

## **SHIATSU IN STRESS RELATED CONDITIONS**

Stress related conditions are increasingly common in modern society. Stress in the workplace during 2003 accounted for more days off than the common cold, a total of 176 million days costing the country £13 Billion. The BBC Healthwatch programme stated that 80% of all visits to GP's are stress related.

Stress occurs when the perceived pressure on an individual exceeds their perceived ability to cope and they feel out of control. Too much of the wrong type of pressure for a particular individual may lead to breaking point, inability to cope and feelings of not being in control.

What is stressful for one person at a particular time may not be stressful for another person, equally, at a different time it may not be stressful to the first person. It is the way a situation is viewed that causes the stress rather than the situation itself. If dealt with at the acute stage stress is much easier to resolve than if left until chronic.

All the stresses of modern life which trigger fear and the 'fight or flight' response are not released by physical means as they should be, instead there is a tendency to build up tension in the body and mind. Many people no longer have strong family support systems as in the past so have no one to talk to and may feel very isolated.

The stress and tension within accumulates until 'overload' is reached at which point the stress begins to take a toll on health. The chemical and hormonal changes which affect every organ when the body and mind are stressed have not evolved with modern civilisation and the very biological system designed to protect us from external threat is now a contributory factor in cancer, heart disease, mental illness and many degenerative and disabling diseases

The pressure and stress may be external – from the environmental factors, coping with constant rapid change, information overload or work and family pressures from others which are accepted. Alternatively the stress may be internally generated through not releasing emotions appropriately, sedentary lifestyle, self inflicted pressures or any mental, physical, emotional, or spiritual strain.

Stress can impact on heart rate, memory, breathing, muscle function, hormonal balance, the immune system, acid production in the stomach and many other physiological functions. Equally it can lead to anxiety and depression or panic attacks.

Whatever the cause of the stress overload the individual who needs support is invariably 'stuck' and unable to move forward without some form of support and intervention.

Relaxation and time out is needed.

**Shiatsu** offers supportive, attentive touch, essential for healthy human development and especially helpful in stress related conditions.

**Shiatsu** provides a clear process for working with and managing change. It looks at the person as a whole and their interaction with the environment, taking into account both internal and external influences.

**Shiatsu** sessions can move people from a stuck position. Breathing exercises help in letting go of physical and emotional stresses and tension, gentle holding and stretching techniques help muscles relax, heart beat to slow down, anxiety reduce and the mood lift.

**Shiatsu** Often the stressors are not going to go away so help is provided in looking at situations differently and guiding the person towards attitudinal or lifestyle changes, focusing on what can realistically be changed.

**Shiatsu** is particularly helpful where there is a deep emotional reason for the stress as the relevant meridians can be worked on.

**Shiatsu** can be very supportive in anxiety, depression and other mental health problems. It provides a safe space to be listened to deeply, a sense of connectedness and the opportunity for peacefulness and quiet. Shiatsu offers physical touch without invasion building a trusting relationship and acceptance of where the client is at that moment. Shiatsu can offer a different perspective on illness which the client can make sense of and supports physical calming and relaxation of the nervous system without any side effects.

**Shiatsu** treatments promote clarity of thought and creativity helping in decision making, especially important in times of stress or transition.

### **Energy Depletion**

We are born with a certain store of energy which is called our ancestral or source chi, sometimes referred to as our essence. It is stored in our lower abdomen and we gradually deplete this in our lifetime. Source chi is like rocket fuel – a little goes a long way. It acts as a catalyst for all bodily processes, is related to kidney energy and powers the yang energy of the whole body. The store is replenished by chi formed from breathing and digestion.

If we assume we start with 100% of energy in our store most people run at 50% of their potential energy. In modern society sedentary lifestyles and lack of exercise, poor dietary habits, overwork, stress, emotional distress, shock, environmental factors, processed foods, additives and so on, all deplete our energy levels.

At 50% level we become susceptible to colds, flu etc. At this stage we need to take steps to 'recharge our batteries'. If we carry on depleting our energy levels through more stress, lack of rest and overwork, or they get depleted through bereavement or other factors they may drop to around 30% at which point our innate vulnerability will manifest. More serious degenerative diseases such as cancer, to which we are genetically or inherently susceptible, will be allowed the freedom to develop unchecked by a compromised immune system.

When chi or energy drops below the critical level our state of mind also changes and we become depressed, detached, cannot sleep, our fear levels rise and we may indulge in compulsive or addictive behaviour. This is an attempt to boost the energy but it just makes the body more toxic and lowers energy further.

The next step is we become totally de-motivated and may even lose the will to live. Self-help at this stage is impossible as we can become defeated and self-critical. If energy is depleted we first of all need support to give us a 'jump start'.

When you know you would feel better for exercising, changing your diet or attitude, or making other lifestyle changes, but do not have the motivation or energy to get started it is time to ask for support, let go and receive. This is especially difficult for British people who are trained to give and be stoic! We do not find it easy to admit to feeling tired or sick and almost need permission to be ill.

Shiatsu and acupuncture are very effective therapies at this stage. Once energy levels rise above the 30% mark then practices such as Tai Chi, Chi Gung, Meditation, Relaxation, Visualisation and other forms of complementary therapy will continue to build the energy. At 50% energy levels we can start to help our selves more but need to refrain from the tendency to return to old patterns and lifestyles. Shiatsu can help us to understand what causes our stress and energy depletion and teach us how to replenish our energy stores and regain vitality.

## **RESEARCH:**

*Research Project on the Perceived Effectiveness of Shiatsu Treatment. Clifford Andrews BSc, MRSS.*

The first 9 conditions which include: General Health/wellbeing, ankle problems, headaches, joint problems, sciatica, back problems, emotional problems, shoulder problems, stress. Over 50% of the clients perceived the treatment as being +2 or Very Effective. In the second observable category which includes: Digestive problems, neck problems, menstrual problems, the perceived effectiveness was divided equally between the +1 (Effective) and +2 (Very Effective) scores but in each case over 80% of the

sample found some benefit (+1 and +2 scores combined). A third group which includes depression, bowel problems/IBS, low energy, knee problems, showed a greater variety in the distribution of the scores. In depression slightly more +1 scores than +2 were recorded, although all of the sample indicated some benefit (+1 and +2 scores combined). Bowel problems and IBS proved difficult to treat giving the widest spread of scores amongst all the categories. Of the sample 40% indicated 0 or no change and 30% giving +1 and 30% giving +2. Low energy also proved to be a difficult category to completely resolve with 24% scoring +2 but a larger 55% feeling some benefit and scoring +1. Knee problems also appeared difficult to completely resolve, despite all of the sample reporting some benefit, only 17% scored +2 with 83% scoring +1.

Conclusions: A large majority of clients that responded to the Questionnaire perceived Shiatsu as being very effective. Two patterns emerged from the analysis of the responses; The most common conditions treated by Shiatsu in the sample shown, and also the relative perceived effectiveness of treatment of different conditions described. These show very promising results with some conditions which western medicine sometimes has difficulties in treating.

Shiatsu is perceived by the majority of clients in the sample as a complimentary approach to health management which is very effective for a wide range of common health problems.

*What do Shiatsu Practitioners Treat? Nicola Pooley and Philip Harris.*

Conclusion: It is clearly evident from both the pilot study (published at the first stage) and the main survey that musculoskeletal and psychological problems were the most common conditions presenting for Shiatsu treatment. The most frequent musculoskeletal problems were neck/shoulder problems and arthritis. Depression was the main psychological problem followed by stress and anxiety. Other conditions commonly reported in the main survey included Myalgic encephalomyelitis, irritable bowel syndrome, hypertension and asthma.

### **CLIENT TESTIMONIAL**

Practitioner: Sara Browne, MRSS

Client: Hilary McLeod

Age: 57

Occupation: Teacher

What were your main reasons for receiving Shiatsu?

*General aches - particularly my legs and shoulders.*

Do you feel Shiatsu has helped?

Yes.

If Yes, in what ways?

*After treatment my whole body feels much more flexible eg, I don't feel as stiff in the mornings. Emotionally I feel more relaxed. I feel as if every part of my body has been re-*

*energised and the flow of energy is unblocked. I also think I feel more peaceful - the tightness and aches have gone for a while.*

How does Shiatsu compare to other treatments you have received?

*I have reflexology - my feet and body respond well but Shiatsu provides an all over treatment which has different benefits.*

Any other comments:

*Shiatsu is a brilliant workout where everything is loosened and treated - it is balanced and specific to parts of my body which need extra focus.*

*Thinking about sleep patterns. Probably no different and energy levels the same so for me, Shiatsu has worked on the physical side more - less aching/tension, which then probably makes me more relaxed generally.*

*Shiatsu isn't as 'violent' as some treatments and I like to feel my arms/legs/shoulders being manipulated and stretched firmly where they need it.*

*The treatment is also a time of calm and a sense of healing, away from daily routine.*

I can definitely advise of the benefits of the massage. The relaxation you get as a result of the massage is great, and it makes such a contrast to the hustle and bustle on the floor! Although feeling very lethargic during and immediately after a massage, this quickly transcends to a feeling of relaxation and calmness. I can't recommend this massage enough!

Cheers!

**Simon Warrilow EDF Energy**

I've just returned from a session, so...feel very relaxed, to the point of drifting off to sleep, but in another way, feel completely chilled out, as if nothing is a problem on my return to work. I do tend to choose my tasks carefully when I return, in order to keep the chilled out feeling as long as possible. It's similar to feeling a bit high when you've drunk that first glass of wine! If I ever feel particularly stressed either mentally or physically, I find the massage helps to push my shoulders back down to where they're supposed to be! I particularly like the way each massage has a bit of variety each time, and think you must focus on specific areas if required. I always recommend the massages to my colleagues and try to encourage them to come along and feel the benefit for themselves!

Thanks

**Denise Quinn**

**Customer Relations Manager EDF Energy**

## CASE STUDY 1

B is 47, she has three children, twins aged 13 and a 7 year old. Her husband works away a lot. She is thin, with a muscular build and has a contained quality. She finds it hard to cry, but has a weepy quality to her voice.

She has come for Shiatsu to relieve stress and pain around her back and shoulders, she is finding it hard to relax and switch off, and acknowledges she finds it hard to slow down, feels a lack of physical and emotional support.

They moved to England from Switzerland 5 years ago and a year ago bought a house. At around the same time her mother died. Her father is suffering from Alzheimers, he lives quite close by so she looks after him. His behaviour can be difficult, angry and hostile. She has a good diet but has found herself drinking a lot of coffee and more alcohol in the past year. B has been feeling anti-social and cutting herself off from friends and neighbours. She is a movement work teacher but has found it impossible to focus on setting up classes and is having a break and not doing much physical activity.

### MEDICAL HISTORY

B had a caesarean with her twins 13 years ago and has suffered on and off with lower back problems. She has been to an osteopath with no lasting affects. She recently discovered that her uterus is retrograde. Her upper back and shoulders have been painful for 18 months.

She has suffered from digestive problems over the last couple of years, and has a history of PMS starting about 5 days before her period, feeling irritable and impatient. Her periods are getting close together.

### PRESENTING SYMPTOMS

She has been uncomfortable with tightness and pain around her neck and shoulders, upper and middle back with limited movement toward the left. She has been feeling very stressed and finding it hard to relax.

Her sleep has been unsettled, waking several times a night worrying and mentally over active.

Emotionally she has been feeling up and down suffering from irritation, tiredness and depression sometimes feeling that she cannot cope.

Her digestion has been unsettled, suffering from bouts of nausea, abdominal pain, bloating and constipation, which goes in a cycle of 4 to 6 weeks, lasting for several days. She has blocked sinuses and her breathing is quite shallow.

### ZEN DIAGNOSIS

B'S Kyo lung meridian was associated with difficulties communicating and expressing her grief. Her shallow held breath, sinus problems, and isolating herself from friends and neighbours, limiting her exchanges between herself and the outside world, led to feelings of depression and a lack of vitality.

Symptoms of her Kyo spleen meridian relates to feelings of not being supported, excessive nurture of others at the expense of herself, disturbed sleep, PMS, digestive problems and a lack of exercise.

Small intestine kyo relating to shock after her mothers death, and difficulty in assimilating events have left her lacking the ability to acknowledge these difficult emotions. Lack of patience and nervousness can be linked in Zen Shiatsu to the S1 providing a source of Ki in the Hara through nutrients thus bringing the presence of the heart down to the Hara. Because of its link with the ovaries and menstrual disorders it is often diagnosed after a difficult birth, it could relate to shock and uterus problems after her caesarean, and links with lower back problems held since then.

Bladder jitso came up in the first three treatments, relating to tension pain along the meridian pathway, nervous tension, lack of impetus with her work, but overloading her self with family issues, bladder can also relate to the uterus in Zen and an inability to relax.

Liver and GB came up in back visual diagnosis, held around the side of the body, this relates to uneven flow of Ki, inconsistent emotions, irritability, anger and to a physical lack of flow resulting in stiff painful shoulders, neck and back. This stagnation of energies causing the abdominal distension pain, nausea and constipation. This also reflects with livers poor distribution causing problems with her menstrual cycle, frustration and feelings of being at wits end and difficulty expressing creativity in her work.

#### FIVE ELEMENTS DIAGNOSIS

B's water element if full but not flowing resulting in an inability to relax, tension in her back some insomnia and a lack of motivation. Water not feeding well into wood which is unrooted and stagnant, its rising energy getting stuck and causing areas of pain and stiffness in the neck, shoulders and joints. Headaches, digestive problems, nausea, swollen painful abdomen, constipation and PMS are also linking to blocked wood energy. Not aided by daily consumption of coffee and alcohol.. A lack of emotional harmony, feelings of irritability and impatience causing problems in areas of creative expression and organisation. Her lean muscular frame has a wood presence. Stuck wood energy not fuelling fire which is being put out by water causing a lack of joy and emotional expression.

Low fire energy giving a lack of substance for earth which is also being invaded by wood is symptomatic of her care and nurture of her family to the deprivation of herself and feeling unsupported by he partner. Retreating into her head and over worrying, her digestive and PMS problems, the death of her mother, moving country and house all ungrounding he earth energy which is not controlling and channelling her water energy and lacks the nourishing composites for feeding her metal element.

Her weepy choked voice relates to metal imbalance. Overwhelmed with grief, difficulties with crying and expressing emotions and letting go (constipation) lowering her vitality and causing her to withdraw into herself. Problems with her father relating to her metal element, lack of exercise compounding depletion and its inability to control and cut wood.

## TREATMENTS

1 & 2. 20/04/04, 04,05/04

Front and lower legs Kyo, back Jitso

1<sup>st</sup> treatment: Hara Diagnosis S1 kyo BL Jitso started with sotia stretches to release neck.

Dispersed BL in sitting and prone using stretches, rocking. Worked BL28 to effect Uterus, BL27 for small intestine and tonified meridian. S1 3, S1 11 for back shoulders tension. S1 felt Kyo used compassionate touch.

Worked hara. heart Uterus which felt disconnected lower hara. Tonified spleen using a supportive touch and spleen 6 to benefit uterus calm mind, relieve frustration.

Recommended holding S1 3, breathing into lower hara.

Next two treatments: 18/05/04, 08/06/04.

Liver GB Jits, spleen Kyo. Back diagnosis, visually energy held in sides, shoulders. My emphasis in treatment was in releasing stagnation, working in side to open liver GB.

The meridians felt Jitso responded to movement and points used.

GB 34 descends rebellious Ki, relaxes tendons, muscles.

GB 21 Move Ki down, ease neck shoulders, Tension. Liver 13 Harmonise Liver and spleen.

Liver 3 smooth flow of Ki, release anger, PMT.

Hara work releases tension ST25, tonified spleen which felt Kyo using SP 6/3.

Recommended hara massage ST 25 for bloating and constipation. Talked about finding more time for herself exercise to shift stuck wood energy.

Last 3 treatments: 22/06/04, 13/07/04, 05/08/04.

Back diagnosis. Liver GB Jitsu. Lung spleen Kyo.

Energy less contracted more continuity. Still working with stretches to release wood energy also focusing on nurturing earth energy, tonifying lung using deep present connection and breath to connect with feeling of grief.

Using lung 9 tonify lung Ki deepen breath. Lung 7 sinuses. Lung 1 help descending Lung Ki release stuck emotions.

## TREATMENT RESULTS

During treatments B had the following results and improvements. Her neck mobility improved. By treatment 3 her lower back pain was nearly gone and she was finding it easier to relax.

As her liver, GB Qi released so did her shoulder and upper back pain. With an improvement in PMS, abdominal bloating and nausea. By treatment 5 she was doing more exercise had taken up riding and teaching again, and she was feeling less irritable and able to cope.

As B's metal energy strengthened she was able to express herself better to her husband and felt less inclined to isolate herself. With firmer boundaries found that she was able to deal with her father's emotions better and with more clarity. She looked more relaxed, her voice was clearer and her breath deepened.

## CONCLUSIONS

B, has been able to get in touch and express her grief more. Through meeting some of her own needs exercising her friends horse, giving her a sense of freedom and joy in life again. Using her strength to bond and communicate with her father, who she has moved into a home, where he is happier. Through releasing tension is able to be more relaxed and comfortable. Seeing more of her friends neighbours has some support outside of the family.

H. Armstrong

## CASE STUDY 2

### Profile

CB is a 33-year-old male. He works as a furniture maker, although physical doesn't involve much exercise. He feels too tired at home to do any exercise. He is under a lot of stress having to work to deadlines. Emotionally he is experiencing problems from his recent ex wife who appears to be chasing and hounding him. This is also causing a great deal of stress.

He is quiet and fairly easy going but can flare up when really pushed. When he was around 8 years old he suffered from a protracted kidney infection. He traumatically lost a close friend at 17 to cancer.

Although he has a good appetite, he suffers indigestion problems at night. His main complaint is that the stress is causing really tight neck and shoulders. Also pain in his right buttock, thigh and foot.

### Observations / Diagnosis

Posture – very slight build thin but with broad shoulders and thin legs. On rotations is very flexible almost over flexible. Joints are sinewy and seem loose and weak, ankles, shoulders and hips.

Emotionally tends to bottle things up but will eventually flare up if pushed to extreme. Has frustrations and resentment from being hassled by his ex wife.

### Zen

The most consistent channels that came up were Gallbladder and Heart protector from both Hara and Back diagnosis.

Diagnostically the energy appears to be stagnant and collecting in the lower body. It manifested at the same GB points each treatment, although the upper body does not seem particularly kyo.

The tension in the shoulders also indicates GB as the channel runs through this area also the client found chickenwing stretches very beneficial as they went through the zen extension.

The digestive problems can also be related to gallbladder. In zen the GB helps regulate the digestive secretions as well as bile this would seem to be impaired further collaborated by manifesting at night around 11-1 o'clock.

## 5 Element

He is feeling pressurised and overwhelmed from all sides i.e. work and wife and is losing clarity on how to handle it, increasing the stress on himself.

The Hp is being affected emotionally with his relationship problems, which can produce heat and reflect in the GB.

Stress is really taking a toll on him, along with the anger, frustration and bottled up resentment stagnation of wood energy.

Therefore wood and fire are involved in the creation cycle as mother and child.

The emotions he is experiencing is stagnating his wood energy and therefore allowing heat to show in fire (child).

## Action Aims / Treatments

To help relax and relieve tension in neck and shoulders and circulate energy. I want to get the energy flowing and help relax and calm him. Apart from the GB points I used Ht3, Hp3 & 8 to clear heat and calm shen. Also Liv 3 & 5 Qi flow.

### Treatment No 1 17/03/04

Present – very tight neck and shoulders. Deep buttock pain and tight thigh and calf on R. He is extremely stressed.

Hara GB kyo, St jitsu.

Worked B1 to help relax. Tender B1 24 and down. St was not very Jitsu.

GB 30 could feel energy bubbling, very tender also GB 34 & GB 40, energy started to move vigorously.

### Treatment No 2 24/03/04

Previous – buttock pain much improved. Neck and shoulders eased away but returned.

Present – neck and shoulders stiff. R thigh and calf feel knotty. R knee feels unsupported. Still stressed from work.

Hara GB kyo, Hp jitsu.

GB upper body was kyo/empty lower jitsu. GB30 and GB34 tender GB40 extremely tender. Most points around ankle tender.

Hp arms and torso not very jitsu.

Extra work on R. Knee and around neck.

### Treatment No 3 01/04/04

Previous – felt really good for a few days and less stressed. Knee feels more supported. Deep buttock pain gone.

Present – neck and shoulders still tension from stress.

Hara Hp kyo, GB jitsu.

Hp not very kyo in legs. Arms and torso empty except HP3 & 7.

GB upper body not jitsu, lower body very. GB30, 34, 40v tender felt energy start to move.

Li15, 16, B110, GB20 for neck and shoulders. Liv 3, 4, 5 for moving Qi.

### Treatment No 4 08/04/04

Previous – neck and shoulders not so tight. Thigh and calf released.

Present – sleeping well. Coping better with stress. R knee no improvement.

Hara Hp Kyo, GB jitsu.

Hp 6, 7, 8 v kyo. TH4 (sinews), TH5 (stagnant ki)

GB30 on L v tender, R GB34 and both GB40 felt energy move.

Extra knee work St35, BI40.

#### Treatment No 5 15/04/04

Previous – shoulders felt sore that night then felt improved. Thighs and calf better. Knee feels much improved but not right.

Present – shoulder tension both sides. R buttock pain again. Coping better with stress.

Hara St kyo, Liv jitsu.

St slightly jitsu in thighs, St36 reacted, St44 tender. Arms v kyo.

Liv not jitsu in arms or torso. Liv 4, 5, 6 tender. Liv 5 feel energy move.

Worked GB round shoulders for tension. GB21 tender rest fairly kyo.

#### Treatment No 6 28/04/04

Previous – shoulders, neck, thigh and calf all feel relaxed.

Present – deep buttock pain gone but starting to come back. Pulled chest muscles on left (Ht extension) when coughing. Knee still niggly.

Stress as build up to wedding.

Hara Ht kyo, GB jitsu.

Ht arms v kyo. Worked Ht1 & Ht8 reaction, Ht9 strong reaction/throbbing. Torso felt needy.

GB upper body felt ok, lower jitsu. GB30, 34, 39, 40 strong reaction.

Legs seemed to clear easily.

#### Conclusions

Results – There was immediate improvement with the muscle pain in buttock area with it gone after two treatments although it re-occurred later. The other tensions reduced greatly, almost gone by sixth treatment.

Feelings and emotions are causing stagnation in GB being able to relax has allowed him to cope with the stress.

Client started to learn to look after himself. Recommended taking up exercise to help maintain circulation, now using exercise bike daily. As a further recommendation I have asked to consider his working practises, as it may well be a physical reaction that is causing the muscle problems. Just to consider and think about what he is doing during the day.

Appreciating what Shiatsu has done for him and is recommending it to all his work colleagues.

#### Personal Reflections

I wasn't able to conclude any definite TCM patterns but the treatments seemed to have been effective working on Zen.

The first treatment was the most dramatic reaction I have experienced. Working down GB when I reached GB30 the energy was so violent it felt like a volcano ready to explode but it eventually dispersed.

Anthony McRitchie