

# THE BETRYAL OF INTIMACY

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While it is well known for its ability to address physical pain, the ability of acupuncture to assist in cases of emotional and psychological pain is less well known. This is unfortunate, since Chinese medicine has much to offer in this area. It is my personal belief that acupuncture should not be used in place of appropriate psychiatric interventions nor is it a replacement for necessary psychotherapy. However, it can be helpful in many psycho-emotional conditions and is a useful adjunctive treatment in several more.

## The value of trust

Intimacy is an experience that is based on trust. The betrayal of intimacy can be thought of as any situation where a violation of that trust has occurred. This can range from situations that are bilateral, such as divorce, to those that are unilateral, such as abuse. According to what Lonny S. Jarrett, M.Ac. calls the "Inner Tradition" of Chinese medicine, the healthy experience of intimacy with others is based on self-knowledge. This is linked energetically with the one's connection to the Xin (Heart). The Xin is often referred to as the "Emperor" of the body and is thus responsible for establishing boundaries that protects the individual's physical, psycho-emotional, and energetic integrity.

## Types of violation

Regrettably, the level of violation in our society is so high that almost everyone's capacity for intimacy has been compromised in some fashion. This can occur in three basic ways. The first is to erode the foundation upon which the person's boundaries are based before they are established. Incest is an example of this primary type of violation. Betrayals of what could be called the secondary type occurs when established boundaries are shattered from outside to inside as occurs in sexual abuse. The final way betrayal can occur is when boundaries are devastated from inside to outside. Divorce, which involves a tearing apart of an intimate energetic link between the Xin of the two partners, is one example of this. It should be pointed out that the violation here can simply involve the expectations of the two partners and not imply that anything malicious has occurred. Betrayal of intimacy can also be categorized as either forcible or non-forcible. Rape is therefore a secondary forcible type of violation, whereas an affair would be in the secondary non-forcible category.

## Emotional imbalances and disease

In Chinese medicine, psycho-emotional imbalances are considered to be as causative of disease as any virus or bacteria. Experiences such as rage, anxiety, and depression can all have a negative impact on physiological function, eventually leading to organ dysfunction.

## Subtle levels of imbalance

The lexicon of Chinese medicine, however, allows perception on more subtle levels. For example, secondary type of betrayals involve the experience of "heartbreak" where the victim is no longer able to feel safe or to extend trust in the world. There is often an experience of grief which affect the Fei (Lungs) and anger that undermines the function of the Gan (Liver). These imbalances can be the beginning of more serious pathology, such as panic attacks, sleep disruption and heart palpitations.

## Types of intervention

Since it is unlikely that the ability to be truly intimate can be reestablished until these imbalances have been addressed, a number of interventions can be utilized. Acupuncture addresses the problem energetically, seeking to balance the individual's system directly. Herbal prescriptions can assist in numerous ways, from addressing acute symptoms to rebuilding inner resources. Perhaps most important to long term success are education and counseling, since the root of the problem could lie in various patterns of dysfunction or unhealthy lifestyle choices. In summary, Chinese medicine has the tools to nurture one of the more important elements in human relationships: the ability to be intimate both with ourselves and others.

## About the Author:

Gary Piscopo N.D., L.A.c., is a naturopathic physician and licensed acupuncturist. After twelve years in hospital-based medicine, Dr. Piscopo pursued a career in natural medicine. A graduate of Bastyr University, he also serves as a consultant to MicroMedex, Inc., which provides data bases to other medical professionals. Dr. Piscopo has a private practice in Wenatchee, Washington. He can be reached at: (509) 665-0867