



GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

Down the Rabbit Hole: The Taboo at the Root of Sickness

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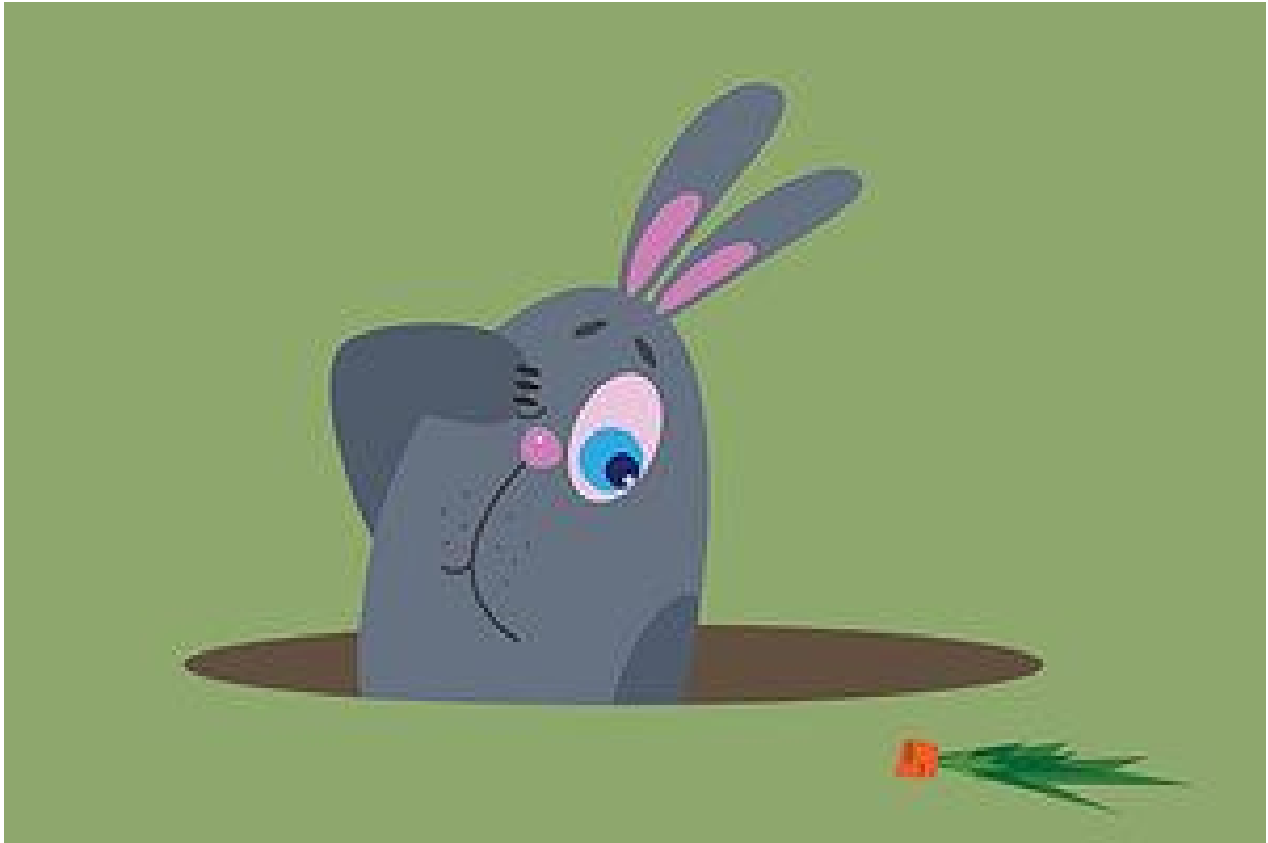
The medicine we practice and use is a reflection of our consciousness. If we identify ourselves as our physical body and its thoughts and emotions we are invested into the common dream of our society. We will be likely to patronize its conventional medical systems. If we know ourselves as a conscious being inhabiting the body we are more likely to seek a medicine that includes healing through consciousness.

In 1966 Allan Watts published, "The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are." The preface of his book starts with these words: THIS BOOK explores an unrecognized but mighty taboo — our tacit conspiracy to ignore who, or what, we really are.

Briefly, the thesis is that the prevalent sensation of oneself as a separate ego enclosed in a bag of skin is a hallucination which accords neither with Western science nor with the experimental philosophy-religions of the East. This hallucination underlies the misuse of technology for the violent subjugation of man's natural environment and, consequently, its eventual destruction.

Where Does the Taboo Come From?

If we accept Watts' words as truth, and I do, then we need to ask where this taboo comes from. The answer is multi-dimensional, and requires seekers of truth to study life and look deeply within themselves. One important dimension is well expressed by Don Miguel Ruiz in his landmark book, "The Four Agreements."



Ruiz explains how as children we are domesticated like farm animals to conform with the limiting and fear-based dream of our society, and we usually reinforce this hell by continuing to make additional limiting agreements to be less than we really are. Any medicine based on healing through consciousness must then assist suffering individuals to look beyond distressing symptoms and unwind the web of limiting agreements that underlie their complaints.

As practitioners of Chinese medicine and energetic medicine we need to choose level of consciousness at which we practice. Are we primarily focused on providing relief and maintenance of the body, or helping our clients claim true freedom? If we choose to delve into the deeper *root causes* of suffering it can sometimes seem like the proverbial rabbit hole that Alice tumbled down into in the story "Alice in Wonderland." It keeps going deeper and deeper.

Root and Branch

The body of knowledge known as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) includes many references to Root and Branch. One of the most useful is the differentiation between treatments with a focus on symptomatic relief and those that address underlying causative factors of disease.

There are layers of depth within the paradigm of Root and Branch. For example a patient could come to us complaining of shortness of breath. TCM diagnosis could reveal the Root to be Deficient Heart Yang, which could be manifesting as the Western disease name of congestive heart failure.

On this level the symptom of shortness of breath is the Branch and the lack of Yang Qi in the Heart is the Root. To take this a step deeper, as clinicians we could ask why is the Heart Yang deficient? From that perspective the evaluation of Deficient Heart Yang becomes the Branch and we would need to seek a deeper Root.

Why You Should Re-Evaluate

With further evaluation we may find that this condition is connected to deficient Kidney Yang not supporting the Heart fire. This diagnosis could lead to the prescription of a supportive herbal formula and a series of acupuncture points to needle or apply moxa to. If the patient cooperates and takes the treatments it is likely that there would be improvement in some or all of the distressing symptoms.

If you have been in practice as long as me you have probably noticed that this approach really is more management than cure. If we do our work well our patient feels better for some period of time and gets through a difficult period.

Yet in most cases the distress returns in the same or different forms. What does this mean? From the more conventional TCM perspective it means that the patient needs to be re-evaluated and given a new prescription to deal with the new presentation. I now choose to see this in a different light.

To take the next step down the proverbial rabbit hole I would ask "why is this man's Kidney Yang deficient?" The answer could include lifestyle considerations such as consuming too much raw or cold foods, overwork or excessive ejaculation during sex. These are important to take into account.

Deficiency & Will

It can be even more useful to consider the psycho-spiritual essence of the Kidney, which is zhi or Will. Will is an essential quality of soul, and is a reflection of a person's life path and strength. When the quality of Will is ample and healthy a person can pursue her goals with one-pointed focus and is able to manifest her visions into reality. When Will is deficient or imbalanced a person usually struggles to do this and often feels blocked and distracted.

It is unlikely that well-prescribed herbal formulas or acupuncture by themselves will heal this soul-level rift. These therapies can be strongly supportive of this process, however, in my experience, if I help the patient journey further down the rabbit hole of causation we usually find that the presenting complaint is a manifestation of a challenging theme of the person's entire lifetime. Major life lessons tend to appear in a limited number of areas. These include relationships and sexuality, finances, health and personal identity.

All of the struggles people go through in these areas have a common root that is at the deepest level of the rabbit hole. That is in the realm of self-realization (or lack of it). The way a person has felt blocked or limited in any of the vital areas of life is a direct reflection of some form of ignorance or denial of truly knowing who they are. In some way it does not feel safe to be and express their true self. This is the deeply internalized taboo that Watts wrote about in his book referenced above.

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