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## LIFE BEGINS IN AUTUMN:

### The metal phase of a woman's life, seen through her five guardian elements

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*Wisdom is knowledge and life experience distilled. The Metal Phase is our opportunity to help ourselves through the transition from our life experience to eisdom.*

#### Abstract

**Women's Wisdom:** Menopause is the time of a woman's life when she should be fulfilled. She is a culmination of all her life's experience and so, has something to give back to the world from a deeper part of herself.

Oriental medicine teaches us that women go through seven year cycles, while men have eight year cycles. We must meet each new cycle and let go of the old. If we don't, we get stuck. The seventh and eighth cycles may be difficult to let go of for this is the time we let go of our youth, our fertility and nurturing young offspring. This is also the cycle that offers us a hyparchic leap into our full potential. Hyparxis is the condition of ableness-to-be. One of the four determining conditions with space, time, and eternity. The condition of existing in a state of sensitivity. Hyparxis is associated with the operations of will as the conditions for exchanges, free choice and hence transformation. Hyparchic depth and strength express the notion of will- power. If we don't let go of the past and also of anxieties we have about the future, we are in danger of our reality becoming the reality we fear – old age and death!

Key words: Acupuncture, five elements, menopause

#### Introduction

The Theory of Five Elements or Five Phases was introduced by Tsou Yen, thought to be the founder of Chinese scientific thought, several hundred years before the birth of Christ. He described the movement of one element into another as five phases, the cadence of life within us and outside of us. Some of us go about our daily business totally unconscious of these rhythms - of twenty-eight days; seven years; and five phases of our lives. Even the movement of daytime to night-time requires that we draw within as the yin energy of our blood nourishes our organs and mind at this time. Women's bodies and women's emotions ebb and flow with this cyclic tide of life-giving force. Many of us are

sensitive to this 'pulse' of the universe and many of us who do not flow with it, battle against it. Gynaecology more often than not would have us stand on the battlefield by taking medication with detrimental side effects to the delicate balance of the hormonal system or aggressive procedures such as hysterectomy.

Chinese medicine is patriarchal. The point of reference is to the Yellow Emperor and his court [approximately 206B.C - 25 A.D. The functions of the organs are likened to his army, whose sole purpose is to protect their emperor. The analogy works very well in Chinese medical practice. The functions of the organs are described like poetry - harmonizing mind, body and spirit. Chinese medicine is a rich and sophisticated science – but women's' physiological and emotional cycles are described, surprisingly, in mechanistic concepts, even in the modern texts. This is no doubt due to the fact that there are no medical manuscripts written by women during the dynasties of ancient China. The Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) books actually say that by the time a woman reaches her seven times seven cycle (49 years) her jing (essence) is depleted. On a gynecology workshop, the renowned Japanese acupuncturist, Kiko Matsumoto, said to us, "You want to know about Oriental medicine, you go to source. You go before 2,000 years to Five Elements, and then you know!" It is the purpose of this article to redefine this statement!

I run a busy acupuncture practice and see many women going through menopause. My medicine is good medicine, but I found it lacking, or I should say, I found a gap in the way female physiology and psychology are taught in TCM. I did a year's post graduate course in Five Element acupuncture and the gap was filled, and my experience of Chinese medicine expanded like a lotus flower before me. From 1973 -74 I was a resident student at a college of the healing arts where our learning experience was profound. We studied and put into practice esoteric knowledge which underpins oriental medicine. Twenty-five years later, I was looking for a way to bring my own experience into my practice of TCM and make it accessible to my patients. I believe that I have accomplished this through my study of the Five elements.

I have nine children of my own. After our last child was born and after my first grandchild was born, I gave myself an 'initiation' into *grand motherhood*; I invited the woman I had become to show me my unique gift to the world. I believe we create our own future and to create the future we want, we must have gratitude for the life we have. My 'initiation' into grand motherhood was just that, gratitude; it melts away any doubt, any fear of the future and infuses one with a great enthusiasm to live life to the full for another fifty years to come! That is the quality I try to bring into my work with the people I treat.

### **Overview of The Five Elements: Wood – Fire – Earth – Metal – Water**

There are many different ways of practicing Chinese medicine throughout the Orient. Over the past twenty-five years in the West, Oriental medicine is being rediscovered – and with that, redefined, as courses in TCM are now taught in universities. TCM, although it incorporates the five elements, is based on diagnosis, TCM organ pathology, treatment plan and point prescription. In contrast, Five Element acupuncture is based on finding a person's *element*, or causative factor (CF), or *guardian element*. Treat the guardian element and the dis-harmony, whether it is emotional or physiological, must be restored to balance.

We are born with all five elements within us, but one element will be a little out of balance. It is that bit of chaos thrown in at the last minute at birth. It is the very thing that, when in balance, allows us to reach our full potential in life; and when out of balance, it is the very thing that holds us back. Each one of us is predisposed to a pattern of emotional and physiological harmony and dis-harmony, according to this theory.

The five elements are likely to be unfamiliar within Western medical concepts, as they arise from very different cultural and conceptual frameworks. The following descriptions and explanations will help you to understand this system, which offers a different road into addressing problems – often helping

people who have not responded to Western treatment approaches.

A Five Element practitioner will begin to establish the Guardian Element of her patient the moment the person walks through the door. The first impression provides important clues - the way they move

**Table 1. The five elements manifested into the world**

	WOOD	FIRE	EARTH	METAL	WATER
<b>YIN / YANG</b>	IMMATURE YANG	MATURE YANG	CENTRE	IMMATURE YIN	MATURE YIN
<b>DIRECTION</b>	EAST	SOUTH	CENTRE	WEST	NORTH
<b>SEASON</b>	SPRING	SUMMER	LATE SUMMER	AUTUMN	WINTER
<b>CLIMACTIC INFLUENCE</b>	WIND/COOL	HEAT	DAMP / WARMTH	DRYNESS	COLD
<b>COLOUR</b>	GREEN	RED	YELLOW	WHITE	BLACK / BLUE
<b>SOUND</b>	SHOUT	LAUGHING	SINGING	WEEPING	GROAN
<b>EMOTION</b>	ANGER	JOY	PENSIVE	GRIEF	FEAR
<b>TASTE</b>	SOUR	BITTER	SWEET	PUNGENT	SALTY
<b>ODOUR</b>	RANCID	BURNT	FRAGRANT	ROTTEN	PUTRID
<b>YIN ORGAN</b>	LIVER	HEART / PERICARDIUM	SPLEEN	LUNG	KIDNEY
<b>YANG ORGAN</b>	GALL BLADDER	SMALL INTESTINE	STOMACH	COLON	BLADDER
<b>ORIFICE</b>	EYES	TONGUE	MOUTH	NOSE	EARS, ANUS URETHRA
<b>TISSUE</b>	SINEW	BLOOD VESSELS	FAT / MUSCLE	SKIN	BONE / BONES
<b>STAGE</b>	BIRTH	GROWTH	TRANSFORMATION	ABSORPTION	STORAGE
<b>SPIRIT</b>	HUN	SHEN	YI	PO	ZHI
<b>REFLECTION</b>	NAILS	FACE	LIPS	BODY HAIR	HEAD HAIR
<b>SECRETION</b>	TEARS	SWEAT	SALIVA	SNIVEL	SPUTUM
<b>OFFICIAL DUTY</b>	PLANNING	RULING	TO NOURISH	CREATES ORDER	STORES ESSENCE
<b>OFFICE</b>	GENERAL	SOVEREIGN	MINISTER OF THE GRAINERY	ARCHITECT	TREASURER
<b>QUALITIES</b>	BENEVOLENCE	RIGHTOUSNESS	FAITH	DECORUM	WISDOM

across the room, the tone of voice. The element out of balance will create recognizable characteristics in a person – such as expression of emotion, hue or color on the face, and body odor. Nora Franglen, principal of the School of Five Element Acupuncture (SOFEA) in London, said that her teacher, J.R. Worsley, would say to his students of Five Element acupuncture, “You must lose your mind to come to your senses.” This is about tuning into that pulse –(not just the pulse of the radial artery, which reflects twenty-eight qualities of the organs in Chinese medicine, but the energies of the elements flowing through the meridians) and finding our rhythm within the cadence of universal life force.

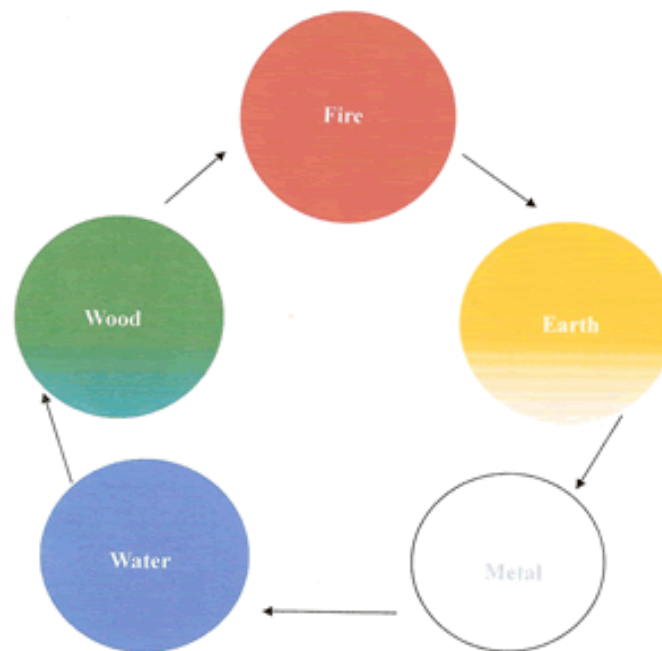
Each element represents an organ, a season, an emotion, a direction, sound, taste, colour, odour, climactic influence, spirit and more. (See table 1.). The elements also have their time of day when their energy peaks and troughs.

## The Five Element Interrelationships

### *The Engendering Cycle*

Each element generates another and is itself generated by another. Wood generates Fire, Fire generates Earth, Earth generates Metal, Metal generates Water, and Water generates Wood. (See Figure 1. The generating sequence of the five elements.)

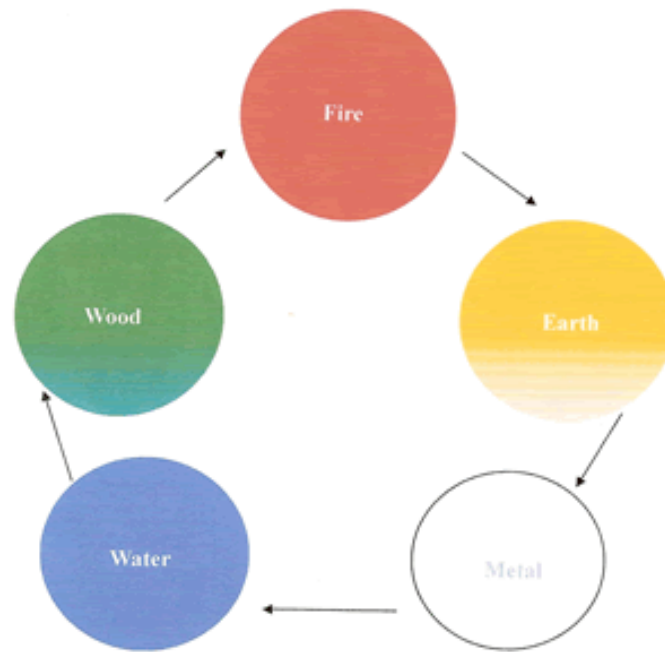
**Figure 1. The generating sequence of the five elements**



### *The Controlling Cycle*

In this sequence each element controls another. Wood controls Earth, Fire controls Metal, Earth controls Water, Metal controls Wood and Water controls Fire. (See Figure 2. The controlling sequence of the five elements.)

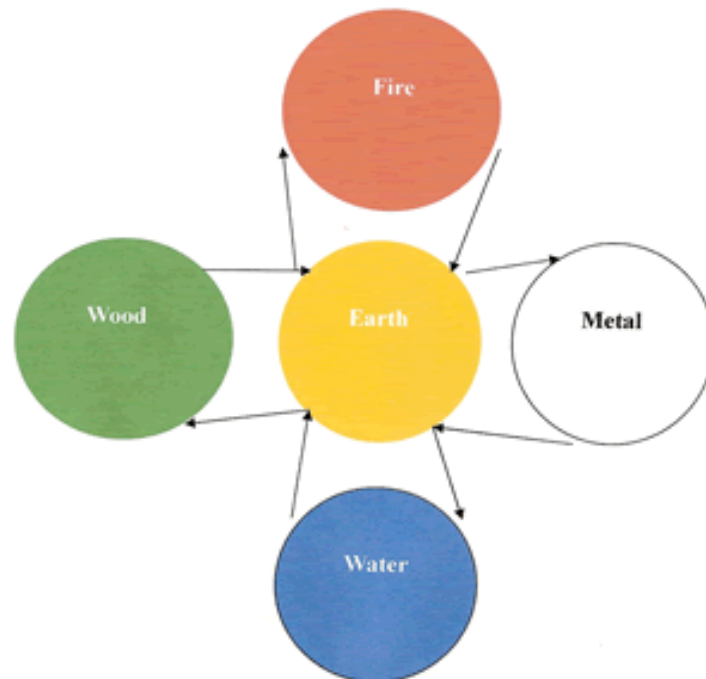
**Figure 2. The controlling sequence of the five elements**



*The Seasonal Cycle*

The seasonal cycle puts Earth in the center. At the interclary period or change of season, the heavenly energies go back to the Earth for replenishment. Thus, Earth also corresponds to the end of each season. (See Figure 3. The seasonal cycle of the five elements.)

**Figure 3. The seasonal cycle of the five elements**



## Qualities of the Elements

The first element in our cycle is Wood. Its organs are the Liver and Gall Bladder, and it is in charge of the smooth flow of Qi (biological energy) for all the organs and the emotions. The Liver also houses the menstrual blood and so is involved in the female reproductive system. The season is spring, representing birth and youthful energy. Its energy flows upward and outward towards the sun. You might picture a little bud under the cold hard ground after winter. It takes a tremendous effort to push up and out, breaking through the hard earth. The energy is selfish; it must get that bud up to meet the sun at any cost. It has direction and purpose. So it is with Wood in our lives. Wood also nourishes our eyes, giving us vision as well as our ability to be visionary. Wood gives us our flexibility – you can bend like a young green shoot or be as inflexible as an old plank.

The emotion of Wood is anger. Anger in balance is assertiveness. Wood gives us our ability to vision the future, make plans and have the courage to take the decisions necessary to carry out those plans. When Wood is held back, it easily becomes frustrated and angry or resentful, and if not checked, will give rise to disharmony, manifesting in any element that may be weak. Problems arising could be migraine, blurred vision, palpitations, stroke, late onset asthma, irritable bowel, or menstrual problems.

Fire is the second element in the cycle: Inner Fire and Outer Fire. Fire gives us our ability to love and receive love. Its organs are the Heart and Small Intestine, the Pericardium, and San Jiao. (The San Jiao, or Triple Burner is an elusive aspect of Chinese medicine. It is formless, yet divides the body into upper, middle and lower. It may be seen as an avenue for Original Qi.) The emotion is joy. The Small Intestine sifts and sorts information – the pure from the impure – before passing it on to the Heart (Emperor). Those with Fire as their Guardian Element are people you can see ‘sifting and sorting’ the information you are giving them before you’ve even finished. They have your answer almost before you stop talking.

The Pericardium protects the Emperor from hurtful emotion. We know those people who ‘wear their heart on their sleeve’, inappropriately opening their heart to all. These are vulnerable people who have outer Fire as their Guardian Element. Like fire, they flicker high and sparkle and then fall cold into the ashes of what once was their happiness, burnt out.

The season is summer. The emotion is joy. This is when spring stops its intense focus on the little bud in its charge and becomes aware that “There are other buds on the bough” (Franglen, 2001). This is the time of joyous, young adulthood. Romance and passions are aroused under the warm sunshine of summer. This is a vulnerable time for our heart can be full of joy one moment and broken the next.

Out of balance, Fire manifests as heart problems, depression, circulatory problems, or speech impediment (the heart manifests on the tongue).

Earth is the third element in the cycle. The organs are the Spleen and Stomach. Earth gives us our ability to give and receive nourishment. Its emotion is pensiveness / empathy and sympathy. Earth gives us the capacity for clear thinking. It is our intellect. Its season is late summer, when the fruits are ripening and there is abundance. The passions of young adulthood have now reached maturity and we are able to care for the needs of others. When out of balance, this pensiveness becomes worry. Earth needs to be light and loamy in order to provide a bountiful harvest, so when worry and ruminating take over, those with Earth as their guardian element will be literally ‘stuck in the mud,’ unable to move out of their stuckness.

Earth out of balance leads to an inability to either give nourishment to others, selfishly hoarding out of a fear that there will be nothing left in the larder, or, over indulging others to the point of pushing them away. People with Earth as their guardian element may suffer eating disorders, digestive problems, weight problems and varicose veins.

Metal is our fourth element on the cycle. The organs are the Lung and Colon. Metal gives us our ability

to judge what is of value and what is not. We inhale new impressions, exhaling the information which has no value for us. The emotion is grief. In balance, grief gives us our ability to let go. Out of balance, we have a feeling of loss; something is missing, even if we don't know what.

The season is autumn. Metal makes order out of the activity of spring, the chaos of summer and the remains of the harvest of late summer. The rotting fruits left on the ground are gathered by Metal and turned into precious trace elements to be stored deep within the ground over the winter months, ensuring rebirth next spring. Out of balance people with Metal as their guardian element look back at the activity and beauty and harvest of the other elements work and grieve at the passing of all this beauty, seeing only barren earth and death around the corner in winter. Unable to let go, they fail to see their own true value in the cycle, for there is a diamond within metal that reflects the qualities of the other elements.

Metal people look upward for an explanation, when they are the very ones who can look within to see the valuable diamond of their being. Quality and meaning is what Metal yearns for.

Metal out of balance may suffer asthma, respiratory problems, sadness, allergies, skin problems.

Water, the fifth element brings us full circle. The Water organs are the Kidneys and Bladder. The emotion is fear. Water gives us our will for survival; our fright –fight-flight mechanism. In balance, we can act and survive. Water houses our constitutional or 'before heaven' Qi. The season is Winter, a time of storage of essence. Nature turns deep within, reflecting, storing nutrients, reconnecting with our source before we are called to rise again to the call of spring.

Water wants to unify all life. Out of balance, people with Water as their guardian element, may be very fearful and need reassurance from us; or they may be fearless, taking unnecessary risks. Water out of balance may manifest with urinary problems, reproductive problems, inherited dis-ease, arthritis, endocrine and hormonal problems.

### **The Elements as Phases in our lives**

We have seen that Wood is the phase of our life that corresponds to our birth and childhood, and is the phase where we reach up and out to receive the impressions that will form our relationship to the world, and how comfortable or uncomfortable we will be in the other element phases of our lives.

Fire is the time we form relationships and learn to relate to others in our young adulthood. The little bud opens and becomes aware of the other blossoms on the bough. Depending on how well our hearts are cherished at this time, Fire sets us up for happiness or heartbreak, warm heartedness or cold-heartedness.

Earth is the phase of mature adulthood, when we look for someone to settle with or have a family with. This can be a time of fulfilment and contentment, knowing that everyone's needs are met, or it may be a time of feeling left out and no longer at the center of things. Maybe we forgot to nourish ourselves?

Metal represents late maturity from fifty to seventy years. This is the time of transformation. It is the opposite element to Wood, yet Metal must draw on the courage of Wood to let go of things past and look forward to see its own value. We have a choice of spiritual fulfilment or to forever grieve the past.

Water is our time from seventy years until death, when we return to Source. We can look into our own reflection, trusting what we see, or be terrified at the unknown depths below the surface. Wisdom or fear of the unknown?

### **Menopause, the Metal Phase of a Woman's Life**

Menopause is the time of a woman's life when she should be fulfilled. She is a culmination of all her life's experience, and so has something to give back to the world from a deeper part of herself.

Oriental medicine teaches us that women go through seven year cycles (men have eight year cycles). We must meet each new cycle and let go of the old. If we don't, we get stuck. The seventh and eighth cycles may be difficult to let go of, for this is the time we let go of our youth, of our fertility and nurturing young offspring, or of career. This is also the cycle that offers us a hypercyclic leap into our full potential. If we don't let go – we are in danger of our reality becoming the reality we fear – old age and death!

How many women reach their climacteric years with a feeling of 'something is missing'? Women may feel they have had a fortunate life, yet somehow they have arrived at a phase that sometimes seems to have happened almost overnight. One day we see ourselves in the mirror looking sassy, the next day we linger in front of the mirror, wondering where we went. It's not just about the hormonal changes, cessation of menses or hot flashes. It's about "me as a unique individual with *value* for who I am."

Our Metal Phase rests on our experiences of our earlier phases and transitions. If these experiences were positive and fulfilled, then we may embrace Metal with open arms. If our experiences were negative or left wanting, this transition could be the most difficult for us.

Our transition from our Wood phase into our Fire phase is a delicate one, going from childhood through puberty and into young adulthood. We may have sailed through it or not, depending on the support we had from those who cared for us. But, it is a transition where we are looking towards the future because there is so much of it before us.

Our transition from our Fire phase into our Earth phase often happens with the energy of a brush fire sweeping us off our feet into passion, marriage, career, expectations and before we know it we come down to Earth with a thump, caring for children, partners, colleagues all drawing energy from us in the form of breast milk, sex, solutions and extra hours! This may or may not have been a positive experience for us. Some women thrive, others become exhausted. This would depend on which element is out of balance.

Here is where we may find the reality of the path we are walking is not leading to the destination we thought we were going to. *The transition from our Earth phase into our Metal phase will determine our transformation from Metal to Water or, knowledge to Wisdom.* This is where the intellect of the Earth element can bring understanding and we can consciously act upon that understanding.

In the seasonal cycle (see Figure 3.), Earth is in the center, providing nourishment to each element during the interclary Transition – the late stage of each season. Wood (spring) is opposite autumn. Fire (summer) is opposite Water (winter). Each element contains a *seed* of its opposite element. Like the interdependence of yin and yang. To make the necessary transition, each element must call upon the strengths of its opposing element to make its transformation; as when a woman gives birth and is at her weakest, she finds an almost superhuman strength from deep within to push her baby out into the world. And the first thing a baby does is to respond with its Metal by inhaling its new life into the lungs. A woman requires the same effort that only Wood can give her, only this time to rebirth herself at menopause.

### **Acupuncture, connecting to the Tao?**

Acupuncture offers excellent treatment for the unwanted symptoms of menopause. It is interesting to note the names of the points used for women at menopause. We open the Extraordinary Vessels (energy channels, likened to a reservoir of energy deep within the body). These vessels derive their energy from Essence and are a link between Before-heaven and After-heaven Qi. They circulate



Essence all over the body and represent a deeper level of treatment. The Extraordinary Vessels also regulate the seven and eight year cycles of women and men. A combination of two points are used to open and Extraordinary Vessel. There are eight Extraordinary Vessels; two are predominantly used in treating menopause symptoms.

*The Ren Mai or Directing Vessel.* The opening point is on a Metal meridian called Lieque, or *Broken Sequence*. It is so called because this point is located just proximal to the medial aspect of the wrist and makes a diversion just off from its Lung meridian. Yet Broken Sequence also gives us a picture of a woman's menstrual life coming to an end, only to begin again from a deeper part of herself. The sequence is only broken, it has not come to an end.

Its coupled point is Zhaohai, or *Shining Sea* and is on the Kidney meridian, which is a Water meridian. The name Shining Sea gives us a picture that we will see our reflection if we look into it. It is located just distal to the medial malleolus.

Broken Sequence on the Metal meridian is needled first. Shining Sea on the Water meridian is then needled. Thus we open Metal and move to Water on the generating cycle. Both of these points exert an influence on the throat and the uterus, and also calm the mind. This gives us a picture of speaking out our truth in order to rebirth ourselves (the throat chakra is associated with taking responsibility for one's personal needs). The Directing Vessel is also called the "Sea of the Yin Meridians," which (like estrogen) treats such symptoms as night sweating, hot flushes, insomnia, tinnitus, feeling of heat, and irritability.

The other Extraordinary Vessel used in menopause is *Chong Mai*, or Penetrating Vessel. The opening point is called *Gongsun*. It means Minute Connecting Channels. It is an Earth meridian and is used to irrigate the channels with nourishment in the form of blood.

The coupled point is *Neiguan* or Inner Pass. This point on the Pericardium meridian is proximal to the medial aspect of the wrist, between the ulnar and radial arteries. It is a Fire meridian. This point opens the chest (Metal). It is said that the only way to supplement our constitutional Qi is through the breath or *Zhong Qi* (Spiritual practices always include the breath). It also harmonizes Earth.

This presents us with a picture of Earth taking nourishment, in the form of blood, to an Inner Pass where it will be transformed through the breath (Metal tempered by Fire) and returned to Essence. Or metaphorically, the mature woman takes the gifts of her unique qualities into her Metal phase, where they are transformed into Wisdom.

Acupuncture may help us with all the unpleasant, unwanted symptoms of menopause, and even help us to connect to our Inner Wisdom. Sometimes during a treatment a person who has been looking at life through a misty window can just clear a little corner and catch a glimpse, a moment of clarity. The effects can be quite subtle. The person may even think they have been sleeping through the treatment, yet there has been an insight, and a shift has taken place.

### **Retrieving our gifts, a women's' wisdom workshop**

If, as women, we cannot see our gifts because our self esteem is so low, then we must endeavour to retrieve them and bring them to the present moment.

The guided visualization I have developed for my workshops helps women to retrieve the 'gifts' she may have forgotten she had.

1. The women are asked to sit comfortably and are taken through a simple relaxation exercise.
2. They are asked to go through a door into a great hall where there are five doors. One green, one red, one yellow, one white and one blue, representing the colors of each element.

One by one we enter each door into a garden representing the season of each element. We meet ourselves in the corresponding phase and observe the positive qualities that we had in our dealing with situations at that time. Our younger self presents us with those qualities and we leave with them, bringing each one into the present moment. We give a symbol or a shape to each quality.

Then we enter the fifth door, to Water. There is a still, crystal clear lake in front of us. At the far side is an old crone. She beckons us to come and we see there are stones across the lake for us to step onto. As we walk from stone to stone, we see our life pass before us in the reflection of the still water. As we approach the old crone, we hand her our 'gifts.' As she raises her head, she smiles, and we see she is beautiful. She receives our gifts, and we turn to walk back to the blue door. As we do, we see our reflection in the Water and realize that we had nothing to fear all along. We are beautiful. We turn to wave goodbye, and the crone has disappeared into the water.

The emotion of Water is *fear*. We can be fearful of fear itself. We are too fearful to look at our reflection, but if we find the courage of our youth within us, that's just what we find – the Water element offers us the fountain of youth. Metal finds her value, having given her gifts to be stored as essence out of which a new spring is born... and the cycle continues.

### **Case study, Wood**

A.C. is a woman who was perimenopausal when she came on my workshop. She is married, with a ten year old daughter. She had more time for herself, as her daughter was older; she studied reflexology and wanted to do a course in counseling. Her husband was not happy about A.C.'s new-found interests. They were arguing more frequently. A.C. was suffering temporal headaches, menstrual irregularities, and her mood swings were beginning to scare her.

My diagnosis was an imbalance in her Wood element and Wood is her guardian element. A.C. wanted to move forward in her life. She planned, took decisions and had the enthusiasm and courage of Wood to bring her efforts into fruition. But she felt she was being held back by her husband and this was causing her to feel resentful and angry.

A.C. felt her husband's Guardian Element was probably Metal. So we looked at why he might be feeling threatened by her new interests. Metal controls Wood in the controlling cycle. A.C. felt that he was "always cutting me down." I said to her, "How often do you show your husband that you value him?" A.C. had to admit that probably since she had been studying, not enough. Metal needs to be respected and valued – otherwise, they suffer with feelings of low self-esteem and worthlessness.

I saw A.C. three months later. She said that she had made a conscious effort to show her husband how she valued the things that he did. Instead of reacting with anger, she visualised that she was a young, green branch, bending in the breeze! Like Metal when it turns to flux, her husband softened and started to value the new skills of his wife. They were each in the same local magazine in an article about A.C.'s achievements, and her husband had won an award for his amateur photographs.

A.C.'s headaches disappeared, her menses returned to a regular cycle, and her mood swings subsided.

### **Case study, Fire**

M.M. was going through menopause and suffering insomnia, hot flushes, anxiety and palpitations. She lived on her own, having been divorced three times. Her friends were calling up to invite her out, but she was making excuses to stay at home.

I diagnosed M.M. as a Fire element out of balance. She was quite a vivacious lady and would laugh a

lot, but in her eyes she looked lonely. M. M. was thinking about having cosmetic surgery, because “At my age, who will love me looking like this?” Actually, she was a stunning woman and in my view, did not need the surgery.

Fire is terrified of Water. In this case, Water represents growing old. Fire is much too busy to be reflective, especially when it has a fear of being doused out. . So, M.M. in her Metal phase was scared of growing old. Fire needs to be loved. Fire can suffer from feeling unlovable. Fire people love a party, will get all dressed up but at the last minute be unable to walk through the door. Like flames flickering high one minute, hyperactive, then flat and depressed the next. They can be people who seem to have it all, but on their own they can suffer extreme loneliness.

After doing the visualisations of retrieving her gifts and taking them to the crone, she began to love herself a little more. She started to go out again and in fact met a “very nice companion.” Her anxiety calmed down and so did her other symptoms. She said that she was still contemplating the cosmetic surgery, but had noticed that she was looking better now that she “had a little happiness” in her life again!

### **Case Study, Earth**

A.H. has what is probably the most frequent element that I see out of balance in my practice. Her family have grown and left home. She is going through menopause and has gained “All this weight, overnight. I used to be a size 12!” At the start of her treatment A.H. weighed 180 lbs. As A.H. is feeling miserable about her weight, she frequently goes to the fridge to make herself a sandwich to comfort herself.

This is when Earth becomes like a damp bog. Step into it and you can’t pull your feet out; you are stuck until you stop those ruminating, obsessive thoughts and look up out of the mire. These women have a constant muzziness, memory loss, fluid retention, fatigue and admit to obsessive thoughts, worrying themselves to sleep.

In her Metal phase of life, Earth is grieving the loss of those she held close to her bosom. A.H. never stopped to think about her own needs during the years she was ‘giving out’ all the time. Her husband had his friends to play golf with at the weekends, which had never been an issue when A.H. had kids to run here and there at weekends. Now, she finds herself sitting in front of the fridge on a Saturday afternoon.

Wood controls Earth. A.H. needed to get her body moving! After retrieving her gifts, she realised that after years of raising four children, she was great at organising events and multi tasking. She joined a gym, organised a group of women to meet up before breakfast to go jogging, took control of her diet, and got involved in fundraising for a local charity. A.H. is still ‘giving out,’ but she is on the receiving end too. Her family is very proud of her and their respect has given her back her self esteem.

### **Case study, Metal**

D.G is in her Metal phase. She has been going through menopause the past three years. She says she feels at a loss. Old, previously forgotten memories keep coming to mind as if it was only yesterday and she reacts to them emotionally, sometimes crying for hours.

D.G. had lost her sister to cancer 10 years ago. They had been extremely close and D.G. never got over the loss. She looked for answers from the church and different spiritual philosophies, but didn’t find anything to help her with this ‘great sadness/’

I treated her guardian element of Metal with acupuncture to strengthen Metal’s ability to ‘let go.’ She

stopped crying so much and after retrieving her gifts, in her visualization, she took them to the crone and her sister was there with her. Her sister told D.G. that she had to let go of the past and that she would be there to meet D.G. when it was her time to join her sister.

### **Case study, Water**

Sometimes we are lucky enough to have a crone on our workshops. They remind us of all the 'stuff' we hang on to for dear life! They put things into perspective just by being there. One menopausal woman brought her elderly mother with her because she didn't want to leave her on her own. She slept through most of the two days; a little snore would remind us that she was there at all. Yet, when she was awake at the call to lunch, she was as nimble footed as the rest of us (more so actually), and what a hearty appetite! Every so often, when she appeared to be asleep, she would voice some little gem for us all to contemplate or laugh at. We noticed as she dozed, how beautiful she actually was with her white hair, her face looked so soft. Was this really what we were all so scared of? Even in her sleep, she was so composed and one could see all the elements at peace within her. Her gifts were gratefully received; her inner Wisdom was shining like a diamond. "Water is where we began and where we end; it [Water] has the ability to rejoin and Water brings the elements full circle to begin again. You made a promise [before your birth] not to forget me." (Sufi teaching)

### **References**

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Lori is a practitioner of both Traditional Chinese Medicine (T.C.M.) and Five Element Acupuncture. She studied at the London College of Traditional Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine and did post graduate studies at SOFEA (School of Five Element Acupuncture) also in London. She has a degree in Chinese Medicine from Portsmouth University.

In 1973 Lori was a resident student at the International Academy for Continuous Education under the direction of J.G. Bennett, founder of the Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences Ltd. He was one of the eminent founding fathers of the holistic movement in the UK, bringing together doctors of many modalities and cultures to an international class of students from all walks of life totaling more than 500 over the 5 year period he ran the courses.

Never has our world been so threatened as at this point in history. By offering this Work Lori is trying in her way to pass knowledge on to those who may gain insight and benefit by it.

Lori practices in the UK, Gibraltar and in Estepona, Spain where she is director of the Life Centre, Medico Resort for the Holistic practice of Integrated Medicine. She is founder and president of the Asoc. De Apoyo a Enfermos de Cancer which is a cancer support association helping those affected by cancer and their families. Lori and her husband John offer residential courses, workshops and treatment programmes in Spain.

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