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# TRADITIONAL CHINESE HEALTH SECRETS

*The Essential Guide to Harmonious Living*

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## Editor's Note

Traditional Chinese Health Secrets provides valuable information for beginners, advanced amateurs, and medical professionals. This textbook gives beginning practitioners a comprehensive overview of all of the subject matter and intricacies of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM); it offers advanced students practical references, and it provides medical professionals insight into various preventative and curative treatments often prescribed by TCM practitioners.

Traditional Chinese Health Secrets is in no way meant to be a practical, hands-on guide to prescriptive medicine by non-TCM practitioners. All readers seeking such guidance are directed to seek professional education, including TCM diagnostic techniques not covered within this text. As with any medicine—preventative or curative, herbal or chemical, ingested or performed—readers should NOT self-medicate or administer these treatments to others without appropriate education from licensed professionals.

## Table of Contents

Foreword by Prof. Dr. Hu Ximing .....	ix
Foreword by Mr. Zhang Qiwen .....	x
Preface .....	xi
Chapter 1 Principles of Healthcare in TCM	
1.1 Mental Healthcare .....	1
Being Open-Minded and Optimistic • Keeping a Clear Mind and Reducing Desire • Controlling Joy and Anger • Abstaining from Too Much Worry • Refraining from Grief, Sorrow, and Misery • Avoiding Terror and Fear	
1.2 Dietetic Healthcare .....	9
Choosing a Simple and Light Diet • Seasoning Food with the Five Tastes Properly • Dining at Regular Times and Controlling Food Intake • Regulation of the Temperature of Food • Following Proper Methods of Cleanliness • Following Some Instructions in Diet	
1.3 Routine Healthcare .....	20
Leading a Regular Life • The Correct Way of Sleeping • Adjusting One's Clothing According to Climate • Paying Attention to Hygiene	
1.4 Balance Between Work and Rest .....	25
Avoiding Overwork • Avoiding Irritability • Regulating Sexual Life • Avoiding Excessive Leisure	
1.5 Healthcare by Sports .....	30
Participating in Physical Labor • Brief Introduction to Common Exercises	
1.6 Healthcare by Conforming to Nature .....	32
Living According to the Four Seasons • Adjusting the Environment	
Chapter 2 Practical Chinese Materia Medica for Healthcare	
2.1 Commonly Used Chinese Material Medicines for Healthcare .....	39
Qi Tonics • Blood Tonics • Yang Tonics • Yin Tonics • Other Chinese Medicines for Healthcare	
2.2 Commonly Used Chinese Patent Medicines for Healthcare .....	63
Patent Medicines for Tonifying Qi • Patent Medicines for Nourishing Blood • Patent Medicines for Supporting Yang • Patent Medicines for Nourishing Yin • Other Patent Medicines for Healthcare	
2.3 Chinese Medicated Liquor for Healthcare .....	88
Healthcare Effects of Chinese Medicated Liquor • Mechanism of Chinese Medicated Liquor • Characteristics of Healthcare with Chinese Medicated Liquor • Indications of Chinese Medicated Liquor for Healthcare • Preparation of Medicated Liquor • Cautions for Taking Medicated Liquor • Commonly Used Medicated Liquor	
2.4 Soft Extracts .....	123
Soft Extracts for Invigorating Qi • Soft Extracts for Nourishing the Blood • Soft Extract for Nourishing Yin • Soft Extract for Supporting Yang • Soft Extract for Tonifying both Qi and Blood • Soft Extracts for Tonifying the Five Zang Organs • Other Soft Extracts for Tonifying the Body and Prolonging Life • Soft Extracts for Healthcare Used to Prevent and Treat Diseases	
2.5 Chinese Herbal Tea for Healthcare .....	142
Herbal Tea for Invigorating Qi and Enriching Blood • Herbal Tea for Nourishing Yin and Supporting Yang • Herbal Tea for Regulating the Function of the Spleen and Stomach to Promote Digestion • Herbal Tea for Tranquilizing the Mind • Herbal Tea for Preventing and Treating Common Diseases	
2.6 Medicated Gruel for Healthcare .....	155
2.7 Medicated Cake for Healthcare .....	173
2.8 Medicated Pancakes for Healthcare .....	179

Table of Contents

Chapter 3 Healthcare Independent of Medicines

- 3.1 Acupuncture and Moxibustion for Healthcare .....185  
The Effects of Acupuncture and Moxibustion in Healthcare • Mechanisms of Acupuncture and Moxibustion • Commonly Selected Acupoints in Healthcare • Acupuncture and Moxibustion for Healthcare
- 3.2 Qigong Exercises for Healthcare .....201  
Ways of Exercising • Types of Qigong Exercises • Principles in Doing Qigong Exercises
- 3.3 TCM Massage for Healthcare .....209  
Active and Passive Massage • Self-Massage for Healthcare • Indications and Contraindications

Glossary of Terms .....217

Index .....219

## Foreword

I am delighted to learn that Traditional Chinese Health Secrets will soon come into the world. TCM has experienced many vicissitudes of times but has remained evergreen. It has made great contributions not only to the power and prosperity of our Chinese nation but to the enrichment and improvement of world medicine. Unfortunately, differences in nations, states and languages have slowed down its spreading and flowing outside China. Presently, however, an upsurge in learning, researching and applying Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is unfolding. In order to bring the practice of TCM to all areas of the globe, Mr. Xu Xiangcai called intellectuals of noble aspirations and high intelligence together from Shandong and many other provinces in China to compile and translate this text. I believe that the day when the world's medicine is fully developed will be the day when TCM has spread throughout the world.

I am pleased to give it my recommendation.

Prof. Dr. Hu Ximing

Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Public Health of the People's Republic of China, Director General of the State Administrative Bureau of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Pharmacology, President of the World Federation of Acupuncture Moxibustion Societies, Member of China Association of Science & Technology, Deputy President of All-China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine, President of China Acupuncture & Moxibustion Society

Foreword

The Chinese nation has been through a long, arduous course of struggling against diseases. Through this struggle, it has developed its own traditional medicine—Traditional Chinese Medicine and Pharmacology (TCMP). TCMP has a unique, comprehensive—both theories and clinical practice—scientific system including both theories and clinical practice.

Though its beginnings were several thousand years ago, the practice of TCM has been well preserved and continuously developed. TCM has special advantages, which include remarkable curative effects and few side effects. It is an effective means by which people can prevent and treat diseases and keep themselves strong and healthy. All achievements attained by any nation in the development of medicine are the public wealth of all mankind. They should not be confined within a single country. What is more, the need to set them free to flow throughout the world as quickly and precisely as possible is greater than that of any other kind of science. During my more than thirty years of being engaged in the practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), I have been looking forward to the day when TCMP will have spread all over the world and made its contributions to the elimination of diseases of all mankind. However, it is to be deeply regretted that the pace of TCMP in extending outside China has been unsatisfactory due to the major difficulties involved in expressing its concepts in foreign languages.

Mr. Xu Xiangcai, a teacher of Shandong College of TCM, has sponsored and taken charge of the work of compilation and translation of such knowledge into English. This work is a great project, a large-scale scientific research, a courageous effort and a novel creation. I am deeply grateful to Mr. Xu Xiangcai and his compilers and translators, who have been working day and night for such a long time on this project. As a leader in the circles of TCM, I am duty-bound to do my best to support them.

I believe this text will be certain to find its position both in the history of Chinese medicine and in the history of world science and technology.

Mr. Zhang Qiwen  
Member of the Standing Committee of All-China  
Association of TCM, Deputy Head of the Health  
Department of Shandong Province

## Preface

Traditional Chinese Health Secrets is based on the fundamental theories of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) with emphasis on the clinical practice of TCM. It is a semi-advanced English-Chinese academic work, which is quite comprehensive, systematic, concise, practical and easy to read. This text is designed to give the reader an introduction to the practices and theories of TCM. It is also comprehensive enough to serve as a reference for the TCM practitioner.

Because this text is unique to the Chinese nation, translating it into English has been crucial to sharing the knowledge of TCM practice with the rest of the world.

More than 200 people have taken part in the activities of compiling, translating and revising this text. These individuals come from twenty-eight institutions in all parts of China. Among these institutions are fifteen colleges of TCM: Shandong, Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Nanjing, Zhejiang, Anhui, Henan, Hubei, Guangxi, Guiyang, Gansu, Chengdu, Shanxi and Changchun, and scientific research centers of TCM such as China Academy of and Shandong Scientific Research Institute of TCM.

The Education Commission of Shandong province has included the compilation and translation of this text in its scientific research projects and allocated funds accordingly. The Health Department of Shandong Province has also given financial aid together with a number of pharmaceutical factories of TCM. The subsidization from Jinan Pharmaceutical Factory of TCM provided the impetus for the work of compilation and translation to get under way.

The success of compiling and translating this series is not only the fruit of the collective labor of all the compilers, translators and revisers but also the result of the support of the responsible leaders of the relevant leading institutions. As this text is going to be published, I express my heartfelt thanks to all the compilers, translators, and revisers for their sincere cooperation, and to the specialists, professors, leaders at all levels and pharmaceutical factories of TCM for their warm support.

It is my most profound wish that the publication of this text will help to expand the idea of TCM practice to those individuals interested in this practice.

*Xu Xiangcai*  
*Shandong College of TCM*

# Principles of Healthcare in TCM

The principles and techniques of healthcare that exist today in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) were gradually developed through thousands of years of study and practice. According to a classic and ancient TCM text, the *Nei Jing*, the ways of TCM healthcare are generalized by the following principles.

*The techniques and methods are based on the theory of yin and yang and should conform to the natural law. One should keep an orderly life with a proper and controlled diet. One should avoid overwork. Pathogenic wind and other ill factors should be prevented at all times. Essential qi results from serenity and empty-mindedness and will keep you free of disease if you have a sound mind.*

The way of TCM healthcare has been practiced for thousands of years by those who wished to keep themselves in good health. It is under the guidance of these principles that the content and methods of TCM gradually developed and perfected, and they are still highly advocated by healthcare experts today.

## 1.1 Mental Healthcare

TCM pays great attention to the close relationship between mental activities and health. A TCM theory states that the body becomes an “organic unit” when the body and spirit are integrated. If you wish to strengthen the spirit, you must strengthen the body, and to strengthen the body, you must strengthen the spirit. TCM also theorizes that essence (*jing*), vital energy (*qi*), and spirit (*shen*) are three treasures of one’s life. If you cultivate these three treasures, you will live a long healthy life. It is believed that one can be healthy and free from illnesses only when he or she cultivates essence, uses *qi* sparingly, and takes good care of his spirit. This will ensure that he or she will be balanced and full of vigor, with every organ performing its proper function. If the spirit is in a state of imbalance, then the body’s essential *qi* will be lost, resulting in

various illnesses or even early death. There are many common Chinese sayings that address this situation such as,

*Those who keep a sound mind will survive and those who do not will die, and those who gain a sound mind will live and those who do not will perish.*

Therefore, according to TCM theory, for the sake of preventing diseases and promoting longevity, it is imperative to keep a sound mind.

TCM theory states that man has seven emotions: joy, anger, melancholy, anxiety, grief, fear, and terror. It is believed that when these emotions are experienced in excess, the Qi and blood will be disturbed resulting in pathological changes and bringing about great harm to the human body. As is stated in the Nei Jing,

*It is known that all diseases arise from the upset of qi: Anger pushes the qi up, joy makes the qi slacken, grief disperses the qi, fear brings the qi down, terror confuses the qi, and anxiety causes the qi to stagnate. Anger harms the liver, joy the heart, anxiety the spleen, grief the lungs, and fear the kidneys.*

In short, the loss of balance in the mind and the qi will greatly affect your health.

To the TCM practitioner mental healthcare has always been highly valued and applied as a major means of maintaining health and achieving longevity. Mental healthcare serves as a means of building up the body by strengthening resistance against disease.

### 1.1.1 BEING OPEN-MINDED AND OPTIMISTIC

A Chinese proverb says, “Optimism will help you forget sorrow.” It is believed that an optimistic, stable mood and good mental balance calms the body’s vital energy and spirit, which aids the circulation of blood and qi, thus, improving health. Throughout China’s long history, ancient medical texts provide advice on the subject of mental health. For example:

- The ancient book, Guan Zi, states, “The quality of one’s life depends on maintaining a positive happy state of mind. Anxiety and anger lead to confusion of mind. There can be no mental balance when anxiety, grief, joy, and anger exist. Thus desire should be subdued, and disorder should be checked. Happiness and luck will arrive on their own if there is no such disturbance of mind.”
- The Nei Jing also points out that “one should strive for tranquility and happiness, while remaining free from anger, resentment, and troubled thoughts. This text also indicates

that by avoiding angry moods and a troubled state of mind and by cultivating tranquility, optimism, and happiness, one will obtain longevity with a sound body that is not easily degenerated and a sound mind that is not easily distracted.”

- The book, *Huai Nan Zi*, advocates “happiness and cheerfulness,” which is said to be a part of human nature.
- The book, *Zun Sheng Ba Jian*, also maintains that “to tranquilize the mind one should have a happy mood.”

These texts indicate to the reader that good health is based on happy and tranquil moods. Keeping a happy mood requires that one must have a noble spirit, high ideals, an expanded outlook, a sanguine and lively disposition, and an open and broad mind. As is said in the book, *Ji Zhong San Ji*, “Cultivate a good temperament for the sake of the mind. Tranquilize the mind for the sake of life; avoid emotional extremes and adopt a care-free attitude.” Though it may seem difficult, if one can achieve such equanimity, he or she will be safe from unnecessary worries and enjoy an undisturbed mind and a sound body.

Your state of mind also reflects in your ability to deal with problems. Keeping a happy state of mind allows you to tackle problems in a composed manner. The book, *Shou Shi Qing Bian*, says,

*Do not worry about a problem before it actually happens, and do not worry after it happens. Do not cling to what has already passed; rather, try to remain detached and to keep your emotions in check. That is the way to health and longevity.*

Within contentment lies happiness, which is important for physical and mental health. The *Dao De Jing* says, “There is no sin greater than discontent, and no error greater than covetousness.” Therefore, constant satisfaction knows what contentment means. Additionally, the book, *Zun Sheng Ba Jian*, maintains, “Contentment will bring neither abuse nor danger.” Both of these statements express the idea that lasting happiness can be achieved only through contentment. If you think about it, most anxieties and worries result from pursuing and coveting fame, higher status, and material comfort. In the face of such temptations, it is important to stay grounded and realize that there are many people that have less than you do. Such realizations can make it easier for you to refrain from excessive desire and competition. You can then remain content and open-minded, maintaining an optimistic and stable state.

The self-cultivation of one’s sense of morality is another important method that helps you to maintain optimism. The self-cultivation of morality is something to which the ancients paid great attention. The

cultivation of morality involves devoted attention to things such as moderating desires, remaining content, and being tolerant, kind, and courteous. The ancients believed that a person of great morality was sure to obtain longevity. Through the cultivation of morality a person will cultivate great qi which contributes to a balanced mind and a cheerful mood.

Cultivating a variety of interests also contributes to maintaining an optimistic frame of mind. Such interests could include reading, meeting friends, traveling, fishing, playing chess, practicing calligraphy, painting, reciting poetry, singing, playing musical instruments, watering flowers, growing bamboo, etc. According to the book, *Yi Qing Xiao Lu*, “One should always enjoy simple pleasures such as sunshine in winter or shade in summer, beautiful scenes on a bright day, walking cheerfully with a stick, watching fish in a pond, listening to birds singing in the woods, drinking a cup of wine, or playing a stringed musical instrument.” What this quotation means is that you should relax your mind, choose and cultivate your own hobbies, and continually increase your interest in life. In doing so, you promote comfortable feelings and a stability of mind, which both contribute to good health and longevity.

In short, open-mindedness and optimism are key factors in regulating the mind. If you can exist in such a way that promotes these factors, then your mind will be balanced and your health will be good.

#### 1.1.2 KEEPING A CLEAR MIND AND REDUCING DESIRE

Through various historical periods, Chinese healthcare experts have always attached great importance to reducing desire and clarifying the mind. They believed this point was important for regulating the mind and prolonging life.

Consider the following excerpts:

- The book *Li Lun Yao Ji* says, “Healthcare lies in reducing desire. Selfishness and desire exist in the mind; therefore, if they become extreme, the spirit and qi will be disturbed, and peace and tranquility of the mind will be damaged.”
- Lao Zi, the founder of Daoism, emphasized the maintenance of a clear mind and reduction of desire, advocating a simple and plain life without selfishness and desire.
- Ge Hong, a famous physician and world known alchemist from the Jin dynasty, stressed that to adjust one’s mind requires purity, modesty, freedom from desire and anxiety, maintenance of essence of life, and simple living with no indulgence in material comforts.

The philosophy of TCM states that humanity has three treasures: essence, vital energy, and spirit. Those that take good care at preserving health will not spend the essences lavishly; rather they will keep hold of spirit, essence, and qi by reducing desire, refraining from talkativeness, and avoiding anxiety, respectively. This belief emphasizes that good health can be achieved through reduction of desire and elimination of improper thoughts, thus resulting in the adjustment of qi and blood and the preservation of a peaceful mind. Persistence in the practices of maintaining a clear mind and reducing desire will keep all diseases away.

For that purpose, the following three points should be followed:

Controlling the Mind with the Understanding that Selfishness and Excessive Desire Are Harmful to Your Health. The book Yang Sheng Lun addresses this issue, stating that one should cultivate an empty and tranquil mind. In doing so, there will be no place for selfishness and excessive desire to take root. He or she should avoid the pursuit of fame and power, because they can harm one's virtue. It is better for the individual to keep out excessive desire, greed, and selfishness rather than suppress them after they have emerged. Once they emerge, they are very difficult to suppress and will harm your ability to create a calm and tranquil mind.

If you can understand the how and why of controlling your mind, then you can help eliminate selfish and improper thoughts. Your mind will naturally become tranquil.

Eliminating six dangers and taking a correct attitude toward personal gains and losses. According to TCM, one of the processes to promoting good health is to eliminate the six dangers: fame, physical indulgence, riches, gluttony, haughtiness, and jealousy. The book Tai Shang Lao Jun Yang Sheng Jue tells us to do the following.

- Care little about fame and position
- Refrain from indulgence in entertainment and sexual activities
- Discount riches
- Abstain from greed for food
- Get rid of haughtiness
- Eliminate jealousy

It is believed that if the six dangers are not eliminated, the mind will be filled with anxieties and will not be able to remain tranquil.

Avoiding excessive stimulation of the eyes and ears. Of the five sense organs, the eyes and ears are two important sensory organs that provide the mind a vast amount of stimulation from sources outside the

body. Their functions are governed and controlled by the mind. If the eyes and ears are protected from unhealthy stimulation, the mind and the body's vital energy can remain undisturbed. Lao Zi believed that maintaining a tranquil mind could be managed by keeping desired objects out of sight. Similar thoughts can be accounted for in the Qian Jin Yi Fang, which states, "What is important in healthcare for the aged is that they should not listen to anything improper, nor talk about anything improper, nor have any improper desire." The key point here is to remove improper thoughts from whatever you see and hear.

In order to control one's personal desire, the ancients came up with some specific measures, such as:

- Cultivating a clean conscience
- Acquiring knowledge of what is to be respected and what is to be distanced
- Developing the ability to be resolute and to detect errors

These measures have positive significance in suppressing desire and calming the mind.

### 1.1.3 CONTROLLING JOY AND ANGER

Everybody experiences joy and anger, but too much of either is harmful. The book Ling Shu says, "Those overjoyed have their minds distracted rather than preserved. Those extremely enraged have their minds confused rather than calmed." Therefore, many of the ancients upheld the measure of preserving a sound mind and vital energy by controlling joy and anger. The Nei Jing lists controlling joy and anger as one of the most important measures in healthcare. The book Peng Zu She Sheng Yang Xing Lun states "Excessive joy or anger makes it impossible for the spirit to be in its proper position." This excerpt means that too much joy or anger will disturb the mind and cause the vital energy to be scattered, dispersed, and upset rather than being preserved and calm. Uncontrolled joy and anger may also injure one's viscera and the balance of yin and yang thus causing various diseases.

**Suppressing Joy.** Joy itself brings about a cheerful mood; however, excessive joy can bring harm to your health. The ancients believed that excessive joy weakens qi and injures the heart. Joy in excess can cause you to become over-excited. If a body remains in an over-excited state for a period of time, hypertension and heart disease can occur and become life threatening.

You should learn to regard the events in your life calmly and to judge any matter in an objective and rational way. In this way, strong and transitory emotions can be avoided, which promotes long-lasting happiness and a stable and harmonious state of mind.

Controlling Anger. Of the seven emotions, anger is the most harmful. Anger diverts qi and injures the liver. Because controlling anger is so important, it has been written about in many important ancient texts. The book, *Hong Lu Dian Xue*, states, “Anger and rage should be avoided. If qi is not confluent, the flow in the channels cannot be regulated. If the qi is not regulated, harmony will be disturbed. Anger disrupts the confluence of qi.” The book *She Sheng San Yao* says, “When one flies into a rage, the Qi becomes tough, diverted, disordered, and dispersed rather than gentle, fluent, stable and consistent.” The book *She Sheng Yao Lu* says, “Intense anger injures the eyes and dims the sight. Too much anger will disturb all the channels, wither the hair, and weaken the tendons. Those who get angry easily tend to exhaust their spirit; their illness is hard to cure, and their qi drains away with each passing day; hence, they will not be able to enjoy longevity.” These ancient texts indicate that anger is one of the major causes of accelerated aging and geriatric diseases.

Since anger creates such great harm to the body, you must try to refrain from it or keep it in check. In doing so you must first train your temper and cultivate your mind. During your daily activities try to keep your mind calm and controlled. A famous physician from the Tang dynasty, Sun Simiao gives the following advice: “I say little while others talk a lot. I remain tranquil while others get entangled in affairs. I keep my temper while others lose it. I refrain from feeling troubled by staying away from improper affairs, and I do not follow vulgar custom, so as to reach the state of empty-mindedness.

It would be impossible for anyone to completely avoid stimulation of his or her emotions. However, you can control the effects that your emotions have on your body. Sun Simiao held, “No one can be free from troubled thoughts, but they should be dispelled. When one gets angry, he should make timely effort to comfort himself and dispel his worried thoughts so as to minimize their ill effects on health.”

The ancients advocated tolerance and forbearance and regarded them as a person’s virtues, which are, in effect, important measures for checking anger.

#### 1.1.4 ABSTAINING FROM TOO MUCH WORRY

Worry is one of the activities of the spirit. Everybody has something to worry about. However, excessive worry will cause anxiety, which will hurt your spirit and can shorten your life. The book *Ling Shu* also says, “Too much anxiety injures the spirit.” While the book *Peng Zu She Sheng Yang Xing Lun* says, “Hard and continuous worry will lead to

destruction of the spirit.” It is believed that the heart houses the spirit; therefore, when the heart is not disturbed, the spirit will be tranquil. When the heart is agitated, the spirit will become exhausted. Since the spirit is the master of the limbs, a sound spirit will bring about a sound body, which in turn will bring about longevity. A sound spirit is brought about by worrying less, desiring less, eliminating disturbing ideas, and resisting all encroachment. The relationship between worry and spirit is similar to the one between fire and oil. The more one worries, the weaker his spirit will become, just as the more the fire burns, the less oil there is to fuel it. Your body expends a lot of energy when you worry excessively. Through continued worry, the body will become extremely exhausted.

We must be open-minded and take a realistic attitude when analyzing and dealing with every day affairs. When it is difficult to free yourself from worry, divert your attention to other things. As time passes, you will worry less.

#### 1.1.5 REFRAINING FROM GRIEF, SORROW, AND MISERY

The great ancient poet, Su Dongpo, from the Song dynasty said, “Man has his grief and happiness just as the moon has its different phases, dark and bright, full and crescent.” The ancient people carefully noted the influence that grief, sorrow, and misery have on health. The book *Huai Nan Zi* states, “Too much sorrow and misery lead to illness. Those in grief cannot fall asleep in bed, nor get pleasure even from their best food, nor enjoy music and dance.”

Anxiety and grief injure the heart-qi and, consequently, the health. It is, however, difficult to avoid anxiety and grief during your lifetime, but you can learn to subdue them.

One should first cultivate the characteristic of open-mindedness so as to refrain from attachment to material gains. This will keep you from grieving over personal loss when it happens. You also need a strong will to overcome sentimentality.

Good friends are important as well. A treasured friendship can replace regret and hatred and heal the old wounds of the mind. Such a friendship can provide sincere help, consolation, and encouragement. These can be magic weapons for eliminating grief and anxiety. When your life is free from anxiety and grief, you will find food tasty, sleep restful, and recreation enjoyable.

#### 1.1.6 AVOIDING TERROR AND FEAR

Terror and fear, no matter what the degree, are abnormal mental activities. Terror means panic, which is mainly caused by outside factors

such as sudden stimulation. Terror disperses and disorders the spirit and qi. Fear means apprehension, which is mainly caused by inner factors such as dread and uneasiness. Fear depresses the spirit and impairs qi. The Nei Jing maintains, “Fear depresses qi, while terror disorders qi.” Terror and fear not only harm one’s spirit and health and cause disorder of the qi; they also hinder normal physiological functions.

It is also believed that through exposure to fear and terror, an embryo can contract disease. Qi Bo, one of the greatest founders of TCM, explained that such disease is called embryopathia. The embryo can contract this disease when the mother experiences a great fright. This causes the qi to stay up in confusion and thus plants epilepsy in the infant.

Those who have a weak personality should not travel alone at night or walk alone through thick forests, mountains, or other deserted places. Additionally, attention should be paid to the training of your will so that you can be free from unnecessary panic, which will allow you to maintain mental peace and tranquility.

## 1.2 Dietetic Healthcare

Food provides nutrients for the maintenance of bodily function and and growth. Good dietary practices insure your health and longevity. Through the years, TCM has developed systematic theories, principles, and methods that have contributed a great deal to the health and longevity of the Chinese people. As early as the Zhou dynasty, “diet doctors” held official positions. Such doctors were responsible for the medical treatment of their patients through proper diet. During the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern dynasties, a book entitled Shi Jing (The Classic on Diet) systematically defined the nourishing functions of food. Sun Simiao, writer of the Qian Jin Yao Fang, held the view that the medical treatment function of diet must never be neglected. He stated “Proper food can beat back pathogenic factors, as well as tranquilize zang and fu, inspire the mind, and strengthen blood and Qi.”

The Yang Sheng Lu theorizes two methods of healthcare:

1. To keep a sound mind by cultivating one’s character
2. To keep fit through proper diet, with the latter as the basis

Later, during the Song dynasty, dietetic healthcare was developed into a branch of science.

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