

## Sample material - HEALING WITH THE ENERGY EQUATION

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When I opened my practice in 1986, I began seeing many patients with complex conditions involving multiple body systems just as many Acupuncturists/Chinese Medicine practitioners do. While I had my share of successes treating these patients, I also had my failures and struggled to understand why some people who seemed to have the same basic set of problems responded well to certain acupuncture points or certain herbs formulas and others did not. Eventually, it began to dawn on me that many of these patients suffered from long-standing qi deficiencies that lead to breakdowns in a wide range of body systems. It also dawned on me that if you could increase the quality and quantity of qi these patients had available to them, their natural internal systems would automatically know how to heal the problems caused by the breakdowns. I spent a lot of time trying to understand how to build or tonify depleted qi states and pondering how to increase efficiencies in every aspect of qi dynamics. I eventually developed a model for describing those dynamics and improving their efficiencies. I ended-up calling this approach the “Energy Equation”.

An analogy I would use to describe this approach to my patients seemed to help them grasp it: I would tell my patients that the qi or energy dynamics of an individual was similar to the dynamics of how oil is made into gasoline and then burned in our automobiles. Crude oil is refined in an oil refinery and shipped to gas stations where we then put refined gasoline into our vehicles as fuel to take us where we are going. The same thing happens in the body. We take in crude resources (air and food) then our internal organs and glands refine those and turn them into a type of fuel our bodies can burn. This fuel is stored and then shipped to our cells for our cells to burn as fuel to take us where we are going. I would explain to my patients that in order to help their systems to heal themselves we would need to improve the efficiency of this whole process. Every stage of the process has its own characteristics and we want to look at each stage and see where we could improve efficiencies in order to give the best chance to increase the fuel available to self-heal.

In this course we will consider each of the stages of how qi is consumed, refined, shipped when and where the demand exists, and the demand itself. By improving efficiencies in all of these stages, we have the best chance to improve the quantity and quality of qi a patient’s system has available to heal. Most everything I will describe here is well grounded in Chinese medicine theory and practice, but has not been put together in such a manner before (at least to my knowledge). I hope you find this helpful as following this approach helped me to improve my success rates with some of the most challenging patients seen in practice.

Autoimmune and other Multi-system Health Disorders

Modern medicine excels at treating trauma and conditions in which a single factor has caused a serious health issue. However, modern medicine is much less effective at treating chronic conditions especially those involving multiple body systems or when several smaller things go wrong rather than one big thing. This being the case, many patients who seek out the services of an acupuncturist do so because they are suffering from those types of complex, chronic conditions. These conditions can be especially difficult to treat because the most effective approach often takes a long time and needs the cooperation of the patient to work with the practitioner over a long time. There are few reliable resources for such long-term care out there so this type of services is badly needed and little understood. Some of the most difficult of these conditions acupuncturists will face are those that fall under the rather large umbrella of autoimmune conditions. Then there are others that may not technically fall under that umbrella but are similar in their general scope. This would include conditions such as chronic fatigue syndrome or fibromyalgia. Whether or not these conditions would be considered autoimmune, they are all conditions that come about gradually over many years and involve multiple body systems.

For more than 2000 years Chinese medicine has been using a model that sees an individual human being as a complex combination of "energy" dynamics. More technically, Chinese medicine sees individuals as a complex combination of "qi" dynamics. Now I know some people today are critical of using the word "energy" as a translation for the word qi. Qi has also been translated as "vital force", "air", or even "vital air" but there is no "correct" translation and any of these terms could be used. While I would agree that the word energy does not capture the wider connotations of what the word qi was originally coined to represent, for the purposes of understanding disease and healing dynamics I believe the term energy works pretty well. This may not be "energy" as it is understood by modern scientists, but more as it is understood in popular culture. When someone says that they feel like they have "no energy" they are not speaking of energy in that scientific meaning. So if we can agree that when I refer to "energy" I mean in the popular culture way of considering that word it will serve us well as we try to understand the dynamics involved in disease and healing we will cover in this course.

What I want to delve into using the word energy and how to heal with the energy equation relates to the qi dynamics that the ancient Chinese understood and tried to convey to us. The most important factor to appreciate about the ancient Chinese concept of energy dynamics was their brilliant insight that everything in nature – in all of creation--is in a constant state of change or transformation. The essence of this state of transformation is the dynamic interplay of Yin and Yang. The ancient Taoists laid out for us the most fundamental understanding of those Yin and Yang dynamics in the teaching known as the I-Ching also known as the "Book of Changes". The concepts of the two primary dynamic forces of nature, Yin and Yang, and how those forces interact go back so far in time as to be untraceable. Folk legend has it that the eight trigrams that form the core of the I-Ching go back about 8000 years. The Yin/Yang dynamics symbolized in those eight trigrams and 64 hexagrams is really a form of energy physics. This is how the ancient Taoists came to understand the workings of nature.

However old these ancient concepts may be the most important lesson they teach us as it relates to life, disease, and healing is that every second of our lives we are in a continual state of transformation and that this depletes or "burns" energy. Every second of our lives we are burning energy as the fuel of this continual state of transformation. The fuel that we burn by these transformations creates what I will call

an “Energy Demand “. As we continually burn this fuel to meet that demand we of course have to constantly replenish the lost energy in order to keep going. As long as we are able to add enough new sources of energy into our systems to meet the energy demand we will have good health. But if we fail to add enough new sources of energy to meet this demand it creates a sort of energy deficiency that can lead to many disorders, as we will consider. Conversely, when energy deficiencies lead to health disorders we have a chance to help and even reverse these by creating an energy surplus. If we take the right steps to turn energy deficiencies into energy surpluses the body will know what to do with that extra energy and begin to heal itself.

There are four primary facets to understanding what I am calling the “Energy Equation”. The first has to do with how we bring new sources of energy into our systems. When we burn energy by the functions of our body/mind/spirit we need to continually add new sources from outside our body/mind/spirit. We bring outside sources of energy to the inside. The two main sources of this outside energy are food and air: food as Yin energy of the Earth below us and air as the Yang energy of the air or sky (or Heaven) above us. But before we can use these sources of outside energy we must refine them from their raw state and transform them into a type of energy that we can burn and this is the second facet to the “Energy Equation”. The third facet relates to how this refined energy we now have available to burn will be circulated where it is needed to meet the demand. The internal organs and glands of our body carry out the job of processing these outside sources of Yin and Yang energy while the circulation of the refined energy takes place within the channels/meridians. It is truly remarkable when you consider the great detail the ancient Chinese went to in such books as the Yellow Emperor's Classic describing just how this refinery process of transforming outside energy into the types of internal energy our bodies can burn. In this course we will not go into that detail but will stay focused on the more fundamental view of how this refinery process gives us what I will call “Energy to Burn”.

Considering the above we can now understand the four primary facets to the energy equation. The first is the raw sources of Yin and Yang energy that we bring into the body that we will call “Energy Intake”, or EI. The second part refers to the processing or refinery phase. It takes energy to run this refinery process and we must consider the amount or the efficiency of the energy that is burned to do this processing. We can designate this as “Energy for Processing” or EP. The third part deals with the efficiency of how this refined energy will be distributed when and where necessary. We can call this “Energy for Distribution” or ED. When you subtract the amount of energy that it takes to process and distribute those outside energy sources from the amount of energy we intake with those outside energy sources it gives you the amount of energy you have to burn that we can call “Energy to Burn”, or EB. The last part of this equation is what we considered earlier, the “Energy Demand” or ED. If the amount of energy we have to burn is equal to or greater than the Energy Demand, we have good health. If the amount of energy we have to burn is consistently less than the energy demand, it leads to health problems. Changing the energy deficit into an energy surplus leads to natural healing as I mentioned above. What I just described looks like this in the form of an equation:

$$(EI-EP)-ED= EB$$

If EB=ED we maintain health.

If  $EB > ED$  we maintain health and can naturally heal health issues.

If  $EB < ED$  for long periods of time, it leads to chronic disease.