

Case Study #1 – Disappointment with the Past in the Wood Element

by Elin Hilgemann

Meridian Key:

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| SI Small Intestine | GB Gallbladder | BL Bladder | LI Large Intestine | ST Stomach | TW Triple Warmer |
| H Heart | LV Liver | KI Kidney | LU Lung | SP Spleen | P Pericardium |

John Smith, an 81-year-old man, is an eager and hardworking landscaper. He has lived a very adventurous life, starting with working as a sailor, barber and gardener. The unique thing about John is that he has virtually no presenting symptoms. In our initial interview he told me he had no pain, and that he wanted to focus on energy and peace. He had no complaints about sleep, digestion, aches or pains or mobility, and takes no medication. Though he has no physical concerns now, in 2000 he did undergo two knee surgeries. It was also the time where he and his wife separated, and he felt his knee pain was a combination of the divorce and working long hours on the earth. Other than the need to have hearing aids, John has no concerns in his body.

John arrived dressed formally, but comfortably, and was excited to receive his first treatment. He has a lot of redness in his face. His brows are furrowed, his eyes look somewhat dim and dark, and he appears to be somewhat rigid and tight in the way he stands and conducts himself. I asked John what he would like to focus on that day, and he replied in a surprised and blunt way that “you choose what we focus on!” He didn't appear to want to choose for himself, or perhaps he thought that as his practitioner that I should know what to do for him without him telling me. He wanted me to *control* the treatment plan for him. As I continued the interview process, he told me he had no pain or complaints and he appeared to be very proud about this. He does have an interesting way of directing the conversation back away from himself and towards me instead. He was wanting to know how my own health was, and I found that he was somewhat needing *control* in the conversation, but a *lack* of control in his own treatment. The emotion of *control*, as well as the appearance of *anger* on his face was something I silently took note of the potentiality of being a *Wood* CF. John appeared to be very talkative in the initial interview. Eventually I stood up and moved the conversation to the massage table where I could start the treatment.

1st Session – 4:00pm – Bladder Time

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I was surprised to find that John's pulses on both sides were very balanced. They felt strong and constant. I decided to use the Yin Yang Linking as our first session in hopes it would calm him, as well as act as a funnel system to other potential concerns, either emotional or physical, that may appear as we worked together longer. John wanted to take his hearing aids out, and once he did, he could no longer hear or talk to me. It appeared that John was content with all the communication we had

together in the interview, and at this time, was simply wanting silence. John fell asleep soon into the treatment and seemed very relaxed when our session was over. It was an interesting pattern for me to conduct because John had no complains, so there wasn't a specific meridian that stood out to me, as well as the fact that John didn't vocalize any particular point or meridian that was sorer to him than others. After checking his pulses at the end of the pattern, I noticed that the LI was a little bit quiet than the other pulses, but they still appeared to be quite balanced.

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I asked John once he woke up and sat off the bed if he noticed any specific point that was more tender to him than others, and he said they were all great. John continued to yawn as he filled out his forms after the treatment and told me he never yawns and that he felt deeply relaxed. He seemed very happy with acupressure and told me he wants to be in that relaxed state weekly. He exclaimed that he was very excited to come back for another treatment.

2nd Session – 4:30pm – Bladder Time

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In our second treatment, I noticed that John's GB pulse was deficient. I was intrigued to know this, since in previous treatment, John had no complaints, his pulses were balanced, yet he wanted acupressure treatments done. He told me that after our first treatment together, he went home and slept for 10 hours straight! He doesn't usually sleep this much and was very happy at how acupressure made him feel. Since John had requested wanting deeper relaxation and peace, I decided to do the General Stress Reduction pattern for him. Again, John took out his hearing aids, and fell asleep for the majority of the treatment. He woke up very happy and complimented me on my pressure and location of points. After this second treatment, John's GB pulse was still deficient, and his LI had become quieter.

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3rd Session – 4:30pm – Bladder Time

John arrived for his third treatment in a different state than he usual had been. He appeared more frustrated and distracted than he usually was, due to his work. He appeared more angry than usual and

took his hearing aids out once again. I checked John's pulses, and they were quite different than the previous two sessions.

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SI and BL were deficient, and GB was excess. I was surprised that his GB pulse had gone from balanced, to deficient and then to excess within three treatments. I decided to do a Gallbladder Meridian Release for him because it was the meridian that stood out to me due to his frustration. During this session, John was more 'fidgety' than usual. He didn't fall asleep and kept his eyes open for most of the treatment. After finishing with the usual neck release, he did appear to be more relaxed. His pulses had changed: all felt balanced other than his LI being a little bit more excess.

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We started to speak about the 5 Elements system after his treatment when he was completing his forms. He told me that a previous reiki practitioner said he had a lot of *Fire* and that maybe he was *Fire* CF. I haven't noticed any *laughter* in his voice, and his odour appeared more *putrid* or *rancid* rather than *scorched*. I was having trouble determining a specific colour on his temples. It sometimes looked blue, white, or green, but I took note of what he said about Fire. He asked me what his pulses were reading, and I told him that his Gallbladder was the meridian that changed the most in the past three sessions. He told me he doesn't drink enough water and that maybe this was why his Gallbladder was changing so much. He also seemed to be hard on himself about drinking the occasional glass of wine and wanted to quite drinking alcohol all together. There was a feeling of *harshness* that John had about himself. He seemed to be very hard on himself, but harder on others, and would blame other people at work.

4th Session – 4:30pm – Bladder Time

John arrived for his 4th session still wanting to feel calmer and at peace. It did appear that he had a lot of frustration and anger. I checked his pulses and they had once again changed quite a lot.

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I decided to do the Liver Meridian Release for John because of his portrayal of frustration that he was expressing. I also had previously done the yang aspect of the Wood element for John, and I knew that by treating the yin it would open up the *emotion* of this element. Maybe this would help him acknowledge the anger he was holding onto. After this treatment though, John's LV was still very high.

His BL and KI appeared to have gotten more fainter, but his ST and SP pulses had balanced. He still appeared very happy and grateful for the treatments even though his pulses were shifting so much. He told me that he was noticing a change in wanting to work a little bit less and feeling more at peace and happy. John is 81 and still works full time at a strenuous job. He seemed very happy with my treatments and complimented me on my ability to communicate and make him feel acknowledged and heard, but at the same time he appeared very frustrated at everyone else.

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5th Session – 4:00pm – Bladder Time

It had almost been a month since I had last seen John. Summer had gotten in the way of our treatments and John had been caught up with the busyness in his garden and harvest time. He was relieved to be back for a treatment and told me that he missed having them. I checked John's pulses, and they were all over the place. I wondered if this was because of not having acupuncture done for a while and if we may have left things out in the open by stopping for almost a month.

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I decided to do a GB and LV sedation for John that day. Since his GB and LV pulses stood out with changing more than the others, I thought this may help ease his frustration at his workplace. John appeared really happy and joyful after this treatment. He had more sparkle in his eye and a skip in his step. His pulses had shifted; most had balanced out other than the LV, ST, SP being a little bit higher than the others. He didn't take his hearing aids out this time and it was nice to be able to communicate with him more throughout the treatment. He asked me what I was working on that day for him, and I mentioned that his GB and LV pulses had been high, and that this involves decision making, planning, and the emotion of anger. I explained that the Wood element includes both GB and LV and that there could be a lack of anger, or a portrayal of too much anger and he seemed to be very interested in this. He asked me how he could work on reducing his GB and LV pulses. I showed him the handout for Wood as well as the Qigong exercise: "The Wise Owl Gazes Backwards," to help him release all the 7 emotions.

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6th Session – 12:00 – Heart

I decided when John arrived for his 6th session that we would try something a little bit different. Since John had been talking about his frustration with his co-workers, his ex-wife, his landlords and other people in his life, I thought it may be a good idea to conduct a TW and P tonification for him. These two meridians are crucial for the relationships with friends, co-workers, and partners and I felt that it may help release a lot of the blame and upset that John has towards the people in his life. As much as John loved receiving treatments and felt so much happier after them, it was as if the treatments we were doing were not “sticking.” His GB and LV continued to be excess and his frustration at others wasn't improving in a way where he continued to feel better.

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During this treatment, John wanted to keep his hearing aids in so we could talk. I started with the Four Gates to bring John to a deeper state before treatment and it appeared to help him. He still spoke throughout the whole treatment, and I made sure to actively listen and comment when I felt the need to. I tried to bring his awareness back to certain points I was doing, but he seemed to want to talk more about his work life, and the people who worked there.

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After doing this Tonification treatment, all of John's pulses felt balanced, other than the GB and LV being higher than the others. I was glad to feel that his pulses were balancing out and that we would still continue to work on the Wood element.

7th Session – 11:30am – Heart

I was relieved to find that when John arrived for this treatment, that his pulses had continued to stay relatively balanced, other than the usual LI and GB/LV meridians. I noticed that his Liver was the highest pulse on both sides of his wrists. Even though I had done a LV release for John before, I felt inclined to do it again. I am glad I decided to do this because we had somewhat of a breakthrough in treatment.

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John arrived for his treatment in the Heart time of the day, and maybe this is why he felt more compelled to talk about himself during this session. He told me that he had been thinking a lot about what I said about Wood that week, and that he had been exploring his feelings about frustration and anger. As I started to work on his Liver points, he told me that he feels like has been angry for most of his life! I continued to work on the points while using reflective listening and asking open-ended questions. John really opened up to me and told me why he thinks he has been holding onto anger so

long. 67 years ago he had been betrayed by the love of his life and that he believed he was still holding onto the anger of that. He told me that he never really got over it and he felt cheated on with life, because he ended up marrying a different woman and that marriage didn't work out. He has lived alone for so many years since, and told me he loved the solitude, but he thinks that he has held on to the anger because it fuels him to do better. He told me that he wouldn't have travelled the world or moved to another country if that didn't happen, and he seemed very proud of his achievements and choices in life. I made sure to acknowledge this in the treatment, telling how his life has been full. He appeared to be very accountable during this treatment. Previously, John had shown a lot of blame towards others. However, during this session he appeared to understand exactly why his life was the way it was. He talked to me the whole session and his energy really shifted as he shared these vulnerable topics with me. He seemed really proud of his life, his choices and what he knows. The knowledge that he has gained and the lessons he has learned is something he really holds onto. I told him that it was a wonderful breakthrough he had, and I made sure to let him know that his feelings were indeed very valid. He is now aware of where his anger comes from, and this is a key component to fostering forgiveness and letting go.

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John's pulses were all balanced after this Liver Release. He and I were both very proud and happy at the result and John left that day feeling really good about himself, as well as feeling calmer and more balanced within himself.

Conclusion

When I first started working with John, I didn't know how I would ever determine his CF. He appeared to have a lot of *anger*, but his voice also sounded more like a *groan* in the Water element, rather than a *shout*. It was hard for me to find the *shouting* in his voice due to the fact that he has hearing aids. He also told me about previous hunches that practitioners had about him being a Fire and that added to my confusion. With these 8 treatments that I did for John though, his Wood element really stood out to me. I noticed a pattern of *anger*, and if I didn't understand something he was talking about, he would raise his voice, which also portrayed *shouting* for Wood. I was confused as well between the Wood and Water for John because he always wears blue, and he has never been afraid of fearful of anything. I know that this points further to Water. In the end though, I determined that his odour was more *rancid*, like old oil and compost rather than *putrid* like water in a pond. I noticed a *green* hue around his lips when he was talking about something that made him upset. I also took note that John is quite the Pioneer, which is also a prominent aspect of Wood. He moved to a new country on his own and started two businesses, as well as being brave enough to sail the oceans.

I learned so much by working with John. I am glad that I followed my hunch in continuing treatments with him for his Gallbladder and Liver. I am happy that I chose to do his Liver release twice because he needed more time to let go and have revelations about his feelings of anger. John also discovered so much about himself by exploring the Wood element. Though he doesn't love the idea of a being a Wood element himself, he is very fascinated with learning more about the 5 Elements and asked for books that I had studied so he could learn more. John is an excellent client for many reasons, but one being that is very open to talking about emotions and being spiritual. He likes to practice Buddhism and I

believe that his weekly acupressure treatments help him feel closer to the Source. He was an interesting client to have as well because he came with no physical complaints or symptoms. We solely worked on his emotional attitude, but also found that by the 7th and 8th session, John's hearing was actually improving. I found this interesting because we hadn't worked on the Small Intestine Meridian on its own, but that his hearing was improving from acupressure points all over his body, and that he doesn't need to adjust his hearing aids as much as before.

I decided with his further treatments to do a Husband/Wife release, and then the following weeks I did and LI and LU release. I chose these treatments because of his previous issues with his wife and past partner, and the LI and LU meridians for helping him let go of those past pains and releasing the anger. Though John still has days where his anger flares up, he appears to be calmer, at ease, and okay with the world. His pulses are all more relatively balanced and his GB meridian has balanced out completely. Acupressure has helped John feel more connected to his spirituality which resulted in him feeling better about himself. I am deeply grateful to have had the opportunity to work alongside John in these months and I look forward to continuing treatments with him.