

# Ancient Arts, Modern-Day Practice

by Kathy Simpson

I've seen a few acupuncturists over the years -- not for major physical symptoms, usually, but more for my overall sense of health and wellbeing. I've become accustomed to a fairly standard treatment process: a short interview about my health and habits, pulse taking, insertion of needles, and alone time until the needles are withdrawn.

Groupon-inspired, I visited a new acupuncturist this spring: Becky La Plante, who has a practice in Granby, CT. Becky offers an experience that is decidedly different.

We talked more than the usual about me and my inner and outer life. She also stayed present in the room for the entire session, administering a quiet sort of hands-on healing while I layed on the table and the needles took effect.

I left feeling heard and rejuvenated -- and also intrigued and curious about what was really going on in the room.

Later, in the sessions that followed, I learned that Becky's practice incorporates two healing modalities: Chinese Classical Five Element Acupuncture combined with energy healing in the tradition of the Native American shaman. While both are ancient practices, combining them as Becky does is rare. Together, they make for a potentially potent healing formula, the energy work compounding the effect of the acupuncture and making it more powerful.

Both modalities have the same intent: to identify and treat the imbalance or wound that's at the very root of the client's suffering.

## Classical Five Element Acupuncture

In Five Element Acupuncture, it's believed this root cause is a constitutional weakness that develops through birth or in early childhood. The weakness will be in one of the five elements -- wood, fire, earth, metal or water. Diagnosing and treating that element, known as the "causative factor (CF)," will bring all five elements into balance, helping to resolve disease and restore a sense of joy and wellbeing.

Identifying the CF element requires a bit of detective work on the part of the acupuncturist -- a process of asking questions, listening, observing and getting a sense of the person as a whole. Lifestyle, childhood, work history and relationships are among the clues that point to an elemental type, as are such indicators as the color of the clients' face, the sound of their voice, any odors they exude as well as their emotional affect as they engage in conversation.



Once the CF element is identified, the acupuncturist applies a treatment to address the elemental deficiency as well as those that may stem from it. This includes points and gates along the meridian lines that equate to different spiritual energies. Some are "places" with names such as the Gate of Hope, the Place of Weariness, the Spirit Hall, and even the Spirit Burial Ground that may be out of balance when a client is particularly resigned.

Sometimes healing can happen in a single session but the process usually takes longer, especially for deeper issues. But as the elements come into balance, it's believed that the whole person can heal, grow and change.

"Five element acupuncture looks at the whole person: body, mind, spirit; symptoms, reactions and beliefs," Becky says. "You know a person is getting better when they find their passion, when they begin to express themselves more fully in life."

## Native American Energy Healing

While Five Element Acupuncture can bring about profound healing, the healing can go even deeper when it's coupled with shamanism.

In my sessions with Becky, shamanism came into play after the acupuncture needles were inserted. It was the hands-on healing I was so curious about in my first session, yet none of the usual shamanic tools applied. There were no drums or rattles, no feverish dances or incantations. Becky was making a simple and quiet connection with the unseen but ever-present world of the spirit. And with that guidance, she was "tracking."

She describes it as a process of being guided through the asking of questions: Why is this person feeling this way? Why am I drawn to this place in the body? Why is this particular area weak? What does he or she need? How can I be a conduit to help this person connect? The healer explores the answers to each question in depth to track the cause at its source.

Tracking is a common practice for this healing modality that's not unlike the one that animal trackers use in the wild. Consider this quote from the Tom Brown, Jr. Tracker School website: "When we track, we pick up a string. At the far end of that string a being is moving, existing, still connected to the track that we gaze upon. The animal's movement is still contained in that track, along with the smallest of external and

internal details. As we follow these tracks, we begin to become the very animal we track. Our awareness expands from the animal we have become to the landscape it reacted to and is played by. We feel the influence of all things that surround us and our awareness expands from our consciousness to the mind of the animal and finally to the very cosmos."

The animal at the end of the string is a metaphor for the source of a client's affliction -- a "place" in the client's memory that the healer journeys to. It may be felt as a knot or a stuck, unmovable energy. It may also be experienced as an image. For instance, a person who was abandoned as a child might appear in a vision as a small being lost in the desert, held under the power of a demon that stole its spirit. By connecting with that abandoned child or sitting with the stuck place, the healer illuminates what was previously unconscious. That awareness can help the energy move and begin to heal.

Relief may be gradual. Restoring lost energies can even have an aggravating effect for a while, but at some point over time, with intent and attention, healing can occur.

#### Integrating the Two Modalities

Sometimes healing is just a physical matter, but oftentimes the roots go deeper, even for a common complaint such as a digestive issue. Classical Five Element Acupuncture and shamanic healing are modalities for treating on all levels, but the true intent for both is to heal at the source, to restore

balance and integrate the vital energies we need to feel alive and express our unique gifts in a profound way.

Interestingly, Five Element Acupuncture, which originated around 200 BC, is considered a shamanic practice that evolved based on observation of nature, natural laws and how those laws worked in people. This foundation and the application of needles paired with shamanic journeying and energy healing are naturally compatible. They have a synergistic effect. It's only in our modern age that we have the opportunity to understand and integrate these practices of ancient cultures from opposite sides of the world.

But don't expect the shaman to call out to you from the rooftops. Shamanism is a sacred, humble and long path. The true shaman has years of experience, has placed hands on thousands of people, and bears the self-knowledge and wisdom necessary to be a vessel and conduit for the healing for others.

*Kathy Simpson is a freelance writer who specializes in natural healing, health and spirituality. She can be reached at [simsoka@att.net](mailto:simsoka@att.net) or (860) 651-7728. Becky La Plante, L.Ac. is a licensed acupuncturist in both California and Connecticut. Her mission is to aid in the self healing, balance and expression of the fullness of the human experience of her patients through nature, acupuncture, herbal medicine and the healing arts. She practices in Granby, CT. Visit Becky's website at [www.elementaltransformation.com](http://www.elementaltransformation.com) or call (860) 341-1227.*



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