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„SHIATSU WITH CLIENTS IN A LIFE CRISIS“

(G. Poli)

How can we define a “life crisis” in Shiatsu terms? Or better, as I am talking about my experience, how would I define a “life crisis” in “my” Shiatsu terms? First of all, I would like to present my philosophy about Shiatsu, what is Shiatsu for me and, especially, how I believe it works. Only if I clarify these concepts, I can explain how I use Shiatsu with clients who are in a life crisis.

It is not by chance that I have used words like philosophy, belief, concepts. As we all know, “the mind leads the Ki”, therefore our concepts, beliefs and ideas will strongly influence our Shiatsu and, consequently, its effect on our clients.

What I believe, based on my studies but mostly on my experience, is that Shiatsu influences all levels and aspects of our life: the functions and systems of our body, our emotions, our thoughts, our relationships with ourselves, with others and with the Universe.

The Shiatsu I practise is basically the Masunaga style enriched by the innovative concepts of Pauline Sasaki and Clifford Andrews. I believe that the most revolutionary aspect of Masunaga style was not only the introduction of meridians in his Shiatsu but the development of a totally new concept of what a meridian is.

The meridian in the Masunaga style is not only an energetic channel with a specific pathway in our body and with tsubos having a very precise location and action, but it also represents a vital function, a movement of our life that expresses at all levels: physical (bones, muscles, tissues, organs, systems, etc.), emotional (emotions, feelings, experiences, etc.); mental (thoughts, ideas, concepts, principles, belief systems, etc.); at the spiritual level (who we are, our origin, our destiny, our path in this life, etc.). The meridian therefore has a yin nature, its structure, and a yang nature, its function.

Masunaga further emphasizes this concept maintaining that meridians, being functions, exists also in a unicellular organism like the amoeba:

Quote from Zen Imagery Exercises:

.....The circulation of Ki is something which takes place in all forms of life.....We can regard amoebas as also having meridians, since amoebas live by the movement of protoplasm and exist as independent living entities. Amoebas perform the basic life functions of locomotion, ingestion, elimination and reproduction and are also capable of defensive reactions, like higher forms of life such as human beings. All these basic life functions depend on the working of the meridians.

Let's explore now which are these vital functions, these expressions of our life and what kind of information they can give us on our clients. We will then see how we can concretely work with them to support our clients in recovering the quality of their life.

Function of the Lung and Large Intestine: Intake of Ki and Elimination.

This function gives us the faculty to exchange: to take in from the external environment and let



go from the internal realm; therefore, it grants us the ability to create our borders, our structure at all levels. This function speaks of the ability to have a good exchange, a good relation with the external environment through permeable borders and a flexible structure; hence, if not used to its potential, of isolation, loneliness, of the need to let go of old life structures, of grief, mourning, losses, resentment; of the need to define our borders, to have our own space, to get away from con-fused situations where we have lost our definition, our own structure. It speaks of the need to forgive ourselves and the others.

Function of the Stomach and Spleen: Intake and Transformation of nutrients.

This function gives us the faculty to satisfy our needs: to go and get what we need (nourishment) and to break it down (transformation/digestion) so that we can use it to make our life fertile. It speaks of satisfaction, of the ability to care for ourselves and for our needs, of a good grounding, of concreteness, of the ability to transform ideas and thoughts into concrete actions. And therefore of "situations" to be digested, of the need for stability and concreteness, of a life spent to "nourish" others hoping to receive love and thoughtfulness in return, of dissatisfaction, of unsatisfied hunger, of research for new objectives.

Function of the Heart and the Small Intestine: Interpretation, Integration, Absorption and Assimilation.

This function gives us the faculty to bring information, stimuli we get from the external world, through our senses, into our "centre", to interpret them, integrate them and convert them into experience and awareness, and to express and manifest ourselves from this "centre". It can therefore speak of self-awareness, self-consciousness, self-esteem, of emotional stability, of the ability to express ourselves, our essence in the world and therefore of a need for a deeper knowledge of our "self", of little self-esteem, of separation from our Source, of shyness, of lack of confidence, of vulnerability, of unresolved negative and traumatic experiences.

Function of the Bladder and Kidney: Purification and Impetus.

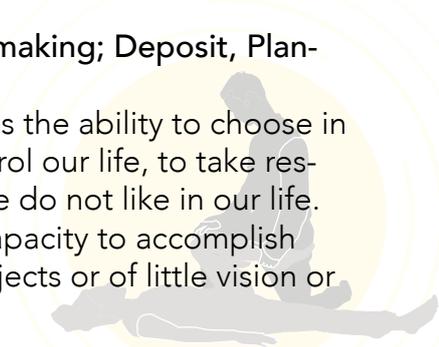
This functions gives us the faculty to regulate and balance, in our life, activity (impetus, the life push) and rest (regeneration, purification) to have vitality. It speaks of the "thrust" of life, of the survival instinct, of confidence in life, of courage, of ambition, of our life path, of wisdom; and therefore of fear, of pessimism, of apathy, of long lasting unresolved stress situations, of fatigue, of weakness, of feeling inadequate, of difficulty in coping with life challenges.

Function of the Heart Constrictor and of the Triple Heater: Circulation and Protection. This function gives us the faculty to let our life circulate and to protect us and our "centre" through the circulation of our life.

This function speaks about living our life fully in all its aspect, at the same time protecting our centre, our self, not allowing it to be threatened or endangered. It speaks of the protection that comes from being present and active in all the aspects of our system (as the blood circulating in all our body keeps it "alive" and "warm") It may therefore speak of vulnerability, of difficulty in communicating with others, of accepting situations and love relationships that threaten our integrity, our dignity, of undergoing violence, abuse, injustice.

Function of the Gallbladder and of the Liver: Distribution and Decision-making; Deposit, Planning and Detossification.

This function grants us the "freedom of movement" at all levels. It gives us the ability to choose in which direction we want to go to accomplish our plans, the ability to control our life, to take responsibility for our decisions, to use the power of anger to change what we do not like in our life. It gives us a clear vision, a vision beyond the present, together with the capacity to accomplish this vision, and hence of confusion, uncertainty, indecision, unrealistic projects or of little vision or



planning, of impulsive anger, of dependence.

In my Shiatsu, together with the theory of the meridians/functions, I utilize, for the energetic evaluation, the concept of kyo-jitsu. To be coherent with the concept of the function being the expression of an "energetic quality", of a "movement of our Ki", the traditional "quantitative" vision of kyo and jitsu as "empty" and "full" becomes too limited and reductive. In this wider vision, kyo and jitsu do not only represent a "quantity" of energy that we can sedate or tonify, but also two energetic "qualities", two expressions of Ki in our life, two functions that interact. Kyo and jitsu thus become the two expressions of the "unity" human being.

And it is working with the movement, with the interaction of the kyo-jitsu functions that show up in the hara or back evaluation, that we can help our clients to overcome a life crises, supporting them in restoring the movement of their vital functions and allowing them, ultimately, to recover all their possibilities and potentials.

Some practical examples:

Heart Kyo / Stomach Jitsu

The receiver is going through a period of lack of self-confidence, of emotional instability, he feels extremely vulnerable (Heart) and unsatisfied, he has the feeling he needs something but does not know what (Stomach). Through our work on these two functions, we can support our receiver to enter more and more in contact with his true nature, with his "self", to develop self-esteem and, once our client becomes more aware of himself, it will be easier for him to identify and reach his objectives, to satisfy his needs, to nourish himself with the food that will make his life rich and fertile.

Liver kyo / Large Intestine Jitsu

The receiver is confused, undecided (Liver), feels too tight, imprisoned in his present life situation (Large Intestine), he feels he does not have enough space to move freely (Large Intestine/Liver); through our work on his meridians/functions we can help him and support him in recovering and redefining his space so that he can have the clarity of mind and the freedom to decide in which direction he wants to go.

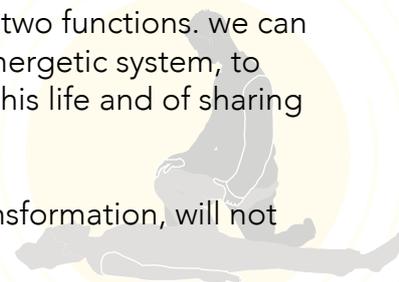
Kidney Kyo / Heart Jitsu

Our receiver is overstressed by his work, by money problems, he is exhausted but he is no more able to stop and rest, he cannot sleep well (Kidney), this whole situation has caused him anxiety, and more and more often tachycardia and this makes him even more anxious (Heart). He has lost contact with his self (Heart), always one step ahead, always doing something, always under stress (Kidney). Working the functions of Kidney and Heart we can support him in recovering his ability to stop, to be able to get again in contact with his inner "silence", to become more aware of who he is and of what his priorities are in life.

Heart Constrictor Kyo / Small Intestine Jitsu

Our client has had some traumatic experiences in his adolescence, experiences of violence and psychological abuse (Small Intestine), and, as a consequence, he has closed himself to love relationships, to feeling emotions, to life itself (Heart Constrictor). Working these two functions. we can help our receiver to assimilate his past traumas, to integrate them into his energetic system, to convert them into life experiences, so to recover his possibility of fully living his life and of sharing it with the persons he loves.

Obviously, our clients, due the very nature of Ki, which is movement and transformation, will not



always have the same kyo/jitsu movement; but, usually, the tendency is to find in the first sessions a similar kyo/jitsu movement or at least a dominant energetic pattern. However, session after session, we will see how this pattern will "expand", how the same function will be used "to its potential" and how other functions and different kyo-jitsu movements will emerge. These new movements will show how the energetic pattern of the receiver is evolving, how slowly slowly other possibilities are emerging and how the person is recovering all his possibilities and potentials of living his life fully.

After this introduction that has clarified the basic concepts and principles of my Shiatsu, I can now explain what I do in my treatments to support and help those of my clients who are in a life crisis.

When a client comes to me with an existential problem, my main guidelines are the two functions (kyo-jitsu) that I find in the hara or back evaluation and their interrelation. Of course, I will also take into consideration all the other shins but the interrelation between the two functions will remain the "core" to which I will refer all the other information I will receive (bo-shin, bun-shin, mon-shin, setsu-shin).

In practice, when working with the two meridians, I am getting in contact and interacting with the corresponding functions at all levels. I am therefore establishing a global approach with the receiver's whole energetic system, through the two dominant functions in his life in the "here and now" of the treatment. And, as I am dealing with the client's as „one" manifested by the two functions, I will endeavour to be totally present in the contact (body/mind/spirit) to reinforce the client's experience of oneness.

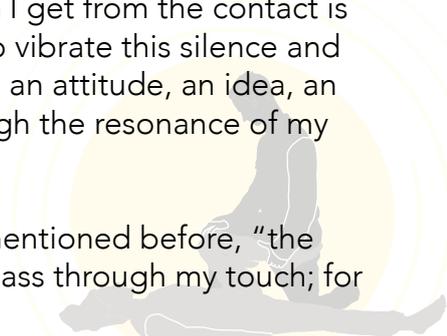
When I start a treatment, therefore, I will first try to establish what I would define a "basic contact" with the receiver, an overall contact with his energetic system and dominant functions. I will be in a listening, open mode to receive whatever information will come from the contact, information such as how the two functions interact, which is the dominant level of expression of the two functions (physical, emotional, mental or spiritual), which aspect of the functions is more present (for instance if I work the Lung meridian, it could be borders, exchange, structure, letting go, etc.), where the functions in the body have a stronger expression, where I can best contact them, if there are energetic blockages, unresolved past stress or traumas, etc. etc..

I will "respond" to these information through my touch, utilizing the depth of leaning, the rhythm of work, the modelling, the mindset, the time scanning and fascia release techniques. In short, I will entertain a non verbal dialogue with the receivers functions through my touch.

I will research the depth of leaning and rhythm of work that will allow the deepest and widest contact with the meridians/functions: I will try to tune in with the vibration of the meridians/functions, with the receiver's life flow, and will try to experience, together with him, through each touch, this very special feeling of being totally in contact and in tune with each other.

Through the modelling I, myself, become a model for the receiver through the way I set my energy in my whole system (body/mind/spirit). If, for instance, the information I get from the contact is that the receiver has a need for "silence" and "insight", I will try to act, to vibrate this silence and this insight in my whole energetic system (using a movement of my body, an attitude, an idea, an image) so that the client can receive this "offer", this "suggestion" through the resonance of my energetic system with his.

Through the mindset, I consciously use my mind and my thoughts. As I mentioned before, "the mind leads the ki", and therefore what I think during the treatment, will pass through my touch; for



instance, I can offer the receiver an image or an idea of "silence", think and suggest through my touch: "what about experiencing the pleasure of deep silence, of being in stillness, how does this feel to you?".

In the time scanning, which I have experienced with Clifford Andrews, I have another very effective tool to treat clients that are in a life crisis. Quite often clients are energetically stuck in the past due to a physical, emotional, mental or spiritual trauma: an accident, a very serious disease, the loss of a dear person, abuses, moral subjugation, etc. The technique consists in scanning the energetic field of the receiver going back in time until I reach the period of the trauma. Once I am energetically "there", I can interact with the functions that were predominant at that time and thus support the receiver's energetic system to resolve the trauma.

I also integrate fascia release techniques in my Shiatsu as I find them a very useful tool to release what we could define "energetic cysts", places in our body where energy connected with unresolved stress is stuck and held. As fascia represents the intermediate energetic level between our denser structures (bones, muscles, ligaments, organs, etc.) and our more expanded structures (emotions, thoughts and spirituality), the release of this tissue allows several healings to occur at different levels. Furthermore, I have found, through my experience, that fascia and meridians are very closely energetically connected, so working on meridians influences fascia and viceversa.

To conclude, in my experience, a life crisis, as any other "dis-ease" of the human being at any level, is a manifestation and an expression of his Ki, a movement of his life that needs to recover its full natural capacities. All we have to do, therefore, is to establish a deep, wide, overall contact with our client's energetic system and its dominant expressions and support and stimulate his Ki to recover its natural vibrational potential, its natural movement: in short to simply support life to recover what by nature is its potential.

And Shiatsu represents a very special tool to support life as it is and as it shows to us, without judgement, being respectful of our clients, of their freedom of choice, of their possibilities, of their timing. Shiatsu is a life sustaining discipline that gives support and does not force or constrain, that leaves space and at the same time offers incredible possibilities for change, for developing, for healing in the widest meaning of the word.

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