

– Yin Qigong Nidra Series –

Balancing the Heart Energy

Workshop Notes

Introducing Yin Yang and the Five Element Theory

The concept of Yin and Yang originated from observing day and night as a cyclical pattern, and is, perhaps, the single most distinctive theory in Traditional Chinese Medicine .

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Yin and Yang are understood to be two opposite and interdependent energies at the foundation of health. All aspects of our body, mind and emotions are seen as being interconnected and impacting each other. Illness comes in the form of a deficiency or excess, creating imbalance throughout our systems. TCM aims to bring about balance by nourishing and strengthening deficiency and/or moving and clearing excess.

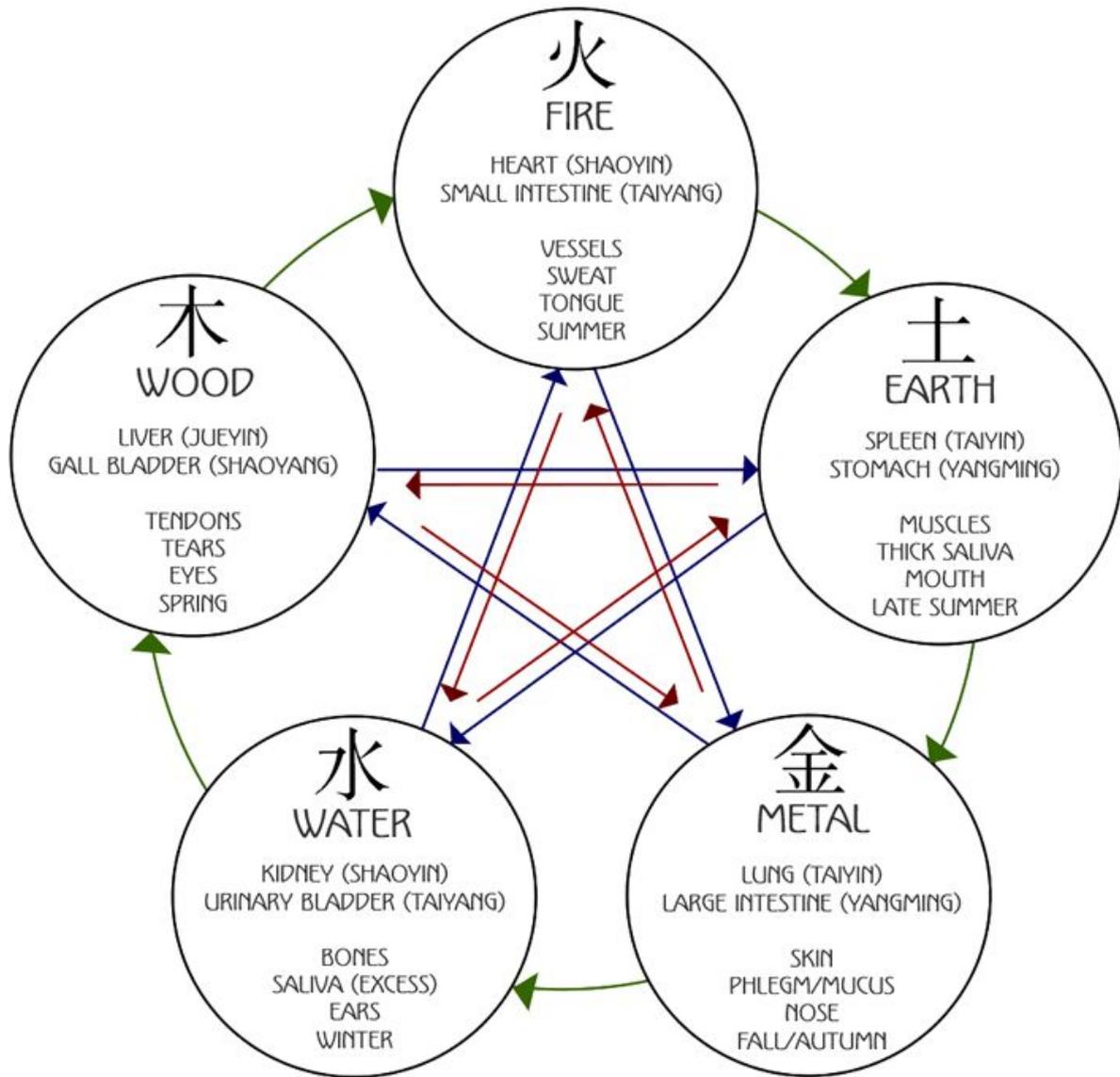
Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water are linked with the seasons and phases of the year in nature (there is an extra season called late summer - a time of stillness and fruition). They are also linked with the organs in our body and with specific emotional strengths and weaknesses. Although we contain all of the five elements, in the way nature contains each of the seasons, one of these elements is particularly significant for us and has been since very early on in life, affecting our view of the world, leading to certain types of mental/emotional patterns and tendencies to certain types of physical illnesses.

Norman Blair, Brightening Our Inner Skies – Yin and Yoga.

For an informative perspective on Yin and Yang, this TED animation by John Bellaimey explains these terms, and how we can achieve a balance of both in our lives:

<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-hidden-meanings-of-yin-and-yang-john-bellaimey>.

The Generating Sequence of the Five Elements – Green Flow



The Element of Fire and the Heart Energy

In the Five Elements Cycle, the heart energy is in the summer and represents fire. It comes after the liver energy in the spring, when we are starting to come upward and outward, and the yang energy starts rising. The heart energy is the culmination of that rising energy, representing the fullness of yang and peaking at the summer solstice.

The qualities of the fire element and the heart are: openness, receptivity, warmth, lightness, spaciousness, freedom, playfulness, fun, generosity, contentment, calmness, care, compassion and love.

The heart's functions include:

- Pumping blood around the body.
- Controlling the quality and brilliance of the voice.
- Storing the *shen* (the mind or spirit), which is seen in the vibrancy of the eyes.
- Being the seat of consciousness – the Emperor, who oversees all the workings of the body and mind.

The heart energy is about CONNECTION, both with the Above and to others. When the heart qi is healthy, we feel warm, nourished, nourishing, able to contact innate joy, inner peace, and harmony, and able to build healthy relationships.

The strength of the heart energy is seen in the eyes and heard in the clarity of the voice.

The physical manifestations of weak heart energy may include: sadness, depression, anxiety, palpitations, chest pain, insomnia, loss of voice, poor memory. On top of that, worry, anxiety, overstimulation and excess tax and weaken the heart energy.

How to Nourish the Heart

- Meditation is the mother of nutrition for the heart.
- Cultivating connection (inner and outer) and openness, making sure you do not let the gates flood open.
- Finding out what brings you joy, and planning to do that thing every day.
- Being in the open, in nature; bringing the nature in too.
- Practicing curiosity and awe.
- Acknowledging and celebrating the seasons.
- Avoiding time pressures; learning to say 'no'; making life simple and harmonious.
- Giving voice through self-expression; singing! Being mindful that the words you use bring confidence and other positive qualities.
- Journaling; being aware of your personal concerns.
- Wearing red and other bright colours.
- Massaging the heart meridian (both arms).
- Massaging acupressure point Heart 7 (*Spirit Gate*; in the crease of your wrist. It lies in line with the space between your ring and pinkie finger), which can help manage anxiety and insomnia due to over-excitement.

- Eating (and sharing joyfully) foods that are in season, either cooked lightly or raw (eg, in salads). Heart and blood nourishing foods include: grapes, raspberries, strawberries, tomatoes, red peppers, asparagus, pakchoi, celery, cucumber, beetroot, aduki beans; a little bit of bitter flavours (eg, dandelion leaves, endive and chicory); chilli pepper, cayenne pepper, onions, vinegar.

Self-Reflection and Journaling

This is the time to reflect, post-practice, on the effects felt by the practices. Things to jot down may include: the 'internal weather forecast' (thoughts/impressions, emotions, physical sensations) before, during and after the practice; variation/s on the technique and whether they helped; date and time. These notes could be as short as a few keywords or short sentences.

Class Structure

- 13:00 Welcome.
Introductions: for what are you grateful today.
Sharing the handouts.
- 13:10 **Heart meridian massage (6').**
Qigong for the heart (30'):
1. Awakening the meridians and the organs.
 2. Awakening the wrists and shoulders.
 3. Parting clouds.
 4. Separating clouds.
 5. Crane flying.
 6. Red-headed crane delights in seeing its mate.
 7. Lifting the ball.
 8. Opening and protecting the heart.
 9. Hands to heart.
 10. Sealing the energy.
- Self-reflection.
- 13:45 **Myofascial release for the thorax, arms and hands (15').**
- 14:00 **Yin Sequence for the Heart and Meridian (30').**
1. Wide legged child's pose, extending arms and pressing through fingertips.
 2. Heart melting pose, pressing through fingertips.
 3. Square or shoelace with arms first in *garudasana* (eagle's pose) and then *gomukhasana* (cow's face's pose).
 4. Lateral dragonfly.
 5. Sphinx or seal, pressing through fingertips.
 6. Cat pulling tail.
 7. Shavasana.
- Nidra (15').**
- Self-reflection.
- 14.50 **Q&A.**
Feedback forms: <http://amshala.ie/workshop-feedback-form/>.
- 15.00 Good-byes.