

Chinese Medicine Newsletter - April 05

Welcome to the April newsletter. Well, it seems that spring has finally arrived. Spring is the time of renewal and rebirth. The incubation and inwardness that characterized the winter now gives way to the outward and upward movement of spring. It is the energy of expansion, growth, and self-expression.

In the Chinese terminology of Yin and Yang, spring is the manifestation of the rising Yang energy, the energy of warmth and movement, emerging out of the deep stillness and containment of the winter, the fullest expression of Yin. Spring associated with the wood element, which makes sense in terms of all the growth that happens in nature this time of year. After the storing of reserves through the winter, this energy is ready to burst out and begin to express its many possibilities, aspiring to its innate potential. This happens in nature and in us.

There is tremendous power as well as ease and flow in this energy of spring and the wood element. Nature is regenerating, recreating the forms of life once again. This great display all happens without effort. A flower grows without trying. A new, tender blade of grass can rise up through a concrete sidewalk, yet does so without straining. A thrush, a cardinal and a fox, all express themselves spontaneously. A tiger doesn't "try" to be a tiger. It just is. So even though the wood element in us is about our growth and aspirations on every level, the challenge is how to allow who we are to unfold naturally, easily and without strain.

In our culture, this the seems like a contradiction. How can we move forward without pushing, without "making it happen?" How can we produce the results we want without feeling that we are in a struggle with the circumstances of our life? It's not a question of necessarily toning down our intentions and aspirations, although these always need to be thoughtfully examined. It's about letting go, being present to possibilities, allowing the tapestry of our lives to unfold while releasing and relaxing in the process.

The emotion associated with the wood is anger. In its positive manifestation, the energy of anger can be clear and decisive, a "potency of action," enabling us to take a stand, make a life change, set a boundary, pursue a dream. When imbalanced or thwarted, this energy can manifest as feelings of irritation, hostility, frustration, rage, or in another aspect, feelings of powerlessness, resignation, depression or hopelessness. In these scenarios, life can be experienced as an obstacle course, impeding our ability to get what we want. If someone's wood element needs

assistance, acupuncture is one resource to help restore harmony and promote optimum function; physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

When the wood element in us is in balance, we're like a healthy tree. We have the strength and uprightness of an oak, yet the flexibility and give of a willow. We have the courage of our convictions and meet the challenges of life with resilience, suppleness and creativity. Obstacles, instead of being viewed negatively, are seen as creative challenges which are part of our process.

The "virtue" of the wood element is "benevolence." The virtue of an element is considered its heavenly manifestation, or its highest fulfillment. It's obvious how benevolence is the antidote to the dysfunctional aspects of anger. Our negative judgements about people and life are the foundation for our dissatisfactions, hatreds and sense of separation. This creates an environment of "us" and "other," which fuels personal as well as global conflict.

There is a saying, "*The mind creates the abyss, the heart crosses it.*" Judgement creates the abyss, compassion and benevolence cross it. When our wood energy is harmonious, there is individual aspiration and creativity, expressing that which is unique about us, as well as connection, compassion and benevolence, realizing the interconnectedness of all of life.

Some suggestions to be in harmony with the spring.

1. Include lots of spring greens in your diet.
2. The wood is said to control the tendons, ligaments and sinews. If we are too rigid and tense we can break, if too placid we can't hold ourselves in alignment. Do strengthening exercises while emphasizing flexibility.
2. Contemplate your goals for the rest of the year. Assess your short term and long term vision. What are your hopes and aspirations?
3. Identify external and internal "obstacles." Practice seeing them as opportunities and practice relaxing in the midst of challenges.
4. Sit or stand with your back leaning against a tree for a few minutes. Let go of your rational mind and see what you experience. What do you feel?

Take care,

Bob