

The Internal Causes of Diseases- Emotions

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What are the seven Emotions?

- The Seven emotions refers to Anger, Joy, Grief (Sadness), Contemplation (Worry and pensiveness), Fear/Shock (Terror)
- Are different responses of the body to the environmental stimuli and are normal **psychological activities**.
- Normally, the seven emotions will not cause disease, but sudden, violent or prolonged emotional stimuli, beyond the range of physiological activities, will cause disorder of Qi activity and disharmony of visceral Yin, Yang, Qi and Blood, which consequently lead to disease.
- Since the seven emotions are endogenous and directly affect visceral Qi and blood, the internal disorder caused is called “Internal impairment due to seven emotions”
- Considered the major internal causes of disease in TCM

The seven emotions are the physiological responses of visceral Qi, Blood, Yin and Yang. Different visceral Qi, Blood, Yin, and Yang differ from each other in moving style, leading to different emotional responses.

In Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor Classic) the seven emotions matched with five viscera:

- the Heart is related to joy
- the Liver to anger
- the Spleen to pensiveness (contemplation)
- the Lungs to grief / anxiety
- the Kidneys to fear/shock

Relationship Between Seven Emotions and Zang Qi

- The attribution of the seven emotions to the five Zang-organs is not absolute.
- The same viscus may produce different emotional responses because of different pathophysiological states.
 - For example: **excess** of Liver-qi cause anger while **deficiency** of liver-qi brings on fear;
 - Excess of Heart-qi brings on Joy while deficiency of Heart-qi leading to grief
- The seven emotions are exclusively dominated by the heart.
 - In fact, all the emotional activities are controlled by the heart and all the emotional responses are the manifestations of the heart-spirit.

Emotions as Cause of Disease

“七情內傷”

- When emotions become so powerful that they become uncontrollable and overwhelm or possess a person
- Prolonged duration of an extreme emotion causes damage to Zang-Fu, as does extreme intensity of emotions
- TCM emphasizes the integration of physical and psychological manifestations in response to psychosomatic ailments

Characteristics of the Seven Emotions

- Excess emotional activity causes severe Yin-Yang imbalances, wild aberrations in the flow of Blood, Qi blockages in the meridians, and impairment of Zang-Fu functions
- Once physical damage has begun, a cure requires physical and emotional intervention
- Emotions represent different human reactions to certain stimuli and do not cause disease under normal conditions
- The Pathogenic Features of the Seven Emotions:
 - Directly impairing Zang-Fu organs
 - Affecting the functions of Zang-Fu Qi activity
 - Deteriorating effects of emotional instability

Basic Characteristics

- Anger makes Qi rise: Anger makes Liver Qi over-rise and all Qi reverse up
- Joy slows Qi: Over-joy causes Qi to slow down and Heart Qi cannot be collected
- Grief consumes Qi: Excess grief injures the Lungs, cannot mist and lower
- Fear descends the Qi: Excessive fear harms the Kidneys, Qi fail to solidify
- Shock makes Qi chaotic: Sudden fright makes Kidney and Heart Qi become chaotic, Heart scatters, Kidneys cannot hold
- Pensiveness makes Qi knotted: Over thinking causes the heart, spleen to stagnate and not move.

Emotions' Effects on Disease

- Seven emotions change has two effects of the disease:
 - Conducive to recovery
 - Mood upbeat, seven emotions reaction appropriately, when anger is anger, it is sad when sad, angry when appropriate
 - Sad but not depressed, there is conducive to the improvement and even cure disease
- OR, it can worsen disease
 - Depression, despair, or impassioned abnormal fluctuations
 - Can aggravate or worsen

1. Directly impairing the internal Organs

- Since the seven emotions are endogenous, they can directly impair the internal organs
 - Excessive joy impairs the heart, excessive anger impairs the Liver...
- The relationships among the five Zang-organs are complicated, so the impairment of one viscus by the seven emotions may involve several organs
 - Depression and rage impair the liver, the adverse flow of liver-qi attacks the spleen and stomach, leading to imbalance between the liver and spleen or disharmony between liver and stomach
- Since the heart is the supreme dominator of the mental activities, the impairment caused by the seven emotions is closely related to the heart
- Clinically, the seven emotions often impair the Heart, the Liver, and the Spleen.

2. Disordering the activity of Qi

- Excessive Joy relaxes the activity of Qi
- Excessive anger drives Qi to move upwards
- Excessive contemplation stagnates Qi
- Excessive grief exhausts qi
- Fear drives qi to move downwards
- Excessive terror disturbs qi
- Excessive anxiety depresses qi

Excessive Joy relaxes the activity of Qi

- LingShu: "When one is excessively joyful, the spirit scatters and can no longer be stored"
- 《黃帝內經·靈樞》曰："喜樂者，神蕩散而不藏"
- Relax, also means "slack"
- In TCM joy refers to a state of agitation or overexcitement.

Heart and Joy

- Joy is controlled by the heart
- Normally joy can harmonize Qi and blood, smooth the activity of the nutrient qi and defensive qi as well as ease the mind
- When it becomes excessive, it may slack heart-qi, derange the mind and lead to inability to concentrate and even mania
- Symptoms of agitation, insomnia, and palpitations

Excessive Anger drives Qi to move upwards

- Anger is controlled by liver
- Covers the full range of associated emotions including resentment, irritability, and frustration.
- An excess of rich blood makes one prone to anger
- Excessive anger drives liver-qi, together with the blood, moving adversely upwards to head, and leading to dizziness, distending headache, reddish complexion and redness of the eyes or hematemesis, or even sudden syncope
- Under excessive anger, liver-qi may flow adversely and attack the spleen and stomach, causing anorexia, chest oppression and belching or even diarrhea.

Liver and Anger

- An excess of rich blood makes one prone to anger
- Prolonged, can result in high blood pressure
- It is commonly observed that ruddy, "full-blooded" people with flushed faces are more prone than others to sudden fits of rage at the slightest provocation
- Anger will thus affect the Liver, resulting in stagnation of Liver Qi, or Liver Fire

Excessive contemplation(Anxiety) depress(inhibiting) Qi

- Anxiety injures the lungs and Liver, which control Qi flow through breathing
- When one feels anxiety, the Qi is blocked and does not move
- Inhibits Qi and leads to depression of lung-qi or stagnation of liver-qi
- The depression of lung-qi causing chest oppression and unsmooth breath
- Stagnation of liver-qi leads to hypochondriac distention and fullness or pain, unhappiness and reduced appetite.

Lung and Anxiety

- Anxiety also injures the Lungs' coupled organ, the Large Intestine
 - For example, over-anxious people are prone to ulcerative colitis
- Common symptoms of extreme anxiety are retention of breath, shallow breathing, and irregular breathing
- The shortage of breath experienced during periods of anxiety is common to everyone

Pensiveness 思

- Excessive contemplation stagnating Qi
- In TCM, pensiveness or concentration is considered to be the result of thinking too much or excessive mental and intellectual stimulation
- Any activity that involves a lot of mental effort will run the risk of causing disharmony

Spleen and Pensiveness

- The organ most directly at risk is the Spleen
- This can lead to stagnate spleen-qi, or deficiency of Spleen Qi and affecting transportation and transformation, leading to gastric and abdominal distention and fullness, anorexia and loose stool
- In prolonged indulgence, it will consume Yin-blood and deprives the heart-spirit of nourishment, often causes palpitation, amnesia, insomnia and dreaminess, or worry, fatigue, lethargy, and inability to concentrate

Grief 悲

- Excessive grief exhausts qi
- The Lungs are more directly involved with this emotion
- A normal and healthy expression of grief can be expressed as sobbing that originates in the depths of the Lungs - deep breathes and the expulsion of air with the sob
- Excessive grief affects the normal functions of lung to depurate, descend, disperse and distribute, leading to failure of the nutrient qi and the defensive qi to distribute and consumption of the pectoral qi.
- Symptoms: dizziness, lassitude, dispiritedness...

Fear 恐

- Fear drives qi to move downwards
- Fear is a normal and adaptive human emotion
- The organs most at risk are the Kidneys
- Leading to incontinence of urine and feces due to failure of Kidney-qi to fixate or weakness and atrophy of bones and seminal emission due to failure of kidney to store essence.
- Prolonged state of fear may lead to various diseases due to failure of qi to elevate, decline of the visceral functions and inability of healthy qi to defend the superficies
- This can be a particular problem with children

Excessive Terror (Fright) disturbs qi

- Fright is another emotion not specifically related to only one organ
- Similar as fear, but different in the responses of visceral Qi activity.
- It originating from the heart, disturbs the activity of qi, causing disorder of heart-qi, derangement of the mind, indecision and bewilderment.
- Disorder of the activity of qi damage the harmony between qi and blood and weakens the defensive qi, leading to invasion of pathogenic factors into the body and occurrence of disease.