

A Joyful Heart

by Shoshanna Katzman



In Chinese medicine, a basic tenet holds that a person's physical body and emotional state are intimately interconnected. With this in mind, it is understandable to believe that emotions impact both physical as well as one's mental health. Thus, viewing the whole body through a holistic lens reveals that emotional issues need to be reconciled for physical healing to take place.

We learn from the Law of the Five Elements, as an example, that joy is associated with the fire element and directly impacts energetics of its yin organ, the heart. When in balance, the expression of joy nourishes heart energy and reflects a healthy emotional state. A lack of joy along with prolonged sadness depletes heart qi and can become the underlying

root cause of symptoms such as palpitations, fatigue, and emotional numbness. On the other hand, excessive joy overstimulates the body-mind and poses a great risk to the heart energy system.

Strangely enough we learn that excessive joy can be an emotional cause of disease. It disrupts the flow of qi (vital energy) and blood, becoming an energetic imbalance known as overjoy or over-elation. This typically will lead to agitation, nervousness, and overexcitement, making it difficult to react appropriately to one's surroundings and during social interactions. Whereas a moderate, balanced state of joy smooths the flow of qi and blood throughout the body – bringing forth stress relief, inner contentment, and a boost in immunity.

The heart, known to “house the spirit”,

embodies a person's vitality, consciousness, emotions, and mental function. The ancient Chinese medicine text the Neijing states: “When one is excessively joyful, the spirit scatters and can no longer be stored” – producing mental and behavioral confusion along with unclear thinking, outbursts of laughter, chattering happily to oneself, and a state of manic risk-taking.” Overjoy causes an energetic disharmony of “excess heart fire” associated with recurrent agitation, insomnia, palpitations, over-excitability, and restlessness.

The heart is the “emotional center of the body”. It rules over the Seven Emotions which include joy, grief, fear, fright, worry, and anger. It filters these emotions through one's energetic system.



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Working toward a balanced state of joy in life, creating a more harmonious heart spirit begins with engaging in self-reflection in order to deepen inner knowledge. This assists one to get in touch with their feelings and become truer within themselves. This reveals ways to make more space for joy and inner peace to surface in life. This might include not allowing the news of current events to zap their energy. It may mean maintaining a better work/life balance, along with giving oneself ample periods for rest and restoration. And it is important to spend more time outside to cultivate a harmonious connection with nature. Engaging with friends and having fun socializing while indulging in hearty laughter are highly recommended activities.




In terms of Chinese medicine dietary suggestions, red foods such as raspberries, lychee berries, watermelon, pomegranate, tomatoes, and beets are known to nourish the heart. Engage in the ancient Chinese exercises of Taiji (Tai Chi) and Qigong to bask in their generation of joyful spirit. Its meditation through movement component brings forth a more peaceful existence, as it nourishes heart joy and promotes a tranquil spirit. Its upward flowing hands open and balance flow of energy throughout the heart meridian and heart organ system – continuously balancing heart energy and filling one's heart-mind with joy.

Receive acupuncture to balance energies flowing within the pericardium meridian which serves as the “heart protector”. The acupuncture experience also nourishes the heart-mind by helping one to go within and get in touch with their true nature. All in all, following these recommendations will result in a balanced emotional state of joy, a harmonious heart spirit, and a life filled with a calm and clear mind.

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