element Theoretical Model:



EARTH

Emotion: sympathy, rumination, obsession

Color: yellow

Season: late summer

Sound: singing

Odor: fragrant

Distorted belief: 'I am not enough; therefore, I must put others or myself first in all situations.'

Earth in Balance: Feeling complete right now, genuine selflessness, balance between giving and receiving

METAL

Emotion: Grief, longing

Color: white

Season: fall

Sound: weeping

Odor: rotting

Distorted belief: 'Life has no value and is meaningless; therefore, I must attach to the material world or renounce it altogether.'

Metal in Balance: Inspiration, value, poignancy, being present to life

WATER

Emotion: Fear, anxiety

Color: blue

Season: winter

Sound: groaning

Odor: putrid

Distorted belief: 'My purpose is not powerful enough to change the world. I am subject to the whims of fate.'

Water in Balance: Purpose and potential fulfilled, feeling the fear and doing it anyway, power

WOOD

Emotion: Anger, frustration

Color: green

Season: spring

Sound: shouting

Odor: rancid

Distorted belief: 'Life isn't fair. I am resigned to a life of injustice.'

Wood in Balance: Creativity, broad perspective, benevolent, visionary

FIRE

Emotion: Sadness or lack of joy

Color: red

Season: fire

Sound: laughing

Odor: scorched

Distorted belief: 'Life isn't safe. It's impossible to find real intimacy.'

Fire in Balance: Charisma, joy, connection, compassion

According to the five element model, every one of us is predominantly affected by one of these elements and their associations.

Using the wise guidance of this model, we can see how there are precise psychological dynamics at work that perpetuate our physical health problems. As these psychological dynamics are allowed to persist, the five element model clearly shows us how physical pathology will eventually result.

Clearing Shock

The first priority in treatment using five element acupuncture is taking the patient out of a state of shock. While most of us think of shock as an overt trauma or accident that would lead to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or something of the like, shock can be much more subtle in its cause and manifestation. From this perspective, we can define shock as the loss of awareness of present moment reality. This kind of shock leads to many chronic health problems, as the body will eventually mirror the mind. Using various five element acupuncture protocols, the blocked energy of shock can usually be cleared either instantly or within a few weeks of treatment. When this happens, the patient will typically say something like, 'I feel like my old self' or 'I feel like I have myself back.' These are classic statements that show the shock has cleared.

From a five element perspective, the majority of people in our fast paced society are in this kind of low grade shock. We are surviving, but we are not thriving. We are able to function and make it through the day, but we are not deeply connected with a strong sense of purpose and the profound satisfaction of living life fully. This is why 40 million Americans have been diagnosed with anxiety and depression and why countless more carry chronic and extreme amounts of stress, pain, insomnia, and hormonal imbalances.

Chapter 5

CASE STUDY

The following is a case study that captures the relationship between a patient's physical, emotional, and spiritual dynamics.

Jenny, a 52 year old woman, came in with the initial complaints of fatigue, low back pain, dry and burning eyes, thirst, insomnia and digestive weakness (characterized by bloating, constipation, sluggish metabolism, or diarrhea). These symptoms had persisted for four years and were steadily getting worse. While she did not explicitly state that she was anxious or depressed, it was clear that she would easily be clinically diagnosed as suffering from both of these maladies. A recent series of tests performed by a rheumatologist had led to a tentative diagnosis of Sjogren's syndrome, an autoimmune disorder characterized by extreme dryness, insomnia, and joint pain.

Jenny was extremely worried about her health. In particular, she mentioned several times that she was terrified of having a heart attack. Even though her blood pressure and cholesterol were within normal limits, she could not stop obsessing about the health of her heart. It was clear that Jenny felt extremely victimized by her health issues. She would repeatedly ask, 'why me?' and 'why do I have this back pain again and again?' She desperately wanted someone to understand all that was happening to her and to sympathize with her unfortunate plight in life. These signs, along with her yellow facial color, and sweet disposition, confirmed that Jenny was an earth constitution.

After a few acupuncture treatments, it was evident that Jenny was on her way to better health. There was more light in her eyes, she was laughing more, and she was generally more light-hearted. She was not complaining as much about her aches and pains. During one particularly powerful treatment, Jenny finally arrived at the core belief system that had sabotaged her emotional and physical health:

'I am only good enough when I work my hardest to please other people. Rest is for lazy people.'

Jenny had been a victim to this core belief for the better part of fifty years. She had never given herself permission to deeply rest, relax, and enjoy life. Instead, she worked too hard, always putting other's needs before her own. All of her symptoms were clear messages that her mind was working against her body (which is common in autoimmune disorders). This belief was slowly killing her.

After identifying this constitutional imbalance, she said, 'Well, I guess I'm going to have to work on getting rid of that.' In reality, her attempts to 'work on' this issue would only provide more struggle for her. After all, it was her 'working on' every aspect of life that had slowly eroded her physical health. Instead, she was offered the possibility of releasing this belief right now, and to allow it to be effortless. This struck a deep chord within her as she said, 'You mean I really can do that?' A look of relief washed over her as she made her way to the treatment table. A few acupuncture points were chosen that captured the essence of this profound shift. To give you a sense of how five element acupuncture works, the names and functions of the points have been included here:

Stomach 40 Abundant Splendor: Restores a sense of wholeness and completion
Stomach 8 Head Tied: Relaxes the mind's tendency to obsess and worry
Spleen 3: Strengthens the basic ability to receive nourishment from life
Heart 7: Transmits this nourishment directly into the heart

Jenny's constant worry about her heart was actually a way of expressing her awareness that her heart was not open to her life. She simply mistook her literal heart for the suppressed nature of her shen (the spirit of the heart that expresses one's deepest source of wisdom to the world). Her homework assignment after the treatment was to take the next two weeks to do nothing but completely relax and nourish herself, to give herself permission to restore her lost health.

This case study can give you a sense of how acupuncture can help someone deeply heal both the mind and the body. Immediate and profound change can result from identifying the core dysfunctional belief system reflective of one's constitutional type and then needling acupuncture points to balance the Qi that supports that belief system. This is why acupuncture can be so helpful for a myriad of chronic health problems. It can address the underlying energetic imbalance that sustains our health problems. When this level of treatment is effectively addressed, one's overall health and life begin to feel much better. In this way, acupuncture can simultaneously heal the mind (anxiety and depression)

and its correlative physical imbalances (joint pain, digestive problems, shoulder tension, headaches, etc.) As such, the entire pattern of disharmony has been resolved simply by balancing Jenny's Qi.

Chapter 6

AN OVERVIEW OF CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE

As one of the main branches of Chinese medicine, Chinese herbs have also been used for thousands of years to help in the healing of physical and mental disorders. Many people find herbs to be an attractive treatment option because, if they are used skillfully, they are generally free of side effects. Herbal medicine supports and enhances one's overall health.



A Chinese herbalist is more interested in strengthening the foundation of one's health rather than offering symptomatic band-aids. In this sense, herbal medicine works from the inside out; it treats the core issues that underlie our symptoms, which will either sooner or later rectify the symptoms themselves. This is in contrast to Western drugs which work from the outside in. They offer immediate symptomatic improvement without directly addressing the deeper cause of the symptoms. While there are certain cases where this is warranted, the long-term use of Western drugs for chronic health problems can be detrimental to one's foundation of health. This is why it is often best to pursue plant-based medicines and nutrition before going the drug route. It is a more gentle, life-affirming way to heal yourself.

Chinese herbalists generally use the Chinese herbs in various combinations to make up formulas for the patient. A talented herbalist can combine several herbs to offer a highly specific form of treatment to the unique needs of the patient. Herbs are quite versatile. One formula can have ingredients for treating depression and all of its byproducts such as pain, insomnia, or menstrual problems. When the underlying pattern of disharmony is addressed, all of the symptoms associated with that pattern should improve.

In regards to physical health complaints, Chinese herbs can be used for a wide range of conditions including:

- ♦ Chronic pain
- ♦ Diarrhea
- ♦ Constipation
- ♦ PMS
- ♦ Menstrual cramps
- ♦ Weak immunity
- ♦ Asthma
- ♦ Headaches
- ♦ High blood pressure
- ♦ High cholesterol
- ♦ Type 2 diabetes
- ♦ Infertility

When it comes to treating the mind with Chinese herbs, it has long been recognized that there are numerous herbs that offer direct benefits for our emotional and psychological health. Everything that we ingest as food or medicine affects the mind in some form or another. Sometimes, however, it is too subtle to detect. When certain herbs are concentrated and given at a sufficient dosage, there can be tangible effects on one's consciousness. Chinese herbal formulas that work on the mind can:

- ♦ Make you feel psychologically lighter
- ♦ Relax and calm your thoughts
- ♦ Open your perspective on yourself and life
- ♦ Engender patience and calmness
- ♦ Boost confidence levels
- ♦ Induce more peaceful sleep

Chinese herbal medicine is widely regarded as a wonderful complement to acupuncture treatment. Many practitioners use Chinese herbs as a way to offer continual therapeutic input into the body between acupuncture treatments. By taking herbs on a daily basis, the positive momentum created by acupuncture is enhanced.

Can Chinese herbs be taken with my Western medications?

In many cases, yes. When you visit your practitioner, be sure to mention any medications you are taking and ask them about drug/herb interactions. There are situations where the herbs will antagonize Western medications, but in most cases herbs are safe to use with medications as long as they are prescribed by a skilled herbalist.

Along with acupuncture and Chinese herbs, Chinese medicine asserts that dietary therapy, exercise, and the healing of our environment also play crucial roles in our overall health and quality of health. In order to thrive, we want every piece of the puzzle to be acknowledged and working for us. Many acupuncturists will be able to help you develop a nutritional plan that reflects your unique constitutional needs. They may even show you various breathing exercises or Qi gong (a meditative form of movement) exercises that will enhance your treatment experience.

Chapter 7

ABOUT ALASKA CENTER FOR ACUPUNCTURE



Acupuncture Treatment Style

At Alaska Center for Acupuncture, our primary approach to treatment is via Classical Five-Element acupuncture. However, we also offer a variety of modalities and techniques from 8-principle acupuncture, Japanese style acupuncture, Auricular (ear) acupuncture and many other styles of treatment as well. Our goal is to help our patients return to a state of wholeness and vital health by using the best tools for the unique needs of each patient. Thus we do not limit ourselves to one style of acupuncture; rather we use the best combination of methods appropriate for each person's unique situation to achieve superior results. In addition to acupuncture, we also employ many non-needle therapies. Here is a brief description of some of these highly effective adjunctive therapies.

Non Needle Therapies

Moxibustion Therapy

Moxibustion, involves burning an herb called mugwort or "moxa" directly on or above acupuncture points. Moxa adds heat and stimulates the points in a similar way to acupuncture. Like acupuncture, moxa is used for wide variety of disorders and is effective with many conditions. While needles can move energy and build or "tonify" the organ systems of the body, moxa is a way to actually add energy into the body's system. Moxa produces a sensation of heat and sometimes redness around a particular area, but it is not painful and often has a relaxing effect. The use of moxa enhances treatment and often allows the practitioner to use fewer needles than would be required without the moxa. Children respond especially well to moxa, and moxa can often be used in place of needles with young kids.

Acupressure:

Acupressure utilizes the same theory as acupuncture without using needles. Points can be massaged by hand directly by the acupuncturist or points may

be gently stimulated using a wide variety of tools including derma-rollers and magnetic point stimulators. This is particularly appropriate for children who are not yet comfortable with needles or when more subtle stimulation of the acu-points is indicated. Acupressure is also helpful for diagnosis – your practitioner will often massage a point with acupressure before using a needle.

Chinese Herbal Medicine, Topical Liniments and Herbal Plasters

As mentioned earlier, Chinese herbal medicines address the underlying causes of illness and they rarely cause unwanted side effects. In our center, we only prescribe Chinese Herbal medicines which have been tested and re-formulated by reputable Western companies. These herbal formulas come in several forms including capsules, tablets and liquid tinctures. We also use topical liniments and plasters which are very helpful in reducing pain, inflammation, swelling, and speeding the healing process. Liniments are liquids applied directly to the skin, while plasters are Chinese herbs embedded in a cloth backing which are applied to the skin much like a large band-aid.

Cupping Therapy

In Chinese Medical Theory many types of pain are said to be caused by stagnation. This condition arises when energy or blood becomes trapped in the skin and/or muscle tissue and is unable to move. Cupping stimulates the circulation within the superficial muscle layers and benefits conditions such as arthritis, musculoskeletal pain, headache, common cold, and cough. Small glass or plastic cups are placed over specific areas and a vacuum is created under the cup using suction. This creates a non-painful tugging sensation on your skin. The cups are usually left in place for a period of several minutes. We also employ a technique called “sliding cupping” where the cups are moved around over a large area – such as your back – to help increase circulation in the tissues. Cupping creates areas of redness which generally resolve in about three to five days.

Guasha Therapy (pronounced “gwa-shah”)

Similar to cupping, Guasha is a technique that is also used to release muscle tightness, pain, and constriction. A Guasha tool is used to gently scrape or rub the skin over an affected area, where muscles are tense or tight. As the practitioner scrapes, red spots will start to appear in the area. This technique simulates circulation of blood and energy to help the body resolve painful stagnation in the muscle tissues. Many people experience a significant release of muscular tension during application and after. Also similar to cupping, the redness will dissipate in three to five days.

Ion Pumping Cords

Ion pumping cords help the practitioner to move your body's energy in a particular direction. Ion pumping cords are attached directly to the needles. They are very helpful in cases of muscular-skeletal conditions such as pain, swelling, and limited range of motion, but they are also effective in a wide variety of chronic disorders including headaches, anxiety, exhaustion, chemical sensitivity and much more. The cords are attached to acupuncture needles and are left in place for 10-20 minutes. Very often there is a gentle tingling sensation that can be felt, along with a feeling of relaxation. Ion pumping cords do not use an outside energy source - they work with the energy that is already flowing in the acupuncture channels of the body.

Nutritional Recommendations

At ACA we believe that a healthy, balanced, whole foods diet is one of the most important aspects of maintaining health. The digestive system is an integral part of the immune system and plays a significant role in a person's sense of well-being. For example, scientific evidence has demonstrated that there are more serotonin receptors in the gut than in the brain. Thus, a functional digestive system is actually one of the crucial keys to health and happiness. Therefore, along with our own recommendations based on Chinese dietary therapy, we often recommend a consultation with one of our wellness partners – either a naturopath or an herbalist – to further reinforce vital digestive health and wholesome eating habits.

Breathing Exercises

One of the first things your practitioner will show you is how to breathe effectively. It is the single most important change you can make to create a profound shift in your health immediately. The Chinese word for “energy” is the same as the word for “breath”. Thus, proper breathing automatically improves energy, focus, concentration and sense of well-being.

Qigong (pronounced “chee-gong”)

Qigong is a powerful system of healing and energy medicine from China. It is the art and science of using breathing techniques, gentle movement, and meditation to cleanse, strengthen, and circulate energy throughout the body. Qigong practice leads to better health and vitality and a tranquil state of mind. Qigong has been shown to improve posture and respiration, induce the relaxation response, cause favorable changes in blood chemistry, and improve self-awareness and concentration. Research suggests that Qigong may be beneficial for Asthma, Arthritis, Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease, Chronic Fatigue,

Fibromyalgia, Headaches, Pain, and a wide variety of common ailments. Your acupuncturist will show you some simple Qigong techniques that you can begin doing right away. By practicing these simple exercises on a daily basis, you will not only have more energy, but you will receive greater benefits from your acupuncture treatments.

Meditation

Like Acupuncture, Meditation strengthens and integrates mind, body and spirit and helps to cultivate focus, clarity, creativity, stamina, vitality, emotional stability and mindfulness in all actions. A daily meditation practice also expands one's sense of connectedness to the natural rhythms of life. Current research affirms what saints, sages, athletes, artists, and successful business people already know: Regular meditation results in less stress, more ease and greater enjoyment of life amidst the many challenges of modern living. We offer a monthly meditation group to help you establish your own meditation practice.

Our Patients



At Alaska Center for Acupuncture our holistic approach works with a wide variety of ailments and is effective for people of all ages. Thus, we have successfully treated young children suffering from asthma and allergies, athletes recovering from injuries, professionals suffering from anxiety and exhaustion, over-worked parents and older folks with joint and pain issues. As is often the case with acupuncture treatment, many of our patients actually come in with a specific ailment in mind, but later

find that many of their other long standing problems and pathologies improve with regular acupuncture treatment as well.

Ultimately, the people who get the most benefit from acupuncture treatment are those who are committed to regular preventative care in addition to making healthy lifestyle choices. Our goal in treatment is to help you resolve your issues as quickly as possible, and to serve as a resource and partner to help you reach your highest potential and long-term goals in life.

Patient Experiences at Alaska Center for Acupuncture

Below are comments from our patients who have reported profound benefits from acupuncture treatment at Alaska Center for Acupuncture. An extensive listing of testimonials covering a vast range of health conditions are also available to you on our website at: www.alaskaacupuncture.com.

Severe Post Surgical Pain (open-heart surgery)

“After my first visit I had a noticeable decrease in pain. I’ve worked in surgery for 10 ½ years and have always thought alternative medicine was all smoke and mirrors. I thought I would give acupuncture a try as a last ditch effort. I didn’t want to increase my pain meds due to memory loss. I didn’t want to miss out any more on my 3-year-old’s life. Acupuncture worked so

well for me that my husband is now receiving treatment. My friends can also see the improvement with the treatment. Sam and Kevin have been truly wonderful. They listen to what is going on at that moment and do a treatment to help with what is wrong at that moment. We have had a long tough road with this recovery, but with the help of Chinese medicine and Western medicine I feel like I will make a full recovery. I'm looking forward to returning to work in the O.R."

-C.F., Wasilla, AK:

Depression

"I had suffered from depression for years and was taking prescribed medication to try to help me cope. After six years I stopped taking the meds because of all the side effects. I soon became suicidal and really wanted to die but was determined not to go back on the drugs.

I was in counseling but felt that it wasn't really helping me. My counselor pretty much gave me an ultimatum, go back on the drugs or be hospitalized against my will. I told her that I wanted to try acupuncture. I had never tried it before and wanted to see if that could possibly help.

Kevin and Sam were my saving grace. I started feeling better after the second session and by my 6th session my depression was totally gone. In a months time I had went from being suicidal to happy again. It has been over a year and a half my depression has not came back and I feel great.

I really would like people to know the wonderful benefits of acupuncture and that it really did saved my life."

-N.L., Palmer, AK:

Recurrent back pain, overstress, insomnia

"It has been a little over two years since I started going to Alaska Center for Acupuncture. The back pain was relieved quickly, within a few visits. And, it

has not recurred with any severity, despite a work environment that in the past was sending me to the chiropractor at least annually. The other concerns, too--the sense of stress and depletion, and the insomnia, were improved to very tolerable levels almost immediately and stayed improved.

During and after acupuncture treatments, I have had the distinct perception of something being "put right," or corrected; and although I can't verbalize why the corrections work, they last a long time.

Based on these experiences, I would like to express my very enthusiastic praise, not just for the acupuncture treatments themselves, but also for Samantha and Kevin and the practice that they have created. I have been consistently impressed with their knowledge of, interest in, and enthusiasm for their work. I happily recommend acupuncture, as I have experienced it, and Samantha and Kevin's practice, to anyone seeking holistic, complementary and/or alternative approaches to their health or wellness interests."

-K.B., Palmer, AK:

Pain, fatigue, restless legs, and depression.

"Acupuncture has been a true blessing to me. For 20 years, I have battled with very low energy, depression, restless legs and weight. I have more energy now than I know what to do with. It is great waking up every morning and not feeling exhausted. Prior to acupuncture, I would sleep 10-16 hours and get up as tired, if not more tired, than when I went to bed the night before. There were times that I could barely make it to work and then I would come home and sleep until the next morning and start all over again. I thought my whole life was going to be like that; sleep, eat, work. I didn't want to do anything, go anywhere or even be around others - I was just too exhausted. Since meeting Kevin and Sam, my life has turned around so completely it is hard even for me to believe at times! My doctor cannot believe the changes in me. I recently had the first good visit in over 20 years! I really feel that could not have happened without the help that acupuncture has given me."

-D.W., Palmer, AK:

Post Surgical Pain (mastectomy and breast reconstruction).

"Naturopaths and other health professionals recommended acupuncture to me for many reasons, both curative and preventative, and my own research made me most interested in this therapy.

From my very first session with Sam and later with Kevin, I realized that their holistic approach to wellness was both authentic and practical, and exactly what I was seeking! What especially struck me was the emphasis on a time-honored tradition that was applied uniquely to an individual's entire state. The sensitive inquiry, thorough discussions of application and theory, and the entire ambience of ACA's setting are immediately conducive to wellness. The absence of any pretense, the delightful exchange of ideas, the thoughtfulness, and the attention to underlying causes and concerns, coupled with significant knowledge and understanding, are very much in line with my views of what healthcare should be.

Due to my experience with breast cancer, I have consulted close to 30 health practitioners, both here and outside of Alaska, in the last 20 months. My visits with Sam and Kevin at ACA have without question been the most beneficial to me, both for my shorter-term goal of reducing the use of pain medication and, equally important, my longer-term goal of enhancing my overall health and minimizing any dependency on conventional medicine. Through their help and suggestions, I feel I have taken charge of my own health in ways I never thought possible before. Since I've never really been very sick at any point in my life, I was surprised to discover how much better I could actually feel, and how strong the health connections are to all other areas of my life.

Even when very troubled and despondent, when the best thought in my head was to crawl under the bedcovers, I could always look forward to a visit and treatment with Sam and Kevin. And when I felt my best, I could also anticipate a wonderful reunion and boost to keep my convictions and support my good state."

-E. N., Palmer, AK:

Resources

Resources

www.AlaskaAcupuncture.com

www.nccaom.org

www.aaaomonline.org

www.acupuncture.com

www.acupuncturetoday.com

www.Mercola.com

www.WestonAPrice.org

Books

“Archetypal Acupuncture” by Gary Dolowich, MD

“The Web That Has No Weaver” by Ted Kaptchuk

“Nourishing Destiny” by Lonny Jarrett

“Acupuncture: Is it for You?” By J.R. Worsley

“Staying Healthy with the Seasons” by Elson Haas

“Between Heaven and Earth: A Guide to Chinese Medicine” by Harriet Beinfield and Efrem Korngold

“The Biology Of Belief: Unleashing The Power Of Consciousness, Matter And Miracles” by Bruce H. Lipton

“Pain Free” by Pete Egoscue

“Nourishing Traditions” by Sally Fallon and Mary Enig

“Healing with Whole Foods” by Paul Pitchford

About the Authors

Samantha Berg M.Ac., L.Ac., Dipl.Ac. and Kevin Meddleton M.Ac., L.Ac., Dipl.Ac. are licensed and Nationally Board Certified Acupuncturists and co-owners of Alaska Center for Acupuncture in Palmer, Alaska. Sam and Kevin are also a husband and wife team and Mat-Su Valley residents. They have been together for close to 20 years and have lived in Alaska since 1994. They both received their undergraduate degrees from Cornell University and their Master's in Acupuncture from Tai-Sophia Institute (formally the Traditional Acupuncture Institute) in Laurel, Maryland. In addition, they have studied extensively with many prominent Five Element Acupuncturists including Niki Bilton, Thea Elijah and Lonny Jarrett. Kevin and Sam have been immersed in the study of Eastern Philosophy and Alternative Medicine for over 15 years.

In addition to treating patients at Alaska Center for Acupuncture, Kevin and Sam offer on-site stress management workshops to help corporations, organizations, and schools increase quality of life, reduce stress related illness, and prevent escalating healthcare costs.

To schedule an appointment or to book a speaking engagement, please call 907-745-8688. Visit www.AlaskaAcupuncture.com for health tips, wellness resources, and download their many published articles on holistic health care.

Kevin Doherty, L.Ac., Dipl.Ac., MSOM, has a passion for helping people like you live a spiritually connected, emotionally balanced, and physically thriving life. He received a bachelor's degree in Eastern religion and psychology at Naropa university in 1997 and a Master's degree in Oriental Medicine from Southwest Acupuncture College in 2001. He completed a two-year continuing education program with Lonny Jarrett, M.Ac. in 2002.

Kevin is also a business coach and mentor and a seminar leader to many acupuncturists in the Denver metro area. He teaches extensively on Chinese herbology, pulse diagnosis, 5 element acupuncture, and practice management.

Kevin is a natural teacher and considers education to be an essential dimension of the healing process. He enjoys public speaking and has written a variety of articles on alternative health for various publications.

To learn more about Kevin, go to www.bouldercountyacupuncture.com, www.findyou-lifecoaching.com or www.findyou-enterprises.com.