

Traditional Chinese Medicine explained to Bodyworkers: A Personal Approach to treating Complex Cases.

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I am a continuing education provider of massage therapy courses and get many inquiries from prospective students about the relevance and importance of Traditional Chinese Medicine in the form of Tui-Na (Chinese medical massage) and acupressure to their clients . Some of them have been exposed to acupressure and Shiatsu in a limited way, but wouldn't call themselves practitioners of these modalities yet, as they are too unsure of their knowledge of Chinese medicine.

My answer is that the application of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) bodywork modalities will allow them to diversify and deepen their practice. Many of these inquirers are also seeking ways to work smarter and in a less confrontational manner. They tell me , that they want to make a significant impact on their clients' pain and stress levels during the first visit with a treatment that will also last . Yet they find that they often overwork themselves leaving them prone to injury, or the clients themselves remain in significant pain , after that first visit. A major reason for the persistence of that pain is the complexity of the client's signs and symptoms. When I ask them to give me examples of such cases, these massage therapists often mention Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue clients

My personal view has been to ask bodywork therapists to re- examine their roles as massage therapists and project themselves as holistic practitioners addressing the mind, body , emotions and spirit components of their clients. They need to see their clients obeying the laws and patterns of nature and the environment which can cause or worsen the signs and symptoms .

My favorite metaphoric image of the holistic practitioner is that of a gardener who tends to the needs of the client The client represents the garden with all its strengths and weaknesses. When the client is in pain or stressed out, it's because he or she has not taken care of his own body or garden. The result is a garden with weeds, or drought, or flooding, or destructive bugs and undernourished plants. The practitioner has to look at every component of the garden to make it whole and healthy again. These components could be for example , the quality of the soil, the climate, the type of plants that grow well in a particular soil and the fertilizer. Each component interacts in a pattern producing a greater whole that will either flourish or die depending on how good the gardener is.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) looks at the client as part of nature and therefore subject to its laws and patterns. When evaluating the client , TCM takes a holistic approach; it views every aspect of the person's body, mind, spirit and emotions as part of a complete web or circle. In short , the patient is part of a greater and complete whole and not a isolated phenomenon. There is no one single or isolated cause or sign and symptom that has for example, caused that trigger point to develop or that stress headache to flare up, but a series of negative patterns in the social and work life of the client that have contributed to the final effect : pain or stress or both. The client is therefore not seen as a loose patchwork of signs and symptoms that have to be treated individually. When Western medicine examines a sick client , it might ask: What virus or microbe has caused this disease? In TCM you ask: Why is that virus or microbe there in the first place? The answer must lie then in how the garden has or has not been cared for . A massage therapist who just sees himself as a kind of body mechanic or technician will ask what signs and symptoms does the client have? An enlightened holistic practitioner will ask: Why are these signs and symptoms there in the first place?

Perhaps the garden, representing the client , has been neglected or taken care of in a terrible way. Therefore, TCM looks for the root of the cause of the disease or condition in the disharmony between mind, body, spirit and emotions. It's all about patterns and relationships.

My students often get fazed by the complexity of the signs and symptoms that a typical Fibromyalgia/Chronic fatigue patient exhibits. They are challenged by the number of trigger points and sore points that limit the range of movement in such clients and make their lives miserable with pain. These clients require long sessions and a long term program of rehabilitation and maintenance. The image of the massage therapist can sometimes be likened to the knight of medieval times on his white charger fighting a very powerful dragon that represents the pain. This is a confrontational image.

I tell my students that they should look beyond those trigger points and pain and ask themselves, why is the pain there in the first place? Western doctors often say that the Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue is primarily caused by stress. But stress is the result of a multitude of factors that affect the mind, body, emotions and spirit of the client. In TCM you can approach that stress in a non-confrontational manner by tapping into the body's inherent energy or universal energy called Qi. Qi is loosely translated as vital energy and in TCM it animates and informs all things alive. Although Qi is often only interpreted to mean power or force, the term Qi has also been interpreted to mean conscious intelligence or information. Each organ system carries its own unique Qi, which allows it to perform its own unique functions, both physical and energetic. The energetic function of these organs relates to the interaction of each organ system with one another in a supporting relationship. In order to animate and inform these organs, the Qi travels along meridians which are really three-dimensional vessels or canals with branches to all parts of the body. Acupressure and Chinese Medical Massage (Tui –Na) manipulates this force. There are twelve major meridians that run through the body. It is the task of the client and therapist to keep these meridians or canals clear of congestion so that the body can self-regulate itself.

We mentioned the role of the therapist, but what can the client do? As part of a self-care regimen, he or she can do Qi-Gong and Tai-Chi. These are meditation exercises involving breathing and slow movements affecting the joints ,musculature and spine. The ultimate purpose of these exercises is longevity. But it is long life without disease and medications !.

In TCM, diseases are referenced as major Qi, or energy dysfunctions . The TCM practitioner speaks of an overall “Qi deficiency,” which is often described in Western medical terms as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Another major effect of is that of “Qi stagnation “ , which means that energy and information cannot move smoothly to or from its appropriate locations. One result is tight tendons and ischemia. Pain as in headaches and muscular/myofascial pain is considered in TCM as the result of Qi stagnation.

Furthermore , according to TCM theory, blood and Qi are inseparable. Blood is the ”mother” of Qi; it carries Qi and also provides nutrients for its movement. In turn, Qi is the “commander” or “motivator” of blood, which means that it is the force that makes blood flow through the body and provides the intelligence that guides it to the places where it needs to be. For example ,when there is ischemia, there is insufficient blood because the Qi is “stuck” or congested in an organ or meridian. That means that there is also deficiency of Qi in the organ and muscle area that has the ischemia . In TCM, the therapist also has the knowledge to pinpoint which meridian and organ has the energy deficiency or stagnation .

How does this apply to the massage therapist? If we are to understand the role of Qi better we should borrow from the terminology used in agriculture, specifically water management. During a full body Swedish massage the different strokes of the therapist push and liberate the Qi along the meridians, This is like causing a “tide” or “sea” of energy to flow again in a client who was first exhausted because he was Qi deficient. However when applying Trigger Point Therapy or Acupressure, the therapist targets specific blockages and deficiencies that have caused severe pain or numbness in a certain location. Whereas in the previous example, the massage therapist only had a general effect on the whole body and mind, in Acupressure and Trigger Point Therapy it is like unblocking a canal that threatened to overflow or filling a canal that was depleted of water. Acupressure Points can be likened to “canal doors”. General tension and anxiety can cause a “flood” of unwanted energy in the head, which in the long term can create a “drought” of overall body energy from overuse in the body. A general massage can revive the client again and redistribute excess energy, but it will not be enough to address in a thorough way, damaged organ systems, organs, tissues and cells that have suffered from excessive or deficient Qi. Healing energy is channeled quicker and deeper (at cellular level) by the Acupressure therapist than the conventional massage therapist. This is because meridians respond to and carry stimulations as well as transmit information all at a speed as fast and even faster than light.

In conclusion, the application of TCM principles in the form of Tui-Na, Chinese medical massage, or Qi Gong, for example, enables the therapist to work comprehensively, non-confrontationally and deep with long – lasting results. But the role of massage therapist has to be now envisioned and expanded into one of a holistic massage practitioner.

**PHOTOS OF TUI-NA, CHINESE MEDICAL MASSAGE WITH VISCERAL
MANIPULATION**



**SPLEEN 6 FOR GYNECOLOGICAL ISSUES , FATIGUE, INDIGESTION,CIRCULATORY
DISORDERS**



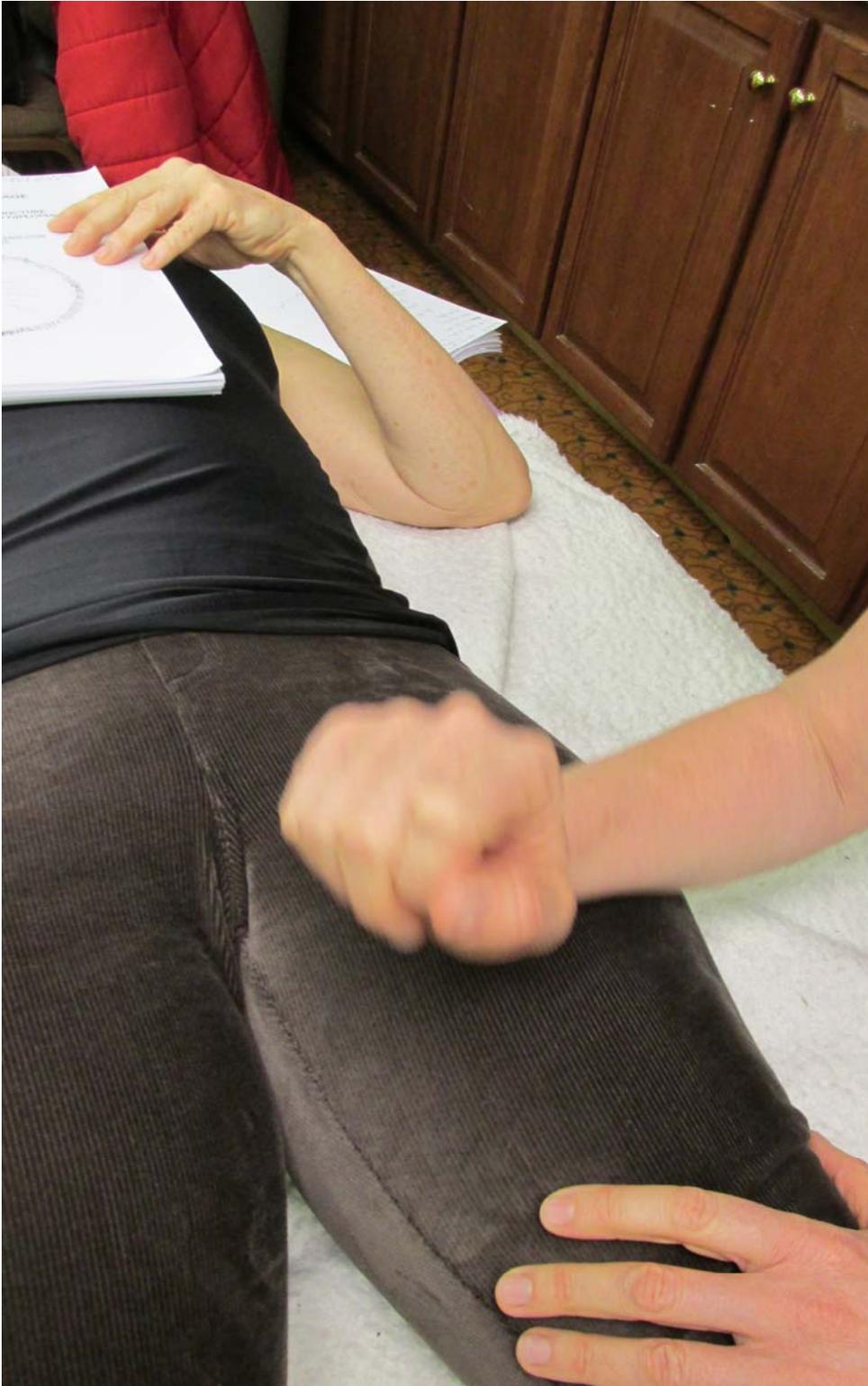
VISCERAL MANIPULATION : “SPLEEN PUMP” FOR EXTREME FATIGUE, LOW IMMUNE FUNCTIONING, INDIGESTION, STRESS AND GYNECOLOGICAL DISORDERS



“RECTIFYING THE HIP” WITH THE OPEN FOREARM STROKE SO TYPICAL IN TUINA.THERAPIST CONCENTRATES ON THE FLOW OF QI THROUGH THE GALLBLADDER CHANNEL.



ACUPRESSURE DOWN THE URINARY BLADDER CHANNEL FOR MYOFASCIAL PAIN AND “REVIVING” THE ORGANS BY STRENGTHENING THE QI



RAPID "ROLLING PIN" TECHNIQUE CENTRIPETALLY FOR UNBLOCKING QI



“OPENING UP THE FOUR GATES” TO ALLOW THE FREE FLOW OF QI THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE BODY WHEN IT IS BLOCKED BY DIS-EASE.



PRESSING LIVER 3 FOR ANGER, MYOFASCIAL PAIN, HEADACHES, MIGRAINES, GYNECOLOGICAL ISSUES, IBS. ETC.



ACUPRESSURE FOR EDEMA, PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY, CRAMPS, RESTLESS LEGS