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METAL ELEMENT PRESENTATION – Diane Seago Atkins
Dragon Rises, Red Bird Flies
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Organs of Respiratory System—Western vs. Eastern View

In Western medicine, the respiratory system includes the nose, pharynx, larynx, trachea, bronchi and their smaller branches, and the lungs. Gas exchanges with blood occur in the lungs in the terminal air sacs (alveoli), so the other structures mentioned are considered conducting passageways that allow air into the lungs. The conducting passageways purify, humidify, and warm incoming air so it has fewer irritants.¹

In Chinese medicine, the Lungs are used not only to obtain oxygen from the air but also to inhale pure Qi from the air and to exhale impure Qi. The Spleen extracts Qi from food, then sends Qi to the Lungs, where it is combined with the pure Qi inhaled from air, forms Zong Qi, then the Lung spreads Qi to all parts of the body. If Lung Qi is strong, it keeps the body temperature even and protects from invasion of external pathogens like Cold, Wind, and Damp. The Lungs control the healthy function of sweating—so, if there is abnormal sweating, the Lungs are probably affected. Qi then descends from the Lungs to the Kidneys. If the descending function is impaired, there may be chest problems like coughing, congestion, and even asthma. Another Lung function is to send Body Fluids to the Kidneys. If this function is impaired, there may be swelling and edema in the upper body, especially the face. Impaired Lung function may evidence as rough and dry skin. The Lungs also control the condition of general body hair (hair on the head is related to Kidney function). When Lung function is impaired, it may affect our sense of smell and how clear the nose is because the nose is the opening of the Lungs. The Lungs also bring us a sense of connection to the world. There may be a sense of alienation if Lung function is impaired. Grief is associated with the Lungs, and we may find it difficult to cope with Grief and change if lungs are impaired.²

The Lung is the yin organ; its yang partner is the Large Intestine. The Lung is associated with Autumn, the color white, dryness, and the West.

The function of the Metal Element is transformation and expansion of bonds, thereby assisting the process of developing into an individual. This is accomplished by letting go and re-attaching (like expansion or contraction of the Lungs or the elimination and

holding of the Large Intestine). The process begins at birth, if not at inception, and continues until death and beyond.

Metal Energies regulate the release and renewal of lighter, fine energies associated with the air we breathe and “spirit” as opposed to the material energies we ingest (food) processed by Earth Energies.

During pre-adolescent, adolescent, and young adulthood family bonds are loosened and surrogate parent bonds are formed with others such as teachers and camp counselors as well as surrogate siblings or school playmates. All this is accomplished using Metal Energies. There is normally a shift away from the group to a relationship with one other person of the same sex and, per Hammer, this “chumship” occurs around the age of fourteen or fifteen—although he feels this phenomenon may be disappearing since World War II and earlier maturity and, thus, earlier sex as a principal bonding ingredient.

Yin Metal Functions

Yin Metal Energies are involved in the bonding phase of a relationship when peoples’ auras have engaged each other through the threads of energy that emerge from the umbilicus. Dr. Hammer believes the Metal Element is associated on a spiritual level with the “animal soul.” For the bond to develop further, other energies such as the Earth (loyalty, dependability, and faithfulness) and Heart (love) are involved. Yin energies are close to a solid state, and lend firmness to the bond and its renewal. “Threads” of Yin Metal energies have a holding, centrifugal (toward the center) quality that gives firmness to the bond. The “threads” are renewed through ideas and feeling, concepts and emotion. When these “threads” are severed and the bonds broken, the pain is expressed as grieving. The Yin Metal energies mediate this pain. Breaking of bonds followed by ignoring grieving may lead to physical pain, deterioration, and serious illness.

Yang Metal Functions

Yang Metal energies are centripetal (away from the center) in nature—and contribute to expansion, release, and letting go of attachments to ideas, beliefs, emotion, and people. Yang energies are filled with “the excitement of moving on to new and changing interpersonal and intellectual vistas.” The release includes forgiveness and surrender, which are unavoidable in achieving personal and spiritual growth.

The Self

Self: Yin Metal Functions

Metal Yin energies guide us to a more profound sense of our own identity. To obtain this sense of self-confidence and self-esteem, we gradually rely more on our inner authority and drop the dependence on external authority of parents and peers. The Metal Yin energies help balance a reckless requisition of authority while ego boundaries are being set. The sense of self deepens with assumption of full responsibility.

Self: Yang Metal Functions

In the development of self, the Yang Metal energies help the self “find and wisely use the best that the society and culture in which it develops have to offer for survival and satisfaction.” The socialization process and acculturation begins at birth with the first separation or earlier if the fetus is subjected to trauma. Early social lessons are related to the Stomach and the Large Intestine, opposite ends of the GI tract (like eating and toilet habits). Beginning here, the individual’s natural instincts are suppressed or redirected to satisfy the requirements of society. Every growing person eventually has to make the transformation into adulthood. With the growing complexity of societies and the “shrinking” of the world, “the goals of the nuclear family may be at variance with the principles of society.” The passage into adulthood has moved from a more physical danger to a more emotional and spiritual danger as evidenced by more adolescent suicides.

Metal Functions and Spirit

Within the Metal Element there are two threads that are exclusive and yet interdependent and essential for the development of the whole person. Metal Yin energies work toward refining the individual, while Metal Yang energies work toward integrating the individual into mutually nourishing relationships with other individuals. Dr. Hammer says our spiritual institutions (which were organized for power rather than spiritual creativity) are disintegrating. Because of this, people are trying to regroup as extreme fundamentalists and are also seeking spiritual guidance from other cultures and traditions. People have shifted from outside authorities to their inner selves for deliverance and redemption and are, therefore, unifying the individual with the universal god within. Authority in the “self” is a recent development in human history. Western democracy, because it is a first step toward individual autonomy, enhances spiritual unity. The Metal Element is “the interface of an organism with the finer energies of the universe, refining and renewing our spirit with each breath.”³ “We share with every living entity each breath we take from the earth’s atmosphere as a practical act of union.”³

Disharmony of the Metal Element

Metal (Lung) Yin Deficiency

Personality: Inability to Form Relationships

(Water in Metal)

This person will have difficulty producing the energetic threads to form new attachments.

(Earth in Metal)

Difficulty in producing threads that have the strength to hold.

(Wood and Pericardium Yang in Metal)

Difficulty in directing energetic threads to their correct destination.

There is not much promise for development of mutual relationships or the self with Lung Yin Deficiency, and this type person will obey the authority of others. Because Metal Yin is the medium for grieving, when the energy threads are broken, there will be “either sudden collapse or flatness of affect, buried hurt, pain, resentment, and either an ultimate and inappropriate explosion or physical illness.”³

Bioenergetically, the “Dantien” is deficient and soft to touch. Generally, they are “weaker below than above and compensate by tightening the upper musculature, especially in the epigastrium.”³

Metal (Lung) Yin Excess

Personality: Domineering and Possessive

“This is a person whose energy threads are so powerfully affixed to and focused upon a specific other that the “other” will perish as an individual unless he has a colossal sense of self and is endlessly vigilant.”³ “The connection itself is more important than the person to whom he is connected.”³ He leaves the Earth at the end of life with less to pass on than when he came because of his devouring ways, even with his own soul.

Bioenergetically, there is tension and spasm below the umbilicus, with pain and tenderness either throughout or on the right or left, especially in women during ovulation, representing a degree of blood and fluid stagnation due to the Excess Yin. The area above the umbilicus would be underenergized, and the Yin in the lower part of the body may lose contact with the Yang Qi, which rises, giving the sensation of heat.

Metal (Lung) Yang Deficiency

Personality: Lack of Energy

This person does not have the ability to let go (of people, ideas, beliefs) and clings to the known rather than expand their horizons to the worlds beyond. They do not have sufficient energy to change. Stages of development are prolonged, and they resist the next stage. They are cautious and unable to surrender to the flow of life. These types of people may feel comfortable in jail because the routine never changes there; it is predictable and makes few demands for innovation.

Bioenergetically, there is a pronounced appearance of immaturity.

Metal (Lung) Yang Excess

Personality: Drifter

Continually undergoing change is the chief personality trait of a Metal Yang Excess person. He is mentally and spiritually scattered and ill-defined “as the rarefied air of the upper atmosphere.”³ He floats from relationship to relationship, work to work, idea to idea, and belief to belief.

Bioenergetically, this person appears mature because he has learned from all his wanderings but is not grounded and may seem to float off the ground a little! You may

sense a pleasant sensation of lightness in his presence—and this is your clue to be cautious. He may be drawn to spiritual leaders and practices for short periods of time.

Lung Yang Xu Condition

This condition leads to a sadness that can be seen only by looking deeply into the person's eyes. These people have low energy, a worn spirit, and are rarely ever happy, even though they may seem lighthearted. They may have a great deal of mucus and be asthmatic or allergic, because the Lung is weak and cannot perform its job of digesting the mucus. The cause can be constitutional or congenital, severe Lung disease or trauma at an early age, from being forced at an early age to control the natural tendency to cry, or from a very deep disappointment (like loss of a parent).

Lung Yin Xu Condition

These conditions usually come from stagnation from Cold and Damp that have gotten inside and interfered with the normal flow of Qi. These people are somewhat self-indulgent and attention-seeking and may exhibit jealousy toward those who seem to be getting the attention they want. There are bonding problems in adolescence and problems separating from family and forming new relationships with peers.

References:

¹Marieb, Elaine N., Essentials of Human Anatomy & Physiology, p. 376.

²Williams, Tom, Ph.D., The Complete Illustrated Guide to Chinese Medicine, pp. 60-61.

³Hammer, Leon, M.D., Dragon Rises, Red Bird Flies, Psychology & Chinese Medicine, pp. 259-280, 354-355.



The Metal Element Function

- Transformation and Expansion of Bonds
 - Assists process of development of the individual
 - Regulates release and renewal of lighter, fine energies associated with air and “spirit”



Yin Metal Functions

- Bonding phase of a relationship
- Grieving phase when bonds broken
 - Mediates pain



Yang Metal Functions

- Expansion, release, letting go of attachments to
 - Ideas
 - Beliefs
 - Emotion
 - People
- Forgiveness and surrender



The Self

- Yin Metal Functions
 - Guide us to sense of own identity
- Yang Metal Functions
 - Help us find and use what our society and culture have to offer for survival and satisfaction



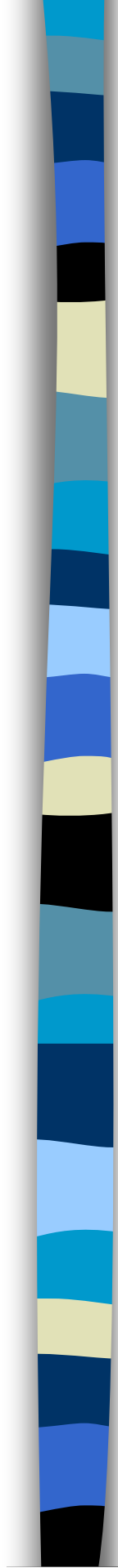
Metal Functions & Spirit

- Metal Yin Energies
 - Refining the individual
- Metal Yang Energies
 - Integrating the individual into relationships with others



Disharmony of Metal Element

- Lung Yin Deficiency
 - Inability to Form Relationships
- Lung Yin Excess
 - Domineering and Possessive
- Lung Yang Deficiency
 - Lack of Energy (can't let go)
- Lung Yang Excess
 - Drifter (changes relationships, work, ideas, beliefs)



Metal Element Deficiencies

- Lung Yang Xu Condition
 - Sadness, low energy, tired spirit but appears lighthearted
 - Mucus, asthmatic, or allergic condition
 - Constitution or congenital cause
- Lung Yin Xu Condition
 - Self-indulgent, seeking attention, jealous
 - Stagnation of Qi from Cold and Damp
 - Bonding and separating problems