

Shock and Trauma (Oriental Medicine view) by Mariola Strahlberg

Shock or trauma mobilizes body/mind/spirit to meet the new situation. The adoptive system (i.e. endocrine) is called into action. However, after the event one feels exhausted, and if the extreme emotion is not dealt with, the related organ becomes at first hyperactive, leading later to pathological disorder. In Oriental Medicine, fear affects kidneys, shock affects heart and pericardium, and heart's spirit component, Shen, the ruler of the body/mind. The extreme emotions, by disturbing related organ, have also a domino-like effect on other parts of the body. The extreme emotion can also become a "dominant emotion", one that arises consistently, although often inappropriately, in a stressful situation. Trauma, either physical or emotional, like a beaver dam, creates blocks that divert the energy from its natural flow forcing us into repeating the same patterns again and again. To recover from shock or trauma, one needs to find an inner urge for self-expression and self awareness.

There are two very clear areas in the abdomen where traumatic reactions can be palpated:

1. sympathetic dominance - Fight or Flight; (diaphragmatic constriction - tightness across the abdomen on the level of the sternum or in the right subcoastal and lower left abdominal regions) manifesting as agitation, inappropriate anger, pit feeling in the throat, shallow or mouth breathing, etc;
2. parasympathetic dominance - Fear and Exhaustion; (tightness 1 inch away and around the navel) manifesting as lowered immunity, chronic fatigue, sleep disturbances, etc.

Other causes of shock and trauma

However, one needs to probe deeper. What about prenatal traumas: unwanted pregnancies, deaths, illness or issues with relationships during pregnancies, womb toxins, or difficult births? What about postnatal traumas: postpartum depression of the mother, adoption, lack of parental love, sexual abuse? These are the traumas that are the hardest to neutralize since they have nothing to do with intellect (neo-cortex) but are registered as emotions in the limbic system (midbrain). According to England's Robert St. John, the time in the womb, from conception through birth, can be checked for each of the 38 weeks by palpating points on the spine of the foot. Robert St. John identified the points while working on his widely practiced prenatal massage in the mid-1950's.

In my practice, before I meet the child, I ask the mother about the conception process, pregnancy and labor. I want to know about her state of health, her relationships and any traumatic experiences during her pregnancy. I find that often behavioral issues at school with particular teachers as well as self esteem issues can be traced back to mother's ambivalence about her pregnancy or mother's rejection of the baby due to the postpartum depression.

How I work with shock and trauma

At the Shining Mountain Children's Center, I use a variety of non-invasive therapies: non-insertive acupuncture, color, sound, emotional tapping techniques, movement, detoxification, essential oils, etc these help a child or adult release their conscious or unconscious traumas. Both color and essential oils are some of the oldest and most powerful therapeutic agents known to us. They have multi-millennium long history of use in healing and rituals. In this article, I will present 3 specific cases where application of color, essential oils and movements were of a great benefit.

I use Color-light therapy (Colorpuncture™) based on the work of German scientist Peter Mandel. Mandel introduced Kirlian photography to the field of medical diagnosis. He also combined photobiology and photon physics with empirical knowledge of acupuncture created his therapeutic methodology of light. Dr. Fritz-Albert Popp, father of photobiology, postulated that light is present in every cell of our bodies and proved that

the radiation from the living cells can be measured and constitutes "intra and inter cellular regulation and communication". In Mandel's therapy, the color is the message to the system to correct the information that has been lodged within its recesses. To apply the light, I use plant dyed quartz glass rods inserted into a stainless steel, battery operated pen that is focused on specific points on the skin. For home use, silks, gems or color plastic overlays can be used. The light is shined on specific point combination, however the exact point location is determined by testing for sensitivity - pressure pain indicating that something is amiss in the energy flow.

Essential oils, through their fragrance and unique molecular structure can directly stimulate the limbic lobe of the brain and the hypothalamus (hormonal control center). Therefore, through the sense of smell, we are able to bring balance to the mind/body/spirit and produce profound psychological and physiological effects. I use only therapeutic grade essential oils (AFNOR or ISO certified) by applying them directly on different areas of the body or diffusing them on the air. Most children show strong affinity to certain blends and love to apply them on their bodies or smell them from the little bottles they carry with them in their pockets. The Young Living Essential Oil blends I most often use in my practice are: Peace and Calming, Trauma Life, Sara, Valor, Harmony, Hope, Release.

I also practice Brain Gym® (registered trademark of the Educational Kinesiology Foundation) a movement-based program that offers specific tools to enhance whole brain learning. When the communication between gestalt and analytic part of the brain becomes more automatic and the relation between cerebral hemispheres and the limbic brain becomes more spontaneous, we are on our way to realize our highest potential.

Case 1: 11 years old girl with uncontrollable tantrums at home followed by periods of lassitude and disinterest.

During the initial intake, mother disclosed issues of hardship during pregnancy with thoughts of aborting between 2nd and 3rd month. The situation at home was difficult since the father was not able to deal with the girl's tantrums rationally and often resorted to mental (loud shouting) and physical abuse (spanking).

My initial examination revealed sympathetic dominance pattern in the abdomen and very sensitive points on the spine of the foot around the 3rd month. During the prenatal color treatment, the girl experienced sharp, hot pain around that area. The treatment was stopped and was followed by the endocrine color treatment to calm the nervous system. The girl was taught simple Brain Gym movement to access both brain hemispheres with additional movements to calm her down when she felt agitated. She showed great affinity for the essential oils and she was asked to use Peace and Calming on her ears and wrists, Release on her liver and Sara on her back.

During the first few days after the initial treatment, the girl experienced a series of scary dreams in which she was trying to escape and was barely making it. There were only 2 tantrums the first week and her mother noted that they were less severe. After five weekly treatments, the whole prenatal color treatment was performed on the spine of the foot without pain, scary dreams and tantrums were the things of the past. The girl showed more energy and developed new hobby (playing the piano).

Case 2: 9 years old boy (classified with LD) managing well in school, 11 months after September 11th (in which the father of his best friend died) showed regressed behavior, very poor school performance and disturbed sleep. He was very athletic prior to September 11th, now scared to go to any games close to New York City or in a town with skyscrapers.

During the first visit, the boy sat in a curled up position in my big chair with a tee shirt over his knees making strange guttural noises and every few minutes would tell me that he is stupid and he likes it that way.

My initial examination revealed cold abdomen with parasympathetic dominance pattern. Weekly one-hour sessions consisted of Brain Gym movements with emphasis on focus dimension to improve the relationship of the back and front of the body to get him out of the stuck state and his passive behavior. He was asked to do these movements before school and before homework. He was to apply 4 essential oils: Trauma Life and Valor in the morning, Harmony and Hope in the evening. He was asked to take 10 minutes walks in nature every day taking deep, slow breaths and picking one tree observe and touch. At night, after application of the essential oils, he was to sleep with a warm bottle on his abdomen. After 6 weeks, all the initial symptoms were gone. The family decided to continue with the program in order to see if some of his learning difficulties could be helped with the application of color and additional Brain Gym balances.

Case 3: A 21 years old college student was hit by a rubber bullet in the right eye during street riots.

I have worked with him few months prior to the accident and therefore was deeply disturbed to see how nervous, confused and sick looking he was one month after the accident. During the examination, my palpation would solicit involuntary jerks of his body. His body was in a state of heightened alert. I applied few essential oils and the familiar smells allowed him to breathe more deeply. After the acupuncture treatment to balance his nervous system and to increase the blood flow to the right eye, I gently stroked color violet over his forehead. This simple color treatment brought a series of big sighs and a flood of tears. Body/mind/spirit were together again and a boy was ready for the next step in his recovery. This case shows not only how deeply trauma affects us but also how traumatic injuries can change our lives. The boy was right eye dominant before the accident and clearly left brain dominant. His major in college was business management. Since his right eye was severely injured during the incident, he had to switch to the left eye. After few months he has noticed that his interests have drastically changed. He found his business courses very narrow and dry and he was looking to expand his major to include more humanities and art.