Winter is the season associated with the water element in Traditional Chinese Medicine. The winter solstice is approaching: darkness abounds and the purifying action of the northwest rains reminds us of the power inherent in the water element. The quiet stillness and rain of the winter nourish the seeds of the life that will bloom again in spring. Hence, the water element provides the deep nourishment for all activities of life, birth, and growth. In the darkest period of the year, the fire that blazes in the summer is born. In the stillness of the Water element, we build the reserves needed to fulfill our function and destiny. Without the water element’s nourishment, we often burn out and lose touch with our original purpose. Water contains the seeds of our “curriculum” in this lifetime. Water holds the blueprint of our souls’ life purpose.

The organs associated with the water element are the urinary bladder and the kidney. The urinary bladder stores our body’s fluids and maintains our energy reserves. The kidneys balance and distribute fluids in our bodies. The kidney contains the well of vital life essence that we are born with called “Jing” in Traditional Chinese Medicine. When the water element is depleted we may experience exhaustion and total depletion. Chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia are often manifestations of a water element imbalance. For men, impotence and a loss of libido may indicate a water imbalance. For women, infertility is one sign that the water element is disturbed. The water element in Traditional Chinese Medicine governs the entire endocrine system.

The water element nourishes and lubricates every joint in our body. The water element provides the flexibility and fluidity for movement. Stiffness, tightness, and joint pains are often a manifestation of an imbalance in the water element. Degenerative arthritis, low back pain, knee problems, and various joint pains reflect disruptions in the water element.

The emotion associated with the water element is fear. When the water element is out of balance we may experience fear that shows up in every aspect of our lives: relationships, career, finances, and personal growth. An imbalanced water element habitually reacts to fear instead of responding with wisdom and equanimity. Often, the reserves of Jing are continually used up in a desperate attempt to control, manage or run away from fear.

The spirit associated with the water element is willpower that guides us to take steps in life that are congruent with our soul’s purpose. It is the commitment to live the highest virtues in life even when we are faced with fear and extraordinary difficulties.

Ironically, when we overuse this will through habitually reacting to fear, we end up exhausted and depleted. In order to find balance with fear, we must cultivate wisdom. The importance of the development of authentic wisdom cannot be overemphasized. Wisdom guides us to respond to life and utilize our resources appropriately.

Acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine are remarkable in their ability to help with exhaustion, fatigue, back pain, joint pain, arthritis, and various hormonal imbalances. In addition, Traditional Chinese Medicine as discussed in this article can be an indispensable tool in reconnecting to your deeper purpose of life while developing new strategies and resources for living life to its fullest.

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