

Five Element Acupuncture Can Enhance Your Practice

Abbye Silverstein, LAc

For eight years I have been teaching and supervising TCM students at an acupuncture college in Colorado, in Five Element acupuncture. It has been my experience that my students have been very capable of integrating Five Element and TCM acupuncture in treating their patients. To the surprise of my students, they have realized where and how the two schools of thought are interrelated, interdependent and actually inseparable in treating the whole human being. The two schools complete each other like yin and yang. In this article, I will explain how they work together and how the five reasons below can enhance your TCM practice:

1. Specific treatment protocols to release physical trauma from surgery, accidents, physical abuse, etc.
2. Specific treatment protocols to release emotional traumas from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, loss of loved ones, divorce, financial losses, victims of war.
3. Directly treat the spirit and restore emotional balance and wellness.
4. Holistic approach to treating the individual based on their constitutional type.
5. Physical symptoms are a cry for help generated from the mental and spiritual imbalances.

The etiology of disease in TCM is defined by the external climatic causes whereas the Five Elements defines them as internal emotional causes; together they compliment and explain the whole person internally and externally. The Five Elements explain the yin perspective focusing on the constitutional type and TCM explains the yang perspective focusing on the differential diagnosis of physical symptoms.

External Climatic Causes (TCM - Yang)	Internal Emotional Causes (Five Elements - Yin)	
Wind	Wood	Spring
Heat/Summer Heat	Fire	Summer
Damp	Earth	Late Summer
Dry	Metal	Autumn
Cold	Water	Winter

Treating the whole person - body, mind and spirit from their constitutional type defines the treatment plan and clarifies the focus of treating the body in relationship to the mind and the spirit. It defines the cause of disease from the mind and/or the spirit. Each constitutional type has unique qualities on each level - body, mind & spirit; hence, the concept that the physical symptom is a cry for help from a deeper source of imbalance (ie: mental or spiritual). Recognizing the spirit level of pain changes the focus of the treatment plan. The purely physical symptoms become a manifestation of the mental and spiritual pain. You are probably wondering how does one treat this intangible pain?

Specific clearing protocols are administered by discerning the type and level of trauma the patient is experiencing. Trauma is lodged in the cellular memory of the individual. This cellular memory creates an energetic pattern that inhibits body-mind-spirit wellness. The patient is living in a fight, flight or frozen state experiencing an event as similar or the same as the original moment of danger. The need to disconnect this adaptive behavior is necessary for the patient's healing process. These protocols for clearing physical and emotional traumas are administered separately one week apart and followed by a third protocol to balance and restore harmony to the whole person. These protocols are very powerful tools to be used appropriately only when needed. Unfortunately in our society, too many people suffer from a variety of trauma both physical and emotional; so I use them on every patient I treat. Post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and everyday stress are overwhelming our population with physical and emotional symptoms that are easily released by these protocols.

Students have been amazed to witness how profound these simple protocols are in relieving long-term emotional and physical trauma. This is not to say they are miracle treatments; rather these protocols act as a catalyst to begin the healing process caused by emotional and physical trauma releasing the bound energy that has not been able to be released by talk therapy and other traditional methods.

Each element has mental and spiritual characteristics defining their unique communication style, world view, emotional response to situations and mental attitudes. By understanding each of the Five Element constitutional types, the practitioner can align with the patient and gain trust in working toward a common health goal for that patient. The treatments are tailored for the patient's constitutional type (Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water) and how their type relates to the other four elements. The constitutional type may have an imbalance in relationship to its generating or controlling Element, therefore both the yin and yang meridians of these two Elements would need to be treated to resolve the imbalance.

After being treated on their constitutional type for 4-6 weeks, my patients have reported how much better they feel overall. The original symptoms that brought them to treatment become less important and they focus on their lifestyle issues (mental attitude and emotional responses) as the cause for their physical symptoms. This shift in my patient's focus of getting well changes the dynamics of the relationship between patient and practitioner to a partnership rather than the practitioner as a fixer. The physical symptoms are connected to the mental and spiritual symptoms with the patient's constitutional type as the focal point.

Recently, a 55-year-old male IT Director at a large corporation came for left-sided psoas and hip pain, which runs down his left IT band. He missed two weeks of treatment due to a heavy work schedule, so I was eager to know how he was fairing. He is a committed patient who stretches daily but drives 150 miles round trip to the office 3 days a week. His pain was about "5 out of 10+"; for him this is tolerable and means he can function and barely feel it. He is a Wood constitutional type and is in constant action mode. He realizes his physical pain is caused by the mental and emotional stress of commuting and work responsibilities. He wants the focus of treatment to be on relaxing his mind and emotional state. I treat his Wood constitution (LV/GB - tendons/muscles- frustration/ need to be in action mode/ producing) and Wood's relationship with Earth (SP/ST- muscles - worry/ mental processing) and Fire (HT/SI - sorting/managing others/sadness about work place).

I treat his physical symptoms as they relate to his mental and emotional state. Wood controls Earth causing the tendons and muscles to be tight and spasm. The Fire is the mother to Earth and the child of Wood, stuck in the middle between the two it is unable to receive as well as give. Moving Wood into Fire (PC9) jump starts the energy flow of the system releasing the tension in Wood and sparking the Fire to be alive/ joyous. The Earth is released of the constriction caused by the tight

tendons and muscle spasms as they contract and release letting go of their control from Wood. Mentally, he is able to relax his mind and rest; emotionally he feels calm, grounded and centered like he took a mini vacation. He leaves feeling happy and smiles until the next treatment.

Last treatment focusing on how the mind and spirit affected his physical condition:

- GB 15- Head Above Tears - mental level, uptight, tense and easily frustrated.
- GB 25 - local point near psoas pain, treats physical pain, treats GB/KI.
- GB 34 - Yang Mound Spring - influential point for tendons and Earth within Wood point - physical and emotional condition, relaxing muscles and tendons for *qi* and blood to flow, feel stable and flexible.
- GB 41 - Foot Above Tears- regulates the *Dai Mai*, Wood within Wood point, expands one's vision of life.
- SJ 5 - Outer Frontier Gate - regulates the *Dai Mai*, master point Yang Wei Mai, resolve conflicts between inner and outer world.
- Open entry- exit points of LV meridian -LV1- wood in wood and LV14 get smooth flow of *qi* along the entire meridian, the meridian enters the lower abdomen traveling around the stomach to enter the LV. This refreshes the LV to be the best leader it can be.
- ST36 - relaxes the mind and the muscles.

By combining the yin and yang principles of TCM with the Five Element constitutional types, treatments support the physical level to its root pathology as well as heal the mind and spirit of the patient. Five Element and TCM are the yin and yang of each other. I have found when integrating both schools of practice I get the best results. These two schools complement each other and my vision is that more practitioners learn both schools as an integrated practice.

DECEMBER 2014