

The Three Heater Official

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This Official, belonging to the element Fire, is responsible for maintaining and regulating the heating system of the body, mind, and spirit. It is named for its function. The trunk is divided into three "burning spaces" or "jiaos." The upper burning space, palpated in the chest region above the level of the thoracic diaphragm, contains the Heart, Lungs, and Heart Protector (AKA pericardium). The middle burning space, palpated at the mid abdomen, above the level of the umbilicus and below the ribcage, contains the Spleen, Stomach, Liver and Gall Bladder. The lower space, palpated below the umbilicus and above the pubic bone, contains the Small Intestine, Large Intestine, Bladder, and Kidney. An imbalance of the Three Heater can cause any of the organs/functions (Officials) to malfunction.

At the physical level, it is obvious that the Lung Official could not function if it were in an environment of either extreme heat or cold. The symptoms arising from excess heat or cold in the Lungs, for example, are well known to all acupuncturists. As well, such extremes of temperature will affect the mental and spiritual realms of the individual.

Any Official can only work properly if it is operating at the right temperature. Thus, an imbalance in the Three Heater Official can be the cause of imbalance in any Official. Too much heat or cold makes for imbalance and disease of even an otherwise healthy Official. Similarly, an imbalance in any of the Officials in any of the jiaos can affect the balance and functioning of the Three Heater Official itself.

Palpation

To test for the amount and balance of heat in the Three Jiaos, we palpate as above, lightly touching the three spaces with the palm and noting the feeling of heat in each of the three burning spaces. For accuracy, before palpating, all areas must be equally exposed to the air for several minutes. On women, the upper jiao is palpated with the hand vertical. The other jiaos can be palpated with the hand across the middle and lower abdomen. If any of the jiaos feel excessively hot or cold, notate it either by a numerical range such as -3 for the coldest to +3 for the hottest, or by words such as "warm, hot, cool, cold, freezing."

Interpretation of Findings

In order to know whether the primary cause of the imbalance is in the Three Heater itself, or one or more of the Officials residing in any of the burning spaces, we rely, as always in the Classical Five-Element system, on the diagnostic indicators of odor, color, sound, and emotion. Of these four diagnostic pillars, we teach that the practitioner may confidently support a "diagnostic case" upon perceiving three of the four. The fewer of the pillars we can perceive, the less certain we are of the primary elemental imbalance: the Causative Factor (CF).

In cases in which the practitioner is unsure as to the CF, we would encourage the practitioner to commit to one elemental CF and treat it for three to four treatments before changing to another

element. A change for the better in the findings upon palpation of the Three Jiao is a secondary, but important indicator of the accuracy of the diagnosis and treatment. In many cases, simply treating the Causative Factor element will correct the heating or cooling problem. In the first few treatments with a new patient, it is suggested to keep it simple - staying on the CF - to see the effect it has in the heating issues, rather than rushing to treat local points on the Conception Vessel (Ren), Governor Vessel (Du), or non CF meridians that happen to be found in the affected area.

When Do We Treat the Fire Element?

If we diagnose the indicators of a scorched odor, a red or lack of red facial color (lateral to the eyes is easiest to detect), the sound of laughing or lack of laughing in the voice, and emotion of excess or lack of joy, we know the Fire Element is the cause. In previous articles, I have indicated how we know which side of Fire to treat - the organ side (Heart and Small Intestine) or the function side (Heart Protector and Three Heater). If the diagnostic indicators of an element other than Fire are perceived, we tend to focus our treatment upon that element and trust that by treating the elemental CF, all of the other elements and their associated Officials will respond.

The balance of this article will address the often overlooked mental and spiritual gifts of the Three Heater Official and how the use of appropriate points on this meridian can restore its functioning.

The Mental Level

When we speak about a person as being cold, warm, or hot, we are speaking of the manifestation of the Fire Element, and more specifically about the functioning of the Three Heater Official. We know when we are warmed up, excited, interested, and engaged. Consider a time when you were so engaged in a book, for example, that you couldn't put it down. Consider also, a time when you simply could not feel any intellectual stimulation, warmth, or attraction to any idea.

The mental gifts of Fire, and the Three Heater in particular, include intellectual enthusiasm, focus, the ability to appropriately give and receive information, and the mental endurance needed to sustain interest. In extreme, one can be manic and constantly over-excited, or seemingly dull, inert and mentally lifeless, easily bored and distracted. Even in the presence of inspiring, exciting information, a person with a Three Heater imbalance may find it all quite boring. In the other extreme, the imbalance could manifest as over-excitedness seemingly over nothing.

The Spirit Level

Spiritually, Fire provides the ability to be open, loving, communicative, and compassionate. This Official senses how much of our inner warmth and passion to bring into the world so that our interactions are appropriate and well adapted to the person or persons with whom we are, or the situation in which we find ourselves. All relationships are a matter of give and take, requiring constant adjustments to be in harmony with the other. The words "adaptation," and "harmonizing" are key to understanding this Official's job.

For example, have you ever professed your love to someone who was simply not interested? Has someone made overtures of affection to you, which you didn't want? When have you felt hot and cold in a relationship - perhaps beginning with great heat, attraction, and passion and quickly dissolving into disinterest and coldness? Have you ever lost interest in a person and wondered what ever attracted you in the first place? Have you ever been unwilling or unable to express warmth to another? When have you wished the initial phase of heat and passion would remain forever? When have you been unable to sustain a relationship once the initial passion cooled? Have

you ever sensationalized about something you wanted to "sell" to another person? Have you ever been on the receiving end of a sales hype, which felt way "over the top?" These are but a few examples of ways in which The Three Heater can malfunction at the level of the spirit. In balance, we are responsive to the loving impulses of the Heart. As well, we know how much of our love, warmth, and passion to express - when to "jump in" whole-heartedly, when, and how much to hold back.

The Points

When our diagnosis leads us to treat the Fire Element and, more specifically, the "function" side of Fire, below are several points on the Three Heater to consider:

- Three Heater (San Jiao) 5: Outer Frontier Gate
- The Three Heater, as we have seen, adjusts our temperature (at all levels) to appropriately harmonize with our environment. This point is a gate, which must open and close appropriately to allow the proper amount of warmth to be expressed, and for harmonious exchanges that allow for truth, love and compassion to flow outwards.
- Three Heater (San Jiao) 7: Assembly of Ancestors
- Some Fire imbalanced patients' ability to trust and to know how much of themselves can be safely expressed to others is severely traumatized. They have, perhaps, been hurt so deeply or so often in relationships that they have simply shut down their own fire and developed a cold, impenetrable shell around themselves. No amount of rational thinking or analysis is of help.
- To see and know with whom we are - friend or foe - involves more than seeing with physical eyes, or even the mind's eyes. We must also be able to see with the eyes of spirit.
- Using the point Assembly of Ancestors on a Fire imbalanced patient is akin to calling a great meeting with his/her great grandmothers and grandfathers - those who have seen and done it all before, and from a high and heavenly perspective, can give the benefit of wise counsel. We can well imagine the relief of such counsel: "This one is safe," or "Be cautious here." The Chinese revered their ancestors for the wisdom they held and their ability to help those in the land of the living. Whether we hold the concept of "ancestors" in a literal or metaphorical sense - as in the wisdom of our higher selves - tapping into such spiritual wisdom reassures us that we are not on our own. Thus connected, we can see each situation with new eyes and respond with instinctual immediacy, rather than through the veils of past pain. We can attune ourselves appropriately in extending our relationships with others and in society.

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