

CASE STUDY #2: Isobel
October 18, 2010
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A middle child of a large family, Isobel grew up impoverished. Her relationship with her father was a good one, but her mother was abusive. In her late teens she moved far from her family, married and soon had a child. Isobel’s husband was older and, initially unknown to her, experienced a mental illness. She lost her father and her husband within a few years of each other between 7-10 years ago. She maintains a long-distance relationship with her mother and siblings.

As a widow, Isobel is a single parent to a pre-adolescent who needs extra care due to some behavioural and learning issues. She is currently self-employed and financially struggles to make ends meet. She has limited social support and respite from extended family and from community. Through community programs she and her child have received some basic additional help. They have a very close relationship even as they face many health and social challenges in their lives. Alongside a high level of stress level that Isobel experiences from her life circumstances, she also suffers from ongoing asthma and allergies, and in the past year was treated for some depression. These are some of the reasons she sought to try acupressure treatments.

Despite her stressors, Isobel is very loving, caring, and upbeat. When she arrived for her session she was happy, laughing, smiling and very excited about the journey we were beginning. The only thing Isobel wanted to work on was releasing stress and relaxing. During our intake and first session, I noticed that Isobel had a laughing quality to her voice; however, it shifted to weepy when discussing serious family matters. Her facial colour was white, with bluish black under her eyes, and the elemental odour I could discern was scorched. Her facial expression was either smiling (joy) or sadness (lack of joy). Throughout our intake, there was no ‘fusion’ (fire) but, rather, she needed reassurance in many areas. Given her history and current circumstances, I felt Isobel was going to be a very complex client.

Isobel hadn’t received any bodywork before; she was open to the experience but didn’t know what to expect. She had a keen interest and a desire to help herself.

Session One 12:30PM: Heart/Small Intestine time

For the first session I chose to do the **Great Regulator Strange flow** release because I wanted to start the energy flows and provide some nourishment to support Isobel. Initial pulses showed Small intestine balanced and Heart low, Triple Warmer low and Pericardium balanced, Spleen excessive and Stomach low, Lung low and Large Intestine balanced, Bladder and Kidney balanced Gall bladder balanced with Liver low. It did feel as though her left side pulses were much weaker than the right.

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Isobel was actively engaged during the first half of the session, working with me on point location and breathing into the points as they released. She was very curious and asked lots of questions. I noticed her asthma and could hear her lungs wheezing as we worked together on the left side. She was also doing lots of swallowing; after the session, she commented that it felt like something was pressing on her throat through the first half of the session. By the time I got to the second side, Isobel was fast asleep. The second side released much faster than the first.

Pulses at close of our first session showed a remarkable and strange change: just about all of the pulses had switched. Small intestine was now low with Heart balanced, Triple Warmer had come up but Pericardium had decreased, Spleen was now low and Stomach balanced, Lung increased and Large Intestine the same, Bladder and Kidney remained balanced Gall bladder decreased while Liver increased.

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Having a concentrated hour to relax was like a gift to Isobel. She left extremely relaxed and nourished.

Session Two 11:30AM: Heart time

Isobel had had a stressful and chaotic week because she moved residences. She reported that her energy had been good all week and, although she had a lot to deal with, she felt like she could manage - no matter what. Her asthma was much improved and I was unable to hear any crackling or wheezing. This session, I provided a second pillow to elevate her upper back and throat to ease the throat pressure sensation she'd felt in the first session. Prior to our session starting, Isobel began to disclose her feelings around her husband's death and her anxiety about her child's questions about it. She appeared to need a lot of reassurance.

Pulses at open indicated Small intestine and Heart low, Triple Warmer completely flat and Pericardium balanced, Spleen excessive and Stomach low, Lung balanced and Large Intestine low, Bladder and Kidney balanced Gall bladder excessive with Liver low.

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Again, I noticed the left side pulses were much weaker than the right. However, rather than do a husband/wife session so early on, I opted to do a meridian release in METAL, to support Isobel's lungs and 'letting go'. I used the Mu points, **Large Intestine (ST 25, Heaven's Pivot)** and **Lung (Lung 1, Middle Palace)** to determine which meridian would be most effective. From the Mu points I decided to do a **Large Intestine release**.

During this session, Isobel talked a lot about having to ‘let-go’ of personal things during her recent residential move. As she spoke, I noted her feelings of sadness and tears as Isobel described how she had nothing growing up, and how hard it was to force herself to give these personal items away now that she finally she had them. When I held **ST 13 Chi Door**, Isobel said she had a flash visual of being in China in a bamboo house which was very simple with no pictures. She said that people meditate there. **ST 13** is a very spiritual point and I do believe that Isobel is quite spiritually sensitive.

Isobel also talked of her child, what being a parent means to her and how her child is a good person (I reinforced her expression with reassurance). She then recalled experiences of abusive behaviour toward her and her child from an extended family member. Isobel talked about having recently let-go of that family connection. Here, Isobel’s experiences felt like a classic METAL session with the discussion on losses, letting go, and also some associations to a father archetype - all metal elemental qualities.

Pulses at session close were much more balanced. Small intestine remained low, however, Heart increased, Triple Warmer increased and Pericardium remained balanced, Spleen decreased to balanced and Stomach balanced, Lung and Large Intestine balanced, Bladder and Kidney balanced Gall bladder decreased with Liver increasing.

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These post-session pulses show a much improved pulse picture, however, the left pulses were still noticeable weaker than the right.

Session Three 10AM: spleen time

At our third session, Isobel showed up in a very upbeat and energized mood, and she was very pleased to report that her energy was good despite another chaotic week. She had plans for a weekend get-away and to scatter the last of her husband’s remains. She was quite sad about this but felt she needed to move on. Pulses at opening indicated Small intestine balanced, Heart low, Triple Warmer and Pericardium balanced, Spleen excessive and Stomach balanced, Lung and Large Intestine balanced, Bladder balanced and Kidney excessive, Gall bladder and Liver balanced.

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Left side pulses were most definitely weaker than right, so I opted to do a **Husband/Wife release** this week.

During our session, Isobel chatted about her anxiety at letting go of her husband's remains and was exploring if she really was ready. She also talked at some length about her child and her fears about whether her child is genetically predisposed to developing the same mental illness her husband had. Near the end of the session, Isobel began reminiscing about all of the good times she and her husband had together, telling me stories about their life together. For the most part, her conversation during the entire session focused on the loving side of her relationship with her husband, which was quite appropriate given we were doing a Husband/Wife release.

Pulses after the session showed all pulses balanced, and the left side pulses were a little stronger but still not as strong as the right side.

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Session Four 10AM: Spleen time

At our fourth session Isobel said she had had a very good week and had energy all week. She talked about how well she has been feeling since she has started acupuncture and how she feels she can take on anything. Isobel had decided to delay scattering her husband's ashes by a week and, instead, was going to be doing it this day. She felt fine with this decision and knew that waiting the week had been right for her.

Pulses at opening indicated Small intestine and Heart low, Triple Warmer and Pericardium balanced, Spleen excessive and Stomach balanced, Lung and Large Intestine balanced, Bladder low and Kidney balanced, Gall bladder balanced and Liver low.

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Left side pulses were again weaker than right, so I opted to do a second **Husband/Wife release** this week.

This session's conversation was mainly around fear, particularly around Isobel releasing some fear in her life in order to embrace her adventurous spirit. Isobel gave several examples of conquering her fears lately. She had managed a family trip to a larger city and they had easily been able to find their way around. She acknowledged she has been through a lot and that she will never give up. At the end of this session, she remarked on how it made her feel like she was being 'split' down the middle of her torso (vertically) so that she had two separate halves to her body. She felt this was good and right for her 'balancing'.

Pulses after the session showed Small intestine and Heart were low, Bladder was low, and all other pulses balanced. Again, her right side pulses were definitely stronger but still not as strong as the left.

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Conclusion

When I first started working with Isobel, I knew this would be a harder and more challenging case for me given the breadth of emotional trauma she has endured in her life so far. I felt I would be working with a severely imbalanced Metal element, based on Isobel’s many losses, having been a recipient of abuse, and her chronic asthma (lung). However, the Metal imbalance wasn’t as strong as I had thought it would be. Nevertheless, we did have good results from the Large Intestine meridian release that led to some asthma improvement, and a lot of emotional ‘letting go’ over the subsequent weeks. Initially, I was not expecting a Husband/Wife imbalance, however, when reviewing at all Isobel has had to overcome and that she is both mother and father to her child under trying circumstances, it certainly makes sense. I expected better results from the first Husband/Wife release and, after researching, was pleased to discover that it can take more than one release to correct. I had wondered if I had misread the pulses, but now know that I have not. I believe Isobel will be with me for many weeks as we continue to work together to bring about deeper healing through physical and emotional releases.

Based on Isobel’s emotional responses and some of the blue/black colouring around her eyes, I thought Isobel might be a Water element. Upon deeper investigation, paying close attention to sound, colour, and odour each week, I believe Isobel’s key element is Fire. Many of the stresses she has endured relate to Fire – sudden and traumatic loss (Pericardium), loss of social network and support (Triple Warmer), sorting through many life challenges to make decisions as a single parent of a challenging child (Small Intestine) and lack of adult love (mother and spouse - Heart). Emotionally she first presented as a strongly imbalanced Water (big and constant fears) and this strong Water would dampen and/or put out a weakened Fire. This elemental exchange would explain her persistent fears and her need for reassurance. There was only one out of four sessions where all four Fire meridians resulted in being balanced, and that changed by each week’s end.

In my work with Isobel, I was amazed at each session’s bodywork related so closely to her conversations and feeling. Extreme alignment appeared to be taking place between her releases and the emotions shown. I discovered that mind-body releasing is not limited to session time only and, in Isobel’s case, the session was simply a starting point for her continued work throughout the week. Isobel’s theme of letting go of old fears evolved over the four sessions and continually became much more balanced and she gained increased perspective on her life. Although I could have worked in Fire first, the work in Metal (LI) was absolutely necessary to start the lengthy process of letting go, resulting in space for Isobel’s adventurous side to start to appear in her life. By the fourth session, I was beginning to see Shen and alignment with what I believe is her true Spirit of Fire.

This was and continues to be a complex case for me, and I am very grateful to be a part of Isobel's journey to healing. A fifth session showed the Husband/Wife imbalance cleared with great improvement to her asthmatic lungs occurring. Each week that she arrives, Isobel is showing herself to be more open and joyful and committed to herself, emotionally and physically. Isobel needs support, human nourishment, and body-mind releases to ease her daily pressure, and acupressure is provides a perfect fit for this phase of her healing.