

Acupuncture Wise

by Jipala R. Kagan

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The fundamental building blocks of Chinese Medical theory are the entities of Yin and Yang. Yin is usually associated with a list of adjectives such as dark, feminine, night, cold and deficient. Yang is often described as light, masculine, day, warmth and excess. Descriptive as these words may be they do not capture the true impact of Yin and Yang. The significance is not found in the portrayal of Yin and Yang as separate entities but rather within their interactions. The two forces of energy are inherently opposite in nature but mutually dependent on one another for survival. Found within their oscillating relationship is the energy of opposition and change that reflects and motivates all form and function within the universe. Dual nature: struggle and control, negative and positive, fire and water, the tension among opposite forces defines the force itself.

Yin and Yang are the principals that outline the boundaries or the space that encircles the philosophical conceptualization of a theory. The whole is the sum of its parts. If the entire idea is amorphous, then understanding must be gained via an alternative route of understanding.

The dynamic force of energies that is born from the tensions of Yin and Yang is exemplified through the Tao. Chinese theory considers the Tao to be energy in its undifferentiated state, it quite literally translates to mean “the path”. The Tao is the trajectory of potential energy as it makes its way through the universe

The Tao guides us from something small, divided and limited to something great and all pervasive, something that hovers at the edges of our awareness, that is always available to us but proves challenging to grasp. This innate desire for wholeness is something that can be found within all.

The Tao, pathways of energy similar to the meridians are pathways of dynamic force that travel through the physical body. A simplified description of the Asian therapy of acupuncture is the technique of using stainless steel needles to free up blocked pathways of energy within the body. Acupuncture restores free movement.

In Chinese Medical theory the physical body, emotions and spirit are viewed as an integrated whole. The emancipation of energy impacts the physical level by managing pain, removing tight bands that reside in the

muscles and restoring movement. There are seven main emotions considered in Chinese Medicine. They are: anger, joy, worry, pensiveness, sadness, fear, and shock. These seven emotions are viewed as broad headings for many other types of feelings. Each emotion is related to a certain organ and each has a particular effect on the movement of energy within the body. For example shock suspends energy while worry makes energy tie itself up in knots. On a spiritual plain the liberation of energy allows us to reconnect to our Tao.

Iris walked into my office on a chilly Tuesday afternoon. She is an older woman, in the prime of life, who had phoned me the day before and mentioned that she was suffering from insomnia. A writer, she discovered that her writing was best on the days that she got the least sleep, but she was still disturbed with her lack of rest. She had heard a radio interview that I had done and it had inspired her to give acupuncture a shot. Iris had been taking over the counter sleep aids and found that they were effective but she harbored a concern about becoming dependent on them. During my first visit with Iris, she told me how she woke up at least two times every night with thoughts running through her head. Each time she had trouble falling back asleep. The lack of continuous uninterrupted sleep was quite disruptive and she was looking for some relief. She also suffered from restless legs just as she was ready to fall asleep her legs would get jumpy and uncomfortable (this complicated her insomnia).

The purpose of acupuncture is to clear blocks that reside within the whole person.

We find these blocks in the physical body where they take the form of tight muscles, numbness or pain. Blocks manifest emotionally as depression, anger, sadness, anxiety, worry or shock. Spiritually, blocks are hard to define with words; but if you have ever felt that you were stagnating in your journey through life, you can relate to a spiritual block.

My first visit with Iris was a treatment to detoxify the body, mind and spirit. Once the needles are placed in their designated points they serve to expel the excessive or negative energy that resides in the body's pathways. Each treatment benefits both the patient and the practitioner by allowing for a deeper understanding of the root issues that contribute to the patient's symptoms.

Iris responded wonderfully to the first treatment. She slept deeply throughout the whole night and woke up feeling restored. She said that she felt as if she was in more of one piece the next day

The insomnia that Iris was experiencing can be broken down into three components. There was the physical aspect of her not being able to rest her legs. The insomnia had an emotional component anxiety and worry that was keeping her mind active; and finally there was a spiritual component relating to Iris's personal process. The acupuncture treatment was able to access the disorder from all three different avenues. Not only has Iris been sleeping better; but she feels whole and connected to the Tao. This connection to the Tao was an unexpected result of treatment for Iris

Acupuncture gently nudges the self into greater awareness, leading us away from the limited dualistic view (Yin and Yang as separate entities) towards a unification of all aspects of the self (Yin and Yang as one force).

I chose to view health and disease as multi-faceted states of being. There is no absolute one way to define health or treat disease. Health is complicated and influenced by our psychological makeup. This is why it behooves us to approach the disease with a multi-faceted mode of health-care. Acupuncture allows us to treat the disease through many different avenues; it informs the body that there is something that needs more attention, and it lets the body auto-regulate and take responsibility for its own healing process. Opportunities to grow within our lifetime on a physical, emotional and spiritual selves are plentiful and it is our responsibility to chose the most appropriate vehicle for growth and healing.