

TALKING ON AND ON ABOUT SHIATSU, HEALTH AND REALITY



by Jan Pletánek

Despite being involved with Shiatsu for many years it's very difficult, however illogical it may seem, to provide a general introduction to it.

Shiatsu is based on the relationships and principles that have been in existence since the beginning of the world and which are in fact still moulding our reality. If we understand these, we are able to use them to heal ourselves, for example, as well as others. Jesus said: "Search for the Kingdom of Heaven and all the other things you will be given along the way." This is the point. The more you direct your search, the more you come to realise who you are, how you exist, how you and the world function, what energy is, what matter is and what the power of a thought is... Consequently, certain things become quite natural and normal, although current hypnotic code of a mind called man says, that it is impossible to see them in this way.. During your own practise you will begin to realise that things are different; it is possible to see the energy, to feel It, to understand that the matter is only a slower form of this energy, that the body is simply a projection of our own mind. It is possible to work with all this if you want. In fact we have been doing it, though not consciously. What is, it is. We could do a headstand, do Shiatsu, deny all of It, meditate, but It remains the same. This is not a religious philosophy. It is pure reality. It is about things as they are. Just decide to get known the real state of things. The result is that you become freer and therefore happier.

I don't know what your individual perceptions concerning Shiatsu may be. You may well have had a massage called Shiatsu. Indeed, Shiatsu could be defined as a Japanese touch therapy, as Shiatsu means, "pressure of fingers" in Japanese. In fact, it was in 1919 that Tamai Tempaku, compiled a book describing a new discipline called simply "Shiatsu", It consisted of a combination of what he considered to be the best of ancient Chinese Medical wisdom i.e. the existence of meridians and energy flow, and western physiology and anatomy.

He had three principal disciples: Namikoshi, Masunga and Serizawa. Each of them subsequently founded his own branche and school of Shiatsu. It was thanks to Namikushi's efforts that Shiatsu spread world-wide. This was not an easy task, because there were many attempts to denigrate this wonderful knowledge. It was branded as "old-fashioned", traditional and un-American. However, a factor that contributed to the spread of Shiatsu was that Namikoshi treated Marilyn Monroe. She recovered from a serious disease, thus ensuring Shiatsu's place in the public mind. All of this helped the general acknowledgement of Shiatsu as a special healing method. Serizawa was originally trained as an acupuncturist. As a result, the Serizawa School of Shiatsu is based mainly on the use of pressure on *tsubo* (acupuncture points). On the other hand, Masunga a man of incredible sensitivity enlarged on the classical ancient Chinese medical system of meridians. Jokingly it is said that he hated blank spaces on acupuncture maps of the body. Today there are many other schools of Shiatsu. However, please remember that not all of them originate from masters of the art. They may well have flourished in the west, due to an acceptance of the fallacy that oriental gentlemen must have a more profound understanding of the basic energetic concepts that underlie Shiatsu. However, don't be conned. For example, recently I have come across a book by a Japanese author. He claims that the most basic technique for learning Shiatsu is to do push-ups using only two fingers (to strengthen them, obviously). This may well be useful for karate – if you want to injure someone! However, the aim of Shiatsu ought to be the very opposite. The hands should be supple and relaxed. Only with relaxed hands we are able to feel something. Practising push-ups definitely won't make your fingers more sensitive. However, that statement may have been a misprint. To sum it up, if you have had, or will have,

experience of Shiatsu elsewhere and it proves to be completely different from that one described here, do not be surprised. There are many different schools.

What school of Shiatsu are you going to take up? I always find it amusing when a school is named after someone - Joe's, Louis's, Frankie's.... Personally, I have a different perspective. Many of you practise and/or have experience of many different kinds of therapies. You may be doctors, physiotherapists, and masseurs or are just interested in these things. As a result, you are equipped with certain knowledge and you work according to it. Then you take another. If someone comes to see you with a problem (for example, a headache) you use the most suitable technique at your disposal to free him or her from the pain. It will make no difference if it is reflexive therapy, Shiatsu, Sujok or even a combination of all of these techniques. For the recipient, the most important thing is to be helped by your "procedure". They are more interested in the duration, cost, and pain factor (both physical pain experienced during the treatment and the emotional pain as a result of its cost). The name of the treatment is less important. You simply know that things work somehow and take advantage of this fact.

Nowadays, Shiatsu is considered to be trendy and popular. Nevertheless, it has its roots in ancient eastern medical practices and in the art of massage. Archaeological excavations have unearthed bone acupuncture needles which are five and a half thousand years old. It was accepted a long time ago and it still works today. The basic principles behind its use have not changed. Neither have human beings – we still have two arms, two legs, a head, a back and a belly. That's it. There is nothing more to speculate about, except maybe that we are not as hairy today – well, at least many of us aren't. Shiatsu and its methods have been continually tested over the centuries, and we can use them now.

At first have a look at some general things concerning Shiatsu; what the procedure itself is like, what you, as Shiatsu therapists should do and what to be aware of. Following this, we will discuss the organ systems from the point of view of Chinese medicine. We will also take into consideration the views of ethicotherapy (*a philosophy that looks for the causes of human diseases in our relationships with other people and with ourselves*), diet, work on meridians, mental/emotional interaction, and anatomy and physiology. However, it is important to remember that our physical existence is not simply as a result of nutrition, nor can it be explained by a philosophy such as ethicotherapy. In addition, we are not all just simply made up of matter, as some other people tend to claim. I would like you to have as much information as possible from as many fields as possible to enable you to look at any given thing from all angles. It's true that not only nutrition or ethics are important, but many other things as well. **The most important thing is that, it is a combination of everything.** However, it is not possible to point out a single aspect as the most important one. You can live like a saint, but if you keep staring at a PC screen for several years, taking no precautions, you will most probably end up with problematical eyesight, whether you are aware of ethicotherapy or not. Similarly, if you eat vast quantities of junk food, your fine morals don't help you very much. Remember, even if you concentrate on eating the most healthy, most naturally grown foodstuffs and work on yourself and do all the other things, you can get still a cold.....

Then we will talk about individual energy pathways (meridians) and how to influence the energy flow in them through applying specific pressure to Shiatsu points (tsubo), using specific exercises and practices. We will explain basic points on the pathways and identify their function and when they should be used. Basically everything that you can use and that can help you in your practice.

There are many factors that have an influence on us or, more appropriately, on our interacting system (energy, body and mind). Our constitution, nutrition, inherent qualities and dispositions, family, money, media (print, TV, radio), our views on life, religion, education, our present life situation, our relationships, our social background, the weather, and geomagnetic effects... All these things are therefore reflected in our present attitude, physical status and mood, which consequently determine the future course of the events of our life... (well, generally everything).

Health is therefore not a case of “not being ill”. It is not the absence of illness. The most important thing is to know how things work in reality – what the power of a thought is, that we are the creators and not purely innocent victims, that a disease is only a symbolic manifestation of an underlying problem. We create it all and thus we are able to change it all. Body reflects our consciousness (state of mind) and matter is the holographic image of it. The body is not the place where a problem has its origin and therefore it is not the place where it can be solved. It is neither bacteria nor radiation that causes diseases, although a human being may use them as auxiliary devices. There is an Indian proverb: “If you want to know what your thoughts were like yesterday, look at your body today. If you want to know what your body will be like tomorrow, look at your thoughts today.”

We keep talking about illnesses or diseases. But it is much more important to know how things really are than to cure of a particular disease or to be able to heal others. This enables me to create the world I live in a better way, knowing that I am much more free and therefore more content and happier. From a human perspective, an amateur-human becomes a professional-human. The problem people have is that they usually do not start changing their thinking and actually doing something until they find themselves in something of a “pickle”. It would be much easier to work on ourselves and on our perception of reality especially when we have enough strength and are in good condition. Unfortunately, we are usually “too busy” and we do not see the “reason why”. But there is one more thing that is quite essential. Understanding It is not enough. It is also necessary to feel and live It.

However, what is Shiatsu? The problem is that there is no simple English (or Czech!) definition. If you define it as a form of massage, most people will get an image of either gentle or robust “kneading of flesh”. Of course, massage techniques are part of Shiatsu too, but only marginally. On the other hand if you were to define it as a form of delicate Japanese touch therapy, a degree of confusion may result in the individual not quite knowing what to expect from you. For example, I once advertised using the following definition: Shiatsu is a Japanese touch therapy encompassing acupuncture, and subtle massage techniques, mobilisation, reflexive therapy, relaxation techniques as well as moxibustion. While all these descriptions are true, the overall picture was incomprehensible. But at least people saw that it was not something simple. So the best way of defining it is to practise Shiatsu on them. Nowadays the situation has improved as people have obtained some notion about Shiatsu, but several years ago amusing misunderstandings were common. For example, I had phone calls from people who thought it was either some kind of erotic massage, faith healing, magic or Chinese fortune telling.

People should lie down and relax during Shiatsu. But when they come for the first time they have a tendency to be wary. They are more inclined to watch what you are doing rather than relax. At the same time hardly anybody is able to relax even just a little. Therefore, the first

twenty minutes are more often about releasing any anxiety and building a trust. It is usually much easier on the second visit as the recipient knows what to expect. They know there is no reason to be afraid of you or of pain, and that you are not going to practise any weird Chinese magic and so they can relax much more. In addition Shiatsu treatment is actually very pleasant..

So, to explain how I would like you to work... During the weekend you will get a lot of information. Of course you will be given space to try the techniques and I will correct you and help you. But practising will be left for homework. But please do not try what a friend of mine did when he returned from his first Reiki course and couldn't find anybody to practise on. So he decided to lock his dog on the balcony to get a cold so he would have a recipient to heal. It is important for you, when you come the next time, to be well practised and able to continue. There will be many techniques you will learn. It is therefore important to try them out and adopt them, get free of thinking about them too much and so that you may apply yourselves to deeper sensing and feeling. A good way to remember things quickly (I know it works) is to rewrite notes. Just right after the course when everything is still vivid in your memory. But the most important thing is practising and training, training and practising.

There are of course certain rules that are advisable to follow when starting to learn Shiatsu. In the beginning you should not "do" more than two people a week, because it will be quite demanding – especially from the energy point of view. You will be tuning and purifying yourselves in order to be ready to absorb a lot of energy. It indeed does not happen immediately. It takes some time for opening up and processing to happen and it requires some persistence and practice. I say "some" so as not to put you off. There is a reason for this. Imagine what a drag it would be going to see a therapist who cannot move, has a woeful backache, is as stiff as a board, and is dying with a cold, and you want him or her to make you feel relaxed and to heal you?!?. It would be insane. **You cannot give what you do not have.** If I have a pair of shoes, I can give them to somebody else. However, if I don't have any, I can't. As a result, if you are not relaxed, it is not possible to pass anything further on and it is nonsense want a recipient you practise Shiatsu on to be relaxed. This understanding will be practically reflected in your correct posture and in the happiness Shiatsu will bring you. It is said: "It is so beautiful and so pleasant, like receiving or being the intermediary of Shiatsu". Therefore, rule number one is; I cannot give what I do not have. It sounds really very simple, but it is forgotten so often in practice. The same is true in everything in life; joy, happiness, love, sweets...

So at the beginning it is all about working on you. Take note that especially in the first phase certain reactions connected with the activation and purification of your body and energy system might occur. These reactions will be more or less the same as the recipients' reactions after Shiatsu. Similarly, this can also happen during the early phases of Qigong or Taiji practice. The body is simply awakening and things that have been gathering for ages begin to emerge to the surface. But more about this later when we come to discuss reactions to Shiatsu. As soon as opening up and purification is finished, the only thing left to do is "to enjoy".

Please do not be afraid of it. I can feel it in the air now; am I up to it, will I be sensitive enough, is it too much for me? It is part of your hardware however, that everything can be mastered with proper training and practice. As you learn how to ride a scooter, you can learn Shiatsu, it is really only a matter of training. Once you have practised it on a hundred patients you will be perfectly OK! So, once again, do not worry. It only needs some training. Nothing more.

When should Shiatsu be used and who could be treated it with?

Shiatsu can be given to anybody who does not protest. Shiatsu can be used with any diagnosis as at least a supportive method. However, some people list a number of contraindications. But I find this strange – how can be illness or a disease a contraindication to itself?

It is certainly important to choose the most suitable method of treatment. It is clear that you don't press your elbow into a varicose ulcer. According to the Chinese medical perspective, you will know that varicose ulcers or varices are connected with a kidney system disorder, so you tune the kidneys and all these troubles disappear completely. Of course, this will not happen at once. But it is possible. Indeed, it may be that the legs may not be treated at all, only specific points on the recipient's back will be used.

Don't be afraid of practising Shiatsu almost anywhere and on anybody. Of course, after you have diagnosed (analysed) the recipient, you will choose the most suitable techniques and the best position to treat them. It is possible to work with the patient lying face down, on their back, on their side or sitting up. When an elderly person comes to Shiatsu treatment and it's clear that he won't be able to get up, you will treat him sitting on the chair.

Sometimes people think that Shiatsu is opposed to classical medicine and expect me to put doctors down or to claim that Western medicine is wrong. You will never hear anything like that from me. It is rubbish! If you suffer from acute appendicitis, it is simply stupid to take some herbs and press points! Get yourself down to the nearest hospital as quickly as possible! There is no other option if things have gone to that stage. On the other hand, before things have progressed too far, a lot can be done to prevent serious problem requiring an operation. Before the disease appears on the physical body, you must have gone a long way, because **nothing happens over night**, although many people think it does. Indeed, you must have actually worked on it and invested a lot of energy into it. According to Chinese medicine, a disease can be diagnosed by the changes in an energy system at least 6 – 9 months before it appears on the physical body as a functional change or as an organ disorder. Therefore, you have several months to get ready for it. If you ignore all the warning signs and signals showing that something is going wrong and you happily continue as before, a problem “suddenly” appears “out of the blue”. Chinese medicine solves problems well in advance and heals a disease in its latent phase, before it actually bursts out. Therefore, it is possible to call it preventive, in the real sense of prevention, opposite to the “Western” early diagnostic approach that we call preventive check-ups. It also solves the real cause in the sense of harmonising the energy imbalance and not only removes the symptoms of the disease. Personally, I am all for the co-operation of both medicines. The aim remains the same – health. And it is great if you can have an ultra-sound check done after Shiatsu and it proves that “it has really been absorbed and nothing is there any more”.

Acupuncture was originally used, and this is also concerns *Shiatsu*, mainly as a preventive medicine. Nowadays it is usually turned to only in case the applied Western treatment has failed. Unfortunately, in many cases the therapist doesn't know pulse diagnosis, which is essential for successful acupuncture treatment. In such cases might be the conclusion it does not work. It really does not work in such a case and what is more, it can even be -- without this knowledge – dangerous. The problem is that many people don't know the principles how it works.

I will give you an example. Let's say your hands are cold. In a book called "Easy Acupuncture" you can read about points you should press in such a case. But even such a trivial problem can have two basic causes. Your blood vessels are either so contracted that blood cannot make its way through them and that is why the hands won't get warm, or, on the contrary, they are so dilated, nearly "slushy", that the blood flows through them without sufficient pressure. The result is the same – cold hands. One symptom - two completely different reasons. If the point you find releases the tension and you have problems with contraction, in other words excess, improvement will actually be seen and your problems will be solved. If the reason is the opposite one, you not only find out that it doesn't work, but you can also cause damage to yourself, by emptying something, which is already empty.

Another easily understood example would be constipation. And again, there may be two reasons. Either the bowel is contracted, its contents can not travel through it (this form is called spastic), or the bowel is so dilated that it can not move the contents (atonic constipation). So once again the same symptom, but from different reasons. If we want to be even more precise, both cases can be caused by either excess or a deficiency of energy in the path of the large intestine. The primary cause, however, might be something completely different. And so it is with all diseases.

It is true that in a certain percentage of cases, a given disease results from a definite excess or deficiency of an energy pathway. And these "cook books" are based on this fact. They offer you a list of diseases with specific points to be treated.. However, you cannot rely on this approach. It might be even dangerous on occasion. Generally these books can not be recommended and in fact they are nonsense. This risk of damaging the patient's health is real especially using the needles. It is not true that if acupuncture does not help it won't hurt. On the other hand, if you work with your hands, and don't push the energy anywhere, the body simply will not let you in if you are wrong. Nevertheless, there will be no improvement either.

I do not intend to frighten you, but it is absolutely vital to have an knowledge of this, because these things do work. This is an interesting moment, when opponents of the "alternative" want this medicine to be made illegal – stating it does not work. If it does not work, as they say, why make it illegal then? If it is true that it works only as placebo as some people claim, well great – lets use it if it helps. Actually, I wonder how to explain the placebo effect when applying homeopathy, acupuncture or Shiatsu to an animal, as a horse, for example, and it is healed. But that is their problem.

Correct treatment is as follows: first the state of energy in a particular meridian (a Traditional Chinese Medicine Energy pathway) is assessed through measuring the patient's pulse. Accordingly, the point or meridian you are going to treat is picked. After a certain time the pulse is re-checked and another point is chosen. Thus you proceed until the maximum level of possible "tuning" is achieved for the given moment.

It is worth mentioning that in ancient China the quality of a physician was recognised by the number of needles used or therapeutic techniques performed. The better the therapist, the fewer needles or techniques used. The aim of acupuncture definitely is not to turn a patient into a pin-cushion or into resembling a hedgehog. In the case of Shiatsu not all techniques you know need to be performed.

In Shiatsu you can also read the energy status by “scanning” the recipient’s back or belly, where particular organs and their status, including their energetic potential, are mirrored. When running your hand over these areas it is possible to feel sensations of warmth, cold, prickling, tingling, or pinching in your palm. You may feel your hand floating softly up or, on the contrary, dropping through empty space. There is great number of different feelings and sensations. However, the first step is to learn to sense those of ‘fullness’ and ‘emptiness’. Consequently, it is also possible to observe a certain quality of the energy of a given organ. This is also the practical explanation and usage of the so-called theory of five elements and the reason for its name.

According to the Chinese, the material world is made up of five elements, and energy passes through five different phases or qualities. They are fire, earth, metal, water and wood. These elements, or transformations, correspond to particular organ systems. Indeed, if your hand runs over the kidneys for example, you can sense not only if there is a lot or a little of energy in them, but also -- if they are working properly – a feeling corresponding to the quality of deep water. It is a sensation of pleasant warmth and heat in the heart area. The heart belongs to the fire element. Etc.

Anyway, **disease is a fascinating phenomenon.** Just take the word disease, it can explain a lot. Dis – ease, i.e. not to be at ease. This is the opposite from being free from worry and anxiety. Or, alternatively, something disturbs or is not easy for you. You may have difficulties with the ability to love, to awaken, or to feel self-awareness. If you realise that diseases are results of your own shortcomings, you will not be in such a rush to complain and tell everybody about them as soon as you meet them. In fact they are a testimony of us. Diseases are only outside mirror what is hidden inside. Our real state. Nothing more. It can not be considered an enemy or something coming from outside.. That is why it is nonsense to treat a disease. It is necessary to treat the person.

The Czech mystic Frantisek Drtikol stated that “disease results from thinking incorrectly” while the German medical doctor a psychoterapist, Rüdiger Dahlke commented that “a disease forces us to be honest”. It is quite obvious that disease is a mental problem in the first place. Thinking directly determines energy, its flow, and its direction – it is only afterwards that the transfer and transcription onto the physical body and into material physical reality occurs. Actually, what is this “matter”? From the point of view of energy, matter is only its slower form and thinking is its faster form. The real matter of a human body could be easily accommodated on a needle-point and there would still be space left. Don’t get me wrong, there is nothing esoteric, spiritual or rambling about this. It is pure physics. Photos of aura and energy have been taken since the 1970’s and Albert Einstein defined his theory of relativity some time ago too. Therefore, there is no point in persuading anyone about the existence of energy, because those who claim it does not exist ignore the basic facts that are learned in the fifth form at primary school. Of course, there are different forms and qualities.

Energy is equivalent to the degree of attention that mind pays towards itself, i.e. the degree by which we are aware of the essence of ourselves (identifying with a specific physical, energetic, or mental form etc.). The level of awareness transcribes as our rising energy and its potential. In this way, the power of thought increases its potential, transcribing into physical reality.

Every object, even things that from a human being point of view are considered inanimate, has its own radiation and its own form of energy. Energy is the primary basis for everything physical. Indeed, the body itself is a biological machine, which is unable to work without energy, and in fact it is an intricate mesh of energy pathways which in their slower form represent what we call matter. These energy pathways are not visible to the naked eye, but this does not mean they do not exist. Indeed, atoms and thoughts are invisible too and nobody doubts their existence. A great deal of these things can be precisely measured and detected with the aid of machines. A definition of an acupuncture point is that it is a place on the skin where the resistance is many times lower than that of the surrounding area. Serizawa, mentioned above, was in fact the first person to construct a measuring apparatus to gauge this phenomenon. He wrote the first scientific papers dealing with this topic, in which he categorically proves the existence of meridians and points lying on them, as well as showing the possibility of influencing the energy flow in a given meridian by point stimulation. After some time of practicing and increasing sensitivity almost everyone can sense, feel and in fact “see” the energy without help of any machines. However, in the initial phases such machines can help you a lot in finding a specific tsubo. For some people who do not believe in the existence of anything which cannot be weighed or measured, they can serve as the proof of their existence.

So, it is really nothing supernatural or magic. However, be careful of extremism. It is the worst of all. Unfortunately it is the most common human quality. In this case, such extremes as so called spiritualism and materialism. Both of them in fact mean a denial of the existence of the other side of the coin. However, this probably is not the best simile, because matter and “spirit” are not antagonistic. To deny one and not to see the other one is pure nonsense.

For a better understanding we can use the comparison of water. Water is found in the form of steam, liquid or ice. Correspondingly, consciousness or mind if you wish, is demonstrated as a thought, energy or matter. If you have ever seen a hot spring in winter you are aware of steam rising from the water, as well as of the surrounding snow and ice. Hence it is a perfect simile for this world and our body, where everything is amazingly interwoven, creating and mutually supporting each other without contradiction. The basis remains the same. Only the expression and manifestation differ. Of course, it is possible to claim that water exists in the form of ice only. But then what a surprise when the spring arrives!

What is the process of Shiatsu like and how does it work in practice? Compared to classical rehabilitation techniques, it is immediately obvious that the biggest difference is that you work on the floor, which at the beginning might seem uncomfortable, a thing people are not used to. But sitting on the floor is quite natural and if your leg muscles are contracted, you can thus stretch them. The main advantage coming out of it is the fact that the therapist can use the whole weight of their body, which makes the work much easier, and they do not damage their hands needlessly. This is very important. As a physiotherapist, I can remember arriving home and not being able to unlock my front door as a result of having massaged eighteen patients that day. My fingers were totally ruined. At the same time I did not have a slightest feeling of helping any of them in spite of the fact I had been working diligently. As time goes by this gets even worse, because you feel so exhausted and it simply does not work. I do not hold to the position that says there is nothing like working your fingers to the bone. It can be said that this was a sort of stimulus for me, because I began to become interested in so called “alternative” approaches and got to know Shiatsu. Personally I think that if you practice

rehabilitation faithfully, after about two years you are ready to retire. I mean no disrespect to any rehabilitation nurses. In fact I admire them – only I was not able to work that way.

Another significant difference for a person providing Shiatsu is that after it, I mean after so called work, you feel much better than before you started. You are full of energy and you can easily go and do something else, because you have relaxed in a wonderful way. In fact it is a sort of dance or play. Definitely no drudgery or sweat or even work. So please do not work.

Have a rest, relax, and play. One should be content when doing so-called work. So, I repeat rule number two: **Do not work**. At the beginning, before you know how, you will probably work very hard anyway, it is a bad habit. Let's remember an old Jewish saying: "Who works too much has no time to get rich." So, as you can see, it is all for nothing. However, let's come back to application of Shiatsu on the floor.

The floor mat should be soft and firm. Japanese Futon mats are ideal, especially those filled with cotton or a mixture of cotton and wool. However, several layers of blankets will be enough. It is important for both the recipient and practitioner to feel comfortable. It is also a good idea to have a variety of pillows and blankets to hand, just in case the recipient becomes uncomfortable or cold during the treatment. On the matter of comfort, the practitioner is free to change position frequently to a more comfortable position. When kneeling, a pillow placed under the buttocks is a great help! Remember rule number one. I cannot give what I do not have. If I feel pain or uncomfortable, how on earth can I help the poor recipient to relax and become healthy. This brings us to another point. Do not crowd the recipient. It is important to ensure that there is enough free space around them, not only to allow access from all angles.

It is important, because at the beginning you will tend to work for between an hour or an hour and half. The working time is usually about 45 minutes, but this requires certain practice. And again there is a deeper reason for this. First, you ought to give the person some time to relax and you need gain their trust for this. At the same time the body needs time to realize what you actually want it to do. During the course of a Physiotherapy or rehabilitation session, time pressures mean that by the time the recipient realises that they should relax they are in the waiting room preparing to leave.... You will see during your practice. People usually lie down, but deep inside they are still at work or on their way to you, still thinking about something. It takes them about 20 minutes to realize they do not have to do anything. Similarly, it is exactly 20 minutes for energy to finish its one cycle. Although you will be perfectly skilful with Shiatsu after a certain time, it is good to keep at least this length of time. The body will process all new information and energy much better. This is the reason why all energy exercises as Qigong or Taiji should last at least that time long, if you want to get the best results.

So how long should Shiatsu take? Well, until "tuning in" has been achieved. This is of course individual. It also depends on the patient's condition and how many Shiatsu they have already been given. For them, it is the feeling they have had enough and more would simply be "more". In this respect, children and animals are the best. They come to be caressed and when they have had enough, they simply get up and go away. On the other hand, when you as a therapist feel that the body will not accept anything more from you, simply finish. If I must suggest a time scale, it would be from 20 minutes to an hour. There might of course be some exceptions.

It is also important for the time to be long enough because at first it is necessary to relax the surface in order to be able to go deeper. You must first melt the protective shields the body uses to defend its weakest areas. It is the area with a defected energy flow. Whether it is its excess or deficiency, you can not say. It is simply disharmony. They both may cause, for example inflammation.

It is ideal to have Shiatsu done approximately every three or four months. In case of a specific disease it can be repeated after about three weeks. If the Shiatsu takes the whole hour there is no point in repeating it any earlier. The body needs some time to process the energy and information. I usually recommend a check-up after six weeks. Naturally when working on rehabilitation, certain parts can be performed more frequently, but usually it is not necessary. If there is no significant improvement after the third application, there is a serious problem, which probably cannot be solved in this way of treatment. The standard I recommend is two or three Shiatsu. After the first one the reactions are usually the strongest. The second one is a sort of fine-tuning and if you want to make sure and tune it to maximum, it can be repeated the third time. The time of the treatment changes too. The first Shiatsu takes usually an hour. The second one approximately 45 minutes and the third one no more than 30 minutes. However, these are rough approximations. Each case is totally individual and that is why it can be completely different.

The basic pattern of procedure of Shiatsu is relaxation, stretching and consequently working on a meridian's energy. Here we arrive at another important point. Contracted muscles and stiffness are defence systems for "weak" areas. A classical massage only massages away these protective mechanisms that the body created itself to defence a deeper problem. In fact, you can remove from the body its armour, but you don't solve the original problem. It is necessary to remove the reason for the protection to solve the cause. If you tune the energy there is no more need for this defence, and the body dissolves it with pleasure itself because the reason for it has disappeared. If not, the problem only shifts somewhere else or becomes stored even deeper, so the end result is the opposite to that which was intended. Basically, it is necessary to perform a degree of "foreplay" before hurling yourself into action. The body needs time to prepare, to be able to accept the new form of energy and at the same time it is important for the reaction following Shiatsu to be as mild as possible, or at least pleasant.

Please, do not be mistaken that there is anything in the belief that there is "bad" or "good" energy. There is only one energy. It may be in the wrong proportion or in unsuitable amount in a particular part of a body or in nit corresponding quality, but it remains the same, one and only energy. The body is like a bucket. It has its own capacity and you simply cannot cram anymore into it. This is the basis of acupuncture. It is all about harmonization, in other words, tuning what already exists. It definitely is not a kind of "charging up" or anything like that, though you might feel such an effect. The energy, which was at a standstill and did not rotate, is put into circulation again. That is also the reason why those purifying reactions occur. You shake it and get it moving. For someone who has been doing nothing for forty years except for eating pork, dumplings and cabbage, and watching TV it can be a dreadful ordeal. But more about this a bit later. I know one patient who had to go to the toilet 15 times after Shiatsu. She told me that what had got out she had never seen in her all life. Nevertheless, in three days she radiated happiness and looked several years younger.

Another thing particular to Shiatsu is that it is practised on a clothed person. They usually wear a cotton T-shirt and loose trousers made of a kind of natural fabric. It is of course possible to work on a naked body, but it is not necessary. The work is focused especially on energy and when in contact with a naked body there are many additional sensations picked up by your hands, e.g. dampness of the skin, its softness, pliability etc. and these things could become a distraction from the sensing of finer energy structures. Honestly, if you put your hand on a sweaty or hairy back, it is not much of a feeling. Also some people do not feel good stripping naked before a complete stranger, the temperature in the room may also not be ideal... But some people do find such a situation quiet embarrassing, so thus you make it easier for them. It goes without saying that you cannot work through a quilt, a duffel coat or a ski jacket.

It is also good to remove all tight things and all metal objects like chains, rings and watches. This applies to both the patient and the therapist. I keep telling people: "Take it off, you won't need it now." If you really have to wear a ring, do not wear it on your index finger. At the normal point of contact there is the sedative point for the large intestine and its permanent stimulation leads to constipation. Once on when giving a Taiji course, I asked the participants to take all their jewellery off. A lady with a ring on each finger seemed to be extremely annoyed. "And why should I do so, can you tell me?" It was not difficult to judge, from her behaviour and imperceptible, almost invisible lower lip, that she suffered from chronic constipation. "At least you will not be constipated," I replied. The lady did not take it well and I thought I would never see her again. But to my surprise not only did she arrive the following week without rings, but pounced on me immediately thanking me profusely for providing enormous relief. Sometimes healing is not so difficult

With earrings it is similar. It is difficult to find an appropriate spot for them, taking into consideration what a "job" a tiny acupuncture needle in the ear can do. If you still must wear them, do not place them in the middle of the ear lobe. The reflexive zone for the eye is there. Originally earrings wore sailors to stimulate their eyesight to see better. However, permanent stimulation leads to fatigue and may lead to a worsening of function. So if your eyes hurt, try taking your earrings off. You may be pleasantly surprised.

Once it also happened to me that a woman with neck pain came to be given Shiatsu. Having wanted to look good, she put new earrings in, with a little chain with a clip placed on the reflexive zone on the ear for the neck. I asked her how long she had been wearing it. Three days, she replied. And this was exactly the time her problems had been going on. I advised her to take it off and sent her home. The same evening she called me. She was without pain.

Another important thing is that Shiatsu should not hurt and must not hurt. On no account! If it does happen, it is the therapist's mistake. You should be able to sense the depth you are in and what the scale of the movement and techniques you can apply is. The patient should never have a feeling you have not done enough, but you should never go too far. If you are relaxed and open, this cannot happen.

What is the reaction if the technique hurts? The muscles contract and won't let you further in, so you can't reach the depth needed. The body immediately creates a protective shield you cannot progress through, so try to avoid provoking any pain or tension. Similarly, if you push or force anyone, the reaction will be the very opposite to that you want or need

And without any doubts it is not a test of the patient's endurance. It is also good to tell them at the beginning to inform you immediately if they do not feel comfortable. Tell them also that they can turn their head and move their arms whenever they want to. People sometimes think they mustn't move or otherwise disturb you, but then, after you have finished and they stand up, their head is to one side and they cannot move it. So it would seem that you should start afresh.

So let me now look at something that has been referred to above several times; reactions to Shiatsu. Once again, this is nothing esoteric. These are just the normal things that classical masseurs or people involved in healing will tell you. Personally I think, for example, that there is no huge difference between massage of good quality and Shiatsu.

The most typical reaction is the feeling of being run-down. You feel worn-out and the best thing to do is to lie down and have a rest. You may feel like you have been unloading coal or working in a gravel pit. Therefore, it is good to tell the patient after Shiatsu to have a rest that day or go to bed earlier if they want. They definitely shouldn't decorate their flat, move house or dig a well. Naturally it depends on their feelings, because not everyone feels the same, so do not force them to go to bed at six p.m. It is nonsense. But it is really ideal not to arrange anything for the evening after Shiatsu and we should recommend this to patients as soon as they make an appointment. Children, they know what to do – after Shiatsu they usually sleep 17 or 18 hours non-stop. They do not have this feeling of self-importance. If you lie down and sleep it away, you can allow your body full reign. You stop being in its way and, and having enough time for itself, it will purify and recover. It is also recommended to drink a lot of water on that day. Water is a perfect carrier and the body is, with its help, able to process the energy and new information much better.

Another quite common reaction is headache. The pain is usually not too pronounced, it is more or less similar to what you feel when leaving a city and coming to a forest where the air is fresh and you are a bit overcome by fresh air... It is caused by the fact that one artery leads directly through the spine in the neck and if it is repaired during Shiatsu, there is more blood flowing to the head and the consumption of oxygen is higher than the brain is used to. So it is not a real headache; but with some people, it might be felt as a kind of pressure in their head. And again, the best thing is to sleep it away. If the pain is severe, it is of course not a problem to take an analgesic to kill it. However, patients shouldn't take any pills before Shiatsu. I do not mean the medication prescribed by a doctor, but painkillers such as Ibuprofen etc., because it cancels the possibility of controlling the work and the body takes on a disguise. When Shiatsu is over and you may need some relief, it is a different matter. And as we have already said, this pain shouldn't be caused by Shiatsu practice.

This especially concerns tranquillising aching prolapsed inter-vertebral discs. Personally I have great experience with treating all types of backaches. It can be said that in 90% cases immediate relief occurs and the pain almost completely diminishes. Sometimes patients crawl in on all four and leave happily in a while. They cannot believe it is possible. It is great fun when they leave their crutches with you and even argue that they do not belong to them. But if there is still some pain, it is possible to "nibble" a pill. I think it's good to tell the patient about it. I am convinced it is not necessary for them to suffer, and this is true in general.

Sometimes a temperature above normal might appear. The body burns gathered rubbish and all unnecessary things. This way it purifies. The advice is the same again; the best thing is to go to bed, sleep it away, have a rest.

Occasionally some kind of rash appears. The body simply wants to get rid of all things it does not need by all possible means. All old sludge gathered through time leaves the body. In this case the reason is that the intestines and lungs are purifying. As mentioned above, more frequent defecation is common. The colour of the stools may change too.

Ladies might experience irregular menstruation in cases where they are not taking the contraception pill. But at least minor discharge is common. Do not worry about that, it is normal. And personally I think it is much better than stagnation and storing unwanted things and toxins and saving them for “a rainy day”.

A body does not start a healing process until it has enough strength to finish it. So everything useless leaves the body in a normal way and you are at peace. It is definitely better to have effusion and a bit higher temperature for three days than to develop a cyst or something similar if not worse, in the future.

None of these reactions lasts longer than three days and they do not have to occur at all. It depends on the state in which the patient comes to you, how they look after themselves, or how far they have let the disease go. But the problem arises when a walking dustbin comes to see you.

It is unnecessary to scare people, only point this out. They tend to become introspective and they can even be disappointed that there was no purification “so now they are not sure if it has worked“. After some time you will be able to say almost with certainty how it all will develop and you will not have to name all possibilities. Once I happened to meet a lady I had done Shiatsu the day before. She triumphantly announced that she had measured her temperature the previous evening. I had been right: it was 37.1 degrees centigrade! It felt really great. I wonder though what I would have done if she had not had it!

Because we work on energy, there might also be reactions on a psychological level. People are usually slightly euphoric after a treatment; it is similar to having eaten a good meal – the feeling of blissful idleness. But also various releases might take place and things surge out of the subconscious, which may result in sadness or signs of depression, nightmares etc. This is no wonder if someone has been carrying inside themselves hundreds of old injustices, hurts and fears. These psychological changes are more common with women who are more sensitive to this aspect. Again, it is better to get rid of these feelings, not to hide them somewhere. If it happens, do not get nervous, do not worry. Simply give your patients the advice to watch it and let it go - let it live somewhere else.

It is also possible that your patient starts crying during Shiatsu. It is all connected with work on energy. The emotions, which have blocked, begin to flow free, roll out. It is often sorrow and sadness, sometimes anger or an inability to forgive oneself or somebody else. It is good to stop Shiatsu at that moment and cover the client with a blanket. But do not lose contact with them. Your work has been done. Stay sitting by them, put your hand on them. Do not comfort them. Let go on what has to go on. Don't hold their hands or stroke their hair. Stay in your position as a therapist. There is no point in letting them have a fixation on you. It is better to avoid any misunderstanding.

Sometimes the reaction is totally opposite. The recipient starts laughing and it is not possible to stop them. In such cases stretching their legs or kneeling on them doesn't really bring added benefits. Harmony brings along the feeling of happiness and joy. However, at the beginning you are more likely to experience the first situations mentioned above. It is connected with the state you are in at the given moment. Similarity attracts similarity. After you have managed to tune yourselves a bit and understand some basic links, you will be probably finishing most of your Shiatsu with your patient laughing so much that it won't be possible to practice any techniques to them.

One more observation. Personally, I do not really find the word 'block' suitable. I prefer calling it 'inferiority complex', or simply a hang-up. People come and start telling you how "they are all blocked and how no-one has been able to help them, despite trying everything under the sun" and so on and so on. Sometimes they are even proud of these hang-ups. "How it was in during childhood with someone looking at them unpleasantly.... and now mother.... and both parents after all ...and also those past lives... , oh and the chakras" and many other things. Purely and simply it is better to call it hang-ups, because hang-ups are not as nice as blocks.

It is true that women react this way more often than men. As I have already said they are more sensitive towards these things than men are. And men do not cry, do they! Generally, there are two sorts of men coming to Shiatsu. The first group could almost be advised to train at putting an engraved marble stone on their chest and tossing earth on themselves and get ready because they are completely wrecked. The second ones announce to you gravely that "they have suffered from runny nose for two days and then a hangnail appeared and when turning their head and then tilting it back and after that bending side-wards to the left and back, there is a sort of slight pricking pain". You can do nothing with these men. It is better to send them somewhere (away) or ditch them on the spot. It is usually best to work with the first group who trudge in with great difficulty because they are "shaking in their boots" and therefore willing to do co-operate and do anything.

This is also an interesting topic. It never crosses the mind of many people to do something for themselves, alternatively they do not allow the possibility there is no help to them. They only expect you to lay your hands on them, start dancing in attendance and brown-nosing in an effort to please them. It is really amazing when such a rubbish basket on two legs comes to see you, rests his 140 kilos on the sofa and says: "So, what are you going to do with me?" "Nothing," I reply. "What should I do with you?! It's your problem. You alone have wrecked yourself." "Wait a moment?! So what's wrong with me? You are the healer, so you tell me!" "First I am no healer. And second I don't care what's wrong with you. It is your business."

Your totally different reaction from that, what people are used to and expect, make them silence immediately and then you can start working seriously. This way you spare yourself a lot of labour where no benefit may result anyway.

Once a lady came to Shiatsu and before we started working she told me she was terribly ashamed. I replied there was no need to worry, she did not have to take her clothes off. But she shook her head and said something that really took me aback: "That's not the thing. I feel

ashamed because I have ruined myself so much and you have to restore it all.“ It was one of the most beautiful Shiatsu I had ever had the privilege to experience.

The common practice is when people see a doctor or come to a rehabilitation centre, they are pounced on, given a variety of massages, prescribed a kilo of pills and they have to do nothing. They stay lying like dumplings and in fact do not care at all. If not satisfied they complain you haven't helped them. They want to function in the same way as they have up to now, what is the very reason why they are in the particular state. They refuse to work on themselves or discipline themselves. They are convinced it is your responsibility and that you will do everything for them. Sometimes the best help might be to tell them off and send them away.

Generally, it is necessary to get rid of the programmes that restrict both you and them. From a certain point of view, so-called life is very often a succession of codes and programmes. You are born, go to kindergarten, finish your studies, find a job, get married, set up home, first child before you are thirty and if not...the thought of it makes you shudder! Then get divorced, find a lover, then grandchildren are born, you get old, fall ill and die. I do not follow why the people who are living this way are afraid to die. They have been dead for a long time.

One of my Shiatsu teachers told me how he went to confession, ready to admit all his wrong deeds and sins. But the priest asked him: “What have you achieved and what made you happy recently?”

You simply have to interrupt your thoughts and lead them in another direction. To unwind that imaginary circle you keep staggering about in. What song did you sing this morning?

Another teacher instructed me what to do when being attacked. He chose this mountain of a man at the seminar and told him to grab him from behind with all his strength as if he was attacking him. So he did so and engulfed him in a huge bear hug. All of a sudden the master turned his head and kissed him on his cheek with a loud smack. The guy was so shocked that he jumped three meters backwards. It was just interrupting an idea.

So if you want to help, I mean to really help and not only just soothe and thus encourage people to continue making the same mistakes and continue being ill, it is necessary to have a very fresh start. Vogeltanz is absolutely right when he claims that “only those seeking can be helped”. The question is what is help? And when curing someone do we really help them? Sometimes the best thing you can do is to tell them off. Not insolently or in a superior “smart alecky” manner, but with an inner humbleness and gentleness.

At this point I always remember a Zen tale about a sparrow which nearly froze to death. A cow was passing by and crapped on it. The sparrow, thanks to the heat the cowpat was giving off, started defrosting and coming to life again. When he was almost OK, a hungry cat appeared. Smelling it, the cat started pawing the shit to get to the sparrow. And the moral?

Not everybody crapping on your head is your enemy and not everybody pulling you out of shit is your friend.

So put on an act if your patient needs it for better understanding. A rehabilitation nurse who used to train me kept telling me: “Rehabilitation is about your ability to put on an act.” And it really is. Some of her performances would have deserved an Oscar nomination. She was able to help a large number of people.

Naturally it is necessary to **base the treatment on a positive approach**. Not only tell people off, but also praise them. Encouragement when needed is important. From my personal experience it is much better to discuss their problems with your patients not before, but after Shiatsu. They become more open and are willing to listen to you and thus you have more time to find out where the problem actually comes from and how to deal with it. And a person, who practises something so beautiful as Shiatsu on you, cannot mean but well.

Of course it is possible, desirable I would say, to give the patients some homework. Anything from doing an exercise to some kind of affirmation would do. It can be an impulse for the next Shiatsu session.

Praise in general is a wonderful thing. Have you ever heard a Czech praising anything? The Czechs only keep grumbling and make themselves heard only when something goes really wrong. Once I practised Shiatsu on a dancer and tap dance teacher from Munich. She kept sighing so intensively that anyone passing by could only have imagined what was happening behind the closed door... Honestly, I was a bit shocked, but on the other hand it is great to be able to say that you like something, especially when you really do. It was also the first time I received an immediate positive response during Shiatsu and therefore I knew when to push and how and where to work. People usually lie down saying “Oh yeah, it’s okay, I’ve only just remembered that there is a pain in my little finger now and then...”

It can also happen that the patient does not realize anything has changed at all. They might have crawled in on all fours, literally, or even been carried on someone’s back, and they simply leave uttering “yeah, okay”.

I practised Shiatsu to my landlord, a tough guy, a man always working with horses and with as much sensitivity as plank of wood, but otherwise a nice person. It was a huge success. I met him the following day; he was shining like a bulb. It was not necessary to switch on the light in the dark corridor. Simply marvellous. But he did not notice anything. So, craving for praise, asked I: “So, how are you?” “Err, nothing much. You know, I’m not into this business of yours...” I felt totally stupid, shot in the foot. However, in a room next door some repairmen were working and something went completely wrong. It was a huge problem and they had to start things over. So in he marched – now do not get me wrong, I do not want him to look an absolute menace - but he does have a bit of reputation and notoriously loses his temper. A bit frightened the lads started to explain what they had done wrong. Normally he would grab them by the collar and throw them out of the window and chase them across the square. But, instead, he only smiled telling them “No problem. Repair it. Take your time...” They couldn’t believe their ears, completely rooted to the spot. “What’s wrong with that guy? Dating a new chick, most probably.”

Another similar thing happened to me. There was a phone call from a lady who was coming to town and she wanted to see me for Shiatsu at half past one. I retorted it was not possible, clients make their appointment a month in advance. She insisted that she was a friend of a friend. I was trying to explain that it simply was not possible and that I could offer her another date. She slammed the phone down. After two hours she called again, the new date was OK. When that day came, a “dragon” arrived with a man trailing behind, obviously timid. Immediately she started bossing us around: “You sit here and you give me a massage, the kids went shopping for some rubbish at the shopping centre ...” We were standing there, as she babbled away. So I told her: “Your husband doesn’t have to sit here. You will be lying here for 45 minutes and he can have a walk around the city...” So she sent him away. He was so happy that he could leave her for a while and I started Shiatsu. It is wonderful when the people lie down and their mouth turns into a thin line, biting into the futon. After twenty minutes they soften and start smiling, almost sucking their earlobes. Simply wonderful 45-minute Shiatsu. After it she sat up and started talking. All the things that had been gathering inside her for ages came out. And she was talking and talking. Her first husband was an alcoholic, the second one used to beat her. Her daughter was anorexic - well, there was more than enough material for a soap opera. This woman had experienced so much. No wonder she acted her way. She went on chattering for forty-five minutes. Then there were nervous footsteps and shuffling from behind the door; the kids with that gentleman, anxious about what to expect from her this time. After half an hour they gathered up enough courage and I heard a light knocking on the door. I opened it and the woman jumped up, opened her arms and started cuddling them. They were shocked. They had no idea what was going on, staring at me, staring at her... Their looks were full of despair: give us our mummy back, who is this lady?! And she, to crown it all, says: “Where have you been for so long? I’ve been waiting and detaining..” she turned to me “...you! Now, let’s go to the shopping centre and buy something nice!”

People will start changing before your eyes and you will marvel at what can be done in an hour and half.

Another very important thing is that health equals harmony. It is not purity. Many people believe that health is purity, so they eat only rice and are afraid to almost even think of anything unhealthy. They are continually purifying their bodies until their intestines are almost crystal clean; they never drink alcohol, or coffee etc. They undergo various purifying cures and pay huge sums for them. However, when you measure their pulse or ask them to lie down and analyse them, it is quite incredible. Their condition is very often much worse than of those who live “commonly”. I do not say “normally” on purpose. In fact, what does “normally” mean? There is a huge difference between “common” and “normal.”

After having tuned and harmonized a body during Shiatsu, it naturally and automatically purifies itself, because health is harmony. Purity is neither health nor harmony. It is beautiful to be crystal clean, but not at all costs. And it has often nothing in common with health, joy or happiness. Many people are so health conscious and so afraid of a disease that they eventually manage to create one as a result of this fear. But they should be the healthiest of the healthiest people because they are looking after their health. And there it is. What is the sense of this?

Not to be ill? Or is it for another reason such as, for example, to be the best healer in the district? These things are very important and it is necessary to make them clear.

All of us are aiming for something and it is important to know the direction and if it is possible to support it consciously. The first is called intention. The second is motivation. Therefore, it is important to get to know the whole mechanism, which concerns not only the disease itself, but also our whole being in general. Once we understand this you will also grasp the so-called theory of disease, how it works and what it actually is. I find it very important and essential for your work because if you are to “heal” someone, you must know what kind of a role the disease plays and what its meaning is. To create a disease, it is necessary to work on it responsibly and to devote a lot of time and energy to it. Still it can take many years to develop it. Very often it determines the person and their role within society and the family. Thanks to the disease the nearest and dearest now have to look after the person and take them seriously. Without it they would not attract so much attention and be able to have everything their own way. Thus they have to be taken into consideration and treated likewise. And you want to steal the disease from them?!

I am going to speak about old people now, because this is quite a clear example. Let’s take a grandmother, poor little thing. She is lonely with nothing much to do. So she goes to a rehabilitation centre. From sitting all day in front of the TV she has developed a bit of a neck pain so she decides to have some massage as prescribed by a doctor. Her neck usually is a bit physically stiff. So here she comes to rehabilitation and you can see it will take three minutes to get it right and to release it. You start working and just before the very moment it should have been finished it contracts much more and the body closes. How is this possible? What to do with it? Remember that she has her programme perfectly planned. She comes to the waiting room an hour earlier, has a chat with the other grandmothers there discussing all their aches and pains. Then she sees you, you take care of her (and good care!), which is something exceptional for her. Not mentioning the fact that nobody has been touching her for many years. Then she sits down in the waiting room for another hour and half. Only after that she goes home. What a beautiful way to spend the morning! And now you want to deprive her of all this?! People look after her, she is the centre of attention – who would otherwise care?

Do not wonder, then, that people in fact do not want to be healed. The disease apparently brings them a lot of advantages. But it can also become a big trap for them. Many are able to develop really terrible diseases just because of this.

It is as a result of learned experiences from childhood. If you were ill as children, all of a sudden everything changed. An ill child is allowed to do much more than a healthy one. They are presented gifts, everyone attends to them and looks after them. It is a common practice and leads to the concept that a state of disease brings many advantages. The problem is that this programme is carried over and called on in the following years as well. Who wouldn’t like to be showered with care and become the centre of attention? That is why psychologists advise; if the child is ill, it goes without saying that you must look after him or her, but do be careful not to pay more attention than usual to them.

So, where is the borderline? Obviously try to do your best, but do not take responsibility for the person. If they are not cured, you know that you have tried your best. There is no place for

prangs of conscience, asking whether you did all you could and why they were not relieved. That is a blind alley. **To heal someone, it is essential that they themselves want to be healthy and that they themselves take their own responsibility for their health.**

You must take the responsibility for your present state. Because where you are now is the result of your past desires. In this aspect everything is correct. You have been working on this all your life; you wanted to be wherever you are now. Sometimes it is not easy to admit this, and it might also be painful. We really do live out our past wishes. If you take responsibility for your present state or possibly for your disease, a lot of work has then been done and you are almost home and dry. In the same way you created this, something else can be created as well. Similarly, **what a body has created, it is able dismantle and get rid of.** Of course it has not been created overnight, that is why the change will not be instant and will require the relevant effort too.

It is necessary to solve and understand these things by ourselves. The above mentioned motivation is extremely important too. And it again concerns all things, not only a disease. Also for example consider this: Why do you actually want to be able to heal people? Many people “slip” into performing good deeds; they try to save and heal everyone. Very often so-called healing practice is just a way of withdrawing attention and escaping from your own problems. As far as the others are concerned, we know exactly what they should do and what is best for them. We do know this pretty well about ourselves too – only it is a little bit more demanding, not always pleasant and it often requires hard work and patience.

So do not be surprised and upset when you realize that people do not want to be healthy, or they do but are not willing to do anything for it. I keep telling them: “Nobody will stretch or strengthen your muscle for you.” It is not possible for anybody to do an exercise or to go on a diet instead of you. And you, as therapists, do not take on anybody else’s responsibilities! It is their life, their manner, their problem and it is totally up to them. Do not push anybody anywhere. Give them a chance, but leave it to them. In principle it is easy. **You need only one thing and it is love.** Love, which is real and infinite, without limitations and restrictions; love which gives everyone freedom and free will and which enables everyone to experience what they want to and what they need to. And if someone feels that they need a disease, do not take it away from them.

It is the same as with energy. There are no good or bad things (energies). They simply are. It is up to you what to do with them. The problem is that many people only start working, thinking or doing something when they are “in a tight spot” and “the fat is in the fire”.

Another thing we must discuss and which is very important are the rules to be followed during Shiatsu intermediation. It looks like a dry theory, but believe me, I wouldn’t bother you with anything unimportant or useless. It is important to understand the principles and fundamentals. You would not know how and why it works without them. So, we are going to talk about practice, practice, and practice again and about things you will certainly find useful and you will apply them.

The first thing is an **empty stomach.** It might sound a bit strange, but remember to keep to this especially at the beginning, so as to be able to sense the energy best. One Shiatsu teacher used to say: “Remember, to be always a bit hungry and a bit cold.” Of course, it does not mean to be so hungry that your stomach is rumbling. You must feel good, but after having

eaten pork, dumplings and cabbage you simply will not be able to do Shiatsu. Once I met a friend. We hadn't seen each other for ages. We were sitting talking, and had two beers. Then I went to do Shiatsu. When the patient was leaving, she was as drunk as a lord. It simply transfers. We give what we have an abundance of. I cannot help it, it simply works like that and it is good to know about it. Nevertheless again; be sensible. If you are hungry, have something light. Bending over after a steak is really difficult and to feel something is even bigger problem. Meat in general is very heavy energy. I am not vegetarian, but certain things are better to be avoided before and also after work. I do not want to name anything. You yourselves know best what is good for you and what is not. After becoming more sensitive, you will know better. It is very individual and a precise recipe does not exist. Similarly, you cannot advise people when to go to bed. Four hours are enough for some people, on the other hand others need more than nine. It also depends on the time when you sleep.. Nevertheless the truth is that some caution and moderation is suitable in this aspect and it also pays off. This is true also about your preparation for this course. It is really advisable to prepare and be aware of this. Eating immediately after work is not ideal too. The energy is thus pulled down into your stomach and you deprive yourselves of the possibility to use it for work on yourselves or for healing and recovering your body. Anyway, you will not be probably hungry. Man does not live by bread alone. But I beg you: **do not suffer!** If you are hungry, feel free to eat. A hot bath after Shiatsu is not recommended for the same reason. The energy is absorbed by the periphery of the body and you deprive yourselves of a great deal of the effect it might have had. Have a shower - that will do. It is good to tell the same thing to the patient.

Another rule is an **empty mind**. What does it mean? We have already mentioned it at the beginning. You cannot give what you do not have. We always give what we have an abundance of. In other words, you must feel relaxed, healthy, and simply good to be able to pass it on. You cannot give love to anyone if you do not have it yourself, you cannot give happiness, if you do not have it yourself, you cannot give joy, if you do not have it yourself... Very often it is really comical when people who have divorced their partners three times or have lived alone for ages, give other people advice on partnership problems. The best advisers are definitely catholic (celibate) priests when recommending to newly weds their know-how.

If you happen to feel unwell, even if it is the beginning of an illness, call the Shiatsu off. It is better than trying at all costs to help the patient while being a patient yourself. And do not be afraid to be honest. "I am sorry, but I do not feel well today and I know I cannot work properly. Let's postpone it to another day. I will call you...etc." Nobody has ever been angry with me because of this. On the contrary, they are happy you care enough about what your performance will be like and that the patient therefore does not mean "another 40 Euro" for you. Of course if a person is brought to you bent double, you get to work quickfire and then hurry home.

Taking this into consideration let us look at classical rehabilitation. Again, I hold in the highest respect rehabilitation nurses and doctors and admire their work, because I couldn't manage what they do. A sixteenth patient arrives that day; your hands are hanging around your knees, you are wrecked and on the top of everything your angry boss has just told you off... so you pounce on the person. You grab the patient by the neck immediately. The neck - it is quite an intimate zone and you normally do not allow anybody to touch it. Tell me, who last touched your neck? How on earth can then the patient relax?! What will they automatically do? They will tense up - try performing something in such a case! It simply does not work and you cannot do anything about it. It's nonsense.

Another rule is that **movement should come out of the centre of your body**, your centre of gravity in other words. The Japanese call this place hara, in China it is tan-tien. It is a point a little below the navel. If you learn to work from hara, it will make it easier for you. You will naturally use the whole body and its weight, and a lever. Hara should always aim at the treated area. So when working on a hand, you should be turned to it with your belly. You do not aim at the head, legs or towards some village in the middle of nowhere.

During the whole working time you should keep an upright but relaxed position as much as possible. Like when your photo is being taken. It shouldn't look as if someone is hurting you. Imagine that the patient's family are watching you.

This upright posture mirrors your inner attitude, concentration and alertness. It refers to two things. It is the position of your body and of your inner position at the same time. So your attitude towards something is obvious from your body position. Avoid trying too hard and pushing something somewhere, for example health. Act as a facilitator to the inner dialogue of the person with himself. The less your presence will be felt, the more powerful and effective the work will be. **Do not be in either the patient's or your own way.** Be like an antenna. It does not try and still it works. Energy, or information for that person, is going through you, or more accurately through your presence. Do not give out anything of yourself, energy most of all. Otherwise you might end up like those "healers" with ruined kidneys, who dress in black only, who have five cats at home that they have to stroke permanently, and a collection of stones they sleep on. The trees around their house are withering away but they keep charging themselves up. If you try to cram some energy into somebody it can not help him or her anyway. And instead of going home happy and relaxed after Shiatsu, you will be lying on the patient, totally wrecked and feeling like a squeezed-out lemon. You will have to sleep for three days to recover as a result. In addition, when cramming something somewhere where it shouldn't be, you can pass the patient's problem onto yourself. Do not do this, on any account. If anybody claims that it is necessary to suck the negative energy in, transform it inside and then give it back, run away as fast as you can. Of course it is possible, but it is useless and dangerous.

What determines the direction of energy? **It's a thought that determines the direction of the energy.** The know-how is incredibly simple. Imagine it and it instantly happens. And it is not necessary to think about it all the time. You set it to a certain programme and it works. **We set out the system of treatment in our mind.** It is important to realize this, and remember it not only when you start with Shiatsu, but bear it in mind all the time. Lack of love, represented for instance by pride or by vanity, the need to show off, but also perhaps by worrying about a dear person, can easily lead us to a situation in which we will be pressing in the wrong direction.

It is also evident that the direction of energy is determined by a thought when comparing the maps of reflexive zones of different systems, for example Korean Sujok, the Czech Janca reflexive therapy or the Japanese school of relexology. You will find out they are completely different. How come, then, that they all work when each of them shows a different organ in a different place? The reason was mentioned above. You can strengthen your thought even more when anchoring it on the body, either by pressure or stimulation. And thus the power of

a thought and belief going hand in hand will do the job. In this case it is not placebo effect, though it might play a certain role here, but utilization of given principles of the functioning of reality.

Let's come to another rule. **Do not use power, only follow.** The thing is, on the physical and technical plane, your pressure shouldn't be too strong, or even better, should be almost non-existent. **Pressure without pressure, pulling without pulling.** On more advanced levels it means to work in your mind only. Your hand will only check the body's responses. In fact you let the patients do it themselves. You only show them where they need tuning up and the places they have to find and work on. In other words: "Look, you are tight here!" and they say: "Oh, I see," and untie themselves. Do you find it too simplified? It is exactly as I say – at least I feel this during Shiatsu. That is why I insist that it is not work, but play and dancing around the person. Like everything else.

Another thing is that if you push into someone you push with a clenched hand and through a clenched muscle you will feel nothing. Your hands, as well as your body, should remain relaxed all the time during the process. I know that I keep repeating the word **relaxation**, but its meaning can never be emphasised enough. Only through relaxation you can realise what things are really like, and the importance they have to be given. Through a relaxed hand you will feel the patient's response, whether the certain tsubo draws you in, defends itself or you hit a barrier or the point is already fulfilled and pushes you out.

Whole Shiatsu should go on **without interruption.** On the physical level it means a permanent contact with the patient even when shifting to a different position. It also means permanent mental contact. Basically do not look at what is flying around, do not think about anything else, but concentrate with your fullest exclusive attention solely on the patient. Because, as I have already said, this is how the thought determines the direction of energy. So if you are thinking about your great-grandmother, the energy flies to your great-grandmother. If thinking about a steak, it flows to it. Really, whatever I am thinking about the energy goes to it. That is why whatever you wish will be fulfilled and whatever you dread most will happen. Energy does not sort it out, you have given the direction and it works. With Shiatsu this is even more emphasised, so if you start thinking about the patient's gall bladder, the energy goes to his gall bladder. This principle works perfectly and it is good to bear this in mind and use it consciously. (To demonstrate this during my lectures and courses I choose a person with a problem or blockage in the small of the back. I show everyone what the given blockage looks like and what its' symptoms are, and then dissolve it without physical contact. With the moving parts of the skeletal structure it is most obvious.)

When concentrated enough your work does not have to last too long. If you are able to harmonize the thought, the energy and the appropriate technique, it is almost instant. It only requires some practice and training.

Use both hands. In Shiatsu we say that one hand is the messenger and the second is the mother one. The messenger hand works, pulls, pushes, treats pathways and points, and the mother hand lies and facilitates the information flow when to switch to another technique. The human body is a battery, and your hands are the positive and negative poles. So use both your hands, not having one in your pocket and the second "fumbling" on the patient's body pretending to be engaged in some activity.

Shiatsu should take place in a pleasant environment. So I repeat again: a soft mat, pleasant temperature, watch out for a draught... You can put on some relaxing music, but it is better to consult your choice with the patient. Not everyone might share your taste. Indeed, some people might even find it annoying. I used to tell my patients to bring music of their own choice, but you may not like this. It is a bit difficult to do Shiatsu to heavy metal or marching music, though otherwise I am easy about it. It is also good to have a lit candle in the room. It clears the air perfectly and possibly heavy energies too. I would not recommend incense sticks or essential oils. Not everybody likes the smell and it does not suit all. And it is really horrible when you enter a place, which smells like a chemist, and the smoke is so dense you cannot see through it. Simply tune to the person, agree on creating a pleasant environment they will enjoy. By asking them at the very beginning what they like and what they find pleasant you accommodate them. And a pleasant treatment follows. For an hour you are touching them, taking care about them, devoting all attention to them. You do not shout at them and suddenly they do not have to do anything. They are only lying down and relaxing. When they are leaving, tell them to lie down when they get home, and do nothing if they want to. This itself is enormously strengthening and healing. How often are you looked after like this? But be careful. Some people might try to solve problems in their private life with their relationships through Shiatsu and develop an unnecessary fixation on you.

In your work place a powerful zone is formed. It begins to function automatically even before you start work. The healing energies it contains will help you with your work. Sometimes I make fun and say that the biggest secret of my Shiatsu is the room where Taiji and Qigong and Shiatsu are also practised. It has such a 'charge' that people are in harmony even before they lie down. It is a sort of hole into matrix.

As for **practising Shiatsu in your family**, you can train on them. But if there is an actual disease, send them to somebody else. They will be most probably told the same you tried to explain to them for six months, but it will have a different weight and they are more likely to accept it. It is a bit silly, but it is true.

Another important thing is that during and after Shiatsu we feel better than human being. Indeed, better than the patient. Actually, better than a human being, this is also true. You are never tired or ruined after Shiatsu. Nothing like that. If you are, it means you have not been working well. **I simply feel better than a human being.**

Another thing, **do not stick rigidly to techniques.** As I have already said, sometimes it is necessary to act for the patient, but you shouldn't succumb to the temptation to start showing off. It is not necessary to do sixty or one hundred techniques. You find out where the problem is coming from and then choose the technique most appropriate for the given moment. Try ten, twelve. Then three will often be enough, sometimes only one. As you will have some 500 techniques in reserve, your choice should be wide enough, so this will not be a problem. But it is not necessary to use them all. You will simply do what is necessary to be done. Less is sometimes more.

Treating the cause, not suppressing the symptoms of the disease. Modern medicine sometimes acts as firemen who are alerted by a siren announcing the fire. Instead of rushing out and fighting the fire they cut the siren off and then act as if the fire has been extinguished. A disease functions like weed in a garden. If you pull it out with roots, it will never grow again. But if you only tear the green leaves off and leave the roots in the soil, it will only get

stronger. It will sprout again, but this time with much more strength. In the same way do not disturb the protective mechanisms of the body. The body is not foolish. Only we act that way. It does not want to be blocked, it does not want to be in convulsion or producing phlegm... There is no point in targeting mucous membranes that produce phlegm. The aim should be to focus on why the body is producing the phlegm to protect itself. Also we should not simply massage a contracted muscle out, but tune the pathway that is in problem, which resulted in the muscle going into spasm.

There are some horrible cases. Suffering from a terrible headache a patient goes through all kinds of neurological examinations, CT, blood analysis, urine analysis. They lie in hospital without the slightest sign of relief. The only thing they were given to kill the pain are some drops. After taking them the patient vomits, four times. And just when a doctor is getting ready to do a lumbar puncture and cerebrospinal fluid analysis, then you arrive, unblock the second vertebra of the patient's neck and after this ten-minute "operation" they can go home, safe and sound.

Let me tell you one more story about healing. An elderly lady, 75, came to see me for Shiatsu. She complained of occasional backache. So I start asking and she tells me... Last winter her husband died. They have a 1200 m2 orchard and he used to cut the grass with a scythe. She cannot work with a scythe, so after picking all the apples, she cut the grass with a sickle. I repaired her back and the advice was easy: treat the cause and buy a lawn mower. 😊

Always look at the body and the person as a whole. You should breathe properly, chew well, eat suitable meals, drink enough water, exercise, in order to be able to relax, to have clarity of thought and direction and at the same time always remember to feel and enjoy your life.

Being human is all this, it determines us and influences us and therefore affects our physical structure, our energy and our thinking. There is an old truth that as long as we are healthy and our body is in good order, we will feel good inside too, and if we feel good and are at peace, disease won't catch us out and bring us down so easily.

And as I have already said; it cannot be claimed that everything is purely a question of how you think, for example. Naturally, if somebody is physically short-sighted, they are actually short-sighted and afraid to look into the future. But if such a patient sees you, it is good to ask them whether they keep staring at a PC screen for 12 hours a day. Eyes suffer from this.

Once I came back from a course, bright as a button, once again. On Monday I come to work, and there was a colleague sitting having a problem with her ankle. I said: "Oh I see, an ankle problem. You refuse to go forward in your life and there will be a urinary bladder disorder..." Staring at me she uttered that I had missed the mark a wee bit. She had fallen off a horse at the weekend.

The truth is much simpler. If we are too "spiritual", what will people make of us. Naturally **there is a deeper cause to a disease that pushes us towards honesty**, but you can also get a cold. Sometimes a good diagnostic skill is based on knowledge, while at other times on intuition and sensitivity. Ideally it is a combination of these.

Therefore, do not use only intuition, but also reason, and not only reason, but also intuition. As it is said: “A man should think with sense and a woman should sense with reason.” Do not confuse them. If there is a mathematical problem, you can use all your intuition and sense, you can contemplate it all night long, but it is definitely better to calculate it. And if there is anything to be sensed and felt, it is completely off-the-wall to ‘try’ to feel...to think I feel, ...to think I love,...to try to relax or even to try not to be tense. It is absolute nonsense. Some things need to be done with a screwdriver, sometimes you need a hammer, not vice versa. Both are tools we have at hand, so let us use the most suitable one.

Do not separate things that go together, but also do not confuse them. Anyway, it is not possible to extract something from a body as an isolated unit. The body does not only consist of nerves or bones, lungs or skin, or even of the heart etc. although the specialities of neurology, orthopaedic, dermatology or cardiology, almost try to persuade us that it does. Very often the cause of a pain of a particular part of body can lie somewhere else.

When we work for example on the spine, it is not enough to get only one part of it right. It is important to look at it as a whole. It is nonsense to straighten for example the neck without straightening all the vertebrae below it and releasing the sacrum. If the base is not corrected, the top cannot be either. It is again about finding the cause. Like building a house from the foundations up, so similarly you must straighten the backbone. The spine has 32 vertebrae and these— like children’s building blocks – are positioned one on the top of the other. If one is displaced, you must readjust the column. Otherwise it will all fall down. To straighten only the cube on the very top when those below are askew, is nonsense and will bring no effect. So, if someone comes to you and wants “Shiatsu of the upper part of the spine”, they have no idea what Shiatsu is about. It is the same with hearing disorders. First, the patients probably do not want to hear anything. A Shiatsu therapist knows from the Chinese medicine that they should also look at the energy of your kidneys because the ears are their outlet. It is the same for the other organ systems, each of which is connected with its own outlet: liver – eyes, lungs – nose, heart – tongue.

Once I practised Shiatsu to a 65-year-old lady. She complained of backache. The problem was in the kidney area and I worked accordingly. The following day her son called. What had I done to his mother? She had been using a hearing aid for three years and suddenly she did not need it! She could hear perfectly! He was in trouble having said something she could hear now. How was it possible?!

There have been legions of people with all kinds of problems, from headache to problems with the neck, problems with knees and feet, infertility etc. And the primary cause was blockage of the sacrum connected with weakness of the urinary bladder meridian and the kidneys.

Take for instance a friend’s young daughter who practised ballet. She had to give it up because there was an outgrowth on her foot. It was so painful that she almost couldn’t walk. The medical science approach was to cut it off. There was nothing else what could be done, of course. When they came to see me first I compared the length of both legs. One was nearly three centimetres “shorter”. Or, her leg was not shorter, but there was a large one-sided blockage of her sacrum. A leg then seems to be shorter. The foot thus rotated and she started walking on the edge of the little toe. At her age, ligaments do not hold bones in their place as tightly, so one bone had rotated and looked like an outgrowth. We unblocked the sacrum and balanced the energy in the given segment. The pain ceased almost immediately. Her

homework was to strengthen her belly and buttock, because these muscles hold the pelvis in the correct position. Application of moxibustion (warming with a lighted stick of rolled mugwort) on specific points of the kidney and urinary bladder meridians was also recommended. She has been okay since then. Sometimes it is incredibly trivial. And nobody thought of measuring her legs!?! Anyway, even if someone had done so, it would have resulted with the recommendation that she wear a heel support. If a leg is “shorter” and this is caused by a sacrum blockage, such heel cushions not only do not help you, but you ‘fix’ the pelvis into a wrong position. The backache or leg ache connected with it is not solved at all. Naturally, if the leg is physically truly shorter, it is a different matter

The body is a unit and as I have said, we have a certain amount of energy. Our one task and purpose therefore should be to keep it in harmony, and in its right proportions. So if there is an abundance of it somewhere, it means there must be a deficiency of it in another place and vice versa. Do not concentrate on a knee, an eye, lungs...The Japanese call the place with abundance or excess *jitsu* and the place with deficiency or lack, *kyo*. Find these two places in the body and connect them (remember that tonification is prior to sedation and that it is better to pull the energy towards you than to push it). Harmonisation is then followed by healing. This is the principle of Shiatsu. Nothing else matters.

As for the concrete Shiatsu techniques. Start working as far away as possible from the problem. If someone comes to you with a headache, for example, start on the feet. The pain appears usually in the place with an abundance of energy and as I have already said; if there is a lot of energy somewhere, it is missing somewhere else. Working on the head immediately means filling something already full and it will only increase the pain. By working on the feet you draw the energy down, bringing relief and the pain ceases. This example is a simplification because there are 26 kinds of headache, but it illustrates the problem well I think, and it underlines the basic principles. If the patient has a stomach-ache, it is not advisable to start jabbing your fingers into that area, but if you treat the feet and the neck the energy disperses.

If somebody has problems on the right side, treat the left one first and vice versa. This is given by the fact that meridians or energy pathways if you like, come in pairs, and so there are lung meridians on both the left and right side. On both sides its surface branch starts at the level of the second rib and ends on the thumb. So if a patient with a pain in his left shoulder comes to you, start Shiatsu on the right shoulder. By relaxing the pathways on the healthy side first, the blockage in the meridians on the other side becomes automatically released. Moreover, it is much easier because it does not hurt. This is exactly what you learn as one of the biggest secrets within the Feldenkreis method. Feldenkreis practised judo and he had a serious knee injury. He did exercises in hospital on his healthy leg while the injured was healing. The body is, as I have said many times, a unit and it is necessary to look at it in this way.

Do not work with your hands only, but also use your imagination. We have already explained why. An elderly lady told me how she broke her leg. It is always a huge problem with old people. The doctors were worried about the development. To their surprise, when the plaster was taken off, the leg was almost without loss of muscle tissue. The lady started running very soon. She admitted that in her imagination she was cycling every day. In reality a mental exercise that you concentrate on fully is the equivalent of doing 75% of a physical one.

Pressure, or **the contact of your hand should always be perpendicular to the structure, to the meridian**. An acupuncture point, or tsubo, looks like an ink pot. It has a neck and so it is necessary to go towards the point perpendicularly. This enables you to get deeper.

One more funny detail about meridians. After the amputation of a limb, it is common to hear of so-called phantom pains appearing. For example, you have a pain where your big toe used to be. It is because the energy pathways follow the same routes as if the foot was there, because the energy body is a model of our physical body. An acupuncturist told me about a man who visited him with certain problems, and started talking about them. He grabbed his hand and tried to measure his pulse. The patient kept staring for a while and then asked: "Don't you mind that it is a prosthesis?!" Acupuncturist replied "I really did find measuring the pulses a bit tougher..."

What I really like about Shiatsu is that you start with some physical techniques, pulling people's legs, kneeling on them, stretching them in various ways etc. After some time you realize that you do not have to spend so much time on it. If you touch softly or not at all, it is much more powerful and more effective. Consequently you find out that you do not have to touch people at all and it still works and that no techniques are actually necessary. You only look and thus tune and heal. Then there is someone on the phone and you can see their problems as if they were standing in front of you and you bring them relief. So you are able to practise "remote healing". Because what is time and space? **Everything is incorporated in one's mind**. And none of these exists in reality.

Naturally there is certain development. You start getting to know how this world is being created and how so-called "reality" actually functions, what its nature and substantiality is. It depends on the point of view or so-called height or depth if you like, from which you look at it. The result is acquiring freedom, which is probably most important. It doesn't mean that you did not have it before, but you become aware of it. Thus, you get a detached point of view and start to attach real meaning to things. You stop considering yourself a victim of coincidence or someone created through boredom by your parents between quarrels. You become a creator or at least a team-mate in the game plan of this cosmic dance and in this tiny infinitely unimportant little game on the Earth called – Man, do not be angry.