



CLINICAL CORNER

Spirits of the Points: Small Intestine Official (Pt. 1)

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In prior articles, I discussed small intestine points 1-5 ([August 2019](#) issue) and 6, 9, 11-12, and 17 ([August 2004](#) issue). This article features points 7 and 8; part 2 will feature points 10, 16 and 19.

The Separator of the Pure From Impure

The small intestine official is the brother to the heart, the supreme controller. It is also called the "transformer of *qi*" and is known as the "alchemist," as it sorts and separates the pure and essential from the waste.

Physically, this official extracts pure essence from the food and drink we consume so it can be used to nourish the body / mind / spirit, and sends the impure remains for elimination. Its job is not limited to the physical, but applies as well to the levels of mind and spirit.

The Mental Level

Consider the mental messages we receive daily from the media, as well as in our daily personal interactions. Some are essential and useful, but much we don't need. If this official is failing, the negative can overwhelm us as we absorb indiscriminately. As we lose our ability to discern good from evil, we become confused, cynical and pessimistic.



A sick small intestine can make us naïve and gullible, mistaking bad ideas for good ones. The mind loses its agility and cleverness if it is unable to sort. It becomes dark, confused, overwhelmed and muddled, unable to figure things out or prioritize. A healthy small intestine, even in the midst of an impure environment, will still find a way to extract what is good and discard the rest.

At the mental level, a healthy small intestine is akin to an able secretary who sorts through the messages, e-mails, trivia, and other minutia, separating out what is important, pure and good to be presented to the chief executive: the heart or supreme controller. (See my prior column, "The Heart Official," in the September 2013 issue for more information.)

The Spirit Level

Spiritually, with a sick small intestine, we might be attracted to toxic spiritual practices, accept dogma blindly; even revel in impurity. If we have a spiritual or religious practice, we might abandon it, seeing no light ahead; there would seem to be no purpose. We would tend to see only the flaws and imperfection in everything and everyone, including ourselves.

In the spiritual realm, this official, when healthy, allows us to see the essential good in everything and everyone - to see our good and proper spiritual path in life, and to know when we are, in fact, on that path. It allows us also to see the good in the spiritual paths of others - to see where we are essentially alike, as well as where we are different in our practices.

Good, in this context, means what is right, appropriate, and oriented to the health and well-being of ourselves and others.

At an even deeper level, this official helps us to separate that part of us that is pure and untainted - consciousness itself - from the processes of the body, mind and emotions, which are always in flux and change, arising and disappearing. Discovery of that part of us that is unchanging is discovering spirit within us and in everything.

The Points

Each of the acupuncture points has a name, translated from the Chinese characters, which suggests the unique gift it can bring to the patient in need. Generally, points on the small intestine official are used in the treatment of patients who have been diagnosed as having a primary imbalance in the element fire, and furthermore on the "organ side" (heart / small intestine), rather than the "function side" (pericardium / triple heater) of the fire element.

SI 7: Upright Branch

A branch is a part of a tree growing from the main trunk, or a local unit or distinct part within a larger organization. More branches make more fruit and a stronger tree. This point reminds us that we are all unique individuals and can walk our own way, in myriad realms: work, social, spiritual, etc.; and succeed and bear fruition, while remaining true and upright to what is in alignment with spirit.

Like a chapter or branch of a national organization, each chapter has a unique membership and style, yet each holds true to the ethos of the larger body. We can be ourselves, spontaneous and free - without sacrificing or losing our true and higher purpose, principles and moral standards.

We consider this point when a fire-imbalanced patient (more challenged on the "organ" side of fire) becomes wobbly in this regard and needs to be reminded of what is upright, straight and true. When sovereigns rule in an "upright" manner, they rule in fairness and love.

SI 8: Small Sea

The use of the term *small* in the context of this point means that which is deep within, pure and unchanging, void of distractions and the pomp of swollen, ego-driven desires.

When we become attached to our grandiosity or inferiority, this point humbly reminds us of what is true and essential - whom we truly are, as in the Biblical reference to the "still small voice." As a "sea," it is a reservoir on which to draw the virtues of enduring love and compassion, humility, and service to others. It provides the strength, cleansing and lubricating power of water. It washes away debris, allowing the pure brightness of spirit to shine.

As the earth point of the meridian, it brings us "home" and "down to earth" when we have lost our way in illusion (greed, power, prestige, fear, sadness, anger, regret, etc.). It restores the qualities of a good mother - abundant nourishment, care, patience and forgiveness.

Author's Note: English translations of point names are those taught by Professor J.R. Worsley and appear in *Traditional Chinese Acupuncture, Volume 1: Meridians and Points* by J.R. Worsley; Element Books, 1982.

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