

A powerful health practice: Chi Nei Tsang, Healing from Within

*Adapted by Kim Knight from an article by Gilles
Marin and Mateo Magarinos*

The Belly - the "Organ" of Happiness

Just as much as our brain, our entire abdomen, in its rich complexity not yet completely explored by modern science, profoundly establishes our affective life. Our enteric brain in our abdomen shapes our emotions and, in return is affected by these emotions. With its battery of neurotransmitters, and other psychoactive endogenous substances, the health of the abdomen has the power to give birth to discouragement or enthusiasm, helplessness or pleasure, depression or fulfillment. Gifted with memory, our belly contains the archives of all our emotional life.

The ancient Chinese Taoists knew this. They associated anger, anxiety, fear, worry, and sadness with different areas of the viscera. Just some self-help Chi Nei Tsang can relieve internal pressure and create an immediate sense of well being at the level of the "upper brain" through the release of endorphins which are much more efficient against pain than any pharmaceutical drugs.

Serious studies conducted by M.D. Michael Gershon in his book 'The Second Brain' show such a tight connection between our brain and our abdomen, that we can really see that our abdomen **is** 'the second brain'. Chi Nei Tsang (CNT), a generative massage of the internal organs, comes from the most ancient of Taoist traditions that virtually disappeared from China after the Cultural Revolution and the inception of the communist regime. Brought to the West by Chi-Kung Master Mantak Chia in the 1970's, CNT is a very efficient way to dissolve the negative energies which have accumulated in the body throughout many years. These energies can manifest as countless somatic pathologies as well as mental and emotional disorders.

Our digestive system is a perfectly integrated unit composed of neurons, proteins, and neuro-transmitters that relates to the "upper" brain and interacts with it in a completely independent way, which is called the enteric nervous system. This enteric nervous system is completely autonomous and is able to learn, remember and generate emotions and feelings.

Chronic emotional negativities such as excess fear, anger, anxiety, sadness or hopelessness can generate energetic obstructions as harmful to health as physical accidents, surgeries, overuse of pharmaceutical drugs, stress, emotional shock and poor diet. CNT helps people rejuvenate their bodies and change unhealthy habits by relieving stress or tension and freeing all kinds of toxicity from the system. It thus constitutes a magnificent form of touch therapy, both preventive and curative, which can be practiced on oneself as well as on others.

One of the differences between CNT and Japanese Shiatsu or Chinese Tui-Na, which also influence the internal organs by manual acupressure on the meridian system, is that CNT works directly on specific organs, as well as each of the five major energetic organ systems of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Even though CNT focuses primarily on the abdomen and the internal organs, in practice it works on every part of the body: upper, middle, and lower abdomen, diaphragm, chest, limbs, lower, middle, upper back, and neck, the head and jaws, as well as the general alignment of the body. Perhaps even more importantly, CNT works with the client's mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects as well as any physical discomfort. This truly holistic approach has brought CNT to the rank of 'master health technique' in China, its country of origin, and in Europe and the United States where it is now being taught and practiced.

Tension, stagnation, toxins and negativities – whether or not they are confirmed pathologies – *always* manifest themselves in the abdomen and can easily be identified as physical tension,

spasm, bloating, feelings of knots and tangles in the nerves, blood vessels, or hardened lymph nodes, as well as accumulations of fatty tissue and cellulite around the waist. Sooner or later, all the tensions, internal conflicts, and contradictions of a lifetime will surface and crystallize themselves in the abdomen more than anywhere else in the body. This area being intimate, often big, soft, and vulnerable, is therefore well protected, with emotional traumas either consciously or unconsciously hidden and ignored.

The numerous beneficial effects of CNT

The techniques that CNT utilizes can dissolve blockages, untie knots and tangles, release painful abdominal congestion and eliminate areas of very old constrictions. The techniques can tremendously reduce the fat load, help the client to relax fully, and allow vital energy to flow freely again, revitalizing the whole abdomen and beyond to the rest of the body. CNT can also greatly alleviate or immediately dissolve negative emotions, anxiety, anguish and depression, and help reinstate a "joie de vivre" that has long been dulled.

These results usually come along with spectacular physiological results: complete remission of functional and neuro-vegetative troubles such as chronic constipation and diarrhea, spastic colon, gastritis, ulcers of all kinds, abdominal cramps and menstrual problems. Beyond the abdomen, this treatment also works remarkably well in improving the cardio-vascular and pulmonary systems as well as in restoring sexual functions by efficiently regularizing blood pressure and body weight, reducing or completely getting rid of joint pains, and alleviating insomnia, chronic fatigue, allergies and persistent headaches. CNT also works with impressive results on all nerve pain including back pain, rheumatism, muscular and neuralgic pain of the extremities, sciatica and chronic stiffness of the back and neck.

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innumerable health complaints of the widest range, we never work directly against symptoms - we work on the person who has the symptom. These symptoms mean something." Gilles Marin

The Second Brain

How can such results be possible? How can a few massage techniques open the body to such a full regeneration and simultaneously heal body, mind and spirit? Even if we have to naturally and judiciously complement the treatments with other modalities, as long as there is a change in habits, diet and life-style, Chi Nei Tsang demonstrates a surprising efficiency in healing the whole person. The answer lies in the fact that our viscera constitute a second brain very similar to the one in our head.

Taoist masters, American Indian shamans and Ayurvedic doctors have known about this since ancient times. For them, the abdomen is the source of life, the site of the soul, and they often compare the shape of the brain with that of the small intestine, both endowed with very surprisingly similar circumvolutions. This morphological likeness unfolds into an incredible network of similarities: This second brain at the very center of our being is truly situated in a sheath of tissue covering our whole digestive tract, esophagus, stomach, and small and large intestine. Our digestive system is a perfectly integrated unit composed of neurons, proteins, and neuro-transmitters that relates to the "upper" brain and interacts with it in a completely independent way, which is called the enteric nervous system. This enteric nervous system is completely autonomous and is able to learn, remember and generate emotions and feelings.

This second brain, asserts Michael Gershon, M.D. from Columbia University in New York, plays a crucial role in the misery and happiness of humanity. By studying this second brain for over thirty years, he scientifically connected the undissolvable link existing between the body and

the mind, the soma and the psyche. Thus, the science of neuro-gastroenterology was born.

We have available in our abdomen all the biochemical pharmacopoeia necessary for relaxation and well being. Wouldn't it be better to massage our belly lovingly in order to detoxify it, to tone it up, and to stimulate it rather than to slowly poison it with drugs? The second brain, the abdominal brain – let us not forget – is the principal guardian of our immunity, the essential function of survival and longevity.

The enteric nervous system mirrors itself in the Central Nervous System (CNS) and vice versa, both constantly independently communicating with each other via the vagus nerve. Almost all substances in charge of brain function can be found in the abdomen: over 20 major neurotransmitters like dopamine, norepinephrine, nitric oxide, acetylcholine, melatonin, and serotonin are present. Two dozen cerebral proteins and neuropeptides reside there along with the main cells of the immune system, created on the spot in great quantities (70 to 80% of the whole organism). A very important category of endogenous opiates, the enkephalins, reside or are generated in the abdominal cavity, along with benzodiazepines, powerful psychoactive drugs that alleviate anxiety and are the principal active ingredients in the well-known drug Valium.

Any change in one of these nervous systems, irreversibly affects the other. This relationship seems particularly striking in cases of auto-immune disorders such as colitis, Crohn's disease, or the fearsome Alzheimer's, whose victims, like those with Parkinson's, suffer from constipation. The enteric nerves in their belly are as ill as the nerves in the brain. The amyloid plaque – a sign of Alzheimer's and other encephalopathies – which we might as well call entero-encephalopathies – is present in both the head and in the intestines.

Until a few years ago, it was thought that the intestines were a neutral and rather docile tube

“plugged” into the brain and that they worked on command. Not until the works of Dr. Gershon and of Dr. David Wingate of the University of London did anyone bother to count the belly's neurons - a hundred million, more than in the spinal cord. Moreover, the vagus nerve connects this enteric brain to the brain in the head via a network of only 2,000 neurons. All of these millions of neurons are dedicated to very specific and autonomous tasks completely independent of the cephalic brain.

This new perspective on anatomy and physiology allows a clearer understanding of how and why people act, react, and feel the way they do; why antidepressants such as Prozac, or antibiotics, tend to upset and compromise the intestinal integrity in one way or another. Once ingested, these drugs rob serotonin - the secret ruler of our feelings - from the enteric nervous system in the belly and make it artificially available to the brain in the head, much to the detriment of all our abdominal functions.

We have available in our abdomen all the biochemical pharmacopoeia necessary for relaxation and well being. Wouldn't it be better to massage our belly lovingly in order to detoxify it, to tone it up, and to stimulate it rather than to slowly poison it with drugs? The second brain, the abdominal brain – let us not forget – is the principal guardian of our immunity, the essential function of survival and longevity. “If the treaty of alliance is broken between the two brains,” warns Dr. Gershon, “there will be chaos in your belly and elsewhere in your body, and misery in your head.” This is so true – have you ever noticed when taking antibiotics how you feel better physically but worse mentally and emotionally?

In light of all this information, Chi Nei Tsang can in fact be a powerful everyday guardian for our well being, protecting our health at all levels.

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affected internally, there is no more reason whatsoever that they can continue to be sick. Healing makes people grow and evolve out of their state of sickness".
Gilles Marin

The Chi Nei Tsang session

During CNT treatments, patients can experience up to a full hour of various hands-on techniques on their abdomens, allowing them to improve their breathing and relieve internal pressure. Sometimes they can follow and feel with their own hands the hands of their practitioner, and they are surprised at how incredibly deep their CNT practitioner can gently go in their abdominal cavity, even touching their spine without their noticing it! The same energy used in martial arts to hurt people is used by the practitioner to heal. The training of CNT practitioners involves learning exercises and meditations which at first sight appear remote from the care of ailing people, but which are all part of learning how to transform energy.

Extreme gentleness added to strength, the legendary 'hand of steel in a velvet glove', gently trains the internal organs to perform better, showing them a different way to process toxicity and to deal with chronic contractions.

CNT brings an incomparable source of well being, of relief and peace, and relaxation – despite the occasional sudden and tearful emotional release - to a belly that starts out hard, congested, spastic and painful. It is here, on the abdomen, perhaps more than anywhere else on the body, that the treatment must convey a touch of tenderness and compassion to ensure the client's (and their body's) complete trust.

"We grow by digesting emotionally. We swallow the emotions, we stomach them, and we digest them, taking what we need and eliminating what we don't need. By digesting we grow, we get stronger, and therefore more sensitive, and this allows us to reveal and digest our next level of emotionally undigested charges." Gilles Marin

French born and raised Gilles Marin, director of the Chi Nei Tsang Institute in Berkeley California, explains that the art of Chi Nei Tsang goes beyond the technical level. "Chi Nei Tsang literally means 'managing the energy and the information of the internal organs'," he says. "It is foremost the application of Chi-Kung, or vital energy management, to the human body." "Most important," he adds, "the way of touching is to be completely absent of the intention of wanting to 'fix' a disease. Even though CNT has relieved innumerable health complaints of the widest range, we never work directly against symptoms, we work on the *person* who has the symptom. These symptoms mean something."

"The body has an intelligence that needs to be addressed instead of attacked. Symptoms are the language of the emotional body and emotions ARE NOT rational, therefore they cannot be solved. There is no solution to emotional distress. The only thing we can do is to OUTGROW the emotions - *to grow out of them*". This is literal: we grow by digesting emotionally. We swallow the emotions, we stomach them, and we digest them, taking what we need and eliminating what we don't need. By digesting, we grow, we get stronger, and therefore more sensitive, and this allows us to reveal and digest our next level of emotionally undigested charges.

Gilles says "In CNT we work with the body, never against it, especially when we want to address the emotional body. Once people connect with the emotional reason why they are sick and are able to evolve and change the way they are emotionally affected internally, there is no more reason whatsoever that they can continue to be sick. Healing makes people grow and evolve out of their state of sickness. The CNT approach is a somato-psychological approach that primarily uses the language of touch rather than of talk. In Chi Nei Tsang, a healing touch means a thousand words."