

TREATING INJURIES AND SHOCK

EXAMPLES WHERE SHIATSU CAN BE VERY USEFUL

Sprains (to tendons and ligaments) e.g. ankles, twists to knees
Strains (to muscles)
Dislocations (joints) e.g. shoulder
Knocks and blows, creating bruises and cuts
Whiplash (neck)
Cracked or broken bones

DIAGNOSIS

Energetic Condition Before Injury

Accidents happen because of a combination of external and internal factors. We usually concentrate on the external factors, but it is much more useful and empowering to look at the internal causes of accidents, as we can change these. So look at the area or meridian or tsubo affected, these were probably imbalanced before the accident. So see what diagnostic areas, meridians and tsubo lie in the place where the injury has happened.

Big energetic imbalances in the body attract big energetic and often physical interventions from outside i.e. an accident. In general, the bigger the imbalance, the bigger the accident. Therefore if you are having small mishaps or accidents, stop and think and sort out the underlying imbalance before you have a bigger accident.

If jitsu, you may run into something, kick something with your jitsu Liver meridian and stub your big toe, cut yourself to release excess Ki from a meridian.

If kyo you may attract a burn, blow, or something to stimulate the low Ki, e.g. oven burns up the Lung meridian. Or a weak part of the body may just give way because it lacks strength e.g. twisting a weak ankle due to low Water energy.

You can also get a client to describe exactly what was happening when the accident happened, and use your knowledge of organ and meridian functions to analyse the causes of an accident. For example, maybe slow reactions were involved, in which case you would suspect the Bladder or Kidney energy being kyo. If a person stumbles, there is probably weakness in the hara and meridians in the legs. If someone rushes into something, either with their body or in a car, maybe their Liver or Kidney Ki is jitsu. If an accident happens because a person is very tired, are they nourishing themselves adequately, or is there a marked Spleen imbalance?

Energetic condition after injury

Deeply the energetic condition is always kyo, damage has been done, a muscle or tendon torn, blood vessels broken, or a bone broken. But immediately after accident a lot of Ki and blood often rushes to the area to protect and heal the kyo, leading to fullness, swelling and heat. These initial symptoms are often treated with cold, e.g. an ice pack, which helps to reduce the bodies reaction to the injury, but does not help the underlying kyo condition. While this initial dispersal of energy might be useful, with shiatsu we can treat the underlying lack of energy to speed up the healing process. Addressing the deeper kyo will also reduce the superficial fullness - many times I have treated the deeper kyo and seen swellings reduce, heat disperse, and stiffness loosen up.

Very often the deeper kyo condition never gets treated or addressed, and an area of deep kyo, and therefore physical and emotional weakness persists, sometimes for years after a person has had an accident. You may well come across the results of past injuries while giving shiatsu, and need to spend a treatment or sometimes quite a number of treatments helping them to heal, in order for the whole person to heal. While treating these old energetic imbalances, clients may not only re-experience some of the physical pain of the injury, but may also have strong visual memories of the accident, and emotions from the time of the accident may come up too.

TREATMENT OF INJURIES

After someone has had an accident, it is preferable to start treating with shiatsu as soon as possible. Then giving daily treatments, or as close to that as is practically possible, will help create rapid healing. This can be easily with a member of your family. With a client you could get them to come and see you for half an hour on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday, or something like that.

For the first few days after an accident, or for several weeks after a more severe accident, the body may be very protective, due to the depth of the kyo condition in the body. This may lead to the feeling that the person does not let you all the way in to their deeper levels of energy. I think this has to be respected, rather than forcing one's way through, which will most likely lead to a reaction of contracting and closing up and symptoms possibly temporarily worsening or at least not improving. Treatment above all has to be supportive, and taking people where they are, even if the rate of progress seems slow.

Obviously take care of any physical damage to the body, don't give pressure to cuts, wounds or breaks, with joints respect the fact that movemnet of the joint may not be a good idea, beware of stretches and other movements. Pay keen attention to the client's report of pain, this is a message that damage could be being done, so change your shiatsu.

There are a number of different ways of treating injuries, it is good to use at least some of these, maybe all of most of them in many cases.

Treat the opposite side of the body in the same place, for example if one ankle is twisted, treat the other ankle. As there is an energetic relationship between the two sides of the body, this will help to rebalance the energy in the damaged side of the body.

If the injury is in the front of the body, treat the corresponding part of the back of the body, and vice versa, due to the energetic relationship between the front and back of the body.

Treat the meridians going through the injury. These will most likely be markedly imbalanced anyway, and work on them will help the flow of energy through the injured part, and bring energy into it. If you cannot do much work directly on the area of injury, for example to an elbow or knee, you can put your mother hand over the knee while working on the meridians going through the injured part of the knee or elbow.

Use the Ashi points - these are the points all around an injury, for example a sprain, bruise or cut. By improving the Ki flow around the injury, one will probably have some effect on the Ki in the injured area.

Work directly on the injured part. At first this may be with gentle use of the palm if finger or palm pressure is too much. At some point it is usually very helpful to get right into the injured place with fingers or thumbs, to deeply nourish the Ki, and normalise the flow and quantity of Ki in the area. When this 'normalisation' has happened, the person will most likely be symptom free. Very often you will find points which are so deeply kyo that you may need to hold for minutes at a time to achieve a small amount of change. This is why frequent treatment is usually desirable, to gradually improve the Ki flow and increase the amount of energy in the injured place. Working deeply into an injured place with the thumb may seem too invasive, but in my experience if done sensitively, people are very thankful to have the depth of the injury touched and healed.

Treat any shock the person is holding. See below for more details.

TREATING SHOCK

If the injury was moderate or severe, the person will almost certainly be carrying some shock in the body. Even with minor injuries, there may be some shock. This needs to be treated as well as the more obvious physical and energetic symptoms.

Sometimes people may be carrying shock from accidents or any sudden shocking physical or emotional trauma that have happened in the distant past, including physical, sexual or emotional abuse, making them permanently ungrounded, not living fully in themselves, with a spaced out or out of the body feel to them.

Shiatsu is really great at helping to get shock out of people, whether recent or old, as we are using supportive and sensitive touch to overcome the withdrawal that happens when people are shocked. Rather like giving someone a big hug, and keeping on with the hug while the body goes through all the crying or other changes until the person feels normal again. Be ready for some of the emotions from the time of the shocking experience to come out, as well as some physical reactions like shivering, coldness, body movements and crying.

DIAGNOSING SHOCK

Typical signs of shock -

Person is not fully grounded and in physical reality, they may be finding it difficult to deal with everyday practical and emotional activities. Dealing with current reality is difficult because the person's ability to process new experiences is blocked.

They will feel overly vulnerable and sensitive to what is happening around them.

They may be cold, both deeply in the body, and also at the extremities. There is a feeling that their energy is withdrawn deeply into the body, not flowing well, or frozen.

The breathing may be shallow and held, especially not breathing into the abdomen, where much of the shock is held.

The pulse may be rapid and weak.

Emotionally they cannot come out to meet you, their body may seem contracted and frozen, they may be excessively fearful, even of things that they are not normally frightened of.

They may find it difficult to think clearly or to concentrate fully on anything.

Physiologically the blood flow is affected, with blood being withdrawn from the circulation (an interesting confirmation of the involvement of the Heart, Heart Protector and Small Intestine from an Oriental point of view).

When you touch the body, shock can be felt throughout the whole body, in the whole muscular and energetic system. The Ki can feel contracted, absent, reluctant to move, fearful.

The transformation most affected by shock is the Fire element. You will probably feel a lack of energy at the surface of the body, together with an increased vulnerability and oversensitivity, indicative of low Triple Heater Ki. The deeper circulation of Ki from the body out to the limbs, hands, feet and face will probably be poor too. The person may feel their extremities to be

cold (you may too) and their face may be pale. This indicates that the shock has gone a little deeper in the body, and affected the Heart Protector.

Much energy is probably being held in the physical small intestine, creating much tension in this part of the intestine, which then feels hard and resistant, even like a rock, on abdominal palpation. If the shock has gone deeply into the body, then the Heart may too be affected, and you will find the diagnostic areas and meridians to be very kyo, and the person's conscious rather absent.

TREATMENT OF SHOCK

The first level to work on is to release the shock held all through the body in the muscular system by simply working over the whole body with palming and squeezing. The quality of touch can be reassuring, and welcoming the person back into contact with the outer world through the physical support and emotional warmth of your touch. This can help the Triple Heater and Heart Protector functions, and also be comforting to the Heart, encouraging Shen to feel safe to re-occupy its natural home.

Then one can work on the specific meridians showing greatest imbalance, which are very often the four Fire meridians, as well as the Kidney and Bladder if people have withdrawn from their bodies. Again one's touch is going to be warm and reassuring, welcoming the person back into their whole body and into life. If the shock is held in the heart, this may be highly protected, and shiatsu on the Heart meridian may have little affect. Working the meridians with the more superficial functions first may work well. The general work over the whole body will help the Triple Heater, and specific work on the Triple Heater and Heart Protector meridians may be more welcomed by the body.

The next deeper level to work is with the physical small intestine. This may be quite confronting for the client, and a lot of sensitivity will be needed, and maybe talking with the client to see how deeply they are comfortable with you going, and what is coming up for them while you work. While the physical small intestine may feel very hard, the Ki in the area will probably be very kyo, and especially in CV 7 the Triple Heater Bo point, and CV 12 the Small Intestine Bo point. Taking time to hold these deeply kyo places can not only help relax the small intestine, but also help the person come back into occupying this part of the body, their second or sacral chakra, which we would call the hara in shiatsu terminology. This can also encourage energy to again come into their lower first or base chakra, which gives us grounding in the physical world, connection with Earth's energy coming up from the ground, and a strong sense our physical existence and survival, and the feeling that it is safe to be alive here on the planet.

The breath can be a great tool in helping energetic change within the body. Observe a person's breathing when they are lying down relaxed, and see which parts of the body they are and are not breathing into. Encouraging them to breath into the 'no go' areas can be very helpful, speeding up the energetic

changes we are trying to bring about with our hands. Encouraging breathing into the lower abdomen can aid release from the small intestine, and help bring the person's consciousness back into this part of their body.

Shiatsu into the abdomen frequently releases or helps the body unwind the physical responses to the shocking event that did not happen at the time, so don't be surprised if people go through periods of shaking, shivering, feeling very cold or fearful, or shedding tears. The emotions and memories of the trauma that caused the shock may also be re-experienced, so be supportive while the person goes through this kind of painful release. It can be helpful to dialogue with the client, letting them express their feelings and describe what happened in detail.

The bigger the trauma, the greater the amount of held material in the body, and the longer it will take to unwind it all. So be patient, this may take quite a number of treatments, but is well worth doing well. If the body memories are very painful, it may be that a person will not be able to release it all at one time, so you may need to leave it alone for a while, and come back to it later when they are ready to do the deeper work again.

As shock is cleared from the body, people will probably become warmer, more grounded, and feel that they have more energy again. They will feel more in their body, and able to cope with the challenges of every day life again. You will feel their energy flow unlock, and begin to flow more normally around the body again.

Although I have been talking here about treating the shock associated with an injury or accident, really we all hold shock within us from a number of physical and emotional traumas in our past adult life and childhood, where the physical and emotional responses to the trauma were not allowed to fully happen. Shiatsu is a deeply healing form of bodywork, and while one aspect of our work is to help heal immediate physical or psychological problems, it is also to catalyse the deeper healing that is our personal growth and evolution. As a course of shiatsu treatments progress, these deeper levels of pain will often come to the fore for healing. The approach to treating shock that I have described above can equally be used to treat these deeper levels of pain and shock held in the body and in the small intestine.