



GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

## The Large Intestine Official

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The *large intestine* (AKA colon) is the great eliminator, or as J.R. Worsley called it, "The Drainer of the Dregs." Dregs are defined as the remnants of liquid with its sediment left in a container, or the basest, least valuable portion of anything.

### The Physical Level

Physically, the colon is the last part of the digestive tract. It is a hollow tube, approximately five feet long and 2.5 inches in diameter. Here, water is absorbed from food wastes before the waste, at this stage nearly void of nutritive value to the human being, is eliminated from the body through defecation. Among the expressions of physical imbalance in this *Official* are constipation, diarrhea, colorectal cancer, colonic polyps, ulcerative colitis, diverticulitis, and irritable bowel syndrome. We can add to that list other symptoms such as fatigue, muscle aches, joint pain, sinus problems, headaches, bloating, abdominal pain, gas, sleep problems, inability to lose weight, skin problems (acne, rashes, eczema, psoriasis, canker sores), PMS and other menstrual problems, to name a few, as all can be the result of accumulation and stagnation of waste.

Classical Chinese medicine considers it the job of this *Official* to remove the rubbish, not only from the digestive tract, but from every organ/function (AKA *Official*) at every level — body, mind, and spirit. Every organ or function will eventually malfunction if its waste is allowed to fester and decay. Thus, symptoms arising from any organ or function can be the result of imbalance in the Colon Official.



The colon is brother to the *Lung Official*. These two comprise the Metal Element within us. The lung receives the pure and fresh while the colon eliminates what is impure. Every moment, we are inhaling — drawing in the pure chi from the heavens, or exhaling, releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Thus, every breath is composed of a taking in and a letting go. Letting go is essential to life. If we could not exhale, we could not take another breath and would die within minutes. If we could not eliminate toxins from the body, we would die of poisoning.

Though the term *waste* may have negative associations, it is, in fact, an essential part of the ecosystem. Plants produce life-giving oxygen in a process called photosynthesis. The plant absorbs respiratory waste, carbon dioxide. From that, oxygen is produced — released as a waste product by the plant. This process is largely responsible for producing and maintaining the oxygen content of our atmosphere. In another example, the manure of animals, used as fertilizer, provide vital nutrients for the healthy growth of plants. Of course, the impact of releasing thousands of toxic chemicals into the water, earth, and air since the beginning of the industrial revolution is an area of major environmental concern.

#### The Mental Level

The early Chinese considered a human being to be a manifestation of body, mind, and spirit, and the functioning of each official manifested on all levels. The mind, when clean of pollution, is empty — innocent and spontaneous, like the mind of a child below the age of one. The child is curious and utterly fascinated by everything.

The child can focus on an object of fascination, and can easily let go and shift to another. Such a mind is fluid, open, and receptive.

As the child gathers experience, memories are accumulated. Some of what is gathered is valuable and a source of knowledge. Some is toxic in nature and is retained, leaving a toxic residue in the

mind. This residue pollutes our storehouse of experience, making it difficult to glean its wisdom. Such toxic experience includes messages from parents, siblings, or other sources in the exterior world. Often, these messages create feelings in the child (and later the adult) of being unworthy, unlovable, wrong, inferior, and generally not good enough.

As children, we are often overwhelmed by this input, absorb it without discrimination, and become identified with the pollution. Rather than simply experiencing life, children learn to evaluate themselves and the world around them as good or bad, right or wrong. They lose their clear, unobstructed vision and begin to see themselves and the world through filters of belief, assumptions, and concepts.

When the mind becomes this polluted, it tends to see toxicity both in itself and the exterior world. It becomes filled with stale, useless, and repetitive "chatter". It becomes difficult for the mind to find rest, to concentrate, to remember things. It tends to find the "bad" in everything, becoming cynical and pessimistic. The person so afflicted may be foul-mouthed, prone to making nasty and cutting remarks, to relish in dirty jokes, gossip and innuendo, to find everything and everyone "full of crap." Life loses both its savor and appetite for new experience, replaced by fear of the next bad thing bound to occur.

### The Spirit Level

Just as Metal gives value to the Earth with its minerals and trace elements, it gives us our sense of self worth. We cannot perceive what is truly unique and special about ourselves if our perception is covered over by toxic thoughts and negativity. This is the source of the grief — the emotion associated with the Metal Element. Grief is the emotion we feel in the presence of separation and loss. Grief is essentially a hanging on to the past, not being able to let go, living life not in the present, but wishing things were like they once were; life becomes filled with remorse and regret, re-living past hurts, mistakes, or missed opportunities. Though the Metal imbalanced patient may excessively grieve about the loss of material things and people, the deepest grief is the perceived loss of our authentic essential selves — eternal, brilliant, divine. This is grief at the Spirit level. As such, life loses inspiration, purpose, joy of learning, spiritual goals, and meaningful connection with others. Both the inner and outer worlds lose their beauty, majesty, and brilliance.

### The Diagnostics

In determining whether to treat the Metal Element, and the Colon Official specifically, we must know where a patient's symptoms originated. Any symptom can arise from an imbalance anywhere. Symptoms are an expression of an imbalance, not necessarily the cause. Sometimes, the symptom is caused by the organ in which it manifests. Sometimes, it is the result of an imbalance in another organ or function entirely. All are connected like members of a family and once there is an imbalance in one, it will spread via the Sheng or K'e Cycle to affect all the rest.

In Classical Five-Element Acupuncture, the source of the imbalance, known as the Causative Factor (AKA "CF") is diagnosed by assessing the odor, color, sound, and emotion of the patient. In the case of a Metal CF, the patient's predominant odor will be rotten — the smell of excrement, rotting meat, a garbage bin in which perishable food has been deposited. The facial color will be white, best observed on the skin just lateral to the eyes. The sound of the voice will be weeping — the sound made in the presence of loss or separation. The emotion will be grief, expressed inappropriately, either by its excess or lack.

The foregoing correspondences point to the Elemental imbalance: Metal in this case. To determine which of the two Officials is the real source of the problem, we have to interact with the patient to

determine whether his/her biggest challenge is "taking in"(the Lung function) or "letting go" (the Colon Function). Regardless of which it turns out to be, we treat both Officials in every session, as they are intimately connected like blood brother and sister.

Each of the 20 points on the Colon meridian serves to help this Official achieve health and harmony in performing its vital functions. Each has a name, translated from the Chinese characters, which suggests the unique gifts it can bring to the patient in need. For examples of points on this meridian, see my October 2011 article, *The Spirits of the Points: The Large Intestine Meridian*.

## The Questions

The following questions are useful for self-observation and can be appropriately modified to inquire as to the state of a patient's Colon Official, particularly at the mental and spirit levels. While any symptom can come from a primary imbalance in any element, as imbalance spreads from one element to the next, if you suspect a problem in a patient's Metal Element and specifically with the Colon Official, here are some questions to consider in assessing its state:

- When have you "trash talked" behind someone's back?
- When have you dismissed an idea as being worthless, prior to investigation?
- What old prejudices do you hold?
- When have you held on to regret or remorse over a mistake?
- What are your standards? What will you simply not accept?
- When have you been able to let go of an old, entrenched idea?
- What do you need to let go of?
- When have you relished in the misfortune of another?
- When have you been cutting or dismissive?
- What is unique and special about you?

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