



SHOULDER PAIN

Acupressure Case Study One

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Microsoft

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Background

Rafael is in his mid-fifties and works as a management consultant. He works primarily at a desk or in meeting rooms, spending significant periods of time sitting working at a computer. Rafael also spends long periods of time on airplanes as he is required to travel to various remote client sites.

He went through a divorce a number of years ago leaving him to raise two adult children as a single parent. Rafael indicated there was minimal stress impact on him due to the divorce.

Rafael was diagnosed with Crohn's disease when he was a teenager, and occasionally experiences bloating and general stomach discomfort but he feels he is effectively managing his condition.

Rafael fractured his collar bone approximately six years ago while playing hockey. He has not played hockey for the last two years however, he is an avid golfer. He has shoulder pain and experiences back and elbow pain on and off. Rafael has been diagnosed with osteoarthritis in both hips however it is more bothersome on the left side. He has issues with pain in his left groin which specialists have attributed to the osteoarthritis and he suffers from Restless Leg Syndrome.

When I first started working with Rafael, he was having difficulty sleeping at night due to the pain in his hip. He indicated the pain starts at the groin and proceeds to deep throbbing in the hips. There is no family history of hip and groin issues or Crohn's disease. Rafael has used Active Release Therapy in the past and has had cortisone injections in his hip and groin. At nighttime, he would take anti-inflammatories or arthritis Tylenol to deal with the pain. He indicated his shoulder pain and periodic back pain was worse after golfing or sitting all day. He is not on any other medications, vitamins or supplements.

Rafael's face has a healthy glow, he has minimal facial wrinkles and his eyes are soft and caring yet have a brightness to them. His shoulders roll forward slightly when sitting and he slouches when standing. He appears to be grounded and emotionally stable. Rafael is a compassionate and sympathetic individual who is eager to please. His voice is calm and soothing and he is cooperative and pleasant to deal with, however, he seems to be easily distracted. I found it difficult to discern a colour in Rafael's face yet I did feel that yellow was present.

My initial assessment is that Rafael's Constitutional Factor (CF) is Earth.

Rafael wanted to work on the shoulder and back pain first and then proceed to deal with his hip and groin pain.

Session One – Great Regulator Release (GRR)

For the first session, I chose to do the **Great Regulator Release** to introduce Rafael to acupressure as he had never experienced energy healing before. The **GRR** would also be beneficial for his shoulder pain.

Initial pulses indicated the *Bladder (BL)* and *Stomach (ST)* deficient, *Small Intestine (SI)*, *Heart (HT)*, *Triple Heater (TH)* and *Pericardium (PE)* excessive and *Gall Bladder (GB)*, *Kidney (KI)*, *Liver (LV)*, *Large Intestine (LI)*, *Lung (LU)* and *Spleen (SP)* balanced. A deficiency in the Bladder Meridian can be attributed to weakness of the back muscles and an excess in the Small Intestine Meridian to shoulder pain.

Rafael fell asleep shortly after we started and didn't wake up until the end of the session when I was taking his pulses. Although he didn't experience significant physical, emotional or spiritual changes, he indicated he felt very relaxed and enjoyed the session. He was surprised that he slept through the entire session. The *BL*, and *ST* pulses increased slightly after the session.

Meridian		Pre-Session ¹		Post-Session ¹	
SI	HT	3	3	3	3
GB	LV	2	2	2	2
BL	KI	1	2	1.5	2
LI	LU	2	2	2	2
ST	SP	1	2	1.5	2
TH	PE	3	3	3	3

I provided Rafael with the **Pal Dan Gum Exercise (PDGE)** “**Holding Toes and Stretching Back**” and suggested he do the exercises at a minimum twice a week to help stimulate the leg meridians and increase flexibility.

Session Two – Shoulder Segmental Release (SSR)

Rafael informed me he has not experienced any body stiffness after playing golf since our last acupressure session. Unfortunately, he arrived unable to turn his head to the right without moving his entire body. Given Rafael's situation I chose to do a **Shoulder Segmental Release** using a **Local Shoulder Point - GB21** with **Six Distal Points - TH5, LI14, ST13, GB34, GB41 and GB29**. The initial pulses showed *BL* and *ST* deficient and *SI*, *HT*, *TH* and *PE* excessive.

After the session Rafael had more mobility in his neck but was still experiencing pain when he turned his head to the right. I worked the following acupoints **HT3, SI3** and **KI20** and afterwards Rafael had complete mobility without pain. Post session the *ST* and *BL* pulses increased.

Meridian		Pre-Session		Post Session	
SI	HT	3	3	3	3
GB	LV	2	2	2	2
BL	KI	1	2	2	2
LI	LU	2	2	2	2
ST	SP	1	2	2	2
TH	PE	3	3	3	3

I recommended Rafael continue with the **PDGE** “**Holding Toes and Stretching Back**”

¹ Pulses – 1=Deficient, 2=Balanced, 3=Excessive

Session Three – Back Release

Rafael had injured his back while playing golf and was experiencing mid and lower back pain. I chose to do a **Back Release** for this session. Initial pulses showed LI, ST, SP, TH and PE as deficient. Given there were so many deficiencies, which was unusual compared to prior sessions, I questioned if I had accurately assessed the pulses. At this point I decided not to recheck the pulses as I was not using them to determine the treatment for this session. I would reevaluate if the pulses remained deficient after the session.

Rafael was awake for the entire session however he was very quiet. He experienced itchiness in his toes while I was working **BL62** and had numbness in his arm when working **P2**. He felt a huge release and had a deep breath while I was holding **LU1** and **KI6** was extremely tender on both sides. The majority of pulses increased after the session so my initial suspicion that I had incorrectly assessed the pulses pre-session was most likely accurate.

Meridian		Pre-Session		Post-Session	
SI	HT	2	2	3	2
GB	LV	2	2	2	3
BL	KI	2	2	3	3
LI	LU	1(?)	2	2	2
ST	SP	1(?)	1(?)	2	2
TH	PE	1(?)	1(?)	2	2

I encouraged Rafael to continue with the **PDGE** already assigned as he had stopped doing it and I provided him with a handout for acupoint **BL40**, made sure he was comfortable locating it and suggested he use this point when experiencing back or hip pain.

Session Four – Shoulder Release

Rafael arrived with a stiff and painful shoulder. I took his pulses and SI and HT were excessive, GB was deficient with all others pulses balanced. I suggested to Rafael we do a Small Intestine Release given shoulder pain can be attributed to an excess pulse in the SI however he wanted me to do the **SSR** we did in a prior session. We agreed to do a **Shoulder Release**.

Rafael was not able to relax during this session; his legs were very fidgety while I was working on his right side and his tummy was gurgling throughout the session. **LU1** was tender on both sides and Rafael released air through his nose while working **LU1** on the right side. **TH5** was tender on the left side. The GB pulse was balanced after the session while the SI and HT pulses remained excessive.

Meridian		Pre-Session		Post-Session	
SI	HT	3	3	3	3
GB	LV	1	2	2	2
BL	KI	2	2	2	2
LI	LU	2	2	2	2
ST	SP	2	2	2	2
TH	PE	2	2	2	2

Rafael indicated he was still not doing the **PDGE** however he said he would try to do it at least twice a week. He had used **BL40** a couple times during the night when his Restless Leg Syndrome was bothering him and he said it helped.

Session Five – Large Intestine Meridian Release

Rafael indicated he had soreness and was stiff around his collar bone as well as around the scapula on the right side. He was also having trouble breathing through both nostrils. I was unable to get any pulses pre and post session. I chose to do a **Large Intestine Meridian Release** as traditional associations with the large intestine include nasal and sinus congestion along with arm and shoulder pain and neck tension. Given I had not done a meridian release on Rafael I wanted to work with a Yang Meridian.

During the session Rafael was calm and wasn't complaining but you could tell he was uncomfortable. He experienced shooting up his leg and into his abdomen when I was holding **BL62** on the right side. **LI18** and **LI4** were sensitive on both sides along with **GB21** during the neck release. Rafael said he felt like some tension had released and he was able to breathe better after the session.

Rafael was doing the **PDGE** and was using **BL40** whenever he experienced Restless Leg Syndrome or had back or hip pain. He informed me he found it very helpful to keep him comfortable during flights.

Session Six – Sinus and Nasal Release

Rafael is still experiencing trouble breathing through his nose and indicated it was more bothersome than usual. He has had trouble breathing through his nose since childhood which he forgot to mention during the intake process. He has never had this condition checked out by a physician. Rafael does have allergies but he does not feel this is attributed to his allergies. His left nostril was more plugged than the right. I chose to do a **Sinus and Nasal Release** and the **SI** and **BL Source Points (SI4 / BL64)**. Pulses pre-session indicated GB and ST deficient, SI and HT excessive with all other pulses balanced.

Rafael experienced pressure in his head while I was working **BL1** on the right side. He experienced pain down his shoulder blades and back while working **LI17 and LI18** on the right side and these points were sensitive on both sides. **LI20 and LI4** were sensitive on both sides. Rafael's breathing through both nostrils improved after the session. His post session pulses remained constant with the pre-session pulses.

Meridian		Pre-Session		Post-Session	
SI	HT	3	3	3	3
GB	LV	1	2	1	2
BL	KI	2	2	2	2
LI	LU	2	2	2	2
ST	SP	1	2	1	2
TH	PE	2	2	2	2

Summary

Rafael's treatment plan went as intended other than when he showed up with the back pain and sinus issues. Rafael was pleasantly surprised that he was able to feel the energy moving through his body and it gave him a new appreciation for energy work. He still does Active Release Therapy and Massage Therapy on occasion, but he indicated he prefers Acupressure.

I must admit that at one point during our sessions I had convinced myself I was incorrect and Rafael was in fact a Fire CF. As you will see in the [lessons learned](#) section below, I still maintain that he is an Earth CF.

We were both pleased with the results of the sessions as Rafael had seen a significant improvement with his shoulder and back pain. Rafael was pleasantly surprised that his breathing had improved as well. He would have continued with the Acupressure sessions; however, he accepted a long-term employment contract out of country.

Rafael did indicate he would reach out to me once he returns so we can continue with his sessions. Unless the shoulder and back pain has returned or deteriorated, we would focus on alleviating his hip and groin pain and then move to a monthly maintenance plan with seasonal tune-ups.

Lessons Learned

In typing up this case study I realize that my original instinct of Rafael being an Earth CF was correct – that is his true core essence. Balanced, he is a kind, considerate, compassionate and sympathetic individual who is a healthy weight. Imbalanced, although rare, I have seen indications of obsessiveness, anxiety and a lack of concentration. Originally, I discounted the digestive disorders given his Crohn's disease however I realize now that this was a mistake. I still struggle with seeing the colour yellow but he has a fragrant odour, loves late summer and his voice sings when he talks. Rafael appreciated that I was sympathetic to the pain he was in and that I would do my best to work with him to heal himself without babying him.

I have learnt that just because the client is presenting with pulses and symptoms outside of their CF doesn't mean you are incorrect – all elements are connected and we are all elements. In hindsight I should have paid more attention to the constant excessive pulses in the fire meridians given it is the mother of earth.

Rafael was one of my initial clients so these were my first sessions as a student. I realize I mainly determined the treatment plan based on presenting symptoms rather than looking at the bigger picture. Having more experience, I would now incorporate the pulses, the client's CF, the Shu and Mu points, the client's current emotion state and many other factors in determining my treatment plan.

I would like to thank Rafael for allowing me to practice my techniques and for providing me the opportunity to learn and grow both personally and professionally.