

Book review - Body Wisdom

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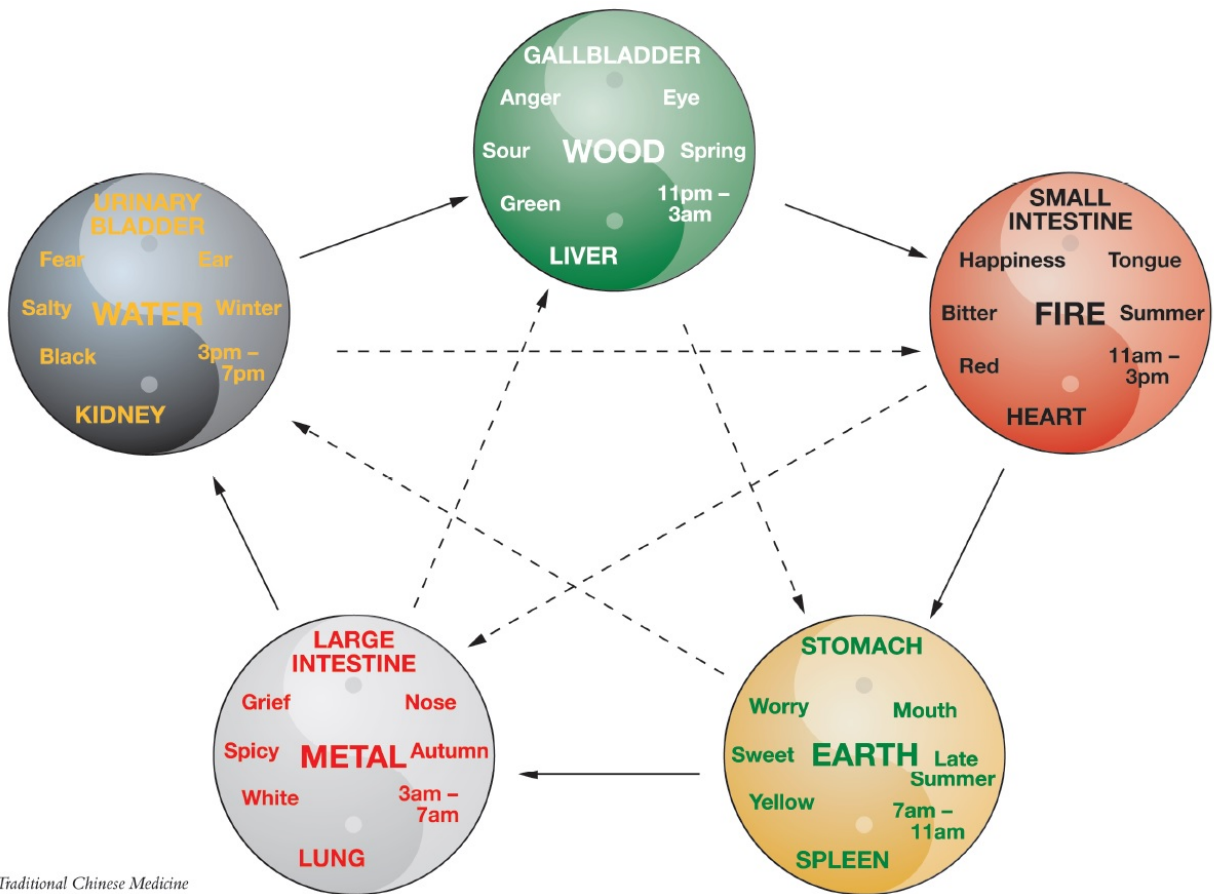
Introduction

In her book, *Body Wisdom*, naturopathic doctor Jennifer Harper shares her own holistic approach to health, incorporating the principles and wisdom of Chinese and Western medicine. Harper details the relationships between Chinese five element theory and other modalities such as nutrition, flower essences, acupuncture, aromatherapy and more.

Each chapter lays out an element, its related organs and its functions from a Western medicine perspective, incorporating a blend of therapies that may support and strengthen any weakened aspects of the human body.

The five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal and water) (Figure 1) include categories relating to time of the day, season, internal organ, body tissue, taste, food, exercise, physical and emotional symptoms of imbalance. Major organs are paired with one of the five elements. The 'zang' organs are involved with primarily collecting and storing, whereas the 'fu' organs are more involved in transforming and transporting.

Figure 1. The five elements



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This is an engaging book to follow and may be a useful reference as part of a holistic approach to health. It does not replace the advice from your general practitioner.

Key highlights from the metal element chapter, which incorporates the lungs and large intestines, are shared below.

The metal element

Partner organs

- **Lungs:** According to Chinese medicine, the highest function of the lungs is acting as the receiver of energy, taking external energy into ourselves, on every level. There is awareness that we breathe both physically and emotionally hence the incorporation of the body-mind aspects to holistic health
- **Large intestine:** In Chinese medicine, the large intestine has a direct impact on and complementary relationship with its partner organ, the lungs. If there is excess Qi in the large intestine, this travels upwards to the lungs. Qi flows through the body via the meridians

Aspects of the lungs and large intestine

- **Body tissue:** Skin. Known as the 3rd lung in Chinese medicine which can reflect sluggish bowels, discharged through the skin
- **Climate:** Dryness. A strong like or dislike for dry weather may present an imbalance in the metal element
- **Season:** Autumn. A time to reflect and prepare for winter
- **Colour:** White. A strong like or dislike may represent metal imbalance. A white hue on a person's face may represent lung imbalances including local congestion or constriction or tightness in the lungs
- **Time of day:** 3-5am (for lungs), 5-7am (for large intestine). Imbalances may include waking or difficulty getting back to sleep during this time, or unresolved grief
- **Sense organ:** Nose, with the secretion for this element being mucous. Deficiency of mucous represents over-heating which leads to dryness. Alternatively, excessive mucous indicates imbalance in the lungs. Sense of smell is often affected with metal element imbalance
- **Taste:** Spicy and pungent
- **Emotion:** Grief
- **Voice sound:** Weeping. The lung meridian controls the voice

Symptoms of imbalance: Lungs

- **Emotional:** Grief, boredom, inability to let go, pessimism
- **Physical:** Breathing difficulties, raspy voice, coughing, nasal difficulties, excessive or lack of perspiration

Therapeutics:

- **Common foods to enhance metal element/lung function:** Chestnut, onions, rice, mustard, carrots, garlic, ginger, basil, peppermint, olives, walnuts
- **Reflexology point:** Ball of the foot (Figure 2)
- **Essential oils:** Eucalyptus, pine, clary sage, cypress, frankincense, thyme
- **Flower remedies:** Honeysuckle, hornbeam, pine, water violet, wild rose
- **Exercise:** Clasp your hands behind your back and bending forward gently, keeping your knees unlocked, working at your own pace (Figure 3)

Figure 2. Foot reflexology chart

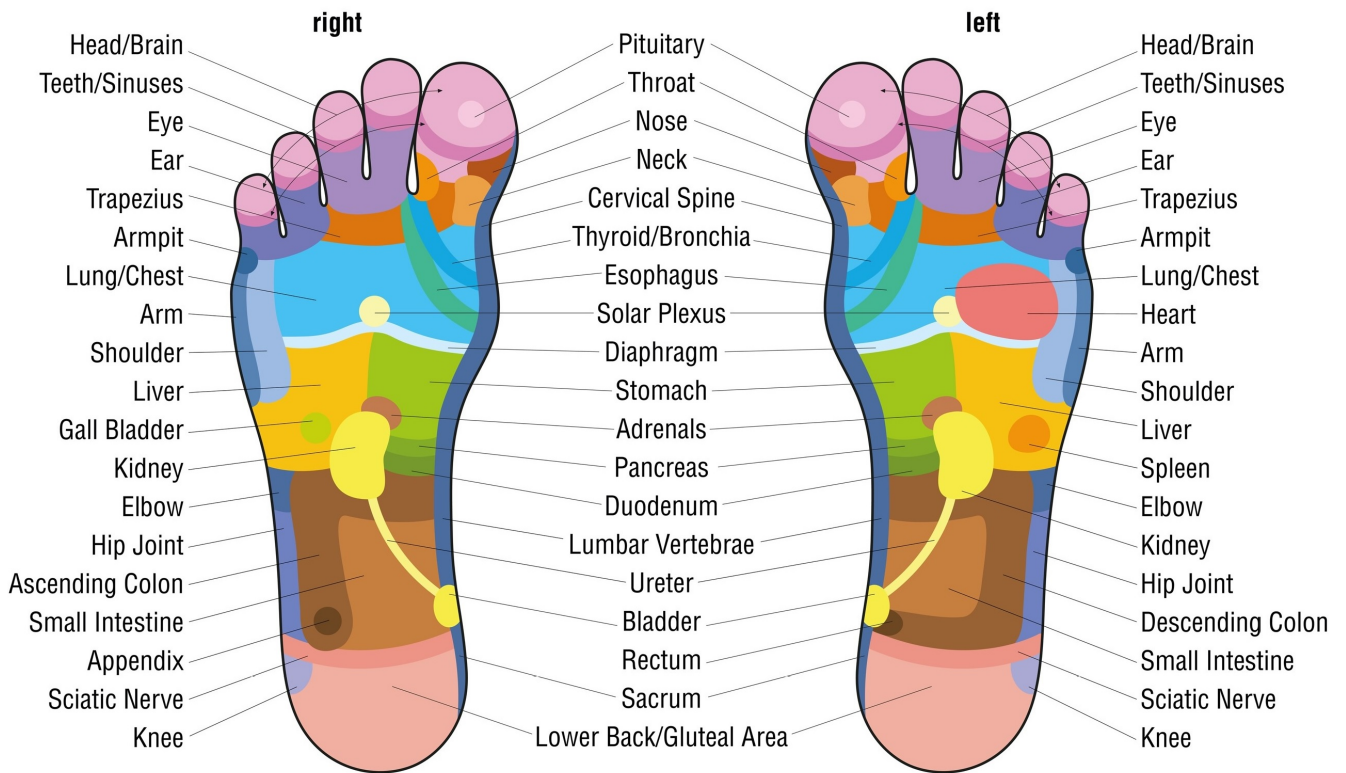


Figure 3. Lung stretch



Symptoms of imbalance: Large intestine

- **Emotional:** Grief, cynical behaviour, inability to let go, constricted attitude
- **Physical:** Constipation, diarrhea, flatulence, body and foot odour, bad breath, poor memory, skin problems

Therapeutics:

- **Common foods to nourish the large intestine:** Chestnut, onions, rice, fibre, aduki beans, cucumber, millet, ginger root, basil, nutmeg
- **Reflexology:** Covers both bases of the left and right foot (Figure 2)
- **Essential oils:** Fennel, german chamomile
- **Flower remedies:** Crab apple, honeysuckle, pine, walnut
- **Lifestyle therapy:** Skin brushing (gentle lymphatic cleanser) carried out on dry skin 3 minutes prior to showering

Conclusion

Harper shares a unique collaboration of a variety of modalities, skillfully incorporating the principles of Chinese medicine as a basic template for addressing imbalances in the body-mind. Together with conventional medicine, this is an engaging read for optimising one's health.

We've received some enquiries as to where you can purchase this book. It is currently available from:

Abebooks.com

Amazon.com

References

- 1 Harper J. Body Wisdom: Self-healing Using Chinese and Natural Therapies. First edition. 1997. Thorsons publishers.