

“No Intention” in Shiatsu

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Does Shiatsu lose something precious, if it is used with a therapeutic intention for the relieving of complaints? Does it contradict the principles of No Intention to use the possibilities of Shiatsu specifically to support a sick person? In my teaching as well as during conversations about “therapeutic Shiatsu” that I have participated in, some of the participants have stated such viewpoints. In the following article, I would like to describe my understanding of working without intention and about effectiveness in shiatsu, and would like to open this up for discussion.

Working without intention means that we work with inner wideness in our Shiatsu. Normally, when we want to achieve something, we concentrate our energy by making ourselves narrow (physically and energetically). That produces more penetration force. This reaction shows itself more clearly the stronger the resistance we meet is.

That is a very effective way of doing things when we think we have to bring our viewpoints across. However, if we want to give a person support in the search for a solution to his momentary state, this narrow penetration force will be a real obstacle in our therapeutic work. Narrowness wants to influence the client into a certain direction that appears to make sense to us. However, a person can only make real developmental steps when these steps evolve out of them and their own self.

Inner wideness means, contrary to the penetrating force of the narrowness, that I accept the truth of my client and make it the fundament of my Shiatsu... and, not only when everything is going well, but especially when things are getting difficult.

It further means that I see every reaction as an authentic expression of my client to my touch, and I take it in the way it shows itself to me. I

observe, try to understand, follow and maybe support the movement that is hinted at in such reactions. I resist the temptation of wanting to push the client into a certain direction or to manipulate him. Healing can only happen in the space which evolves when the complaints, the pain, and the suffering are allowed to be there. If the therapist is, out of whatever reasons, under the pressure of wanting to take the client's complaints away, the therapeutic work loses some of its effectiveness.

Working without intention doesn't mean that I just do Shiatsu without orientation, in the hope that it will do something good. On the contrary, a clear orientation - the perception of the situation and the path I want to take - is prerequisite for effective Shiatsu.

So, “No Intention” doesn't mean that I don't use all my theoretical and practical knowledge (as well as my experience) in the best way I know how for the benefit of my client. If they have problems, I want to do my best to help them with them.

The use of Shiatsu to relieve complaints is one of the big challenges in the Shiatsu practice. Even after many years of practicing Shiatsu, I am still tempted to achieve the goal I am striving for faster by becoming narrow again. In this sense, an oriented therapeutic working is testing whether I can meet the difficulties in the reality of the daily practice, and not only in my wishes and fantasies.

“No Intention” is not a question of morals. I do not strive for this state in Shiatsu because it is a “good” one and I want to be a “good person.” It just makes more sense, is more effective, and healthier to work like this. That is all. No Intention simply is more effective in Shiatsu, because *Ki* can overcome its stagnations and find balance when it is touched with wideness.

But what does effectiveness mean in this context?

In my opinion, we should understand the nature of “effectiveness” differently than we do in western medicine. There, effectiveness simply means that a treatment lessens the symptoms in a statistically provable way.

This is surely a legitimate request. Many of our clients primarily come to us because they want to get rid of something which is causing them pain or is concerning them in another way. If Shiatsu doesn't work here (or only seldomly), probably many clients won't come back.

However, the Shiatsu practice shows that the perceivable symptoms of our clients are only the surface of a complex energetic happening. It is these *energetic dynamics* that we work with in Shiatsu primarily. In this context, I understand my treatment as effective when the stagnation pattern, which brought up the complaints, gets into movement and changes as a result of my touch.

Let us take, as an example, a client that comes to me because of headache. This might be caused by a stagnation pattern of the gall bladder, bladder, or stomach energy. An effective Shiatsu treatment will bring into movement the energy pattern that stands in connection with the headache.

The energetic balancing will mostly trigger a relief of the headache after (or already during)

the treatment. However, it is also possible that there will be a temporary worsening of the headache or that it will not get better. So, I don't judge whether my treatment was effective by whether the headache immediately disappears or not. My work is effective, if the energetic patterns that are connected to the complaint start to change.

On one hand, I use all my abilities and experiences to help my client. On the other hand, I accept it if our working together doesn't bring any relief of the symptoms. I know that my treatment can also have effects in such a case, effects that can become more important than a temporary relief of complaints.

This is because effective work with the capabilities of Shiatsu can help our client in two ways: first, complaints will often lessen or disappear completely, and, second, our clients get the possibility to learn and to grow with their complaints.

If we understand “effectiveness” in a shortened form as the mere getting rid of symptoms, then Shiatsu really loses something essential... We give away the unique possibilities that clients get when they commit themselves to a Shiatsu process. We mistake the wideness of Shiatsu with the compulsive narrowness of “fast success.”