

JOURNAL OF THE SHIATSU THERAPY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

pointers

autumn 2022



COURAGE
RESILIENCE
PERSEVERENCE



What's on at the Australian Shiatsu College

Upcoming Open Days:

Sunday 12th June 2022, 2-5pm, Sunday 23rd October 2022, 2-5pm

ASC Shiatsu Clinic:

- **Student Clinic**
Fridays (alternates between afternoon and evening).
Appointment times: Afternoon: 12:30pm & 2:15pm
Cost \$50. Evening: 4:45pm & 6:30pm
- **Practitioner Clinic**
Appointment times: Thursday: 5:00pm & 6:30pm
Cost \$70. Saturdays: 9:30am, 11:00am & 12:45pm

Upcoming Events & Workshops: *(visit website for more details)*

- **Tuina Short Course** Commences Wednesday 27th April 2022
Establish foundational skills to treat friends and family with Chinese Remedial Massage (Tuina).
This 18 week short course is delivered by Glenys Savage, Melinda Weekes and Angela Lane.
- **Self Healing Medical Qi Gong Short Course** Commences Tuesday 26th July 2022
A 9 week course with Lisa Pearson exploring movement and visualisation to engage and balance the energy of your body.
- **Ethics in Focus: An East Asian Perspective with Angela Lane** Sunday 14th August
Explore ethical actions and being as a healthcare practitioner through the East Asian lens (4 hour workshop)
- **Gender Diversity in Practice with Nellie Collier** Sunday 16th October
Explore psychosocial aspects of sexuality and approaches of a LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice (4 hour workshop)

CPD Refreshers

- **Stretches with Jenny Dorrington** Classes begin Tuesday, 9th August
You are invited to join our students and revisit 6 weeks of Shiatsu stretches.

2023 diary marker

- **Bill Palmer and Teresa Hadland** In early 2023 we look forward to welcoming back Bill Palmer and Teresa Hadland from the UK. They will be running two workshops, stay tuned for confirmed dates:
 - Workshop 1: **The Six Forms of Touch**
 - Workshop 2: **Masterclass: Practical Applications of Movement Shiatsu**

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President's message

Paul Spence

Welcome to the Autumn 2022 edition of *Pointers*.

This edition showcases our good fortune of having a wide network of shiatsu practitioners, based in Australia and abroad, who are willing to share their knowledge and understanding of shiatsu and related areas of health and wellbeing. As members of STAA, having access to this network of expertise is a valuable benefit of being part of our community.

Articles on courage and resilience in this edition bring a clear synergy with the experiences and feelings of our local communities of practitioners and the challenges and opportunities the environment we have been immersed in over the past two years.

Reading Ivan Bel's article reminded me of a recent conversation I had with someone who was asking about the training we do to become shiatsu practitioners and then what job prospects were like in the industry. Although it's easy to explain what the education requirements are, what "boxes" need to be ticked, etc. when you get to the truth of it, being a shiatsu practitioner is a vocation, not a job. It is a continual life-learning experience, one shared with

our clients and colleagues. There are many challenges along the path a shiatsu practitioner traverses, and if what we do is viewed as a job, then I think much of the richness of the views and experiences along this path will be missed.

The impact of the Covid pandemic has been far and wide. It has also acted as a catalyst, showing strengths and weaknesses in systems, communities, organisations, and individuals. From STAA's viewpoint, the pandemic crystallised the offering of online training that has successfully supported our community. It also expanded the way shiatsu treatments are conducted with many members being able to offer remote consultations. It has also highlighted the difficulties faced by the organisations providing training to shiatsu students, unfortunately, including the recent closure of COTY in NSW.

The post-pandemic environment will present ongoing challenges and new opportunities for all of us. The STAA National Council continues to focus on expanding the awareness of shiatsu, of improving communication within and outside our community, and of providing a safe and supported environment for practitioners to gather and thrive.

In terms of ongoing business, here are a few key areas the National Council are currently focussing on.

Future of shiatsu training

The ongoing training and supply of new shiatsu practitioners is probably the most important factor in the survival of a thriving shiatsu industry in Australia.

Without replenishment of those able to offer shiatsu services — and as existing practitioners decide to leave their practices either temporarily or permanently — we will see a continual diminishing in practitioner numbers.

The conditions created by the pandemic have brought a focus on the difficulties the various registered training organisations (RTOs) are facing in being able to provide the necessary resources and access to students to keep the pipeline of newly qualified practitioners flowing.

STAA has started discussions with the Australian Shiatsu College and other providers of shiatsu training to explore the structure of shiatsu education programs. The advent of expanded online offerings, and recent government decisions about the review of training packages and classification of complementary therapies, has made it possible to look into different ways of how shiatsu training can be provided across Australia.

We will be sending out requests for information within and outside of STAA to gain a better understanding of the resources we have available to explore different models of delivery, possibilities for collaboration, and ways to expand and improve shiatsu education.

STAA member surveys

We are finalising the publication of a new workforce survey that will soon be delivered to all STAA members. As mentioned in previous articles, surveys are an important part of the planning process we undertake to do our best to offer member services that are relevant and valuable. The upcoming survey is a continuation of the previous workforce survey that was conducted in 2017. Please do complete the survey when it arrives and note that by completing and returning the survey you will earn two CPE points.

Journeying together

I would like to thank all STAA members for their ongoing support and commitment to shiatsu in Australia. STAA is an important gathering place for shiatsu practitioners, a place where like-minded and motivated people can share the experience of being a practitioner together. It is also a place where we invite our colleagues and associates from overseas, to listen to them, learn from them, and to welcome them as part of our community of practitioners.

For those members who have made the difficult decision to either cease practicing or to leave STAA due to the challenges of the past two years, on behalf of the National Council, I wish you well and always know there is a place for you in STAA if you choose to return.

Please keep up the good and valuable work of shiatsu.

Wishing you wellness and happiness,

Paul Spence

A photograph of a sailboat with a large, vibrant blue sail sailing on a dark blue ocean. The sail has some text on it, including 'E24', 'ATA', 'ATI', '24077', and '17045'. The boat is moving towards the right, leaving a white wake behind it. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

What is courage in shiatsu?

by Ivan Bel

Photo by giuseppe Peppe on Unsplash

It was a grey and rainy spring day, like many others in Brussels, where I have practised shiatsu for 14 years. One of my patients told me about her problem: she couldn't get pregnant a second time and had started an in-vitro fertilisation process for the eighth time, without success. I admired her fierce will to have a child, but at the same time I could not help thinking that if nature had not granted her this possibility, there must be a good reason.

"Will you help me with my ninth IVF?" she said. "I'm thinking of starting in a fortnight."

I was known at that period to be relatively competent at helping women conceive. Out of 100 cases, 98 of them were eventually able to deliver a child. I received birth announcements from every grateful mother, so I have a drawer full of all those cards. For three years in a row, I was even the subject of a diploma theses by midwives at the University Hospital of Saint-Luc, the largest hospital in Brussels.

I asked the woman to postpone the start of the IVF for two months and to come every week, to help her as much as possible. Finally,

she managed to get pregnant and it was a great moment of joy for her. But some time later it was discovered that the embryo was developing on the scar from the previous delivery. The doctors decided to chemically abort her, which was a great psychological and physical pain for her.

After a month of crying, she asked me to help her prepare for her tenth IVF. After a silence, I told her "No. If nature didn't want it, I shouldn't insist. The greatest courage today is to accept this." She insulted me for 5 minutes and she left in a rage after throwing the session money in my face and spitting on the tatami. I was very sad.

A month later, her husband called me for help. She had suddenly developed a double breast cancer that was spreading like wildfire. Could I help her heal? My answer was "No, but I could help her mitigate the side effects of the chemotherapy that was sure to follow". She had both breasts removed and I came to her bedside every week to help her through the pain of the treatment. Eventually she recovered.

A year later, she came back to my practice asking to speak with me. She apologised for her behaviour and wanted to tell me her story:

"I come from the deep countryside of a Nordic country [Norway]. As you know, I have a daughter. She is 12 now. In my family there was a kind of curse that in every couple every second child died. As I only have a daughter, I thought that she might die and then I would have no children at all. I absolutely had to have a second child.

"My best friend in Brussels was my neighbour. At that time, I had been trying to have a second child for years. One day, my friend happily came to tell me that she was pregnant. My world fell apart. I shut the door in her face and never wanted to see her again. In rage and despair, I began to scream alone in the house. I began to bang my head against the kitchen sink until I broke it and passed out bleeding. I wanted to die for not having been able to protect my daughter from certain death.

"That's when my husband found me. From then on, I went through IVF after IVF. I couldn't accept your refusal. Now I need your help to accept and let go, because this story has been hurting me for over 10 years."

Patients' courage

I am writing this story to tell you about courage in shiatsu. After more than 20 years of practice, I have come across the most disarming, the saddest and the most joyful human stories. But above all, I have witnessed the courage of the patients, the real courage.

René Ouvrard — a French author from the 17th century — in his book *Débâcle à la Romaine* says:

"Courage exists only where there is good sense and not the irrational impulse of a moment. In a fit of pique, one cannot perform a brilliant action, but true courage requires patience and renunciation".

This is exactly what happens with our patients. The first act of courage is to come and see a

therapist about whom you know nothing and who is not a regular doctor. The second act of courage is talking about one's physical pain and then one's psychological suffering; telling one's intimate, family or professional story, the one that hurts. The third is to accept to work on one's fears, one's blockages, one's wounds. The fourth requires perseverance at the height of the therapy, when doubt and suffering are raging. The fifth is to be reborn and to restart life with a new perception of oneself.

What courage it takes to shed old skins, old fears, old habits. As Forrest Gump says in the film of the same name: "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you gonna get!" You know what you have, not what you're going to get. Or what you're going to become.

But this courage is the only way to achieve resilience, i.e. to have the strength to overcome a trauma. All human beings on this planet are called upon to suffer, it is our common lot with illness, old age and death. But not all human beings have the strength to overcome its suffering. And this is where shiatsu is an important tool to help people.

Why is it so important? Because it is non-invasive, it has no or only brief side effects, it respects all layers of the human being, and above all, because it does not force anything. It simply gives support, like a cane that is used for the time it takes to heal, to cross a particularly complicated path. And always by the patient's side, during this crossing, is the empathetic presence of a practitioner who does not judge, who accompanies and liberates.

The woman got rid of her obsession about having a second child to somehow honour the family curse. Her only daughter is now a beautiful young woman who is studying, and her mother has finally turned her full attention to her. She was able to return to work after a long recovery and breast reconstruction.

Since then, as it is often the case after such a shock, she is very interested in complementary therapies and is training in hypnosis and therapeutic touch. Because when you are deeply

transformed, you realise that the ordeals were in the end opportunities, offered to push you to improve yourself. Finally, she went to see her neighbour and tried to rebuild the relationship with her by agreeing to see her child.

Practitioners' courage

The great American teacher Stephen Brown once told me that doing shiatsu was “like going to war naked”. And it is true!

We shiatsu practitioners are completely naked in the face of pain, illness or psychological disorders. We cannot hide behind tools, not even a simple acupuncture needle. We only have our hands. And our hands only transmit what we are.

It takes courage to say to yourself one day, “Hey, I'm going to take care of others without any tools, without anything other than what I am”. It's not a job; it's an act of faith.

Fortunately for us, even as students, we quickly realise that the shiatsu technique is powerful enough to get results quickly. But since our hands only transmit what we are, this forces us to continuously work on our body, our mind and our knowledge, as well as our skills. And to do this over a lifetime requires a commitment that requires courage.

But the practitioner's greatest courage is that which allows him to accompany the suffering of others without suffering himself or being insensitive to that of others. It is a delicate balance to find, which requires a great deal of work on oneself. Sometimes patients force us to dig within ourselves to find resources.

I once treated a woman who had been raped for years when she was a teenager. Psychoanalysis had helped her to understand the full extent of her trauma, but her body would not let her alone. All sorts of symptoms continued to plague her some 25 years later.

At the first appointment, I asked her why she had come. She immediately went into a terrible rage and said, “So that's how it is! You want to know; you want to know everything already?

They are all aggressors; all men are the same!” And she told me her abominable story in one go.

One hour later she thought it was a wonderful shiatsu session, but for me it was the beginning of a nightmare. I began to dwell on the story, to be scarred, to lose sleep and my appetite. I had only two options: to stop the treatment and refer the patient to a more experienced practitioner or to search within myself why I was so affected.

With the help of a psychotherapist friend and another shiatsu practitioner, I experienced what is called a “psychological breakthrough”. In other words, I had been displaced from my role as a practitioner wanting to help a person to that of a man associated with male abusers. This violent shift in my role was not intended by the patient, but the damage was done. If there was suffering in me in relation to my patient's story, it was because there was a gap.

The combination of psychotherapy and shiatsu allowed me to quickly unblock the situation and to continue the treatments with serenity. But it took, as with all our patients, the courage to go into my memories and wounds, to put myself back into my neutral and empathetic role as a shiatsushi [*practitioner/expert*]. Thanks to this personal work, the treatments continued and the person even became one of my students and graduated four years later. There was no miracle, the memories were still present in her. But she was able to live more calmly with men, to make plans and even to start a couple's life.

If there is a conclusion to all these stories, it would be this: Shiatsu is above all a relationship between two people. But human relationships are complex, exciting, rewarding and challenging. One can feel discouraged when faced with the immense scope of human suffering and the demands it makes on practitioners. But if one finds the courage to support one's fellow man and to confront oneself, then shiatsu becomes a beautiful path that leads both people to more light and humanity.

Ivan Bel

Ivan is a martial artist with more than 30 years of experience, and a shiatsu practitioner and teacher for more than 20 years. He started with Japanese martial arts (aikido, karate and iaido), then Sino-Vietnamese (qwankido, taijiquan, qigong), which give him the necessary grounding and discipline to advance in shiatsu and to understand the sense of movement and use of the body in shiatsu.

He has been studying and teaching meditation for 25 years, which allows him to deepen the intimate understanding of the mind-body and the mechanisms of thoughts and emotions. He encountered shiatsu through aikido during a summer intensive camp in 1998.

In 2000 he started his journey in Shiatsudo and he is still learning different schools. After Namikoshi, and Yoseido schools, he followed Ohashiatsu, Koho Shiatsu and Movement Shiatsu trainings. He also completed two different approaches of Oriental medicine.

After the creation of two shiatsu schools in Belgium, he is living now in different countries, trying to promote shiatsu in Africa and giving workshops all over Europe. Ivan also is a journalist specialising in shiatsu, interviewing many senseis and great teachers around the world. You can read articles in English (or German, Italian, Spanish, French and soon Portuguese) on Ryoho Shiatsu's blog.

Ivan founded Ryoho Shiatsu in 2016, which is not a new style of practising shiatsu but a state of mind inviting everyone who wants to follow a complete approach with therapeutic shiatsu, meditation, qigong and martial arts. He is specialised in fertility issues, pregnancy follow-up and post-partum, chronic fatigue and burn-out.



In 2018 he created Missions Shiatsu Humanitaire (MSH), which aims to support all initiatives to develop shiatsu throughout the world. In 2019 he launched the historical shiatsu research group with the help of over 2000 participants from all over the world.

Today he lives between France, Belgium, Malawi and soon Bosnia, where he teaches shiatsu. His first book *The Spirit of Shiatsu* will be published in May 2022 (French only for now).

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STAA Mentoring Program

Learning to soar

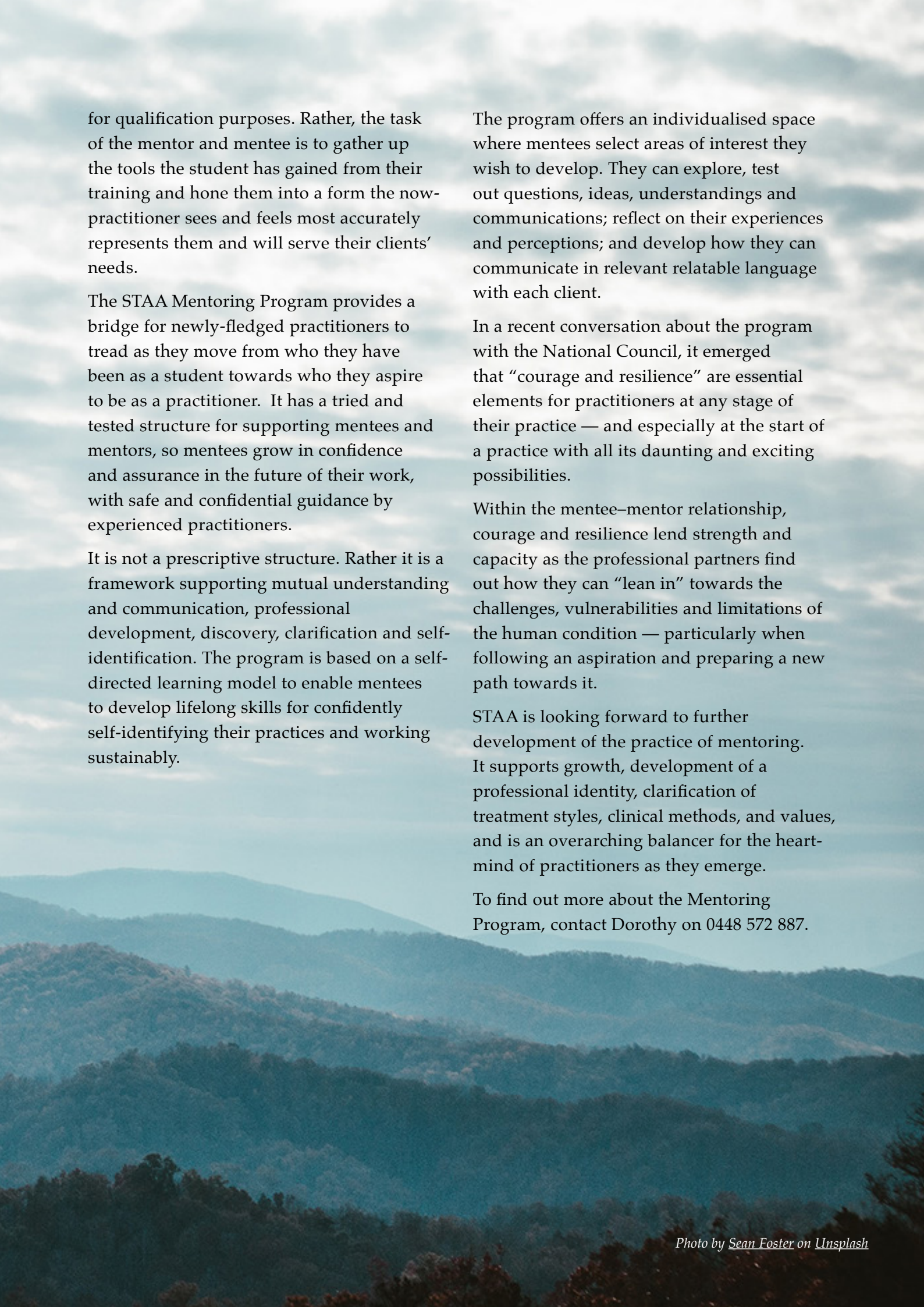
by Dorothy Douglas

A second group of shiatsu practitioners are now undertaking STAA's Mentoring Program. Through their experiences we continue to learn about what mentoring for shiatsu practitioners can be. How it can support mentees to refine their skills and identity, and learn to soar as shiatsu practitioners.

One of the aims of the STAA Mentoring Program — to facilitate the meeting of peer professionals — is becoming more defined. Mentees and mentors each have a role and responsibilities for the growth of the relationship and to learn from each other.

This professional mutual responsibility distinguishes the mentoring relationship from that of teacher and student or master and apprentice. It is recognisable because it does not include assessment or evaluation





for qualification purposes. Rather, the task of the mentor and mentee is to gather up the tools the student has gained from their training and hone them into a form the now-practitioner sees and feels most accurately represents them and will serve their clients' needs.

The STAA Mentoring Program provides a bridge for newly-fledged practitioners to tread as they move from who they have been as a student towards who they aspire to be as a practitioner. It has a tried and tested structure for supporting mentees and mentors, so mentees grow in confidence and assurance in the future of their work, with safe and confidential guidance by experienced practitioners.

It is not a prescriptive structure. Rather it is a framework supporting mutual understanding and communication, professional development, discovery, clarification and self-identification. The program is based on a self-directed learning model to enable mentees to develop lifelong skills for confidently self-identifying their practices and working sustainably.

The program offers an individualised space where mentees select areas of interest they wish to develop. They can explore, test out questions, ideas, understandings and communications; reflect on their experiences and perceptions; and develop how they can communicate in relevant relatable language with each client.

In a recent conversation about the program with the National Council, it emerged that “courage and resilience” are essential elements for practitioners at any stage of their practice — and especially at the start of a practice with all its daunting and exciting possibilities.

Within the mentee–mentor relationship, courage and resilience lend strength and capacity as the professional partners find out how they can “lean in” towards the challenges, vulnerabilities and limitations of the human condition — particularly when following an aspiration and preparing a new path towards it.

STAA is looking forward to further development of the practice of mentoring. It supports growth, development of a professional identity, clarification of treatment styles, clinical methods, and values, and is an overarching balancer for the heart-mind of practitioners as they emerge.

To find out more about the Mentoring Program, contact Dorothy on 0448 572 887.

Therapeutic presence for in-person and distance healing practitioners with Geraldine Doyle

Workshop review by Belinda McIntosh

Distance healing has always been one of those modalities I always knew was possible. It was covered in the Annwyn Energy training course I undertook prior to my shiatsu training, but it was probably the weakest tool I utilised in my repertoire. Then it became a necessity!

No matter where you live, the past two years have challenged and given rise to our need to be resilient, resourceful and to pivot ... many times over in Victoria, to keep our practices afloat. So Geraldine's workshop could not have come at a better time to dust off this scarcely used tool and gain some confidence.

Geraldine's clear presentation with practical exercises and demonstrations reminded us that "It's truly a gift to maintain your therapeutic presence with your client community. Distance really isn't a barrier in maintaining a good therapeutic presence".

She teaches that full body presence is the foundation of a strong therapeutic relationship:

- having the ability to feel all parts of your body, with good flow of healthy energy moving through you;
- including a connection to your inner and outer healthy resources and a good sense of healthy boundaries; and
- honing your connection with one's self which, in turn, also impacts on "in person" work.

As the world readjusts, we see plenty of people still anxious and weary to re-emerge into society, some having difficulty processing their experience. Our open-hearted gentle modality that is shiatsu has an opportunity to gently assist in this process, at our clients' pace, and effectively provide relief from long Covid symptoms and other ailments.

Full body presence accesses the present moment sensory awareness, explains Geraldine. Through the quantum field, this enables connection with our client and work from a distance. It accesses a deeper level than seems to occur in person.

Subsequent to this training I found this access was possible with a couple of clients who willing to try distance healing. Working into the central nervous system and organs seem more accessible and greater shifts in symptoms easier as a result of working without the physical barrier of the body. We can create a therapeutic community and nurture this therapeutic presence all over Australia.

It highlights what our limiting beliefs and conditions are, and invites us to be more present with ourselves. Working with and overcoming these limiting beliefs, we can reach that space where wisdom can arise.

“Distance really isn’t a barrier in maintaining a good therapeutic presence.”



A paradigm shift to get your head around, but one that you soon see is real and effective to aid people to heal their sense of self and what’s possible on their healing journey.

Geraldine’s clear, compassionate and professional style of presenting infused me with the confidence to begin this style of work once more.

I feel it also has helped me strengthen my therapeutic presence and be a more grounded practitioner; no longer feeling drained at the end of the day from such work, as had happened in the past.

Sometimes going back and revisiting the foundations is all that is required to breathe fresh qi into our practice.

A beautiful, respectful and knowledgeable presentation with clear real applications and demonstrations.

Geraldine presents a variety of tools and processes with such clarity, and central to this is a respect and commitment with working with one's self. This is the foundation to then work with and hold others with compassion and from a space void of judgement.

I look forward to her 5-part series beginning on the 23 March 2022.

Geraldine Doyle is a Shiatsu and CranioSacral Therapist, and her treatment style is informed by both modalities.

Geraldine graduated from Zen Shiatsu Centre Sydney in 1989.

She was certified in CranioSacral Therapy Techniques in 1999 and completed the Diplomate level in 2017. She has worked as a teaching assistant with the Upledger Institute for more than 20 years, and has her practice in Hobart.

Since the onset of COVID in 2020, Geraldine has successfully adapted and pivoted her busy practice to provide online services using distant healing techniques for her clients.



Belinda McIntosh trained in Annwyn Energy Healing for 10 years prior to completing her

Diploma of Shiatsu and Oriental Therapies at the Australian Shiatsu College in 2016.

After healing her own autoimmune condition, Belinda set up her clinic, Vitaliq, in Mitcham and is passionate about empowering her clients on their healing journey. Belinda is a member of the STAA National Council.



Aikido & the Development of Movement Shiatsu

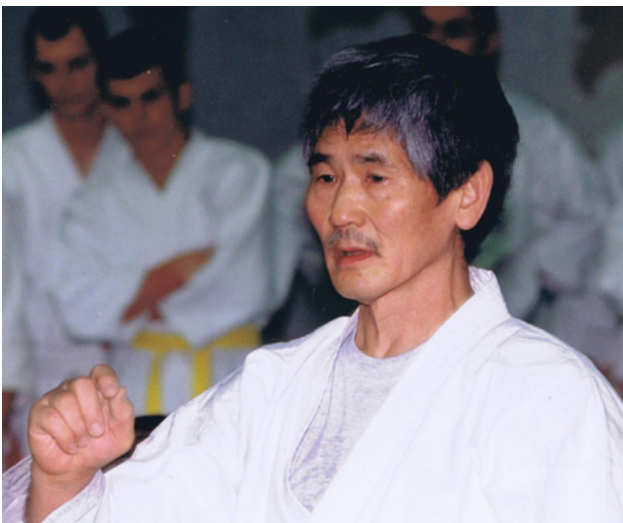
A Personal Memoir by Bill Palmer

My first experience of shiatsu was in the early 1970s when I was a student at London University and started to study aikido.

The aim of aikido is *not* to disable one's opponent but to end conflict. One of its fundamental principles is that you don't need to meet force with force. Your attacker is already in motion and, if you can guide his movement, you can transform the aggressive energy into something peaceful.

If you subdue someone in a fight, they are still your enemy; but if you can transform the energy of their attack into another movement, then the aggression disappears, and you no longer have an enemy. As such it can be seen as resolving aggression rather than conquering it, and this is why I found it was also a path to learning a healing art.

My teacher, Minoru Kanetsuka, practised a simple but powerful form of shiatsu, sometimes using it when we were injured. One time, when I fell awkwardly and broke



Minoru Kanetsuka Sensei, source: <https://senseiaikido.com>

my collarbone, he gave me my first personal experience. He only pressed one point and held it for a long time. Something about his quality of touch made me aware of all my tensions, and I found I was able to soften and release the tensions around my injury. This changed the experience of pain and I could feel the blood flowing into the area and even felt the tissues knitting themselves back together.

It was a kind of contact that I had never experienced, and I asked him if he would teach me shiatsu properly. He said that he had nothing much to teach but, in the following years, he taught me the basics and explained what he was doing while he worked with other people. More importantly, when commenting on my aikido practice, he would frequently make references to shiatsu.

For instance, when I was practising a technique called Kokyu Ho, he said to me something like: "Feel the direction of your partner's ki. Then receive it and open yourself. Then suggest a direction. Don't try to change his ki; just open yourself to it. That's also the principle of shiatsu."

Before then, my intention in aikido had been to dominate my partner and trick him into submission. But when, following his instruction, I simply opened myself to receive my partner's intention, something changed in me, which changed the whole dynamic and we both flowed together without effort.

It also changed my shiatsu. Trying to fix someone's problem has a flavour of domination about it. Instead, I started to open myself to the condition and listen to what it wanted to do.



O-Sensei Morihei Ueshiba images
source: <http://aikidojournal.com>

Unconditional positive regard

Some time later, Masatake Sekiya came to stay in London for a year. Sekiya Sensei was in his mid-60s at the time. He looked frail compared to Kanetsuka's stocky strength, but he had a beautiful warm luminosity and a great sense of humour. His aikido was like a slow and graceful dance.

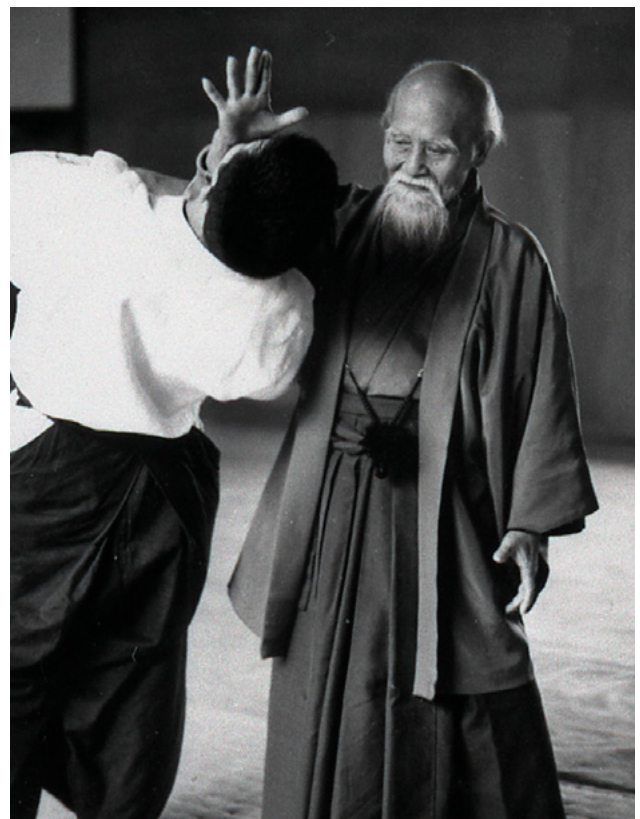
In one class, he told me to attack him forcefully from a distance. I rushed towards him, but when I got within striking distance, I felt like I had run into a wall of love. All my aggression drained out of me, and he gently took my arm and laid me down on the floor! I had no resistance. I felt his complete acceptance of me as I was, and this started healing me at a deep level. How could one fight a man like that!?

The lesson that Sekiya gave me was that the root of healing is *unconditional positive regard* [1], as Carl Rogers puts it, not technical expertise. Techniques can resolve superficial issues that have not grown roots into the spirit of the client. But chronic trauma, disability,

childhood wounds and old habits are part of the person. Trying to get rid of them is like trying to cut out an essential part of their being. These "problematic parts" resist change, and any attempt to fix them increases the client's internal conflicts. Instead, those parts need to be valued, contacted, listened to and loved. Then they feel they can soften and they can start to change spontaneously.

From then on, the spirit of Sekiya was my chief guide in my shiatsu. For instance, when touching a tense muscle, I would mutter "Well done!" under my breath, and I would open my heart to it. Instead of trying to loosen the tightness, I would help it to condense further with the feeling of "I'm with you". The more I let go of the desire to "cure" or change the other person, paradoxically, change happened by itself.

If someone is alive then most of their symptoms are signs of life. An arthritic joint is painful but that pain is saying "take care of this part of me" or "move me in a way that doesn't inflame me". If we just try to get rid of the pain then we are ignoring what the body has to say and, more often than not, the condition will worsen.



On the other hand, if we listen to its message, then our conscious mind stops trying to dominate the body and this usually means that we take care of the part that is suffering rather than trying to get rid of it.[2]

Ki is intention not energy

In the late 1970s, when I started to practise shiatsu seriously, I was doing a PhD in the foundations of quantum physics. The ideas I was learning about ki in Oriental medicine didn't sit comfortably with my physicist's view of energy. I was, and still am, sceptical about the idea of ki being a form of energy that flows through channels in the body.

I prefer to interpret ki as "intention" rather than "energy". Another of my teachers, Kazuo Chiba, explained it as the alignment of intention and action. This does not mean that meridians have no meaning. In fact, my later research convinced me that they are the pathways along which intentional movement develops in babies.[3] However I think that, in practice, the intention behind your touch and the quality of the relationship you have with the client have much more impact than the meridian you are touching.

Kanetsuka's aikido and shiatsu demonstrated this. I don't think he had fixed ideas about the functions of the points that he pressed while giving shiatsu. My experience was that he transmitted his *intention* to the receiver through his quality of touch.

In aikido, he never talked about ki as "energy". Instead, I could see him feeling his partner's intention before they started to move. Once intention turns into action it has an inertia that is difficult to change without conflict. He focused on flowing with his partners while they were preparing to act. Whilst their intention was unmanifest, it was still fluid and could more easily turn to peace rather than war.

How do you feel intention? When we are about to make a movement, postural muscles subtly brace the body and prepare for action, the breath changes, the lens of the eyes focus on the target of the movement and our posture adjusts. There is solid research [4] showing that we are subconsciously aware of these micro-movements and interpret them as intention. I believe this is what is happening when we say we "feel someone's energy". Many different perceptions combine at a subconscious level to create a meaningful feeling.

Every part of the body has some form of intention, but our ego self is not necessarily conscious of it. Intention is a readiness to act or to move which, as we have seen, is frequently expressed in very small preparatory movements. When doing shiatsu, I look out for these micro-movements in different parts of the body and, through touch and verbal guidance, help the receiver to amplify them into large movements so that they become conscious of that aspect of themselves.

Movement is the natural language of the body. I see the body as a community of people; each organ, each muscle and each bone having their own form of intelligence. Unfortunately, in modern society, we are not taught to sense these inner people, and we don't know how to hear what each part has to say. As a result, the body and brain-mind are often in conflict and this results in the physical and emotional problems which people bring to therapy. By facilitating movement, we empower the parts of the body to speak in the first person.

A community of people, who all feel valued and empowered, can easily resolve conflicts through finding common purpose. In the same way, if we listen to the members of our internal community, then they can integrate and find common intention. This, for me, is the meaning of harmonising the ki.



Working with ability, not disability

In this culture, clients expect a therapist to know what is wrong with them and fix it. If the therapist goes along with this expectation then they tend to go into medical-mode, which means to perform a diagnosis and treatment, and the client remains fairly passive. For fairly superficial problems, this often works, but if the issue is chronic, or is a permanent disability, then the procedure is liable to fail, so can deepen the client's sense of being disabled.

A five-year-old girl with cerebral palsy called Lizzie taught me this lesson early on in my career. I was collaborating with a physiotherapist, who was teaching Lizzie to walk with calipers on her legs. She hated it and was visibly upset because she couldn't make the right muscles work. She was becoming dispirited and progressively less in control of her body. But I noticed that every time she tried to move her legs she made a rotating movement with her torso and had no difficulty doing that movement. I suggested that she sit on the floor and start making that movement. Suddenly, she was whirling around the room in a beautiful but chaotic dance. She was squealing with joy and full of energy. After

a while, she came to rest, and I suggested that she use that rotation to start the walking movement. This was no miracle cure, she still found it difficult, but she had found her spirit and believed she could move, so she attacked the challenge with enthusiasm and optimism.

Lizzie taught me that if I viewed her cerebral palsy as a problem to be treated, then I was not seeing her true self and was disempowering her. The cerebral palsy was an intrinsic part of her. Instead, she showed me that if you start by focusing on a person's abilities rather than their problems, then you are enlivening them and this creates a condition that nurtures new development.

She reminded me of one of the basic principles of aikido: to flow with the direction of your partner's movement instead of trying to force a movement that isn't there. The effect of this is to engage with the other person's spirit and this is the pathway to integration.

For two decades I specialised in working with children who were classified as disabled. Almost all of them responded positively to working with their abilities rather than trying to resolve their disabilities. I felt they and their parents were growing to value them as they were, rather than feeling the pressure of trying to move towards "normality", and this gave them the space to develop their abilities in the way that worked best for them. Gradually I realised this might be true for everyone, and the focus on exploring abilities rather than problems became a core aspect of Movement Shiatsu.

Working with chronic kyo

I have already said that I prefer to translate *ki* as "intention" rather than "energy", but one of the effects of bringing one's intention into a part of the body is that it becomes mobilised and enervated. We perceive this as the body part being *energised*. One postulate of Oriental medicine is that the symptoms of a condition are often signs of compensation for an aspect of the organism that is de-energised and not playing its part. This deactivation is called

kyo in Japanese and many forms of Eastern medicine aim to treat the *kyo* first, with the idea that if the symptoms are compensations, they will then disappear of their own accord.[5]

But, in disabilities and other chronic conditions, the *kyo* area is often a hiding place for traumatic emotions that may trigger painful feelings and shame. It therefore hides itself behind defences and resists attempts to contact it and energise it.[6]

In Lizzie's case, her legs were outside her control. The attempt to get her legs to work highlighted the emotional pain of her disability and, I imagine, gave her the impression that there was something essentially wrong with her core self. However, starting from a place that is already energised gave her the message: "I can do this". She then felt able to explore more challenging areas because she had found a positive sense of herself. Lizzie showed me a way of working with *kyo* that empowered the client and, because they felt in control, they could explore their difficulties with spirit.

The key idea is to start by contacting an area that is already energised and then to guide the client to use their internal intention to move and to explore themselves. This exploration is highly interactive. The therapist is noticing the micro-movements that indicate that a part of the body is energised and ready to move. She helps the client to be aware of these movements, facilitating them to amplify until they start to spread through the body. During this journey of exploration the client eventually becomes aware of their own *kyo*, which they experience as a part that won't join in.

But because they have started from a place of ability, they can start to embrace this area and integrate it into their sense of self. Sometimes this means that the symptoms disappear but, even if they don't, the condition stops being a problem and can even become a valued part of the self.

In the summer of 2022–23 Bill and his wife Teresa will be teaching two workshops at the Australian Shiatsu College, Melbourne. Contact the college to receive further news about dates and content.

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Bill Palmer is Director of the School for Experiential Education in the UK.

He started studying shiatsu in 1973 and was one of the pioneers of shiatsu in Europe. He is the originator of Movement Shiatsu, an interactive style that empowers clients to explore themselves through guided movement and to work on their own energetic patterns rather than depending passively on the therapist to treat them.

It evolved from years of work with disability and, apart from shiatsu, has been inspired by Bill's study of Body-Mind Centering, Feldenkrais Method, Inner Qigong, Wolfson Voicework and Gestalt Therapy. It is an effective way to work with chronic patterns which are resistant to change. With his wife, Teresa, he teaches postgraduate courses in 10 countries worldwide.



Meridian Families

Shiatsu and Acupuncture, Meridians and Points

by Chris McAlister

I began my shiatsu studies in London early in 1989, taking the slightly unusual path of studying simultaneously with Nigel Dawes at the London College of Shiatsu and Liz Arundel from the British School of Shiatsu. As if this wasn't strange enough, I began studying acupuncture six months later in Tokyo with Peter Yates.

There were many familiar aspects in acupuncture but also things that differed considerably. For example, there was a much greater emphasis on the nature of the points, the quality of their influence and the different types of point existing. One of the most intriguing results of this was that a point could belong to more than one category and possess a wide variety of different influences on the energy system. CV 12 is one of the most typical examples — not only the Mu point for the Stomach meridian, but also the influential point for yang meridians in general, origin of the Lung meridian and a kind of control point for Earth energy and the middle heater — all this within one point on the Ren Mai or Sea of Yin, with its own set of primary characteristics.

The other huge difference, and one that initially confused me, concerned the names of the meridians. In shiatsu, I had become familiar with them as, for example, Stomach meridian or Large Intestine meridian. Now they were presented as Yang Ming leg Stomach meridian and Yang Ming arm Large Intestine meridian. The Spleen, on the other hand, was now known as Tai Yin foot Spleen meridian

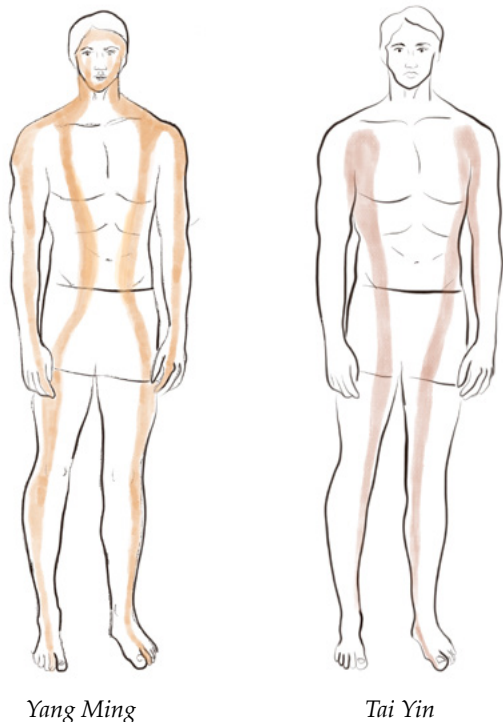
and the Lung as Tai Yin arm Lung meridian. In what way was this new information important? It was not at all obvious to me and I did not spend too much time on figuring it out — there was too much else going on both with my new main shiatsu teacher, Takeo Suzuki, and with Peter in acupuncture.

A Model Emerges

A year or two later, I was given Mark Seem's *Bodymind Energetics* to read, and the penny dropped — hard. Mark made use of these names in his model of the meridians and in doing so created both a power and a simplicity that had hitherto been lacking in my practice.

Placing the Stomach and Large Intestine meridians on a chart together, something amazing happened — a nodal zone opened up where they joined — in this case at the confluence of ST 2 and 3 with LI 19 and 20 in the area of the eyes, nose and lower sinuses — and explaining the mysterious influence of points like ST 40 on congested nasal passages. Tracing the greater meridian unit this created, a startling symmetry emerged: a single pathway now stretched all the way from fingertips to toes, and the second digit was involved in both cases — index finger and second toe.

The exact same thing happened in the case of the Spleen and Lung, which, in a similar fashion, combine to create a greater meridian that stretches from the medial side of the big toe to the medial side of the thumb. They



also create a nodal zone as they converge: in the beautiful placement of SP 20 (“All Round Blossoming”) as a third point in line below LU 2 and LU 1.

Returning to Europe in the mid 1990s, I was exposed to Bill Palmer’s work on the greater meridians and saw that he had gone a step further and created archetypes around their combined characteristics. It made sense in a big way, and he even clarified the equivalence in the anatomical and indeed skeletal structures underpinning the symmetry.

Combining and Uniting

As I myself gradually began to teach these beautiful greater meridians, I noticed that the characteristics of the points themselves could easily be woven into this super structure and began adding this heightened equivalence, to the delight of both my shiatsu and acupuncture students.

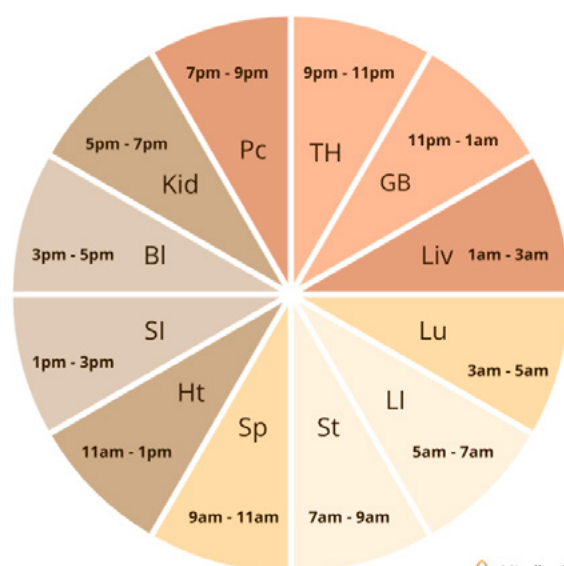
The specific revelation was that, using the sequence of the Antique points that flow from fingertips and toes towards elbows and knees, the categories of points appear in almost strict accordance as we progress up the meridians. No matter whether you choose the original Antique logic or the Five Element overlay, the same phenomenon emerges. Built into this are the famous Yuan, Luo and Xi-Cleft point

categories — each one in turn almost identically placed on upper and lower limb. The power and synergy created as one activated both sets of equivalent points in arm and leg was unlike anything I had previously encountered.

The greater meridians we have named so far are Lung and Spleen, which make up Tai Yin, and Yang Ming where Large Intestine and Stomach combine. These are just two of the six greater meridians. We shall meet the others presently. These two are exclusively on the front of the body and make up one complete circulatory unit that begins with Lung in the chest, flowing out to the upper extremities, continues with Large Intestine up to the face, extends with Stomach down to the feet and returns with Spleen to complete the circuit and create what Mike Mandl has called a Meridian Family.

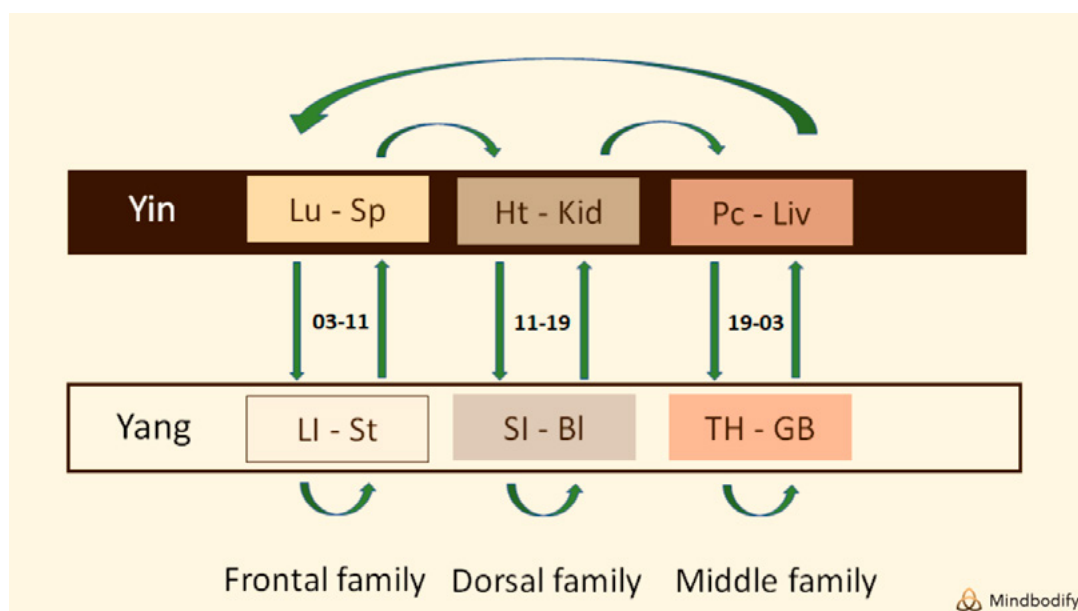
This process of covering the entire body from chest to arm, to face, to feet and back to chest is completed three times during the meridian cycle, which of course not only creates three meridian families but corresponds exactly with the 24-hour cycle of qi throughout the meridian system, as featured in the classic meridian clock.

The Meridian Clock



Mindbodify
www.mindbodify.com

This Frontal family is then joined by a corresponding and polar opposite back or Dorsal family and a Side family. It turns out that this Side family exists to facilitate the



Meridian Flow Diagram

complementarity of the otherwise wholly distinct Frontal and Dorsal families. The symmetry, the simplicity, the beauty and the sheer genius of this system is almost overwhelming.

We arrive at a place from which we can view the entirety of the main meridian system — a vantage point of overview and panorama. We see how the three families wonderfully complement each other and, even as they overlap, also maintain a discrete separateness as they fulfil clear and significantly discrete functions. In short, we see the Big Picture!

Revelations from the Dream World

I have taught these families in person to live classes over the years and was recently encouraged to do so in a virtual setting. Typically, I did so in two separate forums: in my multidimensional, exploratory weekly Zoom class and as a more formal 8-week online course — one that is nearing its end as I write these lines.

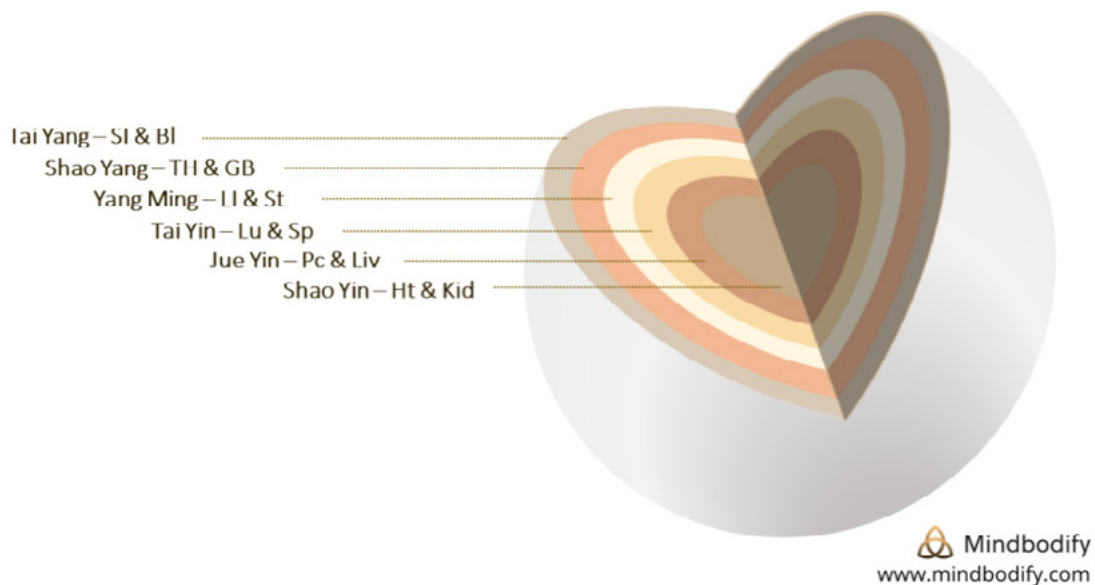
The half-year of planning and teaching these classes has been one of incredible creativity and productivity. I started out with one set of quiet standing embodiment exercises and now have a total of four, including two reclining sets — all four of them sprung from dreams! The planning sessions with Mindbodify co-creator, Snezhana Stoeva, and practical sessions with the Magical

Zoom Group have produced entirely new insights, as well as vastly improved graphic representations of these three Meridian Families and the six greater meridians that comprise them.

One of the features that has grown exponentially is the insights concerning the nodal zones of these greater meridians, this through the exercise series as they steadily manifested. It turns out that while the yin meridians each have one clear and concise zone on the chest area, the yang meridians have several. This is, of course, entirely in keeping with the differing nature of yin (contractive) and yang (expansive) meridians and qualities, but nevertheless came as a surprise as it revealed itself.

The clearest example concerns the Dorsal family. Shao Yin is made up of Heart and Kidney meridians. The nodal zone they create is on the chest, as the Kidney meridian makes its way up towards the collarbone. Three points in particular combine to create the core of the zone: KID 23, 24 and 25. Significantly each of them has either the word *ling* or *shen* within its name.

Turning to the Tai Yang greater meridian, which is made up of Small Intestine and Bladder meridians in synch, we see no fewer than four nodal zones. The meridians themselves converge in a broad area in the upper back. Here we find SI 14 and 15



The Meridian Families Online Course with Chris McAlister

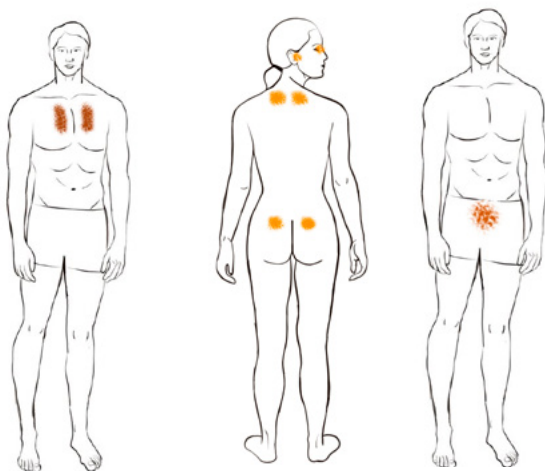
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Shao Yin
nodal zone

Tai Yang nodal zone

smoothly positioning themselves in exact synchrony with BL 11, 12 and 41. The Shu points of these two create another zone on the sacrum, made up of BL 27 (Small Intestine) and BL 28 (Bladder). This provides a wonderful area of potential Tai Yang power and mobility in an otherwise neglected and abused part of the back.

On the face, SI 18 and 19 can be combined with BL 1 and 2 to create startling aural and visual clarity, while in the central lower abdomen, the Mu points create a zone of their own: CV 3 through the Bladder and CV 4 through the Small Intestine.

This creates a stunning total of four nodal zones, distributed evenly throughout

the trunk and head area, and providing wonderful tools for diagnosis and treatment.

The incredible polarity invested in this extraordinary arrangement of meridian energies within the Dorsal family requires its own article, but here can only be mentioned in passing.

A final revelation — stemming directly from this immersion in the world of the Families and greater meridians — has emerged through poetry and songs. Two of them are rendered on the following page to complete this article — they are the songs of Tai Yang (To Tread and then to Fly) and Jue Yin (Evening Road/Deep Time). Tai Yang we have already discussed briefly above.

Jue Yin is part of the Middle or Medial Family and manifests when Liver and Pericardium energies combine. It is the soft, thick, pliant, Blood-rich layer that some call “The Hinge”. Jue Yin is paired with Shao Yang — the frenetic and non-stop, freedom-creating genius of Triple Heater and Gall Bladder — as they sew and weave the various needs and impulses of the system into a mind-boggling field of continuous decision-making and constant regulatory finesse.

Chris McAlister has been involved with recovery, relaxation and rehabilitation for nearly 40 years. Getting seriously ill and reaching a state of total exhaustion, not once but twice within one year, while travelling in East Asia, he experienced the process of breakdown and regeneration at first hand: initially through rest, nutrition, Taiji and Tuina.

His journey took him to Japan, where he studied for five years, before returning to Europe and continuing his studies, while beginning to practice and teach. Chris has taught internationally and published articles in journals of shiatsu and Oriental medicine these past 20 years.

In 2021 a co-authored book, *Touching the Invisible, Exploring the Way of Shiatsu* was published and plans are now in the works for a follow-up: *The Poetry of Touch*.

Since 1986, he has studied and explored the path of healing for his own and everyone else's benefit. He loves to share his own insights and gather those of fellow travellers — especially seminar participants. And one day, hopefully not too far away, he is dying to visit his brothers and sisters in the Antipodes.



Evening Road/Deep Time

Jue Yin

Travelling the road as darkness descends
Adjusting our vision as subtlety blends
Shadows get longer as space decreases
The womb of the vehicle, the body releases

Time slows its pace as light reduces
Thoughts grow longer as space produces
Trains of ideas and pictures unfold
Faces meet names and voices retold

Deep Time
Travel alone
The Evening Road

Memory Lane
Time on our own
The Evening Road

A sense of the body, at ease and diffuse
Reflexes soften as tensions defuse
Eyes drift from centre to side
Gaze lifts as colour subsides.

Memory speaks in muted softness,
Distance in time widens the focus
Linking thoughts with a face from the past
Edges are dulled, soft fingers recast.

Time for the self, a moment inside,
A moving, a roaming, a time to remind
The past right now, a moment repeated
Moving ahead, a present created.

Deep Time
Travel alone
The Evening Road

Memory Lane
Time on our own
The Evening Road

To Tread and Then to Fly

Tai Yang

Softly treading night by night,
A ninja lone avoids the fight.
Born to tread the path outside,
Far from warmth and fireside.

Softly bound on feet a-light,
Making rounds but far from sight.
Sword unsheathed and shield on arm,
Swiftly treads the path of harm.

Woman of Wings,
Man of length,
Golden strings and
Hidden strength

Jaws are loose to open ears,
Eyes are wide and large to hear.
A back of sense, free from fear,
Arms untense, guides and steers.

The forest deep surrounds the fort,
A cape flows out and legs support.
Lonely warrior, arms of light,
Treads in service through the night.

Danger seen but rarely met,
Movement soft and silence kept.
Balance keen and wide of eye,
Born to tread and then to fly.

Woman of Wings,
Man of length,
Golden strings and
Hidden strength.



Shiatsu helps cancer sufferers feel whole again

by Micheline Moorefield Pfister

Photo by [Julia Caesar](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Being diagnosed with cancer is a huge emotional strain on sufferers. They are generally first in shock.

I feel paralysed, frozen. Why me? I was healthy. What can I do? Will I get better? How can I cope with this situation? What do I do about my family, relationship, work?

These are just some of the thoughts occupying sufferers. Shiatsu can offer valuable support when dealing with cancer and the associated questions.

If we're healthy, our etheric body is extended and protects us from illnesses. Healthy cells vibrate strongly. Conversely, cancer cells are warped cells that aren't subject to normal regulation. They vibrate gently. They can exist in organs and in tissues. If they begin to grow rampant, they form tumours. People who can see health auras describe the affected zones of the body as black holes where the health aura concentrates.

The most frequent side effects of conventional treatments like surgical interventions, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, anti-hormone therapy and immune therapy are nausea, vomiting, hair loss, mucosal irritation, infections, exhaustion, skin redness, diarrhoea, depressive moods, headaches, sleep disorders and water retention.

Alongside chemotherapy, patients take other medication, such as:

- » antidepressants — energetic impact: hot, organs primarily affected: liver, heart)
- » antibiotics — energetic impact: cold, damp, organs primarily affected: lungs, spleen.

We can only guess how much strain the body is under.

In this challenging time, sufferers pass through several emotional stages. Disbelief, anxiety, anger, overwhelm, repression, doubt, helplessness and resignation or acceptance are triggered. Their friends and relatives are often challenged, usually overwhelmed and helpless.

Against this backdrop, a therapeutic discussion is a core component in assistance with shiatsu. Even without training in talking therapy, I can play a role in supporting patients with our shiatsu skills. My awareness, perception and empathy are called for.

I create an environment where nothing is demanded: I am just there, listening, feeling; we're together in this silent encounter. I am with the sufferer, alongside them with what is happening. In my experience, this presence is what cancer sufferers value greatly. They feel cared for and understood.

As a therapist and human, I also experience anxiety and other feelings. Thanks to regular supervisions, I can work through these emotions and channel them productively.

Tailored work

With targeted questions on wishes, diagnosis, pain and feelings, I learn what the individual concerns of my counterparty are. My further tools are Bo-Shin, hara greeting and hara diagnosis, scanning chakras in terms of zones and vibration levels.

Depending on the situation and phase of cancer, a dynamic shiatsu treatment might not be possible. The points and tsubo connections mentioned below enable comprehensive treatment without treating the entire meridian or vessel. "Off body" work in the energy field or targeted fascial work is used after operations on inflamed areas, open wounds or metastases.

Supporting chemotherapy

When patients are undergoing chemotherapy, I treat them straight afterwards, where possible; whether in hospital, at home or at the clinic. In any case, I treat them within 24 hours.

It is important to support the immune system. In the body, chemotherapy primarily triggers heat, impacting the organs of the liver and stomach, and the blood. Experience has shown that treatment straight after chemotherapy or a few hours after is sensible. Side effects like nausea, tremors, mental and physical tiredness, disorientation and sleep disorders can be alleviated. I have offered treatment on the afternoon or evening prior to chemotherapy, and after chemotherapy, and had very good feedback.

Dominique Chevalier's study at Saintes Hospital "Side effects after chemotherapy – can shiatsu help?" describes similar results. This study also showed the two meridians of the stomach and liver as being susceptible. The stomach in terms of nausea and vomiting, the liver in terms of its function of storage, distribution and elimination of toxins. Treating

these two meridians can really help alleviate the worst aspects of chemotherapy.

When treating the stomach meridian, I focus on bringing the energy down and earthing it. I also involve ST 45. Treating ST 45 helps nausea and vomiting, by calming stomach peristalsis.

When treating the liver meridian, LIV 3 helps reduce stagnation and restore the flow of qi and blood. Generally, holding this connection feels very hot and vibrates uncontrollably at the start. I keep the connection until the energy enters a calm rhythm that rocks evenly back and forth.

Alongside these two meridians, the meridians of the triple warmer, kidneys and lungs also apply.

Additional point connections I have had good experiences with include:

- » KID 3 refills qi and yin water reserves, boosts immunity, and minimises exhaustion.
- » LU 9 (source point) supports lungs in fulfilling their task of producing wei qi (immune energy) by circulating it through the body, spirit and soul. Plus, it is an important tsubo for supporting blood vessels, as it improves blood circulation, which is crucial for treating cancer.
- » CV 17 is located between the nipples in the middle of the sternum, directly above the thymus where T cells are produced. This zone, so important for triggering immune defence, offers effective support for lung energy, which produces wei qi (immune energy). In addition, it nourishes the heart, where shen is based. It alleviates anxiety and depression that often go along with severe, chronic illnesses. Gently massage the point in clockwise circles with the fingers.
- » GV 4 Mei Men (Ming Men) – major energy point, connection to Ki-Kai zone. Governor vessel energises the kidneys, whose function includes hormone balancing and blood cleansing.

The focus on point/tsubo work is on their zone and its vibrational levels.

Supporting the immune system

Alongside meridian work from the hara diagnosis, involvement of the three extraordinary vessels — Ren Mai, Du Mai and Chong Mai — provides support. By treating these vessels and/or combining their regulation points, we activate the small energy flow (immune system), boost yin and yang qi, and distribute jing, blood and qi.

We can also reach the seven main chakras via Chong Mai. The regulation point for Chong Mai is SP 4, for Ren Mai LU 7 and for Du Mai SI 3. As with other points and tsubos, pressure is applied to them together until an even, equal, present rhythm starts.

Handling pain

For patients with breast cancer, I find time and again that they experience substantial pain in their right arm, in particular; regardless of the side of the port catheter (a subcutaneous, permanent access to blood circulation via a vein or artery). The LI 4/LIV 3 combination can help with this, first on one side, then the other. These two tsubos are first paired on one side of the body until the energy balances, then the other side.

I also support patients with heart breathing, meditation and visualisation exercises.

From my 13 years of treatment experience, it is clear to me that shiatsu is helpful support during cancer, with all my clients primarily choosing conventional therapies. Shiatsu is chosen as a supplement and support. A few get in touch straight after diagnosis. Most get in touch after their second chemotherapy session or during radiotherapy.

Silent shiatsu support offers support in this challenging time, whether during conventional treatment, in breaks, after treatments, or if the cancer has become incurable.

We cannot cure cancer with shiatsu. However, we can offer targeted support to people to positively impact all levels of overall wellbeing and enable them to feel whole again.

A professional shiatsu therapist for more than 20 years, **Micheline Moorefield Pfister** is also a leading teacher and lecturer in Europe, with a focus on supporting clients with depression, cancer, chronic diseases, fibromyalgia, MS, and fear.

It was during her studies in ethnology that she came into contact with various forms of healing work. In shiatsu, she found the optimal combination of body, mind and soul.

Micheline is member of the Shiatsu Society of Switzerland.



This is an updated version of the article originally published in 2015 (issue 10) in the Swiss Shiatsu Journal.



Forging ahead with the Water Tiger

by Joanne Faulkner

The year of the Water Tiger represents power, courage, confidence, strength to clear obstacles and forge ahead with your plans and dreams in 2022.

Does that future excite you or when you read those words do you feel overwhelmed or numb?

Perhaps you are left with post-pandemic exhaustion. Emotionally burnt out after two years where there was little or no control over everyday life. Or perhaps you developed long Covid with symptoms similar to fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome, where every time you get the energy to move ahead with tiger's new plans, you are floored with symptoms of fatigue, anxiety, shortness of breath, brain fog or muscle and joint pain.

"... there is evidence that fragments of the virus, such as protein molecules, can persist for months [2] in which case they might disrupt the body in some way even if they cannot infect cells." [1]

So how do we expel energy zapping symptoms and stride forth with the grace and power of the tiger? In Chinese medicine the tiger is associated with the Wood element and the time of spring, when new shoots begin to

emerge and wind their way up to the light. The organs of this element are the Liver and Gall Bladder, which ensure the detoxification and smooth flow of blood and emotions. In Western medicine this also includes the metabolism and distribution of energy.

Usually we work to clear the liver and aid toxin elimination, to encourage the upsurge of spring energy by using sour foods such as lemons, limes, vinegar, umeboshi plum, rhubarb, plums and gooseberries. This would also encourage flexibility through the tendons, sinews and joints. But if this isn't working and you are still experiencing lethargic dragging energy, stiff joints, sore cramping muscles, cloudy foggy thinking then it's time to look deeper.

In the Five Element cycle of Chinese medicine the Kidney/Bladder system is the mother of Liver/Gall Bladder, so by treating this energetic system we can build energy so that any lingering pathogen or virus can be expelled either by the Liver or by pushing it out to the exterior gates of the body.

The Kidney/Bladder system is related to winter and hibernation, where the soil humus is being prepared for the new spring growth. If the ground is depleted, the seeds cannot sprout. If the Kidney energy is weak, the Liver will struggle to flourish, detoxifying and energising the body.

In our modern lifestyle we can all too often deplete the Kidney energy through overwork, over-achieving and competitiveness. Kidney energy “can be described as determination, our will to survive, our will to succeed, our will to procreate and leave our mark on the world. Fight or flight, thrive and survive. These are basic instincts and they are all governed by the energy of the lowest organs in the body, the bladder and kidney.”[4]

This Kidney will power is amazing — completing projects, building houses, planning cities and creating families — but if it is driven by fear, our Kidney energy will soon become exhausted and we may experience some of the other symptoms of long Covid and fibromyalgia, such as hot flashes and anxiety.

Depletion of Kidney energy creates a knock-on effect of not supporting the Liver in expelling the heat and toxins from the body. So before we begin manipulating the body or pressing the acupuncture points to move the energy, we need to nourish and build the roots of the body by supporting the Kidney.

The Kidney loves the salty flavour of foods such as seaweeds, spirulina, oysters, oats, miso, tamari and, of course, because Kidney is of the Water element ensuring hydration with plenty of water is key. But not all water is equal. Here I share one of my favourite recipes for supporting and building Kidney energy — barley water.

When a stress response happens in the body — either created by an external pandemic or an internal virus — the body tissues can become acidic. This stress response is perfectly normal and the acidity can help to kill or expel the internal bacteria, pathogen or virus.



Barley water

2 large handfuls or 50g organic wholegrain pot or pearl barley

2 litres water

½ lemon

Pinch of salt

Sprinkle of wakame or dillisk seaweed (optional)

Barley malt or honey to taste

Place the barley into a heavy-based saucepan with a good fitting lid. Pour in the water, add the half lemon and pinch of salt. Bring it to the boil and simmer for an hour, make sure the lid is on firmly.

After an hour of a slow simmer, use a fine mesh sieve and strain the barley from the water. Using the back of a spoon push the barley into the mesh to get as much of the white gloopy mixture into the water.

This water can be kept in a jug or a bottle in the fridge for about 5 days.

Shake or stir the barley water before use as the sediment will fall to the bottom.

Shiatsu is above all a relationship
between two people. But human relationships
are complex, exciting, rewarding and challenging.
One can feel discouraged when faced with the
immense scope of human suffering and the
demands it makes on practitioners.

But if one finds the courage to support
one's fellow man and to confront oneself,
then shiatsu becomes a beautiful path
that leads both people to
more light and humanity.

Ivan Bel



However if the stress response, acidity and inflammation remains prolonged, conditions can become chronic. Studies suggest that “lingering inflammation and/or virus-induced damage to the endothelium (lining of the blood vessels) or immune system might be to blame”[3] for the symptoms of long Covid, fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue.

On a physical level, barley water can help to alkalise the urine and maintain the pH balance in the bodily fluids. Energetically its slightly salty flavour supports the Kidney / Bladder system by hydrating, moisturising and lubricating; restoring the cool, calm yin balance and preparing the ground for the yang energy to rise.

I usually make a batch from which I take a measure in the morning and in the afternoon. A measure for me is one-third barley water poured into a mug and topped up with two-thirds of hot water. You can use agave or honey to sweeten if you like. It's best to drink first thing in the morning, before eating to clear your system. Treat it like medicine because that's what it is.

Save the cooked barley to use in some of the other recipes from my book such as Avocado Salad or Chilli Con Barley.

The tiger is a majestic animal that expels evils in mythology. 2022 is no ordinary tiger, it is a Water Tiger. Its energy for overcoming obstacles comes from the dark winter, Kidney yin energy.

Use this tiger energy to shake off what no longer serves you, the physical and emotional remnants of the Covid pandemic.

Address work/life balance, incorporate Kidney foods, exercise gently using gentle qigong flowing water movements.

Spiral the energy through the meridians smoothly, hold and tonify points, work with the deep marrow essence of the body and remember:

All action comes from stillness.

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Joanne Faulkner is a shiatsu practitioner specialising in the energy of food in traditional Chinese medicine and runs a busy shiatsu practice in Dublin and online.



She blogs regularly on her food and health-focused website and she is the author of *Shiatsu & the Art of Conscious Cooking* and *Good Food, Better Sex*: modern cookbooks full of recipes, ancient traditional medicine, acupressure points and meditations.

She runs “Chi Flow with Jo” offering daily online qigong classes and is currently serving as chairperson to the Shiatsu Society of Ireland.

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<https://joannefaulkner.ie/waitlist/>



Breaking through fears into resilience and growth

by Mihael Mamychshvili

Pain is necessary, suffering is part of the human experience, and healing is a work in progress.

Photo by [Floris Siegers](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I believe that most of us come into this world with fear. Fear is the first emotion we experience — a byproduct of the fears we inherit from our mothers and fathers, and the terrifying and sometimes traumatic experience of birth.

Child psychologists say that for the first 6 months, babies express emotions based on how they feel at the moment. Around month 7, babies start to develop emotions like fear and anger. From 8–11 months, babies are more sensitive to approval/disapproval and separation anxiety is likely to peak.

I would like to think, or imagine it differently. I believe it is more ingrained than that, as I have been fortunate to be at the births of my son, my niece, my nephew and others. Fear we come with, anger is experienced when a baby is taken away from its comfort, its universe, the safe space where it existed and developed. When taken away from the mother, there is a great outcry, a tone of anger by the baby (wwaaahhhaaaa on repeat); then if the baby is fortunate it returns to the mother's safety and love.

We also come with built-in resilience!

All one has to do is look at your lineage storylines and genetic codes.

We are also a living paradox, a creature with an innate desire for freedom and creation, but tremendous sophistication in creating barriers, walls built with what I call fears with evidence (FWE), that with time create our:

- pain and suffering
- resistance
- narrative
- denial and blind spots
- negative beliefs and thought patterns
- patterns and symptoms
- disease and dysregulation
- anxiety and depression
- darkness

We all have a breaking point. Some of us have a few. A breaking point can be brought upon by a loss, an injury, an “accident”, a trauma, or simply by an overwhelmed body-mind that gets worn out by our resistance to change, fooled by the notion that we can manage.

And we can, until we can't.

My breaking point

To my good fortune, my breaking point came in my early 20s.

It started with a work-related injury — a bulging disc — with tremendous physical pain, and infused with relationship pain, the breakup of my first love. I went from priding myself as a top athlete with a strong body after years of soccer, and an attitude of nothing bothers me (numbness).

The initial physical pain sent me into what I now call the “doing the circuit”. First pain medication, then rehabilitation for 3 months, and no change by physiotherapy, Chiropractic, massage therapy, osteopath, acupuncture with no change in pain for 6 months.

One day I saw an ad in my local paper:

Are you in pain?

Are you depressed?

Are you suffering?

Come learn meditation for free!

I had nothing to lose. I had a “yes” for everything. It was free and I had no money. Out of all places, it was in the mall. The fact that it was in the mall made it feel safe for me, as the mall for years was a place of comfort and solace for the young man that I was. Back then, 25 years ago, not everyone was meditating. It was not mainstream and many myths had developed around occultism, brainwashing and only hippies were doing it.

I went and had a profound experience that opened a thirst and curiosity about the origins of my pain, my suffering. The “hangover” of the experience continued into the coming days, and one day I was organising my closet meditating on “Why I am suffering so much physically and emotionally?” At that moment I was in a trance fully immersed into this reorganisation and the mantra was “Why?”

What happened very suddenly and shockingly was my subconscious revealed traumatic memories that had been blocked for years. It was devastating. I felt as if I was breaking into

pieces. The pain was overwhelming and I was sinking into the abyss. I reached out to a good friend and shared my pain with her. She guided me to a trauma therapist and my journey began.

The therapist’s first lesson to me was learning how to control my state and emphasising:

“As long as you are able to control the volume of your pain, the interpretation will change with that. So all you have to do is to control the volume and your state will change”.

Me: “That’s all I have to do?”

Therapist: “That’s all you have to do, and when you achieve that you will feel better and will be able to release, heal and grow.”

Me: “How do I do that?”

Therapist: “Well, meditation is a great tool and so is creating tools of awareness, like journalling and mindfulness.”

Diving in

I dove right into it and signed up for a Vipassana 10-day silent retreat. In the retreat I started to experience the workings of the body-mind, and the “mechanism” of pain and suffering. But also, healing and transformation.

I came out of it experiencing freedom and a depth of awareness, and developing a practice of meditation and journalling. Between meditation, trauma work and journalling, I developed resilience, empowerment and resolution of my childhood trauma. At 26 years of age, it led me to understand my purpose: to help others who are suffering from trauma. This in turn led me to search for a modality that would express that.

After searching many modalities, I came across shiatsu therapy. The philosophy, the wholistic approach of body-mind, taking into account the emotions and psychology, and energy work really resonated with me. The intelligence of my body viscerally confirmed to me that this was it. The reaction was so strong I picked up the phone and immediately signed up for a training program.

The program was a fertile ground for a rebirth of sorts. I reclaimed my authentic self and my highly sensitive nature. The sensitivity that the trauma created now had tools, language and hours of guided practice to evolve into a “superpower”. Suddenly I could “see”, feel and tune in to the traumas in others, and could help the person release and move it. And the effects were there, in real time. I came out of school feeling so empowered and elated. I had found my path, my purpose, and more of myself than ever before.

I was not surprised that my initial clients were patients with traumas — abuse, medical traumas, severe accidents, and childhood traumas manifesting into fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome and complex chronic pain — not helped by conventional ways. It was not easy to have patients like that early on, as my training, although good, was not deep enough to understand the complexity. But each client is a teacher and you are the student, so I had to learn about each condition/s that were presenting themselves, and I did; but I also had to rely on innate sensitivity and intuition to guide me through the treatments.

Working with complex clients — who’ve either shared their traumas with me, or with time came to understand that the roots of their conditions were traumas — was very hard for me. At times I got sick, or felt very unwell working with them.

Clients like that can test your boundaries and as a young therapist my boundaries were not strong. I had to develop practices to raise my energetic boundaries and my professional boundaries. I had to raise self-worth issues as a therapist and respect my time and my value. I had to learn and assimilate other modalities and tools to help me and to help my clients. Learn when to refer, and to which therapists, and increase my network of professionals. It took some years of additional training, maturity and development to come fully into my power. What kept driving me forward and inward was my unwavering passion and purpose.

An integrative approach

In my research I kept finding statistics in Canada that clearly showed how many people are suffering from mental illness and trauma. It was at epidemic proportions, yet no one was talking about it. No clinics were working with it (besides psychiatrists and psychologists) in an integrative way. So, in my early 30s, I convinced my wife to open an integrative centre to work with trauma and complex chronic pain. In the centre of Vancouver we found a 2500-square-foot space and poured money into it to create a serene healing centre.

I already had a reputation in the city and therapists had come to me as clients too, so they helped me spread the work and find therapists to join my team. I hired doctors of naturopathy, Chinese medicine or psychology; counsellors, acupuncturists, nutritionists, massage therapists, osteopaths, occupational therapists, clinical hypnotherapists, and yoga and meditation teachers.

I devoted 10 years into learning how to develop an approach to working with trauma in an integrative way. This involved developing:

- assessment tools and programs tailored to the needs of the individual client.
- unique treatments working in tandem with some of the team members.
- workshops, educational classes, community outreach work, and so much more.

It took tremendous resilience to create all of that at a time when there were no models to follow.

I grew on so many levels and stretched myself professionally, learning from all the modalities and the therapists who I collaborated with in such a personal and intense way. We worked on thousands of patients and many flew from other parts of the country: USA, Europe, Australia and New Zealand even. I personally worked on and was involved with 15,000 people. Eventually I was burnt out.

What I learned over those years is the importance of creating “architecture” around the process of healing/recovery. A process,

a language that creates trust, awareness, education and accountability, whilst understanding the innate resources/capabilities and the stage which they are in. NeuroPath Reset Method is something that names the philosophy, architecture, principles and tools/methods that I use and teach.

A typical trauma patient I see, and many of you are seeing, are:

- overwhelmed
- not trusting
- hypervigilant
- tried almost everything
- some losing hope
- some feel helpless
- testing you
- lack boundaries
- self-sabotage behaviours
- fearful
- confused
- anxious and depressed
- sometimes very angry
- tricksters: seem one way on the outside, totally different inside; say one thing, mean another
- multiple systems are affected, e.g. systemic inflammation, auto-immune conditions, digestive problems, etc.
- unexplained conditions/pain for years
- resistant to treatment

When they come to me and share their stories, what I see in front of me is someone incredibly resilient. I often say out loud:

"Wow. You are so strong and brave!"

The response is often:

"How can you say that? I don't feel that way at all. I feel so weak and so fearful. There are so many things wrong with me and my life. I have tried for so long this therapy and that therapy, that I am starting to lose hope."

I usually answer with:

"Well obviously you are strong and resilient as

"Shiatsu therapy enabled me to use my intuition to palpate the conflict between the personality and the spirit/shen. It enables me to see and feel the traumas, the emotions, the forgotten and the spiritual support that is available to many at any time."



you have endured this for so long and managed to continue to try to resolve this. You are strong, as you have not given up on improving your health, your life and your relationships. You are here in front of me, in front of another stranger, sharing your pain story. You are courageous!

"What if I told you that nothing is 'wrong' with you? What if I told you that you just lack trust, the kind of trust that you can embody inside of you and covers every inch of you? What if I told you that you are just 'disorganised' and don't have enough tools, or the right tools? What if I told you that you have not learned how to let go and create practices to help you with that?"

Client: "Well that's sounds very accurate."

Myself: "Then that's all we have to focus on and everything will start to change. But there is just one thing that will be in the way of that."

Client: "What is that?"

Myself: "It will be you. You and your fears with evidence (FWE). You have plenty of evidence to why nothing will get better, no therapy will help, nothing will heal. Here is the list (I itemise the list for them). This is the wall that you have to break through and dissolve, and you've shown to be resilient in managing your state of operation, your volume, your condition/s, your pain story.

"All we have to do is concentrate on changing your state: by first creating and embodying trust, to create order where there is a disorder,

reducing 'volume' through learning tools of awareness and self nourishment, and changing the habitual patterns that were created subconsciously in the body-mind."

The "how we are going to do it" is based on my initial assessment, taking into account their innate resources, where they are at, their lifestyle, and the environments and relationships in their lives. Shiatsu therapy is always at the core, working with the body and energy systems, and by using the sensitivity and intuitive skills and experience to see/feel the unspoken, the unclear, and the roots of the conflict.

Shiatsu therapy enabled me to use my intuition to palpate the conflict between the personality and the spirit/shen. It enables me to see and feel the traumas, the emotions, the forgotten and the spiritual support that is available to many at any time.

Through the practice of shiatsu and my own healing journey and development, it opened me to experience the generational trauma of that person. The transmission of pain and suffering from one family member to another, the "web of the pain story".

I always pay close attention to patterns in the hara, but at the same time their importance is not always immediate in my treatment approach. The patterns vary to the personality of the person, or what I call the "adaptation". Experiencing the same trauma in the same place, people/siblings will respond differently to it, adapt differently and build different personality traits and habits to take them into different patterns. This could be a whole article by itself, and a whole book.

I develop tools that are easy and that work to build more motivation, resolve and resilience. Tools or exercises that work and can be measured in some way, not for you but for the client to build that trust, and with time, to embody it.

Accountability plays a huge role. That is what shows you care, giving them homework and making them accountable to themselves and

to their process. To practise using the tools systematically for the different stages that they are in. To practise using the tools, especially with their usual triggers, and with those that trigger them the most when they are ready. Positioning it as "training" not a conflict. As they "train" they will notice that they are triggered less, or not at all. As they train they will notice with time those "usual suspects" are no longer a trigger. That helps them break down the walls of fear and moves them into empowerment and growth.

It is an honor.

It is sacred.

It is rewarding.

To be a witness to this process.

*They are my teachers, my friends,
a part of me and my soul.*

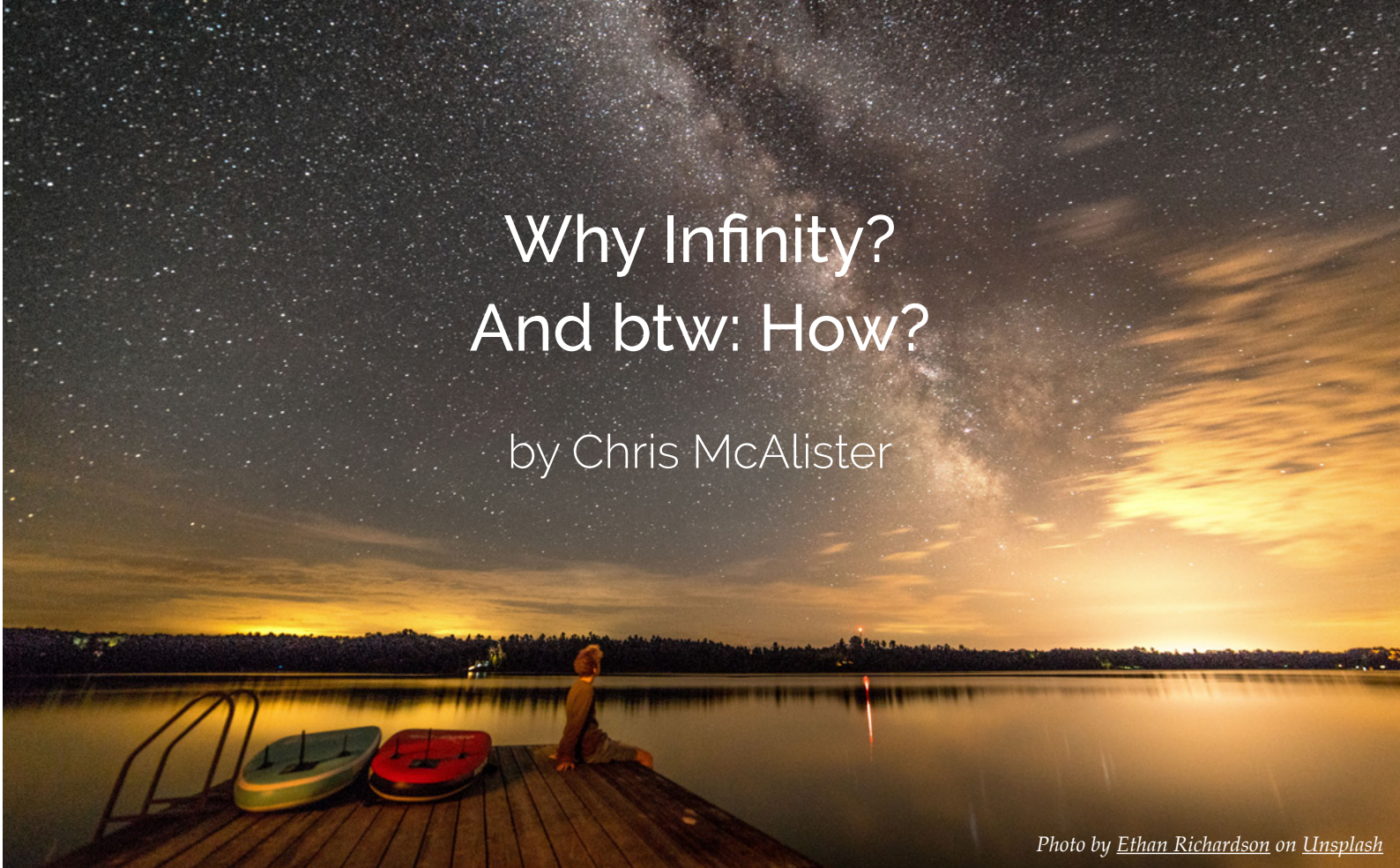
Mihael Mamychshvili

has spent the past 25 years exploring, researching, learning and working with the effects of traumatic events on the body-mind. A registered shiatsu therapist, he has personally treated more than 15,000 people with trauma and chronic pain. He is the founder of Angel Hands Integrative Centre, and created the NeuroPath Reset Method, an integrative methodology to work with the physiological, emotional, psychological and spiritual effects of traumatic events on the body-mind.

Mihael has worked closely with the cardiology department at Vancouver General Hospital, and trauma organisations that work with frontline workers, soldiers, addiction, sexual abuse, violence and torture.

<https://angelhands.ca>





Why Infinity? And btw: How?

by Chris McAlister

Photo by [Ethan Richardson](#) on [Unsplash](#)

If a man is to live, he must be all alive, body, soul, mind, heart and spirit.

Thomas Merton

When I was 15, our religious education teacher was called away and the headmaster stood in for him. I was indifferent — neither were remotely inspiring or interesting. However, the headmaster grew immeasurably in my estimation that day.

First, he taught us about the power of language, giving us concrete examples of how words could be used to create opposing effects with their emotional charge. My eyebrows lifted. Then he talked of infinity. If we believed in infinity, he suggested, then logically we had to believe that somewhere in a far-off universe an elderly man was talking to a classroom full of boys about infinity. My eyebrows took off and took a very long time indeed to settle back into their normal place.

When we think of what infinity might mean, it is easy for us to quickly get lost in the mind-boggling impossibility of conceptualising it. Again, logic tells us clearly that our mind cannot embrace, far less describe, infinity.

Then it would not be infinity, would it?

Unless, of course, our minds are also in some way infinite ...

Our minds are indeed infinite and that is the subject of this text and the investigation it will seek to describe. First, however, we need to briefly come to terms with what mind means and how that connects to the body.

Mind cannot be adequately defined, if indeed it is infinite. So, what are we doing here? Simply acknowledging that we have a conceptual situation that we need to patiently — and rationally — explore.

If mind implies mental, then we know that any mental state we can possibly enter into is a part of mind. Recall for a moment the prodigious range of mental states you have experienced during your time on earth and you begin to enter the world we are opening up. Try now to imagine the mental states another person you know has experienced. Now do the same thing with an imaginary

person in Africa, in Asia, in the jungles of South America, on the snowy steppes of Siberia. You get the point. Limitless.

Now, what I want to do is bring you into your body. First, place a finger lightly on your forehead, between your eyes. Take one breath, release your finger, rest for a milli-second and come back to me here in the text. Savour that momentary experience and bring it with you.

Now place your palm on the flat of your breastbone. Again, breathe in once, release the palm and relax for a moment. Bring your experience with you and rejoin me in the text as we move downwards.

Place the same palm very firmly on your belly, comfortably below your navel: one breath, release the palm, relax briefly and bring your experience with you as you rejoin me here.

So, what did we learn there? That was a lightning introduction to (or reminder of) body awareness. You will have noted three quite distinct impressions. Each of them had its own unique set of markers. Naturally, this kind of exercise is better conducted over slightly longer time periods, but this rapid version should suffice to make the point: you are very definitely capable of evoking quite distinct experiences simply by touching separate parts of your body. Why is this so?

Well, I was hoping you'd ask that but also rather dreading it. Hoping, because it leads us into all kinds of interesting and rewarding thought lines and avenues of enquiry. Dreading, because they are infinite and cannot be measured, categorised or catalogued — I cannot possibly hope to describe them for you. What I can do, however, is lead you towards discovering and embracing some of them.

The brief exercise we performed together is a tiny taster of what is possible when we begin to explore the dimensions within us. A human being is a world of worlds within other worlds. This is an insight mystics and visionaries have described through countless eons of human existence and one that never ceases to stun,

amaze and delight on rediscovery.

Within Oriental medicine, we find a phenomenon that is pedagogically perfect for the next phase of our exploration: the acupoints. These are small places on the body that have been described for several millennia with a fairly staggering degree of uniformity.

In the West, they are named after the meridians they lie along and the bodily organs they eventually connect with.

In the East, they each possess individual names and some of them are mightily suggestive. Just for example, let's name three: Spirit Gate, Room of Perseverance and Great Rushing.

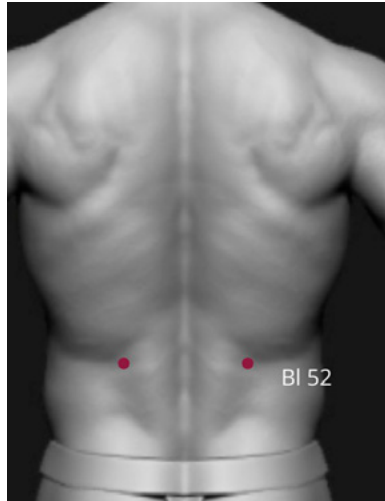
Spirit Gate is on the Heart meridian and lies on the wrist crease, near the ulnar bone. Room of Perseverance is on the back, in the lumbar area and lies on the Bladder meridian. Great Rushing is on the foot, in the flesh just up from the big toe and in between the metatarsals.

These three points I chose at random just for the effect their names create in the imagination. They are fairly well-known points and often used in practice. What are they used for, you ask? Well, HT 7, Spirit Gate, is often employed in the event of mental, emotional or spiritual fatigue, confusion and weakness. Room of Perseverance, BL 52 is most often used as a support point in chronic lumbago. LIV 3, Great Rushing, is commonly used for situations where too much pressure in the body is causing symptoms such as headaches, menstrual discomfort and high blood pressure.

That's a pretty impressive start, I think many would agree. It is merely the tip of the iceberg. What we just did was look at a few of the typical types of pathology these points are commonly used to counteract. If we look beyond pathology and instead explore function, we will discover the infinite realms these points lead us into.



Shenmen, HT 7
Spirit Gate



Zhi Shi, BL 52
Room of Perseverance



Taichong, LIV 3
Extreme Rushing

Images: Mindbodyify

Spirit Gate

Spirit Gate is called Shen Men in Chinese. Shen is the name given to the particular spiritual frequency or band of frequencies associated with the Heart. It denotes a highly ethereal set of vibrations that encompass everything from mind to memory to acuity and far beyond. Given that this is the case, the following story will not be surprising.

A woman complains of poor skin, bad hair, terrible relations with her mother and a host of bothersome life trials. She is treated in a relatively symptomatic fashion, from which fair to middling results are the yield. After a few treatments, the therapist decides to be a tad bolder. Lightly grasping his needle, he approaches the lady's wrist. He places the tip of the needle on the crease next to the ulnar bone and, on the outbreath, swiftly inserts the needle. There is a momentary pause then a momentous explosion.

What happens next is that the woman leaps up off the table, wrenching the puny needle out of her arm, grabs her clothes and, crying, storms out of the building. The therapist is left, baffled and unpaid, wondering what just happened.

Many weeks later, she returns. Her hair looks great, her skin is glowing. She has spoken to her mother and ironed out a few kinks in their relationship. She is smiling and apologetic.

She is also thankful and is sure to pay her bill. The therapist in question is rewarded with a story to pass on to future generations and a fist full of lessons learned: Do not underestimate the power of the needle, the might of pent-up spiritual frustration or the self-healing mechanisms residing on every single level of the human being — and housed in these miraculous micro-worlds known as acupoints. Ever.

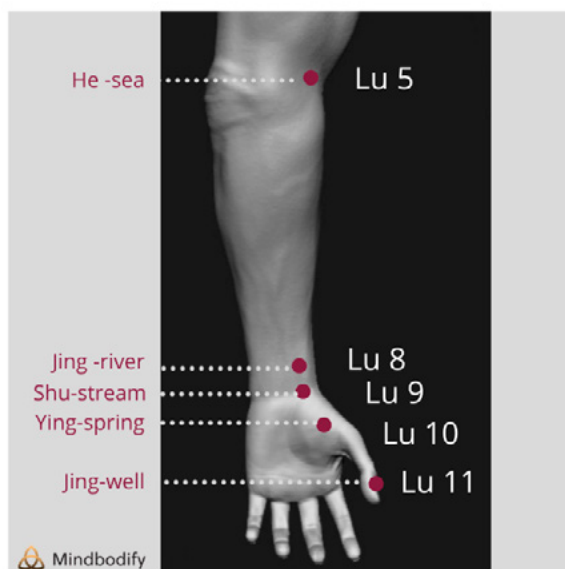
Room of Perseverance

Let us now turn to Room of Perseverance. The point was taught to me way back when (by the above therapist) as a supporting point for chronic lumbago. Fortunately, I was not only annoyingly curious but curiously intrigued by the Chinese characters being employed in the names of these points.

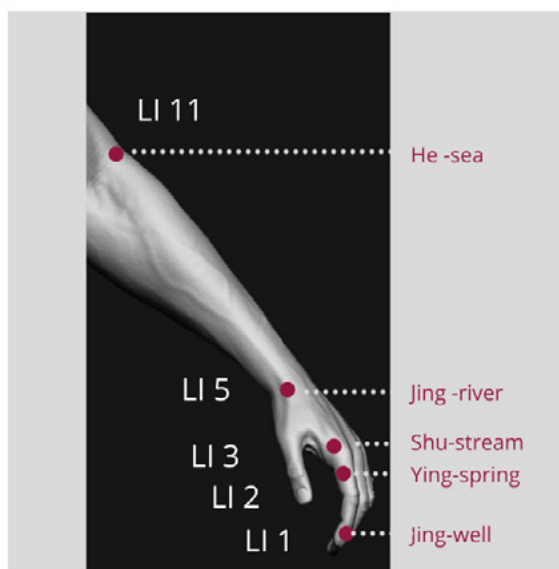
Looking at the chart of the back, I located the point down at the level of the lumbar — at the level of the Kidney back point on the waistline, but slightly further out and just below the ribs, to be exact. That explained the lumbago part but was only the beginning. Considering the first word in the name: Zhi, something compelled me to look up its meaning in my dictionary: will, persistence, perseverance ... Aha! This I recognised as pertaining to the psycho-spiritual aspect of the Kidney meridian.

The Antique Points

Lung Meridian



Large Intestine Meridian



And what about this second, parallel line on the back, slightly further away from the spine upon which it is located? Let us take a closer look. The closer you look, the more you see, right? What did I see as I traced the outer line upwards towards the portion of the back between the shoulder blades? The word Shen leapt out at me. Shen as in spirit, as in the set of ethereal vibrations described above. Interesting ... Checking the other points on the same line, all five of the psycho-spiritual qualities relating to the five elemental energies appeared. In descending order: Po, Shen, Hun, Yi and Zhi

Well, well, well! From that day onwards, Room of Perseverance ceased abruptly to be a support point for chronic lumbago. It became the primary point for boosting the morale, the will to continue, the power of perseverance in people who came to visit me. Open your mind for a moment and ask yourself how many people and situations this might be helpful for ...

Great Rushing

Turning to Great Rushing, we see parallel worlds unfold in the form of one point located far, far from the head — seat of the mind and consciousness according to some ... Great Rushing is called Tai Chong in Chinese. Tai means not only big but massive, huge, vast.

Let's call it great. Chong means original thrust, deep circulation, embryonic momentum. Rushing is a word some use to encompass all of this. Fine by me. My own image of what it means is symbolised by the "Redrum" scene from *The Shining*: pulsing, welling, accumulating, overflowing, dam-busting floods of blood. You get the idea.

This point was used inappropriately by a student of mine once: she used it on an anaemic young man, who proceeded to almost pass out. Her mistake was not solely in its use per se. She used it as the first point in the treatment. Lesson learnt, she told the class and we agreed that she would probably not be using that point on anaemic people as a first point of choice. It is simply too strong.

As noted above, it alleviates pressure, but if the pressure is already way too low, then it will have an adverse effect. When I now inform you that it is a highly effective point in boosting the Blood, you will then object that the point should then be an optimal one for anaemic conditions. Indeed. However, it is too strong on its own as a first point, since it initiates colossal amounts of movement. It requires stabilising points first, so that the system can assimilate the stimulus intended for the Blood.

So, Blood. Hmmm, now that's an intriguing word to throw around, isn't it? What do we mean by Blood? Certainly, we mean a thick red liquid coursing through the circulatory system and passing through the heart. More than that, we mean a deep source of nourishment that provides support to structures all over the body and able to provide enough physicality to house not only the aforementioned Shen but also the Hun.

And what might Hun be? Do you recall that I named the five psycho-spiritual qualities of which Shen and Zhi were two? One of them is called Hun. It pertains to the Wood element, the Liver and Gall Bladder meridians, and the ability of a human being to plot a course through life and continually re-evaluate that course in a creative fashion. To aid in this re-evaluation, the Hun provides vision, dreams and imagination. The Chinese draw Hun as a spirit that floats on the clouds ... permanently impermanent. My own version of Hun travels on a magic carpet. Always loved that Aladdin story ...

Applying this to LIV 3, Great Rushing, we therefore anticipate that not only does it influence the Blood but also the Hun. Vision implies sight and yes, LIV 3 is often associated with treatments for sight impairment, but here we are talking also of inner sight. We have in mind the ability of a person to see things from inside: to visualise. Some even go so far as to say LIV 3 has a beneficial effect on the third eye.



What have we learnt through this random (I promise you) selection of three points scattered across the surface of the body? We have learnt that the points are distinct from each other but partake of distal relations towards each other. They are connected by geography and by function. They are connected on levels ranging from ultra-physical to extremely ethereal. They create networks and they facilitate integrity by allowing functional areas severed by chance and circumstance to realign.

Are there other connections we have not so far named? Yes — many, myriad, multitudinous.

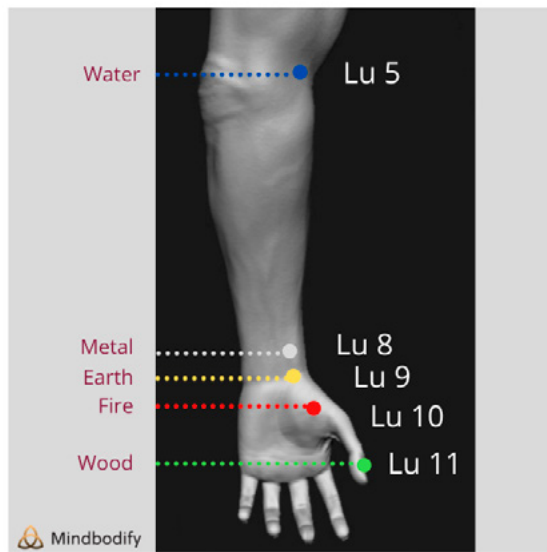
I will name only one before signing off: families. To what am I referring? I am referring to an intriguing facet of Oriental medicine that is sometimes neglected. The points are grouped into categories, or as I prefer to call them — families. We have partially described one of these families. I call them the Spirit points and they run down the outer Bladder channel on the back, parallel with the spine. There are five of them (some say 6) and they are named after the psycho-spiritual aspects of the five elemental energies or transformations: Metal — Po, Fire — Shen, Wood / Tree — Hun, Earth — Yi and Water — Zhi.

You might be curious to know the full names of these points. I would be more than happy to oblige. Po Door is level with the Lung back points. The Hall of the Shen lies next to the Heart equivalents. Hun Gate sits comfortably next to the Liver back points, Abode of the Yi beside the Spleen's ditto and Room of Perseverance all the way down next to the Kidney back points. Those names suggest two types of entrance (Door and Gate) and three varieties of enclosed space (Hall, Abode and Room). This, in itself, opens yet another pathway into the internal workings of Oriental medicine and the human alchemy of being, but we will have to tread that path together on another occasion.

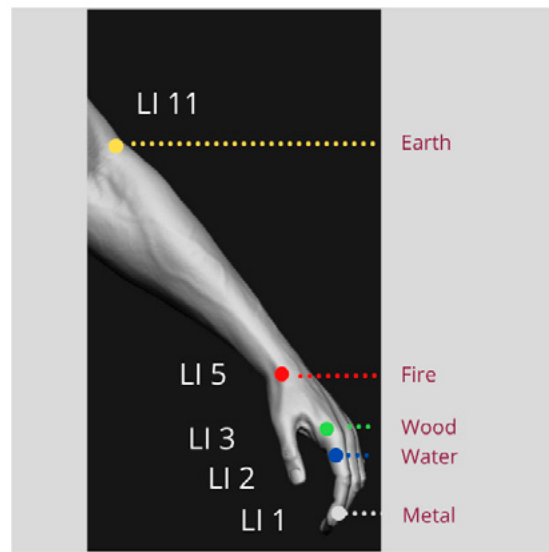
Because now I want to describe one more family grouping — the Source points. These are also called Yuan points, because they are said to connect to Yuan qi or original vitality. They sit uniformly on every single one of the 12 meridians and most of them are fairly near or indeed directly on the wrists and ankles. We have already encountered two of them: HT 7, Spirit Gate and LIV 3, Great Rushing. This implies relationship. Both of these points, since they pertain to the same category or family would, by implication, seem to share certain characteristics and indeed they do. The primary one is exactly the quality of somehow belonging to or being connected to Source.

The 5 Element Points

Lung Meridian



Large Intestine Meridian



The classical explanation is that these are points at which, or through which, a practitioner may aid the body to draw from the well of original vitality to renew the strength of the individual meridian in question. The reverse is equally — though less famously — held to be true. So, while these two points and their 10 brother and sister Source points are on wholly separate meridians, they share a specific characteristic, which unites them into a family grouping we call Yuan or Source points. Needless to say, they are as wildly diverse as they are homogenous — depending on which aspect of their function and personality one chooses to focus.

This brings us to the matter of intention.

There is another family of points which confuse and befuddle not only students but seasoned practitioners of Oriental medicine. They are known as the Antique points. They appear, once again, on each and every meridian but this time we are talking about a series of five points on each channel. They start at the upper edges of the toes or fingernails and continue up to the knee or elbow. They have fairly obscure names in Chinese, but commentators have often likened them to

watercourses that begin modestly, though with huge potential, underground at the nails and develop into formidable waterways by the time they reach the middle joints. The names of the points within this category are thus often rendered as: well, brook, stream, river and sea. Traditionally they have been ascribed functions according to their placement from nail to joint. Each subcategory is said to share certain of these characteristics and treatment strategies were founded upon these distinctions and commonalities.

Simple enough, you might opine. Indeed, though there are precious few left in the world who can theorise appropriately and fewer still who are able to utilise these strategies. Texts differ moreover, and teachings do not tally with any simple ease or beauty ... To make matters considerably more complicated, these exact same points enjoy a completely different identity as a separate family called the Five Element points.

What is meant by this? What is meant is that the exact same five points on all 12 meridians have a distinct identity based on five phase associations. So, simply an overlay, you will suggest ... an overlay, yes indeed, but far from simple.

Let me explain. The Antique points are laid out so that the exact same progression is observable on all meridians from nail to knee or elbow. In contrast, the five element associations ascribed to each point *differ* when it comes to the meridians on the yin as compared to those on the yang surfaces. The yin meridians begin with Wood at the nail, move through Fire and Earth to Metal and become Water as they reach the elbow or knee. The yang meridians begin their journey with Metal, before moving through Water, Wood and Fire and concluding with Earth as they reach knee or elbow.

Do you see the problem here? I cannot simply tell you that all of the Well points at the toenails are Wood, because half of them pertain to Metal. I cannot, with ease and grace, inform you that the Sea points by the elbow belong to Earth because exactly 50% of them belong to Water. My ease dissolves, my grace disperses.

The problem is more correctly viewed as a challenge and the challenge is to look at the proposition on the one hand, and the equal and opposite proposition in the other hand, and say that both are true. Where we are initially tempted to see contradiction, we can instead proceed to paradox and embrace the mind-expanding possibilities inherent in this highly pregnant situation.

Proceeding even further, we may now, armed with intention, investigate the phenomena directly as perceivable qualities residing in specific parts of the body mind and opening up into infinite dimensions within our field of being: Doors to Infinity.

Mindbodify's online course, Doors to Infinity, commenced in 2022. Find out more at:

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Chris McAlister

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