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## Enriching the Three Treasures

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You are unique! Even though you may share certain characteristics with other family members or acquaintances, your Jing, Qi and Shen are uniquely yours. So how can you determine what your needs are in order to bring more vitality and happiness to your life? Ah — that is the adventure!

Let's explore some practical steps that make sometimes-difficult changes possible and even enjoyable and interesting. Using food, lifestyle and meditation and the paradigm of the Three Treasures, we can open ourselves to possibilities for better health and greater wellbeing. For our purposes at this time, we'll simplify some complex Chinese medical concepts to focus on do-able, realistic practices for enriching the Treasures in our lives.

Jing, for example, refers to our inheritance, largely based on the father's sperm and the mother's egg coming together in conception and forming a new substance that becomes a human being. The parents' health at the time of conception and the mother's diet and lifestyle during pregnancy also contribute to the health and wellbeing of the new being. Jing is generally considered to be relatively stable and capable of changing only slowly, if at all, forming the basis for our constitution and declining over a lifetime. Jing manifests in the human body as bones, teeth, head hair, immune system, race, gender and the 7 and 8-year cycles. It relates to our Western concept of DNA.

We know now that DNA isn't necessarily destiny. Genes can be switched on or off to change the likelihood of certain diseases and illnesses, length of life and general health. Bones can be made weaker or stronger, immunity can be enhanced or lessened and gender is more fluid than once believed.

Let's look at bones, for example. What damages bones and can lead to issues such as osteopenia/osteoporosis, arthritis and a tendency to broken bones? What can build stronger, more flexible bones? Acidic blood, largely caused by improper diet, leaches minerals from bones and muscles and can support the growth of cancerous tumors and other unhealthy conditions. A simple dipstick test every morning can track pH or acid-alkaline balance, and eating more alkaline and fewer acidic foods can remedy an acidic condition. Simple, inexpensive, non-invasive! Generally, excessive protein, as found in animal products such as meat and dairy, are more acidic, and most vegetables, except nightshades (tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and eggplant), tend to be more alkaline. Alcohol, sugar and soft drinks are very acidic. As with most "rules" balance is important. Western medical drugs that are advertised as "bone-building" interfere with the bones' natural process of discarding old bone, and they build big chalky bones that break more easily than healthy bones. Bones grow strong and flexible when stressed by weight-bearing exercise and proper stretching. The right minerals (not only calcium but magnesium, strontium, boron and other minerals, such as are found in traditionally-grown — as opposed to processed — food, and abundant in sea vegetables), as well as vitamins, such as Vitamin D, are also essential.

An explanation of Qi/Ki that I particularly like is that it refers to "transformation of matter to energy and energy to matter." In introducing my patients to Qi I often use the example of eating food (matter), which Qi changes to energy (process of digestion) and to matter (blood, bones,

organs, repairs), and so on. Qi is similar to light in some ways as well. Physicists tell us that light is wave and particle (energy and matter), it follows certain rules and can be measured – like Qi. This can make a strange-sounding word or concept believable, help someone suspend their disbelief, and get them excited about our medicine as well.

Shen is integrally related to Jing and Qi and has to do with mind-spirit-consciousness and vitality. It can be nurtured through meditation and other contemplative practices and a sense of adventure as we navigate each of our unique life paths.

*Ed. note - Ruth will expand on the content of this article in her September 2020 Connect & Learn webinar, and go into great depths on this topic in the 2021 AOBTA® Convention.*