

The Importance of Finding/Remembering a Mentor

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"If I were ever to run a school, I would require all new students to take at least three pulses per day for their entire time there. In fact, I want you to do this - take three pulses a day. You won't know what you're feeling, let alone being able to diagnose, but take them. Also take my patients' pulses when I am running late."

Thus began my training with my mentor - a man I was lucky enough to find for the brief 10 months I studied. After such a bold statement, I began taking my three pulses a day, I took his patients' pulses when he was running late (which was rather often, fortunately for me). My mentor was exactly right, I had no idea what I was feeling. Sure, I could pick out excess deficiency, slow and rapid, even thin, but choppy and slippery? Forget it.

I was just as lost as any other student beginning along their path in Chinese medicine, especially when it came to pulse diagnosis. However, Chinese pulse diagnosis is a passion of mine, and I continued to feel all the pulses I could. I began to ask many questions like, "How do I know what the diagnosis is?"

"The key to understanding the pulse is to let it tell you what it is. Don't have any preconceived notions; just take the pulse. If you feel something unique in the pulse, talk with the patient. Find out what has been going on, find out why the pulse has changed, let the patient teach you. Then as you feel that pulse over and over again and it corresponds to a condition, NEVER FORGET THAT PULSE!"

So days turned to weeks, and weeks to months as I continued to take my three (most times more) pulses a day. I learned to tell when there was something different within the pulse. I had no idea what was different but I knew I was feeling it. This whole process continued as my sensitivity continued to develop. One day, I came across a pulse on which I was getting terribly lost. It became so frustrating I thought I had lost my ability to read pulses.

"Sometimes when taking a pulse, I feel something different. I cannot quite explain it, but it feels almost like, well I call it 'a pulse within a pulse.'" My mentor looked at me and smiled, "Ah, you are starting to feel the subtleties of the pulse; you are now feeling the difference between *yin* and *yang* organs. Congratulations." Then he went back to doing his office work.

I felt proud that I had reached a good state of training, finding all my fears were unnecessary. From that day forward my mentor began to include me in his pulse diagnosis. "I want you to feel this left *cun* pulse. What do you feel?" "I feel like it is hitting the back of my finger. It has kind of an 'edge' to it, but it also is hitting the front of my finger. That is much softer." (Choppy in the SI and short in the H.)

"Good, remember this pulse. It indicates that the heart has disconnected with the channel. This is usually due to stress, and the heart will disconnect from the channel to protect itself." My mentor

then looked at the patient and inquired, "Do you have trouble sleeping? Having trouble shutting off the mind at nights?" "Yes," the patient answered. "See, this pulse typically indicates 'monkey mind.' I would also expect to see a red-tipped tongue with little coat." Sure enough, all of the signs were there.

"To treat this you simply use the left arm and put in SI 7, H 7 and H 5. It must be in that order and just use shallow insertion with the green tops (Seirins). Leave the needles in till the pulse balances out, and the treatment is complete."

In my time as a student to this day, I have used this method numerous times on fellow students and within the student clinic. My mentor was always teaching and guiding me. Thanks to him, this is one of the many treatments I am now able to share with my fellow students. I willingly share everything my mentor taught me. Like him, I don't keep secrets, for he often told me, "When I have students with me, I have learned to consider them colleagues. Even though they are not yet, I have to train them to be. We all will have the same goals, I hope, of helping people. So I completely prepare them so I can refer patients to them."

This is one of the most important methods he ever taught me - share willingly and open your mind. Never be satisfied with your own knowledge. Know that at any time, you can come across someone who has something to teach. My mentor often quoted his grandfather: "When all you have in your toolbox is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." So I, like my mentor, believe that we need to fill our "toolboxes" with as many "tools" as possible so we can "fix" as many things as we can.

I spent every day I could with my mentor for 10 months. When I was not at school, I was at his clinic. I helped in the clinic where I could, even if it was taking out the trash. I didn't care. I loved being there; he had taught me so much, and I wanted to learn so much more. I worked day in and day out for 10 full months.

Then, all my learning from him would come into place on the weekend of July 21. I spent the entire weekend at his house with his family and friends; we were singing, dancing and meeting many good friends. We also were mourning, for my mentor was lying on his bed, home from hospice, in a coma as a result of a severe cerebral hemorrhage that was inoperable. We had grown very close in those short 10 months and I knew he would not want me to miss out on an opportunity. "Take a pulse, feel a pulse and what it means, and remember that pulse!" I spent his last weekend on this earth with his family, taking his pulse, returning full circle to how my lessons began. As I took his pulse, I was happy with what he taught me, I was able to feel *yin* and *yang*. However, there was also great sadness as I could feel the *yin* and *yang* separating; I knew my teacher was passing away. But, true to my word, I have never forgotten that pulse!

He once said, "You know, this medicine is amazing. Even with everything I know, I still need help. Sometimes I know my grandfather is working through me, guiding me through treatments. I have no idea how I came up with them or how they worked, therefore I know he is working through me." And with that quote, he left me with yet another big lesson: Realize you are not perfect; do what you need to so you can help the patient. Realize also that you are never alone; others will be able to help you, if you let them.

So now I ask you, Ron "Doc" Rosen, continue to guide me, continue to help me and know that I pass on some of your teachings. I will leave new students with one of your most important ideas, "Find a mentor; you cannot learn this medicine from books and only a little from schools. All of your knowledge will come from clinic time."

