

## A Well-Kept Secret: 5 Element Acupuncture, Part II

Abbye Silverstein, LAc

Supervising acupuncture interns at a TCM college, it has always struck me how funny it is to hear the clinic manager tell the patients that the Five Element clinic specializes in treating emotions, as if patients with physical pain have no emotions! The Five Element school believes that the body, mind and spirit are working together interdependent, interrelated and inseparable like yin and yang. By treating the spirit, the mind and the body will heal. Treating the patient on all three levels in every treatment is rooted in this ancient medical system.

The physical pain symptoms are a call for help from the spirit. It is the spirit that suffers first and creates physical symptoms to alert us that our whole system is imbalanced. The mind interprets the physical pain and acts to relieve it. The Five Spirits of the individual represent the five aspects of the SHEN. The Shen Spirit is the Mind, the consciousness of the spirit residing in the Heart. The Hun is the Ethereal Soul residing in the Liver. The Yi is the Intellect residing in the Spleen. The Po is the Corporeal Soul residing in the Lung. The Zhi is the Will residing in the Kidney. When any aspect is imbalanced, the spirit cries out to be heard by expressing its feelings, acting on behaviors, and/or having physical pain.

Each constitutional type (Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water) corresponds to one of the Five Spirits. The spirit of a Wood CF expresses itself through creativity, planning, acting on plans and decisions. When the Hun Spirit of Wood is unable to live its purpose frustration and depression appear; when it is in alignment with its purpose creativity and action occur.

The Shen Spirit holds the consciousness of the Heart, Fire CF. The Shen Spirit loves to be in love with life and all its passions and desires. When this flame is extinguished, the Shen Spirit is sad, depressed, lost.

The Yi Spirit is the intellectual mind of the Spleen (Earth CF) working to better process and understand the world around them to be of service. Service and compassion are the foundation of the Yi Spirit. When this spirit is unable to serve it becomes withdrawn and self absorbed feeling sorry for themselves.

The Po, Corporeal Spirit of the Metal CF lives in the physical body knowing it will leave one day when the body dies. This irony of living life to the fullest (physically, mentally and emotionally) challenges the Po Spirit to be present even when it is unable. Inspiration and acknowledgement of the bigger picture of the Soul guides the Po Spirit through daily life.

The Zhi Spirit of the Water CF lives with a deep knowledge of one's willpower, life's limitations and expectations. The Zhi Spirit can persevere in the face of adversity or retreat out of fear becoming frozen like ice. The Zhi Spirit draws from it's Jing ancestral Qi to be alive and present in this everchanging unpredictable world.

The therapeutic alliance between patient and practitioner is the cornerstone in guiding, teaching

and coaching the patient when their Spirit is in pain and needs healing. This relationship is based on trust and rapport that is gained by the practitioner aligning their energy (tone and volume of their voice, mannerisms, gestures, phrases, values) with their patient. The dynamics of two Spirits aligning to create a healing bond.

### Case Study

Five years ago, a 74-year-old woman had spinal fusion surgery located at L3-S2. Today, the pain radiates across her left hip and down her left thigh along the ST and GB meridians. She shouts and laughs as she describes the pain, the color around the outer canthus shifts between ashen and light green and her emotions are frustration/anger mixed with sadness. She is a Wood CF primary and Fire secondary. Her spirit is full and alive. She says, "I've got a lot of life in me but my pain is keeping me down."

She shares her frustration about caring for her husband who has advanced Parkinsons. She admits her patience is decreasing and her frustration increasing. I begin by clearing the trauma of the surgery and relax her nervous system which is in a flight or fight mode (NADA Protocol). Within three treatments of treating her GB, LV, KI and ST meridians directly and supporting her Fire CF (PC and SJ), she stops speaking about her hip and leg pain. Her focus is her concern about her husband's future and how she will manage to be his caretaker. After 40 years of being happily married, she wonders what her "golden" years will be like because she has lots of energy and desire to be active in life. She worries about leaving him alone as he falls constantly and hurts himself. This creates a lot of stress for her. She says this "stress" is now the real reason she is receiving acupuncture treatment. Her Spirit is asking for healing and her body is learning how to heal and manage the stress her Spirit is experiencing.

One of the main treatment strategies of Five Element acupuncture is releasing blocks whether they are emotional, mental or physical. There are specific protocols based on ancient shamanic beliefs that release the "demons and dragons" living within us. The ancient shaman healers, "wu" believed that the cause of illness was the possession of evil spirits; the evil spirit entered the individual's body and took control. The ancient healers exorcised the evil spirit through pray, divination and sacrifice. As healing practices evolved, acupuncture, herbs and moxibustion replaced the ancient practices. When the Communists ruled China, the treatment of emotional and mental disturbances as spiritual possession were abandoned. No longer was the "spiritual" state of the individual addressed.

J.R.Worsley's interest in treating the spirit with acupuncture was influenced by Chinese Masters (Hsiu Yan-Chai and Hsu Mifoo) and Japanese teacher Ono Bunkei. Each teacher gave Dr. Worsley a piece of the puzzle, whether it was the gentle needle technique, the interviewing style to gain rapport and communicate with the spirit, the possession protocols and the transferring of excess *qi* to deficient meridians. Dr. Worsley's education focussed on the spirit as the central aspect of healing the individual. I had the opportunity to observe him twice during an intensive as a student at the Traditional Acupuncture Institute in Columbia, MD; he was a modern day shaman healer who was able to immediately connect on a deep level with the patient and treat their spirit with acupuncture and moxabustion.

The shamanic worldview of demons possessing our spirit has been transformed by modern psychotherapy. Our modern day practices call these "demons and dragons" trauma. Traumatic experiences come in varying degrees from low level to extreme high level anxiety, depression and post traumatic stress disorder. Whatever the degree of trauma, these specific protocols are used to release the fight or flight response produced by the autonomic nervous system. These specific protocols address long standing psychospiritual, emotional and physical traumas that block the

healing process from going forward. These blocks impede healing and unless cleared remain as an obstruction to the patient's wellness. They show themselves as wind conditions moving through the body searching for a home; a place to settle in. Once blocks are released (this may include more than one round of treatment protocols) the treatment advances to the next level which is building, restoring and balancing the patient's CF.

### Case Study

A 27-year-old graduate student suffering from severe food allergies, diarrhea and lack of appetite is the victim of child sexual abuse. She has high anxiety and lives on the edge sleeping very little due to the sexual abuse. Her level of trauma is high and she has not had any success with traditional talk therapy. Her ability to trust people is low and this is why she likes working with animals. Since her trauma was both physical and emotional, she needs both protocols to release the physical and emotional trauma. There is no guarantee that one round of both protocols will release this deep rooted trauma and anxiety. I add the NADA protocol to each treatment calming and stabilizing her central nervous system. After eight treatments of releasing her trauma, building her constitution and reducing her anxiety, the acne on her face fades (internal heat is released) and she experiences her body temperature as normal rather than on fire. Her appetite returned learning how to nurture herself positively with food that she could digest.

She is an Earth constitution who was unable to accept, digest, release and transform her childhood trauma. Her mental and emotional abuse shut down her physical system protecting herself against any other attacks. The allergies were her way of fending off what hurt her. The trauma made her sick to her stomach causing food allergies, diarrhea and lack of appetite. She couldn't take in any more than she needed to survive which affected her health on all (3) levels. The heat in her body was the angry (venting the spleen) and the shame of the experience. As she released the "demons" of her trauma her health physically improved by sleeping through the night with a light blanket rather than burning up and waking with night sweats. Mentally and emotionally, she joked, laughed and smiled before, during and after treatment. She made a milestone decision to change graduate schools and move far away from her family to start a new life.

Patients walk in our doors as whole human beings. Their physical, mental and spiritual states may be imbalanced, unconscious of the other parts of themselves that are in pain because the physical pain is screaming the loudest. Nevertheless, their mental and spiritual states are present in the shadow of the physical pain. As practitioners, it is our job to listen to all levels of pain; addressing it and making it conscious to our patients. This is why I love practicing and teaching it.

APRIL 2015