

Summer Love and the Heart Element

Summer is the season that corresponds to the Heart meridian and Fire element in Chinese medicine. While the Heart organ has the tremendous responsibility of pumping blood throughout the body, we also are familiar with its ability to love and feel compassion. With each heartbreak and opportunity to feel compassion towards another, our hearts have the amazing ability to grow in size to love beyond oneself. We all will feel pain and loss in our lives; what we do with those experiences will determine how our heart will grow. We can have a heart that shuts down after a loss, or choose to have one that opens further to love on even a deeper level.

In Chinese medicine, a Heart that is in balance is able to give and receive love with the insight of when to open up, when to close down, and to what degree to do both. Someone with an imbalance will tend to have a lack of joy, trouble with intimacy, will shut down completely, feel lonely, isolated, feel no compassion, feel unloved or unable to love others, not know which way to turn, or will have hatred towards oneself or others. Another possibility of an imbalance will be one of panic, hysteria, chaos, uncertainty, unruliness, or too much impulsivity.

As with any fire, it is fueled by more heat and is squelched by water. This is also true with the Fire element. The Heart fire energy has a close relationship with the Kidney water energy. When the Kidney water gets depleted by pushing oneself too hard in work, sex, or exercise, it is no longer able to nourish the fire of the Heart. When this happens we start to see insomnia, heart palpitations, and anxiety. If the energy of the Heart is scattered by too much physical activity, mental overstimulation or over-socializing, an individual will complain of insomnia, nervousness, restlessness, anxiety, palpitations, and might have an aversion to heat.

What can you do??

Here are a few tips to follow. Listen to your body to see what is right for you.

Choose simple meals:

- ◆ Eat the bountiful harvest: fresh vegetables and fruits. Red foods resonate with the Heart: tomatoes, radishes, beets, red pepper, and watermelon are all great options for the summer months.
- ◆ Eat less on hot days. Avoid heavy foods.
- ◆ Lightly steam your vegetables.
- ◆ Adding foods such as watermelon, cucumbers, celery, and lettuce will help to keep the fire of the Heart quenched.
- ◆ Somewhat counterintuitively, hot and spicy foods will bring heat out to the surface of the body, inducing sweat to cool oneself down. So adding cayenne pepper or salsa can be a good thing!

Consume the following in moderation:

- ◆ Fruits and salads. Cold foods, both in temperature (iced drinks, ice cream) and nature (raw fruits and veggies) can potentially weaken the digestive system. In the winter months, these foods are a no-no. In the summertime, we can get away with a little more of these, but use moderation. In Chinese medicine, we believe that these foods are hard on the Spleen and Stomach and can lead to a weakened digestive system causing brain fog, fatigue, and loose stools.
- ◆ Heavy foods such as dairy, and meat. They can leave you feeling sluggish. Sugar and white flour can weaken the immune system as well as the digestion. Use fruits in the summer to satisfy the sweet craving. If you must use sugar, try coconut palm sugar as a substitute since it doesn't cause the spikes in blood sugar levels like many of the other sugar options.
- ◆ Alcohol, coffee, tobacco. These can increase heat in the body causing Heart imbalanced symptoms to increase (anxiety, insomnia, heart palpitations, etc.).

Chinese medicine is about finding balance within, and acupuncture is a wonderful way to help restore balance to the Heart. Come in for some treatments this summer so you can enjoy this season to the fullest!

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