



Anger: The Liver Life Connection

by Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S

Feelings of anger are important to express, otherwise they build up inside and eventually come out as an explosion when least expected. An individual may also project suppressed anger onto someone else energetically without ever realizing it is happening. When anger is excessive over an extended period of time it results in higher levels of frustration and eventual depression.

To avoid this from happening, it is essential to “find one’s voice” when it comes to anger – to discover a new way to verbalize feelings of anger without feeling ashamed, defensive, apologetic, or embarrassed. It is important to express anger in just the right amount when it arises with utmost care and consideration of self and others. This is especially true when anger has been suppressed for an extended period of time.

Chinese medicine has viewed emotions as a root cause of physical illness for centuries. According to the Law of the Five Elements, correlations exist between each emotion and a particular vital organ, along with its associated meridian. This means that the ways in which a person expresses these emotions directly affects the health of their vital organs. Interestingly, this includes both an excessive amount of an emotion as well as lack or even absence of expression. The following is a list of the correlations between the major organs

and their so-called negative and positive emotions, for which some overlap.

- Heart: sadness, arrogance, cruelty, and hate are its negative emotions. Love and kindness are its positive emotions.
- Spleen: worry, excess sympathy, pity, and anxiety are its negative emotions. Fairness, compassion, and openness are its positive emotions.
- Lungs: grief, sadness, and depression are its negative emotions. Courage and righteousness are its positive emotions.
- Kidneys: fear is its negative emotion. Gentleness and kindness are its positive emotions.
- Liver: anger, hostility, and frustration are its negative emotions. Kindness, generosity, and forgiveness are its positive emotions.

The first step to ensure overall mental, emotional, physical and energetic health thus begins with maintaining emotional balance. Chinese medicine teaches us that energetic balance and physical health are more likely when all five of these emotions are appropriately expressed as they arise. This is especially true for anger not only because it is an emotion that is so often held in, but also due to the liver’s important role in health maintenance. In fact, Chinese medicine teaches that the liver governs smooth flow of qi (vital energy) and stores blood within the body. When these vital substances

are both flowing in ample amount the result is a calm heart, clear mind, peak fertility, excellent metabolism, healthy digestion, glowing complexion, bright eyes, strong muscles and tendons, and a body free of pain with lots of energy - to name a few.

Many of these positive health effects stem from the association of the liver to numerous other physical aspects. For example, the eyes are the associated sensory organ of the liver, tendons are its associated tissue, sour its associated taste, and spring its associated season. Health assessment and treatment according to Chinese medicine is thus a holistic approach looking at every aspect of the body in terms of its relationship to every other aspect of the body.

There are many practical recommendations that stem from this view of an individual, all depending on their presenting symptoms and signs. Many Chinese medicine treatment options and lifestyle recommendations exist in this regard – however, one must be ready and the time must be right for making the necessary changes and adjustments to appropriately deal with anger issues. The Chinese medicine modalities of acupuncture, Chinese herbs, Chinese massage, Chinese Dietary Therapy, Tai Chi, and Qigong are all viable options for helping one to balance their liver energy, manage anger, and strengthen the energetics of the body.

A key component for a healthy body and mind involves keeping the liver energy flowing and balanced, combined with keeping a check on anger. The overall goal is to express and process one’s emotions, rather than allowing them to build up, become stagnant, and blocked. Always keep in mind that free flowing qi and blood are the main ingredients for vibrant health and a balanced emotional state – one that is easily within reach.

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