

Be the Light: Part II

THE WAY OF THE SUPERIOR HERBALIST THROUGH GREAT CLIENT SERVICE

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The Superior Herbalist focuses his or her attention on developing, supporting and maintaining the radiant health of his or her clients. The Superior Herbalist becomes the life-guide of their clients on their journeys and adventures. Once a person has established their radiant health, if imbalance develops, relatively slight tweaks are generally enough to restore balance and radiant health. A healthy body-mind is like a healthy garden - once healthy balance is established, it is difficult for invaders to penetrate and cause disharmony. The goal of the Superior Herbalist is to help his or her clients establish and maintain radiant health. The classical definition of radiant health is "health beyond danger." This is the supreme level of human health. Radiant health is the natural flourishing state of health that may be achieved by living naturally and by taking advantage of the amazing tools of life provided by Nature (Tao). Those in radiant health have a favorable opportunity to live a successful, happy, abundant, long life. Radiant health must be cultivated, and a guide is often very helpful. The Superior Herbalist should serve as that guide.

The tonic herbs, referred to as the "superior herbs by Shennong," are primary tools for establishing and maintaining radiant health. They have been used by billions of people for thousands of years. Other tools used by the Superior Herbalist include acupuncture, acupressure (tuina and tao yin, etc.), qigong, neigong, yoga, meditation, appropriate natural diet, and other forms of life cultivation - not the least of which is providing wisdom and a good example of how to live a cultured natural life. The practitioner who gains the trust of the client by providing enlightened knowledge, guidance and service (healthcare technique) will sooner or later become the guide to thousands, and will have a beneficial impact on society, humanity and Gaia. In Part 2 of "Be the Light," we will focus on "the art of total observing," and the teaching of wisdom.

The Art of Total Observing

Observing is the first skill the Superior Herbalist must perform when engaging with a client. Observing is a state of awareness and focus, powered by the practitioners own Qi, knowledge and intuition.

The Superior Herbalist often knows better than the client what is best for them. Nevertheless, the client comes in with their own ideas and goals, which must be observed and determined. The client is seeking certain end-result benefits of their engagement with you. Even if you know that more can be achieved, the client's desires must be considered carefully. Giving superior end-result benefits to clients begins by knowing what end-result benefits they want. That can happen only when we ask questions and listen to the responses.

Carefully ask your client how you may help them, and then listen attentively. Cut out your own distractions. Tune in and really listen to what they tell you. Listen to their words, sure; but just as importantly (and maybe more importantly), listen to their tone of voice and observe their body language. Listen for hidden messages and underlying meaning. Listen from your Shen.

How to Practice Total Observing

Just hearing is not the same as listening. True listening is also understanding a person's feelings and emotions and it's having insight into the nature of the situation. It's picking up subtle voice inflections and meanings. It's observing what people do with their hands and eyes - the congruence of their body language with their words.

As a practitioner following the Chinese model of health care, you must develop your ability to understand people to its fullest. You must use your various senses to discover the true nature of a person. Your training and knowledge of Chinese health practice will provide you with a powerful template of knowledge.

- Listen. Hear the client's words and ideas, and also hear their breathing, sinuses, the way they walk and the way they move things. Is the person rough or subtle, loud or quiet, etc.
- Watch and Observe. Use your eyes to note posture, weight, muscle tone, physiognomy (skin tone, lips, eyes, hair condition, etc.). Watch how they move, how much energy they have, how they react to questions. Watch for their emotional expressions. Try to determine "biological age." Also, perfect your skill of tongue analysis.
- Touch. Taking a client's pulse can be very exciting to a client. They think you know secret methods of understanding them - which, of course, you do. Practice it with care, patience and reverence. Don't give up in expanding your skill at pulse reading. It takes years to master.

Also pressing acupoints for the purpose of analyzing the client's condition can provide critically useful information and gives the client a sense of your interest and knowledge. Those of you who have been trained in acupuncture and/or acupressure should master the art of acupoint diagnosis. Sensitivity, or lack thereof, of any acupoint can and will reveal hidden problems and underlying imbalances.

- Smell. Smell can give you important information. Don't underestimate the power and value of this sense.
- Intuition. Intuition is the sixth sense. Develop it fully. Use it with every client. Ultimately, this will become your primary analytical tool.

Break Preoccupation - People Want Your Undivided Attention

What gets in the way of effective listening? Mainly preoccupation. Preoccupation is thinking about something else while you're supposed to be listening to your client. It's allowing your own feelings, trains of thought, biases or problems to occupy your thoughts, and thereby screening out what your client is telling you. Concentration and focus are key concepts here. Your practice is an aspect of your own self cultivation. Use your practice to master yourself. This starts and ends with in-the-moment consciousness.

Drifting Eyes Mean a Drifting Mind

Studying the person's physiognomy has a strong effect. The client can tell you're studying them. Of course, you need to learn the art of physiognomy - the art of understanding a client's constitution and current condition by looking at the tone and features of the face. The practitioner should also study features all over the body. The hands are another prime site of observation.

Clients Are Generally Not Overly Truthful In The Beginning

Before you have really gained a client's trust, most clients will be protective and will not reveal the deep facts and issues that will ultimately allow you to help them the most. They will only become

truly truthful when you have proven to them that you are trustworthy, caring, wise, knowledgeable and professional. Just know this - the real truth always lies deep and is associated with the Three Treasures (Jing, Qi and Shen). Getting at the truth is your real job, but it will always take some time. Remember, the client must trust you to become open and honest.

Listening Is The Highest Form of Persuasion

There's probably no better way to persuade your clients - to get them to believe you, have confidence in you and accept you as their guide - than to truly listen to them.

When you listen really well, you silently say to your clients, "I want to understand you; I want to understand your needs and wants; I want to solve your problems - because you're important."

As an important side note: when they feel cared for, they will be happy and satisfied. When they're happy and satisfied, they'll come back and they'll tell others. Then you'll be more successful. Our primary source of new clients will always be word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth clients are already prepared for our service, our products, our prices, and our style.

"The superior practitioner quickly but carefully observes a wide range of signs, which are themselves the different observable states of Jing, Qi and Shen. The attentive and properly oriented practitioner quickly and intuitively interprets the state of Jing, Qi and Shen, and especially the rapport of Jing and Shen. Thus he or she goes at once to the true seat of the condition, which will always lie at the level of the Three Treasures. That insight will provide the foundation for the practitioner's intervention. This is what makes his or her work a masterpiece: the faultless fulfillment of infallible inspiration." - Yellow Emperor's Classic, *Spiritual Axis (Lingshu)*, Chapter 8

Make The Experience Entertaining

The profession of tonic herbalist is paradoxical in that it appears to be about health. Well, it is and it isn't. In our society, most people would think to place us in the medical genre. In fact, tonic herbalism is largely about lifestyle. It is about achieving radiant health and about achieving the most out of life. Physical health is only one aspect of radiant health. Radiant health encompasses our psychological state, our wisdom, and how we harmonize with society and Nature. It encompasses how successful a person becomes in whatever they do.

A large part of this process of attaining radiant health lies in compliance. If a client does not take the herbs and otherwise follow your guidance, they will certainly not progress in the same way, and after a while will be lost to you. It is just a fact of life that the process must be interesting as well as valuable. To a large degree, "interesting" may be equated here with "entertaining."

Historically, all great traditions are in fact entertaining and interesting to those who observe them. Buddhist and Taoist temples are full of extraordinary art, architecture, relics and ritual that clearly "entertain" those who visit or live in the temples. A successful teacher will be entertaining, as will a martial arts master, in their own ways. The Bible, the Bhagavad Gita and the Dao De Jing are all certainly "entertaining." Boredom can easily stifle compliance, causing a person to abandon the path.

Here's a fact of life. You must make your client's experience entertaining, or at least interesting, or they will not return many times. You might think that your great skill or that the quality of your herbs will attract them, but sooner or later, if their experience with you is boring, they will abandon you for a more interesting experience. Humans are fickle, and with a glut of health practitioners and gurus, moving on is easy.

This doesn't mean you should ever be phony or insincere. Just do what you do with beauty. Do it artistically - for indeed, it is an art! And do it with joy. Joy and art together will be entertaining. Put some real effort into decorating your office as beautifully as you can. Leave strong, relevant writings on the tables. Good art is entertaining. A good, short read is interesting and entertaining. Be sure that visiting you is a lovely and enlightening experience.

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