

# Creative Wellness with Richard Brook

## Wellbeing Fundamentals

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**Thrive, Don't Just Survive!**

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## Our Original 'Blueprint'

When we are younger we tend to naturally be more in tune with the inherent flow of energy both from within our own body, and related to that from around us – such as daily and seasonal cycles.

As we develop in life the various forces which act upon us (stresses and strains of life which run counter-current to our natural tendencies) start to skew this balance, creating stress within our system which can lead to imbalance. And our 'inner navigation' and attunement to these natural patterns if you like also becomes jumbled.

Therefore it can be very useful to revisit and educate ourselves again about some of these natural patterns, as often re-booting the 'map', concepts and intellectual understanding in our mind can help us to re-align back to healthier patterns.

## Yin and Yang

All living matter - including human beings (since we are also part of nature - although we often forget) are subjected to natural forces of expansion and contraction, growth and decay. This is the premise of Yin and Yang and you can see these forces around us everywhere.

### **Daily**

If you take the cycle of one day, you can see that the sun rises which applies a yang and uprising growth force to nature as it engages with it (including us) and then as it falls nature enters a Yin phase of retreat and inward motion to rest and replenish before we enter another yang phase the following day and so on.

### **Seasonally**

Similarly if you think of the course of the cycle of one year, you can identify that between Winter Solstice and Summer Solstice nature is in a yang phase of growth, and then between Summer Solstice and Winter Solstice nature enters a Yin phase of retreat, decay and renewal in order to replenish for the next Yang phase the following year.

**The fundamental point is that all natural matter is subjected to and naturally attunes to outward and inward movement, Yin and Yang in order to keep balance!**

### **Within us**

So as human beings we are exactly the same – we have to honour these cycles or else we become ill. Our natural outward movement into the world has to be balanced by inward movement and rest. As previously mentioned, we would have once, when we are younger, generally just have done this

without 'thinking'. But in modern urban living we get pushed and pulled and it strains us.

## **The Mechanics**

In order to keep us attuned to this natural flow of inward and outward movement we have organs within the body which drive the 'Yang' outward movement and growth and organs within the body which bring us back inwards into 'Yin' movement to rest and restore.

We are naturally attuned and designed to flow with these cycles (nature is clever like that!)

So if we overdo the outward movement, it not only strains the 'Yang' organs, but it also depletes the 'Yin' organs trying to replenish us. The occasional excess we can cope with, but it's when we develop a chronic pattern of overwork and stress (a massive dis-ease in the Western world) then we start to develop problems. We can sleep off the occasional excess, have a few extra hours rest, (as we would as a child) but over a longer period of time the body develops a pattern of being overdriven, becomes tight, restless ('restless') and starts to compensate using Adrenal energy (fight or flight) which we should really only be using in times of genuine alarm and emergency! We then become chronically tired!

And since all organs within the body are interconnected, it's not just one organ – or 'element' within us that suffers. (A bit like if one season within the course of the year is way off balance then the following seasons can also suffer, and the overall whole balance is compromised) For example, as your Adrenals over-activate, digestive efficiency decreases as your body feels under threat so starts to shut down on what it considers less essential systems (you'll keep breathing, but the body feels its can compromise digestion) usually in this pattern the Liver also starts to get hot as it has more work to do than normal, which in turn also makes us lose our appetite – not to mention effecting sleep and making us irritable. And this heat in turn radiates up and underneath the Heart, making us blow things our of proportion and our emotions erratic.

So as you can see, it's never just one level of us that gets effected, an excess in one aspect of our life will in turn effect others. There are only 24 hours in a day – if you spend too much time in excessive work and stress by it's very nature it compromises time available to feed and resource ourselves, to socialize and pursue new interests and adventures.

### **Mission number 1**

**Have a look at the Yin and Yang principal in your life – is the structure of your life set up to even give you chance to balance your Yin and Yang?**

## **Therapies:**

So this is where Yin activities like Yoga and meditation are useful, since if you do 'push' out into the world in a very 'Yang' way then you need amplified 'Yin' activities to calm and balance your nervous system and organs in a much more concentrated way.

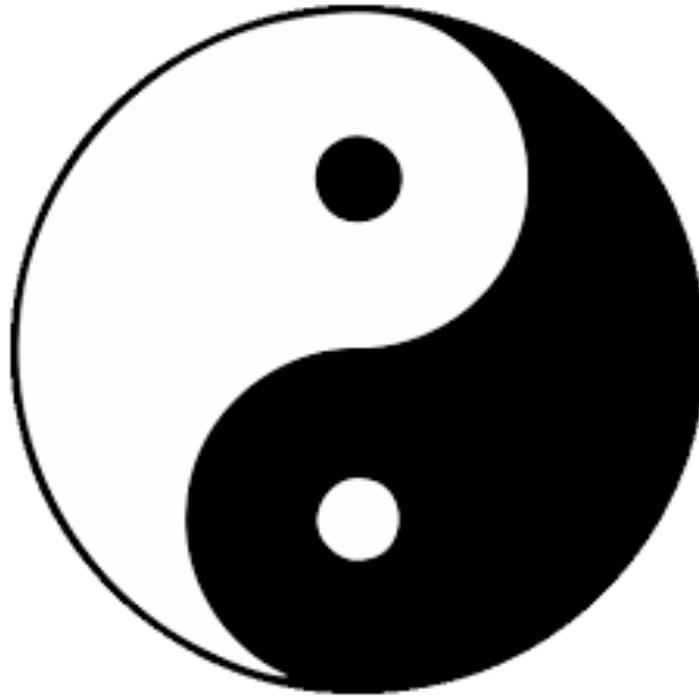
Acupuncture helps as using the needles on specific points on the body we treat the function of the underlying organ in order to bring it back to balance - relaxing organs that have become stressed and stimulating and supporting organs that have become 'deficient.' This is the purpose of traditional acupuncture, as opposed to more modern medical, western or 'dry needling' acupuncture which tends to work on more symptomatic or musculo-skeletal levels.

As an asides, the mechanics of how traditional acupuncture also treats musculo-skeletal problems is that each muscle group and structural function within the body is also connected to the efficiency of the underlying organs, so again by similarly treating the organ it effects change on the exterior. For example, the Spleen relates to overall muscular function, the Liver to Ligaments and Tendons and so on.

Research also suggests that 20 minutes of deep relaxation (such as that achieved at the end of a yoga class) is the equivalent of 2 hours sleep (although deep relaxation also has numerous other benefits!)

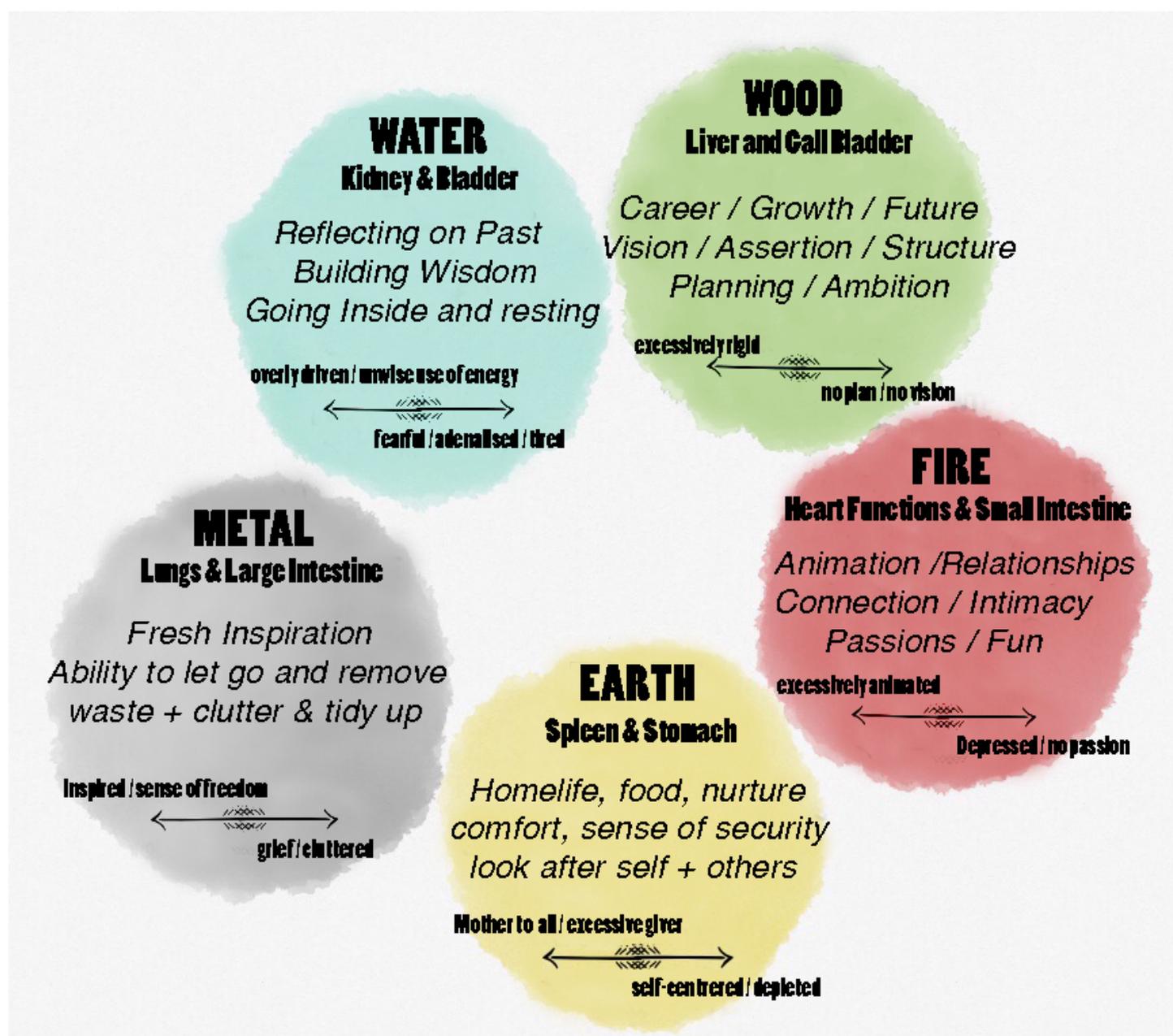
Sometimes, when we are excessively busy 'internally' then engaging with quieter and more 'yin' activities can actually feel a little uncomfortable as it can seem to bring our awareness even more to our internal disquiet and racing mind. Despite this sense of discomfort, it's actually a sign that you need even more to relax your nervous system to restore balance. Gentle activities which can still involve some movement such as walking or spontaneous dance - can be good in this circumstance as it still allows the body to burn off some of the internal yang which still nourishing the yin. However it's essential not to 'push' as that just defeats the object.

# Yin Yang



<b>YIN</b>	<b>YANG</b>
<b>Winter</b>	<b>Summer</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
<b>Moon</b>	<b>Sun</b>
<b>Contracting</b>	<b>Expanding</b>
<b>Inward</b>	<b>Outward</b>
<b>Downward</b>	<b>Upward</b>
<b>Introvert</b>	<b>Extrovert</b>

# The 5 Elements of Life



“What is essential is invisible to the eye” (Antoine de Saint-Exupery)

“I often say to my patients that true achievement is in balancing ALL elements of your life, not just your perception of achieving at work which is a common pattern. It’s the place where you can look across all aspects of your life, social, work, personal, professional, home and your state of health and wellbeing and think yes, all is well, I am achieving as a well rounded human being!” (Richard Brook)

## **The 5 Elements**

Within the cycle of expansion and contraction (yin and yang) you also experience what are known as the 5 Elements or 5 Phases, which helps to give us further information about what we need as a human being to stay healthy. Similarly to how Yin and Yang can be identified as the growth and decay aspects within a yearly cycle, so the 5 Elements could be likened to the seasons within a year – they add more detail to exactly what we need to stay whole. (In Chinese Medicine they identify 5 seasons within the year – adding in an extra season of ‘late Summer’ between Summer and Autumn, a fulcrum point between outward and inward movement)

Each Element also corresponds to different organs within the body – so the idea of the 5 Elements isn’t an intellectual phenomena, it’s essentially what each pair of Organs needs instinctively to stay happy and healthy and how they effect our behavior and mind when in or out of balance.

There’s a breakdown below of the various Elements within us. It’s key to note that although we all have all 5 Elements present within us, each person has them in a different configuration or ratio, so some people may have a more pronounced Fire Element and less pronounced Earth, and so on and so forth. Have a look at the 5 Elements below and you may see which one and it’s qualities feels most pronounced within you.

### **Correspondences:**

Each Element also comes with a set of physical, mental, emotional and behavioural correspondences which gives us an indication as it’s balance and proportion within each individual. As an acupuncturist it’s these sensory signs that I take into account when I treat you as it gives me an indication into the underlying organ function.

Any of these correspondences can also be an excess or deficiency. For example, within the Fire Element a person may exhibit an excess or deficiency of the colour red – not only in their face or overall complexion, but also within their relationship to that colour in their life (they may love it or dislike it) They may laugh to excess or not at all and so on, have excess or no joy, smell scorched or not at all.

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### **Fire (Heart, Small Intestine, Pericardium, Triple Heater)**

To be nourished: The Fire Element needs connection to your passions in life, healthy relationships, joy, connection to (your) ‘spirit’

Emotion – Joy  
Colour - Red  
Sound – Laugh  
Smell – Scorched

## **Behaviorally and Emotionally**

People having a more pronounced Fire Element may find themselves strongly focused on their passions (since Heart and Passions are so closely linked) with a particular focus on their relationships - since by nature they are also affairs of the Heart! They can suffer with issues around excess or deficiency of Joy (always Jovial – even when inappropriate, or always low)

## **Mentally**

The condition of our organs reflects in our thought forms and patterns of thoughts. Our awareness circulates between different organs – which is why our thoughts tend to go around in circles, with each pair of organs coming with different qualities.

As energy courses through the Heart Functions and Small Intestine and circulates through mental level awareness there tends to be thoughts (on a spectrum between abundant and despondent – depending what the Heart energy is doing) around loved ones, things we are passionate about, joy, sex, connection, intimacy, things which make us swoon or despair.

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## **Earth (Stomach, Spleen)**

To be nourished: Requires nurture, support from home and family life, sustenance, stability.

Emotion – Sympathy  
Colour - Yellow  
Sound – Sing  
Smell – Fragrant

## **Behaviorally and Emotionally**

People having a more pronounced Earth Element may find themselves more strongly focused on the securities of life – having a settled home, eating well, looking after themselves and their regular patterns. Also with a strong compassionate streak – playing ‘Mother’ to others. At the other end of the spectrum they may suffer with a deficiency of all of the above – struggling to feel settled and nourished, lack of compassion.

## **Mentally**

As your energy courses through your Stomach and Spleen you experience thoughts (again on a spectrum between abundance of or lack of) around nourishment, food, home, creature comforts, sympathy and empathy for others and the environment.

## **Metal (Lung and Large Intestine)**

To be nourished requires time in an expansive environment (out of the normal routine) to facilitate perspective (amplifying Lung energy) removing clutter and keeping things in order.

Emotion – Grief  
Colour - White  
Sound – Weep  
Smell – Rotten

### **Behaviourally and Emotionally**

People having a more pronounced Metal Element, again on a spectrum of excess or deficiency may find themselves more strongly focused around connection to the whole (as air binds through everything) feeling inspired (or lack of) maintaining broader perspective on things clarity and tidiness of the space around you, needing to let go of things, obsession with being clear, neat and tidy, things to throw away, and grief (or lack of)

### **Mentally**

As your energy courses through your Lung and Large Intestine, (again on a spectrum between inspired clarity or cluttered grief) you'll experience thoughts around things which inspire you (Lungs = Inspiration) sense of perspective of life, clarity and tidiness of the space around you, needing to let go of things, obsession with being clear, neat and tidy, things to throw away, grief.

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## **Water (Kidney and Bladder)**

Water is nourished by rest (quietens the Kidneys and Adrenals and allows them to rebalance), reflection, flowing with your destiny – applying your Willpower to what's in your Heart

Emotion – Fear  
Colour - Blue  
Sound – Groan  
Smell – Putrid

### **Behaviorally and Emotionally**

People having a more pronounced Water Element may find themselves more strongly oriented to be being 'driven' or having a lack of 'drive' in life, have tendencies towards fear or lack of fear, be reflective or an aura of wisdom (or again lack of) and may either be strong and robust or somewhat withdrawn at times (to conserve energy)

## **Mentally**

As your energy passes through your Kidney and Bladder we experience reflection on events that have occurred. Consider how water reflects – and refer to how I've explained Dr Emoto's work on how water absorbs vibration – so what we have been exposed to is in the fluids of the body and as the body filters it through the Kidney and Bladder we experience it as reflective thoughts. We also experience assimilation and therefore thoughts around wisdom building, thoughts around tiredness and wanting to come inside and rest or thoughts about where to spend our energy and willpower.

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## **Wood (Liver and Gall Bladder)**

Wood is nourished by asserting your life path into the world, being flexible where necessary and asserting where necessary (and not overloading your Liver with toxic relationships – to substances or people)

Emotion – Anger / Assertion  
Colour - Green  
Sound – Shout  
Smell – Rancid

People having a more pronounced Wood Element – may have strong and clear vision for the future and be able to assert themselves clearly and forcefully, make fixed plans, or at the other end of the spectrum may lack clarity and vision, be unable to assert very well and lack plans and struggle with decisions.

**Wood (In your mind)** – As your energy passes through your Liver and Gall Bladder, we experience thoughts on a spectrum between having vision or lack of vision for the future, forming a plan, asserting ourselves or lack of assertion of self and desire for growth.

### **Mission number 2**

**Have a look at your life and see if it is structured to feed and nourish all your 5 Elements?**

## **Get to Know your Body, Mind and Emotions!**

In the modern world we tend to be more obsessed with the 'outer' 'exterior' and 'physical' world. But have a think for a moment how much of your perceptual, moment to moment reality is made up of your 'inner' experience. In keeping with the nature of Yin and Yang, if you watch closely you'll actually notice that your mind undulates between your inner and outer world. If you sit and watch your mind across a few minutes, you'll notice you have periods of time where you are more aware of your environment around you, and then periods of time where you are lost in thoughts or feelings as your attention moves inwards.

Indeed we often attune our own focus to our inner or outer worlds when it suits us. For example if something is bothering us in our thoughts or feelings we often distract ourselves with outer experiences, or conversely if we don't like something that is going on around us we often space out into our own thoughts to distract ourselves from the external experience.

This inward and outward movement of the senses can't be stopped, so it's better to move towards getting to know your inner world to the same extent you may know your outer world. Try attending a yoga or meditation class and notice your thought and emotion patterns. Follow up the 5 Element notes from earlier and learn to understand from which organs and elements within you your emotions originate and gain perspective on their optimal balance. Learn to understand that all emotions have an intelligence, and what their balance is – that behind anger is simply the need to assert your life path fluidly into the world. That behind fear is a need to look after your life force and build wisdom. That behind sadness is the need to understand what your passions are and what makes you tick. That behind grief is the longing to feel inspired and behind selfishness is simply the need to feel nourished and secure.

### **Body intelligence and Body 'memory'**

All phenomena exists as vibration, to some degree of density or another, and some things that we engage with feel congruent and harmonious to the body and others not. Learn to listen to your body language – observe situations where you naturally open your chest (opening your Heart centre as it feels comfortable) and relax your belly, or conversely situations which make you hunch your shoulders and clench your gut to protect yourself from feeling what's going on around you.

Also regularly practice exercises and therapies which enable you to clear old energy from your system. We often absorb both good and bad vibrations from our experiences into our body which becomes part of our memories and effect the way we see the world around us. Discordant experiences trapped within the body cause us to lock down certain areas of our spine and structure in order to prevent us from feeling them. Body therapies such as acupuncture and massage, cleanses, yoga and dance can all be great ways to move stagnant energy from your system.

## Your 'Inner' Voice and Connection to Your Passions

It's said that of all the 'inner' voices we hear in our mind that our Heart is often the voice that is whispering the quietest. Indeed when we are really enjoying something the Heart doesn't tend to actually say too much at all – we just become full with feelings of contentment and a sense of being really 'present' in the moment. Recall times when you've felt really intimately connected to a moment or situation, you'll notice how present you are.

Your Heart is one level a witnessing tool for what goes on in front of us in our lives – when you are enjoying yourself your Heart drops defences so you feel like you are fully engaging with, 'witnessing', the moment, and when you don't like what you are doing your Heart somewhat goes into 'hiding' and your mind will become full of many other thoughts in order to distract ourselves and provide some form of rationale or plan to alleviate us of the situation we find confronting ourselves.

Why is this important? Lets visit some reasons for either end of the tangibility spectrum. From the less tangible side of things it's said that the Heart houses our 'Spirit' our Soul or Destiny blueprint for our lives. Hence when we are enjoying something or experiencing a moment of life significance it's almost as if our Spirit or Soul feels fully engaged with the world around us, so it feels like we are more embodied as your Spirit is more present within your body. Even in our everyday parlance, just think of how often we talk of someone's sense of spirit – 'full of spirit' or someone who is very 'dispirited' and think for a moment about the sense of presence that these words evoke in you – when someone is particularly dispirited it can almost be as if they are not 'here'

From the other end of the tangibility spectrum, the Heart Math Institute have done some amazing work on actually scientifically recording the radiance of Heart 'energy' and how it alters in accordance with what someone is doing and whether they are enjoying themselves, and hence, being present.

**They found that the electromagnetic field of the Heart is actually 5000 times greater than that of the brain.** Indeed with its electromagnetic field being so great and extending out from the body for several feet, it's energy literally permeates all the other cells within your body, so the rest of your body begins to tick to the rhythm and energy of your Heart, so best to get on with finding uplifting activities in your life as this literally 'opens your Heart'. Also observe how your chest expands and opens when you are doing something you enjoy, and contracts when we seek to close from our environment. And it's definitely useful to remember that joy is the emotion and laughter the sound associated with the healthy expression of Heart energy!

This greater output of Heart energy than that of your brain also associates to the classic dynamic we often refer to as Head v/s Heart. But as we have been explaining, your Heart energy has an intelligence of it's own and the signals which go from the Heart to the Head actually outweigh the power of the signals coming the other way. So try and fight the energy of your Heart at your

peril. It's much better to become friends with what it is trying to tell you about your passions in life and what literally makes you feel 'Soul-full'

## **Diet**

There is much more to diet than just the bare nutritional input which we feed ourselves. In the increasingly fast paced urban society we are constantly innovating or promoting the next 'superfood' or reading studies which isolate out individual food products and their benefits (or their issues)

However we often completely miss the bigger picture.

It's as much about how we eat as what we eat. I know from years of personal experience and treating people with the most fantastic diets but still struggling with digestive problems that there is more to a sense of nutritional fulfillment than the ingredients list on the packet.

1) Try not to skip meals. Especially Breakfast! Missing breakfast (or any meal) is a massive no no if you want to keep a sense of healthy equilibrium. It's hard wired into our system to feed at particular times (observe a young child – who's often way more in tune with it's appetite than adults – and how it makes a fuss when meal time isn't forthcoming) and when you miss meals your bodies regulatory functions, hormones and digestive processes start to get into disarray.

Missing breakfast in particular sets off a chain reaction of the body seeking resources and energy from adrenalin, rather than sustained nutrition, and the negative impact on the body is often further exacerbated by the addition of 'quick – win' stimulants like Coffee and Sugar. This just heightens the sugar high's and lows and starts the system off for the day on the wrong foot.

This also impacts your digestive efficiency, because as soon as your adrenals switch on, your body feels under threat and the first system to begin to switch off is your digestion. Your body will keep breathing, but it diverts resources away from systems that it feels aren't essential at that moment – and when you engage fight of flight the digestion reduces efficiency. Also notice how when you are dashing about, your abdomen contracts – literally your guts (intestines) tighten, contributing to the impairment of the transit of food.

2) Try not to eat in a rush or while distracted (at your desk, laptop etc!) Often very difficult I know! But hang on, lets take a breath and have a think about this for a second. Have we really evolved so far as the human race that our work is for important that we don't even allow ourselves one of the bare essential processes fundamental to life and so essential to a sense of wellbeing?! I don't call that evolution. Devolution and delusion perhaps. As far as I see we all at least have the right to sit and digest our food properly. When you eat absent mindedly, several things happen;

- We don't chew our food properly, which means it doesn't get infused with the enzymes required to break it down correctly (particularly carbohydrates that you begin to digest in the mouth)
- Being in a rush also activates your adrenals (see point 1) and further impairs digestion;
- We don't enjoy our food as much – so we don't feel satisfied and hit the stimulants or heavy meals later in the day
- We don't energise our food. Energy follows where you put your attention, your attention has power, focus it into your food and it will amplify it's potency!
- And we often miss out on human contact. It's been in our evolutionary blood and genes to come together and eat with our fellow beings! Try and eat at least once a day with other people. It's amazing how we often find ourselves about to connect and socialize with people much more easily over food.

## Sleep

As explained earlier, going 'inwards' and resting is fundamental in our life 'Yin' and 'Yang' cycle.

So here's some helpful tips for getting a better nights sleep.

- Try to avoid being on your laptop / phone / watching TV late at night. All these devices give off electro-magnetic energy which disturbs the body and irritates the hypothalamus of the brain. Hence, they 'trance us out'. Notice how after about 15 mins on a laptop you are 'hooked in' – you lose awareness of sensation in your body, whether you are hungry / thirsty / tired etc.
- Try not to eat within 2 or 3 hours of bedtime. If your body is doing lots of processing of food it can't be getting on with other essential tasks it needs to do overnight.
- If there is a lot of light pollution where you live, try to sleep in a pitch black room – it will help with your brain chemistry.
- Alcohol stresses out your Liver, which is massively active during the night processing and cleaning your blood. If you drink regularly at night you will place extra stress on your Liver which often impairs quality of sleep. You may still fall asleep exhausted, but the quality is affected.

## **Health in the office (and home!)**

So many working environments in the modern world can place undue stress on the system, so here are a few healthy pointers!

### **Nature and Negative Ions**

Within any natural living matter there is a tiny micro-vibration, which by its nature is recognized and harmonious to the body – (since it's in all living matter – including us!)

Modern urban areas not only have a deficiency of this natural vibration, but of course are also predominated by man made electro-magnetic energies and vibrations which can be subtly abrasive to our subtle energies and create stress.

**Point 1: Getting out into 'Nature' is good for you. It is essentially your natural habitat, although becoming accustomed to urban dwelling we tend to think of nature as being somewhat 'alternative'**

Alongside the harmonious micro-vibration to our own body that natural settings provide, another aspect of the healthy environment that a natural setting, or natural life provides, is that of Negative Ions. The air around us contains Ion particles, any natural environmental has an abundance of negative ion particles (despite their name, 'negative' ions are seen as the healthy ones, and 'positive' ions the unhealthy ones)

Negative Ions predominate natural environments, forests, countryside's, streams, mountains basically all the places we often recognise as feeling so much fresher and healthier after visiting.

For example, the normal ion count in fresh country air is around 2000 to 4000 negative ions per cubic centimetre. (negative ion generators.com) At places with rushing water, this is even more greatly increased, citing the example of Yosemite falls in the U.S where the ion count can increase to over 100,000 negative ions per cubic centimetre.

This compares to polluted environments, such as a motorway during rush hour where the level can fall to as low as 100 negative ions per cubic centimetre. Other producers of positive ions are indoors where a TV or computer monitor are operating, environments of warm, dry winds, and where air has flowed through ductwork such as in air-conditioning units

So we can see that modern urban environments with polluted air and preponderance of technological devices are a mass producer of the unhealthy positive ions. So being in an office is a mass-producer of positive ions!

How this relates to us, is that we also, due to interaction with our environment, get affected by these positive ions. We absorb energy from our environment, and in the case of polluted positive ions they will affect us, being absorbed into our organs. The air we breathe is absorbed into our Lungs, into our blood and is circulated around our whole body, affecting every system. Polluted energies, causing the body to work harder and use more energy to maintain balance.

Regards the extra proliferation of negative ions around Water, it's because the effect of Water evaporation, and the breaking of surface tension of water creates negative ions, hence why at a waterfall it feels so fresh and abundant, but also why the air and atmosphere can feel so much fresher and clearer after rain, or indeed why we also feel so much better after a shower!

**Point 2: In order to clear the effects of positive ions and discordant electromagnetic energy, try to leave the office at breaks, shower when you return home, head out into the countryside. Have plants in your office.**

## **Sunlight**

Our brain chemistry requires certain spectral rays of sunlight to hit our Retina (it also goes someway to our brain recognizing it's actually daytime!) and these rays do not pass through glass! So in an office environment there might be lots of windows, but it's likely you're not quite getting what you need.

**Point 3: Step outside or open a window if possible and let natural light hit your eyes. Super essential in the winter too with even shorter days!**

## **Movement**

Certain organs within the body require you to move around for them to function most effectively!

**Point 4: Make sure you move around during the day!**

**THANKYOU, RICHARD**

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