

Food for Thought About Beauty, Inside And Out

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Friedrich Nietzsche said, "At bottom every man knows well enough that he is a unique being, only once on this earth; and by no extraordinary chance will such a marvelously picturesque piece of diversity in unity as he is, ever be put together a second time."

This doesn't seem very true in our current society where many people are searching for cosmetic procedures outside themselves in order to feel good "at bottom." For some, no matter how many cosmetic procedures they endure, there will be no self-acceptance.

As I observe Hollywood persona whose plastic procedures have gone bad, I often ask myself what was wrong with him or her before the procedure? I think that they look lovely in their before photos but some look hideous in their after photos. There seems to be little relationship between objective attractiveness (how others see you as attractive or not) and self-perceived attractiveness. In other words, everyone in the world may think that you are very attractive but you don't necessarily see yourself that way. It seems that Montaigne was right on target when he said, "old age puts more wrinkles in our minds than on our faces." Enter the world of cosmetic procedures that are used to improve the outward look when what is really necessary is a building of self-esteem, self-love and acceptance.

One of my patients recently told me a story about one of his neighbors with whom he had breakfast once or twice a week for years. They always met at a local restaurant even though they live in the same building. One morning, his friend didn't show up for breakfast. Worried, he and the manager of the building went to his friend's apartment to see if she was okay. As I said, they had always met at the restaurant so he had never been in her apartment in all of those years. He couldn't believe his eyes when he opened the door - his friend was a hoarder. There was one pathway that led from the door to the bedroom; the kitchen was completely walled off. What was the main topic of her books and magazines? They were about beauty and how to get it - self help books about how to be beautiful, thinner, etc. The paramedics had to throw things out of the way to get a gurney in to rescue this 300-plus pound woman from her bed. Collecting all of the books and magazines about beauty in the world will not help someone who can't accept him or herself.

Enter acupuncture points that can be added to cosmetic or facial treatments to target the inside, the personhood, the ability to love and accept oneself. For those who know me, you know that I am fanatical about balancing the pulses of every patient before any sort of "prescription" is used - like a cosmetic or facial protocol. So in this article where I am talking about the use of specific points, I am not suggesting a prescription. I am merely musing about what may be good points to treat the insecure person who can be objective about their appearance.

Center Them

Maybe the first order of business with patients who can't accept themselves is to root or center them. Ren 4, Gate of Original Qi, not only benefits Original Qi but nourishes the kidneys, yin, blood, and yang. It calms the mind and is also said to root the ethereal soul. The mind and the ethereal

soul are separate entities that are interconnected in terms of function. Needling Gate of Original Qi may calm the patient's mind enough to allow a freer flow of introspection and self-knowledge or acceptance. The ability of the mind and ethereal soul to work in harmony goes back to balance. When they are both active and balanced, the person is calm and satisfied. When they are not in balance there is dissatisfaction and unhappiness. Door of the Hun (UB 47) also roots the ethereal soul through its ability to regulate liver Qi and the emotions associated with the liver (anger, frustration, depression, anxiety). When people try to fit into this "perfect" world of plastic, their souls suffer. Imperfections are what define people, trying to be "perfect" especially in the eyes of others, just leads to frustration, stagnated Qi, and depression.

Du 4, Gate of life, benefits the basis of life: essence. It warms our gate of vitality and has also been called the "posterior dantian." In fact, the use of both Ren 4 and Du 4 allows yang to be tonified without injuring yin and yin to be nourished without damaging yang. Then to further ground one, we can use K 12, great manifestation, because it supplements both the Chong and Ren channels. The Chong Mai has links to blood, Ren and Du channels, kidney, liver, and spleen channels so is implicated in our basic functions of our digestive and endocrine systems. Since the Ren governs all of the yin channels and guards essence, its treatment (and balance) will help calm patients. SI 4 (yang pond) not only nourishes original qi but also the Chong and Ren channels. That makes it also a very calming, nourishing point. Additionally, SI 4 is a yuan source point and is connected with the fire of the heart.

To clear the mind for proper self-perception and acceptance, Bubbling Spring (K1). I have been known to frequently say how much I love kidney 1 and how I think that every patient (and practitioner) can benefit from its needling - a gentle, nourishing needling, not twisting and thrusting. Take away the cloudiness of trying to be who others think you should be. Try to be what you think others want and soon there will be nothing left of you. There are several gallbladder points that clear the head/brain: eye window (GB 16), falling tears (GB 15), which also helps to regulate overall emotions and mind root (GB 13). In addition to clearing the head, GB 13 may gather essence and bring it up to the head thereby allowing clearer and more productive thinking. Finally, we can calm, open, and nourish the heart (Spirit) using PC 4 (Xicleft Door), Ren 14 (Great Palace) and SI 16 Celestial Window.

In this new year of the Rabbit, the symbol for elegance and the "worship" of beauty, we have the opportunity to help our patients see and accept their own beauty.

At the least we can manage their Qi so that they have a calm internal attitude that will benefit their outward appearance. At the most, we can help them begin the year with a healthier lifestyle. My Chinese New Year greeting will suggest: avoid the sun on skin that you don't want damaged (face, neck), cut down on sugar because your kidneys can only process so much, get enough sleep because tired skin is saggy skin, don't smoke or hang around smokers - the chemicals are hard on your skin, moisturize, eat and chew well, and use Chinese medicine as your anti-aging tool.

JANUARY 2011