

CASE STUDY #1: Jeremy Niki Sedmak

At 59 years of age, Jeremy has recently retired from a long career in healthcare. He is still experiencing ongoing bereavement from the traumatic loss of his long-time partner six years ago, and the loss of his dog. He now lives alone. Jeremy's initial reason for acupuncture was to help depression, which he has managed for years with prescribed medication. His predisposition toward chronic depression could be related to a family history of depression on his father's side. This condition was a significant factor in the deaths of his father and younger brother when Jeremy was still a teen. He has a strong relationship with his elderly mother, who lives at a distance and who suffers from age-related dementia.

Another reason Jeremy had an interest in acupuncture was because he wanted to focus on managing his anxiety, a lack of mental focus, and some stomach 'tension' issues. Additionally, he is borderline diabetic with a self-disclosed sweet tooth, and manages his blood sugar levels through diet and exercise. He is carefully monitored by his doctor, and is in very good physical shape, walking daily and using the gym regularly throughout each week.

Jeremy indicated he wanted to work on focus first, as he had been feeling mentally scattered in recent weeks. In the last month he had changed medications and was feeling some effects of this change mentally and physically. In the past, he had experienced insomnia but felt that the new medication for his depression was helping in this area.

Jeremy had a slightly yellow tinge to his skin around the eyes, although this could have been due in part to a summer tan. The colouring was never significantly pronounced so it was difficult to locate. I did notice that he always wore shades of browns and light tans, bordering on yellow/gold. I was unable to determine a specific odour each week.

Jeremy used humour in many aspects of our conversations which changed the quality and sound of his voice. When he was upbeat and humorous, he presented a very singsong-like voice with varied pitch and inflection. When we would speak of serious things, such as his mother's dementia, he sounded much more water-like, with a groaning, quiet and flat quality that trailed off. He was hard to read emotionally due to the humour, however, there were times when he would speak about his mother, or his dear friend who was going through a rough time emotionally and physically. He was very sympathetic and caring when referencing these subjects, and talked about things he did to provide support, such as daily phone calls, sending 'care' packages, etc. His empathy and sympathy was quite appropriate.

Jeremy had never had bodywork done before and was open to the experience but didn't know what to expect. Based on being new to this modality and because of medications, during each session I tonified and never sedated.

Session One 9AM: spleen time

For the first session Jeremy was slightly apprehensive but engaged and not really knowing what to expect. I chose to do the **Great Regulator Strange flow** release for his first session as I wanted to nourish and activate his energy pathways to prepare him for the next few weeks of sessions. Initial pulses showed Small intestine and Heart low, Triple Warmer was 'flat' or non-existent and Kidney 'flat', or non-existent. Metal (Lung and Large Intestine) were also low. Wood, Gall bladder and Liver were weak but not as weak as Metal. My initial thought on the kidney pulse was the relationship between kidney, spirit and depression.

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The session went very well; Jeremy was subdued and quiet throughout, focusing on the points and on relaxation. I noticed that his energy released and moved very quickly. He was quite sore on the gall bladder points (**GB 29, Dwelling in the Bone** in particular) which led us to a conversation on hips, where he disclosed that he has had a hip problem that has not been resolved despite being cleared after a recent x-ray. Jeremy also mentioned that he was having an ultrasound on his kidney scheduled for a suspected stone. This was not surprising to me given his kidney pulse at the start of the session.

Pulses at close of our first session showed some change. Increase to Small intestine and Heart, increase to Lung and Large Intestine however no change to Triple Warmer or Kidney. Stronger pulses with Gall Bladder and Liver and balanced pulses with Spleen and Stomach. Jeremy responded well, enjoyed the treatment and left very relaxed.

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Session Two 9AM: spleen time

At the second treatment, Jeremy came to me looking a little down and tired. He reported that the previous week was like I had pushed an 'off' switch as he had no energy, however, he did experience increased focus and felt less scattered. He was tired all the time and found himself to be resting all week. Other than sleeping "too much" he reported having no particular sleeping issues, and that his hip was sore on the right side. Pulses indicated excessive Spleen, Gall bladder and Liver, no Triple Warmer or Pericardium and a flat, non-existent Kidney again. Bladder and Stomach were balanced, as were Lung and Large Intestine and Small intestine and Heart.

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In order to support the kidney, I felt it would be best to **tonify from Metal into Water**. I also opted to add two additional points, **ST40 Abundant Bridge** and **LV5 Woodworm Canal** for depression/anxiety as researched in the Deadman text. Treatment was:

- (YANG) BL28 w/ BL67, BL64 to draw metal into Bladder
- (YIN) outer BL23 w/ K7, K3, K4 to draw metal into Kidney
- Added inner shu BL 23 w/ST40, LV 5

Jeremy was very relaxed through the session and, again, his points released smoothly and quickly. Jeremy was able to feel the release at this session as well, and was happy to make that connection for himself. He was in tune with his body, not talkative but meditative. The head/neck/shoulder release was very welcome because he had stiffness through his hands, arms, and shoulders. He commented especially on how wonderful the release was from **GB 20 Wind Pond**.

Pulses at session close were much more balanced. Spleen had decreased to a balanced state as had Gall Bladder and Liver. Triple Warmer was still low and a slight increase for Kidney. There was no change to remainder of pulses.

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Session Three 9AM: spleen time

At our third session Jeremy showed up in a very upbeat and energized mood, very pleased to report that his energy was much better and that he felt like I had found the ‘on’ switch for him last week. He was alert, focused, and no longer felt scattered. He noted that his anxiety had been lower all week. We discussed his previous reaction to the first session when he had felt such low energy, and recognized that this reaction may have been due to his body needing to rest in order to do the necessary rebalancing energy work across the meridians. This week, Jeremy also started seeing a physiotherapist for his hip pain because he felt it may be related to his IT band and the pain was beginning to affect his sleep. Pulses at opening indicated excessive Gall Bladder and Liver and Spleen again. Triple Warmer was flat and Pericardium were very low. Kidney was slightly higher than the previous week however Bladder was low. Lung and Large Intestine were balanced.

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It is worth noting here that I was seeing Jeremy at the same time every week, 9AM which is Spleen time. For that reason I did not focus on the excessive Spleen too much because Stomach was always a balanced and adequate pulse. Since his Triple Warmer was still down, I opted to do a Triple Warmer meridian release which I expected would also increase Pericardium. Triple Warmer would also influence some digestion and anxiety.

To start this session, I used the 4 Gates, opening and closing with **LI4 Joining Valley** and **LV3 Great Rushing** to initiate the energy flow and get Jeremy into a relaxed state. Jeremy breathed deeply into the points and was very quiet and relaxed until I completed the first side before moving over to start the second side. At this point his energy was up; he was wide awake and very chatty through the remainder of the session. He specifically asked for extra time on **GB 20 Wind Pond** as these points provide a great sense of relief and release for him.

Pulses after the session showed an increase in Triple Warmer and Pericardium, and a decrease in Gall Bladder, Liver and Spleen bringing them into balance. There was some increase in Kidney and Bladder as well, and Lung and Large Intestine unchanged (remaining balanced).

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Additionally, I provided Jeremy with two Pal Dan Gum stretches for Kidney (**Standing on the Toes**) and for hip stretch (**Surrendering to the Earth**).

Conclusion

When I first started working with Jeremy I was expecting to have to work in Metal, given his huge emotional losses especially connected to the men in his life, as Metal is associated with grief and with the Father archetype. However, his metal element was surprisingly balanced throughout our sessions. I also expected the Fire element to be another primary focus in terms of the Pericardium, which is related to intimate relationships, because Jeremy was still grieving the loss of his partner. I had also initially wondered if his Triple Warmer meridian might need balancing, specifically because this meridian is associated with the more social aspects of relationships because he now lives alone after having lost his pet, and because of some of the historical influences of his parental, and the social, worldview in his own life that may have increased his feelings of isolation and, perhaps, affected his depressive condition early on. Based on Jeremy's presenting symptoms at our first session, I initially thought his main issues were associated with the Earth element. He wanted to work on mental focus, digestion, depression and anxiety. Added to these symptoms, Jeremy's blood sugar issue (Spleen) indicated a good fit with the Earth element. Yet, I believe the initial work I did was in response to more acute issues (kidney) presented through pulses. Over the first three sessions I worked more in the 'acute' area, balancing Water, then Fire, before moving on to Earth (Spleen, session 4 and Stomach, session 5). Significantly, it was the Earth element tonification where the greatest improvements and consistency in maintaining balance were made. Once I started the Spleen work I noticed his pulses were greatly balanced at each session, especially the Water element pulses which had been low the first three sessions. This improvement makes sense given that Earth controls Water.

One of the key lessons I learned in my work with Jeremy was to not pre-define or make assumptions based on what you know of client's story. The internal workings of the body may not match what you expect based on client disclosure of experience and emotion, and/or how they physically show up

during their intake. I assumed at some point I would be working in Metal with Jeremy, or at the very least Pericardium, but over six sessions we did not work in the Metal element at all.

I enjoyed my sense of curiosity as I researched each week to prepare a general framework for the session. Being prepared helped me immensely, and I kept it generalized to ensure I was open to what would be presented to me each week. Adjustments were necessary to deliver an effective session. I also developed a level of comfort in relying on my intuition. This was especially true in the research aspects between sessions where I would review and look back at notes for patterns and read reference material to find something that might be useful at the next session. At times I would wonder if I was heading in the right direction, and it was gratifying each week as I read opening pulses and closing pulses, and reviewed feedback from earlier sessions which showed the client's positive changes based on how I had diagnosed and defined treatment plans. I built a lot of personal confidence during these sessions.

On reflection, I see that the greatest change for Jeremy was effected when working in what I believe to be his C/F Earth. Getting to this key element early will be important for future clients to provide the greatest degree of change and balance. You can't underestimate the power of looking, seeing, feeling, and listening as critical diagnostic tools to provide the clues to a pathway of greater balance for your client.