

The Heart /Kidney Connection

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Are you treating health conditions related to or affected by love? This past November I taught at the Pacific Symposium, a large educational conference put on for our industry by the Pacific College in San Diego, Calif. I presented an evening keynote titled "The Capacity and Function of Loving" during which I explored definitions of love based upon contemporary research in such areas as the human limbic system, neurochemistry, evolutionary and contemporary psychology as well as multifaceted descriptions from our medicine's history and theoretical constructs.

While it may not seem like an academic subject to you, the way our patients experience love, or the lack of love, in their lives has a substantial effect on their health. The roller coaster ride that is associated with love and passion requires energetic stamina and has a direct effect on every organ in the body. How a patient metabolizes the work you do will affect the ability to love and to cope with the experiences that make up intimate relationship. And, where patients are in the journey of loving will alter their energetic profiles and the way you will be treating them.

Let's go all the way down to the bottom of the energetic dynamics that are water and fire. From here we can see how the associated organs create love and personal identity.

Water-Kidneys

It is a dark, cold, starless night. The ocean is everywhere, soft and rolling. Its inky depths are seemingly infinite and its capacity limitless. The hazy blackness is teeming with life. Formless, without edge or shape, energy flows, continually undulating as moist atmosphere and salt water. Here is the strength to power all of life, the ability to express, to nourish and the potential to manifest. Everything came from this vastness. All of life on Earth began here, in the dark, blue, salty ocean. Here is the wisdom that becomes the five elements; here is the waiting fullness of yin yang's potential. The power to reproduce, life's hunger for itself, is born here.

Fire- Heart

Fire shines, like the sun rising, piercing this darkness. Its light differentiates the ocean from all else and draws a boundary between observer and that which is observed, bringing a consciousness through which the ocean's potential can become known. Fire is its own being-ness, separate from (kidney) water. It is responsible for the identity that we have of ourselves, the "me-ness." Someone's self-awareness comes from fire and while fire and water have dramatic effects on one another, they are separate and cannot be merged. Fire will allow for the experience and expression potential of this great ocean, our genetic foundation, our congenital make-up. Fire comes to illuminate water, to transform it into that which can be understood, recognized, perceived and defined just as our identity perceives potential mates and our hearts determine who we will "let in" romantically and sexually.

Kidneys rule Heart

This is how the Tao flows on the Ko Cycle of the 5-element theory. Sexuality, genetics, constitution and ancestors dictate what becomes love, perspective, awareness and personal identity. Without the rich potential, the life soup in the oceans of our genetics, who we are, how we think, what we believe couldn't exist. It is sexuality and genetics that rules the heart. It is gender that, in part, defines self. It is water that controls fire.

Research shows that the connection between water and fire, between erotic and loving feeling, is universal. Passion is part of the human hardware. It is an emotional skin covering the sophisticated machinery of species reproduction. Without the hunger to be close to another, there would be no offspring. Passion for a beloved can be found in all cultures, no matter how primitive or isolated from the rest of the world. All human beings feel attracted, passionate and desirous of those whose genetics foretell of healthy offspring.

The emotions aroused by love are defined differently by those experiencing them. This is where the cultural differences around love come in. In China, passionate love is equated with "sorrow love" or "unrequited love." It is not seen in a positive light. In many tribes along the Amazon and in Italian culture it is the core of being alive. In the U.S., we idolize romantic love with a literary industry (romance novels) and soap operas that let us in on the love affairs of their character for decades.

How your patients live in this aspect of self, how the kidney/heart machine affects them can be seen in many ways. It shows up in the thoughts of a woman whose biological clock is ticking. Can she find the partner who is pleasing to the heart *qi*, so that her sexual urges will pay off in healthy children? It is expressed in the mate selection process. Is a particular patient making healthy choices or do they have enough damage to the heart *qi* such that the strength of their genetics gets them in to trouble over and over as they pick sexy, heart destroying partners? Many confirmed bachelors and bachelorettes fit into this category: strong kidneys, weak heart. It plays out in the marriages of our patients, as couples stumble past the initial thrills of partnering into the long-term energetic challenges that they face once the chemistry of passion dies down, about 2-3 years into a romance.

It is understood in our medicine that different aspects of self mature at different rates. Do you incorporate this understanding in your practice? The third *Jing* cycle is the one in which the body is mature and ready to procreate, but the mind is not. The mind of a child inhabits the body of an adult. This is why education is so important in Asia for teenagers and young adults. When the mind is still childlike and the body has the urges of a mature person, one must keep the mind very busy to distract the body away from making poor choices. The heart is yet undeveloped while the kidneys are strong. Each *Jing* cycle represents our growth in new ways. All of who we are matures in alignment with the *Jing* as we progress through chronological time.

Have you ever suggested to patients that there be a waiting period after one relationship ends and before the next begins? You could work to strengthen the water/fire relationship so that your patients make good relationship decisions the next time around. Or, you could help them recover, doing the *qi* repair work required by the end of love affairs. People often feel the natural urge to take time to themselves after a relationship ends. If you watch a patient going through relationship recovery you will note tongue and pulse changes and behavioral and attitudinal shifts that reflect the healing process. This is a process your work can dramatically support no matter why a patient came for treatment with you.

Research shows that men are more likely to jump into bed with new women, avoiding the pain and ensuring that relationship recovery takes more time. Women do most of their mourning before distracting themselves with other lovers. Either way, you can have a positive effect on patients as they go through relationship transitions if you include this subject in your intakes and on-going conversations as treatment progresses. When the water/fire axis is affected by love, or the end of love, everyone's body needs help.

Also, the challenges faced every day in committed relationships can be lightened, abbreviated or released with the help you provide. For example, when *qi* is stuck and stubbornness takes hold, your use of *qi* invigorating herbs and dietary suggestions can help end a long-standing argument between partners. There are countless examples of how your contributions can improve a patient's behavior and attitude in a relationship.

Looking at your current patient base, what percentage of patients are in love affairs that nourish, feeding their *qi*? And how many have relationships that deplete and confuse? In what ways are your patients sustained by love? In which organs, elements or meridians is their *qi* bolstered and supported or diminished and dissipated by their love-related circumstances? Where do you see the strength of love, or the lack of love in their pulses? These are important questions to consider. Expanding one's thinking as a practitioner to include such questions makes your work a stronger contribution and a greater gift to those you serve.

MARCH 2012