

Is there an unspecific effect of Shiatsu?

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Over the course of the years, I have come to the understanding that the theories and techniques of shiatsu represent technical instruments. They allow a space between the therapist and the client to unfold, where liberation and healing can happen.

This space isn't dependant on the method that I use in shiatsu, or even on whether I use shiatsu or another method like cranio-sacral work, rolfing or psychotherapy. Since I think that this space is the most important phenomenon in shiatsu, it is my opinion that there is an unspecific effect of shiatsu, which is very, very important.

The clarity of the person giving the treatment, while in contact with his/her clients, ultimately decides the outcome. What is of particular importance here is whether or not the practitioner understands the basics of the method, if what he/she is doing makes sense to him/her respectively, and if he/she is convinced that it is an effective and useful method.

The energetic field of the practitioner seems to become clearer and has a greater effect on the person being treated once he/she makes sense of these ideas. The intent of the practitioner, which becomes possible through this awareness, seems to be more capable of having a guiding influence on the system of the receiver.

It is also important for the following reason. The person giving the treatment must have the subjective feeling of mastering the method and being able to perform it well. Such a conviction will come most easily if one actually really masters technique and theory. This conviction can also come when the security is nourished by an outside source, e.g. through the depth of the contact with the other person. The latter is much less common.

With that said, I definitely don't want to make the statement that the primary thing for a healing effect in shiatsu is that the practitioner imagines him/herself to be doing a great job. If one relies on plain imagination, he/she will create a diffused field where clarity and aimed action aren't possible. It is

clear that the application of specific theories and techniques is certainly not secondary.

The field, which is created with a secure understanding of theory, and where practicality combines with openness and clarity in contact with another person, is a clear, and sometimes sharp, field. This space will provide stability. Thus, it is important for a good practitioner to master the theory and technique of the method he/she is using.

Common shiatsu practice in Europe usually includes a form of body diagnosis, such as the Hara diagnosis. The Hara diagnosis enables the practitioner to find a specific focus and thus offer more clarity in the treatment. A clear focus enables us to act in a way that is based on the current situation of the client; we are then capable of perceiving changes as they happen. If we succeed in working with a client in this way, security and clarity come and, in turn, fertilize the treatment in the therapeutic space.

Shiatsu, which is clear and secure in this way, is also possible without a Hara diagnosis or similar methods. The practitioner may have other instruments to diagnose the current situation of the client in order to establish a concrete starting point of his/her treatment - e.g. through the perception of the energetic space of the client.

This is the reason why it is not important if one finds *the right result* in the Hara diagnosis. In fact, there is no such objective right result. Also, the Hara diagnosis doesn't make any neutral statements about which of the energetic organs and meridians *must* be treated in a given situation. Different practitioners, especially if they have gone through their education in different schools, will very often come to a different result in the same Hara at the same time. The value of the Hara diagnosis in shiatsu - apart from allowing the practitioner to easily find a clear focus in a treatment - lies in that it

offers a possibility to individually feel and understand connections and engage in lively contact with the client more easily through that.

Of course, working with meridians is also of great importance in meridian-oriented shiatsu. The question is, "What *is* the right way to work?" Some practitioners use the classical meridian system of TCM, others the extended Masunagas. Yet others follow Endo, a student of Masunaga's, who said that there are 24 channels on each arm and leg that need to be respected. Or how about Ted Saito, who differentiates between two grades of disturbances, which lets the traditional meridians take completely different courses? Who is right and what is needed to be able to give good and right shiatsu?

The answer is that all of them are right and one can work well with each of the methods – if it offers concrete access to the other person. From there, it is not so important which of the many possible paths one chooses.

So, according to this, what is crucial for a good treatment is that the mind of the practitioner has access to clear theories and techniques. These concepts have to make sense to him/her and must be mastered to the fullest extent possible. This offers the client the freedom to take other paths in difficult physical, psychological or social situations. That is why it is mandatory to fulfill the specific requirements of the system and to follow the respective demands and rules. When the viewpoint becomes wider with years of experience, one can recognize that it is not important which system one follows as long as one finds a clear orientation in his/her work.

If we look beyond certain methods, propagated by certain teachers, we recognize that other things are most important for good and supportive shiatsu. This includes the ability for openness and inner calmness, centering and serenity, and the ability of the person giving the treatment to feel and experience him/herself in his/her own body. Only this can make it possible to experience the person one is working with. Authenticity is important, as well as honesty and love for life. It is valuable to not regard the other as a disordered system, which must be repaired in a highly skilled manner, but rather as a

human being that is already perfect whom I may accompany on a part of their life journey and can possibly support.

Also, for me personally, the ability to meet the client in his/her deep spaces is important. To work like this is a unique session; one can follow it or not, depending on whether one experiences it as useful, supportive and satisfying.

Wilfried Rappenecker for the Second European Shiatsu Congress Kiental 2007