

Living Meridians

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In the course of treating a meridian, one will notice that different parts of this meridian feel very differently from one another. In fact, every touched spot differs from every other spot on this and all the other meridians.

It is not only the state of the meridian-energy and the energetic organ behind it that influence this spot in its quality and its reaction to touch, but also every relevant factor in the life of the person. These factors include, for example, the function, which the spot takes in the movement mechanism, its physiological functions, and/or the spiritual experiencing of the person.

If I am in the meridian with my awareness (which is a prerequisite for working with a meridian), I am also connected with the energetic function of the meridian/ organ energy. In this moment, all the other above-mentioned factors lose importance. Although they still flow into the work with the meridian, and, of course, they are affected by touch just like the meridian itself.

Not every spot on the meridian is of the same importance in the treatment. The ones which are of a special importance are interruptions in the vibration-field or the flow of the meridian. To make this more understandable, I would like to talk about the substance of meridians.

Meridians are space, vibrating

rooms in which every spot communicates freely with every other spot (in the "ideal case"). Depending on the situation and the demands that the life of a human puts on them, they will vibrate in different ways in different places. In some spots it will be free, in others its vibration will be restricted (e.g. directed in a certain direction). These principles are not only valid for the meridians, but for the energetic body as a whole, which is also a vibrating space. In this way, the meridian is a structure of the energetic body.

The forming of the energetic space into patterns of different energetic and vibrational freedom is required for the many quests in life; and because of this, it is normal and healthy. The evolving patterns are always expressions of the life of a human and in return influence his or her way of experiencing and feeling.

This also shows in the physical body, because the energetic body and the physical body, in essence, are one. In this game, each one mirrors the situation of the other. On the physical level, freely vibrating energetic-parts seem not so noticeable. They equal the "ideal" of our body, so to speak, that we very often are not aware of. More noticeable are the spots with a restricted vibration. On a physical level, these spots can manifest, for example, as rigidity, armoring, fullness, emptiness, and in many other ways.

Most of these manifestations of limitation in vitality are also not very noticeable. However, if they exist over a long time period, are very defined, or regard important functions and life processes, they will show themselves in a more defined manner in the physical body, and in a specific quality of touch in the course of the meridian.

Wideness and Resonance - Perception and Touch are One

For the Shiatsu treatment, these areas are of great importance. Through the (partial) release of an "interruptions" rigidity and un-liveliness through touch, the field of Ki of the whole meridian is influenced. If an un-lively part can integrate itself better into the greater field of Ki and vibrate with it, the light levity of the whole field will noticeably increase.

Working with most of these interruption areas normally only shows a rather small effect. Other ones, on the other hand, can turn into the most important, deciding areas of a Shiatsu treatment. It is the reaction to his/her touch that tells the experienced practitioner if an "interruption" is of importance for the treatment.

Shiatsu means to give freedom to areas with restricted aliveness through simple touch and simple presence. This also means the freedom to develop further – and to overcome restrictions that were set up through the "system" of this human to preserve balance or for some other reason. Prerequisite for such a positive effect of our touch, is the perception of energetic and physical phenomena, which indicate such

interruptions, so one can work "on the right spots".

Just as important counts the ability to touch these areas exactly in their center once one has found them. This happens when the practitioner sinks in deeply (which means physically – after all, Shiatsu is bodywork), and through his presence, his simple being there *in* the depth of the area to be treated. The so called "deep rhythm" of Shiatsu, the conscious and relaxed touch in the center of the meridian, the "giving space" in the "right depth," as described in the script *Inner Techniques*, are all important on this path.

Long Fingers - "Seeing" the Meridian Before Touching It

With the technique of the "elongated fingers", it becomes possible to get into contact with the depth of the meridian before actually touching it. As with all energetic exercises, it is basically very simple. On the other hand, it may be difficult in the beginning if the practitioner does not yet have the experience of wideness in his own body.

Prerequisite for this exercise is a good knowledge of the course of the meridians, because one will not "see" where the meridians run on the body surface. It is about recognizing what is waiting for me in the depths where I know the meridian runs.

The principle of this technique is that the practitioner imagines the fingers of the hand he is treating with to grow about 4-5 cm. The main instrument of this exercise is made up

by his forearm, wrist, hand, and elongated fingers. It is this instrument that he moves back and forth over the body surface in a horizontal manner, imagining, that while doing this, his elongated fingers are gliding through the body of the client. This is not only a mental visualization, but with a lively imagination it is reality. Physically, the body, its torso, arms, and legs are solid; but energetically, they are but rooms through which one can travel with one's imagination, and, in this way, explore them.

When the focus of the elongated fingers goes through the meridian in one place, it will often "feel" different than going through the area surrounding. Quite often, there is a certain resistance against the imagined movement. Sometimes it feels a little sticky; more seldom it feels lighter and emptier. The practitioner "sees" or "feels" in which depth all of this happens, and where he wants to touch when he will sink in physically a moment later.

After having moved back and forth a couple of times, and thus clearly recognizing and getting in contact with the quality in the depth, you sink in with your finger or your thumb and precisely touch the center of the spot. This way of getting in contact before the physical touch greatly increases the exactness and effectiveness of that touch. In the same way, one can determine the depth and the center of a *Tsubo* pretty accurately and "see" it before one touches it in the depth.

To make this work more rewarding, a couple of additional things should be considered. For one, the forearm, wrist, and elongated fingers must really form a unit, a unit

that is strong but not rigid. What moves back and forth is always the unity of these elements. Would the practitioner only move his hand back and forth (like waving good-bye), this unity would be interrupted in the wrist. In this way, it would be impossible that the elongated fingers would really move through the body.

In addition, the movement must always be parallel to the surface of the body in whose depths the meridian runs. One should be very specific with this; because if the angle is a little bit off, one will not get the information one is looking for.

The diagonal movement should be big enough, and go over the location of the meridian for the same distance in both directions. When the practitioner perceives the specific quality of the meridian while passing through, he should let go of that feeling right away. He should go away from the meridian quickly, and trust that he will find it again when he comes back. Especially in the beginning when one is not so secure with one's perception yet, many tend to try to hold the feeling. Holding on to it, though, leads to a restriction of one's own energetic space, and through this, to the loss of the possibility to get in contact with the energy – perception becomes impossible.

One's own posture is also of great importance for this exercise. The torso of the practitioner should be open and facing the examined area. Only like this can one "see," because energetic "seeing" is always happens within the energetic and physical space of one's own body. Postures, which enable this are mostly very simple.

Often though, the torso is tilted in the area of the solar plexus (or a little above it) and the solar plexus is pulled back. This happens if the treating person wants to avoid direct contact with the energetic field of the client. Nevertheless, to perceive energetically, it is needed that we meet the perceived totally. Sometimes this takes courage. It might be helpful in this context to imagine that it is not only the fingers that are moving through there, but your whole body - your whole person.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the awareness that travels through the patient is rooted in the whole body, and mainly in the torso of the practitioner. It is not the awareness of the mind! The mind awareness would not have the strength to build such a field of awareness as is needed here. For the awareness that is rooted within the body, however, this is easy. For many people, this form of self-presence is unknown, but can be learned easily.

For most people, it is difficult in the beginning to really be in the body of the other with the presence of their own body. But, as mentioned, physically our body is solid, energetically it is space. Often, it is fear that restricts the practitioner. This may be due to the fact that the presence, although open and wide, is very determined, not to say radical. It does not build up in the body of the client by and by, it is simply just there. Saying yes to this, also means saying yes to yourself in this very moment.

We do need also our mind for this exercise, however. For one, this is because the mind directs and leads the

focus of the physical space of the practitioner. And, for the other, all this that we perceive must be recognized, judged, and interpreted.

“Seeing” Connections and Interruptions

Meridians are energetic space. As said already, I can only get in contact with it, if I allow wideness and space, if I become space myself (techniques with which to develop these skills are described in the script “inner techniques”). Then I *experience* the room of the meridian of the other person, and I can step into resonance with it. Such a wide presence and perception, already has a healing (which means liberating) effect.

On top of this, with the help of conscious attention, the practitioner can direct his presence and guide it into certain areas of the client. He can, according to the needs of the treatment, work with a variety of different qualities of awareness, and, like this, enable different reactions.

Perception and touch become one. In the same moment as the practitioner is “in the room” and perceives it, he is also “touching,” and, thus, triggers change. This is possible because aware, wide attention, by nature, is pure perception - and that means pure energy. Through getting into contact with the client in an aware *wideness*, the practitioner gets a natural link to relevant information in the life of the client. Through getting into contact with the energetic room of the other (specifically of the meridian), one also perceives how this room is structured.

The relaxed wideness inside the practitioner, which searches the connection to the wideness of the other one and steps into resonance with it, lets the practitioner feel restrictions in the liveliness of the vibrational space (he can quasi "see" it). This happens by itself, without further strain, through the simple act of "just being there."

The interruptions in the vibration field of a meridian become especially easily visible when the practitioner uses both hands, to let the space unfold. This happens when he visualizes a connection between the two touched areas in the course of the meridian. When this goes well, after a bit of practice, he might have the impression of holding a room in his hands - to be touching it from the sides.

In the beginning, it is mental concentration that creates such visualizations. Later with more experience mental awareness merely initiates them. Then they gain their strength through the wideness that happens in the practitioner. In essence, it's all about body awareness; the intellect only plays a guiding role. One cannot make such connecting rooms, one can only let them happen, step back inside oneself, and "give them space."

Within those connecting rooms the areas of restricted liveliness suddenly become more visible. At first, it is only a suspicion, like in a dream; sometimes one only has an idea about the direction in which an interruption might lie. Since energetic phenomena are basically unlimited (contrary to the phenomena of the material) and

connected with everything in the infinite energetic space, this perception is flavored with a certain blurriness.

This counts for every energetic perception, and is often interpreted as insecurity or even misperception in the beginning. With more and more experience, the practitioner will lay aside this insecurity and notice that the relative blurriness is, on the contrary, proof of an accurate perception. Then especially in the work with both hands, interruptions in the vibrating room become clearly visible and directly treatable. This happens by itself, without further strain, through the simple "just being there."

Now it becomes clearer that energetic interruptions always also show physically - and physical expressions always have an energetic equivalent. For example, an empty spleen/ pancreas meridian might hint towards its condition through a physical bloatedness. At the same time, the physical bloatedness feels noticeably energy-less and inactive and also "looks" that way!

The perception of physical irregularities, for example in the surface structure of the skin, points toward a special quality in the energetic structure of the meridian that runs through this spot in the body. In the perception of the meridian, maybe there is emptiness there that shows itself physically in the skin through a rough, darker spot.

These are only attempts to describe the energetic/ physical unity. Words will always stay unsatisfying for this; in the end, the unity is only to be

experienced directly. But the effect of Shiatsu is based on this, because in Shiatsu, body and energy work are one. An experienced Shiatsu practitioner will perceive the physical as well as the energetic expression of the restriction or the interruption.

Swift and light

With another technique, it is even easier to localize the places of interruption in the course of a meridian. The practitioner runs along the meridian about 2-4 cm above the skin with the backside of his hand (I prefer the backside, but it is also possible with the inside of the hand). Like this, he will notice places that are "different."

The movement should be done relatively quickly, with a relaxed hand and wrist. Most importantly, it should be done with a wide and relaxed spirit. If the intention of wanting to search and find is too strong, one will perceive nothing because the intention of searching limits one's own space of perception. The wide relaxed space in the practitioner is the prerequisite for contact with the energetic in general.

The technique should not be done too hastily or too slowly. Quick, and with great relaxedness and lightness is the right way. Always *after* the hand has gone over a chosen sequence, one "sees," "feels," or "suspects" special areas. (This should be well understood: not during going over, but afterwards - right afterwards) Often our everyday awareness is not so sure about the exact location of such a "felt" area. Only when the practitioner allows his "intuition" free play, it will

suddenly become possible for him to localize an area precisely with one finger, swift and light.

After finding such a spot, he looks at it more carefully. His energetic perception (which is always also physical) lets him discover many astounding things. Certain places appear full or empty, strength-less or full of strength, bloated, hopeless or hopeful, loud or quiet etc. The list of qualities that are potentially to be found in the course of a meridian, and the words to describe them, are infinite.

Possibly, the practitioner has an impulse right away as to how he wants to touch this area. This is good and he should follow his impulses so he can collect experiences in dealing with interruptions. We all have a natural knowledge of how we want to deal with such areas in our touch; we just have to discover it, then trust it by following it.

Which of the interruptions is especially important for a treatment is often not clear in the beginning. The practitioner gets hints, even before the touch, which evolve out of the conscious (which means energetic) contact with the area. However, often it only becomes clear with the touch what kind of value the area has for the whole vibrational field. The practitioner will receive the information from the direct local reaction, but also from energetic or defined physical reactions of the whole person, his breathing, and others. Quite often, one will discover the importance of a special restriction only after the treatment for example through the effect on the theme of the treatment.

An important principle of this local work is to always go to the center of an interruption, may this interruption be by nature Kyo or Jitsu. The center is the most reactive place and touching it triggers the biggest change. Shiatsu can be defined as the art of touching the most important places immediately and directly. The center may wander under the touch, sometimes one might even have the impression it is playing cat and mouse, and wants to pull itself away from the touch of the practitioner. It is important to be able to follow and not lose track, if that is what feels right.

The goal of the treatment is always to offer more freedom to this area, so it can evolve out of its momentary rigidity and develop further. The wideness in the practitioner offers this additional freedom. That is why it is important to keep the wideness in treating such an area, regardless if the spot needs to be held for a long time in depth, connected, mobilized, stimulated, "woken up," massaged, or contacted in some other way.

Using the possibilities of Kyo and Jitsu

It is pointless to try to list the possibilities of working with Kyo and Jitsu in the situation of an interruption - the possibilities are too broad. More importantly, each and every spot needs its own quality of touch. As mentioned above, luckily, humans have a natural knowledge about the right touch. This natural knowledge must be (re)discovered and used for good Shiatsu.

It might be helpful though, to

make some basic thoughts about this and to put the possible touches into a simple overview. So, there are always two options of either treating an area locally (quasi for itself), or to connect it in treatment with another area, and through offering this extra space allow the freedom to become more concrete.

Contrary to a wide popular opinion about the work with local Kyo and Jitsu areas, there is, basically, the possibility for every spot to be treated slowly or swiftly. One will mostly treat a Jitsu area more swiftly to persuade the held ki to move. But, it is very well possible to hold the same Jitsu for a long time, stepping toward it with wideness as an opposite to its nature, which is narrowness. This works especially in connection with another Kyo or Jitsu area. If one observes patiently, one can experience how the Jitsu lets go and a little bit gives up its narrowness.

This patient holding also offers itself for a Kyo area especially when a deep Kyo for example is nourished, calmed, or encouraged in this way and consequently does not have to separate itself so much from the rest of the field any more. For other (especially not so empty) Kyo qualities, it might be more accurate to stimulate in depth or even to provoke the spot in order to attract ki. Such stimulations only fulfill their purpose when they take place in a concrete connection with the depth of the Kyo. Stimulations on the surface would scatter and/ or create restlessness in the client and consequently should be avoided when working with a kyo.

The connection with another interruption area gives additional possibilities for the treatment. Jitsu in

connection with the right Kyo (there is more than one for every Jitsu, and one is always right next to it) will give up a part of its decisive tightness and concentration. Sometimes it just melts away...

If one connects a Kyo with another Kyo, this offers the chance to create a connecting space in the depth of the communicating level, where the meridian is. This often has a deep

effect on the client. This illustrates the fact, that Kyo does not mean anything negative. It's special meaning and the value of the Kyo in a treatment is that it enables access to the depth, to the communicative level. It is the open door to the real nature of my client.

In the following, I would like to formulate a short overview about the intercourse with Kyo and Jitsu interruptions:

KYO

Working Locally:

- * "Holding" in the deep contact
- * "Stimulate," "encourage" etc. (only when in deep contact)

Connecting with other areas

- * Connect Kyo w/ Kyo (in a deep connection)
- * Connect Kyo w/ Jitsu (more seldom)

JITSU

Working Locally:

- * "Working dynamically" in contact with the center of the Jitsu
- * "Bring into movement"
Holding with light but precise contact,
- while doing this "offering space"

Connecting with other areas

- * Connect Jitsu w/ Kyo (Jitsu gets more freedom through connection)
- * Connect Jitsu w/ Jitsu (practitioner takes herself back and waits)

This list only gives a rough orientation. If one takes it too literally, it loses its sense. In the end, the practitioner has to ask himself in every situation (and this is meant literally) what is the right approach for this interruption, and then follow his feeling. If one is not so familiar with this, one will have to try many times to see, by the reaction and the way it feels, what is right. But also, experienced practitioners will always experiment, make mistakes, discover new things, and develop new approaches. This is how Shiatsu, after decades of practice, stays lively and interesting.

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