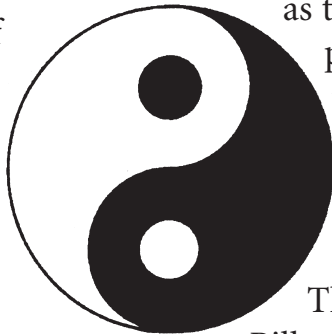


Balance of Yin and Yang

BY DONALD C. LEWNS

To many Marylanders, the Tao Yin Yang symbol represents the 29th Division of the Maryland National Guard. Its distinctive blue and gray insignia, the “oneness symbol,” signifies the joining of regiments from the North with those of the South into one division. The design shows the opposing forces of Yin (North) and Yang (South) entwined into one Circle of Life.



In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the balance of the opposing forces of Yin and Yang constitute wellness in the body-mind-spirit. All disease (or dis-ease) can be traced to an imbalance in these forces. As shown in the symbol, Yin and Yang are deeply entwined. Yin and Yang cannot exist by themselves. For the convenience of understanding, absolute attributes can distinguish the two forces but they must always be taken in a context of “more this” and “less that.” So to describe Yin we can say it is more substantive (material)—dark, cool, winter, interior, female, soft and mental—while Yang is more energetic—light, hot, summer, outward, male, and exterior. The small light and dark circles in the symbol mean that Yin is contained in Yang and Yang is contained in Yin. In Chinese medicine there is no dichotomy. Everything is connected.

Over thousands of years Chinese Medicine has developed into an effective means of maintaining wellness. Chinese physicians were paid to keep people well—if they got sick, the

physicians had to work for free. By means of observation, questioning, listening and palpation, Chinese physicians saw imbalances before they developed into pathologies. No sign or symptom was insignificant. Each was regarded as the body-mind-spirit’s alerting the patient to make some changes.

Modern Asian Bodywork is considered one of the main branches of Chinese Medicine, which includes acupuncture and herbal medicine. The Asian Bodyworker uses the Four Pillars of Assessment in detecting disharmony in the body-mind-spirit.

By means of compression, stretching and pressure on acupoints, the practitioner nudges the body back into a state of balance. Recommendations as to diet, rest, exercise and meditation further the client’s own wellness regimen. The client has the healing power. The practitioner assists the client in discovering ways to allow it to happen.

Asian Bodywork is usually performed on a mat on a fully clothed client in a quiet, supportive environment. The session lasts about an hour. Most clients experience a relaxed state and a feeling of energy marked by a positive attitude, able to embark on a more healthful approach to their lives.

Donald C. Lewns, Dipl., A.B.T., practices Shiatsu Therapy and Asian Bodywork in Arnold, Maryland. This article appeared in August 2004 in the Anne Arundel County edition of Your Health magazine.

Observing the Seasons

BY DONALD C. LEWNS

To many of us, observing the Seasons is joined with lamenting a passing—“Where did the Summer go?” or in looking forward to the next —“I’ll sure be glad this Winter is over!” To others there is much anticipation—“I can’t wait til’ Fall! It’s my favorite time of the year!” Most of us, however, do have a time of the year which we feel is our time—the time where we really blossom.

Early civilizations observed the cycle of the seasons with the Sun reaching its highest zenith in the Summer and its lowest in the Winter. The Seasons had a profound affect on their lives and coincided with the necessities of gathering food to sustain them and carry them thru the hard Winters. Winter Solstice fears of the Sun ever returning were met with relief at the lengthening of the day—the beginning of an ever-continuing rebirth and growth cycle.

The Tao symbol of Yin and Yang reflects the annual cycle with the most Yin time of the year being Winter and the most Yang time being Summer. The Chinese from observing the cycles of nature developed a theory of the Five Elements which correspond to the five seasons of the year (late Summer being the fifth season.) One season led into the other and promoted or generated the next phase. The elements allied with the seasons were: Wood-Spring, Fire-Summer, Earth-late Summer, Metal-Autumn and Water-Winter.

In some diagrams, the four elements are in a circle with Earth in the center. Earth in this model is considered the transition time from one season to the other, thus the allusion is of re-earthing or grounding to prepare for the next season.

The Chinese sought to interpret everything in this model. One aspect of this theory was the five constitutional types. Everyone could be viewed as being predominantly one or another of the five constitutions, usually with the element labels of Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water. In Chinese Medicine to this day when clients walk into the practitioner’s office, they are observed to discern their constitutional type and whether their demeanor (stride, facial expression etc) is in harmony with their constitutional type. For example, a Wood person should be flexible and agile. A Wood type who walks with a stiff gait has an imbalance and is not in harmony with his/her constitution. The phrase “being out of one’s element” takes on a new meaning.

A good book for those who wish to go deeper into the subject is *Staying Healthy with the Seasons* by Elson Haas, M.D. Your Asian Bodywork practitioner can advise you too and help you to “stay in your element.”

Donald C. Lewns, Dipl., A.B.T., practices Shiatsu Therapy and Asian Bodywork in Arnold, Maryland. This article appeared in September 2004 in the Anne Arundel County edition of Your Health magazine.