

Chinese Medicine Newsletter - Summer
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Welcome to the summer newsletter. Again, please feel free to forward this to family or friends if you feel they would enjoy it. If someone is not on the mailing and would like to receive this on an ongoing basis, please have them forward their e-mail address to me. (shapbob@erols.com)

Previously, I've discussed the model of the 5 Elements in Chinese Medicine and Cosmology. The elements, **fire**, **earth**, **metal**, **water** and **wood** have correspondences with the cycle of the seasons, with times of the day, with colors, sounds, odors, emotions, patterns of thought, different organs and functions in our being, as well as several others. Diagnostically these correspondences assist the practitioner in assessing the state of harmony in a person, thus providing a roadmap for the treatment process.

The summer is associated with the **fire** element. **Summer** is the full expression of Yang, which is the warming and expansive energy in us. The energy of growth and development of the **spring** matures in the **summer**. All of nature is in its fullest display. People and animals are out and about, circulating, interacting, dancing the energy of **summer**. The **fire** element manifests as the warmth of relationships, the joy of interaction, the capacity for intimacy, the heat of passion, the celebration of life. The emotion of the fire element is "**joy**" and the main organ and function is the **Heart**, along with three supporting functions, **the Small Intestines, the Pericardium or Heart Protector and the Triple Heater**. **The heart** and mind in Chinese Medicine are spoken of as one, since they together rule the aspect of our ability to be present in the world with joy and contentment.

The color associated with the **fire** element is **red**, the odor is **scorched**, the sound is **laugh**. How is this information useful diagnostically to the acupuncturist and Chinese herbalist? When there is an imbalance in our system that needs attention, signs are present to the skilled practitioner. When the **fire** needs attention, there may be a **reddish hue** or the opposite, a kind of an ashen hue, on the face. A **scorched** odor may be detected and there could be inappropriate **laughing** or expressions of **joy or lack of joy**. For example, if someone is **laughing** when describing a grief experience, this incongruity calls attention to a possible imbalance. Conversely, it would be equally as revealing if someone is lacking in **joy** when describing a happy event or situation. There are many other signals, including the qualities of the pulse and the appearance of the tongue that further inform the practitioner as to what

needs to be balanced in the system.

When the **fire** element in us is out of balance, on a deeper level it could manifest as looking for happiness outside ourselves; in things, objects, situations, relationships, status, material gain, power, etc., When the **fire** energy and **heart** are deeply harmonious, the quality of the **joy** it manifests can be incredibly varied; boisterous, quiet, serene, subtle, outrageous, etc. What is common, however, is that the **joy** is self-generated. It comes from within. It is not erroneously ascribed to an external cause. It is a **joy** that celebrates life but is not dependent on how life shows up. Underneath its varied expressions is a depth and connectedness that feels that the beating of one's heart is as the pulse of all creation and not a drop of it is rejected. It is all celebrated. One of America's greatest poets, Walt Whitman, is a wonderful example of this quality. His classic, Song To Myself, reveals a **mind and heart** large enough to encompass and celebrate the richness of the human condition in all its variety.

There is a saying in one of the Chinese Medical Classics that says, "A healthy **heart** receives the joys and sorrows of the world without breaking." The deepest **joy** rests on a foundation of equanimity. This allows one to keep one's heart open in the midst of life's pleasures and assaults. It is not a sentimental or idealistic quality. It responds to whatever is needed, sometimes with amazing gentleness and compassion and sometimes with tremendous directness and power. (Think of Mother Teresa). It is a heart that stays open, secure in the potency of love.

Some summer suggestions:

- eat what summer offers, plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Our body thrives on lighter fare in the summer. We don't need as much of the heavier foods that are appropriate in winter.
- the heart is connected with our true impulse. We want to be able to be in touch with our deeper impulses for guidance. We need to start with whatever impulses we have, regardless of how mundane or lofty. For fun and practice, allot plenty of time to take a leisurely walk or drive somewhere. Have no agenda about where you are going. Put your attention in your heart briefly from time to time and give yourself over to your impulses and intuitions. See where they take you. What interesting roads do you turn down and follow, what captures your imagination on your walk and where does it lead. Feel the fascination with getting completely lost.

Enjoy the summer. All of it!

Bob