

Engaging Vitality: Effectively Working with Qi in the Clinic

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Engaging Vitality Premises and Background Issues

Mindset

- First feel using palpation. Only Then, interpret. Do NOT interpret while you are feeling.
- The Symptom place/location is commonly NOT the Problem Place.
- Check palpation exam, tongue, pulse before AND after you needle/ treat to check for any changes.

While any one theory of pathology and treatment may be clinically useful much of the time, none is all the time. Treatment based on fixed concepts or protocols end up being what the practitioner likes to do vs. what is best for the patient. Palpation can help determine which concept is most appropriate in a given patient at a given time, increasing clinical success.

- Acupuncture treatment evolves as a call and response dance; fixed treatments cannot do this.
- It is important to remember that in this dance it is optimally the patient's qi that is calling and the practitioner that is responding
- Separate sensation from interpretation — palpation is first and foremost about being aware of what your hands are doing and *only then* interpreting what it may mean
- These skills take time and learning comes about from repetition, not from trying harder.
- Palpation is most useful when the information is unexpected. Welcome finding out that your original thoughts were just wrong.
- Learn to not take failure [or success] personally. Both are part of the learning process and if you don't put yourself outside your comfort zone and be ready to fail, your skills cannot improve. The mind set when using the EV technologies should be that you are attempting to prove yourself wrong, not confirm your beliefs..
- If you don't pay attention to what you are doing, you cannot gain experience.

TEAM (Traditional East Asian Medicine) core concepts

- TEAM is a set of interrelated and overlapping systems vs. a single system — Your patients will be better served if you have the flexibility to utilize multiple approaches, rather than being stuck on a single one.
- Symptoms do not tell us where the problem place is nor where it is best to treat.

Practicalities

- Palpation tells us where the problem is but not what to do about it.

- Diagnosis is dynamic and ongoing during the entire course of each treatment. The EV techniques will tell you whether or not you are on track. Paying attention to the findings allows you to adapt in real time to optimize your diagnosis and treatment.
- While we need to be OK with not having a box to fit people into [which is what most people mean when they say they know what they are doing], it is very important to put all information into the mix and understand what has happened when the treatment works [e.g. don't just stick a needle where you feel something].
- Point location is specified by the response of the body, not some predetermined location, Let the body show you the points and be willing to use those you are not otherwise familiar with.

Physical

- When in doubt *relax* and soften hands
- For different techniques you need to pay attention to different sensors and different types of motion:
 - YR - proprioception/rhythmic motion
 - Global and local listening - proprioception/relatively static pull
 - MT - thermoreceptors -intensity of heat
 - CL - proprioception/*tōng* or not
- Feel from as low down in your body as possible and be sure that you are stable when you palpate.
- For many people a personal practice that improves focus, relaxation, and the ability to SSOI is very useful.

Practice

- Practice as often as possible; practicing even just one technique from the EV repertoire is much better than none.
- Even when you are not planning on using any of these techniques to help with your diagnosis, doing them before and *after* a treatment significantly helps the learning process.
- Focus your practice on doing the techniques correctly. Particularly in the beginning be prepared not to get any useful information in the vast majority of cases. If you really show up and are present when doing them the “aha!” moments will come.
- Progress will come only if you push yourself to practice.
 - Example: Even if you are not confident in your EV exam findings, use the techniques to insert one needle in the point that you feel gets the most response from the Problem Place, as long as this point is not contraindicated. Check as many diagnostic parameters to see what changed after needling. If any change is unclear go back to the way you normally work. If you do get any EV changes in response to the one needle, then adjust your diagnosis to include this information.