

The Spirits of the Points: The Large Intestine Meridian

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Each acupuncture point has a name, translated from classical Chinese calligraphy, which indicates the unique spiritual qualities of that point and the gift it is capable of delivering to the patient in need. In Classical Five-Element Acupuncture, points are mostly chosen for their spiritual connotation from the patient's causative factor meridians.

The causative factor is the one element of the five (fire, Earth, metal, water or wood) which is the primary imbalance and the root cause of the patient's symptoms. The causative factor is determined by assessing the patient's odor, color lateral to the eyes, sound of voice and emotional expression. These are the four major pillars of diagnosis. The patient's symptoms may vary tremendously. Symptoms do not lead us to the causative factor, as once there is a primary imbalance in any of the five elements and their corresponding officials (organs/functions), the imbalance must affect the balance of all the rest. Thus, by the time patients come in for treatment, it is likely that they will be presenting symptoms in multiple elements and organs and all 12 pulses will be imbalanced. Our focus, therefore, is to identify, support, balance and harmonize the causative factor.

Once having determined the causative factor and having removed any and all energetic blocks, we can set about addressing the needs of the patient in body, mind and spirit. I emphasize that we can only reach the body, mind or spirit of a patient if there are no energetic blocks present. It is impossible for any spirit point to deliver its gift if the patient is blocked. Such blocks include possession, aggressive energy, a husband/wife imbalance or an entry/exit block between meridians. It is beyond the scope of this article to expound on these and a good deal of clinical experience and guidance is required to develop the sensory skills to detect them, but the question of a block must always be held in mind if a patient is not responding.

The vast majority of patients we see are imbalanced at the spirit level, regardless of the presence of physical symptoms. To truly and holistically heal, all levels must be addressed. To reach the spirit of a patient, we call upon the spirits of the points.

Reaching the Patient's Core

I would like to discuss several points on the Large Intestine (Colon) meridian and their spiritual connotations and uses. The Large Intestine belongs to the element Metal, whose functions are, specifically, that of the Lung: receiving the pure *qi* from the heavens and the Colon and eliminating the waste. The Colon removes more than just the waste of the digestive process. It removes the waste of every organ and function, as well as mental and spiritual rubbish. If this official is doing its job, rubbish will not collect, stagnate and rot. There will not only be a clean body, but a clear mind – able to let go of old "baggage" of the past and take in new and fresh ideas. The patient also will manifest a

clean, radiant spirit - able to be inspired, to inspire others and to live in the beauty of the eternal present. Just as metal gives value to the Earth in the form of minerals and trace elements, it gives us our sense of self worth. Keywords associated with the Metal element include: respect, awe, purity, honor, inspiration, value and quality.

The translations of the points that follow are those taught by my teacher of nearly 25 years, Professor J.R. Worsley. I have found, in more than three decades of practice, that these translations capture the essential meanings of the individual points and the context of the element in which they reside.

The meanings are as timeless as nature itself and as needed by today's patients as those who received them thousands of years ago.

Large Intestine 1 Merchant Yang

Merchants know the value of things. Their success depends on their acquisition and sale or exchange of things people want and need, as well as the elimination of what is old, stale or unnecessary. A "yang" merchant is one who is vibrant and active. There will be no accumulation of rubbish in this merchant's shop. What will be found there will be of the highest quality, impeccably fresh and clean.

Many patients have accumulated so much rubbish - physically, mentally and spiritually - that they have lost touch with what is innately pure, incorruptible and eternal. Using this point on the metal-imbalanced patient in such a state is akin to cleaning layers of debris from a stone and revealing a dazzling diamond beneath.

Large Intestine 4 Joining of the Valleys

Valleys are low-lying places between hills or mountains. When the rain comes or the snow melts, all the debris that had accumulated on the mountainside (e.g. dead leaves, twigs, fruit fallen from trees, organic waste) falls into these low places and are washed away to the sea. Some of the plant and animal waste will soak into the soil to fertilize and enrich the valleys, which will abound with life as a result. But, that which is toxic and of no use will be washed away. When many valleys are joined, they connect into one vast, cleansing flow from every mountainside - from every official and every level. Many metal imbalanced-patients seem unable to wash away the waste of their own bodies, minds or spirits. As debris collects, they may become physically constipated, but also cynical and negative, tending to see the worst in themselves, others and in life situations. This point, also known as "The Great Eliminator" has the ability to flush out the stale and toxic within, allowing for inspiration to occur.

Large Intestine 5 Yang Stream

A stream is a body of water, moving with a current, confined within banks. As such, it has a specific direction and flow. The *yang* aspect adds the qualities of warmth, light and activity. This is the fire point of the meridian. Fire controls metal by melting and softening, making it malleable. Like metal that has become cold and inert, many metal-imbalanced patients have become hard, immobile, unable to bend, attached to the past, holding on to shame, guilt and unworthiness. They become unable to let go of that which binds them. This point, used at the right time, encourages release - direct, active and with a good measure of humor, love and compassion - the warmth of fire. In many cultures, the ritual of baptism is a rite of purification - a symbolic washing away of that which defiles and compromises our perception of our true selves as pure, incorruptible spirit. Using this point is akin to immersing the

patient in need in these divine cleansing waters.

Large Intestine 6 Side Passage

This point, the junction (or *Luo/Connecting*) point of the meridian used for its spiritual connotation can be used to prevent backup of waste as it is eliminated. It is rather like the cleaning out of an old closet where, on the way to the trash bins, the garbage is temporarily piled in the nearby hallway. Before long, the hallway becomes so filled with trash that it is jammed tight and nothing can pass through. What is needed is a "side passage," providing another way out. It might happen that as we treat the Colon official and it begins its job of eliminating accumulated waste from every level that things get stuck. This point can be used with such patients to unclog the jam, reestablishing and reinforcing the movement and flow of elimination.

Large Intestine 11 Crooked Pond

This point, the Earth point of the meridian, brings the qualities of groundedness and stability to the process of elimination. Letting go can be a fearful prospect to a patient who has become identified with attachments of the past, old ways of thought, beliefs, opinions and assumptions. Being held securely in the loving arms of the mother, for many might be the best and most comforting encouragement for the letting go to occur.

The image of a pond again gives the image of water. One of water's principal qualities is to cleanse. "Crooked" implies the ability to bend and move in different directions. All of the old waste must be cleansed in order to be mentally and spiritually free - not just that with which one is comfortable in eliminating. One cannot be truly free and still hold to those attachments to which one feels especially entitled or identified. It is like asserting, "I want enlightenment, but I want to hold on to my anger. I have a right to be angry. Damn right, I do!" True, perhaps, but in continuing to hold that old resentment, one is in a prison of one's own making and freedom is but an idea, not a reality. "Crooked Pond" can reach those hard-to-reach places, smooth out sharp edges and help ease the way to rediscover the beauty and clarity within.

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