

Shiatsu

A brief history

Shiatsu has its foundations in Chinese medicine and was developed as part of a system of healing known as Tao-Yin. It was introduced to Japan in the 6th century. The term shiatsu however is a recent term and was officially recognised as late as the 1950s. It was introduced in the West in the 1970s primarily influenced by two Japanese practitioners Tokujiro Namikoshi and Shizuto Masunaga. The two basic styles of shiatsu bear their names. The Namikoshi style places greater emphasis on Western physiology and pressure points.

Masunaga developed a school of shiatsu, also known as zen shiatsu, with an extended energy system to the traditional Chinese view of meridians. This is a relaxed and fluid style of shiatsu. He developed the principles of kyo and jitsu.

Kyo and Jitsu

Kyo is a term used to describe emptiness – a lack of qi, while jitsu means a fullness of qi – an excess. The principles of zen shiatsu are very simple. The idea is to find the channel in the body, which has the most energy, and encourage it to move to the area, which has the least. This is achieved through a strong, positive and two-handed connection and developing a sensitivity to the patient's energy. The jitsu is dispersed by, for example, stretching the area and the kyo is nourished by, for example, holding and supporting the area. In this way the body reaches a greater state of balance and health can be restored.

Diagnosis

Individual shiatsu practitioners (even within the same style) have different methods of making a diagnosis. In zen shiatsu, a practitioner may use tongue and pulse diagnosis, a hara diagnosis¹, a back diagnosis or patient questioning, which is based on the principles of traditional Chinese medicine. Whichever method of diagnosis is favoured by the practitioner, all practitioners will receive constant feedback from the qi in the channels while they are treating the patient. They are constantly assessing the state of kyo and jitsu in the channels and therefore constantly making a diagnosis.

Some of the common conditions helped by shiatsu:

- ☉ Back pain
- ☉ Headaches and migraine
- ☉ Whiplash injuries and neck stiffness
- ☉ Joint pain
- ☉ Menstrual problems
- ☉ Digestive problems
- ☉ Depression/anxiety
- ☉ Sleep problems
- ☉ And much more

¹ In Japanese the hara is the belly. Shiatsu practitioners can feel very different areas of the hara, which correspond to different meridians, to assess the main areas of kyo and jitsu.

The only real way of fully appreciating the benefits of shiatsu is to experience it for yourself. Please come along to my talk on the 28th April where I hope to have the opportunity to give a demonstration or two. Shiatsu is wonderfully relaxing, and seeing, or in this case feeling, is believing.

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For more information contact the Shiatsu Society, www.shiatusociety.org