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Jin Shin Do® Bodymind Acupressure®: Long Definition

At its basic level, Jin Shin Do® Bodymind Acupressure® is a relaxation method that can help release physical and emotional tension. In the hands of a trained therapist, this Bodymind Acupressure technique can be used to help release the effects of childhood abuse and other trauma. The work can include the intensity of catharsis, but is characterized by gentleness and non-invasiveness, safety in touch, and a sense of wonder and synchronicity. What makes Jin Shin Do different from other systems of acupressure is its foundational use of the Strange Flows and of Western psychotherapeutic concepts, notably those of Wilhelm Reich. These Eastern and the Western theories are like two lenses through which to view the bodymind. They are the two eyes of Jin Shin Do.

Jin Shin Do's use of the Strange Flows comes to us from Japanese acupressurist Jiro Murai's near death vision of "rivers of fire" running through his body. In gratitude for his recovery, he devoted the rest of his life to understanding his vision and learning how to use it for healing. Part of his work, Jin Shin Jyutsu, came west with one of his students Mary Burmeister. In the 1970's, Iona Teegarden's research in Japan connected Jiro Murai's "Major Vertical Flow", "Main Central Flow", "Minor Diagonal Flow", and "Fatigue Flow" with the eight "Strange Flows" (or "Extraordinary Meridians") of Chinese acupuncture. This vision reunites Jiro Murai's legacy with its 5000-year-old Chinese roots. Jiro Murai's spontaneous rediscovery and Iona Teegarden's subsequent research into the Strange Flows enlarged our understanding of them as a primary self-regulating mechanism. Also called "Wondrous Vessels" or "Psychic Channels", they are a system of eight channels that store and release energy to all the twelve "Organ Meridians". When open, these channels shunt life energy around the body, continually adjusting and moderating the flow of energy through the twelve meridians.

Thus, at its basic level, rather than "prescribe" specific points for specific conditions, Jin Shin Do acupressure seeks to stimulate the body's own system of self-regulation by activating the Strange Flows and allowing the body to balance its own energy.

To this already rich therapeutic approach, Iona added a Western component - from Wilhelm Reich's view of the body as a series of segments, each relating to specific emotional experiences. When we are not allowed to express an emotion, the way we hold it back - or keep it from coming into the world - is by tightening

the muscles that would normally express it. This tension can become chronic, with the muscles involved becoming rigid and incapable of expression. As we use muscular tension to numb out feeling, “rings of armoring” develop in specific segments, and we become separated from the emotional energies that could give direction to our lives. To release the armoring, Iona has applied Reichian ideas about the sequence of releasing the segments and the layers of armoring within them. She uses acupuncture to loosen muscular armoring and restore emotional expressiveness, and suggests that the vertical flows of energy that Reich talked about are the channels and meridians (all but one of which flow vertically through the body).

Looking again through the Eastern lens, the emotions are honored as servants of the Spirit. Each pair of meridians carries a specific emotional energy: joy, anger, grief, fear, concern, etc. When we do not honor our feelings and let them guide us, when we hold them back with muscular tension, we also cut off the flow of energy through the channels and meridians, and to the internal organs. Those big tight knots in our shoulders (or back or neck or wherever) are pools of energy that has ceased to flow through the acu-points. Therefore, one of the best preventative medicines is simply learning to be aware of our feelings - learning to heed them and give them appropriate expression in the world. In this process, the Strange Flows can have a general balancing and calming effect.