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## HERBS, ACUPUNCTURE, AND DIET – DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING

### THE TREATISE ON PRECIOUS LIFE AND THE ENTIRE FORM

*First you must control the spirit, second you must know how to nourish the body, third you must know the real truth about ‘toxic’ herbs, fourth you must know the ins and outs of acupuncture and fifth you must know how to understand and diagnose the patterns of the inner organs, the blood and energy. When you know all of the above, the right path is not mysterious anymore. It is open in front of you, however you may be alone on this path.*

These are the methods known for the past 3000 years that bring us closer to health and fertility. We must control the spirit and nourish the body, know herbs and acupuncture and understand how to diagnose the problem according to Chinese medicine.

### THE MIRACLE HERB

The “miracle herb” in Chinese medicine is an herb that performs wonders in your body. If you are very ill, it can make you healthy, if you are sad, it can make you happy. This miracle herb can even give you longevity.

The name of this miracle herb is “Chinese herbs,” and there are hundreds of them, each one offering its own specific miracle. Herbs are Chinese medicine’s main tool to restore health and fertility, and combined with acupuncture, they have been the single most practiced and tested healing method for the past 3000 years.

The challenge is that each single herb must be used exactly at the right time, in the right quantity, and in the right combination with other herbs. It must be prepared correctly, cooked exactly the appropriate length of time, and administered in the correct way. When a patient visits me for the first time and says that she has heard that *Dang Gui is good for infertility*, I can only politely disagree. The herb is neither good nor bad. If one knows how to use it, it can make miracles. If one doesn't know how to use it effectively, then it is all a matter of chance. As I've stated before, Chinese medicine is not about luck, but rather about knowledge: how to, when to, why to? That is the reason I urge patients to avoid buying herbs for a "quick fix" solution. The patient must be thoroughly versed in the herb, and aware of the long-term effects; that do not mean the results of a study done over a period of six months or two years.

I recently visited an herbalist friend in California whose back yard garden is full of medicinal herbs. Every morning he picks a different set of herbs to brew his morning tea. When I looked at him harvesting his herbs, I asked myself: is he going to have a long healthy life? The answer was absolutely. Sometimes you look at something and you just know in your heart that it is right. Harvesting his home-grown herbs fresh every morning is in accord with nature. A double blind study is not necessary to prove it true.

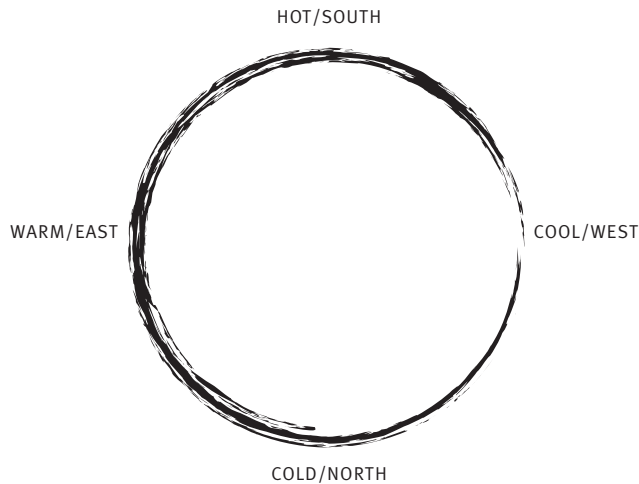
**The Treatise of Storing the Energy and Living According to the Seasons:** *Toxic herbs can defeat a disease, the five grains will nurture, the five fruits will help, the five meats will benefit and the five vegetables will supplement. The energy and flavor of each will unite and enter the body. This will strengthen your essence and benefit your energy.*

Herbal formulas are not made-up of a bunch of herbs put together, but rather of ingredients carefully chosen to go into the mix. The famous scholar Su Shi (1037-1101) wrote in his work **Noble Prescriptions of the Shen Family:** *Treating a disease has five difficulties: differentiating the disease, choosing a correct treatment plan, knowing the individual herbs, knowing how to put the herbal formula together, and knowing how to distinguish between the herbs in the formula.*

The practitioner must have adequate knowledge in a variety of areas in order to put an effective formula together. As Su Shi writes in the introduction of this same book: *When the sages prepared herbs, they had rules for cooking and rules for drinking the herbal teas. Some herbs need to be cooked for a long time, while other herbs cannot be cooked for long. Some herbs require strong flame, while others require low heat for their cooking. These are the main rules of cooking. For drinking, some herbs need to be consumed warm while others cold, some need to be sipped slow while others fast. Some herbs need to be consumed with emotions such as anger or happiness and these emotions help the action of the herbs, while other herbs are contraindicated to emotions. For these contraindicated herbs, the emotions are enemies. These are the rules for drinking the herbs. In addition, some spring water is good and some is bad, so if the patient*

*receives herbs and they don't always work, don't blame the herbs for that. This is because there is difficulty in determining the right way to prepare and drink the herbs.*

While establishing the basis for herbal treatments, **The Yellow Emperor** defines the strategy needed for healing: *When the disease is hot, then cool it off, and when the disease is cold, then warm it up.* This is the most basic approach for using herbs in classical Chinese medicine. However, **The Yellow Emperor** does not stop there. In **The Great Treatise of the Five Common Affairs**, he says: *To treat hot disease you use cold herbs and you need to drink it warm. To treat cold disease you use hot herbs and you need to drink it cool. To treat warm disease you use cool herbs and you need to drink it cold. To treat cool disease you use warm herbs and you need to drink it hot.* For the herbs to be effective, the method of delivery must be correct.



If the disease is hot, its energy is in the south, and cold herbs from the north are necessary to instill balance. However, in order for the north cold energy to travel to the south hot disease, east warm energy is needed, making it important that the tea be consumed when warm. If the disease is cool, its energy is in the west. The herbs must be warm from the east to bring balance. The tea must be hot, possessing the energy of the south. The south hot energy is a bridge between the east warm herbs and the west cool disease. The energy, as in the four seasons, is moving clockwise from the east to south to west to north. If the disease is cold, its energy is in the north. The herbs needed are hot from the south and the tea temperature needs to be cool from the west. If the disease is warm, its energy is in the east. The herbs should be cool from the west and the tea needs to be cold. The cold energy of the north will take the energy of the west and bring it to the warm disease in the east.

The book **Stories of Famous Physicians of the Past** includes a story about the famed physician Li Shicai: *One patient suffered cold injury. He felt very agitated and his face was red. His mind was in chaos and at times he wanted to drink cold water. The patient was waving his hands and kicking his feet so that the doctor could not feel his pulse. It took five or six people to subdue the patient for the doctor to take his pulse. The pulse was surging big and without rhythm. When he pressed down on the pulse it felt like a thin thread. Doctor Li said: 'Floating and big, while deep and small it is a Yin disease that looks like a Yang disease. I will give the patient 'strengthening the center decoction' (hot herbs) and he will live.' His student said: 'Ten out of ten doctors would have used cold herbs, but you instead used hot herbs. What is the logic behind it?' Dr. Li answered: 'With warm herbs the patient will live, while with cool herbs he will die. Following this, the doctor decocted the formula 'strengthening the center decoction', which included four ounces Ginseng and one ounce of Fu Zi. The finished tea was inserted into well water to cool off, and the patient drank it cool. Within one hour the erratic behavior stopped and one cup of tea later, the patient's spirit became clear. With the help of five pounds of herbs, the patient completely recovered.*

In this story, we witness the great skill of the physician. The symptoms the patient displayed – red face, waving his hands, etc. – were all hot symptoms, but within the pulse the doctor found the real cause of the disease, a cold disease. Furthermore, in addition to using hot herbs to counter the cold disease, the patient was ordered to cool off the tea before drinking. Doctor Li understood that to bring the hot herbs into the cold disease, the tea must be cool; to bring the south into the north we need the west.

#### USING HERBS WRONGLY THE WESTERN MEDICINE WAY

Normally I treat patients suffering from night sweats and hot flashes with hot herbs in a formula such as Tong Mai Si Ni Tang (penetrating the vessels Si Ni decoction). The prevailing reason for night sweats and hot flashes is a deficiency in the Yang energy due to the Yang's inability to root in the kidneys. It is not, as some people believe, a Kidney Yin deficiency.

When do women suffer hot flashes most frequently? It is as they approach menopause in their 40's and 50's, when the Yang energy is declining for both men and women. If the decline is abnormally rapid, the Yang may have a problem anchoring into the Yin and it begins floating to the surface of the body, triggering a hot flash or heavy sweat in the middle of the night. Using very hot herbs to strengthen the Yang solves the problem.

Fertility drugs, which also disturb the Yang rooting process in an abrupt manner, can have the same effect, forcing the Yang to the surface, and prompting hot flashes, or flickering of the Yang.