

Notes From Aculand

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To your physical, mental, and spiritual health!

by Karen Johnson L.Ac., R.N.

Why do you needle on the left?

Strangely, it seems that everyone is asking about this all of a sudden. I'm going to attempt an explanation. I'll have to use images and analogies, since we can't actually see the "stuff" that acupuncture is based on.

One of my working models of acupuncture is to compare it to a hologram. There are pronounced differences between holograms and two-or-three dimensional objects. You can separate a part from the whole of 2-D or 3-D objects. You can cut a piece from a picture, for example, or remove a leaf from a plant. In a holographic image, however, every part, no matter how large or small, contains the whole image. There is no way to divide or separate the image or remove any part.

Acupuncture is like that. The action created by the insertion of a needle is universal. It affects the entire body/being of the individual all at once. The meridians on the charts you see in my treatment room or in books on acupuncture are depicted in straight lines, but they don't actually work in a linear way. You can use a model of house to

get an image of this. If you look at a house and see all the windows, it looks like they are in a straight line, but if you know how a house works, you know that they are not connected; they are separate entries into the same house. Once you get into the house, you are in the whole house all at once. However, each window grants you access to the house through a different room. Each room has a different use and function relative to the life of the house (or the people who live there). If you want to do something in the house related to sleep, for example, you would try to get into the bedroom instead of wasting time rattling around in the kitchen.



That has something to do with why I choose specific points to do specific things. I want to make sure I am in the right room, knowing that my action will affect the life of the whole "house" via the specific function I am accessing.



But why the left side? That was the original question! There are a lot of rules to the flow of energy, one of which is that it continually rises and falls, like day constantly turns into night and vice versa. This movement, while also universal, has a left-to-right quality about it. Think about a clock, the representative movement of time goes up on the left and down on the right. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. In an individual body, the energy is thought to rise on the left and descend on the right. In most treatment situations, we are strengthening or building up something, so we capitalize on the rising movement of nature to support our efforts. So we use the left side, at only one point, because that's all we need to access the whole system, but it has to be the right point to get the right job done. There you have it. Let me know if that makes sense to you!



Winter Fashion Advisory

Did you know that covering your head and neck in the cold and wind is one of the best ways to prevent catching a cold?

That's not a superstition. From the point of view of acupuncture theory, it makes wonderful sense.

The meridians that govern the respiratory system run up through the neck, head, and face. Cold, or worse, cold driven by wind, causes these meridians to malfunction (this is, I understand, a different world view from the



infection theory...both idea frames can be true...good topic for another article!). It only takes a few moments of exposure to cold or cold and wind to feel the distinctive tickle in the throat, followed by the headache and the sneezing...so do a simple thing... wear scarves often, indoors and out, and cover up before going out in the cold. Here's to a healthier winter!

Book Review: ESSENTIAL SPIRITUALITY by Roger Walsh, M.D. Ph.D.

EXERCISES FROM THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS TO CULTIVATE KINDNESS, LOVE, JOY, PEACE, VISION, WISDOM AND GENEROSITY.

This wonderful book draws from all the major world religious traditions, exploring the common themes that have helped people around the world and throughout the ages cultivate peace and happiness. It's beautifully written, easy to understand, and includes practical advice and exercises that can be incorporated into daily life. The book explores such things as ethics, transforming emotions, shifting motivation, clearing awareness, awakening spiritual vision, and doing service.

I'm going to quote one exercise that I am particularly fond of. It can be found on page 85. It is a wonderful practice that can be done any time. I think it will make sense even though you won't have all the explanatory information that leads up to it. It is about releasing fear.

"Facing and exploring fear is a powerful means for healing it that can be tested in this exercise.

Begin by sitting comfortably. Take some time to relax. Remember to breathe slowly and deeply, relaxing more with each breath.

When you feel calm and comfortable, think of something

that makes you afraid. For this exercise it is best to choose a fear that is troubling but not overwhelming. For example, a mild fear of spiders would be better than an overwhelming terror of heights.

Allow yourself to feel the fear and then begin to explore it. Notice that the actual sensations of fear seem to be located at a particular part of your body. Where is the fear located? How large is it? What shape does it have? What does it feel like? Is it a tingling, vibrating sensation or more like hard, solid lump?

Now turn your attention to other aspects of the experience. Is there an image associated with the fear? If so, what is it? What is your posture like, and are there particular muscles that are tense? Can you relax some of these muscles as you continue to breathe slowly and deeply? What thoughts run through your mind?

Take a few really slow, deep breaths. Now explore the experience of fear again. Notice its location right now. What size and shape does it have now? What does it feel like now? Be careful to explore it carefully this second time, because the experience of fear, like all experiences, changes constantly. It probably has a somewhat different size, shape and feel from those of a few minutes ago. What about the posture and muscle

tension? And the thoughts and images-are they different, too?

Now notice something fascinating and freeing about the experience of fear when you look closely, none of the sensations, thoughts, and images that make it up are terribly distressing in themselves. Perhaps the muscle tension or an image is a little uncomfortable. However, when we actually experience it, fear is usually nowhere near as devastating as we imagine it to be. Rather it is our unexamined beliefs and fantasies about it-and our unexplored reactions to it-that lock us into the painful unconscious cycle of contraction and withdrawal.

Notice something else: When you breathe slowly and consciously, the body and then the body and the mind tend to relax, and as they do, the fear begins to diminish. You have uncovered an important healing principle discovered centuries ago by mediators and recently by psychologists: you can't be relaxed and fearful at the same time. To the extent that you can relax, fear dissolves."

