

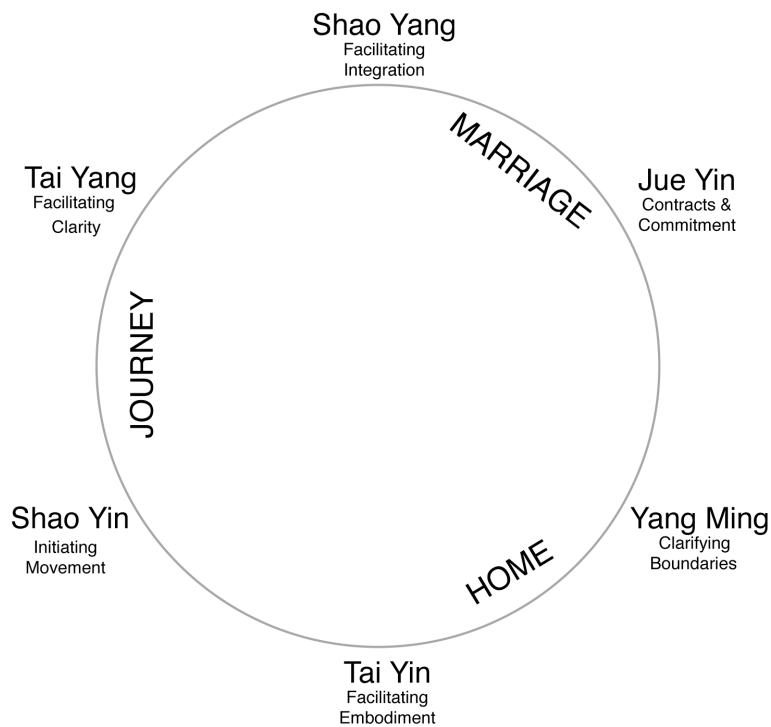
The Six Forms of Touch

Touch is one of the most immediate of sensations. Through the quality of physical touch you can feel the intentions and personality of the toucher. Doing therapy requires the development of specific relationship skills, which maintain clarity and awareness for both participants. In bodywork, these skills are also transmitted through the quality of physical touch.

The Six Forms of Touch is a training system for learning these relationship skills through developing six different qualities of physical touch and relating them to the basic therapeutic skills. The word 'Touch' is used to mean not only physical contact – through which the energy of the practitioner is sensed by the Client – but also the total energy of the contact, whether physical or not, between the two people.

*The Six Forms of Touch are not techniques to be used at particular times but a range of skills which good therapists use simultaneously, they are **the alphabet of therapeutic relationship**.*

This chapter groups these skills into three themes: Home, Journey and Marriage which are related to the three principles of Movement Shiatsu. Each form of touch can be seen as either the Yin or Yang expression of one theme. You will also find that the name of each form of touch is the same as one of the Six Divisions described in the last chapter. By understanding the skills associated with each form of touch, we hope that the Six Divisions will start to take on a deeper meaning.



Home

PICTURE

Facilitating Direct Experience

It is common in Shiatsu sessions for the therapist to articulate their diagnosis by saying something like: “I feel that your Spleen energy is deficient, what we need to do is ...”

What is the client to respond? She doesn't know what Spleen energy is! Already she is passive, and, if she trusts the therapist will just go along with what they say without understanding.

Maybe, however, she asks “What do you mean?” and the practitioner might answer with a potted definition of Spleen function, for instance:

“The Spleen is your internal support, it transports nourishment to the muscles and gives tone to your flesh”

“Are you saying my flesh is flabby! It's not, I go to the gym every day!”

“Well no”, says the practitioner “But I can feel your Spleen Energy by diagnosis of the meridians”

The client is left without an answer. She cannot feel internally what the practitioner diagnoses but, if she wants the session to continue without getting into an argument, she just has to accept the situation.

She *could* continue the discussion by saying “Well, how can I feel what you say is true?”. This is a very valid question. But the way Oriental Medicine is done does not usually include tools for refining the client's awareness. The practitioner would probably have to lamely answer that she has to rely on their training and expertise.

In most cases, the client is left with the choice of passively accepting direction from the practitioner or blocking off from them. In neither case is real contact made.

In most Shiatsu sessions this discussion never even gets started. The form of the work implies that the practitioner takes over the client's space and the client lets them in. Deep pressure and strong stretches can feel very pleasant but they tend to augment this dynamic.

Instead, can we find a way of making contact and of physically touching which assists the client to feel their own sensations and waits for the client to give them real permission to enter their space before doing something. For this to happen, the work must make sense to the client so they can make an informed choice to go along with the suggestions and procedures of the practitioner.

The image of the Home illustrates the above in four ways which can be associated with two of the six divisions

YANG MING in the Home:

Stomach Theme:

If you feel comfortable at Home it is a pleasure to go out to visit others and to invite them to dinner. On the other hand, if you don't like the way your house looks then you tend to stay at home trying to fix it or, alternatively, spend all your time out with your friends and there is no space where you can retreat for a rest. This is the principle of helping the client to **accept themselves as they are**. A dripping cave can feel like a welcoming home if the owner accepts it as it is instead of yearning for a three bedroom town house.

Large Intestine Theme

Your Home is your personal space. If someone can march in and do what they like without permission from you then it doesn't feel like Home. To feel at home you must feel that you have choice whether to invite someone in. Other people usually knock on the door and wait for it to be opened before coming in. This is the principle of **helping the client to feel clear and comfortable with boundaries**. A key feature of this theme is that it is necessary to be able to say NO, to refuse entry or even to push an unwelcome visitor out in order to feel confident and safe in your boundaries. If you do not have this ability then you have to rely on strong barriers rather than boundaries. You double lock the doors and put bars on your windows.

TAI YIN in the Home

Spleen Theme

Your Home is a place where you can enter every room. If someone tells you that there is a room in the house and describes it for you but doesn't help you, or allow you, to actually enter that room and see for yourself, then the house does not feel like Home. This is the principle of helping the client to **experience themselves through their own sensations** rather than giving them an external description of themselves.

Lung Theme

A good Home expresses the personality of the owner. The contents of all the rooms, the flowers in the garden and the colour schemes of the decoration all are imbued with the your character. On the other hand, some homes are cold and characterless, except, perhaps, for the owner's bedroom, which no one else enters. This is the principle of helping the client to **fill their space with themselves and to express their true self through their body**.

The Japanese have a word MIAI, important in Martial Arts, which means "finding the exact distance between you and another where you are in contact, can feel the other person's energy, but in your own space". This is the essence of the Home energy.

Let's now look at the forms of touch which facilitate these themes.

Yang Ming Touch

Respect for the Client and the Client's Process

Attitude

Stomach Theme

The acceptance of the client's state by the therapist. If the therapist approaches the client with an intention to change them or treats them from the viewpoint that there is something wrong with them then it is very hard for the client to accept their own state of being.

Granted that doing therapy involves change, but that change can be seen as a development of the present state rather than throwing the present state away for something perceived as better. This is a subtle difference but an extremely important one.

Large Intestine Theme:

Asking for and waiting for the client's permission to do some work. This need not be an explicit verbal permission, as we saw in Sally's case history, she brought up issues herself. This voluntary presentation is, in effect, giving permission for the therapist to work at that level.

In Sally's case, she first presented the Medical Story. She was giving permission to work at a physical level. Later she introduced the Historical Story. This gave me permission to work at an emotional level.

If a client does not introduce a level of work themselves, I feel it is fine to ask them if they are willing to look at that level, if it seems appropriate. However, to ask direct questions and to start work at a level that has not already been presented is invasive and tends to hinder the client's confidence in their own boundaries.

Quality of Physical Touch:

Stomach Theme

The therapist needs to develop an awareness in themselves how they feel when they are anxious to produce change. Commonly this is shown through the effortful use of muscles. If the therapist learns to relax when they notice this and to use their weight and breathing to initiate movement then the quality of touch loses the sense of anxiety about the present and the client feels more able to relax and accept themselves.

Various physical techniques can assist this theme. Using weight rather than muscles to make contact, initiating movement from the centre of gravity rather than the limbs and moving the client in such a way that they can let gravity do the work rather than muscles are all examples. The common feature of these techniques is that, as much as possible, you let gravity help the contact or movement rather than using muscular effort to work against gravity.

Large Intestine Theme

This is a key form of touch in Movement Shiatsu. The basic principle is to take up the slack and then wait for the client to give permission to go further.

When the practitioner is giving pressure or stretching, there is a point at which the pressure or stretch has taken up the slack in the body. For instance, when the therapist first touches the body, the surface may be soft and they can press in a little bit with no feedback from the client's tissues. With a little bit more pressure the therapist starts to feel an elastic resistance to going further.

This is the client's physical boundary. If the therapist is sensitive to this precise point in the touch and waits there until the tissues give way and allow him deeper, this gives the client a profound sense of their boundary and also that their boundaries are respected by the therapist.

Tai Yin Touch

Encouraging Embodiment and Expression

Our normal consciousness covers a very small part of ourselves. We take responsibility for and really inhabit even less. When we have a problem, we tend to localise it and objectify that part as being separate from ourselves. We often feel a victim of the problem and want to get rid of it, change it or swap it for a new one like a faulty part in a car.

For instance, people often say things like “I’ve got a bad back”. Compare this with the statement “I am making my back hurt”. The first statement shows the attitude that the bad back is not something about which the person has any choice. It needs to be fixed, and, more significantly, it can be fixed without changing anything else.

In many cases it is immediately useful to say, “I am making my back hurt”. Much back pain results from how we move, our posture and how freely we express emotions. These are hard to change but definitely within our choice. Once you realise that you are making your back hurt then you can start to experiment with different ways of moving and expressing yourself.

But even if the back pain is a result of a tumour or abnormal growth, it is our nervous system that feels the pain and our self that deals with the pain. It may not be within our choice to have or not to have a tumour but we can do something about our response to it and, as many people in extreme pain have shown me, it is possible to feel alright about yourself, to be happy and satisfied with life even in the grip of chronic pain.

The key difference I have noticed in these people is that they do not feel themselves to be people **in** a body that is causing them pain. Instead, they feel themselves as their body. They are more fully embodied.

If you disown parts of your body then they cannot support you, you cannot physically relax onto them and they are a hindrance to your external intentions. Once you start to incorporate these parts into your sense of self, two things happen:

- 1) The nervous system integrates that part and can use it for support in movement and posture. This gives an internal sense of inner support and the body as a whole feels more toned.
- 2) Like immigrants who are nationalised into a country, the incorporated parts start to have a voice in the intentions and attitudes of the whole organism. Instead of feeling that you want to do some action but are hindered by the faulty part, you start to feel that you want to do things in a way that includes and respects the vulnerability of that part.

Both of these effects have the paradoxical effect of both helping you to accept yourself as you are and facilitating healing change.

Tai Yin touch is a way of helping a client to be more embodied. To inhabit more of the rooms in their home and to feel every aspect of themselves to be part of their image of themselves.

It is complementary to the Yang Ming process of Accepting Yourself as you are, but is the practical, tangible and inner aspect of that theme. In this way the Yang Ming is the Yang aspect of the Home Theme while the Tai Yin is the Yin aspect.

Attitude

We first met Stories in Sally's case history. Stories are a way of objectifying ourselves, of describing ourselves as if from the outside. Stories tend to be fixed views and, most often, block us off from our immediate sensory experience. The attitude of the Spleen Theme involves:

- 1) Noticing stories
- 2) Breaking through them into direct experience by either...
- 3) Helping the client to feel actual experience OR
- 4) Saying something that you directly notice with the common senses

For instance, I remember a session with a client called Tom, which had not seemed to have got anywhere. Near the end of the session I noticed him scowling and asked whether he was angry.

He replied "No, I feel quite calm, I'm just thinking about what has just happened"

Focusing on his posture in more detail, I noticed that his forehead was scrunched up and his shoulders were hunched and asked him to feel the sensation in these areas. They seemed to be the most charged zones in his body at that moment.

He checked them out and then said: "My God, I *am* angry. I'm really pissed off with you! This session has been really SHITTY! I feel worse now than at the beginning."

So his initial statement was a story. Probably it was more consistent with his self image as an intelligent, mature man than the feeling of petulant outrage which was his actual emotion. I don't believe he was lying at first, he simply was blocking off his own experience with the story.

I will continue with Tom's story in the introduction to Shao Yin Touch. For now, notice how Tom has become more real, more expressive through contacting his sensations. Instead of describing himself he is expressing himself.

If I had stayed on the emotional level in response to his initial story, I would only have been able to say, lamely, that he felt angry to me. By pointing out parts of his body that I

noticed were charged and that he could agree had sensation, he could access his direct experience of himself rather than his image of himself.

Much of the therapist's skill of this theme is in the discipline of only expressing what he notices through his own senses, not what he feels intuitively or what he thinks. What you notice through vision or hearing is usually something that the client can agree on. Your interpretations, intuitive feelings and judgements, however true, may only conflict with the client's story of themselves and go nowhere.

In a similar way, this attitude implies that the therapist should initiate the work that he does from things that he notices and not from a theory or diagnosis (which is an interpretation of sensation). Theory can be very useful and inspiring but only when it gives an idea for the next step. The first step should always arise from what you sense directly.

So far we have described the aspect of Tai Yin attitude which helps a client to embody themselves, in Chinese terms, embodiment is a function of both the Spleen and the Lung Organs. The Spleen nourishes and fills the flesh. The Lung spreads energy into all parts of the body.

Another aspect of Tai Yin touch, however, is particular to the Lung function. In this, the aim of therapist is to encourage the client not only to sense themselves, but to express themselves.

The important distinction to make is between expression and description. A person can say the words "I feel angry" in a calm, analytical tone of voice. In this case, the words are describing the emotion. However, if the anger enters the voice and body as they say the words then they feel authentic and the energy is directly expressing itself.

Expression feels like an expansion of the energy of the body into the outer world while, during description, the outer world cannot directly feel the inner energy.

If a client starts to talk about themselves in the descriptive mode, it is often useful to ask them to express what they are saying through movement or through sound without words. This almost forces expression to take place and gives the client a direct experience of the expressive mode. Returning to speech again, they often find that they have dropped the descriptions and feel more real and energised.

One difficulty that clients have with this, especially in Britain, is embarrassment. If the therapist always speaks in a calm tone of voice and the atmosphere of the sessions is always quiet and peaceful, then expression of strong energy feels embarrassing to the client. They feel like a drunkard in church!

It does no good for the therapist to give verbal permission for noisy expression, they have to give permission by doing it themselves. When I have been a client in therapy sessions, I always feel more comfortable with therapists who express emotion. If their voice rises with excitement or becomes throaty with sadness and, if they speak to me as they would

normally speak instead of putting on a calm exterior, it gives me immediate permission to express myself.

This, more than any technique, is the attitude that facilitates the Lung theme.

Physical Touch

The basic principle in Tai Yin touch is to take up the slack in the tissue and then to expand by breathing in and extending your attention out to your own boundary. This physically expands the therapist's own body and produces a mild form of pressure.

However, touching in this way gives a particular message to the client. The client senses the therapist bringing themselves to the surface first. This is the physical analogy to the attitude described above. It encourages the client's energy to expand towards the touch.

The Ying, the Wei and the Egg

Traditional Chinese Medical theory describes two forms of energy called the Ying and the Wei, which are at the core of the Tai Yin. Ying Qi traditionally spreads nourishment throughout the tissues of the body. This nourishment is generated by the Spleen Organ. When Ying energy reaches the surface of the body it fills the skin and part of it changes role and becomes Defensive Energy, or Wei Qi. Traditionally, Wei Qi circulates just under the skin and opens or closes the pores.

The Wei Qi's defensive function is seen as an outward pressure, keeping harmful influences from entering the body by its active expansion rather than the creation of a hard barrier.

Both Ying and Wei are outward moving, expansive energy, bringing the deep self to the surface. They are both aspects of Lung Energy which continues this expansion further to express the self into the outer world.

True contact happens when two people expand out to meet each other at their boundary, neither dominating nor merging with each other. A person's boundary extends further than the skin, there is a space around us which we instinctively feel we own, and we feel invaded if someone enters it without permission. I see the Ying and the Wei as extending to fill this space forming an egg of expansive energy whose outward pressure forms flexible boundaries rather than hard defences.

This image is very useful during therapy. If the therapist maintains an awareness of their own expansive egg then their contact is from the heart, expansive but not invasive and automatically encourages embodiment and expansion in the client.

Additionally, if the therapist is aware of the egg of the client, then he naturally avoids energetic invasion and is respectful of the client's home space.

PICTURE

Journey

PICTURE

Exploring New Territory

The image of the Journey describes movement. The Home phase encourages the client to feel their true self and to express themselves. This opens them to a direct experience of their energy in the present.

However, it is the nature of living energy to move. Becoming aware of how you are leads naturally to an awareness of how you want to move, to develop and to change.

Stories often contain motives and desires but they do not usually reflect the real movement of one's energy, so create internal conflict. Even if you can achieve the goals of the Story, it brings no lasting satisfaction because it is not really what you want.

The forms of touch in the Journey phase help the client to perceive the true motives of their energy, to initiate authentic movement and to maintain the clarity of the initial inspiration.

The Shao Yin aspect of the Journey helps the inner motive force to become conscious and initiates movement. The Tai Yang aspect helps maintain the clarity of the movement's direction and helps bring whole self into it.

Shao Yin Touch

Finding the Spring

Returning to the session that I started describing in Tai Yin Touch: Tom had accessed his real emotion through experiencing himself through sensation rather than his self-image story. He knew he felt angry and I was tempted to explore why he felt angry in more depth.

However, the question “WHY?” usually just leads to another story because it brings in events which are not present. Instead, I asked him to feel where in his body he felt most of the angry energy. He pointed to his upper breastbone, which did not seem to be moving at all. So I asked him to close his eyes and sense what the tissues around that area were doing to the angry energy.

“They’re holding it in. It’s like being in prison”

I suggested that he actively exaggerate the tension holding the anger in; to hold it in more. This was to help him to feel that HE was doing the holding and to give him access to a choice in the matter.

He went quiet for a few moments and then, suddenly, started flying around the room with great leaps and twirls, like a traditional Russian dancer. It was a powerful, spontaneous and authentic dance.

“God!”, he said at the end, “I’ve never done anything like that in my life! I feel wonderful!”.

This illustrates some of the themes of Shao Yang Touch:

- 1) The pressure of energy wanting to move is often experienced first as emotion
- 2) The emotion tends to get projected onto an external object. In Tom’s case he felt angry with me because the session up to that point had not been satisfactory.
- 3) The emotion is therefore already a Story because it has projected the build up of energy away from the present. Initiating movement from the emotion, for instance by expressing anger physically, may well be a red herring.
- 4) Shao Yin touch helps the client to directly feel the pure energy, not disguised as emotion, and to initiate movement from it
- 5) The movement may be physical or a more abstract movement such as life change.
- 6) These movement processes do not need to be deep and meaningful. In fact they often do not seem to have any meaning.
- 7) However, they do resolve local build up of energy and bring the organism back to a state of rest instead of being caught up in an un-resolvable feeling.

As the client experiences the ability of authentic movement to resolve energy pressure in the moment, deeper and more chronic energy blockages find a way of moving and chronic issues start to change spontaneously.

Therefore there is no need to try to bring the chronic issues into the therapy unless they are already in the foreground of the work, but only to work with the energy that presents itself directly.

The Kidney and the Heart are the two aspects of the Shao Yin and both are traditionally core energies. The difference between them is that the Kidney represents raw life force while the Heart is the personalisation of that force and is self-aware. Thus the Kidney is the Source of vitality while the Heart is the centre of the person.

However, in terms of both the attitude and technique of Shao Yin touch, we can treat them as a unified field.

Attitude

The attitude which facilitates the Shao Yin is the willingness to meet and approve whatever energy presents itself, however intense and however frightening it may seem.

This requires personal practice on the therapist's part. If he has not explored himself deeply and contacted the raw energies which lie under the surface of the socialised personality, then he will, quite naturally, be frightened of any such intense energy.

Spontaneous energy can be violent, powerful and dark as well as light and bubbly. Paradoxically, spontaneity takes a lot of practice. Not because there are techniques to learn but that it takes time to become familiar enough with these strong forces that one does not freeze with fear when they arise. It took me about ten years of practice to feel comfortable enough with my own spontaneity that I could remain relaxed with whatever came up in a session.

If the therapist is familiar with their deep energies and has practiced expressing them in spontaneous movement then the client unconsciously perceives that it is alright to contact them herself. This perception of the therapist's familiarity with energy is not supernatural. When we are scared of something our small muscles tense up and our breathing changes. Maybe also it is true that we give off the smell of fear. All of these small signals tell the client that it is not safe to let go and be truly spontaneous.

This attitude cannot be easily simulated. It has to be real. Therefore, the more deeply a therapist has explored themselves, the more deeply clients will feel safe to explore in turn.

Given this foundation, there are several techniques which help the client to access their deep energies:

Techniques

The principle behind these techniques is of skinning an onion. It is senseless to try to find the deepest core movements straight away, there are too many layers of self image and inhibition in the way. However, if the client starts familiarising themselves with spontaneous movements that feel safe to them then this strengthens their ability to go deeper next time.

There are several stages in physical Shao Yin Touch which appeared in Tom's case.

- 1) Bring the client's awareness to the area of the body where he feels most charge or pressure. If he finds it difficult to sense this, notice if there is any area that is being held unnaturally still and suggest that he brings his attention to that area. Pressure is a particular form of sensation which
- 2) Help the client to embody and exaggerate their inhibition of movement in this area. We gave an example of this in Tom's case where I asked him to actively imprison the charge that he felt in his chest.

If you tell someone who is inhibiting their energy to try to move, they will usually do so, but mechanically, because the inhibition is still there.

However, if, instead, you help them to actively and consciously inhibit themselves, then this consciousness gives them access to choice and gives them the opportunity to let go, allowing let the energy to move.

- 3) If the client cannot find how to do this, the therapist can find the exact muscles which are contracting to inhibit movement and use touch to bring sensation to these muscles. Then by holding the bones at the origin and insertion of the muscles, the therapist can help the client to actively contract them by suggesting that they move the two bones towards each other
- 4) Allow the client to find their own way of letting go of inhibition. Instructions at this stage almost always bring about controlled movement rather than facilitating spontaneity.
- 5) If they still have difficulty finding movement, then the therapist can try "becoming the inhibition". In this technique, the therapist uses their own force to contain and to hold the charged body part still. He can even suggest to the client that he attempt to push **gently** against the therapist's force two or three times. This transfers the client's embodiment from the inhibition to the charge and gives their nervous system a hint of how that part might move.

I emphasise the word gently because otherwise there is a danger of both people entering a 'Pushing Cliché'. Pushing can be enjoyable and engaging but remember that the suggestion to push came from the therapist and is unlikely to be the true expression of the spontaneous energy.

- 6) Finally, don't *aim* for movement. Even if movement does not start the client is using the experiment to develop their awareness of both charge and inhibition. Movement that does not come by itself is not authentic.

Tai Yang Touch

Swimming with the Stream

When a movement starts, it often has a theme or direction which can be recognised by the therapist. Tai Yang Touch is group of skills which help a client to clarify such a theme so that they can recognise it themselves and involve more of their body in the process.

Tai Yang Touch is therefore the ability to use theory, knowledge and intuition in a way that gives a direction to the work but does not break the immediacy of the energy process.

The Bladder aspect of this touch gives the sense of an aim, which emerges from the present energy, but which is not actualised. It helps the client to sense this direction as a part of their immediate process and to use their whole body to move in that direction.

During an active energy process, the therapist's mind is continually generating higher level descriptions to make sense of what is going on. These are experienced as recognitions, ideas and hypotheses.

The Small Intestine theme maintains the connection with the present energy by discriminating between the authentic aims, that are a real extension of the present, and the red herrings. The authentic aims are those to which the client can directly relate and which she can assimilate. The other ideas and theories may sound good, and may even be true, but the client cannot, except in an intellectual way, take them on board at that moment.

Attitude

They keyword for Tai Yang touch in general is **Clarity**. The essential attitude is to allow theoretical insights to excite you but to always remain clearly in contact with the client's process.

It's easy to get excited by ideas that the process brings up, as I described in Sally's case history, when she started making Rooting movements. I was very tempted to follow the theory then rather than her process, which might have meant that I ask her to imagine reaching for a nipple with her mouth and feeling how she could swallow the nourishment. This would have fitted perfectly into the theme of the Yang Ming process she was struggling with.

However, this might well have broken her contact with the present and pushed her into a physical cliché. In the end, she found her own way of reaching for support and a really appropriate time emerged, through the build up of charge in her throat when we were holding hands, for me to suggest that she swallow and complete the Stomach movement.

The excitement of a theoretical insight is part of the Bladder energy, analogous to physical vision, and is an essential aspect of the aliveness of the contact between therapist and client. It is analogous physical vision, which, as we shall see in Chapter 9, initiates Outer Reach and tonifies the support of the spine.

However, the Small Intestine keeps these excitements from divorcing you from the present by discriminating between those ideas that are only intellectually exciting and those which can be assimilated into the immediate process. With a good balance between these functions the process gains in excitement but doesn't get carried away into the confusing realm of ideas.

Techniques

The techniques of Tai Yang Touch also clarify the physical process for the client and keep it on track.

Giving encouraging feedback to small movements:

Within a spontaneous process the therapist can often see a part of the client's body starting a movement but the client does not follow it through because they do not notice it. Subjectively, this means that the client feels a bit lost. They do not know where their movement wants to go. The therapist can help the client to become clear by giving a gentle but persistent pressure in the direction started by the small movement.

It is immediately obvious when this direction *is* part of the authentic process because the pressure does not create conflict. Instead, it is like giving notice to the client's nervous system that this part of the body wants to move.

Working with the skeleton

Bones transmit force clearly. That is their primary function. Bonne Cohen calls the bones the **embodiment of clarity**. In contrast, in other tissues such as muscle and fat, force gets diverted into many confusing directions.

Sometimes a client seems confused in their movements. No clear directions of movement are even initiated. It is often helpful to make clear contact with the skeleton, using the tips of the fingers, which are themselves bony, to help the client feel their own bones,

Sometimes it is enough to simply make bone contact within the movement process for the client to regain clarity. It is also equally valid to interrupt the process and start an extended period of hands-on bodywork focusing on helping the client to feel their bones internally.

On returning to the movement process the client usually finds they can plainly feel the force travelling through their body and confusion is dispersed.

Providing something to push against

Sometimes, the movements which emerge are those which could move the client through space. For instance, flexion and extension of the legs or even of the whole spine. If these movements are combined with reaching movements of the arms or of the head, they may well be an expression of an energy that is wanting to move the whole body across the room, but do not because they have nothing to push against.

In this case it is helpful if the therapist provides a solid surface against which the client's movements can push. As with skeletal work, this technique can give the client a clear sensation of the path the force takes through their body and clarifies the motion.

Aligning the Body

As we shall see in more detail in the Water theme of Chapter 9, there are times when the lack of tone or misalignment of a part of the body can divert a force from its true aim. By helping the legs, pelvis and spine to work together using the developmental patterning described in Chapter 9, the client is helped to feel how a force initiated in one part of their body can clearly travel through its whole length.

Marriage

PICTURE

Facilitating Integration

The image of Marriage deals with Contact and Conflict. How to stay together when the going gets tough and reap the rewards of a deeper level of connection.

The Journey Touches helps a client embody their impulses in spontaneous movement. But as energy starts to move more freely and more authentically there is more scope for conflict. The function of inhibition is, more often than not, a way of avoiding internal conflict, but the result is a diminution of the zest in life.

If we can find a way for two different and conflicting impulses to live together rather than inhibit each other, then, like a successful marriage, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The Marriage theme in itself is more integrated than the Home or Journey themes so we do not talk about the attitude and physical side of each touch. Instead, we use the Yang aspect of the theme to describe the more physical features of the work and the Yin aspect to describe the associated attitudes.

The section on Shao Yang Touch describes the physical techniques for helping a client to embody conflicting impulses simultaneously. In Jue Yin Touch we explore the principles of commitment and persistence, necessary for a successful marriage, by looking at the contracts and conflicts in therapeutic relationships.

Shao Yang Touch

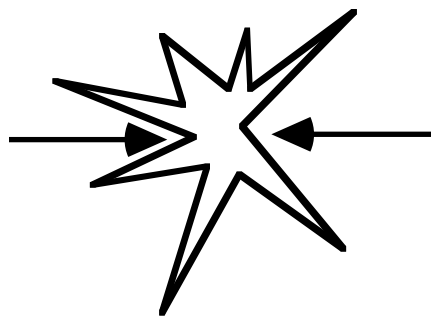
Integrating Conflicting Energies

How we can deal with potential conflict creatively? The ability to bring conflicting energies together so that they can co-exist is what Chinese medicine calls the function of the Gall Bladder. The ability to then act as an integrated organism is an aspect of the energy traditionally called the Triple Heater. Together, the Gall Bladder and Triple Heater form the Shao Yang Division. The paths of these meridians inspire specific physical techniques for giving a client direct experience of integrating their energy through movement.

Before describing these techniques it will be useful to look at the abstract concept of conflict.

The Shoot Out

What possible ways are there of dealing with conflict? One of the most common is to fight. In energy terms, a fight is complements meeting head on and competing for dominance. This situation we can call a 'Shoot-Out' When a Shoot-Out happens internally one part of ourselves becomes the oppressive winner over another part.

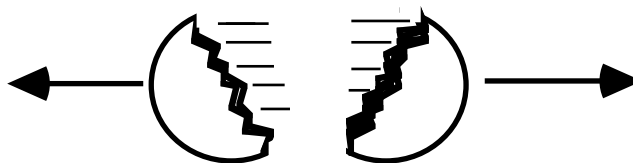


As we grow up, we learn to control ourselves by incorporating the way in which our parents and teachers tried to control us. If they used head on conflict, then we learn to suppress our own impulses rather than learning to integrate them into our sense of self.

The underlying forces driving self-suppression are felt as Shame and Guilt. Both these emotions seem to originate through adult disapproval of the child's urges. The child reacts to this disapproval by feeling "I am not good enough as I am" from which it is a short step to "I must change who I am". He cannot develop a core feeling of self- validity and tends to be ruled by an anxious ego (the internalised parent), often confused by rebellious impulses (naughty children) which sometimes break out of control and run riot.

The Cop-Out

Another way in which we can deal with conflict is to ignore it. This leads to progressive separation and isolation.



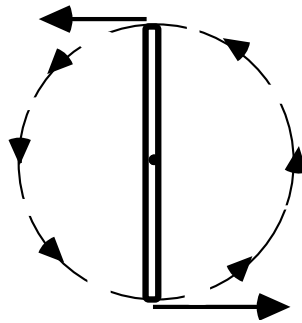
The result of the Cop-Out strategy in a family is that the child is always *reaching* for the contact he doesn't get rather than *pushing* against suppressive forces, as in the Shoot-Out. Instead of shrinking smaller under external pressure he expands further and further out to try and meet the boundary of another person until his sense of self is lost in the vacuum.

Such a child may be creative, impulsive, alive and wild but lacks the grounding experience of relationship. Faced with the demands of another person he doesn't know what to do. He's wanted cake for so long that when he gets it he doesn't know how to eat it, he only knows how to want it.

This person's life force is visible but has no centre and is therefore terribly insecure. The balloon can easily burst leaving a lost soul floating in space.

The Roundabout

Both ways of dealing with conflict lead to disaster because they are based on the idea that opposites can't collaborate. But luckily there is a third path, a middle way between the extremes.



This picture looks similar to the ancient YinYang symbol. This symbol of the Tao, as well as picturing the movement of the roundabout around its centre, incorporates the view that opposites contain each other, are necessary to each other because they only exist in relationship to each other.

So conflict can be resolved by *realising* that your viewpoint only exists in relationship to other complementary ones. In Gestalt psychology, if an issue is in the foreground of consciousness, it is called the figure. But just as the figure in a drawing cannot exist without the background, so the issue cannot be resolved in isolation. To shift viewpoints so that the background is equally important to the figure is often the key to therapeutic or spiritual transformation.

DIAGRAM OF FIGURE/GROUND

This process is what Buddha called compassion. Compassion is more than just mutual understanding or sympathy. It is the realization that both forces are part of the same unified field and thus necessarily co-exist. It is a change of viewpoint, which does not identify the self with any of the conflicting forces but integrates them all. The energies behind the different individual impulses can then all be used in a mutually chosen direction.

Physical Techniques

I suggest you try a physical experiment while reading this.

Stretch both your hands out in front of you so that your palms face up and your elbows are slightly bent.

- *Become aware of the underside of your forearms and feel how, by contracting the muscles in this part of your arm. The hands are pulled down.*



- *Do this a few times quickly and experience what is happening in the wrist joints. Also experience the emotional quality of the movement.*
- *Now start in same position and start the movement by lengthening the muscles along the upper side of the forearm.*



- *Repeat this a few time and again notice your wrist joint. What do you feel you are **doing** with this movement? Is the rest of the arm and the body involved in a different way to the first one ?*

Most people feel that, in the first movement, the wrist joint is tightened back towards the arm as the hand is pulled down while, in the second, the movement is smoother, the wrist joint feels open and free. In the first they have the emotional feeling of throwing something away or dismissing something. In the second they have the feeling of giving or offering something. Also, the rest of the arm becomes involved in the motion and, more subtly, the whole of the body. In all movements at a joint, one group of muscles are the *prime movers*, the agonists, and one are the *facilitators*, the antagonists.

They are complements which cooperate by the agonists contracting while the antagonists lengthen. The *way* in which they lengthen is very significant. In this culture we are pre-conditioned to think of the movers as being the only important part. However, this is perpetuating the unintegrated Shoot-Out strategy within our own body. Contraction is dominant and lengthening is perceived as passive.

This produces a tense, contracted state of self-experience. If we pay more attention to the allowing side of action then both agonists and antagonists are actively involved and the internal experience is more spacious and harmonious. We are repatterning our muscles to embody the Roundabout Strategy by engaging *both* directions within the act of moving the joint.

The Gall-Bladder meridian runs along the junction between the Flexor and the Extensor muscle groups and many points on this meridian like GB 41,40,34, 30, 25, 22, 20, 12, 8,

1 are pivots for different flexor/extensor movement patterns. They are the body's focus for integrating the back and the front.

DIAGRAM OF GB

The physical techniques of the Gall Bladder aspect of Shao Yang touch focuses on repatterning the movement at joints to involve both agonists and antagonists actively. The basic principle is to move the joint using both the proximal and distal sides of the joint equally.

To explain this, recall the experiment with your wrists, you probably noticed that in the first type of movement- that which emphasised contraction- only the hand moved. In the second type of movement, where both agonists and antagonists were equally involved, the forearm moved as well as the hand. In fact, the forearm moved up as the hand moved down and vice versa, like this:

DIAGRAM

The part of a joint nearest the body centre is called proximal, the part furthest away is called distal. In this case the hand is distal and the forearm is proximal. Moving the proximal part tends to involve the whole body and, as babies, we tend to initiate intentional movement proximally. As we grow up we tend to disconnect the body at the joints and mainly move the distal part.

The pictures on this page show techniques for re-engaging both proximal and distal sides of several major joints in the body. This automatically teaches the muscle groups to collaborate.

I find these movements very beautiful and full of grace. They demonstrate a general principle of how to work with complementary forces. If two complements are in conflict one is usually dominated by the other. ***By initiating movement from the subordinate complement the nervous system is forced out of its habit.*** For example, in the case of a joint, it is common for the distal side to dominate the proximal. If this is the case, the principle says to initiate the work from the proximal side.

The result of this bodywork is to give a client direct experience of integrating conflict physically. I find that this sensation works its way into the client's nervous system and starts to transform the way they move themselves, opening up the possibility of incorporating two different impulses simultaneously.

Techniques related to the Triple Heater meridian give the client an internal sensation of how their limbs and head are connected to the center of the body. This further assists them in finding ways of moving that involve and integrate the different parts of the body.

We explore the Triple Heater techniques further in the Chapter 9.

Jue Yin Touch

The Sadist on Honeymoon

About ten years ago, I was running a workshop on counselling for Shiatsu Practitioners with a Gestalt Therapist, Flora Meadows. At the end of the workshop she said to me that she felt that Shiatsu therapists were sadists. I was shocked and assumed that she was making a criticism of Shiatsu but, in talking to her and thinking about it more, I realised she was not being critical, that she valued this skill, and thought it a natural and necessary part of being a therapist. The word 'sadist' is emotionally charged but it made me think. This section is the result of the decade of fertile thought which her shock tactics stimulated in me.

First of all, what do I think she really meant? The word 'sadist' is often used to describe a person who is excited by inflicting pain on a victim who does not want it. Someone who abuses and humiliates his or her victim. I do not think that most Shiatsu practitioners fall into this category! However, in any therapeutic relationship, the vulnerable client can fall into a passive role, being told what is wrong with them and what they should do, while the therapist enjoys the feelings of expertise, of knowing what to do and having the skill and knowledge to do it. In this dynamic the client and therapist may enact similar roles to the sadist and his victim since the power structures in the relationship are alike, though I hasten to add, they are less evil.

This is the darker side of the sadist in the therapeutic process, which can act as a caution to us in our work, helping us to be aware of the power dynamics in the relationship. However, I believe that there is also another, more creative, parallel between the sadist and the therapist. To begin to explore this we need to look at why a client comes to therapy. More often than not, it is for more than a simple cure for a problem. At some level the client knows that his personality, posture or habitual ways of living are the root of his suffering rather than the immediate symptoms. He is implicitly asking to be helped to change his patterns. If he simply wanted to alleviate his symptoms then an orthodox doctor would be his first choice. The fact he has chosen a more holistic style of therapy means that he is probably asking for more.

However, changing patterns is an arduous process, often extremely painful, and all the defences of the personality are brought into play to resist deeper transformation, positive though it might be. Think how difficult it is for most people to give up a destructive habit such as tobacco smoking even though they know it might kill them. Think how much more difficult it is to change a pattern rooted in the posture and personality. In order to help a person to change at this level the therapist and client need persistence, compassion, vision and commitment. Above all, the process must feel 'worth it' to both parties. Understanding the traditional Chinese view of the Liver can give us insights into how to help a client to push through their resistance to change. In the process we will see how the metaphor of the sadist can be positively applied to therapy.

The Contract - Liver Choice

The contract between practitioner and client is arguably one of the most important

features of therapy. Many of the problems in a therapeutic relationship can often be traced to a contract that is unclear. A contract is always made whether it is explicit or not. For instance, a client comes in through the door:

Shiatsu Practitioner: *Hello, what can I do for you?*

Client: *My back is hurting*

Shiatsu Practitioner: *Well, lie down on the futon and we'll see what we can do about that.*

This is a contract. The client has requested help with his back. The Shiatsu Practitioner has agreed to try to help through bodywork on the futon. The difficulties often arise in a therapeutic relationship when this initial contract is changed without renegotiation. For instance:

Practitioner: *I think that since your Spleen Energy is deficient you need to take more exercise and change your diet by eating more grains.*

This is a change of contract, although probably most clients would accept it without question, since the original implicit agreement was to work on the back through bodywork rather than through advice about lifestyle.

More serious changes of contract are also common such as:

Practitioner: *It feels to me that you are holding a lot of anger in your back. Do you know what that might be about?*

This change of contract (unskillfully) transforms the area of work from the issue the client brought, which was his back-pain, to his emotions. Such a change of direction, without consultation, almost inevitably has a confusing effect. To explain:

1) If the client accepts the changed contract, 'trusting' the therapist to know what they are doing, then he becomes more passive in the relationship. This can easily lead to the feelings of abuse discussed above, especially if such therapeutic interventions bring up feelings that the client does not want to expose.

2) If the client rejects the change of ground by saying something like "*I'm not angry, I just pulled a muscle*" then unclear conflict ensues. The two people will be arguing about what is the 'right diagnosis' rather than the real (and healthy) conflict involved in renegotiating a contract.

In effect the practitioner is saying "*I believe that I cannot carry out my contract to help you with your back problem unless we also agree to bring your emotions into the therapy*". This would be a clear statement. The problem arises because it is *not* stated. The client is not given the choice of whether to continue working under these terms and not given the chance to express his view on the therapist's belief.

The therapeutic contract is a clear statement of the path which the process might take which both therapist and client can agree to and thus embodies two important aspects of Liver Function: the overall **vision** of where the therapy will go and the **conscious choice** to go in that direction.

Commitment - The Yang and the Yin of the Liver.

If the contract is clear then the client can make an active choice to take part in the therapy and this makes it easier for him to stick with the process when it gets difficult. Since neither therapist nor client can know the path of the therapy at the beginning, the contract needs to be renegotiable. But if it is too flexible and changes whenever there is difficulty then the therapy can never push through the client's natural resistance to change. To paraphrase Derek Gale: *"If whenever the going gets tough the tough get going, then we never get anywhere"*.

Carola Beresford Cooke uses the metaphor of the seedling pushing up through the resistance of the hard earth to reach the light to explain the Wood Element. In therapy this image describes the process of the client and therapist pushing through the resistance to change; being flexible as to the exact path, but not being turned back by opposition. This flexible persistence through conscious choice is what I mean by **commitment**. In Chinese terms it is the **Liver Yang** of the therapy.

However, it is easy for commitment to be confused with control. For instance:

Therapist: *"You made a contract to stay in therapy even if it got difficult so I'm keeping you to that"* or

Client: *"I should stay with this process even though I think this therapist is useless because I've made a commitment and should stick with it"*.

Both of these statements smell of the shadow side of the sadist/victim relationship. No client can know the intensity of pain they may feel when they make their initial choice to be in therapy. Therefore I feel more comfortable with questions such as:

Therapist: *"Now you know how difficult this process can be, do you still want to hold to the choice you made to stay with it even if it got tough?"*

Then commitment can be a courageous reaffirmation of choice in hard times rather than a rigid set of rules that the therapy is controlled by.

The Therapeutic Sadist

Commitment in this sense is a mutual choice by therapist and client to stay with a painful process in order to get to the real life energy. This is the positive analogy with a sadomasochistic relationship. The metaphor of the sadist is useful for a therapist because it points out that, to really get anywhere, you may have to be willing to persist in an activity which causes someone else pain.

However, it is very difficult for a therapist to distinguish between this loving commitment and the darker enjoyment of power of the real sadist. Psychotherapists recognise this and require that therapists are themselves under supervision by someone experienced enough to help them see whether they are being therapeutic sadists or real ones.

Why is it worth it?

Human beings are complex and can persuade themselves they are victims to a situation. In some cases this may be true, but in therapy the client is actually free to choose. He is an adult paying a therapist to help him and, if the pain is not worth it, he is free to leave. In reality the contract, the commitment and the vision mean nothing if at some level the therapy does not feel worth it.

What factors help this feeling of worthwhile-ness to develop? The most obvious is that there must be phases of satisfaction and nourishment within the therapy. If it's all hard from beginning to end, in the end both therapist and client run out of stamina. The initial period of therapy, where trust and contracts are developed is very important in building up a reserve of good feeling that can nourish the therapy through its hard times.

Honeymoons and Liver Yin

This initial time is like a honeymoon. Everything seems to be resolving very fast. The client feels the therapist is great and feels themselves to be getting better. In many ways it's just like falling in love - everything is warm, smooth and satisfying. Like falling in love, this period is very transient but this nourishing period builds up a supply of satisfaction which supports the future commitment.

I feel that this store of contentment is the **Liver Yin** of the relationship. Without the Liver Yin the persistent Liver Yang has no feeling of being worth it and can only be maintained through rigid control. Phases of resistance and difficulty literally use up the Liver Yin and, unless the store of satisfaction is sometimes replenished, the relationship will dry up, become hard and brittle and finally break apart. The Liver Yin is the **Life Blood** of the relationship and needs to be nurtured by leavening the Yang process of challenge with contact that feels empathetic and nourishing. Breakthroughs can also provide these times of fulfilment and even pain can be satisfying if the client feels that it is getting him somewhere.

It is ultimately the existence of satisfying honeymoons in the therapeutic relationship that make the necessary 'somasochism' worthwhile and give substance to the commitment to be in therapy.

In acknowledgement - Liver Hun.

I started this section by acknowledging Flora Meadows in initiating this fertile growth of thought. On the other hand, her words would not have made sense to me if I had not experienced the satisfaction coming from challenging relationships. Since my family avoided conflict, it was not until I worked with Derek Gale, in the latter half of the 1980's, that I really understood the value of the Liver in therapy.

I must say I didn't understand it at the time! I left after five or six years of regular therapy before the issues raised had reached resolution. But that leaving was one of the first times I made a choice and was valuable for that. What is interesting to me and relevant to this article is that Derek's strong challenges continued working within my life for many years after the end of that therapy, in a period that I never saw him personally. Only in the last year have I reached real resolution to those issues and feel that the therapy with him has properly finished.

This endurance of influence strongly echoes the Chinese concept of the **Liver Hun** (*the Liver Soul*), which describes the persistence of a personality's 'benevolence' after death. It is an extension of the Liver function into a more collective and universal dimension, giving a significance to our life within history and the wider community. Ted Kaptchuk describes the Hun as that aspect of ourselves that is part of ancestral lineage embracing the effects our predecessors have on us and which we pass on to future generations. I like to think of the Hun as also being the continuation of a person's influence when they are not present, not only when they are dead. Thus the soul, or the Hun, of my teachers lives on in my life even when I am not with them.

Most oriental traditions emphasise the importance of lineage, that no practice or idea is born out of nothing. Acknowledging past influences and paying homage to a lineage of learning supports my ability to innovate and be spontaneous, knowing that the motivation is not based only on the shallow soil of my individual life but also on the deep roots of a lineage. Thus the Liver Hun also gives substance to the action of Liver Yang. The strength of a therapist's lineage is important in their ability to compassionately challenge the resistance of a client. Supervision can help here too, giving a therapist support from the collective wisdom of the therapeutic heritage.

Lastly, my experience of Derek's Hun (even though he is very much alive), is a great lesson to me, teaching me not to assume that all therapeutic relationships need to reach resolution, that no session needs to be complete and rounded. I believe that the force of the relationship will keep on threading through a person's life until they reach satisfaction and liberation from those issues.