

Stress Management According to Traditional Chinese Medicine

CTTB TCM Forum

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Introduction: The Challenge of Stress

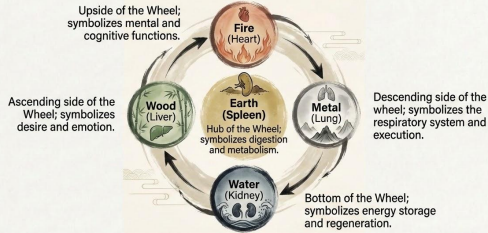
- Stress is a common problem in our society.
- In clinical experience, stress is a precursor to many mental and physical health issues.
- Stress is unavoidable; the key is to manage it.

Goal: Understand and manage stress holistically from a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) perspective.



TCM Foundation: The Wheel of Qi

The Wheel of Qi illustrates the big picture of interconnected systems.



What is Stress in TCM?

- Stress is the body mobilizing energy to deal with challenges.
- The nervous system is demanding more energy (Qi and Blood).



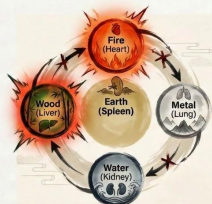
TCM Imbalance: Liver (Wood) mobilizes energy (Qi and Blood) to the Heart/Mind (Fire).

Understanding Chronic Stress

- Temporary stress is a normal part of a healthy physiological response.
- Chronic Stress is pathological, persistently high levels of stress where the system is never reset.

Holistic View:

The Liver (Wood) and Heart (Fire) become overactive and chronically engaged (**stagnant**), causing the Wheel of Qi to be **off balance** and **not spinning normally**.



Common Causes of Chronic Stress Today



- Over-sensory-stimulated (constant access to too much information).



- White-collar jobs (spending most of the day on mental activities).



- Sedentary lifestyle and reduced social engagement.

TCM Stress Management: Rebalancing the System

TCM stress management means looking at the big picture and rebalancing the whole system.

Strategy 1:
Reduce the parts
that are
overpowering
(Liver and Heart).



Strategy 2:
Support the parts
that are weak
(counter
balances).

Strategy 1: Tuning Down Overactive Systems

Since stress is excessive Liver and Heart, we want to tune them down.

Fire (Heart/Mind):



- 🌙 Reduce sensory overload, especially in the evening before bedtime.
- 🙏 Use meditation or prayer to focus and reduce mental distress.

Wood (Liver):



- 🛖 Prevent overuse and Qi-stagnation.
- ⌚ Take regular breaks.
- 🎨 Do pleasant things intermittently to prevent burnout.

Strategy 2: Strengthening Counter-Balance Systems (Earth)

Strengthen the systems that act like a counter balance to the Liver and Heart.

Earth (Spleen): Digestive and Metabolic System



- Strengthen the spleen by eating healthy food.
- Maintain metabolic health, including good blood sugar and insulin sensitivity.

Dietary Focus



Minimally processed, fresh, whole food, with lots of varieties, whole grains, beans, nuts, and vegetables.

What to Avoid: Gan Fei Hou Ni (甘肥厚膩)



Sweet food, greasy food, difficult-to-digest food, and overfilling food, as these will jam the digestive system.

Strategy 2 (Cont.): Strengthening Metal and Water

Metal (Lung): Respiratory System



Practice Deep Breathing exercises.



Engage in moderate aerobic exercises that do not increase stress.



Strategy 2 (Cont.): Strengthening Water

Water (Kidney): Storage and Regeneration



- Reenforce circadian rhythm.



- ✓ Sleep early to match the cycle of the Sun.



- ✗ Avoid physical, mental, sensory, and spiritual exhaustion.



Further Learning & Resources



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