



ACUPUNCTURE & ACUPRESSURE

Spirits of the Points: The Stomach Official (Pt. 3)

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The stomach, known as “The Official of Rotting and Ripening Food and Drink,” with its paired official, the spleen, represents the earth element within us. I discussed the stomach official in detail in the [June 2017](#) issue, including its manifestations at the physical, mental and spirit levels. In the [October 2022](#) issue, I discussed points 42, 43, 44, and 45, and in [July 2023](#), points 8, 9, 11, 12, and 14. This article covers points 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25.

ST 20: *Receiving Fullness*

The word *fullness* reminds us of the material and spiritual gifts of the earth element, and its corresponding season of late summer. This is harvest time, when the Earth provides its vast bounty. Its abundance provides for our present and future needs. We store away and rely on the harvest to get us through the barrenness of winter, in which nothing grows. If we have received the fullness of the harvest, we can endure winter, or periods of scarcity, with trust and security.

In imbalance, patients may overcompensate by overeating and hoarding, or may have lost their physical appetite. They may be unwilling or unable to take in good and needed forms of nourishment. Mentally and spiritually, they often feel betrayed or abandoned, leaving them feeling empty, alone, and distrustful. They perceive a lack of the mother figure, symbolic of the Earth itself, so no one can be trusted. They often feel, “No one cares or understands. Why bother?” This point opens the way to receive appropriately for those earth-imbalanced patients who cannot.

ST 21: *Bridge Gate*

A bridge allows passage from one side to another over an obstacle, such as a body of water, a valley, road, or railway. To journey forward, evolve, and grow through ongoing experience, we are often faced with obstacles, both external and internal. This point suggests that there is a gate that must be opened before we can cross the bridge and continue moving forward.

This point is considered for earth-imbalanced patients who are “stuck” at the gate. The “stuckness” can include old patterns of belief, habits, fears, and lack of motivation. To move forward into new experiences, new ideas, and new sources of nourishment can be a frightful prospect. With the gate closed, the next step or stage can look almost impossible to achieve. When the gate is opened, change can be welcomed. We can access new sources of nourishment.

ST 22: *Border Gate*

A border is an edge or boundary separating two political or geographical areas. Historically, gates were erected to allow passage in or out. Like all gates, they opened and closed as appropriate, offering security and protection to those who resided within, as well as a way to allow others to enter and residents to exit and venture beyond.

If this gate within us is jammed shut, no one gets in or out. We are cut off from the nourishment that could be found beyond our existing boundaries – our comfort zones, as we dare not venture outside.

Similarly, those who would bring new and fresh nourishment (both physical and non-physical, as in new ideas, concepts, ways of being) cannot enter. We merely recirculate the old, stale, and familiar. With the gate stuck open, anyone and anything gets in. We are left unprotected and potentially in danger.

This point can restore the functioning of this internal gate. If well-guarded, but openable, we have security, as well as the ability to venture explore beyond what we perceived as our limits and conditioning. We can taste new things, grow, open our minds, and be continually nourished.

ST 23: *Great Oneness*

This point reminds us of our essential sameness and unity. The unfolding of the human process is essentially the same in every human being, unfolding in a unique and individual way, of course, but following the same natural laws. Just as no two blades of grass, two flowers, or two snowflakes are identical, so are no two people the same, but each is governed by the same natural laws and connected at the level of spirit.

Throughout history, people have had the same organs, functions, instincts, basic drives, and desires. They have similarly eaten, slept, loved, hated, and felt the same range of needs and emotions. Therefore, Great Oneness is considered for the earth-imbalanced patient who is unable to get past differences of opinion, prejudices, and the perceptions of things that divide us, and cannot sense the essential unity at the core. Realizing our unity, contradictions diminish and disappear. Love and compassion increase.

The point is also useful when, within ourselves, we feel lack of compassion, internal contradiction and disunity. This might manifest as an inability to love and forgive ourselves and learn from our mistakes; or disunity between body, mind, and spirit. For example, our physical self may want one thing; the mind may be in total contradiction, as if to say, “You shouldn’t want that!”, and the spirit level will suffer the pangs of unworthiness.

With Great Oneness, divisiveness dissolves; it is all seen as one journey, unfolding as it needs, providing us with a treasure of experience.

ST 24: *Lubrication Food Gate*

The physical food we consume must be digested: rotted and ripened by the stomach, and passed on

to the small intestine. If done smoothly, with the right amount of lubrication, we feel satisfied, well-nourished, and energized. If this gate is stuck shut, we may have physical indigestion, bloating, as well as a stagnancy and lack of movement of thoughts and emotions. If stuck open, food passes through too quickly, without proper mixing and digesting. We miss out on the nutritive benefit physically, as well as the learning and savoring of experience that makes us grow and makes life enjoyable.

In our age, we are bombarded by input and information. We must be able to digest its essence, but not become immobilized by its volume. This point keeps the digestive flow appropriately easy, balanced, and free-moving. It flushes the mind of old, undigested impediments that diminish our mental and spiritual clarity and spontaneity, but allows for the joy of a good meal, a good book, an inspiring story, a beautiful sunset, a meaningful relationship.

ST 25: *Heavenly Pivot*

Everything in the material world changes, as do thoughts, ideas, concepts, and feelings. At times, we must “pivot” or turn with the natural course of events and circumstances. Even in the midst of change, there is something eternal which does not change. That is the spirit at the core of every one of us to which the word *heavenly* in this point’s name refers.

When we are centered in our spirit, we can allow for change, digest our experience, and yet remain at peace, at one. Spiritually upright, we realize that all is unfolding as it must, according to natural laws, of which we are a part. Thus, we would consider this point for the earth-imbalanced patient who cannot flow with change, turn in a new direction, embrace a change of life; a patient who is stuck, resistant, easily upset and uprooted.

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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