

The Way of the Heart

by Shoshanna Katzman



Looking through the lens of Chinese medicine provides a new dimension to view the heart. This ancient medicine relies on acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, Chinese dietary therapy, Tuina massage, and Taiji (Tai Chi) or Qigong exercise to protect and preserve the energetic integrity of the heart. Its harmonious structure and function are achieved by opening free flow of qi (vital energy) and balancing yin-yang energy throughout its organ system and associated meridian pathway.

Heart energetic imbalance and physical illness is viewed as a gradual process. When symptomatic expression of illness is removed without properly treating its root, symptoms tend to manifest elsewhere at a later date. Chinese medicine practitioners seek to connect these events whereby various symptoms and signs are woven together into a specific pattern of disharmony. They work to eliminate symptoms and strengthen overall health by addressing the underlying root cause.

Exploration begins with knowing that the heart is a yin organ system associated with the fire element and emotion of joy. Balanced fire of the heart is reflected via a warm and engaging facial expression. A peaceful, loving, and engaging way of being contributes to successful interactions with others. In return, forging meaningful and joyful connections brings harmony to the heart – leaving one feeling eager and excited to live life to the fullest and enjoy all that it has to offer.

Balanced heart energetics supports well-being in various ways due to encompassing much of the body's physiological and psychological processes. Often referred to as the "Emperor" of the organs, it takes com-

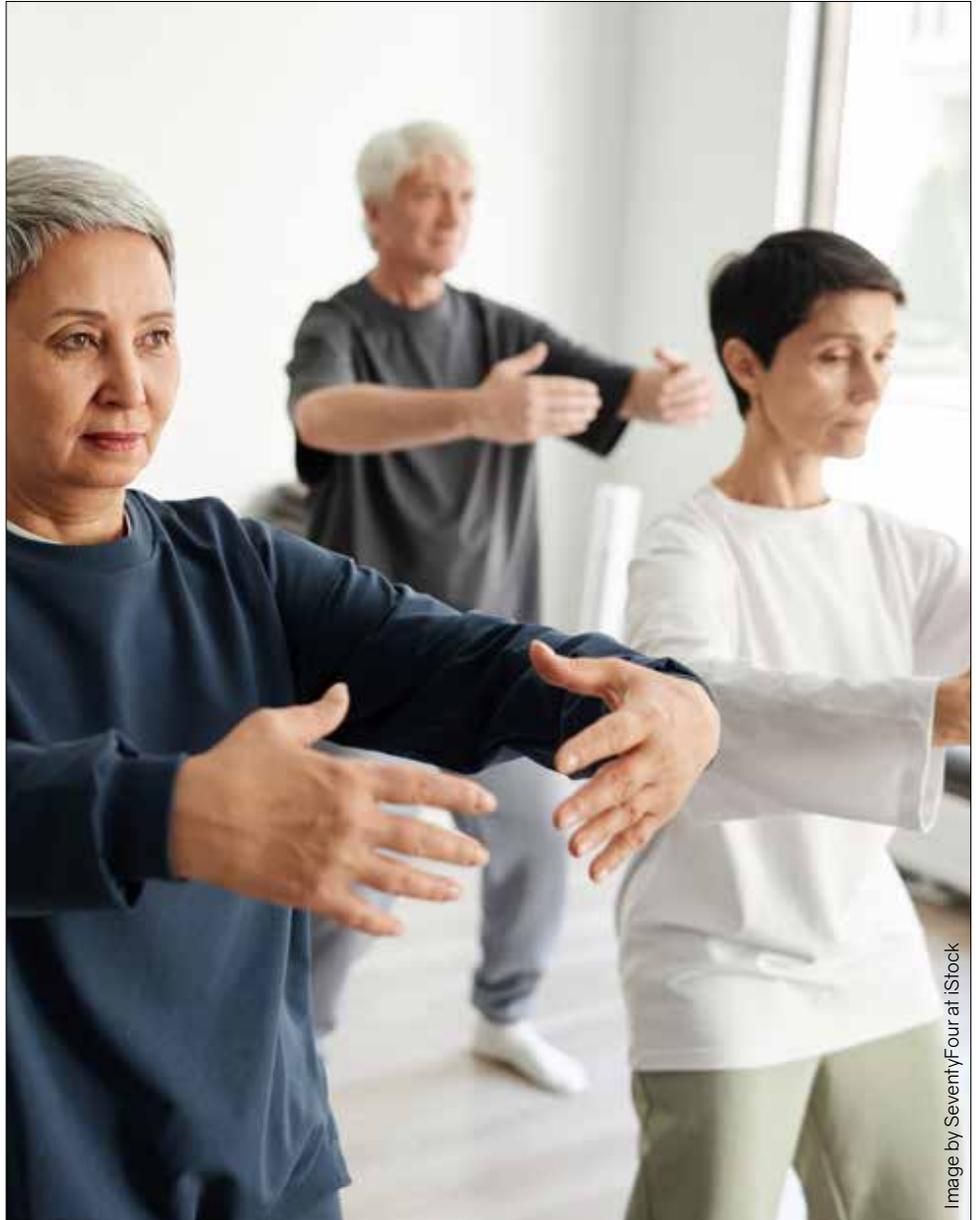


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mand over all vital organs of the body and provides them with sustenance – making the heart a central player in the symphony of health and wellness.

The heart rules over the body's blood vessels, which includes circulating and distributing blood similar to its Western medicine function. As the "ruler of the blood", the heart is connected to the uterus and known for its impact on gynecological health, es-

pecially menstruation. As the "heart mind", it houses the mind and controls mental activity – influencing cognition, intelligence, thinking, ideas, long-term memory, along with emotional control and intimacy.

Due to its combined impact on the mind, blood flow to the head, and storage of shen (spirit), a balanced heart is key to the enjoyment of a restful night's sleep. Positive results are



secured when this “king of organs” works to calm the mind, pacify the spirit, and bring ample blood flow to the head.

According to an old Chinese medicine saying: “the heart opens to the tongue”, a balanced heart results in the expression of meaningful and appropriate words reflecting the right intent. This includes speaking and expressing oneself openly and honestly. It is traditionally said that seeking truth in all things leads to a “happy heart”.

The tongue also reflects the state of heart energy according to sense of taste. When in balance, a person’s ability to taste all flavors and enjoy food is enhanced. Bitter foods such as bitter melon, kale, arugula, Swiss chard, broccoli rabe, and dark chocolate all support the heart. Foods of red color such as cherries, watermelon, goji berries, strawberries, beets, tomatoes, radishes, and red meat, beans, lentils, apples, and potatoes are possibilities.

Simple heart healthy tips:

- Cultivate joy in your life
- Bring forth an “inner smile”
- Get regular sleep
- Rest your body, relax your mind
- Take nature walks
- Breathe deep
- Practice Taiji or Qigong
- Feel your feelings, listen to your heart

There are many things you can do preventatively to maintain heart health. It is just a matter of making the commitment to do so and then sticking with it. There is no better time to start than right now.

Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S. has been director of Red Bank Acupuncture & Wellness Center (www.healing4u.com) for 35 years in Shrewsbury, NJ providing acupuncture, Chinese herbal consultation along with Taiji and Qigong private and group classes. She is author of “Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20-Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy”, co-author of “Feeling Light: The Holistic Solution to Permanent Weight Loss and Wellness” and “Center of Power: Life Mastery through Taiji” a comprehensive online curriculum (www.yourcenterofpower.com). For more information call or text 732.758.1800.

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