

PAIN: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

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We have all experienced some form of pain, whether it be physical, emotional or psychological, and I'm sure most of us would rather live without it. However, perhaps there is a dimension to the pain from which we might learn something about the way we are living our lives. Perhaps if we took the time to sit with it and study it, instead of treating pain as an enemy to be eradicated, we might find it to be our ally, a protector and informant. Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) looks at pain as a disharmony or imbalance that manifests in our body, mind or emotions. These energetic centers are inseparable from each other. The focus of TCM is to restore harmony and offer insight into the imbalance and help prevent it from recurring.

Pain often results from a physical blockage or stubborn *resistance to change*. Pain, like fear, can run deep, from the wounds of childhood to repetitive trauma. Our body-mind is a complex system and doesn't forget the lifetime of experiences that become stored in our "cellular memory". Our bodies are very powerful, self-regulating energetic systems, and a lifetime of conditioned responses and thoughts can create underlying conflict between who we think we are and our dynamic, essential Self.

Becoming aware of the judgments we hold about ourselves and about the world can be very freeing. The world is just the way it is, imperfectly perfect. It is our over-active and reactive human minds continually passing judgments of good or bad, right or wrong, that create stumbling blocks. Our judgments and rigid belief systems can make our life very uncomfortable if we resist change. Therefore, pain and illness can be very powerful opportunities for growth, *if* we take time to listen to their messages. Sometimes making an attitude change—not trying so hard, not expecting so much and being more accepting of our gifts as well as our limitations—may be the only medicine we need. Change is not often easy, however, and we may need assistance along the way.

Chinese medicine, which includes acupuncture, Chinese herbs, Chinese body work and internal energy work, such as Tai Qi and Qi Gong, has several thousand years of experience to its credit. It is a natural health care system that helps initiate change by unblocking constricted energy. Acupuncture can help bring into awareness the inseparable connection between body, mind and spirit and offer a new experience of our selves. By listening to the wisdom of our body and its messages, we can more fully participate in and trust our unique healing process. ***Our life is our message and we are the ultimate healer.***