



The DragonTree

~ Promoting Healing through Bliss ~

Newsletter

Summer Newsletter - Fire

As the big ball of fire we call the Sun makes its most prominent appearance this time of year, it's a nice chance to explore the many literal and symbolic ways **fire** shows up in our lives. Fire was once a god of great esteem in many cultures. These days, with amazing new and sophisticated electronic gizmos everywhere, it's not often that we stop to marvel at something as simple and primal as fire.

In the elemental systems of India and China, fire represents the peak of activity and outward growth in any cycle. In the cycle of the seasons, summer is the fieriest time of year: The flowers are blooming, the bugs are buzzing, the birds are chirping, the kids are screaming, the ice cream trucks are playing their song over and over, and people are packing their weekends full of recreational activities. Likewise, in our everyday lives, the fire phase of any project is when it reaches its climax of growth and activity.

In the summer season and in the fire phase of life processes, we can benefit from keeping in mind the challenge of the fire element. In Daoist philosophy, each element (water, wood, fire, earth, metal) has its own challenge, lesson, and virtue. Fire is constantly moving and changing, just like life itself. The challenge it is to stay conscious in the present moment.

In the body, the heart is one of the primary organs associated with fire. Through life, the heart continuously tries to remind us to savor the present. It beats out every moment for us, prompting us to be here *now...* and *now...* and *now...* and *now...* We tend to mentally wander into the past, trying to rewrite or re-live it, and into the future, trying to predict what will happen or fantasizing about a time when everything will be just the way we want it. Meanwhile, the heart struggles to reconcile the huge importance we place on the past and the future with the inescapable fact that right now there is only *this very moment* which we often barely experience. Heart disease, the number one killer in the U.S., is in many ways a reflection of our departure from living life in the present.

The virtue of fire is called "propriety," meaning the quality of being *appropriate* in the every moment. Cultivation of propriety comes from expanding our awareness – allowing ourselves to *feel* life as much as we *think* about it. This helps us show up in each situation without resistance, in harmony with whatever is demanded.

Fire is also a symbol of unity. It brings people together – around a campfire or a fireplace. And in the same way that flames are warm and dancing, fire is associated with merriment, laughter, and the exchange of warmth and love between people. Here again, fire's connection with the heart seems natural, as in expressions like, "warms my heart." Fire is a phenomenal unifier in a very literal sense too: whatever assortment of things we may throw into it will all become one as ash.

Your homework assignment, if you choose to accept it, is this: for the next week allow the fire in your own heart to be a beacon in the world. Imagine, as you move through your daily exchanges with others, that your heart is open, like a big, beautiful flower. Pouring out of the center of your chest is a radiant, healing, inclusive light. For this week, practice being an ambassador of Love. Whatever unloving stuff the world hurls at you, don't let it erode your commitment to be a positive force in the world. Imagine that even if they can't consciously perceive it, you can touch every person you come in contact with by shining your own sun upon them.

Have fun!

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The guest author of this month's newsletter, DragonTree acupuncturist and herbalist, Peter Borten, helps people attain physical and emotional health with effective, natural methods. He loves traditional Chinese medicine because it is both poetic and scientific.

Chinese medicine has thrived for thousands of years because of its elegance and potency as a complete system of healing. Its aim is to bring into balance the cause of any disturbances to our health - to treat the *whole person*, not just the symptoms.

Our life energy (Qi) can be directed through hundreds of distinct points on the body, each of which has a specific action on the body, mind, and spirit. In the art of acupuncture, extremely fine needles are inserted at these points to produce a therapeutic effect.

A personalized herbal formula (of usually 6-12 herbs) is about as effective as a comparable pharmaceutical drug, with the advantage of supporting your core vitality.

Many herbal formulas (including ones Peter prescribes daily) have been used continually, unchanged for 2000 years - simply because they work.

Peter received his B.S. in botany from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He moved to Portland to attend Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, where he studied acupuncture, herbal medicine, nutrition, massage, and Qi Gong, and meanwhile wrote a popular reference book on herbs. After OCOM, Peter returned to school to learn classical Five Element acupuncture - a form specifically for addressing the spiritual and emotional origins of disease. He now teaches at Lewis & Clark College, has a private practice, and maintains a pharmacy of over 250 raw herbs at The DragonTree.

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