

Shiatsu Autumn Newsletter

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Welcome to the fifth edition of our Shiatsu Newsletter.

Metal Element

The Metal Element relates to how people see themselves; how they set up boundaries between themselves and the rest of the world. This is reflected in breathing; whether air flows easily from the world into the body and out again, or whether there is a permanent struggle between what is taken and what is given back.

Element Season:

Autumn



In the cycle of the movements of energy represented by the Elements through the seasons, the Metal phase is linked with the autumn, when summer's Yang peak of energy begins to reverse. Leaves fall, vegetation dies down and Ki moves down and inwards in preparation for the winter storage period.

Element Associations:

Value, conductivity, strength, precision

The Chinese ideogram usually translated "metal" more properly means "gold", which adds an extra dimension to the meaning; it means something of great value, untarnishable, non-degradable. Metal, in the form

of gold, has been a symbol for value since civilisation began, and in this capacity has always been a medium of change or barrier between individuals, groups and nations. We can associate both the Metal meridians with this meaning, since the Lungs act to take in the purest, most valuable component of the world outside, the Ki of the universe, and the Large Intestine works to expel from the body and mind all that is no longer of any value to the individual's life process.

"The three months of autumn are called the period of tranquility of one's conduct" (Nei Ching)

The Metal Element forms the boundaries of our life on earth, with our first and last breaths, our bodies are inhabited by the "Corporeal Soul", or Hun, which pertains to the Wood Element, and which corresponds to a kind of "soul personality". The Corporeal Soul, however, returns to the earth after our death, in the same way as our physical substance, and represents more a kind of instinctual bodily intelligence.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Metal Element is associated with the Lung and Large Intestine meridians, which influence the outside of the body – the physical boundary, or the skin.

"The Lung has the charge of minister and assistant, from it stem well regulated rhythms" (Su Wen)

The time of the Lung meridian is 3-5am, and that of the Large Intestine meridian is 5-7am.

This time period is around dawn, as is appropriate for the meridians which begin the cycle of the Chinese Clock. In the Far East, dawn is the time to get up, and the first action of the day is usually some form of breathing exercise; in China it has always been the time to gather in the parks and do Tai Chi.



Probably the second action of the day is defecation, in Large Intestine time. When Metal energies are out of balance however, symptoms may be at their worst during this time. Asthmatics may be woken by an attack during Lung time, and a classic symptom of clinical depression (often stemming from a Metal imbalance), is early waking, usually around 4 or 5am, with a feeling of doom.

Someone with harmonious Metal energy:

- Copes with letting go of the past and making space to step into the future.
- Creates space in his/her life by throwing out old things.
- Has no problems with breathing, and after strenuous exercise the breath quickly returns to normal.
- Has good skin.
- Has a clear sense of self and knows his/her own boundaries.
- Has clarity of thought and is capable of organised thinking.
- Has an ability to create networks socially and at work.
- Has a good relationship with his/her father.

Symptoms of Metal element Imbalance:

When the Metal Element is out of balance symptoms may include respiratory problems, constipation, and skin disorders. A person may have frequent colds, nasal congestion, and a sore or tickly throat. Chronic skin conditions such as psoriasis or eczema tend to relate to the Lung, whereas acne or boils are eliminative and therefore are symptoms of a Large Intestine imbalance. Dryness is the climate for Metal and dry skin or even a lack of sweating can indicate a Metal imbalance. Sometimes the descending energy of Metal does not disperse fluids from the upper part of the body and the nose and eyes may be watery. Any sort of breathing difficulty such as asthma or stuffiness is associated with a Lung imbalance. The intake of Ki is a vital part of the Metal Element. If the Lungs are not able to receive Air Ki, the person may feel a lack of vitality and a sense of disconnection from the world around him or her. The person may have difficulty taking in new experiences or appreciating what is taken through the senses. Just as the skin provides a physical border for the body, Metal provides a psychological border. When Metal is out of balance, the person may have difficulty relating to others and feelings of isolation or depression may result.

How does Metal energy get out of balance?

Not letting go of emotional pain

The grieving process is a healthy one which makes room for new experiences. Although grieving is painful, avoiding it will damage Metal energy. Rituals and remembering sad events help grieving.

Not eliminating

Problems with the bowels can upset Metal energy. Regular bowels mean different things to different people. There is no right rhythm except the one that is comfortable.

Loneliness

When someone spends more time alone than is desired, it can upset Metal energy. Being content and alone is one thing, but loneliness hurts.

Breathing

Breathing connects humans to the energy of the universe. When breathing in, we take in the energy of heaven – cosmic energy. This gives us life.

Smoking

Smoking causes severe damage to Metal energy as it affects breathing, represses emotional pain and causes damage to the body. Smoking also contracts Metal energy.



Self-care for Metal:

- Perform breathing exercises
- Organise a closet or drawer
- Get rid of clothes that aren't being worn
- Take gentle, regular exercise
- Allow yourself to cry
- Avoid smoke and polluted air

Many spiritual practices use breathing – “the breath” – to connect to that which is divine.