

## **Internal techniques – The Quality Of Touch**

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The Quality of touch in first place depends on the level of internal freedom the practitioner has achieved. How far can this person relax and act from the Inner Space rather than from the surface, which manifests in the tension of shoulders and muscles for example.

Luckily the capacity for an open and focused state is enhanced by the Shiatsu-practice itself. It can be supported by a regular practice e.g. of Qi Gong, Taiji, by Yoga, breathing exercises, dance etc. or by the experience of meditation. The practitioner's own development in this respect can also be promoted by certain exercises, which aim at training the attention and at the same time have an astounding effect on the energetic organisation body as a whole. These exercises are usually quite simple and similar to exercises, as they are known from Still Qi Gong. They do however require some discipline and perseverance if we want to apply them in our Shiatsu for more than just a breath's time.

I would like to suggest the term "internal techniques" for such exercises of focused attention. For the one, the practitioner practices them quietly inside; only the skilled observer senses that there is something going on, or being done. And for the other, I would like to call them "techniques" because they are (and should be) used specifically and performed with precision, just the same as physical Shiatsu techniques.

Already at the first application, internal techniques often lead to interesting and even stunning "aha" experiences. Applied "physical"

Shiatsu techniques feel different and have different effects. Their true potential however only starts to unfold – just as Qi Gong exercises e.g. – after years of persistent and interested practice. Then, inner limitations open up in the practitioner, the understanding of Ki and how we work with it in Shiatsu deepens, the energetic perception develops etc.

### **Touching the whole body**

This exercise is really simple – just as all internal techniques. Their principle is always that we first sink in and touch as we are used to. The actual exercise consists in combining touch with a specific mental image, which designates this certain exercise.

Most often it is easier to use this image in a Kyo-spot, it is somewhat more difficult on Jitsu-areas. So it is also with this following exercise, but it can – and also should – be used on any spot on the body. The image, which we use in this case is that our touch does not only affect the spot on which the thumb, the hand or any other body part is working on, but that it irradiates far beyond it into the whole of the receiver's body.

At the beginning it may not be so easy to let this image arise. When it works, however, something will change in the receiver's body. When one practices this for the first time one will notice that it only works if there is a change occurring in the practitioner's body – and this exactly is what the exercise is about.

It can hence be that the shoulders of the practitioner widen up, that she feels more space and softer inside, the back maybe a little bit more straight, the pelvis slightly changes its position or the practitioner becomes aware at that moment of certain spots in her own body, where she is holding on to and now feels a need to let them go.

This is exactly the important thing about it: The relaxed and clear intention to reach the whole body of the client by a local touch brings forward the need in the practitioner to create the preconditions for such a touch – i.e. to become more wide and open, to let go of the tension in some key areas and thus to allow space in our body to unfold.

A touch that reaches the whole body is more than a physical contact. An “energetic” component is added to the physical touch, and this only becomes possible, when a feeling of “space” emerges in the practitioner’s body.

If we practice working with this image regularly in our Shiatsu practice, every time we do so the body recognises this state that wants to arise a little bit quicker. It will finally be so familiar to the practitioner that she can create this state in herself quasi as if she was switching the light on.

This is a simple exercise, which has a great effect.

## **Touching the meridian in the depth**

An exercise to discover the depth

People who learn Shiatsu as well as practitioners often believe that their Shiatsu is already meridian-

Shiatsu when they just follow the courses of the meridians with their thumbs. Personally, I had this assumption before as well. Learning with different teachers and especially the experiences gained from practice showed me that such kind of meridian-Shiatsu is just a faint idea of what meridian work can really mean.

At least equally important as the exact knowledge of the meridian courses and a precise technique is a clear attention **in** the meridian as I touch it. This attention arises from the perception of the quality of the meridian; we could also say that it emerges from “seeing” the meridian, as it were, when we touch it.

Meridians are subtle energetic phenomena; their presence can be enhanced significantly through our attention in the treatment. It is only this wide and focussed attention that makes them clearly perceptible and ready to be touched. Meridian-Shiatsu can become the more effective, the more clearly we perceive a meridian and are able to touch it consciously and with focus.

“Seeing” the meridians is a tricky issue, though. The more we try hard to see them and stare at where they are supposed to flow, the more they withdraw from our searching eyes – same as with any other energetic pattern. The best thing that can happen is that one discovers the energetic perception of a meridian “by chance”, if one stumbles into it. Two essential preconditions for this can be pinned down: abundant practice and serious interest in the issue.

The following little exercise can serve as a kind of introduction to the perception of the meridians. It is best to practice this perception in

small groups of three to four before we try to apply it in our own treatments. In groups of three to four, one person is working on a second while the others can watch.

As a spectator it is possible to see more as if we are treating ourselves. This seems to be a fundamental phenomenon of energetic perception: the closer we are to what is going on, the less we are able to "see". For our exercise it is best if the observer keeps a distance of one and a half to two and a half meters from the people who are working. It is easier to "see" when you are standing.

It is helpful to start this exercise with "loud" meridians, i.e. with a meridian quality that can also be perceived relatively easily by less experienced people. (Every meridian quality can be "loud" or "soft"; it depends on its vibrational state). Under normal circumstances Stomach, Gallbladder and Bladder-meridian offer themselves as "loud" meridians, especially in their courses on the leg. Pericardium or Small Intestine on the arm are other examples.

### Something feels different

After the treating person has decided for a certain meridian sequence, he chooses a simple treating position, localises the meridian according to its theoretical course and then sinks in attentively with his thumb or the middle fingers of the hand.

Those who are watching will now perceive a change occurring at different depths of the process of sinking in. It is difficult to say of what nature this change is. Something just feels different.

We cannot actually see it. We feel something in our body or in the room. It is really subtle, but at the same time nothing special. In discovering it we often feel we found something we have already known long before. And this is true, in fact. We perceive all these things in our everyday lives all the time, most of the time without being aware of them, though.

Something feels different because the touching person comes closer to the meridian. In a more colloquial way we could say, he scratches its surface. Physically contacting the energetic space of the meridians brings forward a response, which can be felt and "seen". This response is stronger if the practitioner's attention perceives the meridian space before physically touching it.

The contact in the "centre" of the meridian then is often "softer" than the reaction to the contact on the "periphery". It can however also be more prominent, clearly perceptible for the observer, depending on the energetic state of the spot. Basically we can say, that it feels good and satisfying for the receiver and the observers (and with a little experience for the treating person as well) when the "centre" of a meridian or a tsubo is being reached. In fact it can be utterly frustrating for anybody involved in this experiment when the treating person does not get there.

There is an interesting phenomenon to be observed here: if the giver is tense (e.g. in his shoulders or arms), we will have the feeling that the meridian is not really being reached - even if physically the practitioner has sunk in deep enough. If he can become wide in his shoulders and arms (and beyond this in all of his body), and at the same

time with his relaxed attention rests totally on the touched spot, then the energetic reaction will become softer, while at the same time the observer more and more will get the feeling that this touch reaches its goal.

## Every touch induces an energetic reaction

How can all these observations be explained? Obviously, as mentioned above, every touch of the body induces an energetic reaction, which expands through space similar to acoustic or light waves. These waves meet the people in the room, partially penetrate through them and can therefore be perceived by them. Most often, a watching person feels the energetic reactions in her own body.

The touch that induces such reactions can be physical, e.g. with our hands. Energetic structures can, however, also be touched mentally, which also induces a clearly perceptible reaction. In meridian-Shiatsu, we work with the body and with the mind. Shiatsu, understood like this, is a kind of Still Qi Gong.

When the hand comes into contact with a meridian on its "surface", then there is some kind of threshold reaction emerging. It shows that the touch induces a clear energetic reaction in the meridian field as well as in the body of the receiver.

With more experience in such exercises one will notice that there are several such "changes" in one comes closer step by step. The clearer the attention of the giver has established a contact with the place that he will touch, the more prominent the reaction will be. If this mental contact is strong, then the first "threshold reaction" can already be perceptible outside of the physical

body, before the treating hand has even touched the body's surface.

This "external" reaction is comparatively yang, i.e. quite prominent. And it is the more prominent, the more strongly the touched spot is positively charged (i.e. Jitsu).

Also the reaction in a Kyo state can strongly spring to attention, although in a different way. Compared to the threshold reaction on the surface it is yin. It is softer, while in its effect often more powerful.

In this way energetic perception is more about sensing or feeling within one's own body than seeing. Still the eyes are of great importance for it. If we look with our relaxed glance to where we are working the reactions are much more easily perceptible than with eyes closed. It seems as if beyond being optic organs the eyes were organs of focussing our mind. Thus they facilitate getting in contact with energetic structures. More experience is needed to be able to "see" the above described with eyes closed. Blind people often have developed this ability.

## Every spot shows a different pattern to touch

The observed reactions can now be quite different. Depending on the energetic state of the touched spot, the first prominent "peripheral" reaction can already occur on the surface of the skin at the first light touch (e.g. in the case of a prominent Jitsu-state) or relatively soft in the depth of a tsubo (e.g. in the case of a Kyo-state of the meridian at that spot). The touch in the centre can be utterly still and yet quite powerful (e.g. in a Kyo-tsubo). Whereas usually a Kyo-spot likes to

be touched, it can sometimes be impossible to reach its centre if this proves to be too painful. Also touching the centre in a prominent Jitsu-spot at times can be difficult because the strong Jitsu state does not allow an easy access.

If one is unfamiliar with in this kind of perception, one may at first have the impression of not getting anything of what is going on. This will quickly change, though. The exercise is so simple that even an untrained observer most often will realise that he can sense the reactions.

The next step is then to perceive the reactions not as an observer, but as the giver. This is a bit more difficult, due to the nature of the energetic world that allows a clearer vision if you watch from a greater distance. However, with the help of the others participating in the exercise it will also become possible. Whoever is interested in discovering more may start to examine the differences between the different spots and meridian sequences in the own practice and finally learn how to account for them during the treatment.

For some the "seeing" proves easier when treating, instead of watching. In that case the perception of the meridian contact from a distance of one and a half to two and a half metres is a challenge for us, and a possibility to discover new things.

However, also for these practitioners the actual exploration of the deep contact has to take place in their own everyday practice. It is therefore recommendable to practice this exercise (of attentive sinking in, feeling the first contact with the meridian and the touching it in its

depth) for five to ten minutes at the most during a treatment. With more experience one will be able to apply it at any given time in a treatment.

In the end it becomes so familiar that we do not want to give Shiatsu in any other way anymore. This because the level we are touching when we get in contact with the meridian is quite rich in energy, and it allows connections to other areas of the physical and energetic body happen more easily and quickly than any other level. I call this the Communicating Level. The meridians run through it like the veins through a leaf. It is satisfying to get in contact with the Communicating Level.

In order to really work with the energy of the meridians, we first need to be interested in touching the meridian in its centre. Not only the hands, but also the mind should be ready to touch there. This is something that can be learned with this exercise.

Second, it needs to be ready to contact the energetic in general. This demands inner wideness and lightness. Such an inner state on the side of the practitioner is being supported through the application of Internal Techniques like "Touching the Whole Body", "Free Flow of Ki" or "Ki-Projection".

## **Deep Rhythm Shiatsu and Connecting**

Central subject of this internal technique is the discovery of the real depth in which the meridian runs and to be there with one's own attention in the treatment. When we touch at this depth, the rhythm of our treatment changes.

For beginners in Shiatsu, this rhythm is a result of the consequently sinking in, going out of a tsubo and proceeding to the next one. Each one of these phases has its own meaning in a Shiatsu-treatment. If it is disregarded, the treatment will lose of its quality.

If the three phases are respected as equally important, a steady rhythm emerges, which makes it easy for the beginner to practice the use of her own body in Shiatsu.

Meridian-work, however, means to work clearly and unequivocally with the meridian. To work with the meridian means to be present in its depth - physically as well as with one's attention. If only the phases of sinking in, coming out and proceeding to the next are consciously effectuated, we cannot be in the meridian with our attention. We are then in the process(es) of sinking in, coming out and proceeding to the next.

For this reason we introduce the phase of holding. When I have come in contact with the meridian in its depth, I stay there. This moment is the most important in meridian-Shiatsu. It is here that the essential energetic movements take place. This is why this phase of holding is more important than the other three.

In fact, sinking in, coming out and going on are only there to enable this holding of the contact in the depth, this is from where they draw their right to exist. As important as it may be not to neglect them, they do not have any essential own meaning. The real key-point is the relaxed holding in deep contact.

If this phase of holding becomes the most important in meridian-

work, a fundamentally different treatment rhythm emerges. The contact in the depth leads us. This becomes so strong that the treating person does not leave the depth with her attention anymore. The thumb has to go out and on, and then sink in again; the mind however stays down there in the meridian.

In the beginning, the deep rhythm may appear difficult and unusual to practice. The impression may arise that we have to learn Shiatsu completely anew. And yes, in a certain way, this is true. Once mind and body got used to the new rhythm though, it becomes much easier though, and a space opens that allows explore the deep contact: e.g. where is the precise centre of this Kyo, which angle of touch allows a direct access, and what is the quality of touch that should be applied here?

If the attention of the giver in such way rests in the depth of the meridian then the phase of holding will gain special importance in a Shiatsu treatment as well as in meridian work. This is made possible because the giver internally can let go, and allow space to unfold. Thus she can enter the energetic space, enter the reality of the meridian as well as of the whole person. This is a very precious moment, which not only may create a major change in the energy field of the receiver, but it also feels very good. So don't miss it - but enjoy it!

Space and *wideness* that unfold inside the giver also have a widening effect on the spots that are being touched and where the attention of the giver rests. This can be made use of by allowing a **connection** to take place in between the two spots that are held. In this moment access to a

deeper understanding of the meaning of "two hand Shiatsu" is offered.

A connection of that kind one could also try to achieve by means of a high mental concentration. However, such a construction will appear weak and ineffective. Again it is the space and the wideness within the giver, which renders the connection to appear strong and vivid. Certainly the mental image of connection may be needed to initiate this process. Then, however, the body has to take over; like the corpus of a guitar or a violin it becomes the resonance body for the applied technique, and more: for the spots that are touched and even for the whole person who lies there on the futon.

In the beginning allowing a vivid connection to occur is not always an easy thing to accomplish. One may feel tempted to somehow force it to happen, however the result will be rather disappointing. Then one understands: you cannot "make" such a connection, you can only allow it to take place. To try hard to make it happen means that you get narrow inside yourself; what is needed though is the *wideness* of letting go.

One other effect of this work is that it allows a clearer perception of the meridian as space. The giver may experience the feeling as if holding a continuous space at its two ends. The meridian field becomes more clearly perceptible, which can be used for more precise meridian work: suddenly it is easy to "see" where in this space there is an interruption, a spot that does not communicate fully with the rest. Then one can work with that point directly and immediately feel or see the change (for more details of this work see article "Living Meridians").

The Inner Technique of Connecting presents a paradox: trying to achieve something by letting go, becoming wide, allowing it to happen. It is a real challenge; a solution does exist. Because looking for that solution may initiate important changes within the practitioner it is also a beautiful and effective kind of Still Qi Gong.

### **The technique of a Totally Free Flow Of Ki (*muss das nicht "Total Free Flow Of Ki" heißen?*)**

When techniques of pressure are merely effectuated in a mechanical way in Shiatsu, which means that no connection with the space of the energetic is taking place, then the movement of Ki will quasi be blocked for the time of the exerted "pressure. Energetic movements then for a big part only take place as a reaction after the weight has been removed from the spot.

It is however also possible to initiate Ki-movements while touching and to influence them. This can happen in different ways. One of these possibilities consists in the technique of the Totally Free Flow Of Ki.

The technique itself is as simple as it can be: we imagine that the Ki under the thumb (or the palm, elbow, knee etc.) that we are working with can move totally free.

The technique of the Totally Free Flow Of Ki is especially suitable for the work with meridians. After all it is the meridians job to channel Ki, respectively to allow it to vibrate freely. For this technique the course of the energetic channel offers our imagination a clear focus: we give Ki

the space to vibrate freely in the meridian course – in both directions! With this exercise we support the function of a meridian.

Also in a local meridian-free Shiatsu this internal technique can fertilise the work. In class, I like to present this on the neck. The neck as connector between the head and thorax often lets the effect become more apparent than elsewhere. For this purpose all neck-techniques are suitable, which work with the neck resting on one, two, or three fingertips. First, I let students apply such a technique merely mechanically, without any imagination, and then I ask them to activate the mechanical approach by the internal technique.

Both techniques, the “merely physical” and the one activated by imagination have different effects, as the receivers confirm over and over again. Often the merely physical technique is being described as pointed, relatively painful, locally effective, pressing, narrowing, intruding and similar attributes. Activated by the described image the same technique is being sensed clearly differently, e.g. as softer, less painful, reaching a lot further and deeper, less urging or intruding, some say they feel a stream down their back, that one feels more connected, protected etc.

### Effects on the treating person

The technique of the Totally Free Flow Of Ki will, after some practice, clearly change the quality and the effectiveness of a Shiatsu-treatment. However, the effect of this exercise on the practitioner is maybe even more important to me than the effect on the client. It is for this reason that I introduce these techniques to the students of our Shiatsu training.

Treating people thus reported e.g. that their thumb got warm. They noticed that they had pressed much too hard in the first, “mechanical” phase, that they had to change their position in order to effectuate the technique well or that they had become aware of their own blockages in different areas/joints of their body and much more. All these phenomena spring from the fact that a lively imagination in this exercise only becomes possible when the treating person gives up at least some essential blockages in her own body.

In a fascinating way, the aspiration to get a clear image of the free flow of Ki often dissolves such blockages by itself. It is like a present that suddenly comes to the practising person as a reward: in the moment the image of a free flow of Ki becomes vivid and “real” the own body suddenly feels more light and free. We notice e.g. that, when we do Shiatsu, we always hold on to at this or that spot, in this or that joint. We may start to understand that it is holding on to the Ki in our own body that holds the Ki in the body of the client, and that the Ki in the client can flow the more freely, the freer the practitioner allows it to be in her own body.

Through persistent and relaxed practice of the internal technique, this effect will be experienced over and over again; eventually the body will gain the ability to let go, to allow space prevail in it’s depth, without the image of a free flow of Ki. Self-controlling thoughts like “I need to let go in my shoulders (elbows, thumbs, lower back, diaphragm etc.)” become superfluous.

The internal release of the body is also a precondition for becoming aware of the Hara. One can

concentrate on the Hara for years, without it becoming more alive and stronger. Only when Ki gradually becomes freer in our whole body, the Hara can gain strength, and we can start to work from there.

## A few things that are to be cared for

Now, when effectuating this internal technique, there are a few things to be aware of. One thing e.g. is that when working with this image we tend to release the physical contact a bit, to go a bit out of the touch. This is good and wanted if it is expression of the changes inside the treating person. Not rarely, however, it is an escape. Essentially, the application of internal techniques does not replace external techniques, but they should enrich them. The physical contact should therefore be kept upright.

Shiatsu is, as a matter of fact, bodywork and energetic work at the same time. It is easy to perform physical techniques mechanically, as we learn it at the beginning of a Shiatsu training. It is even easier to get in contact with energetic patterns when the touch is light or even no physical contact at all. It is however not so easy and requires practice and experience to combine energetic work with the use of the body weight or other physical techniques. I believe this to be one of the greatest challenges that Shiatsu has to offer. Again here is the paradox: How can I be in a concrete and (more or less) deep physical contact and at the same time be open and free and allow endless space inside my own body and beyond?

Furthermore when practising this internal technique it may be that in the beginning our mind rebels against the clear imagination of a free flow of Ki. A certain discipline is

required to go on practising and to rebuild the image over and over again. We also need understanding for the situation of our mind, which for good reasons does not allow that easily to be forced into any direction. It should remain a game, similar to Qi Gong (in fact, this *is* a kind of Still Qi Gong), which is best practised with a light, wide-open mind and an inner smile. Persistence and understanding for the own "weak points" (which are, closely looked at, not only weaknesses) are needed to proceed on this way.

I recommend our students to practice this technique in the beginning for only five to ten minutes per treatment. On one hand, it is not good to force the mind into a certain direction for long time and torture it in this way. This is the surest way to lose having fun with it. On the other hand, this technique is able to destroy the flow and the rhythm of a treatment when at the beginning it is applied slowly (which is naturally the case: it simply takes time until the image becomes vivid in each contact). Equally important is that a beginner in the practise of this exercise runs the risk to lose contact with the client when her mind is focused on such an image over a long time instead of being aware of the situation of the client.

Finally, the contact with a single spot/area should be kept up as long as it takes until the image of the free flow of Ki has become totally vivid. To become vivid does not mean anything than that it is light and feels good and right. As soon as the image becomes vivid, the Ki-flow is released and the practitioner can go on.

To become alive also means that we cannot force this image to come, as the consequence would not be

liveliness but rigidity. Rigidity however would contradict the flow. It is enough to imagine the free flow with a light but persistent mind and watch this image become more and more real and vivid as space and openness spread out inside one's own body. This offers the possibility to understand deeper the meaning of "No-Intention" or "Non-Doing" in Shiatsu, as Non-Doing is the expression of freedom in our own body.

### Free flow of Ki and Kyo-/Jitsu-areas

There will be some (few) spots on which a vivid image will emerge only very hesitatingly - or even not at all. We can understand this phenomenon in the way that this area does not want a free movement of Ki and quasi defends itself against it. Except for the case of the practitioner's attention being absent, there will most often a prominent Kyo or Jitsu be found on such a spot. As such reactions are helpful for the understanding of Kyo and Jitsu I briefly want to mention discuss them here:

Ki always has a longing to move freely. Therefore our work will usually be welcomed also by a moderate **Jitsu** - and it will feel good and right for the practitioner as well as for the receiver. With a really prominent Jitsu-spot, this is however not always the case. One could say that in such a strong Jitsu Ki simply does not understand why it should move. In fact, Ki got stuck creating this Jitsu because the body ordered it to do so - and not to vibrate freely. With our imagination then, we work against the body's clear order - and the prominent Jitsu feels strong enough to resist the freeing presence of the practitioner and continue to do it's job.

In such a case the impression may arise that nothing would happen at all, as if we would be working on concrete. Then we have to stick to the motto: the wiser head gives in. To insist too much could lead to a wrestle, a fight, in which the practitioner will never get wide and open but narrow and blocked; this will let the blockages only become even more prominent. (There is the possibility to work with this technique on such a strong Jitsu, though. This requires more experience and specific, focused physical techniques).

In order to understand the hindrances that appear with a prominent **Kyo** we have to understand that in a Kyo-spot we find a lack of Ki-activity, respectively of liveliness. One could say that with our technique of a Totally Free Flow Of Ki we would make the little Ki that is there move away, too. Strong Kyo-areas according to their nature do not resist the focused attention of the practitioner as much as strong Jitsu-areas. Being wakefully present, however, it will not feel right, suitable to apply this technique here.

The practitioner will get the clear feeling that something else is needed. A prominent Kyo does not need the image of movement to find balance. The tranquil presence and simple, clear touch of the practitioner in its very centre are enough for that purpose. This may feel as if we were holding our hands in a pool or a very slow and calm creek.

### Some have always been doing it like this...

What sometimes happens in class is that some students look at me in surprise, asking what was so special about this technique. They had always been doing it this way, after all.

The precondition for the work with Ki is that its freedom is being promoted in the treatment. And in fact, not few intuitively work in this or a similar way right from the beginning. When they use this imagination, they become aware of it. They would however most often describe their way of treating in a totally different way and much simpler than I did.

And really, there probably is an infinity of possibilities to work consciously or unconsciously with free Ki. The one outlined here is only one approach among many. The more, I have already said far too much about the technique of the Totally Free Flow Of Ki. This probably is a consequence of the attempt to put something elementary into words, which actually can only be experienced directly.

## **The Technique Of Focused Ki – Ki-projection**

The use of internal techniques gives us the possibility to make use of our attention – and therewith our Ki – in a focused way in Shiatsu. They are an important supplement for Shiatsu techniques of physical touch, which themselves could be called external techniques. Their effects rest upon the phenomenon that our thoughts are an expression of Ki. Even more: Ki follows the mind, which means that the conscious mind is able to guide our Ki to be effective where ever we want. Internal techniques are at least equally important as external techniques, let them be applied consciously or unconsciously.

The internal technique that I am going to describe in this section has

a lot in common with the technique of the Totally Free Flow Of Ki. Again it is quite a simple exercise for our attention, which furnishes many “aha” experiences already at the first time that we use it. Its true sense however lies on a different level, which only opens up after persistent and relaxed practice – similar to Qi Gong.

Ki follows our attention. Put in other words: my energetic field reaches to where my thoughts go. This phenomenon is the basis of the majority of every-day activities that we successfully perform. In the oriental martial arts it is specifically being practised and applied. To be fully present with our attention at the spot where we are working at a given moment is one of the essentials for a good and effective Shiatsu.

This technique is known to many under the term of “Ki-projection”, especially to those who have studied with Pauline Sasaki and Cliff Andrews. For my feeling the term “Technique Of Focused Ki” describes what really happens in a better – even though somewhat more complicated – way: the practitioner aims her Ki at some place in the body of the client, maybe comparable to a laser-beam, which gets its force from the rays being parallel bundled. Such a comparison however already leads us astray, as this exercise is much more about the play of focus with space rather than a “hard” technical exercise, which like a laser gains it’s effects from a rigid focus only.

### Initial exercise

A good start into this play is the work with the Hara. This then becomes an excellent exercise for our energetic perception too. To start, you first sit in Seiza besides your Shiatsu-partner. Most important

precondition for the success is that you have a secure and relaxed posture that feels good in the Hara and gives you a good and pleasant feeling of contact to the ground. Then put your hands on the Hara of your partner. Let them simply rest there and look into the Hara with your Inner Eye.

At first, there may not be much to see. After a short while however, the Hara will not appear as the same everywhere in its depth anymore. Differences will become visible, bright and dark spots maybe, dense, full or empty places, powerful or rather thin, empty structures, patterns and many more other differences. The Hara can present itself to us in the most different ways – and it is always a surprise!

Then you choose one of these patterns for your work. It can be any of the different structures that came to your attention. It is good to take something of which you think it has importance or “weight” – or just one that attracts you most, interests you most. And then the actual exercise starts:

First, become aware of your own Hara once again – of the whole of the Hara with the Tan Den as its centre of gravity. Care about sitting straight and relaxed and that it feels good. Now, allow your attention that is resting in the Hara to expand slowly, beyond the limits of the Hara into the thorax. On the way up, you include the strength of the Middle Warmer (Wood and Earth) into the movement. In the chest it is the Heart that vibrates along, which gives the emerging touch the right colouring.

And it expands further: through the shoulders into the upper arms and the elbows, into the forearms,

through the wrists into the hands. Actually you do not do anything, but just sit there and watch it happen. Internally you step aside and give room to the expanding attention of the Hara.

Then the movement goes beyond the limits of your hands into the Hara of your partner, into the centre of the structure or quality that you have chosen. You will find this centre easily; you just have to “look closely”. It is where the chosen quality is most intense, maybe most burning or clear. When you have chosen an empty area e.g., the centre will be where the emptiness is clearest, most prominent, if the spot is dark, then the centre is where it appears darkest.

What is important: your Hara-attention does not flow from your Hara into the Hara of your partner. It *expands* to there! This is an important difference: in the first case you lose something – maybe only little – but you lose something. In the second case however, you strengthen your centre.

Maybe in the meantime your attention broke down on the way through the thorax, shoulders or arms. This is absolutely normal, as it is quite difficult and needs some practice to be able to keep it up integrated over a certain period of time. This does not have to bother you, though, you just start it again from the Hara. If it crushes twenty times in a minute, you reinstall it twenty times, light-hearted and with the Qi Gong’s Inner Smile.

Maybe you discover spots on the way from your Hara into the hands on which your attention always dissolves, respectively where it cannot pass through. You can assume that these are places where

you hinder the Ki-flow in one way or another. Vividly imagine then that the attention can expand through there, step aside internally and make room for it.

You possibly notice that something makes it difficult for you to give room there. Maybe it is your posture, maybe a lack of calmness and ease in yourself, or it is a thought that distracts you. Whatever you find, care for the situation to change and that you can perform the exercise without being bothered.

### Ki works

When the arc from your Hara to your partner is installed it is as if you would touch her there with your own Hara. It does not only seem like – you really touch her in this way. It is because the attention or power of your Hara has expanded to that point that you are able to touch there. Now you just touch as relaxed as possible. Be clearly aware of the centre of this structure - and offer space to it with your attention. Do not try to change anything, as this is less effective (and more exhausting) than the attentive touch with an inner feeling of wideness.

This is a very concrete energetic technique that works. Few moments of direct and vivid contact between the two spots are enough to change something. You will notice this when you “see” that under the influence of the attention of your Hara the pattern in the Hara of your partner will probably change. At first, the centre of the pattern that you are touching may move – in this case, you simply follow, respectively look for a new centre. Maybe this pattern disappears or clearly changes its energetic quality. When something has changed, this technique has fulfilled its task and you stop – unless you have the clear feeling that

there is still something more to change soon, thus that it is better to stay some more.

The technique of focusing our Ki and to treat with it is quite simple, then. All we need is the will to perform it and a little discipline to keep up the arch of attention. It can be used at any spot of the body, in nearly every situation as a support of other Shiatsu-techniques or also by itself. It can be really effective and really change something. It is, however, not a magic technique. Even if you master it, the same what is true for all subtle Shiatsu-techniques applies here too: they are especially effective when we use them to support a movement that wants to happen in the client. It can lead to blockage when we want to use it to force our client “on the right track”.

### The application in Shiatsu

The technique described here can be used in all possible situations in Shiatsu. It enables us to be really where we work, even there, where our hands cannot reach to on a physical level. It supports the physical work but is also effective by itself. In fact to my understanding it is the fundament for Shiatsu. I use it a lot in meridian free local Shiatsu e.g. when working with joint problems.

In meridian work it allows for a more direct contact to the meridian in the depth under our hands. The wideness that opens up in shoulders, arms, wrists and beyond helps you to understand that what the tip of your thumb, fingers or elbow touch is not just body tissue, that you enter a space instead when you touch the meridian. Meridians are vibrating space. To touch means that your hara is in this space; that you are right in there.

In the flow of a Shiatsu-treatment the application of this technique is however something different from the exercise on the Hara described above. First, we work here with two hands that often have different tasks. It takes some practice to let the attention equally expand into and beyond both arms and hands.

Second, the application of this technique is more difficult when we work with the thumb instead of working with the palms. Most often we start to build up tensions in our wrist and shoulder (and other, more far away regions of our body) as soon as we start using the thumb. When working with the thumb it gets more difficult to step aside internally and to give full space to the attention of the Hara. Third, we do not have as much time in a treatment for the single touch as we had in the former exercise on the Hara. If it takes too long to build up the attention at a point, the treatment flow can get interrupted.

The first step is to learn to build up the attention from the Hara to every spot of the sequence we are treating. Therefore you first sink in physically as you are used to. Then you add the touch with the attention of your Hara: it expands from the Hara through the chest and arms to the spot you are treating. Later on you will not have to rebuild the attention at every new spot, but be able to keep it upright over longer time and many contacts.

Further on it is best to practise the exercise only with the Resting Hand first. To start with both hands right away is quite difficult, and the Resting Hand is the more important of the two. When you are familiar with this feeling, add the Wandering

Hand. Take your time to get to this point; it can well take a few weeks (doesn't have to, though).

In the beginning this exercise is often a one-way road: we still need a high level of concentration to focus the attention. There is no more space left to perceive anything else. There also seems to be no space left for all the other important and beautiful sides of Shiatsu. The more, the treatment can become drowsy and viscous, everything goes on really slowly now and the treatment flow can get interrupted.

In order to avoid this it is recommendable not to practise more than five to ten minutes a treatment. This way you can avoid becoming rigid, that your treatment falls apart and you lose joy for what you do. As with all these exercises it is helpful to perform it with a light mind and an Inner Smile.

### The reward and the useful detour

However, it will soon become a lot easier and the toil in the beginning is rewarded. To touch with the attention of the Hara will soon become as familiar to you as all the other Shiatsu-techniques that you have already mastered until now. Your body starts to understand how it can be used as an instrument in Shiatsu without having to close the locks. This understanding may perhaps evolve only in the arms at first and later also in other areas like the chest, the pelvis or the legs.

Now it pays off that you have freed the way for your Hara-attention to pass through the chest and the difficult spots in the shoulders, arms, wrists and thumbs so often. Once you get to the point where you can give "stereo"-Shiatsu with both arms in this way, a new wideness and lightness becomes possible in your

work. For the one it allows you a more intense contact and for the other overview and distance to the spot you are touching.

The distance is important, as it makes it easier for you to perceive energetic patterns and to touch them directly, with a focus. It supports you to keep an overall view of the treatment, to assess the meaning of a spot that you are working with in relation to the whole, to gain a broad view and perceive important changes in other parts of the body. Distance protects you, too.

Even more: you start to experience yourself in a different way in your body and energetic space. How exactly this will be is difficult to say, the more as everybody experiences it differently and would describe it in another way. It has to do with lightness and wideness, maybe also with stability, and opens the way to the understanding of Ki. It can evolve early, after a few months, or it can take some years, and it is not a disadvantage if it takes a little longer.

One can ask now whether it is not possible to touch directly with the attention of the Hara, and whether the detour over the chest, shoulders and arms is a necessary one. This would save us a lot of effort.

The answer is yes, it is possible. It is, however, not as effective – especially not in the beginning. Most important, the heart does not get involved in this kind of touch. The “detour” through the chest makes the practitioner act not only from the Hara, but also from the Middle Warmer and with the Heart. The power and the contact come out of the whole human. This is a totally

different encounter, much more vivid – and besides, more effective, too.

There is also another reason why it pays off to do this “detour”. To work with open shoulders and arms is one of the greatest challenges in Shiatsu for many. “Shoulders wide, elbows not stretched to full but neither too bent, let go of the wrists, open thumbs” etc. are therefore hints that are often given by Shiatsu-teachers – for good reasons. With this technique of the focused Ki you get all this for free: the state of openness evolves quasi as a side effect by itself when I imagine the arc of attention.

If we only think from the Hara directly to the place we are working on without making the detour through the body it is also possible that the technique of focused Ki is only performed mentally but not being created within the body. The body and its centre, the Hara, are probably not that open yet in the beginning to receive the arriving mental impulse and to perform it effectively. The detour through the thorax, shoulders and arms however binds the body into the exercise, gives it the possibility to learn how to work in the “open state” and hinders us from performing the exercise only mentally. If the technique only relies on mental control there is a danger on the longer term that the Ki of the practitioner becomes too yang, i.e. too quick and hot (especially with those who are prone to it anyway).

Later then, with more experience, it will become possible to let the attention of the body expand directly into the forearms, wrists, hands and thumbs, and from there to the place of the actual touch. And even later, with even more experience, it may sometimes appear to make sense to touch directly with

the attention of the Hara and the  
Heart.

Wilfried Rappenecker 1997