

The Spirits of the Points: The Liver Meridian - Part I

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The Liver, belonging to the Wood Element, is associated with the season of Spring. The powers of Spring include birth, growth, regeneration, vision, activity, forward movement, upward direction, vitality, optimism and hope. Spring does not arrive with subtlety. It bursts out - violently and forcefully. Its strength can be seen in the force of a lone dandelion bursting through a crack in a cement sidewalk.

The Official of Planning: The Liver

The Liver is called the "Official of Planning." Every function and process begins with a plan or vision. The Wood element is directed toward a future goal. This Official is likened to an architect, who has a vision for a house to be built and draws up blueprints, which are an expression of the vision. Within us, everything operates according to a plan (or blueprint) for its function (digestion, respiration, circulation, menstruation, etc.). Nothing simply occurs randomly, but inevitably follows built-in natural laws. With a clear and sound plan in place, everything works in synch, harmoniously and smoothly. All parts "know" what to do, when and where to do it, as well as what the contingency plans are, if the unforeseen arises. This allows for both relaxation and confidence that everything is "on track" and working together.

The Mental Level

Mentally, we plan our time, arrange and rearrange our schedules (contingency plans) in order to reach goals. Once we reach a goal, a new goal is set. The Liver grants us powers of reason, clarity of thought, logic, the ability to "see" with the mind's eye what is communicated by another, as well as to present our ideas in a way that others can "see" what we mean.

If the Liver is imbalanced, we may be unable to make plans, be uncertain, tentative, aimless, or may over-plan, exemplified by over-perfectionism, in which case nothing gets started because it's not perfect enough. We may become so attached to one point of view (lacking flexibility and adaptability) and, incapable of "seeing" another idea, we become rigid, bossy, or overly-assertive. "Not only is this my plan, but it better be yours, too!" In the other extreme, this imbalance may express itself as complete surrendering of our own plans, ideas and visions, to blindly follow another.

The Spirit Level

Spiritually, having a plan or goal gives us a sense of purpose and direction. It orients us toward a future with confidence, hope, and optimism. In imbalance, we may feel hopeless, desperate, with no perceived direction or purpose and, thus, resigned. We may wrongly perceive a polluted spiritual path or teaching to be correct and fanatically defend and blindly follow it. The good news is: when the health of the Liver is restored, we can see our way out of even the darkest of places.

The sound of shouting and the emotion of anger are expressions of a primary imbalance in Wood. If we consider a time in which we had made plans, which were thwarted, we can see how the emotion of anger and the sound of shouting arise. In health, there are times we must appropriately assert ourselves forcefully; at other times, it is appropriate to yield, to change direction and embrace another plan or decision. When imbalanced, we cannot well perceive what a good plan is. We may instead, embrace a bad one, or give up entirely, in which everything can look bleak, dark and frustrating, and eventually, hopeless.

When healthy, this Official knows what our individual plan, aligned with the Divine plan, truly is. Therefore, aligned with the Divine (the Tao, Nature, the way of God, Jesus, Buddha, the Creative Force, or whatever name is given), our plans will be for our highest good and the good of humanity. No obstacle will thwart us from our goals. Our plans will be pure and appropriate, strong, yet flexible. Our lives will be purposeful and oriented toward good.

The Diagnostics

In Classical Five-Element Acupuncture, we would consider points on the Wood meridians (Liver and Gall Bladder) once having diagnosed the patient as a Wood Causative Factor. This means that he or she manifests a rancid odor, green color lateral to the eyes, a voice that is inappropriately making a shouting sound (or lack of shouting sound), and expressing the emotion of anger inappropriately (either over-expressing when there is no appropriate reason, or under-expressing when the emotion should be present). The impact of these points is far greater when conjoined with these methods of traditional diagnosis.

The Points

The point names, translations from the Chinese characters give us insight into the gifts they are capable of bringing to the patient in need.¹ Each point uniquely helps guide the patient toward the fullness of a healthy Wood element, described above.

Liver 1 Great Esteem Wood, horary, entry point

As the Wood point of the meridian, this point provides a burst of growth and confidence to the meridian itself (stronger still when used as a horary point, tonified during the Liver's 2-hour peak time: 1-3 AM, and/or in Spring; it blows away the dead debris so the Wood is free to grow). Spring is a season of birth, new visions, plans and decisions. When one is aligned with his/her Divine plan, or higher purpose, one can move forward with "great esteem," with direction, boldness, strength, flexibility and optimism. We consider this point for the Wood imbalanced patient who lacks the confidence or vision to start.

Liver 2 Walk Between Fire point

This point reminds us that plans must have the flexibility to deal with to obstacles, adapting with a contingency plan, or an appropriate "side step" at any time. We often must consider, in planning, other points of view and sides to an issue. This need not thwart us from our path. The good humor of fire is often a good antidote for stuck, stubborn and overly attached patients. It brings love and compassion to one's plans.

Liver 3 Supreme Rushing Earth, source point

As the Earth point of the meridian, this point provides a sense of security - knowing that nourishment is always available. Mother Earth feeds the plants that set their roots in her, and

reach to the light and air. Our plans need to be fueled, or they will die "on the vine." As a source point which, like all source points, switches "off" when the correct balance is attained, and cannot be over tonified or sedated, it brings just the right amount of fuel. Well nourished, we can move with quickness and certainty. "Supreme" implies spirit, pointing to and rushing to our center - to pure consciousness - to spirit itself.

Liver 4 Middle Seal Metal point

As the Metal point, this point brings quality and richness to our plans. A seal is an embossed emblem, symbol or letter used as evidence of quality, authority or authenticity. Whoever held the royal seal was seen as an authorized representative of the Emperor and was treated as such. This seal is even more special, as it carries the imprint of the Divine - found in the center or middle of us. We all have such an imprint, as we are all a creation of the Divine, or One creative force. This is the authority, the source of wisdom and goodness to which the Emperor him/herself must turn. We consider this point for the patient who has trouble "seeing" whether a plan is worthy of pursuing or not, whose own plans lack value and quality, who needs the inspiration and acknowledgement that ultimately comes from within.

Liver 5 Insect Ditch Junction (Luo connecting) point

As the junction point, it can be used to resolve a disparate amount of energy in the Wood Officials (i.e. Gall Bladder having an excess of energy relative to Liver - detected on the pulses, and resolved by tonifying this point). For its spiritual connotation, the "insects" in this case refer to the little irritants that can wreak havoc on the progress we wish to make in determining or putting a plan into action. To some Wood imbalanced patients, virtually everything is a frustrating annoyance. This point is akin to clearing annoying insects out and removing them to the ditch. Peace and calm are restored. It is akin to the relief of having a newly cleaned windshield, with the insects and other obstructions to clarity of vision removed. From a clean and pure place, the power, efficiency, organization and perfect planning observed in nature (and highly evident in the insect world) can awaken in us.

Reference

1. Worsley, J.R., Traditional Chinese Acupuncture Vol 1 Meridians and Points (Worsley Inc. 2004) 87

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