

Alchemical Facial Acupuncture Protocols, Part 3

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In [part 2](#) of this series, we introduced an ancient Taoist meditative practice, called the "Water Wheel." We can view this technique as the beginning of a transformational journey whereby the acupuncturist/practitioner refines their *qi* and cultivates effortless clarity of intention, in turn becoming an acupuncturist/chemist. This dynamic of inner evolution can facilitate a similar alchemical transformation within our patients.

A constitutional treatment protocol that we can interpret from an alchemical perspective involves the Five-Element kidney spirit points and back *shu* points. This approach can be incorporated quite successfully within facial acupuncture to touch patients at the deepest psychospiritual level. It can be extremely effective in addressing imbalances that occur during periods of emotional stress and trauma, when the free flow of *qi* is somehow impaired. We can view this conversion of *yang* into *yin*, and vice versa, as being an intimate dance between the two primal polarities, in which *yang* leads and *yin* follows. In participating in this exchange, both partners achieve oneness in their rhythmic unity.

The Five-Element kidney spirit points lie over the heart, and support kidney *yin* and heart fire. Not only do they affect the heart and lung energetically, but they actually connect to the physical organs. We can refer to them as kidney *mu* points; in the *su wen*, they are considered to be energy transfer points that are linked with the back *shu*. We can regard these two systems as being in sympathetic resonance; a condition that presents itself on the front of the body has a corresponding harmonic impact upon the back.

Element	Mu Points	Shu Points
Earth	Kid 23, <i>Shen Fang</i> , Spirit Seal	Bl 20, <i>Pi Shu</i> , Spleen <i>Shu</i> ; Bl 21, <i>Wei Shu</i> , Stomach <i>Shu</i>
Wood	Kid 24, <i>Ling Xu</i> , Spirit Ruins	Bl 18, <i>Gan Shu</i> , Liver <i>Shu</i> ; Bl 19, <i>Dan Shu</i> , Gallbladder <i>Shu</i>
Fire	Kid 25, <i>Shen Cang</i> , Spirit Storehouse	Bl 14, <i>Jue Yin Shu</i> , PC <i>Shu</i> ; Bl 15, <i>Xin Shu</i> , Heart <i>Shu</i>
Metal	Kid 26, <i>Yu Zhong</i> , Amidst Elegance	Bl 13, <i>Fei Shu</i> , Lung <i>Shu</i>
Water	Kid 22, <i>Bu Lang</i> , On the Veranda	Bl 23, <i>Shen Shu</i> , Kidney <i>Shu</i>

In this treatment, we palpate these *mu* points, positioned 2 cun on either side of the sternum, toward the *Ren* meridian. Palpate one point at a time, interacting with your patient to discover which are exquisitely tender. If this should be the case with a given point, and the point opposite is only slightly tender, treat that pair. Treat only one set of points, and needle toward the *Ren* meridian to consolidate the essence back to the *yin*.

The patient can be treated on their side or sitting on the edge of the treatment table. Perform your customary diagnostics and ensure that the patient is thoroughly grounded prior to needling these

points. This protocol can either be integrated or as a special treatment. For example, if a patient presents exquisitely tender points at *Ren 24 (Ling Xu)*, needle bilaterally below the third intercostal space on the chest, toward the *Ren* meridian. On the back, you will needle Bl 18, *Gan Shu* (Liver *Shu*) and Bl 19, *Dan Shu* (Gallbladder *Shu*). This pairing reflects the Wood element, and the *ling* or *yin* aspect of spirit.

This patient may have difficulty letting go, and find themselves awake at night, obsessing about the (physical or ego) death of a loved one. They can also be struggling with pre-existing karmic patterns in need of release. The patient is depressed, life has "buried" their spirit, and there is a flat, *shen*-less look in their eyes. Often, they complain about a subjective feeling of pressure on their chest during the night. Upon palpation of these exquisitely tender points, a mutual agreement with the patient is recommended before this alchemical treatment is performed. Leave the needles in for 25 minutes or less.

As it is the most visible and vulnerable organ, the face can retain tension and trauma from the vicissitudes of life, manifesting them outwardly in the form of lines, wrinkles and scar tissue. The connective tissue and the fascia are repositories of cellular memory. Old belief systems can be found lodged not only within the body but also in the facial landscape. It is therefore important for the practitioner to recognize the psychospiritual, as well as physical, imbalances that are reflected in the facial expression and muscle systems.

For example, the nasolabial fold, or "smile line," corresponds to the *fa ling* lines of Chinese physiognomy, and is related to the formation of character and maturity through life experience. A smile is generated by the action of the levator labii superioris muscle, which elevates the upper lip, raises the angle of the mouth and also elevates the upper lip laterally.

A patient who is depressed rarely smiles, and the quality of their nasolabial fold may be untuned, flabby or unevenly lined on one or the other side. This condition may be associated with excessive weight loss, hormonal imbalances or (from the standpoint of face reading) a right/left brain imbalance. In treating this muscle, we insert half-inch needles. This is a three-tiered approach that parallels the organization of the Three Treasures: *Jing* (Earth), *Qi* (Humanity) and *Shen* (Heaven).

Muscle: Origin (<i>Jing</i>)	The beginning of the muscle is usually attached to the bone, which relates to the kidneys, and the prenatal, ancestral <i>qi</i> (needle first)
Muscle: Insertion (<i>Qi</i>)	The attachment of the muscle is usually in the skin and relates to the spleen and postnatal <i>qi</i> ; this relates to choices made (needle second)
Result: Transformation (<i>Shen</i>)	Balances the <i>jing</i> and <i>qi</i> , sparks <i>shen</i> and synergizes the alchemical process.

There are likewise three muscle heads intermingled in the functioning of the levator labii superioris muscle:

Muscle	Origin	Insertion
Angular head	<i>Bi Tong</i> ; needle downward toward LI 20, <i>Ying Xiang</i>	LI 20, <i>Ying Xiang</i> ; needle upward toward <i>Bi Tong</i>
Infraorbital head	St 2, <i>Si Bai</i> ; needled on an angle toward LI 19, <i>Kou He Liao</i>	LI 19, <i>Kou He Liao</i> ; needled on an angle toward St 2, <i>Si Bai</i>
Zygomatic head	St 3, <i>Ju Liao</i> ; needled toward St 4, <i>Di Cang</i>	St 4, <i>Di Cang</i> ; needled toward St 3, <i>Ju Liao</i>

It is recommended that the practitioner be thoroughly grounded, breathe into their *dan tien*, remain neutral and focus full attention on the treatment. Any true protocol ultimately derives its beneficial effect from the conscious intent and clarity of the practitioner.

By addressing both the origin in the bone (*yang*) and the insertion in the skin (*yin*) of specific facial muscles, the practitioner symbolically recapitulates the individual pilgrimage of incarnation, while duplicating the flow of vital energy that occurs within the microcosmic orbit. Bone structure may be regarded as indicative of potential, and the skin provides vivid testimony to the choices that we make, according to the dictates of the inner life of the soul. Such an understanding of the face as the mirror of self-directed individual destiny would seem to agree with a fundamental precept of Chinese alchemy, i.e., that each of us possesses the capacity for personal transformation of the body, achieving immortality while still remaining in physical form.

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