

A Happy Marriage: Tonic for Long Life

by Ellen Teeter, AP

You can increase your lifespan by at least four years just by being happily married. Everyone needs contentment and connection for radiant health. A study done at Brigham Young University and released in March of 2008 found that couples within harmonious marriages had the best blood pressure.

Taoist philosophers and Chinese physicians have long claimed great significance to harmonious living as a vehicle toward health and longevity. The basic premise of Chinese medical theory is one of balance. The balance of yin and yang energy is at the root of all healing. We understand yin as

the yin principle and the male the yang principle; rather, balance is achieved by becoming aware of the flow of energy between oneself and another. Yin and yang are not absolute. The energies complete each other, flow into one another, and are interdependent. One energy requires the other to be complete. When yin and yang are in healthy balance, the flow of energy is smooth and continuous. If there is discord in a relationship, this causes an imbalance in the receptive and active flow, and one energy dominates. Chronic disharmony can cause disease.

More and more, we are aware of how our emotional well-being affects our health. In Chinese medicine, there are seven emotions or ways of being that can cause disease. In simple terms, anger affects the liver, over-excitement and guilt affect the heart, worry and grief affect the lungs, while fear and shock affect the kidneys. From this, it is easy to see that discord in a marriage could generate the kind of negative emotions that can cause illness. Therefore, it is important to find ways to nurture your relationship with your partner.

“Marriage is three parts love and seven parts forgiveness of sins.” – Lao Tzu.

Marriage and the vital flow of energy between two people in a loving relationship can be blocked by anger. Anger and frustration often erupt when one perceives that a partner has not followed through

on a promise or is forgetful of agreements. In many cases when these frustrating situations are examined carefully, they are a consequence of being human rather than an intentional action. Interestingly Chinese classic herbal medicinal formulas are named for the transformation of negative emotional states, like Calm the Spirit, Drain Fire, and Open the Heart.

Another way to look at it is from this transforming quote in the Tao Te Ching: “Giving without demanding; this is harmony.” In this way, a free flow of energy can be ignited between the feminine and the masculine. Three things you can do to begin:

1. Support one another. Tell each other how proud you are of each other's talents and accomplishments. Encourage each other, and respect each other's decisions.

2. Neutralize stress. Prioritize at work, watch your diet, and find a way to maintain calm though meditation or through a gentle exercise like Tai Chi.

3. Listen. Deep, compassionate listening is a powerful tool in harmonizing any relationship. Actually voicing back what you have heard can magically transform one's perspective.

The ancient Chinese have traditionally acknowledged the vital role of healthy sexual practices for well-being and longevity. The same principle of yin and yang holds true in sexual relationships. Masculine and feminine energies, softness and strength, can become ardently charged toward a dance of rapture. The ancients have long used carefully guarded techniques to cultivate sexual ecstasy while channeling its power toward its most health-enhancing benefit.

We can boost our energy and vitality by cultivating positive relationships everywhere. Add years to your life by involving yourself with friends and colleagues that are positive, uplifting, and supportive. Herbal medicinals, Chinese exercise energetics, dietary therapy, and acupuncture can assist one's journey toward radiant health and longevity.

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the female principle – nurturing, meditative, receptive – and the masculine yang principle as active, expanding, solar. Just as yin and yang energies need to be balanced in the body, they also need to be balanced in our relationships. Thus the female and male in marriage benefit from finding balance in these two principles. This is not to say that the female should personify only