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Anorexia nervosa – a study case of mother-daughter relationship in the light of Five Phases Cycle.

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The strength of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) rests in its diagnosis and treatment protocol, which takes into consideration the complex phenomenon of human existence. Many of the illnesses of the modern man are caused by multifarious factors influencing his physical, mental and spiritual spheres. The fact alone, of the recognition of the multilevel composition of a human, gives a strong starting point in the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

Anorexia nervosa being an illness of self-destruction indicates that it cannot be approached purely by addressing the main symptom that is the inability to consume food. The self-destructive feature of the disease points to the weakening of the most powerful and innate characteristic of human life, which is able to adapt to the ongoing changes in the environment in order to survive. The encoded information of survival in anorexia nervosa seems to be dormant. The human being consciously or not refuses to supply to its body the fuel necessary for the physiological processes in order to maintain healthy life.

Consequently one might suggest that anorexia nervosa originates from the disturbance to the natural flow of the life processes. In TCM it is known, as a disturbance and the obstruction in the flow of Qi.

In the following presentation a female anorexic patient's treatment is analyzed in the energetic interaction modeled on the Five Phases Cycle, which is taking into consideration the powerful, however most likely unconscious, influence of the natural mother of the patient. Both the patient and the mother were using the services of the same acupuncture practitioner that gave a food for thought provoking material in the treatment and the management of anorexia nervosa.

At the time of the commencement of the treatment the patient was 23 years old. She was a studying law abroad and was away from the family home. When the patient turned up for treatment she reported having had an anorexia nervosa diagnosis attached five years ago, at the age of fifteen. Since then she was treated for anorexia nervosa, which included hospitalization with bribing and forcing the food down her stomach she frequently vomited. At the age of fifteen within a one calendar year the patient reported, as having had lost twenty kilograms. When the patient arrived at the practice for treatment, her weight was thirty-nine kilograms, being 165cm tall. The patient complained of depression, she treated with Prozac, distending stomach pain after each meal, ulcerated duodenum, nervousness, hyperactivity, stress and shaking within. The patient was aware that since the illness she stopped being relaxed and she lost a good sense of humor. The fact that by midnight she felt totally exhausted was upsetting her, together with her continual feeling of inner cold. The patient also noticed that on her return home, for holiday breaks, her stomach pain always got worse.

At the time she also was in the relationship she was not happy about, but had no strength to terminate it.

When the treatment commenced she lost within four months some more weight arriving at 37.8kg, but within this time the patient was abroad and did not received any acupuncture treatment. In that time the patient tried to implement some diet recommendations. The regular weekly treatment were launched in August 1999, which mainly consisted of the direct moxabustion on Conception Vessel 12 (CV12) and the acupuncture tonification on the feet points of the Liver and Gall Bladder meridians. Occasionally Spleen 6 and Stomach 36 were added. It is important to stress here that during the course of treatment CV12 was never needled. The patient refused to have it done, augmenting it that the thought of having it done makes her feel ill. The patient's reaction might have been caused by the amount of physical pain she suffered in this part of the body for years prior to the treatment.

The course of treatment of consisted of six months of almost weekly treatments. After tis intensive period the treatments were spaced out to one a month till there was no obvious reason to carry on an acupuncture treatment.

All the earlier mentioned, by the patient, symptoms disappeared, but the stomach reminds the patient about the past when she overtaxes herself with work. At present the patient holds a scientific post at a university and blossoms in a personally satisfying relationship.

Though the effects of such a simple treatment protocol in the treatment of anorexia nervosa might seem impressive, this is not, however the most valuable experience gained in the described case.

By far much more enriching and fascinating is the analysis of the cause of the patient's illness in the light of the Mother-Child Law of the Five Phase Cycle.

The patient has been diagnosed as presenting a predominant energy imbalance within the Wood phase/element, which was indicated by the patient's tone of voice, predominant emotion, odor and the hue of the face.

The patient's mother happened to possess he major energetic imbalance within the Water phase/element, which was indicated by a relevant features of her energetic constitution.

It would be wise to begin the analysis of the presented case by looking at the energetic set up of the patient's natural mother. Whereas each individual has a unique energetic setting, the environment the individual grows up has an essential influence on the energetic dynamics of the physical, mental and the spiritual growth.

In this particular setting the fear dominated energy of the patient's mother, being the representative emotion of Water phase/element, constrained and the flamboyant and dynamic Wood energy of growing up daughter.

The Wood energy is not easy to curb since it is affiliated to wind. Most people would agree that it is rather difficult to trap the energy of the wind, unless the trap has dynamic characteristics. One can utilize the wind energy, but it has to be transformed. If not it looses its power and dynamics.

The Water energy on the other had is easy to store and can be utilized at any other time; for example in power stations using the tidal wave. The major characteristic of the water energy is the ability to overwhelm, to penetrate and to control.

Interestingly enough the patient's mother indicated in her interview that despite the fact that she bore and brought up two children she is afraid of them and if possible she would rather

stay clear of them. In this setting, however, she was forced to nourish her children and guide. I personally trust that to her knowledge the patient's mother did all the best she could, but her combination of the patient's mother energy of Water and the patient's (her daughter) energy of Wood brought about the energetic imbalance manifested in the form of anorexia nervosa.

Wood energy needs freedom and space. It cannot be inhibited, but it can easily be directed and then it even moves with greater dynamics that can be creatively utilized. An attempt to trap the Wood energy brings about a lot of havoc, which might manifest in humans as anger, shouting and fight; while the constrain of the Wood energy leads to the total defeat of its core dynamics that might represent in humans in the form of depression. Consequently depressed people do not want to eat, they do not care about others, let alone themselves; the spark of life is as if gone from them. They lost the dynamics of wood energy necessary and the motivation for living.

In a grown up human the consequences of depression are usually not as dramatic as they can be in a developing human being for whose this period of life is formative for his or her physical, mental and emotional spheres. At this period of human life the schema of values and the determination for survival is being formed, as a result there is no such strong motivation to keep living when the wood energy gets constrained, hence there is an ideal environment for the development of anorexia nervosa usually proceeded and associated with depression.

In this set up the energetic set up was most unfavorable for the patient, since her innate energetic pattern predisposed her to fall prey of the constrained Wood energy, I suppose, quicker than it would take place in any other inborn energetic pattern. Moreover the scenery was reinforced by the inborn energetic made up of the patient's mother, which I speculate contributed to the development of the patient's anorexia nervosa. One can further hypothesize if both the patient's mother and the patient being her daughter were aware of the energetic intermingle they would have acted differently which was not the case.

In this case presentation, the interdependence of the Mother-Child Law of the Five Phase Cycle seems to be particularly applicable. The mother's fear constrained and controlled the Child's anger and expansion and led to its almost destruction evident in the patient's illness that indicated the severe malfunction of the patient's nervous system and the loss of drive for living, which if not treated might have had a fatal end.

The powerful influence of the patient's mother Water energy on the developing patient-child was so overwhelming that her constitutionally set Wood characteristics like anger and shouting clearly became fear and groaning, which are the features of Water element.

The years of patient's mother's dominance over the patient made her unable to function in day-to-day life without the mother's assistance. The patient realized that fact while studying abroad. The problem was brought into the consciousness of the patient's mother when she realized that she is unable to meet her daughter's (the patient) demands, since the biological laws make allow her just to look after herself leaving no strength to cope with her daughter, the patient. Moreover, the problem was deepened, since the growing up daughter (the patient) required more from her ageing mother and her once powerful energy of fear to control her daughter's (the patient) anger began to crumble.

As the lack would have it, for the sake of the patient, the exhausted mother decided to seek unconventional help for herself and her daughter. The mother first made a reconnaissance visit to the acupuncture practitioner and afterwards ordered her daughter to follow the blazed trail.

In conclusion one might wonder whether the Mother-Child Law was a significant factor in the formation of the patient's illness. It might have been just as well a coincidence and the natural interpretation of the facts by the author of the presentation, who unsurprisingly strived to discover the mechanism of the patient's illness.

To make this account valuable one would have to select a number of similar cases to the presented one. Nevertheless, the presentation holds some educational, for the most part in the light of the Five Phase Cycle.

Nevertheless, the case is a food for thought for many parents, who frequently forget that children are not their possession, but rather a unique, intelligent human creatures assigned to them through the highest energetic vibrations, only for guidance and not for dominance.