



PHILOSOPHY

The Spirits of the Points: The Pericardium Meridian

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The vast majority of our patients, in spite of the presence of physical symptoms, are also imbalanced at the levels of mind and spirit. The word "spirit" itself can be challenging, and how to treat it even more so. In colloquial terms, we all know what it means when we refer to the spirit of giving, team spirit, when we say that a sick friend is recovering and in "good spirits" or conversely, "dis-spirited" — feeling depressed, unlovable, hopeless, not good enough, fearful, and angry — to name a few.

Pure & Perfect Awareness

Spirit itself is the pure and perfect awareness with which we were born. It is perhaps most apparent in a child below the age of one, prior to the development of an individual ego, when life is still a celebration — a new, bright, and fascinating adventure. Being simply pure conscious awareness, the spirit is composed of nothing but itself, and as such, can neither be balanced nor imbalanced.

However, it is unavoidable, as we grow, that we absorb impressions — many of them negative and painful, which obscure and compromise our perception of spirit. Our reactions to these experiences form a defensive layer of personality, which dulls and pollutes the mind and can wreak havoc on the potential magnificence of the body.



The work of a truly wholistic practitioner is to address the needs of the whole person at all levels. While spirit itself needs no treatment, the spirit level, however, can be helped — cleared of the rubbish and obscurations that tarnish its perception, and restored to its innate brilliance. Just as dark clouds obscure the perception of a clear blue sky, beyond the clouds is always blue sky unaffected by the clouds.

Spiritual Connotations

Using points for their spiritual connotations are the key to resolving illness at the spirit level. Each of the acupuncture points has a name, translated from the Chinese characters, which offers insight into the unique spiritual gifts the point offers. When we are internally quiet, curious, and fully present to the patient, we can feel what he or she is feeling and know exactly what point or points are needed.

It is important to know what a patient's underlying elemental imbalance (Causative Factor, AKA "CF") is. The CF is the element among five (Fire, Earth, Metal, Water, and Wood) that is the weak link in the system and most in need of support. We are born with a specific elemental imbalance, which does not change over a lifetime.

Therefore, in choosing points for their spiritual connotations, we mostly choose points from the meridians of the CF. These will, by far, have the most profound impact. The CF is determined by sensing the color in certain areas of the patient's face, the sound of the voice, the emotional expression, and the odor.

The Diagnostics

A Fire imbalanced patient will manifest a scorched (or burnt) odor, the color red or ashen gray, the sound of laughter (in excess or deficiency), and the emotion of joy (in excess or deficiency). These excesses or deficiencies are beyond what would be considered normal expression. A reasonably

healthy person will laugh and feel joy, appropriately, in the presence of humor and conviviality. The Fire imbalanced person will tend to be either laughing when the situation does not warrant it, or will be deadly serious and somber when joy and laughter would normally be present.

In addition to the four diagnostic indicators (odor, color, sound, and emotion), expressed by a Fire imbalanced patient, we also need to determine which side of Fire is principally imbalanced, as that will be the focus of our treatment. For detailed explanations of the functions of the four Fire Officials, please refer to articles on each by this author, archived in *Acupuncture Today*.

The Pericardium AKA Heart Protector/Circulation-Sex

All of the major organs and functions are considered, metaphorically, to be "Officials" — ministers in service to the Heart - AKA the Supreme Controller. In order to rule with wisdom, love, impartiality, and to spread joy throughout the Kingdom, the Supreme Controller must be kept safe and protected. That is the job of the Heart Protector.

This Official is akin to the chief bodyguard, head ninja, captain of the musketeers, or head of the secret service. In other words, this Official acts as the protector of the King or Queen, metaphorically standing before the Monarch and saying to anyone who poses a threat, essentially, "If you want to get to him, you've got to get through me." With such protection, the Monarch can be truly fair and impartial — open to give and receive love, dispense justice, set boundaries, create order, resolve disputes, issue royal proclamations, and fearlessly respond to the needs of all.

This Official is also known as Circulation-Sex. It is responsible for arterial and venous blood flow, as well as internal and external sexual secretions. The Fire element, associated with the Summer season, manifests nature in its fullest expansion — the power of maturity. Only in maturity can flowers spread their pollen or animals reproduce.

Thus, the act of love is one of the ultimate expressions of the Fire element. In order to fully open to another, for the sexual secretions to flow in the way nature intended, for there to be passion, trust, warmth, intimacy, joy, and ultimately unity, the circulation and protection this Official provides must be strong. It is the voice of consciousness that knows instinctively that, in this situation and with this person, the sharing of love at such a deep and intimate level is right.

The Points

Every point on a given meridian helps the Official to do its naturally ordained jobs, but in a unique and specific way. It is our interaction with the patient, as well as pulse diagnosis, that lead us to the exact point or points that are needed. Thus, there is some similarity in their meanings, as well as a unique individual gift that only that point can give. Having diagnosed a patient as a Fire CF, and having determined that the Pericardium is in need of support, here are examples of points on this meridian and their spiritual connotations. The English point name translations that follow are those passed by my teacher, Professor J.R. Worsley.

Pericardium 1:

Heavenly Pond

With the word "Heavenly" in its name, this pond has the ability to cleanse, dissolve, and wash away all that blocks the flow of warmth, connection, joy, and love. It is a calm and still reservoir that brings refreshment and a soothing recharge to a weary psyche. It washes away old hurts, heartbreaks, and psychic debris that may have left a patient suspicious, shut down, closed off to others, or contrarily, wide open, vulnerable, and without filters or barriers.

As a Window of the Sky¹, this point enables a patient to truly see the world and those in it with fresh, unprejudiced eyes, like a clear and mirror-like lake, allowing free and easy interaction with those whose who would bring joy to the heart of the King, while keeping out those who would pose danger. Thus, love can flow freely, fearlessly, appropriately, and with proper protection. It allows the Heart to be open, without being vulnerable.

Windows of the Sky are a special group of points that are used to open spiritual perception for patients who are mentally or spiritually "imprisoned." Please note, this point, being on the breast, is prohibited on women. Pericardium 2 would be used instead.

Pericardium 2:

Heavenly Spring

A spring is a body of water being continually refilled from a deep underground source. It is pure, vital, bubbling, healing, active. Like Pericardium 1, it reinvigorates the spirit, bringing a flow of cleansing warmth, vitality, and strength from a vast and inexhaustible reserve that will never run dry. It enables the Heart Protector to clearly see who and what to let in and keep out, fearlessly.

Little children know innately whom they welcome into their sphere, and with whom they will resist — scream, wiggle, and protest. We all have such a barometer within ourselves, but often due to past interpersonal traumas, we lose touch with what was an innate instinct.

Like Pericardium 1, when used as a Window of the Sky, it is not used early in treatment, but when the patient is ready — when Fire has been built up sufficiently with treatment, but still there remains an area of darkness, fear, and confusion that seems impenetrable. The patient may say things like, "I'm feeling better in many ways, but wish I could express my love to my wife. I know it's time for me to do it. I know I'd feel better if I did, but I just can't get the words out. I am afraid I'll be rejected." Sufficiently prepared, however, a sudden freeing up of the spiritual eye is not a source of fear, but a welcome relief, opening into new life, love, and joy.

Pericardium 3:

Crooked Marsh

A marsh is a wetland, dominated by rich, lush, and abundant herbs and other plants. Marshes are often found at the edges of bodies of water, forming a rich and fruitful transition between Earth and Water. As the Water point on a Fire meridian, it allows the gifts of the Element to flow and enrich all areas of life, as Water fills every hollow and crevice.

The point brings richness, enjoyment and pleasure not only to relationships, but even to the most mundane of activities. "Crooked" refers to the ability to bend and accommodate. Like bamboo (a translation of the first character in the point name), which is lightweight, hollow, and flexible, but strong enough not to break from pressure, this point brings fluidity to relationships — the strength to remain spiritually upright and straight, while also being adaptable.

As a Water point, it can adjust and control the flames, calming a Fire, which is raging out of control, or increasing warmth where there is coldness. The Fire imbalanced patient needing this point may describe his/her relationship as blowing hot and cold, vacillating between love and hate, attraction and revulsion. Crooked Marsh straightens, creating smoothness, stability, and ease.

Pericardium 4:

Gate of Chi Reserve

When the Heart and its protector have endured too much stress, are tired, weary, depleted, and the patient has nearly "lost heart" this point calls in reinforcements like a cavalry troop. It brings in a fresh supply of energy. This Gate, like all gates, should open and close as necessary. If the gate is left open, what is stored inside may drain and dissipate away. If stuck closed, its reserves are inaccessible.

In either case, there may seem to be nothing to call upon, leaving the patient insecure, weak, unenthusiastic, cold, unable to open to life in its myriad expressions. Unsticking this gate brings peace and security to a troubled and overburdened Heart. It helps the Fire imbalanced patient access the strength and protection, joy and love that are always potentially within.

Pericardium 5:

The Intermediary

An "intermediary" is a middleman or intercessor who stands between an individual and an enemy, problem or obstacle. It provides space, distance, and a cushion from that which is troubling or threatening the Heart. The point brings to mind a television ad that warns, "Don't face the IRS alone! Call this number and let our experts handle your tax problems for you."

For many Fire imbalanced patients, their obstacles can seem too much to handle alone. They may feel too unprotected to deal with challenging issues of love and relationships. They need a strong, protective ally to stand before them. Taking the metaphor of Pericardium 4 as representing the arrival of the reinforcements, the Intermediary is their captain. When all else fails, the Intermediary still stands with a sharp, swift sword and shield to ward off the blows, insult, and injury directed at the Heart.

Understandably, the point provides relief, calm, and reassurance to perceived threatening situations. As the Metal point of the meridian, the Intermediary provides quality and inspiration to a frightening situation. Metal brings honor and dignity to the process, inspiration, and nobility of purpose, and the ability to let go of the darkest toxicity.

Reference

1. Twicken D. Window of the Sky Points. Acupuncture Today, Feb 2016.

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