

Chinese Medicine Newsletter - February 05
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Welcome to the February newsletter. As I mentioned last time, winter is a time for going inward, conserving our reserves and listening to the wisdom of our inner stillness. We also learned that the kidneys and the water element are associated with winter. The essential quality or “virtue” of the kidneys is Will, both the will of activity in the world and the receptive will of opening to our innermost depths and intuitions.

The kidneys have a special relationship with the heart. The heart is connected to the fire element, which corresponds to the summer. The heart is considered the Emperor of the Kingdom of the body/mind. From the heart emerges our “impulse” for responding to life. In ancient China the Emperor was said to receive the “mandate from heaven,” ruling the kingdom from the highest and most pure of intentions (quite a concept for modern politics!). The Emperor performed rituals to maintain this essential connection to the heavens so as not to fall prey to personal ambition and desire.

In order for the heart to receive the heavenly impulses, it must be empty or “void.” What does this mean? It means that it needs to be empty of our ego, which, in this case, means the habituated, limited and conditioned part of ourselves. In other words, all our “baggage” that inhibits us from being fully alive, causing us to feel separate, defensive, frightened and alone.

The impulse from heaven is available every moment when “we,” the small we, can get out of the way. Our heart connects with the heavens, or our most essential inspiration and the kidneys root this connection to the earth. In Chinese thought, human beings are seen as the midpoint between the heavens and the earth. We receive the mandate from heaven and make it manifest on earth.

From their depth of stillness after receiving this communication from the heart, the kidneys then reflect this impulse back to the heart and it becomes the basis for enlightened action in the world. (There is actually a diagnosis in Chinese medicine of the “kidneys and heart not connected” with acupuncture treatments and herbal remedies to help restore the balance.)

How can we practice allowing our hearts to be “empty” or “void?” This is the

essence of meditation. Let the heart and “mind” be like a clear mirror. (In Chinese the word for heart also means mind) Just as clouds arise and disappear spontaneously in the vast, blue sky, let your thoughts, feelings and experiences spontaneously arise and dissolve in your awareness. Just as the sky is unaffected by the clouds that come and go, or as a mirror is never altered by the images that it reflects, our consciousness is the vast, unchanging presence that underlies all experience.

Take a few moments several times a day, sit quietly, breathe deeply and slowly and watch the incredible activity of your mind. Notice the thoughts, feelings and body sensations that seem to endlessly come and go. When any of these experiences momentarily dissolve, notice that you are still aware. You have not dissolved with them. Thus, you cannot be your thoughts, your feelings or sensations, none of it, because you are still around when they disappear. So what is this presence that remains? That is both the question and the answer to meditation! Be that and your heart and kidneys will reflect a marvelously unique and individual expression of the mandate of heaven manifesting on earth.

Thanks for listening. Again, if you feel any friends or family may enjoy this offering, please feel free to let them know they can forward their e-mail address to me and I’ll add them to the recipients.

Next time we’ll the discuss the arising of the energy of spring and how that is reflected in our being.

Be well,
Bob