



CLINICAL ACUPUNCTURE

Spirits of the Points: Liver Official (Pt. 3)

Neil Gumenick, MAc, LAc, Dipl. Ac.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- The liver official is likened to an architect, who has a vision for a structure to be built and draws up blueprints, which are an expression of the vision.
- When healthy, this official knows what our individual plans, aligned with the divine plan (nature's plan), should truly be.
- Liver 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12 are important points that help promote health and harmony of the liver official and thus the patient.

Editor's Note: In prior articles, the author discussed points 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 on the liver official ([February 2012](#)) and points 6, 8, 13, and 14 ([June 2012](#)). He also discusses the liver official in depth in the [June 2016](#) issue. This article features points 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

The liver, belonging to the wood element, is associated with the season of spring. The powers of spring include birth, growth, regeneration, vision, activity, forward movement, upward direction, vitality, optimism and hope.

Spring does not arrive with subtlety. It bursts out - violently and forcefully. Its strength can be seen in the force of a lone dandelion bursting through a crack in a cement sidewalk.



The liver is called the "Official of Planning." Every function and process begins with a plan or vision. The wood element is directed toward a future goal. This official is likened to an architect, who has a vision for a structure to be built and draws up blueprints, which are an expression of the vision.

Within us, everything operates according to a plan (or blueprint) for its function (digestion, respiration, circulation, menstruation, etc.). Nothing simply occurs randomly, but inevitably follows built-in natural laws. With a clear and sound plan in place, everything works in sync, harmoniously and smoothly.

All parts "know" what to do, when and where to do it, as well as what the contingency plans are if the unforeseen arises. This allows for both relaxation and confidence that everything is "on track" and working together.

The Mental Level

Mentally, we plan our time, arrange and rearrange our schedules (contingency plans) in order to reach goals. Once we reach a goal, a new goal is set. The liver grants us powers of reason, clarity of thought, logic, the ability to "see" with the mind's eye what is communicated by another; as well as to present our ideas in a way that others can "see" what we mean.

If the liver is imbalanced, we may be unable to make plans, be uncertain, tentative, aimless; or we may overplan, exemplified by over-perfectionism, in which case nothing gets started because it's not perfect enough. We may become so attached to one point of view (lacking flexibility and adaptability) and, incapable of "seeing" another idea, that we become rigid, bossy or overly assertive: "Not only is this my plan, but it better be yours, too!"

In the other extreme, this imbalance may express itself as complete surrendering of our own plans, ideas and visions to blindly follow another.

The Spirit Level

Spiritually, having a plan or goal gives us a sense of purpose and direction. It orients us toward a future with confidence, hope and optimism. In imbalance, we may feel hopeless, desperate, with no perceived direction or purpose, thus resigned. We may wrongly perceive a polluted spiritual path or ideology to be correct, and fanatically defend and blindly follow it. However, when the health of the liver is restored, we can see our way out of even the darkest of places.

The inappropriate sound of shouting and the emotion of anger are expressions of a primary imbalance in wood. If we consider a time in which plans were thwarted, we can see how the emotion of anger and the sound of shouting arise.

In health, there are times we must appropriately assert ourselves forcefully and raise our voices; at other times, it is appropriate to yield, to change direction and embrace another plan or decision. When imbalanced, we cannot perceive what a good plan is. We may instead, embrace a bad one or give up entirely, in which everything can look bleak, dark and frustrating, and eventually hopeless.

When healthy, this official knows what our individual plans, aligned with the divine plan (nature's plan), should truly be – for our highest good and the good of humanity. No obstacle will thwart us from our goals. Our plans will be pure and appropriate; strong, yet flexible. Our lives will be purposeful and oriented toward good.

Liver 7: *Knee Border*

When a point name includes a body part, we must consider what that body part does. The knee is one of the largest and most complex of body joints. It provides stability, flexibility, and the power to spring upward and forward. It is needed for many forms of movement.

A "border" is a boundary or limit line. Used for its mental and spiritual connotation, this point provides power and flexibility of mind and spirit. It helps the wood-imbalanced patient move ahead, cushioning the bumps and challenges of the journey to new insight and vision beyond perceived borders and limitations.

Liver 9: *Yin Wrapping*

Prior to sprouting, seeds are wrapped in a protective covering or husk. Within the covering – dormant, dark and hidden, is precious nourishment for the plant. This is the "yin" aspect.

If this food is compromised or there is insufficient nourishment delivered, the seeds won't have the energy to grow when it's time to sprout – the "yang" aspect.

Like tender seeds, our plans need to be considered with clarity, calmness and nourished sufficiently so that when they sprout, at exactly the right time, they will be appropriate and favorable to achieving our aims. When wood is healthy, everything works like clockwork, happening at exactly the right time, as nature innately knows.

We would consider this point for wood-imbalanced patients who lack the virtues of patience and receptivity before taking action; who jump ahead recklessly and impulsively, without seeing the implications of their plans and actions, unable to allow things to take their due course.

Liver 10: *Five Miles*

As with other points that contain the word *miles*, this point suggests that at times, our journey may be long and arduous. In the context of the liver official, the journey may require much planning, as well as adjustments and contingencies.

If the plan is worthy, however, we need the reserves of energy to see it through. This point provides endurance, stamina and perseverance, allowing us to carry on with clarity, hope and optimism, despite obstacles in our path.

Liver 11: *Yin Angle*

An "angle" is a meeting place of two intersecting surfaces, as in a corner. The character is also translated as "to examine" or "investigate." A corner provides the strength of two planes joined together. Thus, a "yin angle" provides a strong support to our plans, based upon deep ("yin")

consideration from a different angle or point of view.

We would consider this point for the wood-imbalanced patient who is attached, perhaps, to only one superficial or materialistic view and is unable to see from a deeper and stronger level, aligned with spirit and their highest good.

Liver 12: *Hasty Pulse*

"Hasty" implies action done with excessive speed, urgency or undue consideration. The pulse reflects the state of the *chi* of the officials and circulating through the meridians.

We would consider this point for wood-imbalanced patients who need to be moderated, tending to get ahead of themselves with regard to planning; who are rushing into the future without due regard for the needs of the present or the consequences of their actions.

Author's Note: There are many interpretations and uses of these points in various traditions; the preceding is not intended to encompass all possibilities. 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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