

Energetic Aquatic Shiatsu Yoga (EASY)

Clinical Ai Chi Lower Back

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The Fire Element

In Oriental medicine we seek balance in nature as well as in our bodies and minds. In the western countries, the fire element is predominant and we tend to place a higher value on it. For example, our life styles are fast-paced, lack regularity, and there is a high pressure toward success (accomplishments). Fire is an exciting element but also very stressful. If we have too much fire (hyper-active Yang) we can reduce immunity, resistance to disease, and have various challenges such as insomnia, hypertension, digestive challenges, anxiety, heart palpitation, etc. This means the essence of fire naturally dries up the important element of “water” which causes other challenges in our bodies and minds, such as weakness in the lower back, knees, reproductive system, as well as fatigue, slow digestion, paranoia, etc.

Ai Chi and the Water Element

In our daily life it is very difficult to slow down. Our bodies and minds can not relax easily. Slow and smooth Ai Chi movement meditation (similar to Tai Chi) is an excellent solution to balance our fire energy with the water element by nourishing Yin. Ai Chi helps us to feel and listen to our inner energy. Because Ai Chi is practiced in water, it helps the yin (water) energy to grow and to bring Yin and Yang, Water and Fire into harmony for a healthy body and mind.

Clinical Ai Chi (EASY)

Clinical Ai Chi is based on a combination of Ai Chi, Shiatsu and Yoga. As we touch acupuncture points and consciously stretch, the related meridian and element open energy pathways to flow, nourishing our bodies and minds. Let me explain more about the importance of strengthening the water element to take care of your lower back. The water element, represented by the Kidney meridian refers to the Kidney System rather than to the specific organ. In Chinese medicine, Kidney, Heart, Liver, Lungs and Spleen do not refer to the actual organs. Because Chinese medicine is holistic, the functions of organs have a broader definition that includes the relationship with the other organs. So, through Clinical Ai Chi we not only open the flow of the entire body but also heal our specific challenges, such as back pain. ¹

Source of Energy

In Japan we often greet each other, saying “Genki desuka?” This translates as “How are you?” but literally means “How’s your source of energy”. “Gen” means “source, principal, foundation” and “Ki” means “life energy”. We believe that the main source of energy is in the Hara which is located below the naval in the torso. The hara is the foundation and source of human life and it is the location of the major water element. When women are pregnant they carry the baby in this area for nine months and cultivate the new life. Do they have to figure out how to make a brain or any other organs? Nobody can, but we all naturally have a deep faith in this process and accept this magic. Women consciously rest, eat and breathe, in honoring this magic with love. Yes, the birth process is uncomfortable and painful, especially labor, but we naturally accept it as part of birth and know that it is the most precious, joyous moment of life. We all have this magic in us and knowing “we are the magic” is the first step of healing and creating a foundation for life. So it is essential to cultivate this magical energy. In fact, Oriental medicine believes that once we have an abundance of energy in the Hara (naval center), any kind of sickness can be healed.

My Story of Back Pain

I have been very blessed with my health. In fact, I haven't visited a medical doctor for anything more than a check-up since I was a child in Japan. However, since the age of 50 my back has caused me pain and some difficulty of movement. I knew the main reason for this pain was an imbalance of my fire and water elements. During the summer of 2007 I was traveling extensively, including a two week trip to Japan to take care of a family emergency. In November, I went home to Florida for a fairly long break. I could finally take care of my own family and my health, especially my tight back. I will never forget the night, not long after coming home, that I woke up with a searing pain in my back. I could barely stand up straight or walk. It was a very painful experience, but this is the day my new Shiatsu Yoga Self Care, both land and water (Clinical Ai Chi, EASY) was born. From that day I made a conscious effort to listen to my pain. I knew my pain could teach me more about who I was (my balance of the five elements) and would ultimately lead me to a stronger back and better health.

Principles of Clinical Ai Chi (EASY)

During my first two weeks, I followed an unknown direction in my journey of healing. The question "how can I fix and heal my back?" became "what's wrong with me?" However, since I *did* have plenty of time on my hands, I had a great opportunity to feel and understand what was happening. Then, one night, I received a wonderful gift through a dream. In my dream I was teaching how to take care of the back, saying:

- Your Shiatsu Yoga Back-Care is correct. The most important part is that you trust your treatment and have faith in yourself and your healing energy.
- Once you believe in this process, then you will see the truth.
- Give yourself time and space. Nature (universal energy) will take care of itself and heal your back.
- Have a flexible mind. Healing yourself can be difficult and sometimes discouraging, but always ask "what I can do now?" Then do it, like a root growing around a rock - keep growing, changing, and adapting. Be open to new ideas and be aware of empty space to grow into.

Clinical Ai Chi (EASY) with my back care

The major pain of my back was around the spine from L2 down to the sacrum. So here is one example of how I use Clinical Ai Chi (EASY) with acupuncture points. Governing Vessel 4 "Life Gate" is located at the center line of the spine between L2 and L3. This is one of the major points for connecting the water element and the kidney, and it is very well known for lower back pain and other challenges, such as fatigue and kidney problems. Once I find the point, I gently support it and stretch the Kidney and GV meridians. This affects the whole body, like dropping a small pebble in a pond creates waves to the entire space. I am feeling my own waves inside and flowing with them. I do not force a stretch but use EASY meridian stretches. It is important to focus on the flexibility of the entire spine and support the natural curvature with breath. I imagine my spine is like a lightning rod connecting heaven and earth. A spine wave is connecting with the top of my head, GV 20 "Hundred Meeting Point" as if this meridian is connecting with heaven (sky) and opening the entire spine. Each movement is in harmony with my complete breath so it is natural to move slowly and with rhythm. The breath is opening a door from inside to connect with universal energy.

Now, I am consciously stretching the Kidney meridian (water element) which is flowing down to the soles of my feet and gently connecting to the Kidney 1 point "Bubbling Spring" to open the Kidney meridian. Kidney 1 is like the root of a tree reaching down into the earth. Gradually I feel the vibration of the waves from the Kidney 1 as if a spring is bubbling up all the way to my spine. It will take some time to feel the energy but with your positive imagination and practice, it will come to you --- when you are ready.

I have realized that the back pain, which seemed at first to be a bad thing, ultimately gave me not only an understanding of how I heal but also how I strengthen myself - not just my back, but my whole body and even my life. I am very happy to say that my back has completely healed and now I have clear joy to teach and share this Clinical Ai Chi - Energetic Aquatic Shiatsu Yoga.

¹ Hsieh LL., et al (2006). Treatment of low back pain by acupuncture and physical therapy: randomised controlled trial. *British Medical Journal*. 25;332(7543):696-700.

From *Energy Medicine* by James Oschman

“The connective tissue and fascia form a mechanical continuum, extending throughout the animal body, even into the innermost parts of each cell. All the great systems of the body—the circulatory, the nervous system, the musculo-skeletal system, the digestive tract, the various organs—are ensheathed in connective tissues. This matrix determines the overall shape of the organism as well as the detailed architecture of its parts. All movements, of the body as a whole, or of its smallest parts, are created by tensions carried through the connective tissue fabric. Each tension, each compression, each movement causes the crystalline lattices of the connective tissues to generate bio-electric signals that are precisely characteristic of those tensions, compressions, and movements. The fabric is a semiconducting communication network that can convey the bioelectric signals between every part of the body and every other part. **This communication network with the fascia is none other than the meridian system of traditional Oriental medicine**, with its countless extensions into every part of the body. As these signals flow through the tissues, their biomagnetic counterparts extend the stories they tell into the space around the body. The mechanical, bioelectric, and biomagnetic signals traveling through the connective tissue network, and through the space around the body, tell the various cells how to form and reform the tissue architecture in response to the tensions, compressions, and movements we make.”

From *Yin Yoga* by Paul Grilley

“Yoga as practiced in the West is almost exclusively Yang or muscular in nature. The Yin aspect of Yoga (using postures that stretch connective tissue) is virtually unknown but vital for a balanced approach to physical and mental health. The Modern Meridian Theory states that the meridians of acupuncture theory are currents flowing through the connective tissues of the body. *The main differences between a Yin and a Yang Yoga practice are that Yin postures should be done with the muscles relaxed and be held a long time. This is because connective tissue does not stretch like muscle and will not respond well to brief stresses.”

The relationship between fascia & meridian pathways

*This relationship was supported by a study performed by A. J. R. Macdonald, in which he correlated the relationship between acupuncture pathways and patterns of pain experienced by his patients suffering with myofascial constrictions. See A. J. R. Macdonald in Peter E. Baldry, *Acupuncture*, 44-45

Lower Back Pain Acupressure and Research

Acupressure was shown to be effective in reducing low back pain. A randomised, controlled, longitudinal trial was conducted at the Institute of Preventive Medicine, Taiwan and reported in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ).

The trial evaluated the effectiveness of acupressure in terms of disability, pain, and functional status. 129 participants with chronic low back pain attended the Orthopedic clinic in Kaohsiung,

Taipei, where they received acupressure for one month. The main outcome measure was Roland and Morris disability questionnaire, administered at baseline, after treatment, and at six-month follow-up. Acupressure conferred an 89% reduction in significant disability compared with physical therapy. The improvement in disability score in the acupressure group compared with the physical group remained at six-month follow-up. Statistically significant differences between two groups were found for all six domains of the core outcome, pain visual scale, and modified Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability questionnaire after treatment and at six-month follow-up. The researchers concluded that the acupressure was an effective treatment for low back pain with sustained effects over 6 months.

¹. Hsieh LL., et al (2006). Treatment of low back pain by acupressure and physical therapy: randomised controlled trial. *British Medical Journal*. 25;332(7543):696-700.