

Self-Care with Shiatsu and Acupressure

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Tom Swiss, LMT, CP (AOBTA), Dipl. ABT (NCCAOM)

www.EarthTouchShiatsu.com

tms@EarthTouchShiatsu.com

facebook.com/EarthTouchShiatsu

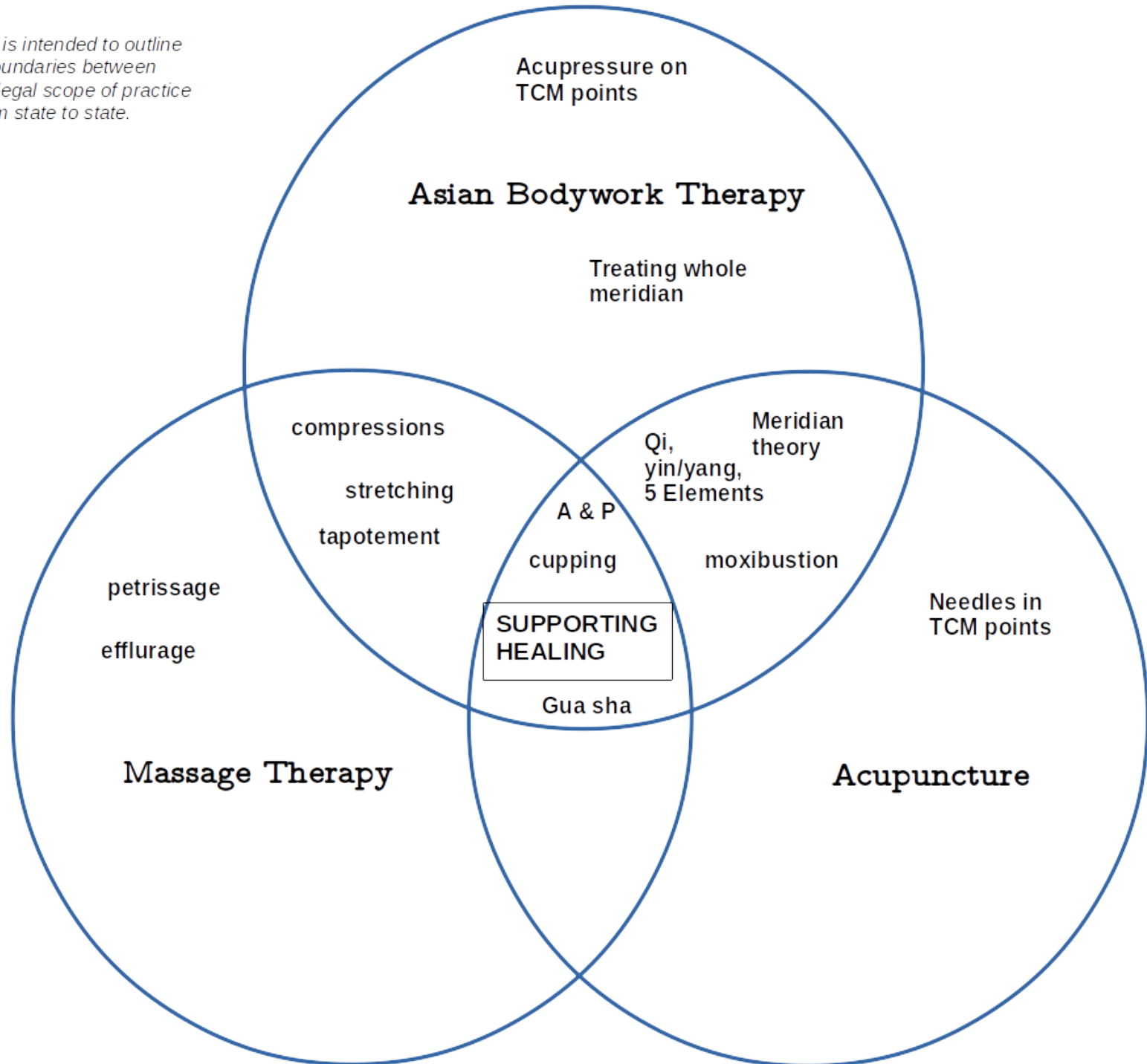
443-803-9621 (voice or SMS)

“Asian Bodywork Therapy (ABT) promotes, maintains, and restores physical, emotional, mental, energetic, and spiritual health by treating the individual within the "Qi and Meridian" principles of Chinese Medicine, through various assessments, treatment strategies, and bodywork techniques.”

“ABT is one of the three branches of Chinese Medicine in which the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) certifies people for entry level into the profession. Treatment may include, but is not limited to, the following: touching, pressing or holding of the body along meridians and/or on acupoints primarily with the hands, stretching, external application of medicinal plants or foods, heat or cold, and dietary or exercise suggestions. Cupping, guasha, moxibustion, and other methods/modalities may also be used by properly trained practitioners.”

– American Organization for Bodywork Therapies of Asia (AOBTA)
aobta.org

This diagram is intended to outline theoretical boundaries between healing arts; legal scope of practice may vary from state to state.



Shiatsu Ryōhō

指圧 療法

しあつ りょうほう

"Finger pressure way of healing"



Shiatsu

Shiatsu is a Japanese word meaning "finger pressure". It is an ancient healing method that uses pressure, stretching, and other manipulations to balance the flow of *qi* through the body. While its historical roots can be traced to China, it evolved into a distinct art in Japan over hundreds of years. Shiatsu is usually performed on a mat on the floor but can be adapted for the table.

Unlike typical "Swedish" massage, no oils or lotions are used and the recipient remains clothed. Light to medium pressure is applied with the thumbs, fingers, and hands along channels or "meridians" to balance and free the flow of physical and mental energy. When appropriate, a shiatsu therapist can create deep pressure with elbows, knees, and feet.

History of Shiatsu

c. 3,000 B.C.E.: Acupressure is used in China, as recorded in point prescriptions found in ancient bone carvings.

c. 400 C.E.: Mastery of bodywork was required for Chinese physicians.

c. 552: Chinese medicine brought to Japan by the Buddhist priest Gan Jin Osho.

1603-1868: Edo period. Peak of manipulative therapies (shiatsu/anma, acupuncture, moxibustion) in Japan. Just as in China thousands of years earlier, mastery of bodywork was required for physicians.

History of Shiatsu

1614: Sugiyama Waichi born. Blind since childhood, Sugiyama became one of the greatest healers of his time. After he healed the Shogun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi of a painful abdominal ailment that had baffled other physicians, in gratitude the Shogun made massage (*anma*) the special province of the blind.

1868-1911: Introduction of European medicine. Anma declined from a comprehensive treatment system into a simple relaxation massage.

1911: Laws regulating the practice of acupuncture, moxibustion, and anma were introduced, forcing practitioners of old-style anma therapies (*koho anma*) to find new names for their practices to distinguish themselves and avoid legal entanglements.

1915: Tenpaku Temai publishes *Shiatsu Ryōhō*, establishing the term

1919: Tenpaku publishes *Shiatsu Ho*. More popularly successful than his first book, it described a system integrating koho anma, ampuku (abdominal massage), *tsubo* (acu-point) theory, *do-in* (ki cultivation exercises), and Western anatomy and physiology. “People must have high spiritual development to do this Shiatsu technique, because healing disease is not only by fingertip pressure. You have to have spiritual power to do healing by hand.”— Preface, *Shiatsu Ho*



c. 1945: After World War II, traditional Japanese forms of medicine were outlawed by the MacArthur occupation government, after returning POWs told stories about being stuck with needles and burned with moxa. The ban caused much protest. Because there were still many blind Shiatsu/Anma practitioners, Helen Keller interceded with the American government. The ban was rescinded.

1950: Toshiko Phipps became the first qualified Shiatsu therapist to teach in the U.S.

1953: While touring Japan, Marilyn Monroe fell deathly ill. Famous shiatsu teacher Namikoshi Tokujiro was treated her every day for a week. This may have helped lead to the eventual formal recognition by the Japanese government of Namikoshi's style of Shiatsu. Also in 1953, Namikoshi Toru (son of Namikoshi Tokujiro) came to the U.S. to teach at the Palmer Chiropractic College.

1950s-present: Shiatsu spreads all over the world. While the Namikoshi school, which focuses on Western anatomic theory, remains the only style with legal recognition in Japan, other practitioners (ironically, especially in the West) look to rejoin Shiatsu with its roots in ancient Chinese medicine.

Contraindications

- During pregnancy, or while trying to conceive:
 - avoid Spleen 6, Spleen 8 (inside of the lower leg/shin), Large Intestine 4 (webbing of the hand), Gall Bladder 21 (top of shoulders), Bladder 60, Bladder 62, Bladder 67, Kidney 3 (around the ankle bones and the outside edge of the foot)
 - avoid the abdomen and lower back
 - No bilateral pressure over the neck arteries or veins
 - Avoid varicose veins
 - No prolonged pressure over any artery or vein
 - Avoid tumors, lumps of unknown origin, or recent injuries or surgical sites
 - Don't work on someone in the acute stages of an infectious disease, fever
- If in doubt – don't!!**

Fundamental Principles for Self-Shiatsu

- **Apply perpendicular pressure.**
- **Use body weight & leverage** as much as you can. Don't stress on muscle to relax another.
- **Use rhythmic pressure.** Rapid to disperse excess, slow to tonify deficiency. Press, release, move; repeat.
- **Breathe.** Breathe deeply from your hara (belly). Apply pressure in synchronization with the breath.
- **Shibumi.** Simplicity. Unobtrusiveness. Less is more. If it feels like “this is too simple” it’s probably just about right.

Models of the Human Being

Societies develop different medical models – models of the human body, mind, and “spirit” – based on their models of the world.

In the past few hundred years in the West, we modeled the body as a machine when Enlightenment thinkers gave us a clockwork universe; then as a set of electrochemical reactions in the 19th and early 20th centuries; then as an information processing system (brain as computer, DNA as cellular programming); now we are starting to model the body as an ecological system (microbiome). None of these is entirely right or wrong.

Similarly, in ancient China people built medical models based on the working of their society: first around village life and elders; then around warring states; then the logistics of empire. Much later, Maoist thought influenced the standardization and materialism of “TCM”.

Taoism



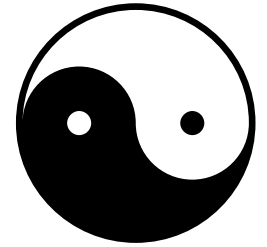
Chinese medicine has its origins in the philosophy of Taoism.

Taoism is the native mysticism of China, traditionally attributed to a mythical figure called Lao Tzu who supposedly lived around 600 BCE. He doesn't even have a proper name – “Lao Tzu” means “Old Fellow” or “Great Old Master.

The Tao of Lao Tzu is “the Way” – literally, the character “tao” means path or road or way – the way things are, in the deepest sense and the biggest picture. It is not a being to be worshiped, but something more like a current or a pattern, a way of thinking and acting, that a wise person can make use of. The Taoist Sage lives a life of simplicity and balance, puts himself or herself in accordance with Nature, and spontaneously and un-self-consciously “goes with the flow.” Two key ideas in Taoist cosmology are Yin/Yang, and the Five Elements.

Yin and Yang

The ancient Chinese recognized two complementary principles at work in many natural phenomena: yin and yang. The relationship between these two principles has 5 important characteristics. Yin and yang are:



- opposites,
- interdependent – neither can exist without the other
- inter-consuming/supporting – each is constantly consuming the other. For example, the substance and actions of the body
- inter-transforming – each can transform into the other, especially at the extremes
- infinitely divisible – they are relative and have no limit, there is always yin and yang within.

The Chinese characters used to write “yin” and “yang” developed from pictograms showing the shady side and the sunny side of a hill, a good example.

Yin and Yang

Yang is associated with things that are active, masculine, warm, bright, moving upward; yin is receptive, feminine, cool, dark, and descending. Yin and Yang are attributes, not things or substances – think adjectives, not nouns.

Yin

Night, Dark

Feminine

Cold

Winter, Autumn

Rest

Internal

Space

Matter, Substance

Earth, Low, Descending

Yang

Day, Bright

Masculine

Hot

Summer, Spring

Activity

External

Time

Energy, Activity

Sky, High, Ascending

Vital Substances

A large, bold Chinese character for 'Qi' (氣), written in a traditional style. It consists of a top radical '禾' (rice) and a bottom radical '气' (vapor/steam).

One of the most fundamental concepts in Chinese medicine is “qi”. Qi is **not** a supernatural phenomenon. It is often translated as “energy”, but this can be misleading. The older Chinese character for “qi” shows steam or vapor coming off of rice. (A simplified form is used today; ancient forms show the vapor but don't indicate rice.) In Chinese thought, “rice” means not just a side dish, but food, the essence of life itself.

In different contexts, “qi” has been translated as “energy”, “material force”, “matter”, “ether”, “matter-energy”, “vital force”, “life force”, “vital power”, or “moving power”.

Qi is often equated with bio-electricity by Western authors, though in my opinion this is a questionable association.

Vital Substances

“Chinese Medicine sees the working of the body and mind as the result of the interaction of certain vital substances. These substances manifest in varying degrees of “substantiality”, so that some of them are very rarefied and some totally non-material. All together, they constitute the ancient Chinese view of the body-mind. The body and mind are not seen as a mechanism (however complex) but as a vortex of energy and vital substances interacting with each other to form an organism. At the basis of all is Qi: all the other vital substances are but manifestations of Qi in varying degrees of materiality, ranging from the completely material, such as Body Fluids, to the totally immaterial, such as the Mind (*Shen*).” – Giovanni Maciocia, *The Foundations of Chinese Medicine*

Three Treasures: Qi, Jing, and Shen

Jing is “Essence”. It is a more “dense” form of Qi. We inherit part of our Jing from our parents; it declines as we age but can replenish it somewhat through cultivation practices. Jing is involved with growth, development, reproduction, and our constitutional strength.

Shen, the most rarefied of the Vital Substances, is “Mind” or “Spirit”, our sense of ourself. It is not our intellect, but the light that is in our eyes when we understand our selves, and – ideally – grows as we age.

Everything in the universe manifests Qi; every living thing manifests Jing; but only humans (or, IMHO, other sentient creatures) have Shen. Qi, Jing, and Shen form the “Three Treasures” that Taoists seek to cultivate.

Shen leads Qi; Qi leads Blood, Jing, and Body Fluids.

Five Elements

Another key concept in Taoist cosmology and Chinese Medicine is the “Five Elements” or “Five Phases” (*Wu Xing*).

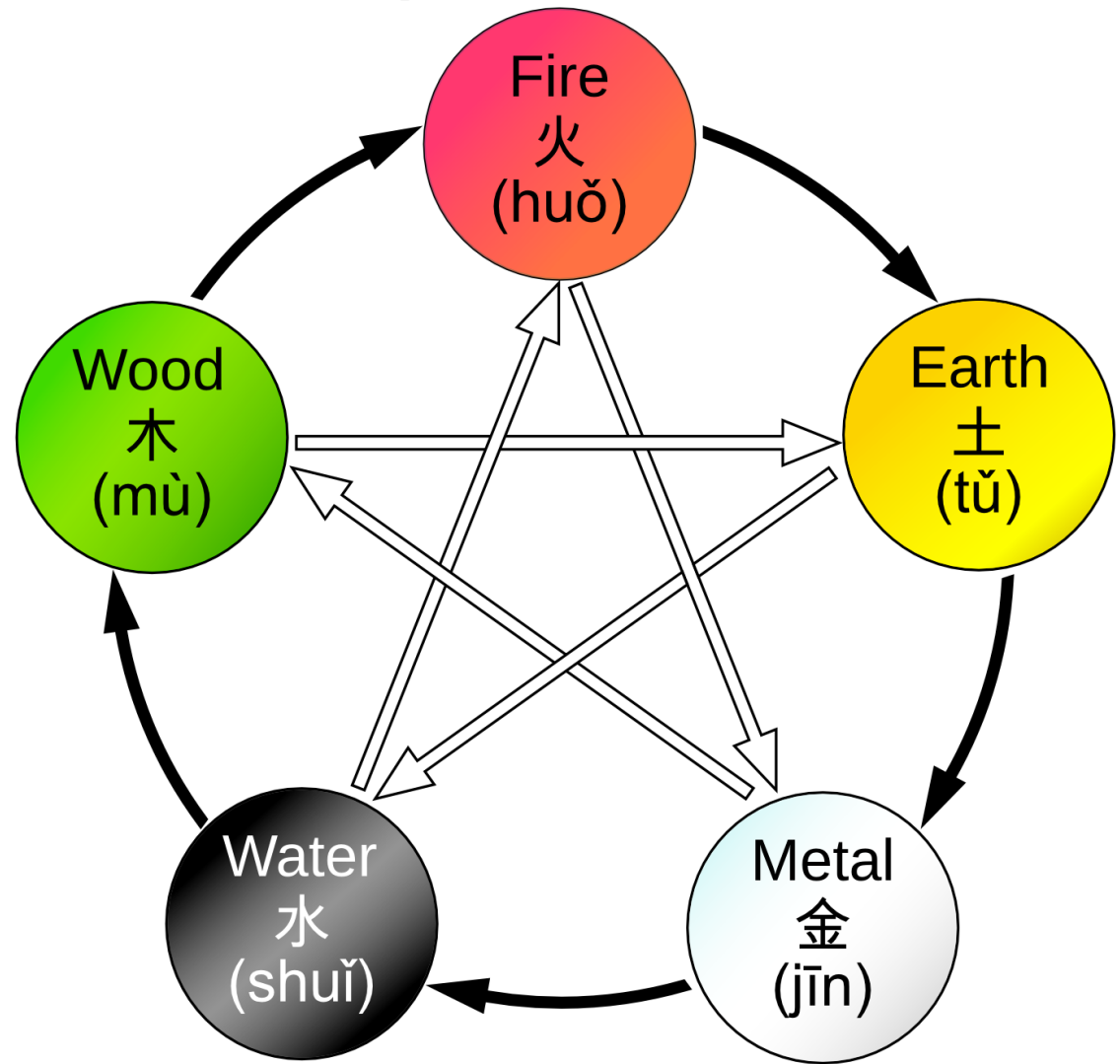
“The five Elements, therefore, are not basic constituents of Nature, but five basic processes, qualities, phases of a cycle or inherent capabilities of change of phenomena.” – Giovanni Maciocia

“The 5 Elements are Water, Fire, Wood, Metal, and Earth. Water moistens downwards, Fire flares upwards, Wood can be bent and straightened, Metal can be moulded and can harden, Earth permits sowing, growing, and reaping. That which soaks and descends [Water] is salty, that which blazes upwards [Fire] is bitter, that which can be bent and straightened [Wood] is sour, that which can be moulded and become hard [Metal] is pungent, that which permits sowing and reaping [Earth] is sweet.” – from the “Shang Shu”, c. 1000-771 BCE. (translated by Maciocia)

Five Elements

This diagram illustrates the two most significant “cycles” or “sequences” of the Elements. In the Generating Sequence, Water is the mother of Wood, Wood is the mother of Fire, and so on, each giving birth to the next. In the Controlling Sequence, Water controls Fire, Fire controls Metal, etc. These cycles model many self-regulating, balancing processes found in the natural world and the body.

Based on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wuxing_en.svg



→ generating sequence
→ controlling sequence

Five Elements

The Meridians and Organs of Chinese Medicine each have a correspondence to one of the Five Elements; and so a disharmony between the organs can often be understood in these terms.

The Five Elements form a system of correspondences: seasons, directions, colors, sounds, tastes, smells, and physical and mental/spiritual aspects of the person. It's not biomedical! But it often works where biomedicine hits limits.

Self Shiatsu

(from a seated position)

1. Using the fingertips, work back along the channel in the center of the head (“Governing Vessel”). Press and hold GV 20 at the top of the head, in line with the tops of the ears
2. Elbows against your body, drop your forehead into your fingertips. Work at the hairline, then the middle of the forehead (hold GB 14, above the center of the eyes), then right above the eyebrows
3. Hold Bl 1(just above inside corner of eye) and Bl 2(medial end of the eyebrow)
4. Rest fingers over closed eyes, Apply light pressure if this is comfortable
5. Press the edge of the socket under the eye (St 2). Use the weight of your head into your fingers, rather than pressing up with your fingers – gravity is your friend in shiatsu.

6. Work under the cheekbones the same way (St 3). Press into the space where the cheekbones meet the nose – LI 20, excellent for sinus congestion
7. Press along the jawline, then under the jawbone
8. Lean your head back and press along the side (the SCM muscles), one side at a time. Press below the collarbone with your thumbs, from the center out.
9. Lean your head forward. Clasp your fingertips then work down the back of the neck (GB channel between upper trapezius and the SCM) with the heels of your hands. You can also work up onto the back of the skull.
10. Lean your head to the left and work the right side of the neck (same area, GB channel) with fingertips or thumbs. Repeat on other side. Use your hands to help lift your head.
11. Use your fingertips or thumbs to press GB 20 at the base of the skull (between upper trapezius and the SCM). Try to hook under the edge of the skull. Lean your head back into your fingers.

12. (Skip for pregnancy!) Work along the tops of the shoulder (GB channel). Use the left fingertips on the right side, and vice-versa. Pull down on the elbow to penetrate point GB 21. Reach over the shoulder and press into the center of the scapula (SI 11, gate point for the arm)
13. Straighten the arm. Use a “bye-bye” hand to squeeze down the outside of the arm. Press LI 10, two fingers below the outside corner of the elbow crease (arm energizer point). Do inside of the arm; then the other arm.
14. Place your left forearm, palm-side up, along your left thigh. Use your right forearm like a rolling pin along your left forearm, working towards the hand. Then rub cross-ways. Finally turn your left arm over so your knee presses at the inside of the wrist, and use your right arm to move your left back and forth.
15. Repeat for other side.

16. Rotate and stretch the wrists. Gently stretch the fingers of one hand between the index and ring fingers of the other. Address each segment of the fingers. Repeat for the other side.
17. Thumb into center of the palm, between 2nd and 3rd metacarpals (index and middle finger “hand bones” - Pc 8, good calming point), then into three points along the wrist crease (Lu 9, Pc 7, Ht 7, “source points” for those channels).
18. Reach both hands behind you. Using knuckles, press on the muscles up and down either side of the spine, about 4 fingers out from the center (Bladder meridian). Press, hold, and rub/vibrate the points on the back on those lines at the level of the navel (Bl 23).
19. Bend forward, tap the lower back down to the sacrum. Repeat several times. (Very good for stimulating energy.)

20. Use your left elbow to work down the inside of your left thigh, between the quadriceps muscles, then the outside (Spleen and Stomach meridians). Hold point 4 fingers above the knee on inside the thigh (Sp 10, the “Sea of Blood” point – good for skin disorders and for menstrual problems).
21. Interlocking fingers, work down the front of the left leg on either side of the shinbone. Press St 36, on outside 4 fingers below knee (leg energizer point).
22. Use thumb or fingertips to work between the foot bones. With your index finger hold a point between the “big toe foot bone” and the “pointer toe foot bone” (the first and second metatarsal bones – point is Liver 3, good for headaches and hangovers) while pressing the with the thumb a point on the bottom of the foot (Kidney 1, in depression formed when toes are curled).
23. Rub around the ankle bones. Rotate the ankle both directions.
24. Clasp hands and flex the foot towards you.
25. Repeat 20-24 on other side

26. Finish: with fingertips of one hand, hold point CV 17 (“Sea of Tranquility”), center of chest right about the nipple line, or about four plus two fingers below the collarbone. With other hand, hold CV 6 (“Sea of Qi”), two fingers below the navel.
27. Take several slow deep breaths. As you breathe in, imagine energy coming into your body, flowing down the center of your chest into your belly where your bottom hand is; as you breathe out, let that energy run up your spine, over your head, and all through your body, and back out into the world.

Easy Acupressure

I call these “easy acupressure” points because they are both fairly easy to find, and easy to apply practically – you don’t need a lot of theory to be able to use them for day to day self care.

For copyright reasons I haven’t included charts in this handout. More detailed point location information including diagrams or photos can be found by searching for a point name on the internet. ee.g. “LI4 acupressure.”

A good resource is:

https://yinyanghouse.com/theory/acupuncturepoints/locations_theory_and_clinical_applications/ ; click on the meridian name to see a chart with links to points.

Easy Acupressure Points on the Leg and Foot

Point	Location	Uses
Lv 3	Between the “big toe footbone” and the “pointer toe footbone”, about three fingers up from the webbing of the toes	“Source Point” of the Liver meridian. Calms spasms and cramps, calms the mind (short temper, frustration, stress, tension, depression), migraines, hangovers, rib pain
Sp 3	Inside edge of foot, just behind the ball	“Source Point” of the Spleen meridian. Good for digestive problems, constipation, diarrhea, edema, hemorrhoids, stomach pain or cramps, vomiting.
Kd 1	sole of foot, between 2 nd and 3 rd metatarsals, in depression formed when foot and toes flexed	Brings Qi down. Good for headache, dizziness, sore throat, dry mouth, loss of voice, loss of consciousness (tap or slap to “bounce” the Qi back up), convulsions, phobias, nervousness
Kd 3	between inside ankle bone and Achilles' tendon, level with top of ankle bone	“Source Point” for the Kidney meridian. Pain and weakness in lower back and knees; also good for fibromyalgia, asthma, insomnia (often paired with Bl 60, on the outside of the leg at the same height). Contraindicated in pregnancy.
GB 34	Below and outside the head of fibula	“Meeting Point” for the “sinews” - use for tendon, ligament, or cartilage injuries.
St 36	Four fingers below the kneecap, about one t ^{sun} * lateral to the shinbone	“Energizer” point, strengthens body and mind. Good for digestive problems (use with Sp 3). Good for any leg pain. Rubbing this area good for “grounding” when your mind is unfocused.
Kd 10	Inside leg, just below knee crease, between the hamstring tendons	Knee pain (medial)
Bl 40	Center of the crease behind the knee	“Master Point” for the back. Also good for (posterior) knee pain, calf muscle spasm
Sp 10	Four fingers above the upper inside corner of the knee, on the vastus medialis muscle	“Sea of Blood”. Useful for knee pain; also good for skin problems such as acne, and for menstrual difficulties.

* A “t^{sun}” or “c^{un}” is a relative measurement on the body, the width of the thumb, about an inch.

Easy Acupressure Points on the Arm and Hand

Point	Location	Uses
LI 4	On the muscle between the thumb and the hand, around the midpoint of the metacarpal bone	“Master Point” of the face and head. Used for head, face, and shoulder pain; nasal congestion, burning eyes, sneezing, hay fever, the early signs of a cold or flu; good for constipation. Combine with Lv 3 for the “Four Gates” to stimulate the flow of Qi in the whole body, stop pain, and calm the mind. Contraindicated in pregnancy.
SI 3	On the edge of the pinky-side of the palm, at the crease (“Heart line”)	Shoulder or upper back problems, neck stiffness, strengthens the spine and the mind (“backbone”)
Pc 8	center of the palm, between 2nd and 3rd metacarpals (index and middle finger “hand bones”)	Good calming point
Pc 6	On the palm-side of the forearm, between the tendons in line with the middle finger, three fingers up from the wrist crease	Wrist pain, carpal tunnel; nausea, motion sickness, morning sickness, stomachache, stuffiness in the chest
TH 5	posterior forearm, two cun from wrist crease, between ulna and radius	febrile disease, headache, tinnitus, red swollen eyes, rib pain, energy regulation, benefits ear and head, subdues liver yang
LI 10	Outside edge of the brachioradialis muscle, 3 fingers below the elbow crease	“Energizer point” for the arm; swelling or pain in the shoulder, elbow, wrist, and hand
LI 11	Outside edge of the elbow crease	Good for fever, for early stages of cold or flu; benefits skin eruptions like acne
SI 9	1 tsun above posterior end of axillary fold	pain in scapula area, problems moving hand or arm, carpal tunnel problems

Easy Acupressure Points on the Head, Neck, and Torso

Point	Location	Uses
GB 20	At the base of the skull, in the depression between the upper SCM and trapezius	Occipital headache, temporal or moving headache, eye problems, neck stiffness, TMJ, common cold, insomnia; dizziness, vertigo, stress, anger
GB 21	On top of the trapezius, midway between spine and outside of shoulder, at highest point	pain in head, neck, shoulders; reflux (GIRD). Contraindicated in pregnancy.
TH 17	Under the earlobe, between the jaw and the mastoid bone (press into the SCM muscle)	tinnitus, ear popping, clenched jaw; good for the first stages of a cold
LI 20	next to nostril, in groove between nose and cheekbone	nasal congestion, nosebleed, sneezing, facial paralysis
St 3	below cheek bone, in line with pupils	local pain, sinus headaches, toothaches, nasal obstruction, twitching of eyes
SI 18	below cheekbone in line with outer corner of eye	eyelid spasm, toothache, sinus problems
GV 20	On the top of the head, on the midline in line with the tops of the ears	Raises Qi - clears the mind, lifts the spirit. Good for prolapse of the internal organs, and for hemorrhoids.
Bl 2	inside end of eyebrow, in the notch in the socket above the eye (supraorbital notch)	headache, red swollen eyes, blurred vision, allergic sneezing and sinuses; benefits vision
CV 17	Center of the chest, on the nipple line (4th intercostal space)	chest tightness/pain, excessive sighing, cough, “lump in throat”, dyspnea, asthma; depression, crying, hysteria, insomnia, bereavement. (“Sea of Tranquility”)
Bl 23	On the back, at the level of the navel, four fingers out from the center of the spine	Low back pain, tiredness, chronic asthma, lack of sexual desire, impotence, infertility
Lv 13	On the front of the chest at the bottom of the rib cage, below tip of 11th rib	indigestion, abdominal distension, belching, nausea, flatulence, loose stools, diarrhea, coughing, weak limbs and body
Lu 1	In the hollow below collarbone in the front of the shoulder, 1 tsun below collarbone	Asthma, breathing problems, coughing, shoulder pain

