

Margaret is 65 years old, and works as a caregiver and companion for seniors in their own homes, and in nursing homes and hospitals. She works with clients who have impaired mobility, brain damage, and dementia. She has university degrees and qualifications far above the requirements of her present employment. However, she loves her work. She is divorced, and lives alone. She jokes that she has no social life, so she works all kinds of hours, day or night.

She has a history of low back pain, right hip pain, scoliosis, and occasional difficulty sleeping, for which she takes Zopiclone.

Margaret came to see me because she had been feeling overwhelmed by tension for the past 2 weeks, and she hoped that acupressure might provide a feeling of being grounded and relaxed. She had jaw pain, and told me that she had been unconsciously biting her lip to the point of bleeding. By the time of her first visit to me, she had stopped the lip biting, but the tension and pain in the jaw was still present. She also felt her whole neck was stiff and sore.

The past two weeks had been arduous for Margaret. She said she had been working too much. She had been helping a particularly difficult client with a move and transition from the nursing home back to her private home. Margaret told me that she had recently “exploded” at the client’s husband and was appalled at her behaviour and said she had never done anything like that before. She seemed to judge herself very harshly on this event. In the same week, Margaret had also received news that a friend had been diagnosed with cancer, a client had died, and her dog had become ill. Her stress was apparent.

Margaret struck me immediately as a nervous person. She is slim and has a pale complexion. The colouring around her eyes seemed more white than yellow. I was looking for yellow based on the Earth associations of her chosen caregiver profession, and her symptom of a tense, sore jaw. She spoke with a quiet voice, almost breathy, and it was difficult to discern specifically a “singing” quality in it. I thought at the time that she may have more of a weeping sound to her voice, pointing more towards the Metal element. But there was certainly nothing “rotten” smelling about her. On the contrary, the only smell I had a sense of was sweet. Of course I realized that may be her shampoo and soap. Her prevailing emotion seemed to be one of anxiety or worry, which I connected with Earth, but I couldn’t be sure if this was over-concern or a type of grief. I didn’t immediately observe anything about her that would indicate a CF of Fire, Water, or Wood. The main element presenting in her was Earth.

Session #1 June 14 1:00pm Heart/Small Intestine Time

Margaret said she wanted to focus on relaxation. As it was her first session, I felt it was important to work directly on her presenting symptom of the tense, painful jaw. Because I also had a hunch that she might be an Earth CF, I chose to do a Stomach meridian release, doing St 6, St 42, and St 40 on both sides.

Pulses Before:

SI ∅ H - GB ∅ Lv ∅ B - K ∅ LI - Lu - St - Sp - to ∅ TW - P ∅

Pulses After:

SI ∅ H ∅ GB ∅ Lv ∅ B ∅ K ∅ LI - Lu - St ∅ Sp ∅ TW ∅ P ∅

At first, Margaret had difficulty relaxing on the table and breathing deeply. She commented that she could feel St 36 "all the way around" her feet, and she liked the sensation. I noticed her eyelids were flickering, and thought that it was a sign that she was not relaxed. She told me afterwards that she experienced seeing colours, which only happens when she is very relaxed, meditating. She also said she preferred the acupressure to acupuncture because she liked having me stay with her throughout the session.

In the pulse assessment, I found there were varying degrees of deficiency or excess. Before the session, I felt that her Spleen pulse registered as being somewhere *between* deficient and balanced. To make these various degrees clearer for myself and easier to notate, after this session I changed my system from using the "+ -" symbols to a scale of minus 3 to plus 3, with ∅ representing a balanced pulse.

Session #2 July 26 3:00pm Small Intestine/Bladder Time

Due to a busy summer, we did not have our second session until 6 weeks later. Margaret said her jaw and neck were better, and not painful anymore. Her jaw was not clenching, and her neck was more relaxed. She said she had been more relaxed in general. But her lower back had been sore. She told me that, for the first time in her life, she had begun to want to stop working.

I decided to do a Deep Breathing Release because I felt that the underlying problems were anxiety and stress, and I had noticed in the last session that she had experienced some difficulty breathing deeply.

Pulses Before:

SI -3 H -3 GB ∅ Lv -1 B +1 K +1 LI -3 Lu -3 St +1 Sp -1 TW -2 P -1

Pulses After:

SI -1 H -1 GB ∅ Lv ∅ B ∅ K ∅ LI -3 Lu -3 St -2 Sp -2 TW -1 P -1

I felt good releases of St 13, St 16, and BL 43. Her Lv 14 was very sensitive. On the left side, she felt tingling in her fingers on P 6. BL 62 was very tight. I heard her stomach gurgling on the St points.

Margaret talked throughout the session about her clients, and also asked me several questions about how I was doing, focusing the attention away from herself and her own relaxation. When I asked her to do some deep breaths into her hara, she began to inhale and then stopped, saying she wanted to “get it right”. This surprised me, and I assured her that she was doing just fine, that there was no right or wrong way for her to breathe. This suggested to me that her emotion of worry or concern, and her need to please others, was strong.

In spite of this, she reported enjoying the session, and said she felt more aware of her body. Consequently, she was now more aware of areas of tension in her body, however, she said she felt quite relaxed.

Session #3 August 16 4:00pm Bladder Time

Margaret said her right hip was “out” and that this was a recurring problem. She had not mentioned this during the intake interview. She had no other complaints, and said she was open to any treatment I wanted to do. She said she felt more relaxed about her work related problems, and about life in general.

Through our conversations I surmised that Margaret was a shy person who worried about social and work relationships. Also, her Fire pulses were deficient so I did a Pericardium release pattern, adding GB 29 for relief of her hip tension.

Pulses Before:

SI -3 H -3 GB ∅ Lv ∅ B +1 K +1 LI -3 Lu -3 St -3 Sp -2 TW -2 P -2

I must be honest and admit that I completely forgot to take the pulses after the treatment. I think that I was so focused on giving Margaret the relaxation that she so desperately needed, that I forgot to read the pulses. From this I learned that I am capable of being a bit too engaged with the client, to the point where practical concerns, like pulse reading and time passing, can be forgotten. My attention and care for Margaret was very good, but I needed to also attend to professional, practical concerns.

Margaret was relaxed through the session. She was fairly quiet, chatting occasionally. She said afterwards that when I asked her to breathe deeply, she liked that I breathed along with her. She said she experienced seeing a blue colour, which is a colour she only sees when she is extremely relaxed. She also had the sensation of rocking on tiny waves.

Session #4 October 13 12:00pm Heart Time

Margaret was a bit agitated and on edge. She said she’d had a busy morning, and she had some anxiety about an elderly client who hadn’t been in a good mood.

She had seen a chiropractor for her hip, and it was now feeling somewhat better. She said she just wanted to focus on relaxation. She was uncharacteristically firm about this, which I read as an expression of her frustration and anger.

Since her work relationships were an on-going problem for her, and her Wood pulses were excessive, I decided to do a Tonification transfer from Wood to Fire, using the Triple Warmer and Pericardium.

Pulses Before:

SI ∅ H -1 GB +1 Lv +1 B -1 K -1 LI -1 Lu -1 St ∅ Sp ∅ TW -3 P -2

Pulses After:

SI ∅ H ∅ GB ∅ Lv ∅ B ∅ K ∅ LI -1 Lu -1 St -1 Sp -1 TW -1 P -1

Her right side TW Shu (B 22) was very tight as was the whole of her back on that side. She said the soreness and tension there was related to her hip problem. I noticed the improvement of her TW and P pulses after the treatment. The St and Sp pulses had reduced, which made me wonder if they had actually been slightly excessive before as opposed to balanced.

Margaret said that she felt that B 22 was a good point for releasing her whole back. She enjoyed seeing colours of blue and green again. She was very happy, relaxed, and yet quite alert after the session. I had not seen her appear this happy before. She said she found my voice soothing and that she was beginning to relax now as soon as she entered the treatment room. She was no longer so concerned about the details of the day ahead of her. She told me she is unable to achieve this kind of relaxation on her own. I assured her that she would indeed be able to achieve it given more time and "training".

Session #5 October 26 10:00am Spleen/Pancreas Time

Margaret's right hip was out of joint again and she had seen a chiropractor seven times to treat it. She was disappointed with his recommendation of no exercise except swimming.

She said she'd repeatedly had great difficulty leaving a client's house on time. It had happened again this morning. The client always had "just one more" task for her to do, and Margaret didn't want to say no. Her issues with boundaries and grounding were again pointing to a CF of Earth. I told her I admired her kindness and dedication, but that she deserved to leave on time, or at least to be paid for her extra time.

I realized I could do a sedation of Wood, but instead I chose to do a GB release. Since her hip was causing her the most anxiety, it seemed best to use points that would directly, physically touch that hip. The Wood sedation has points in the lower leg and ankle. My instinct was that Margaret would not feel as though her hip had been addressed if it had not been touched.

Pulses Before:

SI -1 H -1 GB ∅ Lv ∅ B -2 K -2 LI +1 Lu +1 St -1 Sp -1 TW -3 P -3

Pulses After:

SI ∅ H ∅ GB ∅ Lv ∅ B -3 K -3 LI ∅ Lu ∅ St ∅ Sp ∅ TW ∅ P ∅

I was pleased to read more balanced overall pulses after the GB release, but I had not expected the Water pulses to decrease. I wonder if this is because of the flow of energy: if energy is flowing “out” of Wood and into Fire, might energy from Water flow into Wood to replenish it?

Margaret had trouble relaxing and staying present in her body. However, she said that she felt that she was improving with every session. She said she appreciated my frequent checks regarding her comfort with finger pressure, and that it was always “just right”.

Session #6 November 2 10:00am Spleen/Pancreas Time

Margaret described herself as feeling “disappointed with” her back. She said it had been sore for 4 months! She was frustrated with it, and with her chiropractor’s prohibition of exercise apart from swimming. She asked me if I thought she should see a doctor about her back problem. I said it was a very good idea to get a doctor’s diagnosis. She was worried about losing all her muscle, and wished she could go back to the gym. I told her that I thought she could afford to take a break from gym exercise as she seemed fit and had probably developed good core strength. Also, I said, swimming is an excellent exercise that uses the whole body. It was interesting to me that she had never mentioned before how very long she had been experiencing back pain. With a new awareness of her body, she was beginning to notice its various aches, pains, and most importantly, its needs. She reported that she had begun to set boundaries with the client who had been keeping her working late. She had now left the client’s home on time twice, and she was quite pleased about it.

I did a Sedation transfer of Wood to Fire. Because Margaret frequently had trouble relaxing, I began with the 4 Gates. I was amazed with the immediate relaxation it inspired. Margaret complimented me on my ability to relax her. I told her that she was doing very good work in our sessions, and that I was only the facilitator. I wanted to highlight the feeling of pride she had felt while telling me about setting boundaries with her client. I also wanted her to take pride in the improvements she was making in her own life.

Pulses Before:

SI -2 H -2 GB -1 Lv -1 B -1 K -1 LI -2 Lu -2 St ∅ Sp ∅ TW -2 P -2

Pulses After:

SI -1 H -1 GB ∅ Lv ∅ B ∅ K ∅ LI -1 Lu -1 St ∅ Sp ∅ TW ∅ P ∅

This session proved to be a most fascinating and revealing one. Without any prompting, Margaret began to talk about her mother. She said that her mother had “disliked” her, and that Margaret had never felt loved or nourished by her. I asked about her father, and she told me that he had been a complacent man who never

punished Margaret as a child. As a result, she felt as though she and her father were allies who shared a secret. I noticed there was tension in her hands and fingers when she spoke about her mother, but I did not interrupt her flow of words to comment on it.

Margaret asked me about some of the points I was using. I told her they were in the Gall Bladder and Liver meridians, which are associated with decision making and planning. She responded that she knows she has difficulty making decisions because she sees all sides of an issue. She also finds planning challenging.

I felt good softening of all points, including both Shu points. During the session, I suggested the image of breathing in a beautiful colour of light as she inhaled, and having it flow throughout her body, with the breath. She loved this imagery.

Margaret felt this session was very powerful. She described it as a strong feeling of positive energy. She finds she is relaxing as soon as she enters the room now. She said that the end of the session, the Closing (which she calls “the blessing”), was very powerful today.

Summary

I am still working with Margaret and she is always keen to book her next appointment. She feels that the acupressure is helping her feel more relaxed and better in general, and she enjoys the sessions very much. She loves the feeling of profound relaxation after a session.

In the seventh treatment with her, I suddenly smelled something during the Fire from Water Control transfer. It was a sweet smell. I was amazed. It couldn't have been coming from anywhere else but my client. This certainly seemed to be a confirmation of an Earth CF.

I had guessed that Margaret might be an Earth CF early in our sessions based on her emotions, her colouring, her profession, and her symptoms presented at that first session. But as other symptoms presented, I noticed that I was more often working with the Wood element. And yet, my intuition kept leading me back towards Earth as the CF. I found this confusing, and I actually worried about it a bit: What if I was wrong about her CF? But through the sessions, Margaret had experienced feelings of positive energy, deep serenity and relaxation. She had taken action to make improvements in her work life. She had become more aware of her body, its needs, and its intrinsic connection with her mind and spirit. She repeatedly told me how much the sessions were helping her, and *she felt better about her life!* Even if I had guessed her CF incorrectly, the results of the acupressure work I was doing were nothing but positive. For me, this realization has been instrumental in instilling confidence in my abilities and in the process and value of Five Element acupressure.