

# The Agape Acupuncture Newsletter

Spring, 2010



Also known as *Manu's Newsletter of Chinese  
Medicine Coolness!*

By  
Manu Saxena

## Contents

<i>Marvelous Doctrine On the Season of Spring, and Your Liver Chi and You</i>	p. 2-4
<i>Secret Massage Techniques to Harmonize Your Liver Chi and Feel Kind and Generous</i>	p. 4-5
<i>Carefully Hidden Dietary and Herbal Tips to Achieve Inner Peace</i>	p. 5-6
<i>Most Amazing Exercise to Develop Insight and Oversight</i>	p. 6-7
<i>Most Marvelous Promotions</i>	p. 8
<i>Mission Statement &amp; Disclaimer</i>	p. 8

Hi friends! Welcome to my first newsletter, I hope you like it. I plan to send one out every season, or four times a year.

Speaking of seasons, it's starting to look like spring is finally here - just in time for summer! I don't know about you, but for me it's been a long wait :-)



So what does this have to do with traditional Chinese medicine? Well, one of the tenets of Chinese medicine is that as human beings we are microcosms of the macrocosm. One of the things this means is that the rules or principles we use to understand what is

happening within our bodies are the same as those we use to understand what's happening in the world around us. It also means that we aren't separate from our environment; what happens outside us, in a general sense, also happens inside us.

In Chinese medicine, spring is where the wood phase of energy is expressed. There are five phases or states of expression of energy in Chinese medicine. These are modeled after the four seasons: fall, winter, spring, and summer, with Indian summer thrown in. Just as the earth's energy changes in expression throughout the seasons of the year, so does our body's.

***“there's three basic things that can go wrong with your Liver chi...”***

During winter (the water phase) energy goes inside; it's a time of gathering and conserving. Spring is when this gathered energy springs forth: we get new growth, leaves grow on the trees, seedlings sprout, flowers bloom, and the weather gets comfortably warm - sometimes even in Seattle! This same dynamic happens inside us as well, both physically and metaphorically: we tend to feel more energetic and outgoing, ready to achieve new goals and be creative.

That's the ideal, of course, when everything's going well. But what if things aren't going well? You might

experience springtime allergies, for example, or have aches and pains from engaging in new physical activity.

### **Your Liver Chi And You**

In Chinese medicine, it is the Liver chi<sup>1</sup> that is most associated with the energy of springtime. The liver chi is what is responsible for the smooth flow of energy through our bodies physically, and psychologically: it helps us to overcome obstacles of all kinds, and do it with grace. It is also the energy that's most expressed through our eyes, and helps us with our vision in a metaphorical sense as well, so that we can see the "big picture".

At the simplest level of Chinese medicine, there's three basic things that can go wrong with your Liver chi: excess, stagnation, or deficiency. Here's a breakdown of the main characteristics of each type of disharmony.



### **Excess Liver Chi**

If you've got excess liver chi, this means that your energy is hyperactive. It tends to rise to the head causing

---

<sup>1</sup> Simplistically speaking, "chi" means energy, but also means something like "organizing principle", or perhaps "essential function".

headaches (especially on the top of the head or the temples) and migraines with nausea. It may also cause red, irritated eyes, insomnia, or allergies with wheezing. Emotionally, those experiencing excess liver chi have explosive tempers, ready to scream or yell even at relatively mild provocations. For women, excess liver chi can cause really severe PMS with a lot of painful cramping.

### **Liver Chi Stagnation**

Stagnant liver chi happens when your energy is stuck and not moving smoothly. The central signs of stagnant liver chi are bloating and dull pain physically, and irritability or frustration emotionally. Most PMS symptoms, including mood swings, irritability, cramping, and so on are due to liver chi stagnation. According to Chinese medicine, this is something that no woman needs to go through and is very treatable with acupuncture and herbs.

Another possible symptom of liver chi stagnation is a frustrated depression: you may feel trapped and not sure how to go forward in some important life endeavor. In general, feeling "stuck" (including frustrated) is the main characteristic of liver chi stagnation.

### **Deficient Liver Chi**

Deficient Liver chi is recognized more in Japanese acupuncture than Chinese, but its main feature is a lack of energy. When your liver chi is insufficient you don't have enough energy to deal with the problems and

challenges that come your way In daily life. Depression may be a factor here as well: this type of depression is where you feel you've tried and failed too often and just give up, like a child who's lost too many times at a game says, "I don't want to play anymore." You may feel also depressed because you are so focused on your difficulties that you don't have a larger vision of their place in the larger span of your life, and don't see how you can ever escape them.

Although the liver is associated with the spring in Chinese medicine, these conditions can occur any time of the year. So what to do if you find yourself in one of these situations, according to Chinese medicine? Well the main branches of Chinese medicine are acupuncture, massage, herbs, diet, chi gung<sup>2</sup>, and meditation. Here are some examples of how one might use a few of these approaches to enhance your health and improve your liver chi. Please first see my disclaimer at the end of this document.

***“A second useful point to help move your liver chi and keep it flowing smoothly is Liver 3...”***

---

<sup>2</sup> Chi gung is a type of breathing exercise combined with slow movements, similar to yoga in some ways.



### **Massage**

There are a couple of acupuncture points that you can massage yourself to help move and smooth out your liver chi. One of these points is Large Intestine 4: it is located in between your thumb and index finger, on the top side of your hand, in the fleshy part. Feel around in that area until you find a point that aches when you massage it.

If you feel tense or stressed (i.e, are more excess or stagnant), then massage this point in a counterclockwise direction (in other words, move in a circle to the left) and do it with a fair amount of pressure so that you really feel it. If Large Intestine 4 hurts on both your left and right sides, then massage both sides; if it hurts on only one side then massage only the side that hurts. Massage the point for a good two or 3 minutes.

If it's more that you're feeling low energy (i.e., deficient), then massage the point in a clockwise direction (i.e., to the right) and massage lightly; it doesn't have to hurt. In this case massage the point only for 30 seconds to a minute or so.

A second useful point to help move your liver chi and keep it flowing smoothly is Liver 3. This point is located on your foot, in between your big toe and your second toe. From the webbing between your two toes go up an inch or two towards your ankle. Feel around in this area (in the space between the two metatarsal bones) until you find a point that's sore. Check both your left and right sides.

***“Dandelion root is a wonderful herb that helps to soothe and cleanse your liver chi...”***

You can massage this point in the same way as I described massaging Large Intestine 4 above. If you're feeling tense or stressed or in some pain, then massage the point counter-clockwise, making sure you really feel the soreness. If your issue is that you have low energy, then massage the point clockwise with light pressure, in a way that feels good (and do it for a relatively short time).

Another nice massage technique to use in the spring (or anytime you feel stressed) is to massage the liver itself. Your liver is located on your right side, under your ribs. To massage it, start lightly rubbing your hand in a

clockwise motion over the area of your liver. As you massage this area, breathe into it. By that I mean: as you breathe in slowly and deeply, feel or imagine your breath going to and infusing your liver. When you breathe out, relax. Make sure to take nice slow, deep breaths as you massage. You can gradually increase the pressure of your massaging hand if it feels good. Do this massage for about two or 3 minutes at first, then increase to 5 minutes or more in subsequent sessions, once you get used to it.

### **Diet**

According to Chinese medicine, the liver is especially nourished by green leafy vegetables, citrus fruits, and dark colored berries. Green leafy vegetables include things like kale, collard greens, mustard greens, cabbage, and the like. You can look up recipes for these on the Internet; I also recommend the books *Feeding the Whole Family* by Annemarie Colbin and Cynthia Lair, and *Healing with Whole Foods*, by Paul Pitchford. In general, I think it's a good idea to eat in a way that you **LOVeS** (Local, Organic, Vegetables, etc. in Season).

A simple way to help cleanse the liver is to take a cup of hot water, add the juice of about ¼ a lemon, and if desired, a little bit of fresh ginger and some honey. You can take this first thing in the morning to help cleanse and soothe the liver chi.

Another useful tip is to take a pitcher of water, slice up one lemon and two limes, take the seeds out, and put the slices in the pitcher and drink this throughout the day. It

can be extra refreshing to add a handful of fresh mint leaves, especially on hot days.



## Herbs

As far as herbs are concerned, I recommend seeing your practitioner and getting a formula made especially for you. However, there is a really nice herb that's very beneficial for the liver and gallbladder that is easy to prepare. *Dandelion root* is readily available and easy to take as a tea. I find roasted dandelion root actually quite tasty, it tastes a lot like coffee and has been used as a coffee substitute. You can find roasted dandelion root at most health food stores, such as Dandelion Botanical in Ballard, PCC, or whole foods.

To prepare it, just boil a cup of water and steep 1 tablespoon of the roasted dandelion root for just a minute

or two. If you steep the root for too long, it becomes bitter. You can also add chicory to your roasted dandelion root, it gives it a deeper, more complex flavor.

Dandelion root is a wonderful herb that helps to soothe and cleanse your liver chi, and it's helped me personally with my gallbladder issues. However, I don't recommend using just any dandelion that you find on the street or even in a yard, unless you know that the area is free of pesticides or other chemicals. In my opinion, it's best to get organic dandelion root from a store or other vendor that you trust.

***“Beginning treatment after symptoms appear is like waiting to dig a well until one is already thirsty”***

## Exercises

There are many exercises that can help your liver chi. One simple exercise uses the eyes. In Chinese medicine, the liver's chi is what is most responsible for the health of the eyes, and exercising your eyes will exercise and move your liver chi as well.

To do this exercise, take off any glasses or contacts. Hold one of your index fingers about a foot or two in front of your nose (if you're very nearsighted, hold it at the point where it just starts to become blurry). As you breathe in deeply (and gently, without strain), look at your

index finger. Then as you breathe out, slowly and gently look beyond your index finger to something farther away (like a candle on the other side of the room, for example).

When you breathe in, gently bring your eyes back to your finger. Do this for a couple of minutes, or until your eyes start feeling tired. Don't do it for too long, and be sure to be as relaxed as possible through the entire process. This is **NOT** a "no pain, no gain" kind of exercise :-)

This is also a good exercise to do (even for just a few breaths) when taking a break from computer work or when you're doing a lot of reading.

### **Acupuncture**

Of course you should see your skilled acupuncture practitioner! ☺ Your skilled practitioner can diagnose what state your liver chi is in and provide a personalized treatment just for you and the symptoms you happen to have.

In addition, Chinese medicine recognizes acupuncture's effectiveness in preventing problems before they arise. According to one classic text, "beginning treatment after symptoms appear is like waiting to dig a well until one is already thirsty."

Those familiar with acupuncture will often seek treatment during the change of seasons even if they don't have any symptoms, because they know this can help keep them feeling healthy and energetic throughout the year.



Yanagishita Sensei, Tokyo, Japan, 2007.

I happen to know of an acupuncturist in Ballard, his name is Manu and his number is (206) 437-2968 ☺

**My best to you, and good health this spring and summer!**

*Know anyone who's curious about acupuncture, or who could benefit from it? Feel free to pass along a copy of this newsletter to them!*

### **Mission Statement**

*Inside everyone, it is said, there is a seed of Heaven, a divine essence that is meant to grow and flower and thereby express our unique gifts to the world.*

*However, in most of us this growth is blocked or thwarted before it can come to full bloom: false judgments from others or ones we make ourselves distort our understanding of who we really are.*

*In my practice, it's my goal to help people nourish their destiny, to help them to re-acquaint and re-align themselves with their inner spark.*

*Whether it's some simple back pain that's keeping you from doing what you love or something more emotional in nature, whatever's holding you back from expressing yourself completely or experiencing life fully, my mission is to help you overcome it.*

### **Disclaimer**

**Nothing in this document is intended to diagnose, treat, or cure any disease, or to replace the services of trained health care professionals, or to substitute**

**for medical advice. You should discuss all matters relating to your health, including any changes to your health care regimen that you're considering, with your physician or other qualified health care professional.**

### **Special Promotion!**

I'm also having a special promotion in the month of July: mention the secret word "Soong" and receive 20% off the cost of a one-hour treatment. See my website at [www.agape-acupuncture.com](http://www.agape-acupuncture.com) for more details.

### **Find me on Facebook:**

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Manus-Agape-Acupuncture-Chinese-Medicine-in-Seattle/128442770511704>

*Become a fan* of my page and you'll get the same deal I mention above, but in June. Be sure to check out my "Cute Dogs" photo album – it'll help your liver chi ☺

### **Check out my health news blog: [acunews.wordpress.com](http://acunews.wordpress.com)**

*The Agape Acupuncture Newsletter* is published under the **Creative Commons Non-Commercial No Derivatives License, cc by-nc-nd**, 2010 by Manu Saxena.

Basically this means you can copy and distribute it as much as you like, but don't change it, and don't sell it. See <http://creativecommons.org/about/licenses> for details.