

[The Health Series: #6 Needles are not the point.](#)

[March 17, 2017](#)

I'm excited to share this month's essay on acupuncture with you. Introduced by teacher of personal development programs, practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and a treasured friend, Jane Olynyk.

Introduction

I was fortunate to learn about energy, acupuncture and healing from the two incredible men who wrote this article. Jock McKeen, a physician and acupuncturist, and Bennett Wong, a psychiatrist, pioneered the relationship between body, mind and spirit incorporating both eastern and western forms of thought into their unique approach to healing.

They proposed that the relationship with ourselves and each other are the foundation of healing, whatever methodology used.

Their work continues on at [The Haven Institute](#) on Gabriola Island, of which I have the honor of teaching at.

Jane Olynyk, DTCM, Registered Acupuncturist

Needles are not the point

A Proposal for a Dialogical Understanding of Acupuncture Therapy, presented at the 6th International Congress of Chinese Medicine, San Francisco, April 28 , 1997.

Most acupuncture theory is mechanistic, proposing that release of energy comes through insertion and manipulation of needles. Yet, the efficacy of treatment varies with different clients, and with different practitioners. Why is this? There is no widely accepted explanation for these variations. Usually, emphasis on practitioner training has been on better point location or more or less stimulation.

We propose that the client – not the practitioner or the needle – does the healing. This occurs when the client becomes open and vulnerable, responsive in energy to the self and the environment. When a person is open, the energy fixations that underlie disease states can release.

The personality is an expression of habituated conformations of the pattern of the energy body. Personal attitudes and habits can rigidify into chronic muscular and connective tissue tension – producing “blockages” in the energy, which manifest as illness. Illness is an expression of frozen energy, occurring when the energy body closes, or rigidifies. To heal, the person needs to thaw. The factors in the personality that encourage blockage are field dependency and roles and obligations, where the person is satisfying demands external to the self. A person opens up in intimate dialogue with self and others. Thus, the challenge is to help the client to establish intimate relationships with the self, and with others.

The release that permits the thaw can come through a variety of approaches. Acupuncture and moxibustion help to relieve blocks that permit freeing of the energy. In psychotherapy, clients can release pent-up psychological distress, with accompanying energy expression. Reichian breathing work involves unblocking of the energy fixations, with expression of feeling and relief from chronic tension. This can facilitate the opening of the energy body to encourage healing. We have found that deep breathing is very important to achieve maximum benefit from an acupuncture treatment.

Healing occurs in release of tension, with a reduction in fixation of energy. In a dynamic concept of energy, it is not the operation of the needle, but rather the life style of the client that facilitates healing. The relationship between client and practitioner is central to the healing process. The technique of the needle, or the application of electricity are not what make the release – it is the client himself or herself, in the relationship.

Any operation at the points functions as a suggestion to which the client can respond. Indeed, in the proper dynamic, one could sing to the points and help to facilitate release. The factors that the client offers in opening up the blocked energy are breathing, confidence in the relationship, and becoming personally responsible for self and life style.

In our work, we have moved to an educational model, where people can learn to discover themselves through open communication in a group setting. In this environment, acupuncture, breathing and other natural approaches are adjuncts to the life style change that underlies health. Holding back from other people through “walls” and roles is an expression of energy blockage, which can ultimately express itself in illnesses. Abandoning oneself to others, as occurs in compliant, dependent relationships (“fusion”) results in confusion within the self which is often solved by control and defensive mechanisms that further freeze energy. Self-defining boundaries are necessary in maintaining full and healthy energy patterns.

Much of our work involves facilitating communication, and developing skills for releasing the self through open, direct expression. All of our work is done in group setting now; the facilitation of communication is most thorough in this milieu.

Sometimes there is an initial catharsis in the group process; the more substantial work for the individual involves adopting a life style of open and honest communication. The healing comes when people learn to resonate with themselves and each other.

People can learn to heal themselves by learning to release blocked energy through breath and clear interpersonal communication. Their ongoing dialogue with family and friends can establish a pattern of openness that facilitates high level wellness. In the process, people learn to have compassion for themselves in their deepening relatedness to life.

Jock McKeen and Bennet Wong,
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