

Case Study 2:

Melody is a 25 year old health-care professional. She has a spunk for life and a natural kindness and openness that is easy to connect with. She had never had acupuncture before coming to see me but had no hesitations about the process whatsoever. She struck me as an easy-going spirit with a love of people and adventure. She spoke lovingly about her time spent in other cultures and is often on the move. In fact at the time of our meeting she had only just committed to stay in her home town for 6 months which was a real challenge for her, having not done that since growing up here.

She seemed to be somewhat fearless, not a daredevil by any means, but strong and convicted and full of passion for life. So, when I heard that her main medical issue was PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) I was a little taken aback. Turns out that she was diagnosed with the condition three years ago when she had a flashback for which she was taken to hospital. She had feared for many years that she had some sort of mental condition, but she had no idea what it was. For these years she thought that she had schizophrenia or something similar and waited anxiously to hear the diagnosis. When she found out what it was, she was surprised. The traumatic event for which she suffers occurred at the age of 15 and gets triggered in an episodic flashback by certain circumstances though until more recently she had not understood that was what they were. Now she is able to understand the type of incidences that cause the flashbacks and work to reduce or eliminate them from her life. More and more she is able to predict ahead of their occurrence, and with the counseling she now has tools to reduce or reverse a flashback so it doesn't effectively re-traumatize her all over again.

Additionally, Melody suffers from poor sleep, nightmares and tightness in her shoulders and jaw as a result of what she describes as residual tension from the flashbacks. She is able to get some relief from doing yoga and being busy. She never has a problem with PTSD at work which she attributes to always having something to do. It is in times of inactivity such as during sleep or when relaxing at home that the terrors of her past come back to her awareness. She has coped for many years this way but is now willing to use some different methods to get relief from the trauma. She has come to me at this perfect time so that we might find some peace through body work.

My initial impression of Melody was that she was vibrant and yet there was a guarding in her eyes, which I interpreted as an imbalance within the Shen. She would look at me but not with much intensity or sometimes it was as if she wasn't even looking at all. Her energy was high, sitting on the edge of the seat and jumping up prematurely when the session work was merely mentioned. I got a sense that she was not fully at ease even though she was covering it well by being overly eager. This indicated to me a possible correlation between the Fire element and the Water element.

Session one:

I wanted to do an Extraordinary Vessel for the first session so as to test her ease and receptivity to acupuncture. Given the deep nature of the trauma in her life, and the spiritual nature of the other conditions such as the insomnia and flashbacks, I chose to do the Great Central Vessel. Surprisingly, her Water pulses were quite balanced, and it was an excessive Stomach and deficient Triple Warmer that stood out. During the session, while holding GV14 with Kid 9 and BL 62 she started to twitch. At first it was pretty mild and I thought that she was falling asleep but soon it became quite pronounced. She said to me that she couldn't understand why her legs were doing that, it had never happened before. I explained about how the body releases energy/emotion and that it was perfectly normal. This continued throughout the session, even while doing the closing. I stopped at one point to hold the Four Gates to help calm her and increase flow to her feet which had become quite cool. Otherwise, I

completed the release in entirety.

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Session Two:

The next time I saw Melody it had been a couple of weeks. After her last session she says she slept better but then got a cold after a few days that knocked her out. This time when I took the pulses her Kidney meridian was deficient so I decided to do a Kidney Meridian release to directly target this as well as the PTSD. I talked with her about how it would be if any strong emotions or thoughts came up during the session. She understood and felt that she had been working with this enough that she would be able to handle it and if she couldn't she would let me know so that we could stop the session. I did the release, adding in the Kidney Horary point as it was during this time of the evening. Testing the Kidney Shu (both inner and outer) proved that they were not very sensitive.

The twitching started again, wasn't as prominent as last session but was there most of the time. When I asked her about the points it was the ones in the neck and shoulders that she most connected with, remarking about how wonderful the Neck and Shoulder release was. It appeared that the most armored points that we had touched upon so far were in this area. Again, the stomach meridian was excessive but most of the rest of the pulses were balanced.

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Session Three:

Melody seemed much more relaxed and present for this session right from the time she arrived. She talked about how the moving in process was going with the new apartment she has rented and some anger arose to do with that. She also spoke of how she was feeling lost without a partner. She had rarely been without in her life and it had been nearly a year. She wasn't sure where she was going and felt like settling and becoming more rooted was what she wanted but for some reason she just wasn't able to do it. I was happy to see that her pulses were quite balanced all around, that the Water and TW pulses which had been tending low were now in balance. The only pulses that were out of balance were the Heart at excessive and the Liver at deficient. Judging by her tendency of emphasizing the physical symptoms I decided to do a Shoulder Release. She had remarked on both previous sessions about that area as being the area of most change. It also fit quite well with her talks around her relationships, and feeling unable to become intimately involved as she had done previously.

The Per Shu was the most tender area and we worked more here as a result. She said it felt guarded and at times she felt like it went from her heart area right up onto the deltoid. With some time she felt able to relax into it and the point softened considerably. BL 38 coupled with Per 9 gave the most relief. By the end she was feeling elated. I noticed a sparkle to her eyes that I had not yet seen on her previously.

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Conclusion:

Melody's element still eludes me though I would say that my best inclination would be Water. She had a strong enough scent that I could use it for testing and I felt it predominately at the back of the nose. That coupled with the over compensation for her fears made it seem like this may be her CF. When I tried to reassure her about the nature of the healing process being a journey and that it will be alright to feel the discomfort in her body, she brushed it off with too much easiness, almost not letting it in.

I learned during my work with Melody that sometimes all we need to do is a few points. We did many points over the three sessions but it felt that most of them only skimmed the surface. When we got to some key points, by staying there and moving through the experience as it unfolded the best healing became available. I let her direct the work with her words and discomforts and soon we got to what her body was wanting most to let go of.

I also learned that the particulars of stories and the way the conscious mind understands its experience isn't usually the most definitive for settling into a direction for the clinic work. Ultimately, we never discussed the events of Melody's trauma yet I felt by reading her body language and how she presented herself, I was able to get a much better picture than by the words themselves. Often we just talked about random things, about the day's events, about food, and sometimes even about her new favorite sport. It made for a perfect environment as I think she was needing that for her safety. At first, I wanted to keep going back to the deep issues, but I soon realized that that wasn't important. I learned that if I looked and listened with The Five Element approach what I needed to know was readily available.

By Marcia Hewett-Hicks