

Living Well

KW's Healthy Living Quarterly | Autumn 2011



IN THIS ISSUE

Clearing Clutter: One
Corner at a Time
Pg. 3

On the Importance of
Public Art
Pg. 5

When East Meets
West:
The Qi of PMS
Pg. 7



Everything You Know About Running May Be Wrong



By Michael Torreiter,
Naturopathic Doctor

I recently read an inspiring book called “Born to Run” written by runner and journalist, Christopher McDougall. In it, I learned that members of the Tarahumara tribe of Mexico can run farther and faster than North America’s top ultramarathoners, in treacherous terrain, usually hungover, and in sandals or barefeet. (What?) In fact one Tarahumara champion, Francisco Almada, once ran 700 km in one go, which is farther than running from Waterloo to Montreal! Several more ran over 480 km, the equivalent of 12 marathons back to back – running for more than two days straight!

Their story defies conventional wisdom on how we should train. Running uni-

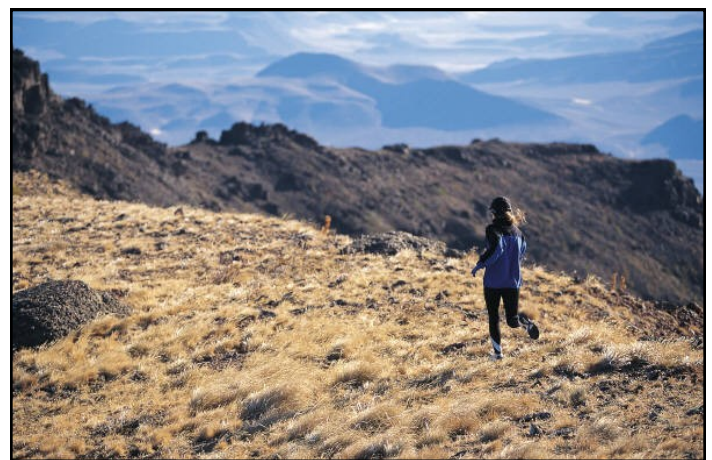
maginably challenging races on a regular basis should increase your risk of injuries, right? Not with the Tarahumara people. Despite wearing sandals held together by a few pieces of leather, they run practically injury free! And you would think running 12 marathons in a row would require days of planning and preparing for the precise nutrition and hydration requirements. But the Tarahumara are more likely to hold a big party, drink too much corn beer and run the next-day’s race without rehydrating.

As a runner myself I have suffered my share of

injuries at very modest distances, and have spent too much time thinking about

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Continued on page 2...



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Running cont. from page 1....

nutritional requirements, therefore I am at the same time annoyed and intrigued by the story of the Tarahumara. So I started doing some digging into how they can succeed in a sport without following modern science's recommendations.

To the Tarahumara people, running is an integral part of their culture. Men and women of all ages run. They run for competition, for intercommunity communication and for survival. Traditionally, the Tarahumara practice persistence hunting, where they literally may chase an animal until the animal slows and they can overtake their prey. As nutritionist Dr.

"A lot of foot and knee injuries that are currently plaguing us are actually caused by people running with shoes that actually make our feet weak"

- Dr. Daniel Lieberman

John Berardi says, "if you lived in a culture where running was the only means of athletic expression and you had to run for survival as well – you'd actually get pretty good at running"¹ Most of us have those abilities, but we don't use them because of our modern lifestyle.

The Tarahumara can burn up to 43,000 calories in a long run, but they

drink or eat very little when they run. However, their habit of partying before a long run, may be helping them. Many conventional marathoners will eat large amounts of carbohydrates such as pasta or rice before a run – "carb-loading" -- in order to maximize their glycogen – or energy stores. The corn beer that the Tarahumara drink is low in alcohol and high in carbohydrates and nutrients, so is likely improving their glycogen and nutritional status before a race. It takes about four litres to get intoxicated, so drinking corn beer is increasing their fluid intake as well.

The Tarahumara people also have a very healthy traditional diet which certainly contributes to their extraordinary performance. Says Tony Ramirez, a Mexican horticulturist, they eat mostly pinto beans, squash, chilli peppers, wild greens, pinole (corn flour), and lots of chia seeds. Eating a diet like this based on beans, seeds, fruits and vegetables provides a great balanced diet with more than enough protein and sufficient minerals such as calcium.²

The most controversial aspect to McDougall's book is his compelling argument for running barefoot. He claims that the modern running shoe design is based on the theory that our feet are not designed to run, and need to be cushioned for protection. But McDougall argues that the cushioning actually causes runners to lose musculature in their feet, shielding them from their natural position by providing more and more support. Dr. Daniel Lieberman, a professor of biological anthropology at Harvard University states "A lot of foot and knee injuries that are currently plaguing us are actually caused by people running with shoes that actually make our feet weak, cause us to over-pronate, give us knee problems. Until 1972, when the modern ath-

Running, cont. from page 2...

letic shoe was invented by Nike, people ran in very thin-soled shoes, had strong feet, and had much lower incidence of knee injuries”³. Dr. Craig Richards, a researcher at the University of Newcastle in Australia published a 2009 research paper for the British Journal of Sports Medicine revealing that there are NO evidence-based studies that show running shoes can decrease incidence of injuries.⁴

When we run in modern heavily cushioned shoes, our stride is long, and our heels strike first, followed by the toe. Barefoot runners have a gait that strikes on the forefoot, with a shorter stride. Proponents of barefoot running say that this tightens up an otherwise sloppy running form, helps straighten the back and keeps the legs squarely under the hips. Sports scientist Irene Davis says this is the key to the Tarahumara’s amazing endurance. Davis, head of the Spaulding National Running Centre at the Harvard Medical School, is a strong proponent of barefoot running.

OK then, I wanna toss my shoes and start running barefoot! “No”, says any reasonable person. Most urban running is over glass, sharp objects, and on concrete surfaces much harder than our running ancestors. Many running shoe companies have responded to the barefoot

running craze by offering a line of minimalist shoes – lightweight but with some cushioning, designed to support a more natural barefoot-like running stride, but to provide protection from urban hazards, as well. Browsing through the heavily marketed minimalist shoe options makes me wonder if this is just the latest craze that will fade in a few years. So I asked Rejean Paul Lavoie, store manager of the Waterloo Running Room, if he thought it is a fad. “Not really. It’s been around for a long time in the “running” world but thanks to media, internet, and mass marketing in today’s industry we have definitely seen a massive spread of this idea and many BIG brands are stepping up this time around and jumping in with products to support it.” I also asked Rejean Paul if his customers have noticed a reduction in injuries when they switch to minimalist shoes or barefoot running. He said some have, yes, but there is a flipside: “From what I’ve come across the past couple years, and articles I’ve read there have been noticeable increases in stress fractures in the foot, plantar fasciitis, calf strains and Achilles tendonitis issues coming from the large number of beginners and uninformed runners that have jumped on board...The failure is not the change more the lack of advice and knowledge on how to make the switch in a safe way.”

Rejean Paul recommends a “gentle and gradual introduction” to less cushioned shoes. Sounds like good advice to me, so I’m trying to do just that. One and a half kilometres is the farthest I’ve run with my new barefoot running shoes. The foot strike is very different and it feels like I’m better utilizing the natural shock absorption in my feet. But while my body adjusts, even that short distance has provoked some surprise muscle aches. At this rate, I won’t be running to Montreal any time soon. But incorporating some of what I’ve learned from the Tarahumara seems like it’s putting me on the right path.

¹Weird or What, Discovery Channel, May 5, 2010).

²McDougall, Christopher. Born To Run. Vintage Books: New York City. pg 209.

³McDougall, page 170.

⁴Richards, Craig. Is Your Prescription of Distance Running Shoes Evidence Based? British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2009;43:159-162.



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Clearing Clutter

One Corner at a Time



By Cecilia Moorcroft, Clutter Coach and Life Coach

When people find out that I’m a Clutter Coach, they often assume that I live in a minimalist heaven, with nothing more than a straw mat to lie on, a buckwheat pillow to rest my head upon, a simple cushion

to sit on and one bowl to eat out of (with my bare hands of course). Perhaps there’s one small decoration, such as a single orchid, rising like a ballerina out of its mossy bed. I don’t mean to shatter any illusions, but this is not my reality and if you want

to follow a clutter-free life, don’t worry, it doesn’t have to be yours either.

Clearing clutter is not about having nothing. Living clutter free is about surrounding yourself with things that

Continued on page 4..



Clearing Clutter, cont. from 3
 you love and bringing a level of consciousness to the sleepy corners of your home and life. I invite you to do a little exercise right now. Close your eyes and mentally take a tour of your house or apartment. Imagine you are walking through every room, looking in every closet and visiting every dark corner. As you do this, are there areas that feel more present than others? Which areas feel forgotten, cluttered or blank? You can even do this exercise by walking through your space. You'll notice the parts of your home that feel good, that feel warm, that feel like you and the parts that you gloss over, that leave you feeling tired or are forgotten as soon as you look away. It's almost as if there's a mental whiteout when it comes to certain closets and corners in your home.

It's these blank, cluttered and sleepy areas that you really want to focus on when you engage the process of clearing clutter. How can you bring a sense of YOU to the quiet corners of your home? The first step, of course, is to clear your clutter. Now listen very carefully, it's important that you start this process with a small space, not your whole house. Your perfectionist gremlin will try to convince you that it's not worth starting if you can't do it all (perfectly, right now), but I assure you it's well worth starting small. In fact, for most of us, it's the only way it will happen. I recommend choosing a specific area on which to work. For example, I recently decided to just focus on the

“How can you bring a sense of YOU to the quiet corners of your home?”

corner where my bedside table lives, which consists of one small surface, two small drawers and a floor space that's 3 feet by 3 feet.

When clearing clutter, the three most important questions to ask yourself are:

1. Do I love it?
2. Do I use it?
3. How does it make me feel?

Once your chosen area is clear of clutter, it's time to show it a little love. There's something quite magical that can happen when you really take the time to clean a space that is usually forgotten. First of all, get your trusty vacuum cleaner and get rid of the dust bunnies and dead flies. Vacuuming is not just a chore when you really bring yourself along for the ride. Instead of blanking out, grumbling or thinking about what you're going to do this weekend, see if you can really be present as you vacuum. Before you start, close your eyes and take a few

slow, deep breaths. Feel your heart and feel your belly. As you vacuum, imagine you're sucking up all the sleepy, stale energy along with the toenail clippings and dog hair. The vacuum cleaner is not just for floors: you can also use it to vacuum your bed, the curtains, the walls and pets. (OK, maybe just some pets, vacuuming your pet mouse or baby hedgehog is not recommended.) If you've never tried it before, it's easier to start with just one small corner rather than doing the whole house. As beautiful as it is, it's often difficult to stay present for extended periods of time.

After you've vacuumed, it's time to bust out the bucket and rag. Note that I said rag, not mop. Although it's possible to presence a space while mopping, it's much more powerful if you get down on your knees and tackle it with your hands. Fill your bucket with warm water. If the corner you're working on is especially dirty, you can add a small amount of natural cleanser to the water, but, if not, just plain water is fine. If you do use cleanser be sure to rinse it with plain water when you're done. Whereas the vacuuming was to clear out old sticky energy, cleaning the space with water is a way of really bringing a loving sense of self to your space. As you wipe the floor/wall/bookcase, feel your heart and love your space. Do it slowly and deliberately, really paying attention to the nooks and crannies, loving every floorboard and every book.

Now that your space is clean, it's time to spice it up. But, before you do, there's one more exercise for you to try. As you'll remember, clearing your

Clearing Clutter, cont. from 4

clutter is not about living in an empty space. However, you might like to try leaving the space clear and clean for a little while, just to see how it feels. Does it make you feel uncomfortable? Do you feel the impulse to dump something, anything there, just so it doesn't feel empty? As you sit with the space, rather than follow the instinct to either fill it up right away or become unconscious to the feelings it brings up, ask yourself what would feel good there. There's a real opportunity to consciously decide what will live here and what will make the space feel most like you.

When you put items back in the space, once again ask yourself how they make you feel. You can consciously

place items that not only make you feel warm and alive, but also items that represent the things that you want to cultivate in your life. Perhaps you would really enjoy spending more time in nature. Why not place something in your corner that reminds of the feeling you get when you're standing in the middle of a forest? Your space can become a touchstone for the life you want to live, so have fun with it. And remember, you don't have to do it all at once, just start one corner at a time.

If you would like to learn more about how to clear clutter and truly make your house a home, I invite you to attend a very special workshop that I will be facilitating on Sunday, October 16th at Queen Street Yoga in Kitchener. It's called *Home is Where the Heart Is* and, for more information,

you can visit queenstreetyoga.com and go to the workshops page. □

Cecilia is a Clutter Coach and Life Coach who motivates and inspires people to clear clutter and make space for what's truly important. She is a warm and engaging facilitator who has been facilitating groups and workshops on Clearing Clutter since 2004. She is a long-time and loved facilitator at Sheena's Place, a centre for people with eating disorders, where she facilitates groups on clutter clearing, goal setting, feng shui and forgiveness. Cecilia's fun and natural facilitating style helps to put participants at ease and gives them the confidence they need to make real and lasting changes in their lives. To see videos of Cecilia and to read past articles, please visit www.spaceforlife.ca.

On the Importance of Public Art



*By Graham Whiting,
Green Designer*

It has been an exceptional week. I've been privileged to be intensely involved with CAFKA+A (Contemporary Art Forum Kitchener + Area), as an architect, carpenter, and guest. CAFKA has grown from a small, local showing of an eccentric and energetic group of artists to a three week show of

international stature, featuring over 30 major installations and artists from around the world. I commend the visionaries and volunteers behind it. The show this year has affected me and those around me in a very positive way.

As a designer of public spaces, the daily tendency is to get mired in bureaucracies, codes, liabilities, and economics. We are creating real structures that need to keep people warm, dry, well lit, and functioning in whatever it is they do for a hundred years or more. It is scary to push the envelope, not only because of the aforementioned list of concerns, but because reputation is such a fine line. Cross that line in a positive manner, and the rewards

can be exhilarating, being known as someone who is a creative, a trendsetter, a person with vision. Cross it too far, and words like reckless, expensive, and irresponsible leap to the foreground. Word of mouth is everything in this business, and nearly everyone can find a parallel in their own work: lines that you are instructed not to cross, but beg further exploration.

Public art, and contemporary art in particular, is the perfect forum for exploring and destroying architectural and cultural boundaries. Often time limited, most likely budget constrained, built by "amateurs", often using found or inexpensive or re-purposed materials, pieces of contemporary art are able to move quickly, to be much more reactive to culture and to establish the bleeding edge of our understanding of space, form, and light. The public nature of most contemporary art ensures that everyone is exposed to it, has to walk through and around it, and as a result is challenged to question what on earth this bizarre creation is, why it looks the way it does, and why it was done. Public art breaks-in our future best clients. It inspires all designers to look at the world differently, to break down common assumptions about materials, construction, aesthetics, and site. □

Two weeks before the opening of CAFKA, I was approached by the organizers to help produce architectural drawings for two of the pieces, which the City had deemed large and complex enough to require building permits. The City of Kitchener reviewed and approved them within hours, showing exceptional support for the show. “The Green Room” by Water Van Broekhuizen and “Buttress” by Andrew Burton commenced construction almost immediately, with 5 days and counting before the show opened. I then spent a gorgeous day in Victoria Park helping to construct Green Room, working with Walter and 4 other volunteers to realize his vision. The result is a masterpiece. Walter has created a space for intense experience, surrounding a giant willow tree on the edge of the water. Inside the green room, the world is reduced to simple elements. The bark of the tree, the play of shadows from the branches and leaves across the white curved walls, and the falling leaves are the first

CAF K+A CONTEMPORARY ART FORUM KITCHENER + AREA

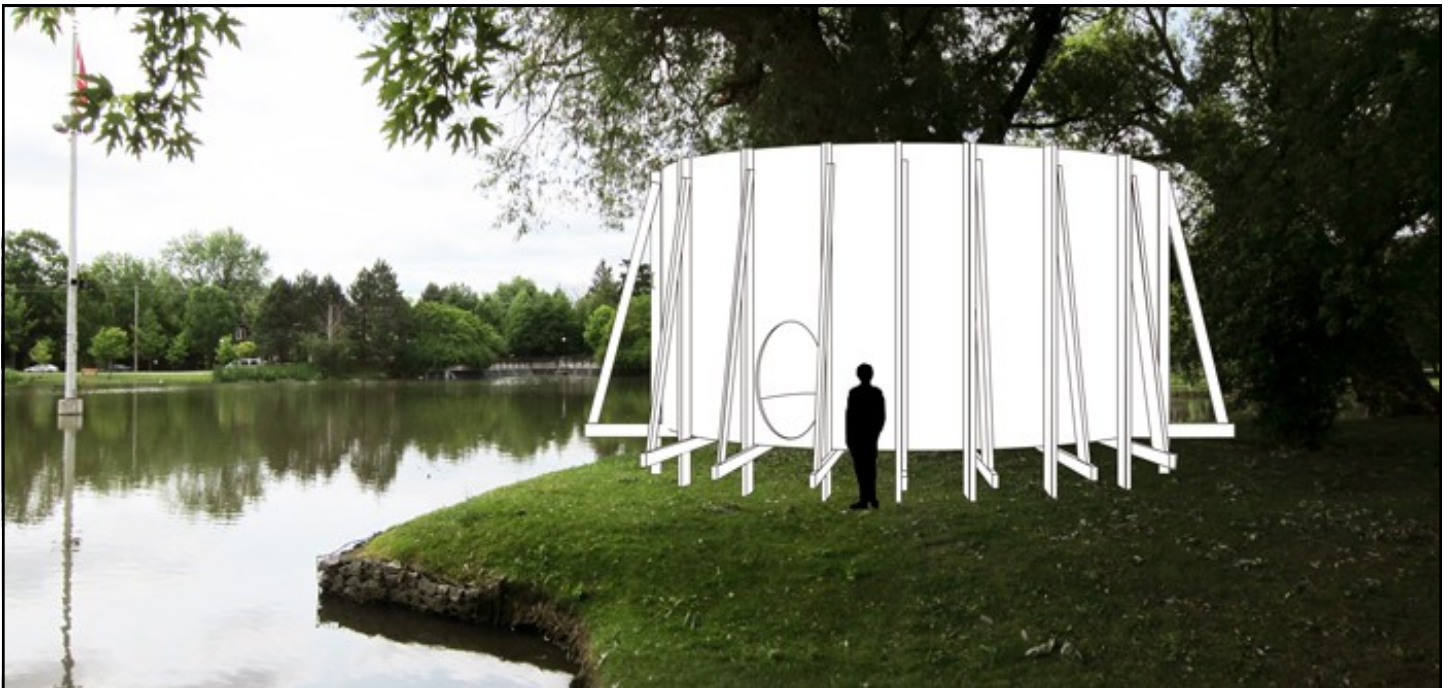
impressions. Stay awhile, and you realize that the view through the small entrance is of rippling water, that sounds are muted, and that the wind swirls interestingly around the walls. Both my one year old and eight year old sons spent the better part of an hour inside: quiet, exploring, happy. Stay longer and the best experience emerges, the opportunity

to watch as others enter, walk around, and leave. The attitudes range from disdain, through indifference, all the way to reverence. The reverent ones are potential future clients.

Too often art is pigeonholed in galleries, hung on walls, constrained to canvasses or computer screens. The kind of experience to be had in Green Room can't be done any other way, and would never be done if not for forums like CAFKA. And it is exactly that kind of experience which not only establishes new boundaries for buildings, but in this case in particular, reminds us of fundamental qualities of space, the importance of silence, and the quiet intensity of the natural world. Chances are this article is being read long after Green Room is gone. You will just have to do your part to encourage its successors.

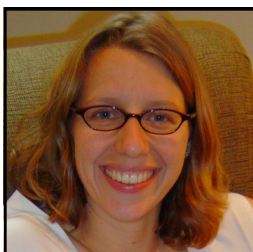
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Walter Van Broekhuizen - The Green Room



Enhancing Fertility

Through Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine



*By Rachel Vanden Berg,
Naturopathic Doctor*

The concept of reproduction is simple and miraculous at the same time. We need a sperm and an egg, and we need them to meet. That's all it takes to create a child. Yet, while it may seem simple, many couples longing for children are finding it difficult to conceive and seek assistance to improve their chances. For these couples, naturopathic medicine has a great deal to offer. Even when all conventional diagnostic tests come back normal, answers to fertility difficulties can often be found by its slightly different approach.

As a naturopathic doctor, I often address fertility concerns using Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). While very effective if used on its own, TCM can also be used to compliment other therapies. For example, several studies show that acupuncture can be used to improve success of in vitro fertilization.

TCM focuses on the health of the whole person, rather than just the reproductive system. Treatments aim to

correct imbalances between two concepts: Yin and Yang. Yin is cool, quiet, and calm. It encompasses the concepts of fluid (and blood) and is more predominant at night. Yang is the opposite. It represents heat, movement, activity, light and daytime. The balancing of yin and yang increases overall wellness.

Another fundamental concept in TCM is that of Qi. Pronounced "chee", it represents the concept of "life force" or "energy". Without Qi, there is no life. With diminished Qi there is not enough energy to create new life. Much of our Qi is inherited from our parents. However, throughout life, Qi is also extracted from food and can also be boosted with acupuncture and herbs.

So what do Yin, Yang and Qi have to do with fertility? Take a look, for example, at the menstrual cycle. Menstrual irregularities can offer much insight into the root cause of fertility difficulties. The colour and quantity of flow as well as discomfort, mood and energy levels will help me as a practitioner discern a naturopathic diagnosis and treatment protocol. I consider these "symptoms" to be messages that the body gives us, letting us know where it needs balancing. Thankfully, with careful listening, a few tools, and a bit of time, effort and dedication, we can often re-create the balance, greatly improving fertility.

Western physiologists describe the menstrual cycle as a complex inter-

play of hormones and responses. Similarly, TCM describes it as a fluid balance between Yin and Yang, and Qi and blood. I find it fascinating that although these two schools of medicine were developed worlds apart, there is much overlap in the concepts they rely on. For example, the hormone that we in the west call estrogen has many characteristics that are very similar to yin. At the same time, progesterone is very yang-like in nature.

"Even when all conventional diagnostic tests come back normal, answers to fertility difficulties can often be found by [naturopathic medicine's] slightly different approach."

The cycle begins with relatively low levels of estrogen and progesterone. Through the first half of the cycle estrogen levels rise to a peak which triggers ovulation. This process (from the first day of menstrual flow to the day of ovulation) should take approximately 14 days. In TCM, the first half of the cycle is called the *yin phase*. If

Continued on page 8



TCM, cont. from pg 7

your cycle tends to be longer than 32 days, and the first half of your cycle is relatively long, you might be deficient in kidney yin. If yin is deficient, the energy supplied to the developing egg is lower than normal and it takes a longer time for the egg to be ready for release. Such eggs tend to be weaker and have a lower chance of fertilization.

Yin is responsible for cooling. Women who record their basal body temperature* notice a lower temperature for the Yin phase (first half) of their cycle. Yin also encompasses moisture (fluid production). Thus, deficiency in yin is often accompanied by decreased cervical discharge (you might observe an absence of the stretchy mid-cycle discharge). Since yin is also responsible for relaxation, higher levels at night help us settle into a cool restful sleep. Difficulty sleeping, general fatigue, and night

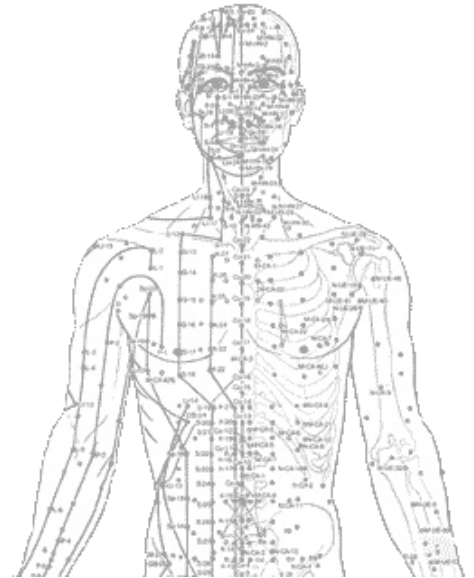


sweats also suggest yin deficiency.

Yin deficiency often arises from a depletion of energy resources due to age, working (or playing) too hard, and not taking enough time to nourish yourself. You can increase your yin by balancing the stress of your busy daily life with quiet activities such as restorative yoga, meditation, or quiet relaxation. Foods such as potatoes, kidney beans, black sesame seeds, and nettle tea will also help to nourish yin. Stimulating foods such as caffeine, sugar and alcohol are best avoided.

The second half of the cycle (from ovulation to the next period) is higher in progesterone. In TCM we see higher Yang levels at this time. Temperature readings should increase and remain high in this half of the cycle. If your temperature readings are generally low, rise slowly, or if you experience fewer than 12 days between ovulation at the end of your cycle, you are likely deficient in kidney yang. The yang energy is responsible for warmth and metabolic activity. If your yang energy is low, you may find that it is easy to put on weight and difficult to lose it. You might lack motivation, libido, and overall energy. Yang deficiency is often due to a longstanding yin deficiency, or a general state of strain and overwork. Yang can be nourished with herbs such as sage, rosemary, and fennel and with foods such as raspberries, walnuts, and pistachios. Jasmine tea will also help to build yang energy.

Finally, a look at Qi. If you find yourself feeling anxious or irritable (especially pre-menstrually), and experience breast tenderness, headaches or bloating before your period, you might be experiencing a stagnation of liver Qi – a condition frequently found as the cause of gynecological concerns. The smooth flow of Qi is essential for many aspects of the reproductive cycle - especially those requiring movement such as the release of the egg and the traveling of this egg along the fallopian tube. The liver is responsible for directing the flow of Qi and is easily influenced by emotions. Emotional stress impedes the functions of the liver, delaying ovulation



and increasing premenstrual tension. Along with emotions, liver function can be taxed by overuse of recreational or prescription drug use (including the birth control pill). Liver function and Qi flow can be supported by anything that reduces your stress.

Regular acupuncture is one of the best ways to build yin and yang, boost Qi, and to help Qi move smoothly. To further improve results, I combine acupuncture treatments with herbal prescriptions, dietary suggestions, and tips for a healthier lifestyle. With time, most patients notice that their monthly cycles improve. They come nearer to the average 28-30 day cycle. Cramping decreases, flow becomes easier, and premenstrual tensions decrease. A smoother transition through the menstrual cycle suggests that the lining is being fully shed, and a healthy new lining can be made. The health of this lining is crucial as it will provide the nutrients and support to allow attachment and growth of an embryo. Most patients also notice an improvement in energy, mood, digestion, sleep and overall wellness. With this increased wellness, fertility is greatly improved. □

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