In the twelfth chapter of the ‘Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic’ of medicine the Yellow Emperor (Huang Di) asks his advisor "When doctors treat conditions, even though they may be illnesses of the same nature, they use different methods and techniques. But they all succeed. Why is this?"

His advisor, Qi Bo, goes on to relate all the different interventions used by Chinese Medicine at that time (<241 BCE) and why they were developed. Each style of medicine (acupuncture, burning of herbs over acupoints, etc.) was developed to help deal with the specific environment and diet of people in the different geographic areas of ancient China. In the central region, Qi Bo – the ancient physician – says that people benefit most from “Dao–Yin, An–Qiao” – or guiding exercise and massage.

This chapter follows an earlier statement that in ancient times, people could cure themselves simply by praying and working with their subtle energy, but now they have to utilize all kinds of medicine because they are out of touch with the Way of Nature. The art of prayer and mobilizing energy is what has come to be called Medical Qigong therapy, where one works solely with moving the spirit and the subtle qi in order to effect a healing. This type of prayer and qi therapy has long been a part of Daoist yogic practice, but so has the tradition of therapeutic movement and massage.

In a way, we need to touch the meridians and stretch them – because we are corporeal beings. We are spirits who are living in bodies – very often, in my own clinical experience, a simple spiritual answer will not do the trick, one has to do some kind of work on the palpable level of the physical body in order to anchor the transformation that is trying to take place into the material plane. In this way, the spirit can be balanced on every level of the person’s being for true health – which is wholeness.

As we shall see during this course, the physical body is the expression of the deeper forces of the psyche that underlie it. The body is made up of tendencies of energy – if these tendencies are healthy, then we will have a healthy body. If, however, these tendencies are unhealthy, then the health of the body declines as well.
Fortunately, we can also utilize this effect in reverse – by learning to place the body in specific postures, we can alter the thinking and the emotions that are taking place. By pressing or stimulating specific areas and points, we can re-route the energy into pathways more conducive to health and happiness. The ancient Tibetans referred to their practices of physical yoga as “Trulkor” – which means a “machine”. We can think of the body as a machine in a very important way – if you know how to operate it properly, it can drive you where you want to go. The study of the meridians of acupuncture is a study in the operation of the physical–spiritual–energetic matrix that you inhabit. In this course we will undertake to study it in a number of ways:

**Qigong:** These exercises will center both on the inner sensation of subtle energy, as well as learning to sense the energy field of another with the palms and the intuition.

**Acupressure:** We will learn by palpation the locations of the meridians of the body and how to regulate them through touch.

**Dao Yin Yoga:** We will also learn how to stretch, move, and massage the various energy pathways in order to bring more life, love, integration, and health into them.

**How this course is different**
This course on “Qigong Acupressure” is different than most other courses you might take to learn the Chinese Medical meridians. Most are based in either points for needling, or points for pressure therapy. In this class, the first thing we’ll be doing is learning how to *experience* the meridians from within. Each one has a specific energetic frequency (the Indian yogic traditions might say that each has a particular *rasa* or taste), and learning to sense it in oneself allows one to have a deeper understanding of the subtle forces of the mind and body. This understanding then leads to intuitive diagnostic ability for Qigong practitioners – the ability to sense the energy of a particular meridian in order to better help bring a student
or therapy client into balanced health.

The other difference in this course is that we will focus on learning how to move the meridian channels. This is an essential piece of knowledge if one is to understand how Qigong postures and exercises function. Most of Chinese Qigong therapy is based on the 12 meridian model, so knowing the points from the inside out helps you to more deeply experience your qi during exercise practice.

**Dao Yin-AnQiao**
The final way that this course is different than many acupressure courses you might take is that the intention is to give you a repertoire of therapeutic exercises that can be offered to your students and clients like a prescription for various ailments.

The words we saw above – Dao Yin, and An-Qiao – have very ancient meanings. Dao Yin means to pull or stretch (Yin 引) and guide along (Dao 導) and it means using stretching or movement to guide the Qi (subtle life-force) through the body in a balanced way. An-Qiao means to press and lift, and refers to massaging the body as a way to guide the qi.

The three most ancient healing practices that exist are herbalism, yoga, and massage. How can we know that they are ancient – because even our animal predecessors practice them. Massaging the body is instinctual when there is illness, and it is very likely that the acupuncture points and meridians were first found by pressing the body. If you grab any part of your body and start squeezing and pressing around, you’ll find that your fingers and thumbs naturally fall into little holes and grooves – these are the meridians and points of qigong and acupressure. We don’t have to come up with a more complicated theory for the origins of Chinese Medicine than this. Humans naturally touch, and they especially touch to comfort another who is sick or injured. If one touches others enough, he or she finds that some points are always sore when a certain illness is present. Other points are always weak or flaccid. If you kept at it long enough, you could discover a whole map of the body based on your findings through touch.
The ancient Daoist Yogis also found that if you stretch the body and massage it, you can mobilize the energy in a way that enhances your spiritual practice. This has come down as various “self-massage” routines that are popular in Qigong exercise systems.

Meridians

The concept of “meridians” in Chinese Medicine can be a little foreign to Western trained minds. The translation “meridian” itself is a little problematic, because that word tends to mean fixed lines, like the “Prime Meridian” on the globe. The meridians in the body are in fact very dynamic things. Accidents, scars, changes in emotions or thought, posture, and disease patterns can all affect how and where they manifest on a given individual in a given time.

It can be valuable to remember that Chinese Medicine is much more about relationships than it is about substances. Western Medicine tends to like solid things that you can look at under a microscope - and this is very valuable in the treatment of certain types of disease. Chinese medicine, on the other hand tends to look a bit more at how the various parts of the body and mind inter-relate. The meridians are the pathways of this inter-relation.

The Chinese word for Meridian is “JingLuo” 経絡 which is actually two words that can be translated as “watercourse network” or, more commonly - network vessels. These are the paths through which the Qi flows in the body, and through which we can influence the Qi. The Jing-Luo are not just straight lines that someone has drawn on the body – as it might appear in any standard acupuncture textbook. Instead, these are dynamic pathways of feeling and energy that exist on the physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual planes. Acupuncture works with these meridians on their most dense level – by needling areas of nerve sensitivity and electromagnetic activity (see Becker – ‘The Body Electric’, Oschman ‘Energy Medicine’, the Scientific Basis, and new research on the “C” nerve fibers affected by needling therapy). Because of this, the points are looked at as somewhat fixed and
unchanging.
Qigong doctors and practitioners of energetic massage, on the other hand, can tell you that meridians can be vastly different depending on the person and what they are experiencing. The energies of these meridians don’t stay contained in convenient and tiny lines, but instead cover large areas (similar to the “tendino-muscular channels”) and can even migrate into another meridian’s territory. Perhaps most amazing of all is that a skilled practitioner can learn to “speak” to the meridians on the emotional and spiritual levels in order to discern the deeper meaning behind certain disease patterns.

The body’s meridians could be said to be symbolic representations of how our physical, spiritual, and emotional energy move – as we will see throughout this test. The Stomach meridian, for example, embodies the energies of desire and hunger – this is shown by its position on the front of the body, with an energetic capacity to carry one forward toward the object of fulfillment.

**Acupoints**

Each meridian in the body is made up of Acupoints or Xue 穴. The Chinese character for an acupressure point depicts a cave with a character for a roof on top of it. Interestingly, this word in Chinese was not always applied to the physical body. The word “Xue” was first used by the ancient practitioners of Feng Shui (geomancy) when describing areas of powerful earth energy. Outwardly, these masters would give advice to families about where to bury their parents, as the ancient Chinese culture felt that how the body of an ancestor was treated would have effects upon the descendants. In the inner tradition, these masters were skilled at finding the most potent energetic places to practice meditation.

It is an extremely ancient practice amongst yogis of India, Tibet, and China to practice deep meditation in retreat in a cave. Many of the caves on sacred Daoist mountains are held to be very sacred due to the accumulated Qi of the masters who practiced there in the past. It was thought by ancient (and modern) Daoist Yogis that certain parts of the earth have very powerful energy, and that practicing qigong or
meditation in those places could give a practitioner a big boost in their progress.

As time progressed, individuals began to feel that the body was a kind of sacred landscape, and just as there were potent areas in the earth, there were potent areas of the body where the Qi could be tapped and put into powerful circulation. It is from this association that the word “xue” began to be used for the acupoints.

If you look at the character for cave, you will notice that there is no closure at the bottom – the two sides just branch out as if to continue on. This represents an important aspect of an acupressure point – that it is a sort of gateway into the energy of the whole body. We shouldn’t think of the points as ending below our fingers, but we should recognize that if we train ourselves, we can feel through an acupoint into the deepest levels of a person’s Being.

Methods Of Discovery
When learning to track our own channel network, there are many ways to go about discovering it. Of course, the most common is to simply grab a book, or attend a lecture in which they describe the meridian’s locations and classical associations and then leave you to memorize these locations and associations.

Memorization is definitely an important part of learning Chinese Qigong medicine, but a lot of students eventually come to wonder if there is anything more they can do to relate this study directly to their own life’s experience. Many modern students of Chinese Medicine and Qigong haven’t ever thought about meridians before, and therefore have a hard time relating to them except through rote memorization. This is largely because we have not been taught how to see the influence of the meridians in our daily lives. Acupuncturist and author Bob Flaws compares the different ways that we can look at the body to the different kind of maps we could use to explore a geographic area. You can have a topographical map, a population map, a precipitation map – and all of them will look a little bit different. It is just the same with the body. Most of us have only ever received a map of the densest parts of the physical body, and haven’t learned to think of the body as a matrix of subtle forces.

When we start to learn some of the associations of the meridians,
we can begin to see how they are the stuff of every moment of our lives. We must do that by exploring many different styles of relating to the channels.

**Qigong Meridian Massage**

One of the best ways to get to know your meridians is to learn this simple qigong exercise to awaken you to the channels in the body. In my classes I often ask a trick question: “how many meridians are there?” Some of the students with a little education will say 12, others will say 14, some might even say that there are 12 regular and 8 extraordinary meridians. All of these answers are correct, but the answer that I’m looking for is that there is ONE meridian!

The reason I say this is because each of the meridians in the body is an expression of your whole being. There is no Lung meridian existing all on its own, only one that is part of a complex harmony that is your energetic body.

This can be seen in the classical locations of the meridians – in every case, one meridian begins right where the last one ends, all the way through the body in a big circle. The channels pass their energy on to each other in a set symbolic sequence, but the main point is to recognize that they are all just aspects of a unified whole.

To begin the meridian massage practice, start with the Qi awakening exercises to bring lots of energy to the hands:

*First, open the hands and close them rapidly 10 times*
*Next, rub the palms together for a 10 count*
*Finally, shake the hands vigorously to a count of 10*

Then open and close the hands like playing an accordion – see if you can feel any kind of tingling, heat, coldness, or pressure in your palms – a sign that you’ve stimulated the Qi energy.

Now that your hands are energized, you are ready to practice feeling the channels – we’ll practice feeling them in their Yin/Yang pairs:

**Lung and Large Intestine Meridians:** Start at the corner of the chest, where the shoulder meets the body and trace down the inner arm to end at the thumb – this is the Lung Meridian.

Then start on the index finger and trace up the outer arm, over
the shoulder, and to the side of your nostril – this is the Large Intestine meridian.
[Note: in general, the Yang meridians are on the more tanned side of the body (the outside, or back), and the Yin meridians are on the less tan part (the inside or front)]
*After you complete the first arm, do the practice on the second

**Stomach and Spleen Meridians:** The Stomach channel begins near the end of the Large Intestine. Start at the base of the eye, just below the eyeball and trace down to the jaw – then trace back up to the hairline like a big smile. Next come down through the front of the neck, the front of the chest and abdomen, and finally the outside/front of the thighs and legs – heading to the pinky side of the 2nd toe.

The Spleen channel starts on the medial side of the big toe and comes up through the flesh of the leg, the inside front of the thigh, up through the sides of the abdomen to end on the side ribs about a hand width down from the arm-pit.
[Note: the Stomach is the only Yang channel that deviates from the rule of running primarily on the outside and back of the body]

**Heart and Small Intestine Meridians:** The Heart meridian starts right where the Spleen ends – at the arm-pit. It then traces down the deepest part of the inner arm and heads to the pinky finger (on the thumb side).

The Small Intestine picks up on the other side of the pinky (medial side) and heads up the back of the arm, through the shoulder and up to the face, ending just in front of the ear.

**Urinary Bladder and Kidney Meridians:** The Urinary Bladder channel picks up from the energy of the Small Intestine and starts at the inner corner of the eye. From there it travels over the top of the head and down the neck and back like a big waterfall. Continue all the way through the thighs and calves and down to the pinky toe.

The Kidney meridian starts on the center of the sole of the foot and comes up the inner back of the leg, then through the front of the pubic bone and up the inner abdomen and chest to end just beneath the two collar bones.
Pericardium and Triple Warmer Meridians: The Pericardium begins at the side of the chest next to the nipple. It comes down through the inner arm heading to end at the tip of the middle finger.

The Triple Warmer picks up on the pinky side of the ring finger and travels up the outer arm, over the top of the shoulder, around the ear, to end next to outer corner of the eyebrow.

Gall Bladder and Liver Meridians: The Gall Bladder meridian picks up next to the Triple warmer at the outer corner of the eye, then it streams back through a complicated zig-zag along the side of the head. For this practice you can just run the hands back like smoothing out your hair. It then goes down through the shoulders, down the sides of the body, and through the sides of the thigh and leg to end on the pinky side of the fourth toe.

The Liver channel starts on the pinky side of the big toe and runs up just behind the shin, through the center of the thigh, through the groin, and up to the ribcage just below the breast.

Practice tracing through all 12 meridians in sequence twice with your hands touching the body, then try it again, but let your hands hover just above the body’s surface and try to contact the Qi of the meridian channels.

Meridian Meditation
Another very powerful way to get in touch with the channels of the inner body is to practice massaging them with the mind. The Qi, subtle energy, flows where your mind goes, and so tracing through the meridians with intention will help you not only to memorize and become familiar with meridian location, but gives you a full body Qi massage!

If you practice the above two methods, you will find out a few things. First, you will notice that each channel begins right where another one ends (some of them are a little easier to see than others, and to fully grasp it, you have to know the internal pathways). Second, you may get the feeling that just running light pressure or intention along these meridians can have profound healing effects. Finally, if you practice consistently, you will develop sensitivity by which you will learn to
distinguish if a meridian is in balance, deficient in energy, or excess.

To understand the implications of these various pathways locations and functions, we must look to the next method of experiencing them, called the biorhythm clock.

**Meridian Energies and the Biorhythm Clock**

The meridians in the body are said to flow in a certain sequence of activation at certain times during the day – following the cycle that we just massaged them in. Knowing these times can be very valuable for our clinical practice, because this can give us some clues as to which meridians are out of balance by the time of day that symptoms manifest.

This clock cycle is also looked at symbolically by some theorists as showing a template of the development of a being. Shizuto Masunaga, the developer of the Zen Shiatsu system, described these phases as the “life cycle of a one celled organism”. The meridians cycling through the body from beginning to end can show how consciousness develops and grows more complex. When we understand the phase that a meridian or meridian pair represents, we have some understanding of what its functions will be in the living person.

In this section we will explore how each channel pair shows up energetically. By discovering how the location of each channel relates to its “phase of development” we can begin to experience these channels as the parts of our lives that they represent in a major way.

**Phase 1, Forming a Boundary – Lung and Large Intestine**

**Metal Element Meridians**

**Energetic Exercise – Lung Meridian**

To experience the energy of the Lung meridian, imagine that you have hiked up to the top of a hill with a beautiful vista, you feel inspired by the beauty and take a deep breath and stretch. Notice how the arms will often reach out and up stretching open the chest and the thumb
side of the arm.

A similar action will happen any time we yawn and stretch – this dramatic drawing in of fresh Qi causes us to mobilize the chest and the arms – usually right along the Lung channel.

**Life Cycle**

In order for a one-celled organism to come into being, a cell has to be created - this means forming a boundary between one’s self and everything else. This is the energy of the first phase of the meridian cycle - embodied by the Lung and Large Intestine channels. The placement of these meridians is on the edge of the arm and this location also symbolizes this **boundary formation**. This meridian is associated with the “Metal phase” of Chinese Medicine, and through this has many associations to protective parts of the body like the skin, body hair, and defensive energy. The attributions to forming a boundary are the same here.

The Lungs, being the Yin side of this Metal energy are responsible for taking in the precious qi from the outside. The Large Intestine - on the Yang end of the spectrum is responsible for expelling waste from the body.

These functions are both physical and energetic. The Lung channel has as much to do with our feeling of physical vitality, as it has to do with our emotional feeling of self worth or self-esteem. Metal, in Chinese Medicine is associated with preciousness or value. The air and the Qi from outside are considered very precious, but the ability to value ones self is also ruled by the Lung channel.

In the energetic exercise above, we felt how when we feel inspired, we’ll often take a deep breath in, and also how we can do the same if we need more physical vitality. This can help us to remember that proper breathing is a source of energetic nourishment, which can keep us functioning at the highest levels in our physical and spiritual bodies.

In a newly born human, this phase represents the first breath that sets all the energy in the body in motion. Until this breath, you are still a part of your mother. After this breath, you are an individual being. It is not until the first gasp of breath that your own 12 meridians start to function. This is part of how the Lung meridian is responsible for the circulation of qi for the entire body.
When the Lung meridian is out of balance, we can feel fatigued and sad. We often will not be able to take a deep breath and snap ourselves out of a morose state, and so cannot fill up on new life force.

Physically, this meridian helps to boost the immune system, vitality, and treat cough and asthma.

**Energetic Exercise – Large Intestine Meridian**
Now imagine that you came home to a big mess that someone made. If you were not in control of your emotions, you might turn your nose up in distaste – this is the upper part of the Large Intestine meridian that ends on the nostril. You might also point your finger while you said “clean this up right NOW!”

For people in less extreme situations, or more control of their emotions, you’ll recognize the Large Intestine channel activating anytime you are giving direction – whether you literally point with your index finger or not.

**Life Cycle**
The physical large intestine helps to expel any form of toxicity from the body. The Large Intestine meridian does the same thing energetically. This can be physical toxicity or emotional. In Chinese medicine, the Lung and Large Intestine are very influential in the grieving process, because the Large Intestine’s job is to help us “let go” (so the Lung can bring in new energy of value to our world). People who are “pack-rats” on a physical, emotional, or spiritual level may have some stagnation in the energy of this Large Intestine meridian.

The Large Intestine channel represents a stronger version of boundary making than the Lung in the sense that its job is to push things out, rather than draw them in.

If the Large Intestine is out of balance, people erect too strong a boundary and can’t let others in, and overly obsessed with neatness or order, or, on the other side, can’t seem to make appropriate boundaries at all. On the physical level, this can result in constipation or diarrhea.
The meridian can be used to treat shoulder pain, nasal congestion, toothache, headache, and bowel issues.

Phase 2 Seeking Nourishment and Digestion – Stomach and Spleen

Energetic Exercise – Stomach Meridian
To feel the energy of the Stomach channel, imagine that you are very hungry. You are walking through a store with many kinds of good food. Notice the way the front of your body lights up with this sensation of desire. Then imagine that you spy something you want. Feel how the energy starts to pull from the eyes, then the mouth, and the whole front of the body to go get it. Finally feel how the energy of the mouth brings that food down into the body along the path that the Stomach channel follows through the abdomen.

Life Cycle
As we saw above, the Lungs energetic starts the entire meridian cycle going. The next thing that a newborn will do is starting to suckle. This is because as soon as one becomes a separate entity, he or she begins to have needs. The stomach meridian with its placement on the front of the body embodies the energy of moving forward to meet these needs. The Stomach represents the Yang energy of the Chinese medical “Earth Element” which has to do with nourishment. As it is the Yang side, the Stomach is responsible for desire, because this nourishment can be physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. Anytime you feel that pull toward something, your stomach meridian is acting to guide you toward what you want.

When the Stomach Meridian is out of balance, there is an excess of craving, one cannot seem to stop the desire. This may be for food, it may be an addictive behavior, or it may be obsession with information or even television – as these are all kinds of taking in nourishment.

The meridian can help with digestion, stomach pain. Strengthening the legs

Energetic Exercise – Spleen Meridian
To feel the Spleen meridian, all you have to do is remember the last time you had a really good hug! Feel that sense of being enveloped and enveloping that takes place when embracing another with love.

It may not be easy to feel the area of the Spleen meridian in the legs that lights up when you do this, but I assure you that it happens. Another way to feel the energy of this channel is to imagine being totally content, perhaps after a fulfilling work day, and a delicious meal. There is a sense of warmth that comes about in the belly, which is the activation of the Spleen channel.

**Life Cycle**
Because it is the Yin side of the Earth element energy of nourishment, the Spleen channel is responsible, not for going out and getting nourishment, but absorbing it and making it a part of oneself. The anatomical organ that is more associated with this is the Pancreas, which produces enzymes that help us to absorb the nutrients from food.

In any case, the Spleen meridian’s location on the body is representative of the energies of nourishment we’ve brought in from outside becoming part of ourselves.

Working with the Spleen meridian can help a person to feel more nourished physically or emotionally. Points on this channel help to transform the energies of food and water into usable types of Qi for our bodies.

**Phase 3 Forming a Core – Heart and Small Intestine Meridians**

**Experiential Exercise – Heart Meridian**
To feel the Heart meridian, imagine that you are sequestered deep in a mountain temple somewhere, on retreat. You are in a beautiful, but empty room and a single candle is burning. Imagine that you are about to go into meditation and you bring your palms together into a prayer position and bow with deep silence and devotion.

In this posture, the energy moves to the center of the subtle body. You may also feel it drawing in from the Heart meridian on the pinky side of the arm.
Another way to experience this meridian is to imagine that you are at a rock concert, or a very spiritual moment in church. That point when your heart opens and everyone’s arms rise up is stretching through the Heart channel.

The Heart meridian is most often used to affect the mind and spirit. This meridian can be indicated if a person is unable to calm down, or is going through any kind of spiritual crisis.

**Life Cycle**

In Masunaga’s system, the next phase is called forming a core. Now you have a boundary, and you can get your needs met, but who are you really? This is related to the Fire element and the concept of the Shen or Spirit of Chinese Medicine. This also relates to the time in a young child’s life when he or she grows from an oceanic state of identification with everything to realizing that some things are different than him or herself (for example, when a child bites the blanket and it doesn’t hurt, but bites his finger and it does) - this is the very beginning of the process of developing an individual personality. If this process is continued and deepened over time, one comes to realize who one really is - which is that Shen we mentioned earlier, or the Original Spirit. It is interesting, though, that this Spirit can only exist in relationship to other things. As some Buddhist traditions would have it “the mind is never without an object” - or something that it’s aware of. This makes sense out of why the forming of the core self can only come after taking in nourishment and information. It doesn’t mean that it didn’t exist before - but that it is conditioned and created with each new stimulus.

The Heart is the Yin side of this dynamic, and represents the core of ones being (the French word for Heart “Cour” is representative of this, as is the Spanish corazon). As such, the Heart is the passive sense of who you really are – you know, “deep down in your heart”

**Experiential Exercise – Small Intestine**

The Small Intestine’s location on the outside of the arm going to the pinky represents its capacity to “sort the pure from the impure”. Imagine that you have a table in front of you with all kind of items to be
sorted – pretend that, using the pinky side of your arm, you push some away, and gather some toward you – sorting what you want from what you don’t.

Life Cycle

The Small Intestine is the Yang aspect of the Fire element. The Yin of the Heart was the passive sense of who you are. The Yang of the Small Intestine then sorts from among the things which are “not me” to see which things should be kept, and which things should be let go of.

Working the Small Intestine channel can help with shoulder and neck pain that comes from trying to sort too much information. It is also valuable in helping a person who feels overwhelmed with the emotional stimuli of his or her life.

Phase 4 - Impulse and Will

Experiential Exercise – Bladder Meridian

To feel the Urinary Bladder meridian, imagine that you are out on a vacation or retreat at a secluded cabin in the woods. You’ve gone outside to maybe take the garbage out and it is pitch black. From a short distance away you hear something go “CRASH” and all your muscles tense to run! Notice particularly that the muscles will tense along the back of the body – from the sole of the foot all the way up through the neck and head.

Life Cycle

When Masunaga describes the next phase, he speaks of it in regards to our little organism having the ability to move itself away from danger - symbolized by the Bladder and Kidney meridian’s placement on the back of the body, and their association with the emotion of Fear.

Just as the Stomach and Spleen on the front embody the energy of desire and the forward pull toward various forms of nourishment, the Bladder on the back embodies the energy of feeling pushed or
impelled.

This relates to the association of the Water Phase with one’s genetic inheritance and Destiny - which can both feel like a push from behind. The Urinary Bladder, because it is associated with fear and the desire to move away from things is very much involved in our experience of stress. If a person is under stress for any length of time, it will often show up in the back of the body, along the pathway of the Bladder meridian. This is showing that the fight or flight response is activating those muscles that want to move one “away”, but one is staying still, so the tension simply accumulates. In Chinese herbal studies, this meridian is related to the Yang of the Kidneys, which basically means one’s adrenals. If a person is exposed to too much stress, it can cause adrenal exhaustion, because the whole body is spending energy attempting to move away from it. This can manifest in tightening and armoring anywhere along the UB meridian.

The Bladder meridian is the longest meridian in the body and can treat problems or pain occurring anywhere along its course – including the neck, head, low back, thighs, knees, and calves. Working the Bladder meridian as a whole is very stress relieving, which is why most people think of a back-rub when they think of massage.

**Experiential Exercise – Kidney Meridian**

The Kidney meridian’s style of movement is a little more subtle and can be hard for some to feel. One easy way is to think of the last time you felt sexually attracted to someone – many people can easily feel the energy awaken near the reproductive organs, but you may also feel the qi flowing up toward the heart area along the Kidney channel. Even subtler, but definitely present is a flow from the inner back of the legs and thighs – an impulse that makes the hips sort of “yearn” forward as if impelled by some deeper force!

Another way to experience this energy is to think of it as the Yin side of the fight-or-flight response that we explored above. Where the Bladder meridian is concerned with actually moving away from danger (the Yang phase), the Kidney meridian is the feeling of concentration of energy that takes place before that movement can happen. You can think of it like a coiled spring. If the coil happens, but the fear is too
strong, you get the response of freezing rather than flight, like a deer in the headlights.

Life Cycle

As we can see from the above, the Kidney represents a kind of coiled and potent energy. This phase is representative of the generative energy that drives one to reproduce. In a single-celled organism, this would be the impulse toward cell division, where there is a movement “away” from its own self to create new life. In a human being, this phase is representative of any deep urge that it seems like you feel “in your bones”. The ancient Daoists felt that the Kidneys, the Brain, the Reproductive Essences, and the Bones, all comprised one system. What do these all share? Basically, they are all very refined and concentrated aspects of the body. The feeling in your bones is related to the genetic inheritance, because it is felt in the ancient tradition that each person comes into this world with some sort of Destiny that they are meant to fulfill. If one practices deep meditation, he or she will often experience coming out of the stillness with a deep desire to engage in some great mission in the world.

The sexual impulse is similar – from the concentration of the body's strength, a human can pass on genetic information to create a new being. There is a degree of concentration or even contraction, a gathering of the energies, and then there is the springing up of the sexual impulse.

These various movements of qi are represented by the Kidney meridian’s position on the innermost portion of the back of the leg – showing the energy concentrating; then moving up through the groin – showing the connection to the sexual essence; and finally moving up toward the chest – which shows the springing up of the energy.

The Kidney can be used to treat any kind of sexual issue on the physical level, and is also used for deep exhaustion, because the Kidney’s are said to “Store the Essence”. If we work too hard, or become too stressed, we can use up this store of essence and the body will suffer. Finally, on the spiritual level, the Kidney meridian can help to harmonize a person with their sense of “Destiny”, and issues of will power.
Phase 5 Protection and Circulation

Experiential Exercise – Pericardium Meridian

To experience the Pericardium meridian, call to mind someone who you love very much. Imagine you are just seeing them after a long time apart, and feel the impulse from your heart down your arms as you reach out to give them a great big hug.

Now, think of someone who kind of creeps you out, imagine reaching out in the same way to give them the same kind of hug and notice what happens in your subtle body.

 Likely, you can feel some sensation down the center of the arm and the chest, which changes in each of these examples.

Another way to experience the energy of the Pericardium is to imagine how, if someone is hurt at a heart level, they may slap a person in the face out of their sense of betrayal.

Life Cycle

The Pericardium and Triple Warmer are the second round of meridians we see belonging to the Fire element (all the other elements only get one pair). At first, we saw a very simple expression of the Fire phase with the Heart and Small intestine when we formed a core of “self”, and learned how to sort the “pure from impure”. Now that we know who we are, and we can move forward to fill our desires (Stomach), be moved from behind to fulfill our destiny (Kidney), or get away from things we fear (Urinary Bladder), we can begin to have more complicated interactions. This is the realm of the Pericardium and Triple warmer.

The pericardium is a sac of connective tissue that physically helps to protect the heart. The Pericardium meridian system has a similar function – to protect the emotional body and the “spirit”. The Heart, in Chinese Medicine, is related to an Emperor or Empress. Unlike modern-day presidents and prime ministers, the kind of ruler we’re imagining didn’t have to actually carry out the decisions of state day-to-day, they were more a figure of spiritual significance. It was the job of the minister to keep things in working order.
In the inner body, the role of the Pericardium is the same as this Minister. It is to keep everything in good working order emotionally so that the spirit can simply be a small, unflickering light of knowing within.

Its location on the inner arm speaks to the pericardium’s duty to decide who or what to embrace and open the heart to, and who or what to push away.

The Pericardium also influences circulation. On the physical level, we can simply think of the functions of the heart – and this meridian does help with things like blood pressure and heart problems. This circulation also extends to the spiritual and emotional levels, though, and is about the ability to freely circulate energy between yourself and others.

Working the Pericardium can help with circulatory issues in the body, or a feeling of an overburdened heart.

On the emotional level, the Pericardium can be used to help distinguish between those who should be embraced as “intimates” and those kept at arm’s length as “associates”. This meridian also has influence over the emotional aspects of sexual relationships and performance.

Experiential Exercise – Triple Warmer

The Triple Warmer meridian runs from the ring finger up over the shoulder to the side of the eyebrow. You feel it activate every time you feel emotionally awkward or out of place. Imagine a party where you don’t know anyone, and the natural stance that people take with arms folded across their torso. This is a posture meant to help one feel the protective energies of the Triple Warmer meridian.

The currently popular “fist bump” may be an expression of the Triple Warmer meridian as well.

Compared with the kind of slap we saw in the pericardium – with the palm when you are hurt at the heart level – the Triple Warmer would be represented by a backhand slap. This is the kind of slap you might give someone you disrespected.

Life Cycle
Just as the Pericardium meridian was concerned with circulation around the heart and arteries, the Triple Warmer rules over circulation to the periphery of the body. This “organ” doesn’t have a physical correlate in Western medicine, but relates to the lymphatic system, peripheral capillary circulation, and immune function.

This meridian rules over all our interactions that are not intimate, but which are with associates or acquaintances. If someone close to you hurts you, your Pericardium channel will go out of balance, trying to find emotional stability again. But if a co-worker is saying comments which you are not sure if you should be offended by or not, your Triple Warmer comes into play.

This meridian can be used to relieve shoulder tension and headaches brought on by social stress. It is also used to help the circulation reach all the way to the extremities for cold limbs. Balancing this channel can help people to distinguish who they should have in their circle of associates, and navigate social interactions.

**Phase 6 Planning and Deciding**

**Experiential Exercise – Liver**

To experience the pathway of the Liver channel, imagine that you have a decision to make. As a Yin meridian, this one can be a little subtle. As you sit and ponder the options, can you feel how the qi moves back and forth from one side of the body to the other? Can you feel how your eyes move from side to side as if surveying the two choices? These movements of energy are expressions of the Liver meridian’s energy, expressed by its location on the inside of the legs. It gives us the ability to turn this way and that, looking at what our options are.

**Life Cycle**

These last two meridians form the final phase in the development of a being for any particular cycle. Through the previous phases, one has acquired all the energetic abilities one needs, and now is a “whole” entity. The Liver and Gall Bladder channel on the sides of the body represent the ability to turn one way or the other and look at all the
options and then make a choice. Each choice then starts the cycle anew – as each choice separates one from some options, and guides one toward a new intake of energy.

The Liver is the Yin side of this phase and relates to the spirit’s capacity to envision and plan and see the future. This is related to the Wood element of Chinese Medicine, which has associations with flexibility (like a tree in the wind), movement, and Vision. The part of your spirit ruled by the Liver is called the “Hun”, which is translated as the “Ethereal Soul” – it is that part of us which grows from our level of wholeness and integration into a new evolution. We can compare this with the spirit of the Lungs, which is called the “Po” and refers to our animal instinct. These two sides of the spirit are like polar opposites (one at the beginning, and one at the end) which Daoist yoga strives to harmonize.

Treating the Liver meridian can help a person who is suffering from indecision, or who is lacking vision in their life. Because the Liver rules the motion side to side, it can easily become twisted. Because of this, and because the Liver channel rules the free flowing of the Qi (like a breeze through the forest), it can easily get bound up by feelings of anger and frustration – this is the main channel that we’ll use for energetic stagnation.

Experiential Exercise – Gall Bladder

Imagine now that you are walking up to a “T”- intersection. As you reach the end of the road you are on, you find yourself trying to choose which direction to walk. You can feel the energy twisting back and forth, from side to side as you prepare to carry out your decision.

Life Cycle
The Gall Bladder is the Yang aspect of the Wood element, and refers to the capacity to carry out the visions that one has received in the Yin phase with the Liver. Classically, the Liver is referred to as the General of an army – because the capacity of the ethereal spirit is to have a broad vision (like being able to see the whole field of battle and plan many steps in the future). The Gall Bladder meridian, then, is related to
a Field Lieutenant – the one who receives the orders from the General and then courageously carries them out.

Because of this, people who are called upon (or addicted to) to make in-the-moment decisions, and “direct the troops” as it were, can have issues in the GB channel. People like CFOs, Head Nurses, and Middle Managers are representative of this pattern. Similarly, people who lack the courage to carry out their convictions may have a deficiency or lack of presence in this channel’s phase.

The Gall Bladder meridian is very useful in treating side of the head headaches, pain along the side of the body, and a tight IT band, in addition to the emotional issues mentioned above.

Coming to completion

Once this last phase of the Liver/Gall Bladder is complete, the cycle starts all over again, because with each decision one carries out, one becomes a new being - with new needs, new drives, a new core. This is the same in the daily cycle of meridian circulation where the cycle starts over every morning with the Lung and Large Intestine.

Interestingly, it is well known in some spiritual systems that when one receives a new vision, one should be prepared for his or her world to be shaken up. This is symbolized in this cycle by the Liver/Gallbladder time being followed directly by the Lung and Large Intestine again. What is occurring is that in order to carry out this new vision, one needs to get rid of all the things in his or her life that are not consistent with it. The Lung and Large Intestine are the channels that form the new boundaries, expel wastes and that which no longer serves, and gather new vitality for the journey. From there, we begin anew. This cycle repeats throughout our lives, every time we grow and change or begin or end a new project. At the end of our lives, according to classical Daoist tradition, the Liver and Gall Bladder channel coming at the end of the cycle represent the Ethereal Soul (Hun) leaving the body to journey to different spheres (this also happens when we dream).
The Daily Meridian Cycle

Sometimes in my classes I ask the trick question “how many meridians are there”. There seem to be 12 or 14, or 72,000... But in fact, these are all just aspects of the same Qi circulation and there is never any point where it stops. The answer is “one”. There is just one circulation of energy in the body, but it takes on many different forms, and there are many different ways to access it.

The daily cycle shows what type of energy is predominating at what time of day and can also give us a clue as to what actions will be most powerful and most appropriate at certain times of the day.

When studying this cycle, we must remember that dawn is always “6:00am”, and sunset is always “6:00pm” – the actual time that your clock says may be different than the template given below. This is because a large part of the balance of this cycle depends upon the energy of the sun and its effect upon our subtle energy circulation. Thus, in the winter, when the days are shorter and nights are longer, the meridians that cycle during the dark hours will have a longer time period each, the meridians in play during the hours of daylight will have a shorter duration. In the summer time, this is reversed. At the spring and autumn equinoxes, each channel has an equal 2 hours.

Classically, these times of heightened meridian function are thought of as excellent times to cultivate health for their respective channel/Organ. For instance, if you are experiencing difficulties in the Lung Organ, you could do certain qigong exercises, take herbal formulas, or receive acupuncture or acupressure on the Lung meridian during its high tide to empower its functions.

Meridian times

3:00-5:00am Lung, and 5:00-7:00am Large Intestine
In India, the time around 4:00am is known as the “hour of Brahma”, and is said to be an especially good time for meditation and energy circulation practices. If you try practicing at this time (or anytime from 3-5am really) you may notice that there is as subtle illumination available (due to the rising solar energy), but a quietness to the mind because the usual habits of our conscious state have not woken up yet. When we study Chinese medicine, we also learn that this is because
this is the time of the Lung Meridian’s predominance, and its rulership over the Qi makes energy and breathing practices especially potent at this time.

Clinically, we will see the Lung meridian come into play when individuals have a cough, or an issue like bronchitis. The time between 3 and 5 am is a time when individuals are often woken up by coughing. Many patients with this type of issue can sleep just fine through the rest of the night, and can often return to sleep after 5am. This is the time of day when the personality is reasserting itself from the deep unconsciousness of the night. In this way, this is the same energetic pattern that we spoke of with the Lung as the first formation of the boundary of an individual. We can see how this boundary of individual personality relates to the influence of the Po, which is concerned with individual survival, and individual needs.

The time of the Large Intestine continues this Metal Phase cycle, and embodies an aspect of cleanliness. This is where our natural urges to shower, shave, and “put ourselves together” in the morning comes from. The Large Intestine energy of Metal gives us the capacity to have everything nice and neat and proper – the way that many people enjoy feeling before heading off to work or other activities. The Large Intestine also provides the energy at this time to move the bowels. Many individuals in a state of good health find that they naturally have the urge to go to the bathroom first thing in the morning around this Large Intestine time period. This can actually be a great way to clear out anything in the way of moving forward into your new day. Not having the urge to go to the bathroom in the morning can actually indicate a less than optimal state of overall health in the meridians.

7:00-9:00am - Stomach, and 9:00-11:00am Spleen

Next on the list for most of us after we have meditated or exercised a little, and then cleaned up, is breakfast! This is the influence of the Stomach meridian. It is said by many that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and with a little experience, you may find that it is true. Some Chinese medical practitioners believe that breakfast should be the largest meal of the day, but I tend to think similarly to the Ayurvedic
practitioners that the Digestive Fire is still just waking up at this point. This is the point where the Stomach’s Qi is flowing, but it’s just getting started. If you were starting a fire, you would not start out with great big logs, you would start with kindling. Similarly, you do not want to overload the Stomach with too much food, or too much heavy food. Many individuals find that they do well with grains made into cereal in the morning, while some others find they need more protein in order to maintain consistent energy until lunch (or the mid-morning snack). Experiment until you find what the perfect balance is for yourself. Some will even find that going without food until lunchtime lets them function at their most optimal - this mirrors the experience of some monks.

This is also the time of the day where we are motivating in a forward direction and are setting out toward what we want to accomplish. This has to do with the forward directionality of the stomach channel on the body.

Once we have taken in nourishment, the Spleen/Pancreas begins breaking it down and digesting it. This is the continued expression of the Earth Phase qualities of nourishment.

Remember that this nourishment refers not only to food, but also to knowledge - and this time of day can be best for study and learning new things. When I teach at massage and bodywork schools, I always try to give the lecture portion of the class first thing, because the mind is fresh and hungry - then later, we do bodywork practice (usually in the time period we’ll talk about next for the Heart). I find that this is often much more efficient than doing it in the reverse order, and definitely more efficient than attempting to learn new things in the afternoon (“snore”).

11am-1pm Heart, and 1:00-3:00pm Small Intestine

These two phases take place in the “heart” of the day. They are both Fire Phase meridians, and are active during the maximum Yang time period around noon. This is often the highest time of the workday with a couple of exceptions.

The first exception is during the summer, when one can easily overheat - and then, one should rest during this time and gather strength for working later. The other is when one is doing work that is
not connected with his or her heart. There is a saying, “work is Love made visible,” which embodies what we are talking about here. In an ideal world (and we can make our world an ideal one if we choose to), we would all be doing work that we love. We would be spending the majority of the hours in our day giving the expression of our Heart’s essence to the world.

If you know anyone who has managed to make his or her living by doing what he or she loves, you probably know that these are among the most fulfilled people you will find. What you may also realize is that a lot of these people are doing work that benefits others. If you do not benefit others with your work this is subtly or grossly going against the nature of the Shen (innate spirit) residing in the Heart - and you will ultimately “burn out”. It is not uncommon to find individuals in jobs that are very competitive and who are working for their own gain to have heart attacks early, or other cardio-vascular issues.

If one is in a job that they do not like, these can be amongst the most challenging hours of the day to get through. If a client complains in this way, we can utilize our qi medicine to help them listen to what their Heart is telling them, and to the alternate visions their Hun (ethereal spirit – Liv/GB) can find.

The Small Intestine meridian’s emphasis on integration and sorting asserts itself at the time from 1-3. If we are thinking of a workday, we are now entering the second half of the day. At this time, many individuals are beginning to sort out the tasks that they can accomplish from the ones that they will have to postpone. There is usually some organization that needs to take place at this point, and this is also governed by the Small Intestine.

Occasionally this time brings with it a post-lunch slump. This is because after eating, the blood in the body has literally gathered in the abdominal organs and intestines to digest, and then absorb the nutrients from the food. If the Small Intestine’s function is healthy, post meal-time should be filled with energy. If these functions are impaired, though, one might need a little rest before he or she can continue with activities.

The Small Intestine also gives us our emotional and intellectual integration, so occasionally individuals will feel like they need a walk, a nap, or some silent time in order to be able to sort and integrate the
experiences that have happened to them so far in the course of the day.

3-5pm - Kidney, and 5-7pm - Bladder

In many households, or parts of the world, you will find the afternoon time is a time when the shops close down and everything comes to a rest for a while. Sometimes this is related to the Heart, which we saw above, and other times it is related to the Kidneys.

The Kidneys are the storehouse of energy in the body, and they can be depleted through overwork. If you take a nap in the early afternoon, it is like putting some qi in the storehouse so you’ll have it to use later. If you rest in the later afternoon, it is like giving the Kidneys a break during their most vulnerable time.

If you work in an office, you may notice that there are two major times when a lot of coffee is being brewed. One is in the morning, to make up for lack of sleep, unprocessed toxicity from the Liver, unrelieved waste from the Large Intestine (this causes a sluggish feeling - coffee perks you up, and is also a laxative herb), and poor nutrition. The other is around 3 in the afternoon. This is one of the worst times of day for individuals with Adrenal Fatigue Syndrome, and is a time when many of us will feel a dip (or crash!) in energy.

This Kidney time, and the time of its partner the Bladder, are also the “push” that often takes place at the end of the day. This is harmonious with the energy of these channels pushing us from the back of the body where they are located.

Finally, just as the Kidneys and the Water phase concentrate essences within the body, this is the time when you are hopefully wrapping up projects for the day - not necessarily starting new ones. Like water flowing downhill, this point in our day should see us flowing toward home, rest, and inward concentration.

7-9pm Pericardium, and 9-11pm Triple Warmer

These are the second round of Fire meridians in the body’s cycle, and have to do with the hearth and the “home fires”. When these meridians are active, the body and mind naturally crave being with loved ones, safe at home.

This Fire phase energy corresponds to the time in our history as a
species when we would be sitting around the evening fires for warmth and companionship as the sun went down. This tendency is still hardwired into our energetic systems. Nowadays, though, the fire and the stories tend to be replaced by television. There is still a degree of togetherness that this provides, and the action of the flickering lights will hypnotize us in the same way a campfire can (this hypnosis is part of what makes advertising so effective and television and computers so addictive). There is, though, a certain element of human connection and sacredness lacking. When watching the TV, you are not necessarily interacting with your companions - you are receiving the same hypnotism, but not necessarily connecting because of it. Of course, TV is not “bad” per se, it’s just that most people don’t use it as a means of connection - they use it in order to turn the mind off after a long day of doing things they don’t necessarily enjoy. It is possible to get together with a group of friends, watch a little TV, and use it as the icebreaker to get to genuine connection with each other. We can also use the hypnotic capacity of this medium to convey mythic messages to our deep unconscious - just like the shamans of old would have done around the campfire.

There is another way that this energy can go, and would have gone for our ancestors on a regular, but not daily basis. This is the direction of going out and partying! The fire of the Pericardium and Triple Warmer have to do with circulation, and on a social level, this can mean circulating and mingling with others. These are the channels that allow genuine connection from heart to heart, and going out dancing and engaging in other social activities can facilitate this connection. In ancient times, this would have taken place at various ceremonial occasions where the dancing might have taken place around an actual fire.

There is a large component of these meridians dealing with sexuality, as they connect the energy of the Heart’s love, with the Kidney’s reproductive essence. As the song goes “they’ve got one thing in common, they got the fire down below”. This is the Fire element in its role in our urge to connect our sexuality and love. This is the time of evening when lovers will often be connecting - even just snuggling up for shared warmth. This is also an element of such fiery social events as dancing - the movement and circulation of this sexual energy through the body. It can express itself as seeking for a mate, expressing it with
your chosen mate, or just the reveling in the bliss of love incarnating in a body.

One final note on this time period. Many practitioners feel that the time opposite an organ’s time is that organ’s weakest period. For example, 3pm would be weakest for the Lung, because its period of strength is 3am. By this theory, 7-9pm is the worst time to eat a large meal, because the stomach is at its lowest. This is somewhat consistent with the levels of Hydrochloric Acid in the stomach throughout the day (a substance which facilitates digestion) - they are lowest in the evening. Many Buddhist practitioners take a vow to avoid the evening meal, in order to keep the mental faculties sharp - and my own experience has shown that there is definitely something to this practice.

On the other hand, individuals with rapid metabolisms, or mild to severe cases of hypoglycemia may need to eat at regular intervals throughout the day to maintain health. In some cases of Yin Deficiency, people will not be able to sleep unless they’ve had something to eat. See what works for you, but it is generally good advice to make the evening meal something small and easily digestible. According to Chinese medicine, the tendency we have in the America to have a large heavy meal in the evening can be detrimental to our health and lightness of mind. If you are waking up feeling heavy in the morning, try not eating after about 6:30pm, or lightening the quality of the food you eat at night.

11pm-1am Gall Bladder, and 1-3am Liver

If you’ve ever stayed up until about 11:30pm, you may be familiar with what is commonly called the “second wind”. It is interesting that this time of the Wood Phase meridians should have an energy associated with it that is the climate associated with the Wood Phase - Wind, or the quality of erratic energy.

Many artists will tell you that this is the time that they are the most creative - when the ideas really start to flow. This is because of the influence of the Hun - the upward moving tendency of the spirit toward visionary states. Classically, this is meant to be happening while you sleep and dream - the body rests and restores itself, and the spirit travels gaining new information. In many meditation traditions, they train in order to become conscious of these nightly journeys and
thus get to use all the creative vision they receive. Some Buddhist and Daoist masters don’t actually engage in what we’d call “sleep” at all - they simply enter the body into an extremely quiet space, and let the spirit soar free.

This is fine for them, but until we reach this state, our bodies need the time of rest at night in order to restore themselves. Staying up at this time, even if one still gets around 8 hours of sleep can still be detrimental to the substances and energies housed by the Liver. For individuals dealing with syndromes of the Wood Phase Organs, it is recommended to be in bed by 10:30pm in order to wind down before the Hun’s ascending energy starts to come into play.

It is also interesting to note that many night-owls that you talk to still get to sleep by around 3am. The reason for this is that the Windy energy of the Wood Phase wears off at that time, and it transitions to the Lungs.

When you get deep, adequate rest, you will wake up refreshed. If not, you will manifest many of the signs of a Liver pathology - red eyes, foul breath, gogginess, and irritability. If you want to awaken fresh, try not eating before bed (the other reason for this is that it gives the Liver less to process and lets it do its real job of cleaning up the blood during the night), and getting plenty of sleep for many nights in a row. This allows the Liver a chance to do its work of detoxification for the body, which then lets the Lung energy activate clean and vital first thing in the morning.

Putting it into practice

From the above, you can get an idea of some of the clinical signs we get from our biorhythm clock, as well as how one can organize his or her life to accomplish greater health. If you are wondering, yes, the extreme expression of this cycle is only getting about 4 hours of sleep per night. This is an advanced stage of practice, so I don’t recommend just setting the alarm clock and trying it. Many Yogis only sleep a few hours a night, because they are replenishing their energetic reserves through many hours of meditation and karma yoga during the day. What you may notice, though, is that as you continue in your study of Qigong, and continue working with your own meridians, thoughts, and dietary choices, you will naturally begin to awaken around 4:00am. I first experienced this when practicing the Golden Bell Cover Qigong -
which strongly cleanses and strengthens all the meridians - just a few
days into the practice, and my body naturally woke me at 4am to train
without an alarm. Many fellow practitioners have told me that they
noticed this phenomenon when intensifying their yoga practice, or
while on a meditation retreat.

**Meridian and Organ Functions**

After going through the above discussions on the associations of the
Five Phases, and the Cycle of the meridian energetics, we can start to
get an idea of the “why” behind many of the classical functions of the
internal Organs in Chinese Medicine. I’ll give a brief description of
each below - see if you can relate it to what you learned about that
Phase, and that meridian’s energetics. Many of the functions of the
Organs are just repetitions of the Five Phase correspondences - for
instance, the Lungs are said to “store the Po (corporeal soul)”, and the
Liver is said to “rule the tendons”. I will leave it to the reader to go
back and explore the sections on the correspondences to deepen his or
her understanding.

**Lung Meridian**

The Lung meridian rules the taking in and circulating of the qi in the
body. This also associates the Lungs with breathing. Any problems in
the breath will likely have to do with the Lung meridian’s function.

Due to their capacity to circulate the qi, the Lungs also have a
role in the defensive energy of the body. They circulate the Wei Qi
(defensive energy) all the way out to the extremities. Many invasions of
pathogenic energy are dispersed through using points on the Lung
channel. The Lungs are said to “rule the exterior” and this also
concerns the excretion of sweat, and the opening and closing of the
pores.

The Lungs also deal with circulation of Water in the body. They
are considered the upper part of the body’s water metabolism (like the
lid on an alchemical cauldron or vessel). When this function is
disturbed, one often sees edema (swelling) in the face or upper body.

**Large Intestine**

The Large Intestine, like most of the Yang Organs in Chinese medicine,
is given a very simple function - to excrete waste. The energetic aspects of its meridian though, are influential in all the associations of the Metal phase. This Channel is used extensively in the treatment of expelling illness from the body (like colds and flus) and to tonify the immune system.

The Large Intestine channel is also used to treat pain or issues anywhere along its meridian course. Headaches, toothaches, and shoulder pain are the indications of many large intestine points.

**Stomach**
The Stomach in Chinese Medicine is the one Yang Organ that is given quite a lot of responsibility compared to other Yang organs. It is often spoken of as if on an equal par with its Yin partner the Spleen.

The Stomach meridian rules the function of all the digestive tubes. The physical digestive functions of the Small and Large Intestine are said to be contained within the Stomach, and these organs have points along the Stomach meridian.

The Stomach is said to “receive”, “rot”, and “ripen” the food that we take in it then sends these ripened essences to the Spleen and Small Intestine for further digestion and assimilation.

The Stomach meridian is associated with all of these functions and is also used to treat conditions along its channel including jaw tightness, frontal headache, esophageal issues, and leg pain or weakness.

**Spleen**
The Spleen rules “transforming and transporting” in the body. The Qi of the Spleen is at the center of the creation of the Qi and Blood for the whole body. If there is a deficiency of either of these substances, we need to tonify the Spleen’s ability to transform the essences of food we’ve taken in.

The Spleen also helps to transform the fluids in the body and to transport them. If this function is lacking, dampness can accumulate, causing fuzzy headedness or water swelling in the abdomen and legs.

The Spleen’s energetic direction is upward, and this Qi has a lot to do with holding things up in the body. Just like the banks of Earth hold in a River, the Spleen/Earth Phase holds the Blood in its proper place, and holds the Organs in their proper place. Easy bruising,
hernias, and prolapsed organs (stomach, uterus), are signs of collapse of this qi.

The Spleen and Stomach are partners in this, because the Stomach’s energy is downward - this keeps the food down and avoids nausea, vomiting, and hiccoughs. On the spiritual/mental level, the Stomach allows us to take in new ideas, while the Spleen sends clear energy up to enliven the mind.

Heart
In Chinese Medicine the Heart has two major functions - on the spiritual level, it houses the Shen, or Spirit, and on the physical level it governs the Blood.

As we will see when we look into pathologies, many of the Heart’s functions are related to the mind and consciousness.

On the physical level, the Heart is similar to our Western understanding of the Heart’s role in circulating the Blood throughout the body.

Small intestine
The Small Intestine separates the “pure from the impure”. This means that it takes the food digested by the Stomach and sends the clear part that one can use to the Spleen to be processed into the body’s Qi and Blood, and it sends the turbid part that we can’t use on to the Large Intestine for excretion.

This also refers to the consciousness. When we take in ideas, the Small Intestine is responsible for our ability to discriminate and have clear judgment. This channel’s functions can be summed up by the words discrimination and assimilation. The Small Intestine decides what we will make into ourselves.

Points along the Small Intestine channel can be used to relieve shoulder pain, back of the head headaches, and ear problems.

Bladder
The Bladder Organ’s function is simply to receive and excrete urine.

The Bladder meridian, on the other hand, has a number of functions. One can think of it as a Yang aspect of the Water phase, and can be used as a whole to help relieve stress (just think of a nice back rub when you are stressed out). This channel also contains points along
the spine that regulate the function of all the other meridians and Organs. The Bladder channel is used to relieve back pain, knee pain, and back of the head headaches.

**Kidney**
The Kidneys are the root of the Yin and Yang energy for all the other organs. We saw above that the Water Phase is the deepest level of energy for the body and the most Yin. The Kidneys store our inheritance of genetic essence and enable us to either use it up, or cultivate a greater store. We will learn more about this function in the discussion on the “Five Substances”.

The Kidneys are also influential in water metabolism - particularly in the lower body. They are the foundation of the water moving functions of the Lungs and the Spleen that we saw above.

**Pericardium**
The Pericardium is a muscular sac that surrounds and protects the Heart. The functions of the Pericardium Organ and Meridian in Chinese medicine are much the same. Classically, many disorders of the Heart would be treated through the Pericardium channel. In some traditions, practitioners will not even approach the Heart because it is considered to be too sacred and too sensitive to receive direct work.

Spiritually and emotionally, the Pericardium protects the Spirit from any influences that might harm it. In some traditions, this Organ is called the “Heart Governor” - not because it governs the Heart, but because it governs for the Heart. This is much like a Prime Minister in some modern monarchy’s.

In one classical model upon which this medicine is based, the Emperor’s job is not actually to rule, the Emperor (the Heart) is meant to embody a certain spiritual state and commune with the spiritual realm. Because of this, the Pericardium is left with the nitty gritty tasks.

**Triple Warmer**
The Triple Warmer is the one “Organ” on this list that has no Western counterpart. This is because it is an Organ with a function, but with no form. The Triple Warmer refers to the torso as a whole with its “three burning spaces”. These are: The lower abdomen including the organs of excretion and reproduction - the Kidneys, Bladder, Large Intestine,
and Liver; the middle abdomen including the organs of digestion - Spleen, Stomach, Liver, Gall Bladder, and Small Intestine; and the chest including the cardiovascular organs - Lungs and Heart. The Triple Warmer refers to the metabolic Fire that makes all of these processes run correctly. In a sense, it is actually an expression of the Yang aspect of the Kidneys.

The Triple Warmer channel helps with the water circulation of the body and the circulation of qi. Its meridian can be used to treat shoulder pain, arm pain, and side of the head headaches.

Gall Bladder
The Gall Bladder’s functions are to store and release bile. It is also said to rule the quality of decisiveness.

The Gall Bladder meridian is used to treat Liver stagnation, side of the head headaches, joint issues, and contains points related to other internal organs as it passes through the torso.

Liver
The Liver has two major functions - ensuring smooth flow of Qi, and “storing” the Blood.

The smooth flow of Qi ensured by the Liver enables us to have an easygoing disposition. This can be related to the Hun’s power of vision and flexible decision making to keep the qi in our lives in general flowing smoothly.

The Liver “storing” the Blood also means helping to keep the Blood clean and cool - allowing the Spirit to be rooted. The Blood is said to return to the Liver when we are at rest, and this is one of the major reasons it can be so important to get adequate amounts of sleep - particularly during the Wood phase time of 11pm-3am.

Meridian Pathways

Lung

The Lung meridian pathway starts from the top of the chest just inside the shoulder, and runs down to the lateral side of the thumb nail. If you’d like to energetically feel the location of this channel, imagine that
you have just hiked up to the top of a big hill, and the air is completely clear and clean. You feel like taking a big deep breath and throwing your arms back to take in the clear expansive sky - the part of your arms that stretches as you do this is the Lung meridian.

**Lung 1 & 2**
Lung one is located just inside the arm, below the collar bone. To find it, find the collar bone and walk along it with your fingers, all the way until you run into the shoulder bone. There should be a small hole here - this is Lung 2, come straight down from this point and you will find another hole which is Lung 1.

This area is a major access to the energy of the Lung. You can simply rub over the entire zone and feel your energy pick up a bit. In qigong, we will also use this area as a place to reach into the Lungs Qi and dredge out pathogenic influences. It is a great point to use for tonifying the lungs - you can use fingers, palm, or invisible needle therapy quite easily.

Lung 1 is considered to be the “alarm” point for the lungs and will show acute problems in the Organ system by pain upon palpation.

**Lung 3 & 4**
Lung 3 is located between the biceps muscle and the humerus bone on the lateral side of the arm. This meridian flows just to the yin side of the arm, meaning that it is just on the untanned side of the skin (remember, the yang side is where the sun will hit - or the outside and back of the arm in a normal standing or working position). Lung 3 is on this border of Yin and Yang skin just at the point where the nose will reach if you bring your arm up to your face. Classically this point was said to be found by dabbing ink on the point of the nose and having the patient lift their arm to their face. Lung 4 is just one Cun below it.

Both of these points can help to reduce cough and shortness of breath. Lung 3 is also classically indicated for spirit possession and mental disturbance.

**Lung 5**
Lung 5 is located in the elbow crease lateral (on the thumb side) of the
biceps tendon (the large tendon in the center of the elbow). There is a very big point that can be found here.

Lung 5 is the Water point of the Lung channel, and thus can be used to cool any kind of irritation or inflammatory condition in this system like dry throat, or coughing blood. As the Water point, it helps to cool fire and heat. You can also utilize the influence over Water in this channel to regulate excess dampness in the Lungs. It also makes it a good point for singers or speakers who may get throat soreness due to overuse.

Lung 6
Lung 6 is found along the border of the Yin/Yang (tanned and untanned) skin about 1/3 of the way down the forearm. I find this point varies in location from individual to individual and just look for a knot in that general area.
Lung 6 is the accumulation point in the Lung. “Accumulation” here is translated from the Chinese word meaning a cleft - like a cleft in rock where things will accumulate when the wind blows. Because of this nature, this point can be dispersed to treat accumulations in the Lung energy system - like bronchitis, pneumonia, dampness, etc.

Lung 7,8,9
Lung 9 is located at the wrist crease on the thumb side - just inside the border of the untanned skin (or hairless skin on most people). Lung 8 is one thumb width back toward the elbow, and Lung 7 is one more thumb back toward the elbow. In Chinese acupuncture, Lung 7 is found by deviating off toward the tan side of the arm onto the radius bone, and is a little closer to the wrist. Acupressurists often find this point directly over the radial pulse - in a line with Lung 8 and 9. I have found both locations to be effective.

Lung 9 is the “Source Point” for the Lung Channel and can treat practically any disharmony in the Lung system. It is especially valuable for tonification.
Lung 8 is the Metal element point and helps to balance the channel.
Lung 7 is called the “Luo” point, which means that it opens up the connective network of channels from the Lung. It can be used to disperse cough, descend the Lung Qi to deepen the breath, and also to
Lung 10
Lung 10 is found in the pad below the thumb, in a hollow in the center of the bone (first metacarpal). If there is any kind of Heat or Yin deficiency in the Lung System, this point will be sore.

Lung 10 is the Fire point on this channel and as such can treat any form of inflammation present in a similar way that we spoke of with Lung 5. Lung 5 was useful in inflammation because it was Water and could cool the Fire. Lung 10 is used to disperse the Fire, or heat directly. It also helps locally to treat pain or weakness in the thumb.

Lung 11
Lung 11 is the very last point on the meridian. It is located at the lateral edge of the thumb nail, at the base of the nail.

The points at the finger or toe end of any channel can help to drain pathogenic factors that are present in the channel. This point helps to clear out Heat in the Lungs, and is a great one to use if one is catching a cold. At the onset of an illness, press this point repeatedly with the fingernail to help disperse the invading energy before it can take hold.

Large Intestine Channel
To get a feel for the Large Intestine channel, imagine that you are scolding someone and pointing with your index finger. Or directing people who are helping you move “this goes here, that goes there” - you will likely feel the channel on your arm activate in the location of the Large Intestine meridian. To feel the rest of the channel flowing from the index finger up to the edge of the nostril, imagine that you are turning up your nose slightly snobbishly while pointing the index finger (as if saying “I won’t stand for it any other way!”). This upper portion also activates if you imagine smelling something wonderfully appetizing - which stimulates the Po - corporeal soul.

Large intestine 1
Large Intestine 1 is found on the lateral corner of the base of the index finger nail (thumb side).
This point (being at the very extremity of the channel) can be used to purge pathogenic factors from the meridian. Often, one can use this point for toothache with the “invisible needle” technique. Simply grow the needle up, and use energetic diagnosis to direct it to the tooth where there is pain or infection - pull the pathogenic energy down and out the channel.

Large Intestine 4
Large intestine 4 is found on the Yang side of the hand (back hand, not palm) in the webbing between the thumb and index finger. Look for the knot or tight spot.
This point is valuable to dredge pathogenic factors from the Large Intestine channel. Being the Source point on the LI channel, it helps with diverse symptoms such as constipation AND diarrhea. It can be used to pull frontal (usually sinus) headaches down and out and toothaches using a similar technique to that described for LI 1. This point also dispels Wind from the channel and can treat cold and flus, plus other Wind symptoms like facial paralysis and facial tics.

Large Intestine 5
Large Intestine 5 is found at the hollow at the base of the thumb on the Yang (tanned) side of the arm. If you pull the thumb back (into extension), this point will show up between the two tendons.
LI 5 is a major point for dispersing Heat from this channel - nosebleeds, fevers, toothache, swollen throat, and cough are included in this category.

LI 11, 10, 9
To find LI 11, bend the elbow and locate the end of the crease on the tanned side. If you strum across the tendon here, you should find a painful knot in most individuals.
LI 10 and 9 are each one Cun back toward the hand.
I often treat these points together, strumming with a Tui Na massage technique over the tendon from the elbow toward the wrist. All of these points help to release heat and toxins from the body and can reduce pain along the LI channel. They help pull pain out of the shoulder, elbow, and head.
Large Intestine 14
LI 14 is found where the deltoid muscle comes to a point on the “deltoid tuberosity” of the Humerus. If you were able to find Lung 3, this point is just about one Cun over to the tan side of the arm - basically right in the middle of the humerus bone where you can feel it between the biceps and triceps muscle.

LI 14 is primarily used for pain in the shoulder.

Large Intestine 15 and 16
LI 16 is located on top of the shoulder where the clavicle (collar bone) and the acromion (shoulder blade bone) come to a ‘V’. Walk out along the inside of the clavicle (the side closer to the neck, not to the chest) until you reach the end and run into the shoulder bone. This is LI 16. LI 15 is just on the other side of this bony juncture where the humerus sits under the shoulder bone.

Both of these points are major points to use for frozen shoulder and rotator cuff injuries.

Large Intestine 20
LI 20 is located just outside the nostril, if you put your finger into the “smile lines” next to the nose, press in, and then pull up and out slightly (toward the eye and ear) you should find a small hole here. This point is useful for opening the sinuses from nasal congestion. It is another great candidate for using the “invisible needle” to dredge out any pathogenic substance in the sinuses.

Stomach Meridian
The Stomach meridian starts from directly under the pupil of the eye, flows through the jaw and esophagus, down the chest and abdomen, and then all the way down the lateral-front of the thigh and leg to end at the lateral side (pinky toe side) of the second toe.

To get a feel for the location of this meridian, imagine that you
are very hungry, and you find yourself inside a magical grocery store. Everywhere, you are surrounded by shelves and displays of delicious items. Imagine that you see something that looks extremely appetizing, and you begin walking toward it. As you walk, you can likely feel the stomach channel on the legs and the abdomen pulling you forward. Notice the energy in your eyes, as you fixate on the object of your desire. Then imagine holding this food item up to your lips and taking a bite - this will activate and call awareness and energy to the stomach channel flowing through the jaw and mouth.

Stomach 1
Stomach one is located in the lower orbit bone of the eye - directly beneath the pupil. If you feel the bone in this area, you will likely feel a small hollow or notch here. This is a valuable point for complaints of the eyes - for relieving pain, twitches, redness, and also improving vision. The energetics here would be activating the Stomach’s ability to take in new information - specifically information through the eyes.

Stomach 3
Directly below Stomach 1 pressing up into the cheek bone
This point also benefit’s the eyes in a similar fashion to St1, and is useful for treating the sinuses and for toothache. Stomach 3 is a common point used in “acupressure face-lift”, as it helps restore beauty and tone to the face.

Stomach 6 & 7
Stomach 6 is located in the jaw muscle just in front of the point of the jaw bone. St 7 is about one Cun toward the ear from ST 6 just under the joint where the jaw meets the cheek bone.

These points are both local for toothache pain, and also help to release the jaw. They can be very helpful in treating TMJ disorder - partially because they are located right on trigger point for the Masseter and Pterygoid muscles. These can also be used for “wryness” of the mouth - stiffness, muscle spasms, paralysis, and other symptoms of this variety.

Stomach 8
Stomach 8 is the highest point on this meridian where it makes a big smile up to the forehead (a smile because everyone loves to eat!). This point is located just at the hairline (think *original* hairline if your patient is bald or has a receding hairline) and can be located by following the from the edge of the eyebrow up to the hairline.

This is a great local point for front of the head headaches. You can also use the Stomach meridian here to dispel dampness covering up the mind and upper orifices.

Stomach 9
Stomach 9 is said to be right at the level of the Adam’s Apple, or near where the hyoid bone is in the center of the throat. It is located on the front of the SternoCleidoMastoid muscle. Clinically I find that there is usually a knot in the SCM muscle itself right at this level, and relieving this knot can be very beneficial in treating obstructions of the throat and relieving TMJ pain. This is because the fascia which flows along the SCM muscle is continuous with the rest of the Stomach channel which is running through the jaw. Often, if other treatments have not helped resolve the TMJ disorder sufficiently, I can get a more complete result by incorporating treating this area (and other distal points on the Stomach meridian).

This point can also be used for local disorders such as cough, vomiting, sore throat, and goiter.

St11, 12, and 13
Stomach 11 is right at the lower insertion of the SCM muscle on the medial end of the clavicle. St 12 is right about in the middle of the clavicle on the superior side - there is a small notch in the bone at this area. St 13 is just on the inferior side of the clavicle in a line with ST12.

All of these points, due to their location near the lungs are useful in complaints in the Lungs, and are particularly helpful in descending Lung Qi. In Qigong therapy, we may not necessarily use these points individually, but will often extend energy through this entire area to access the Lungs.
Stomach Meridian through the chest and torso

The stomach meridian descends down from St13 to the center of the nipple, which is St17, at the bottom of the ribs, the Stomach meridian comes medial a bit to run right along side of the rectus abdominus muscles (six-pack muscles) down to the pubic bone. The most important aspect of many of these points for hands-on healers to consider is that they all lie over certain internal organs. Each of the points can influence the internal organ beneath it. In addition to any of its specific functions.

St 25
At the edge of the Rectus Abdominus muscle at the level of the navel (about 2 cun lateral to the midline).

Stomach 25 is the “front alarm” point of the Large Intestine. Because of this, it can be use to diagnose Large Intestine meridian or Organ complaints - as well as treat complaints of this energetic system.

St 30
Located on the stomach meridian (lateral edge of the rectus abdominus muscle) right at the top of the pubic bone. Simply follow the edge of the muscle down until you reach the bone.

Due to its location near the fascia of the genital organs, this point is used to help treat hernia, pain in the external genitals, bladder, and reproductive issues. This point also connects internally to the chong mai - one of the extraordinary vessels - and can treat the reproductive system through that connection as well. This point is often included in protocols to treat the chong mai.

St 31
If you follow a straight line lateral from St30 all the way out to the lateral edge of the rectus femoris muscle (the central quadriceps muscle on the front of the leg - it pops out when you extend the knee) you will find this point. This point is roughly at the same level as the greater trochanter of the femur - the hip bone that you can feel under the glute
muscles through the side.

This point has similar functions to St 30 above as it is located near to the genital organs and can drain stagnant qi down the meridian channel. This is a great point to treat pain in the thigh. I have found clinically, through my practice of shiatsu therapy, that this point can help open up the leg meridian to drain stagnant energy from the rest of the Stomach channel - thus increasing leg strength and also enabling a practitioner to drain heat or stagnation from the stomach organ itself.

St 34
At the superior border of the patella on the lateral side - on the insertion of the rectus femoris muscle - approximately 3 cun proximal (back toward the body) from the knee.

The stomach meridian flows right down the edge of the rectus femoris muscle to the knee. This point can vary in location - according to my experience as a body worker. Often times, one will find a knot in this area of the body - it may be right next to the knee cap, or it may be up to 3 inches away.

When there is a knot in this area of muscle or ligament, it can signify that there is some condition of excess, pain, or stagnation in the Stomach Organ system. The reason for this is that it is the “accumulation” point on the Stomach meridian and can treat any kind of these accumulations in the organ itself or the channel. Some examples are headache, toothache, ulcer pain, or food stagnation feelings after eating.

Stomach 36
On the lateral edge of the tibia (shin bone) 3 thumb widths distal to the lower edge of the knee cap.

Stomach 36 is one of the major points for tonification in the body - for practically any type of deficiency. This is because the Spleen and Stomach are responsible for the production of the body’s post-natal Qi. They are also a major player in the production of Blood, and the transformation of fluids. If there are deficiency issues in the realm of Qi
and Blood, St 36 is likely to be included in the treatment. This point can also be used to help tonify the Yang of the body. Classically this is often done with moxa. A Qigong therapist can utilize channeling Hot qi into the point, and a Tui Na therapist can use the technique of chafing in order to heat the point. Because of its location and its general tonic effect, this point is also indicated for strengthening the legs. The name of this point is “leg three miles” and the story goes that armies on the march would moxa this point at regular intervals to enable them to march further and stay energetic.

St 40

Stomach 40 is located about halfway between the knee and the ankle. It is actually about 1.5 to 2 cun lateral to the shin bone as the Stomach meridian is classically seen to zig-zag laterally at this point.

Stomach 40 is one of the most important points for treating phlegm in the body. The reason for this is similar to the reasoning behind the indications for stomach 36 - the Earth Phase Organs are seen to be the center of the production of the various substances in the body. This point can resolve phlegm because the Stomach and Spleen are highly influential in the transformation and transportation of Fluids in the body. For a similar reason, this point is said to help clear up the spirit and disposition. This is because the Spirit can become oppressed if there is phlegm which “mists the mind”.

Stomach 41

This point can be found by coming to the ankle joint, right where it flexes, between the two tendons that pop up in the center if you flex the toes back toward the kneecap (dorsiflexion).

Stomach 41 is very good for rooting the spirit through the stomach meridian, clearing Heat, and transforming damp and stagnation. Clinically, I have found through sensing the qi of this point that this is because its location far down on the foot helps to pull the qi down the stomach channel. This point also helps support the Spleen Qi. Many
of the points on the foot will have this same constellation of functions.

St 42-45
The stomach channel heads down from St 41 to the lateral (pinky side) corner of the 2nd toe. It follows right along the path of the second metatarsal bone of the foot. Stomach 42 can be found at the high point of the foot, and St43 is about an inch distal from it. St44 is found at the base of the toe, and 45 is at the toenail corner.

All of these points help to root the spirit down, drain heat and stagnation, and support the earth. St 45, being the point at the end of the channel is especially good at these functions.

Spleen meridian
The Spleen meridian starts at the medial (inside) corner of the big toe and ascends through the flesh of the leg, then the inside front of the thigh - along the vastus medialis muscle of the quadriceps group. It comes up through the torso and meets with the lung channels internally - then descends to the side of the body to end at Sp21.
To feel the energetic activity of the Spleen Channel, start with the Stomach channel exercise of imagining that you are in a magical supermarket and you are very hungry. You feel the Stomach channel activate as you hold an item to your lips. As you bring it into your mouth and begin to chew, though, it is your spleen channel which will activate. You can feel this even better if you think of emotional nourishment rather than physical. Imagine someone you love a lot and feel very comfortable with and nourished by. Imagine walking toward them and beginning to lean in for a hug. If you are sensitive, you may feel the spleen channel throughout the legs and torso active. Please feel free to practice this in actual fact, in addition to imagination!

Spleen 1
This point is found on the medial side of the big toe at the base of the toe nail.
Sp1 helps to tonify the Spleen. You can do this by acupressure, invisible needle therapy, or qi emission, directing energy up the channel and into the Spleen or middle burner. This point also helps to clear the channel by regulating the blood, and rooting and clearing the
Heart (which is both the next meridian in line which the Spleen connects to, and the previous element - fire, which creates earth).

Spleen 3
If you follow the border of the “red and white skin” or the tanned/untanned if you’ve been in the sun, just pass the big knuckle of the 1st metatarsal heading toward the ankle and you’ll find a slight hollow.
This is the site where individuals will form a “bunion” or painful protruberance of bone. The bunion is actually a sign of very weak Spleen Qi. This point is the “Source Point” of the Spleen Channel, and as such can be used for diagnosis of the entire meridian. A bunion is one sign one might see - another might be a small varicose vein, or a bruise on this area.
Spleen 3 is one of the best points to help to tonify the Spleen.

Spleen 4
Follow that red and white skin border for another thumb width and you will find another hollow which is Spleen 4.
Spleen 4 can also help to tonify the Spleen, but is also good for harmonizing this system. It can help to regulate things like vomiting, rumbling in the stomach, abdominal pain, and diarrhea.

Spleen 6
Find the medial ankle bone and measure from the edge of the pinky finger to the edge of the thumb up the inside of the leg. In the middle of the flesh there should be a slight depression - this is 3 thumb widths or Cun up from the ankle. This point may be painful.

Spleen 6 is called the “Three Yin Crossing” because the Liver, Kidney, and Spleen channels of the leg all come in and meet at this point. Because of this, this point is one of the most commonly used for tonifying the Yin of the body. Because of its effect on Yin substances, this point is also sometimes dispersed in order to help drain Dampness. Sp6 tonifies the Spleen. This point influences the reproductive system and genital organs and so can be used for menstrual cramps and sexual problems, but should be avoided in pregnancy (except in the last week or so to promote an easy birth).
Sp 9
Follow up the fleshy part of the inner leg about 1 cun back from the shin bone to trace the Spleen meridian follow until you hit bone. Just where the Tibia curves backward below the knee is a painful spot when you press upward into the bone. This is Spleen 9.

Spleen 9 is called the “fountain of Yin” and can regulate Yin and Dampness in a similar way to Spleen 6. This point is also good for any kind of prolapse in the body (uterus, stomach, or hernias). The “fountaining” nature of its energy helps to lift up the organs or energy that have fallen down.

Sp 10
Spleen 10 is located on the medial side of the thigh just 3 inches (cun) proximal from the medial corner of the knee cap. This point will be just outside of the medial edge of that rectus femoris muscle which we followed the lateral edge of to find the stomach channel.

Spleen 10 is called the “Sea of Blood” and is an especially good regulator of the Blood. This point can help to move the blood and is often used for menstrual disharmonies.

Sp 12
Spleen 12 is found in the same line as the upper border of the pubic bone - just like St30. If you place the edge of your index finger next to the center of the pubic bone, with the hand flat on the body, this point should be right outside of the pinky. If you can find the pulsing of the femoral artery, Sp 12 is just lateral to it at the level of the pubic bone.

This point has a similar effect to St30 because of its location, it can be used for hernia and to effect the genital organs and bladder.

Sp 21
The Spleen Channel flows up through the Abdomen, just outside of where the Stomach meridian travels, and comes all the way up internally to meet the Lungs Qi at Lung 1. From there it descends to
the sides of the ribcage. If you measure about halfway between the
armpit and the bottom of the ribs, you will find a large cavity - this is
Sp21.

This point is called the Great Wrapper, or Great Embracement because
it opens up into channels that wrap through the entire torso. Because
of this, it can regulate qi throughout the torso and regulate pain or
issues in the chest and ribcage.

**Heart Meridian**
The Heart meridian’s action is often displayed by people in spiritual
ecstasy. When I used to attend a church that had a “worship” service,
there would always be a point when the people singing would start
lifting up their hands. After studying Chinese medicine, I realized that
this was a natural expression of the qi moving through their Heart
channels. If you like, you can imagine that you are being spiritually
moved by something so much that you feel compelled to raise your
hands overhead - you will likely feel the Heart channels on the
underside of the arm (from armpit to pinky) become activated.

These channels are also involved in holding the arms into the
body in a meditation posture - this represents the quietness of the Shen
or Spirit as it goes inward. Try adopting a meditation posture with the
hands clasped in any sacred gesture in the lap or at the heart - then feel
what the Heart meridian is doing.

**Heart 1**
Heart 1 is in the very center of the armpit. If you were to slightly flex as
if you were pulling something down with the arm (many “professional”
wrestlers used to do this pose on t.v.), the pectoralis major muscle (in
front) and the latissimus dorsi muscle (in back) would make a type of
hollow pyramid in the arm pit. At the very apex of this is Heart 1

Heart 1 has a direct connection to the internal channels of the meridian
and straight in to the Heart. Because of this, many practitioners advise
cautions when approaching this point. The Heart is not only considered
sacred (the “Emperor” of all the organs), but also very sensitive. It is for
this reason that this point is an emotional release point - emitting qi
through this point to the heart can bring forth repressed memories or
suppressed emotions.

Heart 1 has a similar effect on the physical sensations and on the qi as it does on the emotions, it can free up stagnations in the chest and the heart itself.

This point is also often taught to martial artists as a point through which to cause death or severe damage to the physical heart or the consciousness. This is one reason why practitioners are usually advised to train in keeping the elbows down while practicing martial forms and exercises - to protect this area. Many forms, such as Baguazhang and Shaolin Kung Fu will also have very specific moves where if one hand is raised and exposing the arm pit, the other hand will be nearby to protect.

In Qigong movement exercise we keep the elbows down because it helps the Heart’s Qi to settle down into the lower abdomen and thus let the mind quiet.

Heart 3
Heart 3 can be found by bending the elbow and finding the end of the elbow crease on the medial side of the arm (find medial by holding the arms at the sides with the palms facing forward - the side closest to the torso is considered medial - this is the pinky side of the arm). Remember that the Heart is a Yin meridian, so we are looking on the untanned side of the arm. Heart 3 is just in from the big bone of the epicondyle - right about at the end of the crease. This point is right over a nerve, so don’t press it too hard.

Heart 3 is considered to be the Water Phase point on the Heart meridian. As such, it can help to cool and moisten conditions that are too hot and dry. It is used in conditions of Heat in the Heart, which can effect the spirit and mind causing mania and insomnia. This Water point also helps to clear Water conditions like Phlegm in this system. As a local point, Ht 3 helps with elbow pain.

Heart 4 - 7
Heart 7 is located at the wrist crease on the yin side. If you flex the wrist (pull your fingers back as if you were going to point at yourself), the tendon on the pinky side of the forearm will pop up a little - all of these Heart points are right along this tendon - slightly to the center of
the forearm. Heart 7 is right at the wrist, just under the protruding pisiform bone of the hand. Heart 4-6 occupy about 3 cun from this point back.

Taken together, all of these point have the function of helping to calm and soothe the spirit. These points can be used together for anxiety, stage fright, and to calm the mind when working with tricky things like addictions. I was also taught to use these points for anxiety arising from low blood sugar - it does work, but I find that the effect can be very temporary - use it to help you get that extra few miles so you can find a snack before you shout at someone in your ungrounded state.

Heart 8
Heart 8 is just between the metacarpal bones of the ring and pinky finger. If you make a fist, the pinky finger will come to rest right on this point in many individuals. It can be found just back from the knuckle (proximal).

This point is often sore because it is the Fire point. As the Fire point, pain in this area can show a condition of Heat. It is usually advised that a practitioner work first on points which clear Heat (like Heart 3) before heading to the point which is manifesting pain. Some schools of Chinese medicine say “don’t spank the crying baby”. Meaning, don’t try to treat pain by working directly on the painful area. This can just make the baby cry more. In other cases, you can work directly on Ht 8 in order to disperse Heat from the Organ or channel.

Heart 9
Heart 9 is on the lateral (ring finger) side of the pinky finger at the base of the nail.

As with all points at the end of the channel, Heart 9 can clear pathogenic factors from the channel, especially Heat. Because of this, this point is also used to open up the portals of the Spirit and clear the Heart.

Points at the beginning or end of the channel can also often strongly stimulate the Organ system. Heart 9 can stimulate the system so strongly that it is even used for reestablishing cardiac rhythm during
a heart attack. There are stories of undertakers in olden times commonly biting the pinky finger to make sure that a person was actually dead. If there was still life there, Heart 9 could reawaken them.

For the above reasons, combined with its ability to clear the spirit portals, Heat 9 can be used to resuscitate a person from unconsciousness as well.

**Small Intestine**
The Small Intestine channel begins on the medial (pinky finger) side of the pinky and flows up the yang side of the medial arm - just on the tanned side of the skin. This channel runs up through the shoulder, zigzagging as it goes, and ends in front of the ear. The Small Intestine Channel’s energy embodies the actions of “sorting the pure from the turbid”. You can imagine that you have a table full of poker chips in front of you, and you use this pinky side of the arm to push some into the pot, and gather some to yourself. People also tend to make a karate-chop like motion when they are describing things that they will not accept in their life or personal space - this is expressing the Small Intestine channel.

Small Intestine 1
Small Intestine 1 is located just on the other side of the pinky nail from Heart 1. Its functions are almost identical to Heart 1, with the addition of the ability to disinhibit the breast milk for nursing.

Because this channel goes all the way up through the shoulder and onto the face in front of the ear, SI1 could be used to drain out stagnant or pathogenic qi anywhere along this course - including shoulder pain, neck, or ear problems.

SI 3
SI 3 is on the same level as Heart 8, but on the very edge of the pinky side of the palm. What in some martial art schools is called the “knife edge” of the hand. On the border of the “red and white” skin.

This point helps to clear the Spirit, and is also influential in issues with the Governing Vessel - because of this it can help with spinal problems.
SI 4
SI 4 is found coming down in a line from SI 3, in the depression found just at the base of the hand, before you cross over the wrist crease.

This is a great local point for wrist problems and also treats many problems through the whole Small Intestine Channel as well as helping to clear Heat from the Heart.

SI 8
SI 8 is found in the hollow between the point of the elbow (olecranon) and the medial epicondyle (remember medial is the side closest to the body with the arm palm forward - the pinky side of the arm). This small area is where a nerve runs and if you bang it, you will perhaps say you hit your “funny bone”.

This point is great for treating elbow pain, but is also especially powerful in clearing heat from the Small Intestine, and dispelling Wind invasion. Like most points on this channel, it also clears many problems along the entire channel proximal to it, and helps clear Heat from the Heart.

SI 9 & 10
Small intestine 9 is located directly underneath the acromion or shoulder bone in the back of the body. If you find the spot where the arm meets the shoulder, and press up into the joint, you should feel a sore spot - this is SI 9, on cun superior to this (toward the shoulder bone) is SI 10, both of these are usually sore on most people because they are right over muscles that are commonly stiff.

These points are both among the best local points for shoulder tension and pain.

SI 11
Small intestine 11 can be found in the very center of the scapula (shoulder blade). This point is usually painful, and some teachers believe that finding and resolving any painful knot in this general area can have a similar effect to SI 11. I have found clinically that relieving the tender spots found in the scapula has very good effects - and more
effect than simply treating SI11 alone.

This point is also local for shoulder pain, and can actually affect pain syndromes through the whole arm. It is also a point that accesses the Heart’s qi very directly, and so can be used to help resolve issues in the Heart.

This point can make the whole arm go numb - which points to its therapeutic capacity to affect the qi of the entire arm. Some martial artists recommend using this point in order to paralyze an opponent’s arm during combat.

SI 12
SI 12 is directly up from SI 11 in the depression on the top of the spine of the scapula. It is another great point for releasing the shoulders.

SI13
If you can find the superior angle of the shoulder blade - that’s the point it comes to on the upper side near the spine - you will often find a knot there. This is the attachment of the Levator scapula muscle as well as the Rhomboid muscles - it is also Small Intestine 13.
This is an especially good point for shoulder pain due to unconsciously raising the shoulder toward the ear - because this is the action of the Levator Scapula muscle. Releasing the knot found here allows the shoulder blade to slide down to a more natural position.

SI 14 & 15
SI 14 & 15 are along a diagonal line from SI 13 heading toward the neck. They are each about 1 cun apart.
Both of these points are good for relieving stiffness in the neck, and dispelling wind from the body.

SI 19
Small Intestine 19 is located directly in front of the tragus (flap) of the ear. If you place your finger here and then open the jaw, a depression will form.

This point is called the “Listening Palace” and is named so because it can benefit the hearing. I understand this to be due to the Small
Intestine's energetic influence of “sorting the pure from the impure” - this relates to sounds in the environment as well. Some practitioners feel that the “Palace” refers to the royal dwelling of the Emperor - Heart, and that treating this point can help one to listen more clearly to the voice of the Heart or Spirit. The point can be used to treat deafness, tinnitus, and also to heighten both auditory and visual acuity. I’ve found it to be helpful in treating TMJ disorder.

**Bladder Meridian**
The Bladder Meridian starts at the inner corner of the eye and cascades over the top of the head and down the entire back of the body to end at the pinky toe. It is the longest channel in the body. To experience the Bladder Channel's energetic, imagine that you just heard a scary sound in the woods late at night. Can you feel the skin perk up all along your back? Perhaps you can feel the hamstring muscles as well as the glutes and leg muscles tense and get ready for flight. This channel will also tense up in situations that are less of what we call “fear”, and more of what we call “stress”. We reflect this in the sayings “what a pain in the neck”, or “what a pain in the butt”.

Bladder 1 and 2
Bladder 1 is located at the inside corner of the eye. Bladder 2 is directly above this point at the inner corner of the eyebrow - there is a small hollow that can be felt here pushing up into the bone.

Both of these points help to brighten and nourish the eyes. They also give access to the “Upper Dan Tien” or spiritual center in the brain, and can be used to help lift the mood, calm a person, or induce an analgesic (pain relief) effect. A nice method is to use the invisible needle technique, or “one finger skill” qi emission through either of these points and into the center of the brain to stimulate this spiritual nexus. If you wish to do acupressure, Bl2 is more appropriate and can be accessed by pulling up gently into the upper orbit. I have used Bl2 in many cases to help induce a sense of calm in clients and to help ease depression as it seems to balance neurotransmitter activity (the Water phase strongly influences the endocrine system and the various chemical messengers of the body).
**Bladder 3-10**

Bladder 3 is located in a straight line up from Bl2, and on the hairline. Bl 4 is about 1.5 cun from the midline and is lateral to Bl3 - also in the hairline. From here, the Bladder goes back over the head, staying 1.5 cun from the center until it reaches the base of the skull.

All of these points have functions of helping to dispel wind, awakening the spirit, and clearing the eyes. Most can be used for headache, dizziness, and sinus congestion.

**Bl10**

Bladder 10 is located on the base of the skull just lateral to the occipital foramen (the hole where the spinal cord emerges). This is the posterior hairline, and is about 1 cun from the center. These points are located right where the erector muscles come up to attach to the skull and feel like pillars. These points are appropriately called the “heavenly pillar”

Bl 10 is a very common point for dispelling Wind from the body (which is seen to be the cause of the common cold and flu in Chinese Medicine). Wind is said to enter first through this area of the body at the neck. This is why you will often see older qigong masters practicing with high collared shirts, or new students of Chinese medicine being very careful to wear there scarf if the wind is blowing or it is cold. Because of this, these points can help to treat the sinuses, and help to dispel a cold that is just coming on. They also help to clear the spirit. These points help neck pain and headache.

**Bl11 & Bl 12**

Bladder 11 is at the base of the neck, just 1.5 cun lateral to the 1st thoracic vertebra.
Bladder 12 is one vertebra down, lateral to the 2nd thoracic.

Both of these points help to dispel Wind from the body. Bladder 12’s name is even “wind gate”.

**Bl13 through 35**

These points follow along about 1.5 cun lateral to the spine. Most of
these points relate to the Organ that they are located most closely to. These are often referred to as the “associated points” along the Bladder meridian. They will be dealt with elsewhere.

Bl 41 through 54
These points are located outside the inner bladder line of associated points discussed above. These points are also associated with internal organs, but on a more spiritual level. For instance, the point outside the associated point of the lungs is called the “Po Door” because it relates to the spirit of the Lungs, the Po. These points will be dealt with in another section.

Bl 36
Bl36 can be found directly under the Gluteal fold, right in the center. If you palpate deeply, you will find the ishial tuberosity, or “sit bones” at the base of the pelvis.

This point can help to treat back pain as well as hemorrhoids. It also effects the reproductive organs and bladder. The pudendal nerve runs through this area, and so releasing stagnation here can free up pain in the reproductive system. This helps with menstrual cramps or genital pain. It can also be used to aid in achieving orgasm or sexual arousal.

Bl 40
In the very center of the popliteal crease at the back of the knee

This point is a great local point for knee pain. It also helps to treat low back pain by helping course the meridian downward.

Bl 57
Bl 57 is found at the juncture of the two heads of the gastrocnemius muscle where it begins to form the Achilles tendon.

This point helps with pain in the leg, back pain, and aids the intestines.

Bl 58
If you come 1 cun lateral and toward the foot on an angle from Bl 57 (following the calf muscle) you will find Bl58. This area is often very
If you find a knot on this point and can release it, this can be very helpful in releasing tightness in the back muscles, headache, and neck pain, as this point helps to drain and release the Bladder channel downward.

Bl 60
Bladder 60 is located directly behind the lateral ankle bone.

This point helps issues along the Bladder channel in a similar way to the previous points. Bl 60 also helps with the uterus and the kidneys.

Bl62
Directly under the lateral ankle bone in a small depression. This point can also help to treat issues along the Bladder Channel, but excels at helping to calm and root the spirit. If you can recall that Bl1 and 2 access the spiritual center in the brain, you can see some of the connection of how this point can help to root the spirit downward all the way into the feet. This point is often used in conjunction with Kidney 6 to help with insomnia. Try rubbing the area below both ankles before retiring to increase restfulness.

Bl 64
On the lateral edge of the foot, just under the prominent bone (the base of the fifth metatarsal). Bl 64 can be used to help clear the channel and stabilize the spirit. This point is also indicated for epilepsy.

Bl 67
At the base of the lateral side of the pinky toe nail. Bladder 67, because it is at the end of the channel, can strongly course the channel and help to relieve headaches, back pain, eye problems, wind, and nasal congestion. This point also strongly helps energy move downward, because of this it is contraindicated in pregnancy as it can induce labor. It is used if labor is not coming on, or if the baby is breech, practitioners will begin moxaing this point as soon as they find out to help induce the baby to
Kidney Meridian
The kidney channel flows from the bottom of the foot and flows up the inside (medial) back of the leg and thigh. The Kidney channel then flows up just next to the midline through the abdomen and the chest ending just below the medial head of the collar bone.

In many ways, this channel will activate under similar circumstances as the Bladder - when the person experiences fear, they will be impelled to move forward from the back. Before the impetus to move forward happens, though, the energy concentrates inward. This is what causes the “deer in the headlights” phenomenon - where you freeze. You will feel this Kidney channel on the inside back of the leg activate when this energy concentrates inward before moving you forward.

In addition to fear, this channel activates under the influence of sexual desire. If you’d like to do a thought experiment, you can imagine that you are at a night club, or some other social scene and you see someone very attractive to you (if you are not single, don’t worry - it’s just a thought experiment!)… notice the feeling of being impelled forward from within and behind. This is also the action of the most basic reproduction - cell division where the cell separates into two by the action of moving “away”.

Kidney 1
Kidney 1 can be found right in the midline of the foot, just underneath the ball of the foot.
This point is especially valuable and often used. The name of this point is the “eternal spring” or, more commonly, the “bubbling spring”. The reason for this is that when this point opens, it will often feel like the qi of the Earth is bubbling up and into the body. It is also called “eternal” because the Kidney is responsible for storing the body’s basic generative energy and has to do with ones potential for longevity and health into old age.

This point, being at the extremity of the channel is useful for draining pathogens from any point along the meridian or Organ system. This point can be used to draw down headaches, or issues in the eyes.
It is also used to treat a burning sensation in the feet (which is often due to a Kidney Yang Deficiency).

Often this point can be very useful for extending Qi up to the Kidneys, because it offers direct access to the channel and Organ.

Individuals who have just begun their practice of Qigong often will experience a soreness in the soles of the feet during standing meditations as the subtle energy center here starts to open. One qigong prescription to ease this soreness is to rub the Kidney 1 point 36 times in each direction at the beginning of your practice.

This point can also be used to help root the mind down in cases of insomnia. Rubbing 36 times each direction can also be used for this issue.

Kidney 2
Kidney 2 is found in the center of the inner arch of the foot. It is about halfway between the knuckle of the big toe and the front edge of the ankle bone. In most modern people this point will be sore and there will be a small knot in this area.

The soreness and the knot in this area reflects the point function. This is the Fire point on the Kidney channel and the soreness can be reflective of a Heat condition - usually due to Kidney Yin Deficiency. In addition to being useful in diagnosis, this point can be used to release heat from this Organ system. Usually, as with the other Fire points, I prefer to utilize Yin building points like the Water points on the channel in order to cool it down before I go to the Fire point to try to disperse the heat.

This point is also specifically indicated for a variety of sexual issues including involuntary emission in men, prolapsed uterus in women, menstrual issues, and genital itching.

Kidney 3, 4, and 5
Kidney 3 is located just behind the inner ankle bone in the space between the bone and the Achilles tendon. There are actually three points along this space, Kidney 5 is right above the heel bone and is usually quite sore, Kidney 4 is just one thumb width above this, and Kidney three is one cun above this.

Kidney 3 is one of the most powerful points on this channel. It is the
source point, so it is especially good at tonifying the Kidney energy. It can also be used for diagnosis, if there is pain here, a bruise, or a small varicosity.

Kidney 6
The Kidney channel does an interesting thing here and does not flow in a straight line, it goes from kidney 2 across the ankle, and then descends from Kidney 3 back toward the heel to Kidney 5. The channel then loops around the ankle bone and begins its ascent up the leg (through spleen six, the “three yin crossing”). Kidney 6 is right where this turn takes place and is located directly under the high point of the ankle bone. It is directly opposite Bladder 62.

Some theorists believe that this curve in the Kidney meridian does not exist in any “real” way as the flow of the channel, but is a symbolic invention which represents the big dipper constellation with the polestar at the navel or Dan Tien.

Kidney 6 is one of the most valuable points for tonifying the Yin of the Kidney system, and the entire body. It is also often used for insomnia and is regularly combined with Bl62 for this reason.

Kidney 7
Kidney 7 is located about 2 cun up toward the knee from Kidney 3. If you follow along the edge of the Achilles tendon, you will find a small indentation about 2 thumb-widths up from the Kidney 3 point.

Kidney 7 is the Metal point on the Water channel. Because Metal “creates” Water, this point is called the “Tonification Point” on the channel. It can be used in conjunction with the Water point to tonify the Yin of the Organ system. You can also use Moxa or hot qi emission to tonify the Yang through this point.

Kidney 10
Kid 10 is found at the knee crease on the medial side of the back of the knee. There are two tendons from the semitendinosus and semimembranosus muscles of the hamstrings group. The point is found right between these two tendons and is found most easily if the knee is bent.
Kidney 10 is the Water point on the channel and so is extremely beneficial for building the Yin of this Organ system.

Kidney 11
Kidney 11 is found on the upper border of the pubic bone. It is just .5 thumb widths from the center line.

Much like the other points that we’ve found at this level, it is beneficial for the reproductive system and genital organs. Because the Kidney rules the reproductive energy it is especially good for issues like impotence and involuntary seminal emission. It is also used to disinhibit urine.

Kidney 21 and 22
The Kidney channel continues to follow up the abdomen about .5 cun lateral to the center line until it reaches the ribcage. If you find the point just about one cun below the xiphoid process (the small point of bone at the very bottom of the sternum), then come out about .5 cun, you will be on Kidney 21. The next point is where the channel widens out as it comes up the chest. Kidney 22 will be about 2 cun superior to Kidney 21 and about 2 cun lateral to the centerline.

Kidney 21 reflects the general tendency of points on the torso to influence the organs or meridians directly beneath them. This point is used to help regulate the Liver and the Spleen Qi.

Kidney 22 is the “exit point” on the Kidney channel, and where the Kidney energy intersects with the Lungs. It can thus be used for coughing and asthma.

Kidney 23 through 25
These points are all found about 2 cun from the centerline along the Kidney channel. Kidney 24 is located just at about the center of the sternum in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} intercostal (between the ribs) space. Kidney 23 is one intercostal space below, and Kidney 25 is one intercostal space above. These points all have local functions of helping to open the chest and work with the organs below them.
Interestingly, these points also all begin with the word “spirit” Kidney 23 is the Shen (spirit) seal, Kidney 24 is the Ling (spirit) ruins, and Kidney 25 is the Shen (spirit) storehouse. These names reflect the ability of these points to communicate with the energy of the Heart Organ system, which houses the Spiritual consciousness.

Kidney 27
Kidney 27 is located in a hollow just below the medial head of the collar bone.

This point is called the “Shu Mansion”. The “shu” here is the name that is commonly translated as “associated” in the “associated” points on the Bladder Meridian on the back. This point is thought to be where the Source energy of the Kidney system is transported back to the associated points on the back which deliver the qi to their respective Organs.

**Pericardium Meridian**
The Pericardium Meridian begins just lateral to the nipple and flows down the center of the Yin side of the arm to the middle finger.

To feel the energy of this channel, you can imagine that you see someone who you really love (as a friend, family, or an intimate partner). Imagine opening your arms to them to invite them in for a hug.

You can also feel this channel if you imagine that someone you are intimate with has treated you disrespectfully and you either put your hand out in front of you like saying “stop in the name of love”, or even giving them an open hand slap across the cheek. This exemplifies the ability of the pericardium to “protect the heart”.

Pericardium 1
Pericardium 1 is located right next to the nipple, about 1 cun lateral. This point is primarily used for chest complaints and to treat cough. Often, because pressing this point is not usually an option for bodywork practice, I find a similar access to the pericardium channel right on the lateral edge of the Pectoralis Major muscle between the
breast, and the insertion on the arm.

**Pericardium 2**

PC 2 is located about halfway down the arm in between the two heads of the biceps muscle. In clinical practice of bodywork, you can often find there is a series of sore points following right down the line between these two heads of the muscle. Finding the point with the most soreness and releasing the tension there can be very effective in treating maladies of the Pericardium channel system.

PC 2 is used to open the chest, calm the heart and spirit. It is used to treat pain in the chest and the arm such as angina pectoris or the radiating pain people feel down the arm during a heart attack.

**PC 3**

This point is located at the elbow crease right on the biceps tendon.

PC3 is the Water point on the Pericardium channel and as such can be used to build the Yin in the Fire Phase system and help reduce Heat in the heart.

**Pericardium 6**

PC 6 is located about 3 cun back from the wrist crease toward the elbow in the centerline of the Yin side of the arm. There will often be a large hollow in this area and the point may be sore.

PC 6 is very valuable for helping to release stagnant energy from this system. It calms the Heart and Spirit and can be useful to dispel Heat. This point is also connected to the Liver qi and the diaphragm. Because of this, it is useful for helping relieve Liver Qi stagnation as well as tension in the diaphragm.

PC 6 is also connected to the Penetrating Vessel in the very center of the body. Counterflow in this channel can cause nausea and vomiting. This is often one of the causes of morning sickness in pregnancy. Because of this, this point can be useful for both morning sickness and motion sickness.

**Pericardium 7**
PC 7 is located in the center of the Yin side of the arm right in the line of the wrist crease.

This is the source point on the Pericardium channel, and in the Ling Shu is also listed as the Source point for the Heart. It is also the Earth Point on the Fire meridian. Because Fire “creates” Earth, this point can be useful for draining off excess energy in the Heart and Pericardium and passing it on to its “Child” element.

This point is useful for calming the spirit, calming palpitations, and pain in the chest.

Pericardium 8
PC 8 is in the very center of the palm, between the second and third finger bones. Many of the texts say to locate this point by making a fist and finding where the fourth finger reaches the palm. Other teachers will say it is where the middle finger touches. I personally tend to find it right on the tendon over the third metacarpal bone right between where the middle and ring finger touch.

This point is called the “palace of labor” and is especially valuable for treating stress and overwork. The story I was told is that there is actually a subtle body language in China using this point - if a customer is becoming tiresome, a shopkeeper might visibly massage this point in front of them. Similarly, if a worker is feeling overburdened, they might massage this point in front of the boss.

These subtle body languages point to the ability of this point to dispel stress and tension from overwork. This point is also often used to decrease hypertension and issues in the heart or vascular system. This is the Fire point on the Fire meridian and can be used to help dispel Heat similarly to the other fire points. This is the opening of the “Chakra” in the palm where energy emits. Many of the various “hand forms” used in martial arts styles are designed to help open this point so that energy can be emitted during combat. Opening this point is also essential for successful qi emission for healing.

Pericardium 9
PC 9 is located at the tip of the middle finger.
This point is especially valuable for draining any pathogenic factors in the PC Organ system or meridian. Being at the tip of the longest finger, this point is also seen to be where energy emits most strongly from the body. This is why in acupressure, and one-finger skill qi emission, the middle finger is classically used.

**Triple Warmer Meridian**
The Triple Warmer flows up from the pinky side of the ring finger through the centerline of the Yang side of the forearm. From here it travels up the center-back of the upper arm, over the top of the shoulder, around the ear, and to the corner of the eyebrow.

To feel the energy of this meridian, imagine that you are at a party, but feeling lonely - make the posture that many people will make in this situation, and cross the arms over the chest - you will feel the triple warmer channel activate.

A more extreme example to match that of the open hand slap we saw in the Pericardium meridian would be the backhand slap. This is a slap you would only give someone who was not an intimate, or someone you wanted to show was not worthy of your respect.

**Triple Warmer 1**
TW1 is located at the base of the medial side of the ring finger (pinky finger side). Because this point is at the end of the channel, it can drain pathogenic factors down out of any part of the channel or organ system. This point is valuable in treating ear pain, shoulder pain, elbow issues, and Wind invasions.

**TW 4**
If you bend the wrist, you will find two large dips right at the wrist crease. Triple Warmer 4 is the one on the pinky side.

Both of these holes in the wrist can be used to treat wrist pain. Triple Warmer 4 is also used to tonify the Yang energy of the whole body.

**TW 5**
Triple Warmer 5 is located about 3 cun back from the wrist toward the elbow in between the two bones on the Yang side of the arm.
TW 5 is like a counterpart to PC6. Where PC6 - the inner gate - helps to regulate energies around intimate relationships, TW5 - the “outer gate” helps to regulate energies around non-intimate relationships and acquaintances. This means that this point could be valuable for individuals who are gullible and tend to trust the wrong people, but can also be useful for individuals who have difficulty in making friends and acquaintances.

This point also helps to dispel Heat, ear problems, headache, and lateral ribcage pain.

TW10
Triple Warmer 10 is located in a small hollow just behind (above) the point of the elbow toward the shoulder.

This point treats heat, headaches, and fire in the triple warmer. This Fire can manifest as things like epilepsy, malaria, hot flashes, or the side effects of treatments like radiation therapy.

TW 14
TW14 is located just below the acromion (shoulder bone) in the back of the body. This is just above Small Intestine 10.

TW 14 is a great local point for pain in the shoulder. It also helps to dispel wind due to its location on the upper shoulder in the area where Wind enters the body.

TW 17
The Triple Warmer channel flows up along the back of the trapezius muscle posterior (behind) to the Gall Bladder channel, but superior to the Small Intestine. Points in this region can be very valuable in treating neck pain and Wind Invasions. Some of these points are also very useful in taking down tension in the TMJ and relieving jaw pain.

TW17 is located beneath and behind the lobe of the ear. Lightly palpate in this area until you find a process of bone (it’s big and easy to find). Palpate lightly because there is a small process here - the styloid
process - which can be damaged by excess pressure. TB 17 is the sore point just under this large process of bone.

This point is one of the most effective for helping to dispel wind in the body. It also helps to treat the jaw and the ear due to its meridian influence and its location.

TW23
From TW 17 the channel runs up just behind the ear. Basically if you put your finger on the edge of the ear and touch the skull, you will be touching points on the TW channel all the way around the ear. Most of these points can be used to help clear the head, the senses, the ear, and dispel wind.

TW 23 is located just at the outer edge of the eyebrow. This point Helps to dispel Wind, it also affects the eyes and can be used in headache.

**Gall Bladder Meridian**
The Gall Bladder Channel starts just below TW 23 at the outer corner of the eye. It zig-zags around the side of the head and then flows down through the trapezius muscle, through the side of the body, and then down through the sides of the thighs and legs to end at the 4th toe.

To feel the energy of this channel activate, imagine coming to a fork in the road and trying to decide which way to go. Feel the sides of the body activate as you think “I could go this way, or maybe I could go that way”.

Gall Bladder 1
GB 1 is located just at the outside corner of the eye.

This point is beneficial for the eyes and for headaches.

Gall Bladder 14
GB 14 is located just above the eyebrow in the center of the forehead. If you follow straight up from the pupil, this point is about 1 cun above the eyebrow.
GB14 is useful for dispersing headaches and for brightening the eyes. It also helps to stimulate the mind and memory (notice that people naturally touch it when trying to remember what was on the shopping list).

GB 20
GB 20 is located just lateral (outside) to Bladder 10 at the base of the skull.

This is one of the best points in the body to dispel Wind. This point also aids the eyes and ears, helps to clear the head and clear the sinuses. These points can brighten the mind if you are falling asleep. Some martial arts schools teach slapping the base of the skull as a revival technique for someone who has been knocked out. This is stimulating the Bladder, Gall Bladder, and Governing Vessel points in this area to awaken the consciousness.

GB 21
This point is located in the center of the Trapezius muscle on the shoulder. It is about halfway from the base of the neck to the juncture of the clavicle and the acromion (LI 16). There is often a knot at this point. Similarly, any knots found in this part of the trapezius can have a similar effect to GB 21.

This point helps to dispel wind and can also strongly descend the qi. Because of this it is contraindicated in pregnancy. It is also for this reason that this point is useful in treating headache. This is a great point for relieving shoulder pain.

GB 30
GB 30 is the next major landmark on this channel. The Gall Bladder Zigs and zags on the side of the torso influencing the Liver and Gall Bladder, as well as the organs that each point overlies. GB 30 is located right in the center of the hip. This point is about midway between the greater trochanter of the femur - the protruding bone of the proximal thigh- and the tail bone.

This point is excellent for strengthening the legs and for relieving pain
and tension in the hip and buttocks. It is also helpful in treating low back pain.

GB 34
Gall Bladder 34 is located right at the head of the fibula where there is often a tender knot in the muscle attachments there.

This point is called the “meeting of the muscles and tendons”. It is often used to treat tendon problems - tendons being the tissue ruled by the Wood element. This is also a great point to help release stagnant Liver Qi.

GB 40
Gall Bladder 40 is located just in front of the lateral ankle bone in the large hollow.

This point is used to clear the Liver and Gall Bladder channel and is a local point for ankle pain. I often find that working this point can release tension on points further up the channel and so can also help pull the qi of the Liver and Gall Bladder channel downward.

GB 41 and 42
If you follow down the space between the fourth and fifth metatarsals, you will find a small tendon that crosses over this space. The proximal side of this tendon (toward the ankle) is GB41, the distal side (toward the foot) is GB42.

These points are useful for clearing the Liver and Gall Bladder Channels and disorders anywhere along the channels. GB 41 is called the “overlooking tears” point, and can help someone overcome excessive emotional states. It also helps to clear tearing of the eyes which is not of an emotional origin. GB 42 shares some of these functions.

GB 44
Gall Bladder 44 is found at the lateral (pinky) side of the fourth toe. Because of its location at the end of the channel this point is excellent for pulling out pathogens or pain anywhere along the channel or Organ system.
Liver Meridian

The Liver channel flows from the pinky side (lateral side) of the big toe nail up behind the shin bone and through the medial thigh near the gracilis muscle. It goes up and wraps the external genitalia and then heads up the torso to end just beneath the breast or chest. It’s internal channel comes up through the lungs and all the way to the eyes and the top of the head.

The way to feel the energy of this channel activate is to imagine that you are pondering an important decision - you can feel as if you are weighing the options and the energy shifts from one side to the other it will feel like a deep movement or twisting in the liver channel through the legs, and maybe the eyes moving side to side.

Liver 1
Liver 1 is located on the lateral (pinky side) of the big toe - it is opposite the first point on the Spleen meridian which is on the medial (big toe) side.

This point, being at the end of the channel is extremely valuable for taking down excess in the Liver. Liver Heat is a common disorder in modern Western culture and Liver 1 is one of the best points to help bring this heat down. Using the invisible needle technique to connect with the area of the heat (eyes, Liver, genitals, etc.) and pull it out is one of the easiest ways to do this. With Tui Na therapy, you can grasp from Liver 3 down to Liver 1 and pull out the stagnant qi.

Liver 2
Liver 2 is also a valuable point for treating Heat. This is the Fire point and, like other fire points can be used to diagnose Heat or Yin deficiency in the channel.

Liver 3
Liver 3 is located in the webbing between the big toe and the 2nd toe. If you press way up from the toe toward the ankle, you will likely find a little knot here that is painful.

Liver 3 is one of the most commonly used points in Chinese medicine. This is the source point on the Liver meridian and is often used to disperse stagnant Liver Qi, it is also a point that relieves pain in general. Liver 3 is useful for relieving headaches behind the eyes or at the top of the head, pain in the liver, shoulder tension, red eyes, and genital problems.

Liver 4
Liv4 is located at the ankle joint. If you follow up from Liver three along the outside of the tendons that we found St41 between earlier. This is about one cun in front (anterior) of the medial ankle bone. There is a big hollow here.

Liver 4 is the Metal point on the Wood meridian. Since Metal “controls” Wood, this point can be used to disperse or regulate the Liver Channel and Organ. One interesting treatment I learned from Kiiko Mastsumoto is to use this point in conjunction with the Water point (Liv 8) to treat empty Heat from Liver Yin Deficiency. This can be especially potent because the metal point helps to potentiate the Water point’s Yin building ability, but also helps to control the Wood nature of the Liver channel.

Liver 5, 6, and 7
From Liver 4, the Liver channel runs up behind the shin bone on the medial (yin) side of the leg. There are many points along the bone which will be found to be sore any of them can be useful in relieving stagnation of the Liver.

Liver 5 is located along the bone about 5 cun up from the ankle, Liver 6 is 2 cun above Liv5. Liver 7 is located all the way up on the back of the Tibia where it curves back to form the knee. It is just behind Spleen 9 about 1 cun.

Liver 8
Liver 8 is located at the knee crease on the medial side of the knee. This is directly in the center of the side of the knee and is located right in the center of the ligament there. There is often a small soft spot here.

Liver 8 is the Water point on the Wood channel and can be very effective in building Liver Yin and reducing Heat. This point can also help to disperse dampness and build the Blood (which is stored by the Liver). Additionally, this is a local point for treating knee pain.

Liver 12
Liv 12 is found in the inguinal groove just lateral and inferior to St30. This point is about 2.5 cun from the centerline.

Liv 12, like most points at this level, is very useful for issues in the genito-urinary system. It is especially useful for dispelling Cold in the Liver channel.

Liver 13
Liv 13 is found just at the bottom of the ribcage. This point is usually about an inch or two in front of the 11 rib (it depends upon the proportion of the person’s ribs), which is a floating rib. The point is just lateral to a line you could draw down from the nipple.

Liver 13 helps to relieve Liver stagnation. It also is used as a diagnostic point for the Spleen meridian.

Liver 14
Liv 14 is found superior to Liver 13. It is in the 6th intercostal space, which is said to be two ribs below the original nipple line. I find that if I find the bottom of the pectoralis major muscle - which overlies the upper rib cage, the next large rib space will be the 6th intercostal space and will have a large cavity which is tender.

Liver 14 is one of the best points to relieve stagnant Liver Qi, it is also a diagnostic point for issues in the Liver. I have found clinically that it will show pain and fullness on Liver Qi Stagnation, In Liver Deficiency (of Yin or Blood), this point will often be empty feeling, especially on the right side.
Specific Points and Combinations

Chinese Medical treatment rarely utilizes only one point at a time. Often, multiple points are used in combination to achieve the desired result. Now that we’ve taken a look at the meridian trajectories, and the individual points, we’ll take a look at some of the common classifications of points and then how to combine them for potent treatments.

Source points
The first category includes some of the most often used points in meridian treatment. The Source points are named very appropriately, because they connect the channel back to its “Source”.

In a later chapter, we’ll explore a concept referred to as the “Source Qi”, and this has something to do with the source points on the meridians. Put simply, the source qi is the root of the body’s entire energetic system.

When we enter this life, we carry with us an inheritance of energy from our parents, and, possibly, our previous embodiments. This is referred to as the Source energy of the body.

This source energy can be thought of somewhat as an energetic template on which the manifest body is formed. If the manifestation becomes imbalanced in some way, you can go back and take a look at the template. This is similar to making copies on a copy machine. When your copies start to get a little too grainy, it’s time to go back and find the Master in order to get a clearer image. Interestingly, this copying phenomenon has been present since the time of manual copying of texts in monasteries. If they were lucky, they would have an original document somewhere that could be referenced, because for many years, they usually copied from other copies. If too many mistakes began to pile up (sometimes the copies were made by illiterate monks where were only trained to recognize the letter!) it would be wise to go back to the source document.

Harmonization
So, when we contact a source point for a meridian, we are doing something similar. Some practitioners like to say that the source point
helps the meridian to “be its best self”. This would mean, that it helps the whole meridian embody its functions to the best of its ability.

Source points are also used for general harmonizing treatments for the meridian. If there is not really one specific problem, if there is an entire constellation of problems, or you just aren’t sure about your diagnosis, source points can be a great way to simply help the meridian do its job. Used in this way, they can be incorporated into any treatment. The source points on the Heart and Pericardium meridians are often used in this way. They can be utilized to generally calm the mind and settle the spirit. They do this by harmonizing the function of the entire channel.

**Tonification**
Source points are also often used to help tonify the meridian. You will see them in many standard treatments for qi deficiency. For example, in Lung Qi deficiency, Lung 9 will almost always be included. The source points for the Spleen and Kidneys are used in a similar fashion.

**Diagnosis and Sedation**
Source points can be used for diagnosis as well. Some practitioners will look for visual clues to disharmony in a meridian by looking around the source points. This is often the case for meridians prone to deficiency like the Kidney and Spleen. In severe Kidney Deficiency, you can sometimes see what looks like a bruise, or broken blood vessels in the area of Kidney 3. Spleen 3 will also sometimes show a bruise or a single broken blood vessel if the Spleen is deficient. Spleen 3 is also the area where a person can form a bunion - which can be a sign of Spleen Qi Deficiency or Spleen Qi Collapse.

Pain on the source points is also used diagnostically. The most famous source point for showing pain is Liver 3. In cases of Liver Qi Stagnation, this point will feel full and gummy with a trigger point type knot under the practitioner’s finger. If this area is painful, it can signify a binding of the qi in this meridian. Pain on Kidney 3 is also a very significant sign of Kidney Qi deficiency.

Because a source point can affect the balance of the entire meridian, they are also utilized for sedation. To do this, you would use a more sedating technique - like working more rapidly or more vigorously. If
pain is felt on Liver 3, you could work this point in order to unbind the Liver Qi and sedate the excess in the meridian. Similarly, if there is a Wind invasion in the Lungs, Lung 9 can be dispersed to course the channel of the pathogenic factor. Large Intestine 4 is often dispersed in order to dispel Wind Invasion (colds and flus).

The Source points for the 12 regular meridians are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meridian</th>
<th>Source Point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lu9</td>
<td>LI4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sp3</td>
<td>St42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ht7</td>
<td>SI4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid3</td>
<td>Bl64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC7</td>
<td>TW4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liv3</td>
<td>GB40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Luo Points*

“Luo” is a word that refers to the network of small channels that branch off from the main meridian and fill up the rest of the space of the body. Traditionally, the Chinese words that we translate as “meridian” are “Jing-Luo”. The Jing are the major meridian pathways, and the Luo are the smaller network of vessels that connect throughout the body. If you thought of the meridian channels like veins and arteries, the Luo would be like the capillaries.

Classically, the Luo points are considered to link the Yin or Yang meridian to its paired meridian (i.e. the Lung’s Luo point connects the the Large Intestine channel). Sometimes this will be used to divert energy from one channel to another. I have had good success using this type of combination in certain cases where the Stomach meridian is in an excess condition while the Spleen is in a state of deficiency. In this case, I pair the Luo point of the Stomach (St40) with the Source point of the Spleen (Sp3). Another traditional utilization is of using Lu7, the Luo point on the Lung, combined with LI4, the Source point of Large Intestine, in order to treat Wind invasion - by routing Qi from the Lungs (where defensive energy is created/mobilized) to the exterior (ruled over by the energies of the Large Intestine channel).

In addition to this, I find that Luo points are very effective for dispersing stagnation in the channels in general. I will often use dispersive techniques on points like Lung 7 or Bladder 58 to mobilize
stuck energy in their respective meridians. My personal sense of these points energetically is that they open up the connection of the channel not just to it's partner, but also to the entire meridian circulation of the body. This can be seen, to some degree, by the classical indications of each of the Luo points.

The Luo points on the 12 regular channels are:

Lu7       LI6  
Sp4       St40  
Ht5       SI7  
Kid4      Bl58  
PC6       TW5  
Liv5       GB37

Xi-Cleft Points
The Xi points are the next category to discuss in the channels. This word refers to a place like a crag in a rock where things can gather up. These points are therefore often referred to as “accumulation points”. These points can be used both diagnostically and therapeutically.

Diagnostically, some of the Xi points can be found to be tight or knotted in cases of excess in the meridian. To treat these conditions, you would utilize a dispersive technique upon the Xi point. This can be very valuable in cases of chronic excess conditions. I have had good success, for example, dispersing Lung 6 in cases of bronchitis and obstructive conditions in the Lungs. This point will often show a full, gummy consistency in cases of longstanding phlegm in the lungs. Similarly, food stagnation, and stomach pain from excess conditions will often show up as tightness on ST34 and can be effectively treated by dispersing this point.

The Xi points of the 12 regular meridians are:

Lu6       LI7  
Sp8       St34  
Ht6       SI6  
Kid5      Bl63  
PC4       TW7  
The 5 Shu Points/5 Element Points

On each of the meridians on the extremities there are points where the Qi is said to be very easy to access. These points are classically spoken about through the poetry of different kinds of watercourses. The points at the very end of the channel are said to be like a Well - The Qi is deep in the channel, but can be drawn up. The next points are said to be like a Spring - the Qi is beginning to bubble up. The next points are considered to be like a stream - the Qi is now flowing more strongly. The following points are considered to be like a river - the Qi is flowing strongly. The final of the 5 points is thought to be like a Sea - where the qi becomes full and then goes deep into the body into the ocean of energetic circulation.

The energetic nature of each of these points can be felt by a Qigong practitioner after sufficient sensitivity has been developed. One should attempt to cultivate the sensitivity of hands, fingers, and external energetic field until she or he can feel the well-like nature of the end points, the spring like nature, etc.

The Shu points of the 12 regular meridians are as follows:

Lung - Well: Lu11, Spring: Lu10, Stream: Lu9, River: Lu8, Sea: Lu5
Large Intestine - Well: LI1, Spring: LI2, Stream: LI3, River: LI5, Sea: LI11
Stomach - Well: St45, Spring: St44, Stream: St43, River: 41, Sea: 36
Heart - Well: Ht9, Spring: Ht8, Stream: Ht 7, River: Ht4, Sea: Ht3
Kidney - Well: Kid1, Spring: Kid2, Stream: Kid3, River: Kid7, Sea: Kid10
Pericardium - Well: PC9, Spring: PC8, Stream, PC7, River: PC5, Sea: PC3
Triple Warmer - Well: TW1, Spring: TW2, Stream: TW3, River: TW6, Sea: TW10
Gall Bladder - Well: GB44, Spring: GB43, Stream: GB41, River: GB38, Sea: GB34
The 5 Shu points are important on all the meridians because they are especially strong access points for Qi. Learning the functions of these points in addition to the Source, Luo, and Xi points makes up a large portion of a meridian therapists knowledge base.

These points are also given associations to the 5 phases. Most often, you will find this utilized on the Yin meridians, where the functions of the points relate to their elemental nature.

Wood points: these points are the well points on the Yin meridians and are found at the tips of the fingers or toes. These points are used to drain the entire channel and can be valuable in subduing Wind - the climate associated with the Wood phase.

Fire points: These points are the next ones up and can often be found in the joint where the digit joins the foot or hand. These points will usually show up painful when there is Heat in the channel and can be used to reduce heat in their respective meridian or Organ.

Earth Points: On the Yin channels, these are always the source points, and are found near the ankle and wrist. These points can be used to nourish the whole channel (earth is the nourishing element) and harmonize it.

Metal Points: The Metal points follow the earth points and are the River points on the Yin Channels.

Water Points: Water points correspond to the Sea points and are very useful in treating both the presence of Dampness, and also for tonifying Yin. If Dampness is present, you can often feel a squishy texture in this point - particularly Sp9 - you can use a dispersive technique on the point to help move the dampness from the channel. In cases of Yin Deficiency and Heat, the Water points are often used to cool the channel down. Utilize a tonifying technique like sustained, gentle holding of the point.

Five Element Point Combinations. Some of the most famous point combinations in the corpus of Chinese
medicine have to do with the artful use of the five phase points, or “antique” points as they are sometimes called to reflect the age of these methods.

The logic behind these combinations is very simple. All the internal Organs and meridian channels are connected according to the Creation and Control cycle of the 5 phases. When a meridian goes out of balance, it is almost never the case that it can go out of balance all by itself. If a meridian stays in a state of dysfunction, it always begins to affect the other meridians to which it is related. Similarly, if a dysfunction arises in a particular Organ, the wise practitioner looks to see if it is being enabled, or in some other way influenced, by its neighboring Organs. Finally, many meridians will go out of balance simultaneously with others in their close net of relationships.

Tonifying Through the Parent Phase

in this type of treatment, we utilize the strength of the parent element in order to tonify the child. This method is best employed if you see that a parent Phase channel has an abundance of energy, while the child is deficient. This can be seen very commonly between the Heart and the Spleen - which is a classic pattern of experiencing anxiety (from an excess condition in the Heart) with ungroundedness and fatigue (from deficiency in the Spleen). In this case, you would utilize the Fire point on the Fire meridian (Heart 8) in combination with the fire point on the Spleen meridian (Spleen 2) in order to transfer the energy from the full channel to the more deficient one.

You can also see this pattern in the relationship of the Lungs and the Kidneys. This can result in a stuffy feeling in the Lungs, and even asthma, while the Kidneys become Qi deficient. In this case, utilize the Metal point on the Metal meridian (Lu8) and the Metal point on the Water meridian (Kidney 7) in order to transfer the Qi from one to the other.

For this type of relationship, the basic treatment principle is to treat the Horary point (point of the same Element as the meridian) of the parent Organ/Channel - for example, the Wood point on the Liver meridian; and then treat the Tonification point (point of the parent Element on the child meridian) on the child Organ/meridian - for example, the Wood point on the Heart meridian.

The theory here is simple, you are telling the body to take the
parent element energy and transmit it to the child element Organ and Meridian.

**Dispersing Via the Child**

This methodology is similar to the previous, but is thought of more in terms of draining excess conditions. In this treatment, you would treat the “Dispersion Point” on the excess meridian - this is the point of the child element. After that, you would treat the “Horary Point” on the child channel of the excess Organ.

For example, if there was a Liver excess, you could treat the Fire point on the Liver Channel, as Fire is the child of Wood - this point is Liver 2; then you would treat the Fire point of the Heart channel - Heart 8. This type of treatment brings the stagnant energy out of the excess meridian and into circulation.

I find personally that this type of treatment is most valuable in treating spiritual complaints rather than dealing with the “substances” of Chinese medicine. The reason for this can be seen in the above example, which is a treatment that could actually be contraindicated if there was Liver Heat present (an excess condition of the Liver) because it could transmit that Heat to the Heart. Instead of using in this type of case, I will use this kind of treatment if a patient is spiritually “stuck” in one phase. Using the above example, a patient might be stuck in a pattern on continually planning, visioning, making decisions, directing energy, and unable to simply rest into the joy of their Spirit, or take their much needed rest to restore the Heart. In this case, one can use the points to facilitate the necessary shifting of gears and help the person move into a different mental, emotional, or spiritual phase.

In a similar example, if a person is continually expressing the emotions of the Fire phase - joy and excitement, but unable to get grounded into everyday necessary realities, I might choose to treat the connection of Fire and Earth. To do this, I would treat the Earth point on the Heart meridian (Heart 7), and the Earth point on the Spleen meridian (Spleen 3).

**Controlling Via the Grandparent**

This final method of treating using 5 Phase relationships requires utilizing the energy of the Grandparent element to control the child element.
The technique is very simple, simply find the Shu point on a channel that is associated with its controlling element. For instance, the Metal point on the Liver meridian is known to be very useful for sedating excess conditions of this channel.

Like the previous technique, I find that I use this most commonly to alter emotional and spiritual patterns, rather than actual excess conditions in the meridian.

Theoretically, this is a valid point, and some therapists may use these points in this way, but I find the Metal to Wood relationship, to be the only controlling element point which is generally sedating to the channel in most conditions. The fire point on the Lung (metal) channel, for instance, can be used to sedate Heat in the Lungs, but it is not indicated for general sedation of the channel. On the contrary, if the Lungs are in an emotionally stagnant state, the power of the Fire’s emotion of Joy can be used to control the Lung’s feelings of sadness and depression.

Each practitioner should find his or her own method for utilizing these associated points through trial and error. The important idea is to find your own relationship with them through continual practice. After long term use, and personal cultivation through qigong and meditation - the practitioner finds that he or she can feel what points want to be used for what conditions. You can get a sense of what is really meant when they say that a particular point has the nature of Fire, or Water, or the nature of a river or spring.

Metal and Water point treatment for Yin Deficiency

Another interesting method that can be used to treat meridian imbalances utilizes the Metal and Water points to cool the channel. This method is used to treat Yin Deficiency and Heat symptoms in a meridian’s sphere of influence.

The technique is very simple. First, you must find the Fire point on the channel. Press the Fire point to see if it is sore. It is important to find the soreness in the Fire point, because we’ll be using it to test the effectiveness of the treatment. When I teach this technique in a class environment, I’ll have the students test the fire points on 5 of the Yin meridians - the Liver, Lung, Kidney, Pericardium and Heart - to see which one is the most sore. We don’t usually find soreness on the Spleen channel Fire point, because it is generally thought that the
Spleen cannot become Yin deficient.

When you’ve found the channel with a sore Fire point, the next step is to find that channel’s Metal and Water points. Stimulate these points with a harmonizing or tonifying intention. Hold the points for a few minutes, or until you feel a change under your fingers.

After you’ve felt that the Qi has come up in the Metal and Water point, you go back to the Fire point, which should now be less tender than when you tested it the first time. This is a very valuable treatment for things like cramps in the inner arch of the foot - which is the Fire point on the Kidney channel. The theory is that the Water helps to subdue the Fire, and the Metal is assisting to create the Water.

**Entry and Exit Points**

Occasionally, energy flow in the channels will be blocked from entering the next meridian in the cycle. This can be seen by disturbances during the transitional times in the biorhythm clock. One of the most common disturbances that occurs is the transition from Liver to Lung. Stagnation in either of these meridians can cause a person to wake around the time of 3am (anywhere from 2-4 usually). These imbalances can also be seen in the pulse - the pulse of one meridian in the clock will be excess, while the next one in the cycle will show a deficiency. This can mean that the qi is getting stuck from transmitting to the next phase in the cycle. This can be occurring on a more physically symptomatic level, or can be showing a stasis in the developmental phases of consciousness.

If you look back to the beginning of the chapter where the biorhythm clock was introduced, you can see that these various meridian phases are actually phases in a being’s life cycle - throughout a day, or throughout any period of development. When we flow freely from one phase to the next, there is a state of health - but when we try to skip a phase, or when we get stuck at one, then we will see deterioration in the energy fields of the body. For example, if one is continually in a state of planning and visioning (Liver Meridian) and never goes through the process of bringing those visions into reality - this can stagnate the qi in the Liver, while depriving the rest of the body’s functions. Similarly, if one is stuck in a Splenic phase - always thinking and processing information, or worrying - this can upset not only the Spleen’s functions, but the rest of the meridian circulation in
the body. The natural course brings the nourishment processed by the Spleen into the Heart to be used for loving service. If this doesn’t occur people can feel stuck in worrisome thoughts while never feeling spiritually fulfilled.

When this situation occurs, you can utilize the entry and exit point of the effected meridians to help balance it out. Find the exit point on the stagnant meridian, and work it to facilitate the qi moving on to its next point. Simultaneously, or subsequently, work the entry point to the next channel in the cycle to begin the energy flow to in this sphere. One should palpate the points to find out whether to disperse them, or to tonify for best effect. Sometimes the points are blocked and must therefore be dispersed so that energy can flow. At other times, there is an emptiness present, and qi must be brought to the point so that it can do its function correctly.

These points are also especially valuable for tonification and dispersion respectively, and because they provide powerful access points to the energy of the entire channel. The exit points are powerful for dispersal, because they have an energy of transferring energy out of the channel, but they can also be used as a way to access the entire channel for tonification or harmonizing. The entry points are aligned with qi coming in to the meridian, but can also be used to access the channel and disperse pathogenic energies.

The entry and exit points of the 12 regular meridians are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry Points</th>
<th>Exit Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lu1</td>
<td>Lu7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li4</td>
<td>Li20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St1</td>
<td>ST42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sp1</td>
<td>Sp21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ht1</td>
<td>Ht9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si1</td>
<td>SI19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bl1</td>
<td>Bl67</td>
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<td>Kid1</td>
<td>Kid22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC1</td>
<td>PC8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TW1</td>
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<tr>
<td>GB1</td>
<td>GB41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liv1</td>
<td>Liv14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students should explore the other functions of each of these points
individually to further understand their nature as entry/exit points, as well as for deeper understanding when applying them as part of a Chinese medicine treatment.

**Designing an Acupressure Treatment**

Once you have a general idea of the functions of some major points, you are ready to begin working with them on clients. There are a number of ways to go about this. Later in this text, we’ll be exploring some standard point combinations for treating the most common disharmonies of the Internal Organs, but for now, some general principles on how to combine the points will suffice.

**Meridian Therapy**

One of the easiest ways to start to get a handle on the points and channels of Chinese medicine is to think of them in terms of the entire meridian. We know from the sections above that the Lung meridian has a certain number of functions ascribed to it. We also know that the Metal element has a certain number of associations, and that these are related to the Lung meridian as well.

When we come across someone who seems as if they have symptoms residing mostly in this system, we can simply work the entire meridian to bring balance.

One simple way to work the entire meridian is by tracing it. For the Lung, you would start at Lung 1, the entry point, and simply slide your hand over the pathway all the way down to Lung 11 at the end of the channel. Doing this a number of times can strongly move the qi along the channel and create greater flow. Once you have done this with direct touch on the skin of the body, you can try it in the external Qi field. Gather some energy in your hands, and then run the hand along the Lung channel again - but this time hold it a couple of inches above the body.

To master these techniques and understand the type of changes they make, it can be useful to practice on oneself. The following exercise is one version of how to practice this for all 12 meridians. It brings general balance to the entire energy system, while enabling the student to practice locating the various meridians.
12 Meridian Tracing Qigong
Start in a comfortable standing position and take a few deep breaths.
Rub the hands together and bring some Qi to them until you can feel them begin to tingle a little.

Begin at Lung 1 on the chest and trace through the channels sequentially with the following pattern:
- Lu1 (chest)
- Lu11 (thumb)
- Li1 (index finger)
- Li20 (sides of the nostrils)
  (practice both channels on the left, then right arm)
- St1 (beneath pupil)
- St45 (index toe)
- Sp1 (big toe)
- Sp21 (sides of the ribcage)
  (practice both channels bilaterally)
- Ht1 (arm pit)
- Ht9 (pinky finger)
- Sl1 (pinky finger)
- Sl19 (ear)
  (practice both channels on left arm, then right)
- Bl1 (inner corner of eye)
- Bl67 (pinky toe)
- Kid1 (sole of foot)
- Kid27 (collar bone)
  (practice bilaterally)
- PC1 (side of chest)
- PC9 (middle finger)
- Tw1 (ring finger)
- Tw23 (lateral eyebrow)
  (practice on left arm, then right)
- GB1 (lateral eye)
- GB44 (ring toe)
- Liv1 (big toe)
- Liv14 (rib cage)
  (practice bilaterally)

You should refer back to the previous section, plus any acupuncture charts that you have access to and familiarize yourself with the pathways. When you feel familiar with the channel pathways through tracing, you can try tracing them off the body in the energetic field.

One other method you can utilize is percussion. You can
go through the same sequence above using an open palm, or light fist (or even light fingers) to tap your way through the meridians and stimulate their energy flow.

If you have attained some skill and understanding through tracing the meridian in its entirety, you are ready to move on to the next step of treatment which is meridian acupressure.

To practice meridian acupressure, you simply find an “anchor point” to hold with a stable hand, and then go through all the major points on the channel with the other hand. Utilizing this method brings balance to all the meridians functions by stimulating the points associated with its various jobs and abilities. It also brings greater understanding to the practitioner, because going through all the points in a channel will allow him or her to experience the energies of the different points in various states of health and disease. With a small amount of practice, the therapist will notice that certain points feel “needier” than others, some feel more full and some feel more empty. Certain points will begin to pulse or tingle under the hand (showing that the Qi has arrived) very quickly, while others will take a great deal of time. Learning how different points react when a client is under different health or emotional conditions forms the basis for intuitively being able to select the most appropriate points for treatment later. Because one has had a direct experience of the energies of the different points, one is in a great position to apply them skillfully.

This technique is also the most common in the Japanese channel therapy of Shiatsu. The practitioner goes along through the channel stimulating all the points as he or she works from beginning to end. The practitioner learns over time to feel which points are stagnant, and which points are empty. He or she gains the ability to feel the points on a channel that are most in need of stimulation. In Shiatsu therapy, these points may be classical ones that have names and numbers, or the may be points that are not shown in the classical texts, but are found through palpation and intuition. These points are often highly effective. Shiatsu style pressure therapy can be a next level after the meridian tracing to feel the difference in the qi throughout the whole channel. Simply walk down the channel pressing with the thumb to the rhythm of the breath - find the points that seem to need more care and press them a few extra times.
To practice meridian acupressure, let’s take an example and start with the Lungs. First, we assess that the person has an imbalance in the Lung meridian. We notice they have a cough, or prefer the color white, are experiencing grief, or any of the Five Phase associations or biorhythmic actions for the Lungs.

Next, we choose an anchor point. You can decide to use one of the back Shu, or front Mu points that we’ll discuss in the next section because they are strongly associated with the channel and its Organ. Similarly, you can use an Entry point because we are attempting to open up the channel circulation, and bring in fresh qi. For the lung, one of the best points is Lung 1 - or actually, the whole area of Lu1 and 2 in the corner of the chest. Qigong practitioners will use this as an access point to sink in to the qi of the Lung and connect with it while balancing the meridian. Later, this becomes a valuable diagnostic tool and method of gauging the effectiveness of the treatment while you are performing it - by sensing the changes that take place in the Organ as you apply the points. Another good option is to choose Lung 9 - the Source point, and work down toward it, following the course of the channel’s flow.

Once you’ve got your anchor point, hold it with a stable hand, and then with the other hand, begin working the points sequentially down the meridian. Lu1, Lu2, Lu3, etc. As to how to work the points, read the section on each point to see if there is information on how to work it for various conditions. Also, look to the next section on sensing the Qi, and working the points.

Reaching The Qi
To “reach the qi” means a couple of different things. The first, is that when we stimulate the points, we want to make sure that we are actually contacting the body’s internal energy - not just superficially contacting the patient’s body. When we understand how to contact the energy, we can see dramatic and rapid effects from our treatments. This also allows us to gauge the effectiveness of our treatment plan as we go - as mentioned above.

Techniques to Work With Acupoints
When we wish to “reach the qi” in any given acupoint, we must
determine the type of technique that we are to apply for greatest effect. To do this with real skill, the student should study deeply the next section of this text on Diagnosis in Chinese Medicine. This is because, one needs to know the underlying condition of the Organs and Channels if one is going to treat the points correctly.

For now, the knowledge that has been gained through practicing the meridian tracing exercise, and the Shiatsu-style palpation is sufficient. In these practices, one should gain, over time, an awareness that some of the points cave in or are hypo-tonic feeling, while others feel tight and push one’s fingers away. These are the feelings associated with excess and deficiency, respectively.

When we can determine the excess, or deficiency of a point, then we can determine what kind of technique to apply.

*Harmonizing, Tonifying, and Dispersing*

When initially beginning to work with acupressure points, the type of touch that we use will generally be a harmonizing one. This is a sort of “neutral touch” that simply encourages the Qi to balance within that point’s sphere of influence.

To apply the harmonizing touch, simply contact the point (preferably with the middle finger for greatest energetic potency) and sink in a little bit. After locating the point and sinking in, quiet the mind and relax your body. Try to bring the finger in to the point a little bit, and then back out to a very light contact. Do this a couple of times. At a certain degree of pressure, you will feel a general relaxation and integration of your own body which just feels somehow “right”. This is a sign that you have made contact with your client’s qi. Sometimes, you’ll also feel a slight pressure or tingle in your finger - or you’ll see your client have some physical reaction that tells you the energy is moving - like a deep sigh or muscular release.

When you feel that you have contacted the energy, you can simply wait. Eventually, you will experience the other meaning of “reaching the qi”. After a period of time, you will start to feel a pulsing under your finger - or you might feel tingling, or pressure building. These are all signs that the energy is “reaching” that point. When this happens, wait until the pulse in the point and your anchor point become strong and harmonized. If you are feeling a tingle, wait until it feels smooth and full of positive energy. Then just gradually release the
point while its still pulsing strongly.

Letting off while the energy is strongly moving will keep the healing process going. You, as the healer, are really just there to initiate the process. It is actually their body that does the healing. It is like pointing out the way to go. They are the ones who have to walk the road.

Tonifying
To tonify a point, I usually utilize the same technique as in harmonizing, but with a slightly different intention. While holding the point, and reaching the qi, I will hook up to the Heaven and Earth energies and channel them through to the client’s meridian to send more energy into a deficient Organ or point.

Tonification can also be accomplished by slow and rhythmic pulsing of pressure on the point. Slowly press in until you feel you contact the qi - then gradually pull out as if you are encouraging the qi to come up and to fill the point. Repeat until you feel similar sensations to those described in the harmonizing section - or until the point physically begins to feel more full or warm.

Another traditional technique used to tonify is to circle in a clockwise direction. Once again, connect with the point, and contact the energy as before - then slowly circle in a clockwise direction. As you circle clockwise, you can imagine drawing qi from Heaven and Earth into the body as before, and emitting it out in a clockwise spiral into the point.

Dispersing
To disperse an acupoint that feels too full, the method is slightly different than the other two. The idea is that the energy in these points is somehow backed up, or stagnant.

If you think about it, the body can never have too much energy. Because, you can never be too happy or capable. But you can have too much energy in the wrong place - which leads to a feeling of tension and frustration. When a point is blocked up, it means that the energy here is not flowing correctly.

To disperse a point, make contact with the qi again, then, begin pulsing your pressure in and out. Imagine as you do that the qi is being led away from the area under your finger and back into the greater
circulation of the body. After a short time, you should feel that the elastic, balanced tone of the point is restored. This is the sign that the energy of that point is balanced.

Other methods that may be utilized also involve movement. Gentle massage friction in a back and forth motion can get the energy flowing in the area. Counter-clockwise circles can be used in a similar fashion to the clockwise technique shared above for tonification.

Finally, a method that we can call “sedation” can be applied. This involves using deeper pressure than in either of the previous methods with the aim of forcibly calming the qi in the point and driving it away from the area. When using this method, one should always maintain good communication with the recipient about the comfort of the pressure.

**Multiple Meridian Treatments**
When a practitioner has sufficiently mastered utilizing one meridian at a time, he or she is ready to combine the energies of various Organs/Channels into a single treatment. To do this with skill requires that one study the diagnostic methods of Chinese classical medicine - which will be discussed in the next section. Some words here, though, can help one get started.

Simplicity
First, it’s important to be aware that we should not overwhelm the body’s energetic system with information. What this means in terms of meridian treatment, is that we should not choose too many different points or channels to work on in the same session. The body can only do so many things at one time. Creating a very complex treatment of many points is kind of like calling and asking a friend if they want to go to the movies, and if you can borrow their car, and what their favorite color is, and how their day was - all in a row, and then hanging up before they can answer.

This type of treatment actually offends the body’s energetic system to some degree. Advanced practitioners can in fact perform treatments that involve a lot of points, but the difference is that they now how to choose points that will all give the body a consistent message.

So, in the beginning, start simple. Some examples of how to do
1. Choose no more than 2 meridians to work if you are working entire channels. 
   -this allows the body to understand those messages clearly and integrate the to requests into a unified plan of action

2. Choose points from Yin and Yang paired meridians if possible to balance an entire Phase’s sphere of influence. 
   -This gives the body both the Yin and Yang aspect of that Phases energy to work with. Lung and Large Intestine, for example, are both valuable to stimulate if you want to awaken the body’s defensive energy, or emotional/spiritual boundary system. Kidney and Bladder can be invoked together to deeply restore the body’s fundamental energy and to reduce stress.

3. Choose a meridian on both the arm and the leg. 
   - You’ll notice that after each Yin/Yang pair on the arm, there follows a Yin/Yang meridian pair that runs to and from the foot. When possible, stimulate a channel from each part of the body for greater balance. For example, if the receiver has an issue of stagnation in the Wood Phase/Liver, and also seems to be unwilling to look at the underlying emotional issues involved, you can treat the Liver meridian (foot) combined with the Pericardium meridian (hand).

4. Use your intuition. 
   -The highest faculty you have for designing effective treatments is your intuition. If you have developed the ability to listen to this faculty, you will notice that you get subtle hints about what to do in any given session. It may be just a strong desire to work a certain meridian, or you may even hear yourself telling you to work specific points. Try it out, and see how often it works.