

chinese medicine

THE INTERCONNECTED MIND AND BODY.

By Deirdre Courtney

The modern field of Psychoneuroimmunology provides ample evidence that the body and mind are interconnected. The Chinese have said for thousands of years that our emotions impact the state of our physical health. In oriental philosophy, emotions are seen as energy passing through the meridians. When the energy is allowed to flow freely, we stay in balance. We often interrupt the flow of energy due to busy or unbalanced lifestyles but if we understand the wisdom of our bodies and our point of balance, we can correct the flow.

In Chinese Medicine there are five major yin organs and each is associated with an emotion; the liver – anger, the heart – joy, the spleen – worry, the kidney

– fear, the lungs – sorrow or grief. Excess or suppression of any of these emotions can affect the related organ and as a circular process, if the organ is weak, it can also increase the related emotion.

It is so valuable to understand our own particular constitutional tendencies,

“Build your resistance to worry by doing what makes your heart sing.”

when we do, we can choose the foods, activities, patterns of expression and even atmospheres that serve us best. Have a look at the different patterns below to gain an understanding of your own tendencies.

Liver qi energy If you find yourself sighing frequently, feeling irritable and frustrated or prone to temper outbursts, it may be that energetically your liver energy has stagnated. One of the main causes for this is repressed emotion; holding in or onto too many feelings. Accompanying physical symptoms can include belching, burping, acid regurgitation, sour taste in the mouth. But there are some easy steps to take.

The liver needs movement, emotion needs expression, so get out and exercise, breathe deeply out in fresh air, express your feelings, try writing a journal or pound a pillow. Green is the healing colour for the liver, so walk in beautiful greenery and eat lots of green foods.

Spleen qi energy If you find yourself constantly prone to worry, you may have a tendency to spleen imbalance. The spleen energy rules digestion and is negatively affected by worry. Too

much worry can injure the spleen and a weakened spleen energy leaves us more prone to worry! Accompanying physical symptoms may include feeling really tired especially after eating, loose bowel movements, bloating or weight gain which is difficult to lose, especially around the middle.

If you think this applies to you make this a summer to support your spleen. Decide to deal with worries differently, adopt new coping mechanisms. Build your resistance to worry by doing what makes your heart sing. Certain foods weaken spleen energy, such as wheat, dairy and coffee, so reduce these. Also, eat smaller amounts more often and try not to eat late at night.

Kidney yin energy Do you often feel that you are running on empty, using your reserve tank rather than energy that is easily available to you? Do you often ignore the red light on your dashboard that tells you you are doing too much? Does this sometimes leave you feeling overwhelmed and fearful? You might have other symptoms like flushed cheeks, sweating at night,

feeling thirsty and lower back pain. It is often a sign of overwork. Give yourself more rest and relaxation. Have regular early nights, reduce your workload and find a good work life balance. Connect with water and earth by swimming and walking on the grass in your bare feet. Yoga and meditation also help to increase kidney energy. Foods that strengthen the kidney are pulses and mineral rich foods such as seaweeds.



Heart yin energy If you are feeling anxious or panicky, if you are prone to sleep disturbance or are having vivid dreams, if you are feeling disconnected from friendships or pastimes that you usually enjoy, you may have heart-yin

deficiency. Other indicators of this may include your face flushing easily, feeling worse after alcohol or spicy food, palpitations if you've recently had emotional stress. It's important to take time out to nourish this yin energy. You may need more rest or to retreat a little in order to renew. Increase activities that calm and nourish you. Be good to yourself. Surround yourself with colours and landscapes that nurture. Use deep breathing, yoga, visualisation or meditation. Avoid too much fire in the diet by reducing spicy foods, alcohol and sugar and increase cooling foods such as green vegetables and beetroots.

Our bodies often give us clues as to what we need to do to re-balance, make this a summer where you listen to your body's inner wisdom!

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