

# Shiatsu and the Soul

by Brigitte Ladwig



Translation into  
English:  
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Something very special about Shiatsu is its broad spectrum of treatment possibilities. Our focus and aims can be located in different dimensions: from a local focus to a global one; from a physical vibrational frequency to a spiritual one; from focus on the client in a very personal way, to more impersonal domains; from the practitioner being dominant in treatment, to the client, or even the cosmos, being more dominant.

My released postural alignment (described earlier) allows me to focus on a clearly physical issue, like enhancing the mobility of a joint, or to concentrate on the emotional context of a dream, to give support for clear thinking, even to link this person to a cosmic presence.

Just as our alignment assures us of neutrality and openness for the diagnosis, it's also essential if we want to work with the finer aspects of energy. By transforming our own Ki field to achieve a special quality, by accentuating a particular part of ourselves, by emphasising a movement, this energetic pattern can be communicated to the energetic system of the other person by the law of resonance.

Working with soul aspects in Shiatsu doesn't always mean that we need to work on an emotional or spiritual level of frequency. Psychotherapies like Bioenergetics show that focusing on the body can bring emotional blockages to the surface and resolve them. However we see that working with the more subtle energies can also affect the body, as well as attitudes and feelings about life.

I should emphasise that we don't need to work with a lighter touch in order to address soul issues. The finer frequencies are everywhere, including the physical body.

During practice, if we keep in mind our original theme and our perceptions, we can observe the dynamics and the interrelation of the energetic qualities. It can be helpful to communicate some of this in intelligible language, but Shiatsu practitioners have no need to become oracles - if we can put into words what's nearest to the personal experience of the client we can affirm and enhance their self-perception.

## Notes on a Shiatsu Session

*Mrs W., mid-fifties, has a part-time job in a helping profession and has been having Shiatsu sessions for some time. Lately the main theme is her pain, the despair of separation from her partner. For a long while she's been suffering from insomnia, no appetite and weight loss. She also has almost uncontrollable emotional attacks accompanied by weeping. This time she comes to the session in a phase of mental and emotional self-destruction. "I don't know anything", "I'm useless", "I didn't live my life in a meaningful way". She says these emotions and thoughts are familiar, they surge up from below on and off. She lacks impetus, every step is one too many. She also feels that her head doesn't quite belong to her body. She wants support with regard to her self-doubts and to feel her head re-integrated with her body.*

Here we might be tempted to follow the normal human impulse of wanting to help: to encourage her, try to prove that her life is still worthwhile. Another unnecessary detour could be thinking of Western psycho-therapeutical approaches to low self-esteem. Or we might jump ahead with Shiatsu interpretations of where to work: perhaps the Kidney meridian because of lack of impetus, or the Heart to support her self-identity. Or should it be Liver to

address repressed anger? The feet, to strengthen the grounding as an opposite pole for the head?....

But these preconceptions limit us, better that we follow our curiosity, and stay alert to the fact that at any moment we might be surprised by the movements and the potential of life.

*Usually Mrs W. looks more 'full', though she is slender by constitution. When she feels well, her energy radiates an almost vigorous tranquillity and simultaneously a sort of cheeky, luminous state. Now it feels like this very luminosity is missing. She seems to be waiting, un-involved with life. As we talk she doesn't make much contact with me. Her head seems as if it wants to stay above the surface of water. Scanning corroborates these perceptions. There is little movement, but a quality like fatigue combined with simultaneous tension everywhere. The Hara itself is calm, retired, as though drawn back in on itself. Generally there is not much contact with the outside world. The Hara reaction expresses Spleen Kyo and Lung Jitsu. With a meridian scan for the Lung energy, I pick up a peripheral tension in the energetic field mostly expressed on the spiritual level, but also on the emotional level of vibration. The quality of the Spleen meridian resonates on all levels, as if the energy lacks 'tonus' and might fall away or break up.*

In Shiatsu we work with the energy of the person. Therefore the translation of verbally formulated information into an energetic picture of the person is important. It is not my mind that does the translation: it happens by the direct perception of energetic qualities presented to me. I also look specifically at the person's own request for the session. I

choose one or two of the main aspects as 'barometers of change', to see if my offers are effective. This means that while working I can always relate back to the main themes and focus via my motherhand, or by Bo Shin or by scanning.

*My aim for this treatment is to encourage the energy to regain some vibration. Then I will see what other support might be helpful. This non-mobility, non communicativeness is the most outstanding aspect perceived. Of course I will always be ready to change the focus, if there is no response to my offers. The other background focus is the integration of her head into the whole of her body.*

I start the treatment by tuning into the person as a whole. With motherhand stationary on the Hara, I work the thigh with a soft open touch.

*To set up a good basic contact with Mrs W. I need a quality that's careful, like coating her with a calm vitality. In previous sessions this client connected much more with an inner attitude of forceful, "cheeky" energy. Tuning into what I now perceive as an immobile, tired quality of energy, I work Spleen in the leg. The contact is rather weak and dull. I vary techniques and rhythm and try tuning into different aspects of the functions looking for the best resonance.*

*"To nourish" is clearly not accepted, "earthing" seems boring. It seems we need something containing more movement. I try "transformation" and there is an immediate direct reply. The energy in the meridian line of Spleen, as well as in the whole Ki field and the Hara, reacts with liveliness. The overall expression is better defined and has regained 'tonus' and strength.*

**/// Fundamentally Shiatsu helps us to appreciate the uniqueness of each human being and to value life. Shiatsu allows us not only to heal others but ourselves as well. It offers us the opportunity to discover our place in the infinity of the universe and to participate in this continuum through transformation ///**

**Pauline Sasaki**

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*When working with micro-rotations of the articulations of the feet, I relate more to the binding in her head and I check which meridian gives the best connection. The Hara already feels more lively....*

*For the chest, I place my motherhand on the Spleen area and try working Lung. The function that reacts best is "Po", the condensation of cosmic energy, the connection to every cell of the body as well as to the cosmos. The emotional and mental levels also need further integration. So I'll make sure these levels stay vibrant in myself, but I'll also use my alignment to ground the energy and to offer the whole spectrum of frequencies. Deep, clear sinking in is needed, especially via Lung under the clavicle, and there are reactions of relaxation and release. I repeat, leaning my elbow fully into Lung 1. Mrs. W. takes a deep relaxed breath and sighs. Her energy begins to "glitter", while at the same time there is a sense of tranquillity, like the long ringing sound of a bell. There is more space within and without. Deep thumbing work on Spleen in the chest and tuning into "fullness and richness" brings still more release to the Lung quality.*

*I work Spleen in the arm to continue to stabilise. I open the shoulderblades quite vigorously - the head and neck still hold tension. General work on the back of the neck helps loosen this and by stretching the shoulder, the space between head and chest opens more.*

*When working the Spleen meridian in the head and neck down to the chest, the client has tears running; when working the Lung meridian near the throat, her breath deepens further.*

*In side position, I work the back and Lung in the arm again, while continuing to*

*stabilise the softer, more open quality of energy. My motherhand rests on the head to connect this area to the rest. For Lung, my basic contact looks to give affirmation and space for integration. Nothing more needs to be done; much has already happened.*

*The client reports that at the start, when I worked Spleen in the legs, she felt courage and hope emerging and that she can feel her impetus returning. Touching the chest area opened her heart. She connected back to a deep relationship with herself and to a renewed contact with the world. She feels somehow more transparent and now able to see her real vulnerability. She also feels confident that she can take care of herself, eat well, and look after herself properly...*

Her feeling of low self-esteem and low impetus was in this case closely related to the tired, tense and poorly communicating overall energetic expression. Working Spleen restored a good 'tonus' to the energetic field, while working Lung brought motivation for the energy to exchange and expand in space. The client now sees possibilities of what she can do and she recognises the underlying issues of being hurt and needing to take good care of herself rather than being stuck on a merry-go-round of self-deprecation.

**Brigitte Ladwig**, Director of the European Shiatsu Institute of Muenster, has been working with Shiatsu since 1980. In 1989, after teaching within the framework of the Ohashi Institute, she co-founded the European Shiatsu Institute. Since 1991, she has been a student of Pauline Sasaki and Cliff Andrews. She teaches Shiatsu in Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland. She has been a practising psychotherapist since 1985 and is the author of the video/DVD "Shiatsu - Grundlagen und Praxis" (Shiatsu - Theory and Practice).