



EXPERT NOTES

Sean Lee Gardner

Chinese Medicine



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A Chinese Medicine Perspective

Sean Lee Gardner

There are four main branches of Chinese Medicine:

- acupuncture
- herbal therapy
- massage
- Qigong

Sean has been studying Medical Qigong for 4-5 years. He believes it is the basis for the three remaining branches. In his experience, of all the disciplines and healing arts, Qigong gives the individual outstanding power to take ownership over their health and wellness.

Having completed three years studying Qigong therapy in China, the equivalent of a doctoral program, he's come to believe that the healing art is "the most comprehensive and profound method of taking care of oneself that you can possibly imagine."

Add to the formal education intensive self study in Western and Eastern herbal styles, with a primary emphasis on Chinese herbalism. Secondarily he sought out Ayurvedic and then European and North American medicinal traditions. He believes that once you've learned the basics of treating the body with herbs and Qigong you can integrate the most important principles and dramatically affect your life.

Gardner also applies his gift in the healing arts to massage therapy. He can now claim over 12 years as a practicing massage therapist. He's not an acupuncturist but sees one 2-3 times per week and is a strong proponent of regular acupuncture treatments.

I. How Do You View The Problem?

Sleep related problems first come from:

1. Improper amounts of sleep
2. Getting to bed too late
3. Lacking deep (REM) sleep

The reasons for challenges with sleep are many, spanning physical and energetic causes.

Physically

Hormones

The physical components of sleep challenges are usually explainable as [hormonal imbalances](#).

- Insufficient [neurotransmitters](#) in the brain
- Deficiency of testosterone
- Not enough sunlight hitting the body

Energetically

Yin/Yang

The yin/yang hours determine the appropriate times of activity vs. rest.

Yin

- feminine
- night
- when we want to go “into our cave”
- be nourished and fed [internally](#)

Yang

- masculine
- daylight/daytime
- bright
- active part of the day
- getting enough sunlight means nourishing yang during the day, making it easier to allow yin to settle at night

The Artificial Flame

Dreamless

The modern lifestyle has created a cycle of staring at an “artificial fire.” A computer screen or light is stimulating our optical nerve at a time in the night when it shouldn’t be.

This is prevalent as people become more addicted to TV. Having stimulation in the form of light and moving images takes the place of what would originally have been dreams. We stop dreaming as copiously as otherwise we would.

Yin-less (excess yang)

The constant light stimulation via the computer deprives us of the conditions necessary to enter into the deep, dark, cavernous places in the mind called the “yin state.” When we fail to get into this state we miss out on the full restful experience of the brain shutting down.

The ancient Chinese saw sleep as vital for achieving this necessary yin state during the daily cycle.

They believed if the body was deprived of the opportunity to get into a yin state at the appropriate time it would also fail to get the full rejuvenative powers available.

Sleep Apnea & Insomnia

Even those who seem to get enough exercise and fresh sunlight and who exhibit a healthy calm may have sleep problems such as sleep apnea or sleeplessness. These manifest most often in people suffering with “[adrenal burnout](#).”

II. Why Is Sleep Important?

“It just seems as if everybody is dream walking through their waking state or wake walking through their dream state.” [\(from the movie Waking Life\)](#)

Consequences of Sleep Deprivation

- If you don't fall fully asleep, you won't be fully awake
- Walking around like a zombie
- End up hyper-stimulating with coffee, energy drinks, etc., and **NOT fully engaged with body/mind/spirit**

The Eastern Energetic Approach

After 3 years of staying up every night till 3am, Gardner felt that something was drastically missing from life. The “sparkle and pop” of life was drained out. The magic was gone.

Sleep is necessary for energizing your body. It provides the processes needed for [hormonal rejuvenation](#) on a daily and nightly basis. You should sleep at night and get plenty of exposure to the sun during the day. Drinking yerba mate and coffee is okay, but is it a crutch? If these stimulants are a crutch they're no good.

Mental State

Proper sleep cycles cause the brain chemistry to be balanced. But if improper, expect:

- **Depression (#1 effect)**
- Feeling cloudy
- Feeling zoned out
- Trouble focusing
- Impaired short and long term memory
- Trouble holding cohesive thoughts
- Tuned out of reality
- Things seem fuzzy

Sleep Deprivation, Depression & Epigenetics

This is probably *the most important* thing about sleep immediately applicable to our society:

*****“Lack of sleep correlates with depression.”*****

When we get off track from proper sleep cycles the body physically changes, in the long term causing an “overall sadness.”

Many people take anti-anxiety, anti-depressant drugs but the core issue might be improper sleep. The conditions for depression are not just “improper brain chemistry” as reductionist science would have you believe. It’s not just a genetic trait.

It has to start somewhere.

You're affecting your epigenetics by your daily habits.

Read [Biology of Belief](#) by Bruce Lipton. Behavioral epigenetics is an emerging field looking at our behavior and the way it affects the control mechanisms of human genetics. We can change and shape our physicality through how we're asking and thinking about our lives on a daily basis.

Spiritual Benefits

Being well rested enables us to look deeply at dream states and see how they're translating messages from daily life

III. What Symptoms Should One Look For

1. Irritability
2. Lethargy
3. Itchiness, redness, dryness of eyes, resulting from a lack of yin fluids; * this is a cry from the body to get:
 - a. More and better sleep at night, and
 - b. Greater activity during the day
4. Emaciation (after long term insomnia)
5. Falling asleep while driving or at a movie theater or in the middle of a social situation
6. Drinking stimulants and then crashing

*When you're not nourishing the "yin," ie the dark internal aspect of the body, you're not replenishing fluids. Tears and other fluids are among the first things to go.

The Life is in the Blood

Acupuncturists talk about “blood deficiencies.” This is not strictly physical blood, but also capital-B “Blood,” which includes an energetic perspective of how the blood is forming in the body and how it’s being acted upon by the chi (life force energy, considered a “vitalist” concept, not well accepted in conventional medicine). It’s the energy that motivates and animates the tissues of the body, also generating the “spirit” of the body.

This same life force energy is named in different medicine traditions:

- Naturopathy: “life force energy”
- Chinese medicine: “chi” (“qi”)
- Ayurveda: prana

Oversleeping?

We’ve put a bit of an “arbitrary” standard concerning adequate sleep compared to what our bodies actually need. Sleeping long hours isn’t always an indicator of being excessive. **When you’re catching up on sleep you’re going to be sleeping a lot more and a lot deeper.**

Make the Connection

When identifying and examining your symptoms, notice when symptoms arise during the day and adjust accordingly. For example, an energy crash 6-8 hours after drinking stimulants is a symptom connected to the problem. All that is done during the day will reflect and affect sleep at night.

Had Enough?

How do you know when you're done peeing? When there's no more pee left in you! How do you know you've had enough sleep? When there's no more sleep left in you.

It may take several weeks to correct the problem of sleep deprivation, involving a combination of treatments and an overall change of lifestyle.

IV. What Aggravates the Problem

1. Excessive caffeine and stimulants

- a. Reliance upon stimulants is exasperated in places receiving less sunlight throughout the day
- b. E.g., Seattle is very cloudy and gets little sun; so it's no coincidence that the great Starbucks came out of Seattle to "warm them against the elements."

2. Light

- a. Consuming light at inappropriate times
- b. Staring at a TV or computer at 2am stimulates nerve and brain sensors not normally stimulated at that time
- c. We need to shut down
- d. We need darkness to produce the hormones such as **melatonin**

3. Insufficient melatonin

- a. A calming hormone
- b. Acts as an antioxidant on tissues
- c. Rejuvenates the body
- d. One of the most powerful anti-aging hormones

4. Need for herbs

5. Diet: Not enough protein

- a. Proteins are the “building blocks” to build hormones
- b. Therefore, deficiency inhibits production of necessary hormones

6. Stress

- a. Commuting to work, etc.
- b. Without a method to “discharge” stress, it gets built up in the body tissues
- c. If no stress release, we won’t experience relaxation

V. How Would You Treat The Problem

1. In the bedroom

- a. Eliminate blinking lights such as with wireless routers: cover em, shut em off, take em out of your room
- b. Eliminate *any* light emitting sources.

2. Schedule sleep

- a. Shut off electronics
- b. Bedtime between 10-10:30pm
- c. Be fully asleep by 11pm, the ideal time “to nourish neurons”
- d. Detoxification is taking place as blood goes into and out from the liver between 11pm-3am

3. Workout between 12-3pm OR in the morning to loosen and warm up tendons/ligaments, which is energetically connected to the liver:

- a. Yoga
- b. Qigong
- c. Meditation

4. Circadian rhythms

- a. Not “mystical”
- b. Well studied

- c. Getting enough sunlight during the day will be a counterpoint to getting enough sleep at night

5. Nude Sunbathing (forget injections!)

- a. The sun is not your enemy
- b. Get the sunlight on your face, body, neck and also genitalia
- c. One of the most easily accessible natural testosterone boosting activities
- d. NO sunscreen
- e. Do this regularly

6. Sun Gazing/Moon Gazing

- a. Eyes absorb yang from the sun, yin from the moon
- b. Small amounts of gazing adjusts the eyes to natural sources of light and away from artificial sources
- c. Helps to regulate circadian rhythm
- d. Balances energy and psychology
- e. See www.sungazing.org

7. Herbs

- a. Get recommendations from a licensed Chinese herbalist
- b. **taking herbs is not a supplement**; it's just that we've gotten away from herbal medicine and tend to rely on food
- c. See herbal medicines as food and food as herbal medicine

8. Eustress

- a. The antithesis of distress and aggravation
- b. *Enjoying* a stressful activity, for example:
 - i. a good mind challenge
 - ii. a hard workout
 - iii. yoga
 - iv. stretching

v. meditation

c. Causes:

- i. a positive adaptive response, as opposed to negative reactions
- ii. an anabolic building mode within the tissues, as opposed to catabolic response of stress

The Weekend “slip up”

- Short term application using an herb or drug or sedative/depressant
- Relying on alcohol or pot to rest
- Not healthy
- Not a long term fix
- Treatment has to come from long term lifestyle adjustment

DMT

DMT is powerful for

- Rejuvenating the mind
- Having dreams
- Lucid dreaming
- Inspiration
- Translating messages from daily life to the lucid dreaming state

VI. What Dietary Recommendations Would You Make

Ask, am I eating:

- A regular meal 3-5x/day?

- Foods that are *vital*?
- Enough fat/long burning fuel?
- Too many carbs?
 - High carb foods are “like a flash in the pan” in terms of glycolysis cycle/burning of carbs and energy production
- Too many sugars, which hyperstimulate the body?

Our goal is to get into ketogenic/ketone burning, a product of fat metabolism and higher protein diet, which:

- Causes proper hormonal cascade
- Causes anabolic cycle

Eliminate nutrient deficient and sugary foods

- Heavier more nutritious food might at first make you feel tired because you're stopping the stimulation from too much sugar, caffeine, etc.
- Adrenals will breathe a sigh of relief
- Leads to better sleep

A Morning Protocol

Protein smoothie containing:

- 1-3 raw eggs from pastured hens
- Raw milk
- Superfoods
- And also stimulants okay first thing in the morning UNLESS you're trying to heal a long-term insomnia

High carbs, fat or protein?

- A protein & fat-fueled diet is more effective than lots of carbs, sugars, etc.
- There is disagreement, but over thousands of years Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine have recommended higher fat and protein for sleep issues

Instead of coffee

1. Green tea
 - a. Contains l-theonine amino acid to relax and calm the brain
 - b. Makes you relaxed and alert
 - c. Calms the mind, causing focus;
 - d. But creates *alert* awakeness
 - e. Bodhidharma allegory
 - i. Originated with Buddhism in China
 - ii. Bodhidharma saw meditators' bodies wasting away and not achieving enlightenment
 - iii. He sat for 9 years facing a wall
 - iv. Became tired while sitting there and fell asleep
 - v. Was enraged by his neglect and, so, cut his eyelids off
 - vi. Where his eyelids fell, the first tea plants grew

Jing and Chi replenishing herbs

The Spleen:

- The spleen organizes the chi of the body
- Energetics of the way you digest comes from the spleen
- Nourishing the spleen has a lot to do with energy

Food and Herbs that Nourish the Spleen

NOTE: *Herbs that are good for the spleen tend to be yellow, as is energetically the spleen.*

1. Astragalus and goji berries

- a. Potent for movement and generation of chi
- b. Takes the place of false stimulation when you drink coffee
- c. Put in a tea or water decoction
- d. Add astragalus with goji berries to oatmeal
- e. Goji gives a strong boost to chi
- f. Oatmeal is good medicine and a slow burning carb
- g. Sub out amaranth or millet for a gluten free alternative

2. Turmeric

- a. eat more curry.

3. Pumpkin seeds

- a. contains tryptophan, an amino acid with a relative sedating effect on brain
- b. Similar DMT, a tryptamine chemical
- c. Has complex effects on brain chemistry and product of proper sleep cycles.
- d. Foods containing tryptophan are GOOD FOR BEDTIME, helping to maintain deeper states

4. Durian fruit

- a. Exotic, strangely delicious food
- b. Most tryptophan-rich food
- c. Induces sedation and sleepiness
- d. High in fat
- e. Good oils for skin and brain

5. Organ meats

6. Grass-fed raw organic milk

- a. Processing milk can cause proteins and fat to become "deranged."
- b. FAVORITE! 4-6 oz. before sleep to maintain a sound solid sleep pattern

3 Chinese Herbal Formulas

For most severe cases of insomnia

1. Tian wan bu xin wan

- a. "...absolutely profound" formula
- b. Chills you out
- c. Calms the heart
- d. Relaxes the spirit
- e. Calms a racing mind
- f. Helps you process information and emotions to relax

Use if insomnia is caused or accompanied by:

- 1. Nervous issues
- 2. Spirit not rooting into the blood
- 3. Emotions perturbed
- 4. Anxiety
- 5. Heart palpitations
- 6. Coating on tongue, eyes and face

2. Dao ren an shen pian

- a. "Spiny date seed," "sour date seed"
- b. Shen/spirit restorative
- c. Powerful medicinal based on herbs for calming the spirit
- d. Reconnects the mind and body
- e. Nourishes kidneys and the blood
- f. Calms the mind
- g. Creates a sensation of relaxation and tranquility
- h. Whisks away heat residing in body
- i. Rooting

- j. A large dose induces a peaceful sleep

3. Ho shu woo

- a. Affects the kidneys and liver
- b. Is so nourishing the body wants to sleep and start rejuvenating
- c. Restores and replenishes jing
- d. Rests the emotions
- e. Turns off the mind
- f. Calms the adrenals

Use if:

- 1. Thinking too hard
- 2. Emotions are taking a toll by never getting to rest

**NOTE: the Chinese call all of their treatments an “herb,” could be animal, mineral or vegetable.*

Ghi bai bi huang wan (formula)

- Treats inability to hold yin
- Nourishes adrenals
- Calms the mind
- Reinvigorates the whole system
- Eloquently put together to nourish the:
 - Blood,
 - Body,
 - Kidney, and
 - Adrenals

Use if experiencing:

- Night sweats and dry mouth

- Lower back pain
- Insomnia

Western Herbs

1. Scullcap

- a. Calms the mind
- b. Consume just before sleep

2. Reishi mushroom

- a. Sedation and regeneration of [the three treasures](#) (jing/chi/shen)
- b. Useful for establishing appropriate sleep cycles
- c. Take ¼ tsp or 2-4 capsules before bed
- d. Or, steep 10-15 g of the mushrooms in boiling water for 20-30 minutes
- e. If it has an energizing effect, this one might not be for you

3. Melatonin

- a. No more than 3mg 30-45 mins before bed
- b. High doses (20-40mg) are not recommended
- c. Low doses (as little as ½ mg) may be sufficient to induce the proper circadian rhythm and assist the body in producing its own melatonin
- d. Can be habit forming, psychologically
- e. Take it only for a short period of time and cycle off

4. Tryptophan

- a. An amino-acid
- b. 500-1000mg may help get you more situated and ready for bed
- c. Take for short burst, such as with jet lag

5. Kava kava

- a. From the South Pacific
- b. Good in place of alcohol

- c. A bowl of well soaked kava kava can bring sedation
- d. Not a long term treatment

6. Valerian

- a. Best in tincture form, mostly because of taste
- b. Not a long term treatment
- c. Can become psychologically habit forming
- d. In the short term, helps to quickly regulate the way our nervous systems are reacting to stress and how our circadian rhythms are being affected

7. Cordyceps Mushroom Extract

- a. Long term adrenal kidney nourishment
- b. Top herb for long term maintenance of endocrine/hormonal function
- c. Creates more jing
- d. Longevity herb, helps to actually regenerate healthy cells
- e. Doesn't directly affect sleep
- f. Helps to support proper energetic flow
- g. Supports development of jing/chi/shen in body
- h. Use relatively daily

***Start w/ low doses (minimum effective dosing)**

***More whole wild food = more chi.**

VII. What Lifestyle Rec Would You Make?

Energetic Practices

- Meditation first thing in the morning
 - Find a pillow, relax into a sitting position
 - Practice long deep breathing with simple in-and-out breaths
 - Breathe in through the nose and out through the nose or mouth
 - Do this for 5, 10 or more minutes on a consistent basis
 - You'll find you have less need for artificial stimulation
- [Sun salutations](#)
- Consistent consumption of:
 - Light
 - Food
 - Sleep
 - Exercise

Exercise

- Is guiding chi through the body
- Should be both raising *and* calming of the heart rate
- I.e. not just “pumping iron”
- Should integrate mind and body

- During qigong and yoga you're doing this by visualizing the internal environment
- **Learn how the breath integrates with the way chi moves thru your body.**
- Ashtanga, kriya, laya, *classical* styles of yoga that help regulate the flow of qi (chi) and prana

Dao Yin

- Popular form of qigong
- Known as the "[five yin organ exercise](#)," nourishing the five main organs:
 - heart
 - liver
 - kidneys
 - lungs
 - spleen
- Done slowly
- Intentionally done with slow breathing
- Do it anytime you need to calm down

BaDuanJin

- "[the 8 Pieces of Brocade](#)"
- 8 segmented practice
- used first thing in the morning to wake up the energetic body
- nourishing kidneys
- wake up heart and mind and specific areas of the body
- very energizing
- a "huge" amount of chi running through the body
- moving, cultivating and storing chi in the body

Better Regulate!

The key to integrating herbs and foods to achieve excellent sleep is REGULATION. Take only one or two recommendations at a time and integrate them on a regular basis. Consistency is key in regulating the body.

Take Naps

- Natural and good
- Will help to regulate sleep cycles

Eat More

- whole food
- vital foods
- wild foods
- in order to:**
- gain more chi
- become self-actualized
- sleep better
- think better
- have a better sex life

Male vs. Female

Men and women are not that different. All of these factors really apply to both, and 80% of your results are going to come from 20% of what you do.

Again, practicing these will enhance your life and improve sleep:



- Yoga
- Qi Gong
- Meditation
- Deep breathing and sitting quietly
- Sun salutation (to open tan tien/7 chakras)
- Exercise/Classic meditative (integrates mind/body)