

Some thoughts about points and needling  
By Thea Elijah

My sense is that points are places of communication with deep eternal truths that transcend the individual and basically describe movements in life; but they are also repositories of lies and contradiction, obfuscation or discouragement or puzzlement (or horror or agony) around the thematic content of the point. The points are like a well; at the bottom of the well is the deep truth about life, the sweet true note ready to ring out.

Floating the well, though, layered on top of the sweet true note are something like pancakes-- layers of little round pictures or cookies of delusion, pictures of first grade teachers saying NO or old girlfriends leaving, pictures of cold dark nights, pictures of jeering faces, all these little poker chips stacked up in the point. It's as though, as we live, SOMETHING HAPPENS, and the experience from the outside world seems to demonstrate a "truth" about life which contradicts or calls into question these easy graceful simple eternal life movements, and the image or vibration of the event moves through our system like a small coin-- or a shower of small coins-- until it falls into a slot or acupuncture point that "fits" the shape/vibration of the coin. Thus the points accumulate these little round pictures of life/untruth. They begin to clog the bell so that the true note can no longer sound.

As I understand it, what I am doing when I am needling the point is contacting that deep truth or deep movement-of-life, ringing that bell--needle as clapper in the bell, ring! ring!  
Let the note peal forth through the kingdom!

When I do, when I touch that deep note, what happens is very similar to what happens when I turn on the faucet to start my son's bath: formerly motionless tub toys start to float and agitate around in the chong. I see the same thing happening in the points-- the little pancakes of pathology, the cookies of delusion, the pictures of "life experience" that we have taken into separation inside ourselves start floating up--rising up--and may be felt-- but more importantly, if we are paying attention and doing our work well, may be CLEARED.

There are many things that may happen when we needle a point. I'll describe it as a continuum between Nothing Happening and Everything Happening.

How does nothing happen? A person picks up a metal tool and sticks it, a foreign invasive object, into another person's body. We can argue semantically whether this is really "nothing" happening, but it certainly isn't acupuncture. This may be why I've heard so many people say that acupuncture only works on people who believe in it. I routinely contradict this by saying that it's been working very effectively on race horses for years. It's not a placebo. Those race horses don't "believe." Likely they have no conscious opinion on the subject whatsoever. They just respond.

On the other hand, there is an aspect of experiential reality to this "need to believe" issue, in that a conviction of DISBELIEF--especially when accompanied by distrust-- may limit or in some cases obstruct completely our ability to contact and move the qi of the

client. Acupuncture is a purely consensual modality; we make energetic suggestions only, and the client may override or simply make themselves energetically unavailable to our puttering and poking.

In other words, our relationship with the client clearly matters to our efficacy as practitioners. How we approach the point-- or the particular energetic aspect of our client/ the universe represented by the point-- also clearly matters.

When I needle a point, I am an active agent entering the point with an agenda: to touch the depth of the point where the deep truth lies, to be the clapper that rings the bell of life, so that the accumulated tub toys of delusion can rise up to be seen, to be felt, to be cleared. I am only able to be this heroic and benevolent active agent to the extent that the client is a receptive agent. Moreover it is not simply the client as a whole who must choose to open to my insertion-- it is a particular aspect of my client which is particularly in need of the needle's reminder of deep love and deep truth, and which must trust me and be open to the entry of the needle.

Who am I and what is the needle? Under what circumstances might a point open to receive me/ the needle/ the deep truth inside ourselves?

There are many layers of possible response to this question. I have always found that it is easier for me to contact a point on the client-- whether with the needle or just when initially point locating with my finger-- if I hold the awareness that I am locating and contacting this point not just on my client but in the Universe. It is as though my essential intention is to contact this point or this movement-of-life in the Universe, but I am contacting this life-truth *through* the client, so that they will have the opportunity to contact this deeper-than-self aspect of life within themselves also.

Just so, I find that it is much easier to contact the deeper Universal life-stream of the point through the client if I am aware of myself as Universal Messenger. I often feel physically larger, lighter, and more hollow in those moments. Yes, the needle is in *my* hand; and this is of no greater and no lesser importance than that the point is on the client's body. It is simultaneously a dual relationship between client and practitioner, and each of these aspects of relationship has their importance. We are the Universe delivering a message of awakening (yang) to the Universe of sleeping hidden potential (yin). At the same time we are also human and particular, and every message takes on the fragrance of the messenger. At the very least, if the messenger looks scary-- or even just like too much of a risk or too much of an unknown--the client may choose not to open the door (of the acupuncture point) to the messenger, and thus will not receive the message.

Thus our personal relationship with the client is not of ultimate significance to the healing exchange, but it is the context and the vehicle for this deeper exchange, and as such is "incidentally crucial" to our work. On the continuum between Nothing Happening and Something Happening when we needle the point, both of these relationships-- Universal and personal-- are of significance.

The Universal relationship is more of a simple matter: are we contacting the point on the client to its depth, i.e. are we needling in resonance with the latent health which is universal, or with the particular imbalances of the client? Not all practitioners choose to focus on contacting the health at the depth of the point; often we needle into pathological pancakes and delusional cookies, hoping to disrupt and dispel them, because it is the pathology that we are most aware of in the client, and thus we make the dispelling of illness the focus in the needling of the point. Clearly this is somewhat effective.

What I find to be far more effective is to contact the point's health, and let the pure note ring out, clearing the pathology in its wake.

I am most aware of the importance of my role as Universal Messenger just *after* I have needled the point and set the deep bell ringing. Being the Universal Messenger does help tremendously in locating the point with my finger as well as contacting the qi with the needle, but it is in the moments just after needling that I feel its greatest importance, as the tub toys come floating up out of the point, struggling to make sense of the needle's message now ringing through the body. A great deal happens, or fails to happen, in these crucial after-needling moments, as our beings go into healing turmoil, seeking a new equilibrium. The urge for integrity is strong, but so is the discomfort of calling into question old patterns. Everything is up in the air at this time-- old stories, and even more ancient truths, surge through the client. How do we assist this moment? What I find is that my continued attention to the point and its message at this time makes all the difference in whether the client takes this opportunity to clear some of the old stories, most of the of the old stories, or ALL of them. Holding the note, I stand as Universal Messenger, bearing witness. Often I am at this point holding the point with my finger, as well as holding the heart of the client with my heart, and just waiting-- through the shivers, through the working breaths, perhaps through the tears. I don't rescue; I don't intervene; I have nothing to add, but I stand as loving witness in the midst of the chaos now breaking open, and affirm with my presence the deep note of life as the fundamental basis for the client's new sense of integrity. As with any time of great transformation, a little bit of extra holding as the seasons shift can make all the difference in how much a client is capable of truly changing in a moment.

This Universal relationship is clearly the heart of the matter; but the heart is in the depths of the body, and the Universal is cloaked by our personalities and personas. the superficial may be "unimportant" in our reckoning, and yet it is like a perimeter gate--or potentially a series of gates--which may keep us from ever getting to the heart of the matter. If the point is not open, or is only slightly open, de qi is weak, and the sounding of the note-of-life and subsequent dislodgement of pathological patterns held in the point is minimal. We cannot command the point to open to us; the degree of opening is solely a matter of the client's (largely unconscious) volition. We can only solicit its opening by asking, and how we ask matters. This is the art of building rapport.