

## **Using the Spirits of the Points: The Heart Meridian**

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### **The Three Levels**

It is common to use the word "wholistic" when speaking about Oriental medicine, yet what, exactly, does that imply? To the early Chinese, as well as to modern practitioners who practice according to classical principles, "wholistic" means understanding that every human manifests on three levels: body, mind and spirit.

Being healthy, therefore, means being vital and balanced on each of these three levels, and the levels being balanced among themselves.

Our culture places considerable emphasis on physical well-being, as evidenced by the abundant availability of diet plans, exercise routines and food supplements. Still, many patients come to us with physical symptoms, and we often find that even when the physical symptoms are resolved, patients are far from "well." Mentally, they may still be in a quite negative state: confused, unclear, unstable and unfocused. Spiritually, they may be dull, depressed, angry, agitated, fearful, resentful, and lacking the brilliance and spark that is the birth right of every human being. In a matter of time, the physical symptoms often recur, or new physical symptoms appear, as the real underlying trauma exists at the level of the mind or, more often, at the level of the spirit. Imbalance at these levels must negatively impact the health of the physical body.

In some cases, we may find a patient who is reasonably mentally sound: articulate, logical, able to express and understand concepts and ideas clearly, to follow cause-and-effect relationships, yet is profoundly unhappy and unsatisfied. In the West, we have devoted much of our time and education toward developing the mind. From early childhood, we tend to assess our development and, indeed, our worth on how smart we are: our grades, the caliber of schools we attended, and the degrees we have earned.

Certainly, the health of the body and mind are important. We can eat right, exercise, study and learn in order to strengthen these levels, and yet neglect the most essential part of ourselves: the spirit - who we are at the core of our identity.

### **Using Points for Their Spiritual Connotations**

Each of the acupuncture points has a name, translated from the Chinese characters, which offers insight into the unique spiritual gift the point is capable of delivering. Until we are able to assess from the patient in need (via our own senses) exactly what point or points are being asked for at the levels of the mind and spirit, and *provide* for those needs, we are not practicing wholistically. We are treating, at best, a part - not the whole.

We may see one patient who presents with migraines, for example, and is able to carry on reasonably well at work, at home, and in social situations. We may then see a patient with identical migraines who completely collapses into dysfunction, helplessness and isolation for days at a time. The strength of the spirit is the difference between these two patients. We cannot, then, expect to treat these two people the same. They are both unique individuals with very different needs. According to Classical Five-Element Acupuncture theory, their underlying elemental imbalances (*causative factors*) could be entirely different, as well as the needs of their spirits. The fact is that the *vast* majority of patients, regardless of their symptoms, severity or elemental imbalance, are primarily imbalanced and traumatized at the spirit level.

It is vital, however, to know what a patient's underlying elemental imbalance (*causative factor*) is. The *causative factor* is the element among five (Fire, Earth, Metal, Water, and Wood) that is the weak link in the system and most in need of support. Therefore, in choosing points for their spiritual connotations, we mostly choose points from the *causative factor* meridians. The *causative factor*, as I have indicated in previous articles, is determined by sensing the color in certain specific areas of the patient's face, the sound of the voice, the emotional expression, and the odor.

Therefore, if a patient were a Fire *causative factor*, we would not choose points from Wood meridians, for example, regardless of how suitable and good those names sounded. Thus, Liver 14, *Gate of Hope*, used for its spiritual connotation, would not be appropriate for a Fire *causative factor*, even if he or she felt hopeless. The best and most appropriate points to resolve the hopelessness, in *that particular patient*, would be found on the Fire meridians.

## **Exceptions to the Rule**

Certain points are capable of touching the spirit directly and offer their unique gifts to persons of any *causative factor*. These constitute "exceptions" to the aforementioned principle, and are indeed used, when needed. These include points on the conception vessel (Ren), the governor vessel (Du), upper Kidney chest points, certain outer Bladder points on the back, and Heart 1, which I will describe shortly.

In addition, I must mention that we can only reach the spirit of a patient if there are no energetic blocks present. It is impossible for any spirit point to deliver its gift if the patient is blocked. Such blocks include possession, aggressive energy, a husband/wife imbalance, or an entry/exit block between meridians. It is beyond the scope of this article to expound on these, and a good deal of clinical experience and guidance is required to develop the sensory skills to detect them, but the question of a block must always be held in mind if a patient is not responding.

## **The Heart: The Supreme Controller**

The early Chinese considered their emperor to be God's representative on earth. As such, the emperor manifested those traits that we would all want in a chief executive: wisdom, fairness, unselfishness, love for all, and an embodiment of truth. As king, his power was dependent on these qualities, which gained him the love, devotion, and respect of his people. He was ultimately responsible for order in the kingdom, leading in the way of the *Tao*, controlling, coordinating, delegating, arbitrating, prioritizing, reconciling differences, and assigning tasks. His people welcomed his control because of the love and joy they received from being aligned with him, who was aligned with the Divine. His will was carried out with the help of his loyal ministers (officials) upon whom he depended and who depended upon him.

We all have such a being within ourselves, connected to the same divine source: the Heart Official, also known as the Supreme Controller. His ministers are the 12 Officials (organs/functions). More than just a physical pump, we feel our deepest love and passions in the heart. We speak of feelings as being "heartfelt," having a "heart-to-heart" talk, or having a "heart of gold." We also know feelings of being "heartbroken," being "heartless," or "wearing our heart on our sleeve." All of these colloquialisms refer to the spiritual aspect of this Official.

Belonging to the element Fire, the Heart Official is associated with warmth, laughter and enthusiasm. Just as the summer season, associated with the Fire element, brings blossoming and maturing - the flowering of all

the seeds planted in the spring - love is the blossoming of a human being. It is indeed who we are in full "bloom." Nowhere is such love felt more deeply than the Heart. Love is the current that connects us to each other as one, reaching the furthest corners of the kingdom of the body/mind/spirit with each heartbeat.

When the Supreme Controller is sick, there is no one to guide, to love, or to lead. There is no one to give the orders or to set boundaries. There is little or no warmth, love, enthusiasm or happiness. Life seems to have no purpose or meaning. With no leader on the throne, every Official will cry out in distress and symptoms can arise anywhere. Fear and panic may ensue. Rebellion and eventual resignation may result.

### **The Spirits of the Points**

The following are examples of points on the Heart meridian which can be used for their spiritual connotations to heal the Supreme Controller and restore order in the kingdom of the body/mind/spirit.

#### **Heart 1 - *Utmost Source***

The love we receive from the Fire element bathes every part of our lives. It warms our spirit and gives us an inner communion with the love of the divine. It allows us to share in the spirit that pervades and sustains everything, to feel the warmth of relationships and to feel at one with others. When we are connected to that source, we feel that love: the love of self and the love of others. We know what that self is. This point reconnects us to that source when the connection is broken. It aligns the Supreme Controller, the divine within, to the divine without - one in the same. We use this point, applicable to patients of any *causative factor*, when supreme control needs to be restored to the Heart, such as after severe trauma, shock, the removal of possession - whenever this Official has lost its connection. Typically, the patient in need of this point may feel internal chaos, uncertainty, panic, isolation, abandonment, depression, inability to love him/herself or others, and is struggling to survive.

#### **Heart 4 - *Spirit Path***

This point refers to the path or way of the spirit. It is the job of the emperor to lead the people in the way of the *Tao*. To do so, he needs to know what the way is. So often, we (and our patients) become overly wrapped up in the allure of mundane things - the temporary gratifications of the ego (i.e. money, sex, power) - that we lose our way. We become anxious, worried, and preoccupied about things that are, at best, transient and impermanent. This point illuminates the way back to the one path that satisfies our real needs and guides us to our next step.

### **Heart 5 - *Penetrating Inside***

This point can take us deep within the heart of the Supreme Controller. Consider what a thrill it must have been to see the king even from a distance. In our age, we assign royal status not only to political and religious leaders, but also to sports, music, and movie stars. People line the streets to catch a glimpse of them, as if something regal or holy might rub off. Even more exciting is to make eye contact! How about a private meeting? Everything (and more) that we imagine we might get from such a meeting is already inside of us, waiting to be discovered. We can penetrate right to the soul of the king himself and be so fueled and inspired by that meeting that our lives are forever changed. This point can take us there, beneath superficial masks, facades and pretensions. We tend to use it on patients who are so identified with their exterior masks that they are unable to contact their own true essence.

### **Heart 7 - *Spirit Gate***

Like all gates, the Spirit Gate must open and close freely. The spirit must be able to move freely, responding appropriately to any need, within or without. Locked out of its home, or with the gate stuck open, the spirit cannot rest in quietude. A patient so affected may feel perpetually restless, unstable, and ill at ease. With the spirit locked inside, the patient is unable to access and bring forth love, joy, inspiration and fun: the things that make life worth living. Without access to the spirit, patients hunger for its contact and are often driven to destructive compensatory behaviors, such as drug and alcohol abuse, overeating and promiscuity.

If the gate is closed, the other Officials, too, are deprived of the love and warmth that the Supreme Controller provides. As it is, the Supreme Controller tells the Officials what to do, listens to them, and provides for their needs; without his contact, they are on their own. Chaos soon begins; order is lost. The heart itself can become overcontrolling and tyrannical. Here, we may find the Fire-imbalanced patient who micromanages everyone else's tasks, exhausting himself or herself to utter collapse.

### **Heart 8 - *Lesser Palace***

This point refers to a house of the king, but not the grand official residence where affairs of state are conducted. Rather, this is a place to rest and revitalize. Everything in this palace is pure, plentiful and of the highest quality: fit for a king. In this palace, the emperor can reside within himself and be cared for, bathed, fed, loved, totally recharged, free of the burdens of his awesome responsibilities for a time. We all have such a palace within ourselves; a place to go when the richness and joy of life seems to have gone.

With this point, we bring our Fire-imbalanced patients into the palace when they feel they cannot get what they need from life. Everything seems to be a drain, one more meaningless, joyless chore. We refer to such people as "burnt out," having expended too much, too fast, and for too long. This point can literally resurrect the spirit in such people, bringing it back to life, discarding old negativity, and charging them with new warmth and vitality, restoring in them the ability to carry on with confidence and inspiration.

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Click [here](#) for more information about Neil Gumenick, MAc (UK), LAc, Dipl. Ac.

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