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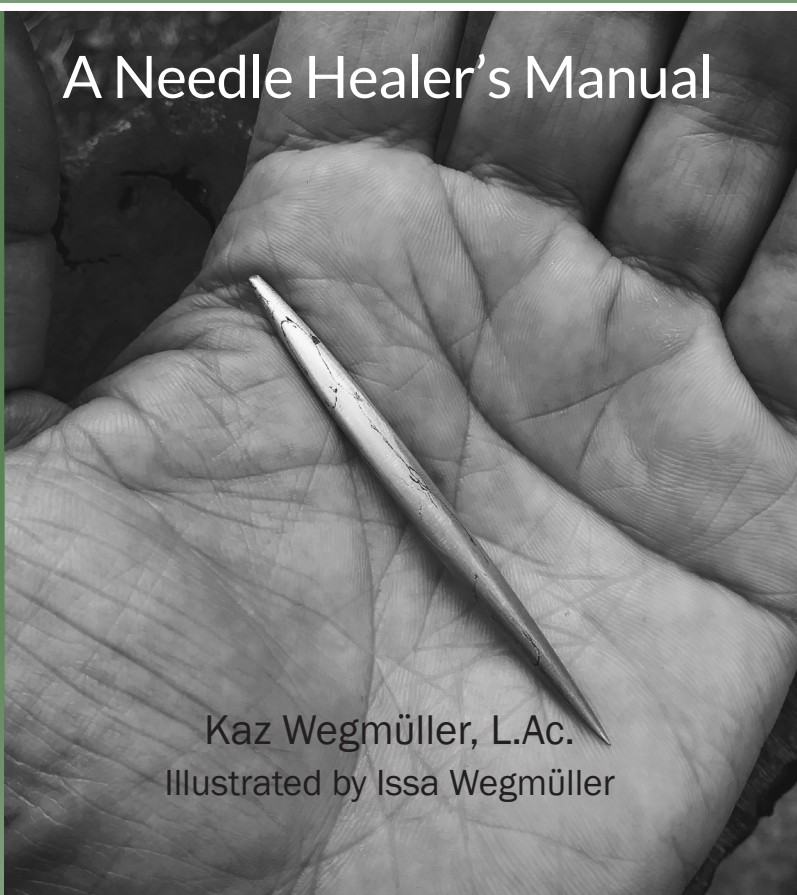
Acupuncture for Curious People: A Needle Healer's Manual

Kaz Wegmüller

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Acupuncture for Curious People

A Needle Healer's Manual

A black and white photograph of a hand, palm up, holding a thin acupuncture needle. The needle is positioned diagonally across the palm, pointing towards the bottom right. The skin on the hand is wrinkled, and the lighting creates strong shadows, emphasizing the texture of the skin and the metallic sheen of the needle.

Kaz Wegmüller, L.Ac.
Illustrated by Issa Wegmüller

*Acupuncture for
Curious People*

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Cal Poly Humboldt Library
1 Harpst Street
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press.humboldt.edu
press@humboldt.edu

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Acupuncture for Curious People

A Needle Healer's Manual



By Kaz Wegmüller, L.Ac.
Illustrated by Issa Wegmüller

The Press at Cal Poly Humboldt

This book is dedicated to my teacher,
Iwashina Anryu Sensei
aka Dr. Bear

And to my healer buddies—
you know who you are!

*Let us put a stop, once and for all, to all that harms and deforms life. It is enough just to live. Life is simply life. And what is life? Well, this is the Simple, **su**, Question, **wen**, of the Yellow Emperor.*

—Claude Larre

The Way of Heaven:
Neijing Suwen Chapters 1 & 2

Disclaimer

This book presents a minority opinion in the world of Chinese medicine: that anyone can and should grab a needle and do acupuncture. But this opinion only pertains to non-insertion acupuncture; the author does not advise that untrained people insert needles through the skin, use a lancet to cause bleeding, burn moxa directly on the skin, or perform any other invasive or potentially dangerous procedure, and these aspects of the Chinese medical arts are not covered here. This book is not meant to be a

comprehensive exposition on the history, theory, and methodologies of Chinese medicine. Though rooted in his training and experience in traditional Japanese non-insertion acupuncture, it represents the author's own ideas on the art of needle healing.

The activities presented here are suggestions for consensual behavior between curious people, not medical advice per se. The reader takes full responsibility for all downstream results—the unfortunate mistakes along with the miraculous healings—from this point on. If you or your partner feels worse during a healing session, stop. Take a break from acupuncture, seek out a teacher or healer buddy who can advise you, and then, if you are feeling better again, continue your explorations. Generally, if

the acupuncture you are doing is causing people to feel unwell, do less: press the needle with less pressure, use fewer points, give a shorter treatment. And make sure that you are well, that you feel centered and vibrant, before treating others.

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Introduction

If you are reading this little book, you are probably a non-acupuncturist with an interest in acupuncture. Or perhaps you are an acupuncturist who is curious about non-insertion acupuncture, or an herbalist or massage therapist interested in adding needles to your healing repertoire. Maybe you are the patient of an acupuncturist or a student of traditional Chinese medicine. Or, this book may have landed in your hands through random chance or karmic synchronicity.

Acupuncture for Curious People

If you are a curious person, this book was written for you! Regardless of your experience or current skill level in the healing arts, I urge you to approach the way of the needle healer with the openness, curiosity, and wonder of the very first prehistoric acupuncturists.

If you have a needle, and a body, you can do acupuncture!

What is Acupuncture?

What is acupuncture? Most people would define it as the insertion of needles in the body for the medical treatment of pain. While it is true that acupuncture is an effective treatment for pain and other ills, a survey of acupuncture patients would show that they experience all kinds of other things while getting treated. Deep relaxation, dreamlike states, emotional catharsis, remembering of suppressed memories, new awareness of previously unconscious musculoskeletal holding patterns, and a kind of diffuse mindbody

bliss are just a few of these possible “side effects.” I believe that it is far too limiting to think of acupuncture solely as a treatment for pain, or even more generally as a healthcare modality. Though I am glad that it has become accepted in modern healthcare, I wish that this gift of the ancient Chinese culture wasn’t sequestered in the professional guild of licensed acupuncturists. I think if more people did acupuncture on each other, the way friends give each other hugs and backrubs, the world would be a better place.

But, unlike massage, which doesn’t present such formidable barriers to experimentation among non-professionals, acupuncture is clothed in a tough suit of clinical, cultural, and professional armor that prevents most people from even

What is Acupuncture?

considering that they could pick up a needle and heal. This book was written to take that suit off and present you with a kind of primal acupuncture: naked, unadorned, as a valuable and satisfying way of experiencing human embodiment and healing yourself and others.

Consider the very first acupuncturists. Somebody found a shard of metal and started poking around with it. Full of curiosity and wonder, they probed the surfaces of their own bodies, and of others, and noticed certain things. For one thing, they must have noticed differences in sensitivity from spot to spot: why does this one tiny point on my hand hurt like crazy when I barely touch the needle to it, while the same spot on the other hand hardly registers a thing? They may have noticed interesting

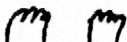
sensations coursing through the body as a needle touched the skin or (ouch!) pierced through the skin and interacted with the tissues below. They must have noticed reductions in pain, or numbness, or swelling, as they continued their investigations. They must also have noticed the deep relaxation and many other effects.

Acupuncture is a very ancient and subtle technology: the use of metal probes to sense and affect the movements of life in the human organism. While much good has come from the standardization and specialization of acupuncture over the centuries, I believe that something essential has been lost in its commoditization. Society has gotten so stratified, and the demands of modern life so stressful, that people have by and large forgotten

What is Acupuncture?

how to take care of themselves and each other. And acupuncture as a profession has relegated itself to its small corner of the healthcare marketplace, rather than embracing the rare thing that it is: a wisdom tradition whose wisdom comes not just from books or gods or authority figures, but from direct exploration and experience in the body.

The premise of this book is that there is great value in the continual rediscovery and re-creation of this original acupuncture; that the art of needle healing is not just a medical profession and catalogue of clinical techniques but a unique way of engaging with the mystery of existence.



The Two Lineages of Acupuncture

Broadly speaking, acupuncture can be separated into two lineages:

1. The kind of acupuncture in which the needle penetrates the skin and plunges into the tissues underneath.
2. The kind of acupuncture in which the needle just touches the surface of the skin.

The vast majority of acupuncturists alive today belong to the first lineage. The

second lineage, though rare, has almost certainly existed from the earliest days—the thick, rounded non-insertion needle known in Japanese as *teishin* is one of the “Ancient Nine Needles” listed in the earliest records of Chinese healing—but found its fullest expression in a particular strand of acupuncture that developed in Japan in the last hundred years.

The Japanese were first introduced to acupuncture about a thousand years ago, by Korean and Chinese practitioners with whom they came into contact. Over the centuries Japanese acupuncture went in the direction of “less is more:” as compared to Chinese acupuncture, Japanese styles generally use thinner needles, fewer points, less manual stimulation of the needle, and shallower penetration. It was the practitioners of

The Two Lineages of Acupuncture

the *keiraku chiryo* (“meridian therapy”) school who took shallow penetration to its ultimate limit, to the point that they were getting therapeutic effects without inserting their needles at all.



What is Happening?

There are many opinions as to how acupuncture works, or whether it works at all. These range from traditional explanations based on the movements of *qi* and blood in the body, to neurohormonal mechanisms involving the stimulation of nerve endings, to biomechanical models involving fascia and motor points, to the placebo effect.

My own opinion is that there is something to each of these ideas, but that we shouldn't obsess so much on what is "really happening," and should

instead focus on what the patient and the practitioner perceive during the experience of acupuncture, and the results that we get.

In the first lineage of acupuncture—insertion acupuncture—the practitioner inserts the needle and manipulates it with lifting and thrusting, and/or twirling, until a kind of grabbing sensation is felt. A good practitioner will stay with the needle, perhaps trying out various micro-movement changes in the angle or direction of the needle-tip, until a relaxation of the tissues is felt. Or, the needle or needles are left in place to let the patient's body resolve whatever it is that needs to be resolved.

In the second lineage of acupuncture, engagement with the various vectors at play in the connective

What is Happening?

tissue is also part of the process, but the primary focus of the non-insertion needle healer is the electrical sensations one feels between the fingertips as a needle is touched to the patient's skin. Traditionally spoken of in terms of the movement of *qi*, these sensations generally take the form of a mild tingling or pulsation that comes and goes. The patient sometimes feels a corresponding sensation, either as a sharp penetrating or dull achy pain, or as tingly coursing movements somewhere in the body—sometimes near where the needle is, but often in entirely different parts of the body.

My own belief is that these *qi* sensations are electrical in nature; that the human body, being water-based and completely “wrapped” in sheaths of conductive connective tissues, is perfectly

constituted to be engaged with electrically. Not only that, but it would appear that pathologies—pain, injury, disease—come with alterations in the normal electrical signaling in the body. Resolution of pathologies is also accompanied by electrical activity.

When a needle touches the patient's skin, there is a two-way communication happening. On the one hand, the practitioner is introducing a small physical and electrical input that the patient feels as a sensation at the needling site and/or elsewhere. At the same time, the patient's body gives the practitioner information about what is happening, via tingling sensations that the practitioner can feel in the hand holding the needle. These tingling feelings occur because the needle is made out of a material—a metal—that

What is Happening?

is electronegative. What this means is that metals such as gold, silver, and iron readily give up electrons: they induce currents in conductive materials.

When an acupuncturist places the needle against the skin, it is something like sending a radar signal into the body. If the point was well-selected—if the acupuncturist chose a good point of entry to address the problem at hand—the signal goes where it needs to go, and initiates changes that help the body resolve its pains and traumas, its stagnations and imbalances. While this resolution is happening, the patient's body helpfully sends electrical information out towards the surface, where the acupuncturist reads it, and pulls the needle away once the shift back towards balance has occurred.

An acupuncture treatment consists of a series of such engagements as the healer moves from point to point. For the patient, it feels like a guided tour of their own body, as the needling sensations direct them to where they are blocked, and to what it feels like when chronic holding patterns let go. It should be quite pleasant and relaxing, and can be educational in a deep way.



How to Become a Healer

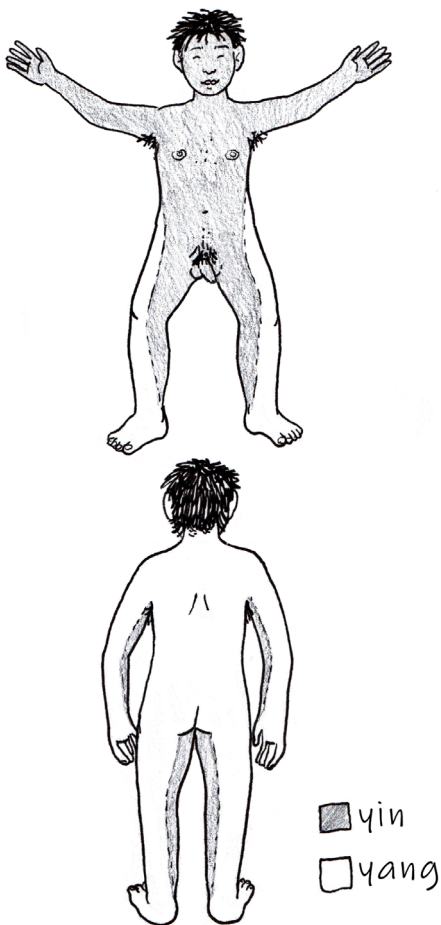
I am a proponent of what I call the Healer Buddies approach to healer education. While I maintain a deep respect for the Chinese medical tradition and believe that school and apprenticeship continue to be important ways to learn the healing arts, especially if you decide to become a professional acupuncturist, I believe nonetheless that you can learn a lot through curiosity, playful experiment, and trial and error.

Basically, you need to find someone—preferably a close friend or

partner who doesn't mind you touching them a lot—who is also interested in exploring acupuncture. Get together with that person on a regular or semi-regular basis, and give each other massages. Massage is a wonderful medicine in its own right, but from the earliest days it has also been an important part of the art of acupuncture. This is because the information you need about where to touch the needle comes not from books listing points and the symptoms they treat, but from the patient's body itself. As you massage, notice areas that feel unusual: ropy, hard, nodular, mushy, soft, moist, sticky. Press with your finger until you find the very center of the unusual area. Then place the needle-tip against that point, perpendicular to the body surface, and wait (more in a minute on

exactly how you do this). Wait until you, or your healer buddy, or both of you, notice something start to happen. Let it happen (it may take a few seconds to a minute or two), then move on. After your healer buddy has had a wonderful session at your hands, trade. Compare notes. That's basically it! Later in this book we will look at one way to structure an acupuncture session for maximum healing benefit.

Acupuncture for Curious People



What is a Body?

First of all, we don't "have bodies;" we are creatures. As creatures, we use our bodies in various ways to seek food, find partners, work, and do any number of different things. The role of the healer is to gently point out to patients the things they could do to feel better—Eat well! Play! Love somebody! Don't sit all day!—and also work directly with them to effect changes in the body that help them feel better.

To be a needle healer, it helps to think of the body the way the ancient acupunc-

turists did. The classical cosmology saw all things, the body included, as being made of the same basic stuff, which was called *qi*. All things are condensations, coalescences of *qi* in various modes of being. Because we are all made of the same stuff, there is a resonance between things, and we, because we are made of *qi*, can somehow experience something through our senses of the *qi* of other things: of trees, for instance, or weather, or other people.

In the human body, as in the rest of nature, things organize into *yin* and *yang* aspects. This differentiation is useful for treating human beings and their aches and pains, their illnesses and discomforts. Using *yinyang* thinking, we can think of all closing movements—pulling the body into a ball or fetus position—as being *yin*.

What is a Body?

And all opening motions—opening the arms and legs and pushing outward—are considered *yang*. The pulling-in muscles and connective tissue lie beneath those surfaces of the body that face inward or downward and don't get tan in the summer: the throat, the belly, the insides of the arms and legs, anything that leads to the crotch or an armpit. The front, lower regions, and interior of the body are considered relatively *yin*. When treating human beings, think of the *yin* as the shady areas, places that might need some warmth and light, a little extra energy to fuel the body's mysterious internal processes. You will notice the places that need this kind of attention by their slackness, softness, mushiness, cold. (Note that this is not a hard and fast rule; *yin* areas can exhibit *yang* char-

acteristics like tightness and hardness, in which case they should be treated accordingly).

In contrast, the *yang* areas of the body are those parts that engage as the body opens, expands, pushes, moves. The back is a *yang* area: it engages as we straighten and open. The parts of the arms and legs that face out, see sun, that tan easily—the outsides and tops of things—are *yang* tissues. They are most involved in moving the body around—movement and animation are *yang* properties—and can easily get tight and stagnant through habitual movements and posture. The back, top half, and exterior of the body are all *yang* areas. Give these zones extra attention with the pokey sharp tip of your needle, venting stuck *qi* from stagnant, tight, hard, or

What is a Body?

hot areas to free things up and return to normalcy.

All this *yinyang* and *qi* talk doesn't mean you have to believe in anything mystical or supernatural. It's just a way of organizing information in useful categories. In my opinion, it's best to define *qi* not as some kind of invisible vital energy (the usual translation) but as a way of linking all categories of things in your experience of them. This way of thinking/feeling is particularly useful when working with a human body.



A Handmade Needle

Your Needle

One of the barriers that prevent even the most curious people from picking up a needle and doing acupuncture is a technical one: they don't have a needle, or assume they need some specialized kind of needle that they don't have. Another barrier is that of health and safety. Piercing the skin and potentially causing infection is surely something that should be regulated by laws and medical boards!

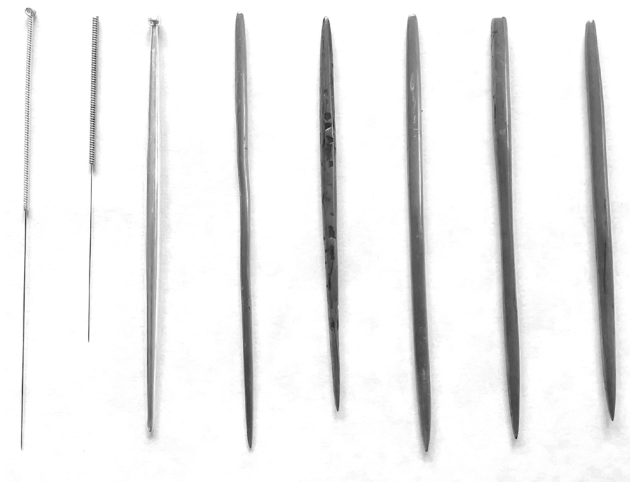
The second concern goes away if we stick to non-insertion acupuncture.

But what do you do if you don't have an acupuncture needle? Actually, you don't really need a special needle to do acupuncture. In fact, I have performed acupuncture *in extremis* using a straightened paper clip! On another occasion, both I and my "patient" felt the *qi* move as I demonstrated needling technique using a metal fork.

But I don't recommend using a fork to do acupuncture. You can make your own acupuncture needle out of metals such as gold, silver, and steel; in fact I recommend that you do so. I like to craft needles out of small chunks of meteorite, believing as I do that this was probably done by the earliest Chinese needle healers (acupuncture has from ancient times had a close association with the stars, and prior to the discovery of

Your Needle

smelting, meteorites were one of the only sources of steel). With a blowtorch, pliers, hammer, vice, file, sandpaper, a small jeweler's anvil and a bit of elbow grease, anyone can make their own needle out of a chunk of metal. Just make sure your needle is 2.5 to 3 inches long, about 1/16 to 1/8 inch thick, and has a pointy end and a rounded end. If you can't be persuaded to make your own needle, a steel darning needle will do in a pinch. You can also buy your needle on the Internet; do a search for "*teishin*" and you will find them for sale.



An Assortment of Needles



Using Your Needle

For those of you who are encountering a non-insertion acupuncture needle for the first time, I start with some suggestions on how to get to know your needle.

You can practice the basic hand position on yourself like this:

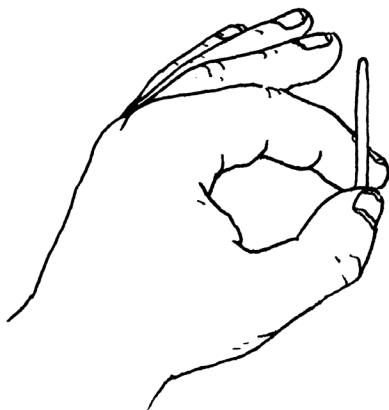
Sit on the edge of a chair or bed and rest your left hand, palm down, on your leg above the knee. Hold the pointy tip of the needle between the thumb and index finger of your left hand, such that you are poking the flesh of your thigh with the sharp end of the needle. The fingers

should form an “O” like the OK sign. The other hand, should you choose to engage it, rests nearby on its ulnar edge. The right thumb, index finger and ring finger can grasp the “handle” part of the needle shaft, steadying it and manipulating it as you wish. Naturally, you should switch left and right and try it both ways. You may be surprised how different the sides feel.

Start by needling yourself. A great point to start with is the vertex, the very top of your head, which most people can find on themselves quite easily. Look for the dip in the skull, and plant your needle there, gently but solidly. Hold the needle perpendicular to the top surface of your head for a good long time. Feel what you feel. Play around with pressure, angle, one hand or two. Once you’re satisfied with your exploration of the vertex, gently

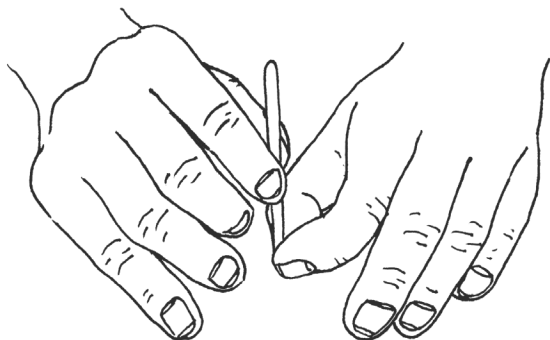
Using Your Needle

and slowly start pecking other parts of your head with the tip of your needle.



One-Handed Needling

Most of your needle healing can be done with one hand. The needle-tip is gripped by the pads of the thumb and forefinger, with the hand resting on your buddy's body and the needle-tip protruding just enough that your buddy can feel it without it being painful.



Two-Handed Needling

This is the classic hand position, with the *oshide* (“pressing hand” in Japanese) holding the needle-tip and the *sashide* (“inserting hand”) grabbing the shaft. I think of this method as a way of embodying your full attention, much like the joining of your two hands in prayer, and use it when I am at a point which feels particularly active and important, or conversely when the *qi* feels especially weak and needs to be coaxed patiently into activity.

Using Your Needle

Work your way over the forehead, the temples, the occiput, the back of the neck, pausing and taking your time at places that feel especially stuck, painful, or electric.

Another great place to start practicing needle healing on yourself is the skin around the edges of the finger- and toenails. Use the rounded end of your needle to press firmly the skin below your cuticles, especially around the two bottom corners of your nail. Give special attention to areas where the skin is dark, swollen, or boggy. Do this on all the fingers and toes. You will likely find one or two points that hurt intensely when you press this way. Flip your needle and apply its sharp tip to the center of the depression you just made with the rounded end. Even though it probably hurts like crazy,

hold your needle there until it starts to ease up, plus a little more. Note how you feel afterwards. You can conduct similar experiments on every part of your body that you can reach, and I encourage you to do so. If you are already an acupuncturist or massage therapist who knows their channels and collaterals, hold the needle at points that call out to you. It's OK to experiment, especially on yourself!

Once you have explored needling on yourself, felt what it's like to be the holder of the needle but also the receiver of the needle, you can move on to playing with your healer buddy.

Because it does not pierce the skin, your needle does not need to be autoclaved or pressure-cooked to disinfect. However, you should clean it, especially the tip, with alcohol between treatments.

The Healing Session

When working on someone using non-insertion acupuncture, it's important to give them a balanced treatment. Don't just treat the *yin* channels but not the *yang*; don't treat only the left or only the right; balance points in the upper half of the body with points in the lower half; same with front and back. Most schools of Japanese healing (martial arts too) teach their methods in the form of sequences of moves, known as *kata*. The *kata* serves not only as the repository of the school's techniques, but also embodies its philo-

sophical basis: Everybody is a whole body, so we treat the whole body. Kindness, balance and harmony are what we seek to manifest and embody, so we treat the patient in a kind and balanced way. The *kata* demonstrates these values and teaches the methods of implementing them in real life, in real people.

What is presented here is just one way to structure a healing session. I do not claim it is the only way or the best way. It is certainly much influenced by the Japanese acupuncture of my teacher, Dr. Bear. I hope it is a useful method for you to explore and experience acupuncture.

Although it is presented in two halves as a “front treatment” and a “back treatment,” this sequence should be considered to be a single treatment that treats the whole body.

The Front Treatment

1. Start with your buddy lying face up on the floor or massage table. Sit at your buddy's head, holding the head from behind. Spread your ten fingers evenly over the surface of the head. Give a little pressure with your fingertips, then ease up so you are just barely touching the skull. Just hold the head for a minute or two. Breathe and center.
2. Massage the forehead, the temples, the occiput, the neck, the jaws. Gently traction the head with fingers interlaced under the neck. Do this as a gentle stretch, not as a high-velocity jerk.
3. Hold the needle at GV-20, at the vertex. Stay there for several minutes,

noting what you feel, and have your healer buddy say what they are feeling. We begin at the vertex, the most *yang* part of the body, because people are generally too much in their heads. By venting some of that rising *yang* energy right at the outset, you allow your buddy to calm down and relax for the session that is unfolding.

4. Gently peck the skin of the throat, neck and upper chest/front shoulder with your needle, releasing tension.

5. Gently pull and massage the arms, wrists, hands, fingers.



6. Gently pull and massage the legs, ankles, feet, toes.

7. While you are massaging the arms and legs, note areas of stagnation, hardness, and other unusual feelings, and needle those points directly. Be patient and non-directive, and just feel what you feel. This sometimes means not feeling anything, in which case, move on.

8. If you are already an acupuncturist and think in these terms, now is a good time to treat symptoms and tonify or sedate channels as appropriate, following whatever diagnostic parameters you use, but also integrate the information you've been receiving from your buddy's body. Play around with pointing

the needle with the channel flow to tonify *yin* channels, pointing against the flow to sedate *yang* channels, and with using the rounded end to gently tonify at points such as Sp-3, K-7, Liv-8, and Lu-9.

9. Using your fingertips, press the abdomen gently and firmly in a slow outward spiral, starting at the navel. Note places that look and feel “off.” Visible wrinkles, dips, dimples, dry or irritated skin can indicate places where the underlying connective tissue is altered, suboptimal, stagnant. Press with your fingers and gently apply the needle-tip to the most affected areas. Note any sensations, but don’t be so focused as to insist on sensations at every needle. Hop from point to point lightly and pause at each point for a

few moments. Stay longer at any point where interesting sensations develop.

10. Needle CV-6 or whichever area of the lower abdomen feels the weakest. Needle it for a long time, with the image that your buddy's entire belly is being filled and energized by the *qi* streaming down from the heavens through the needle.

11. Needle CV-12, on the midline about halfway between the navel and the bottom of the sternum. This point is particularly good if your buddy is having upper GI issues.

The Back Treatment

1. Flip your healer buddy over.
2. Give a nice backrub. Do a good job! Using hands and elbows, press deeply but gently into every part of the back, starting with the neck, working down into the shoulders and upper back, then low back, hips, sacrum. Note tight areas and treat with the needle as you explore.
3. Find the tightest, loosest, or most unusual point in the general vicinity of GV-4 (center of the low back, lumbar region). Needle there. Stay for a minute or two, again with the feeling of your buddy filling up with heavenly *qi*, “re-charging their battery” as it were (people love it when you say that).

The Healing Session

4. Needle the two dimples above the butt. These are excellent treatment points for problems in the hips, low back, and pelvis.
5. Needle points around the sacrum that are tight and sore.
6. Needle points on the buttocks and hips that are tight and sore.
7. Find the floating ribs, needle any tight stagnant areas around them.
8. Needle the tightest muscles of the low back and mid back.
9. Peck the whole lower back/hip/sacrum area, releasing tension.

10. Press up the midline from the L5-S1 juncture at the base of the spine, using your thumb-tip. Needle any gummy, tight or painful spots. Also needle any points that seem “too open,” soft, hollow.

11. Find and treat the one midline point of the upper back that looks/feels the most stuck or congested. It will often feel physically stuck to its upstairs and/or downstairs neighboring vertebrae. Conversely, needle the point that seems the most hollow.

12. Feel with your fingers your buddy's shoulders, traps, neck, occiput. Needle any tight and stagnant areas.

13. Peck the whole upper back/shoulder/neck area, releasing tension.

The Healing Session

14. Peck the entire exposed back and top surfaces of the head. Imagine that inside your buddy's head is a star, and you are making holes that let the light shine out. For your buddy, it should feel deeply blissful, like a monkey being groomed.

15. Press down gently and firmly on the back of your buddy's thighs. Work your way down the backs of the legs, being careful not to press too hard directly behind the knees.

16. If your buddy is having lower back/hip/pelvic issues, and especially if you feel a tight painful hard spot there, needle UB-40 (the area behind the knees) wherever you find it with your fingers. Check both sides.

17. If your buddy is having upper back problems, find sensitive points around UB-58 around the center and slightly lateral on the mid-calf. Press on points all the way down to the ankle and needle the most stagnant.

18. Needle UB-60 between the lateral malleolus and the Achilles tendon, especially if your buddy has a tight occiput.

19. Gently grab your buddy's ankle and pull the legs one by one.

20. Press the bottoms of your buddy's feet and then needle K-1 just behind the ball of the foot, one by one if you have one needle or both sides at the same time if you have two. Just as we started the session by treating the most *yang* region

at the top of the head, we end with the feet to bring your buddy's energy down to the most *yin*, to ground and center. Feel any unwanted energy flow out of your buddy, through you, and into the ground. Let it go.

21. Place one hand on your buddy's sacrum, and the other hand on the top of their head. Apply slight pressure in towards the center of the body with both hands, then ease up on this pressure until you are barely touching.

22. Move your left hand to the center of your buddy's upper back, behind the heart. Keeping the right hand on the sacrum, again press and release with both hands.

23. Move the right hand from the sacrum to the low back, and once again press, release, barely touch. The feeling should be that you compressed your buddy's body, and as you let go it naturally rebounds, expands outward. With your hands in very light contact, you should feel like you are accentuating and prolonging this outward expansion. For your buddy, this moment should feel really good. They feel expansive, relaxed, fully themselves. Many people fall asleep at exactly this point, after remaining awake during the treatment until then.

24. Very gently and slowly, raise your hands off the patient.

The Healing Session

This concludes the session. It's nice to give your buddy a few minutes to integrate (or to sleep), before they get up.

If you are new to acupuncture and the names of acupuncture points like GV-20 and K-1 mean nothing to you, don't despair. Enough description is given here to allow you to proceed, and if you are motivated you can look up point locations online, or ask a knowledgeable healer buddy.

Also, don't be disappointed if you don't immediately feel a whole lot happening between your fingertips as you treat your buddy. This will come with time; as with any new skill you will get better at it the more you do it. But rest assured that "feeling the *qi*" is a real physical phenomenon. It is not a matter

of feeling something only because you have pretended hard enough. If you needle your buddy with your full attention, there will come a time when you feel the distinctive electrical tingle, and once you have felt it, it will be that much easier to feel it again.

If you are already an acupuncturist, use the *kata* as a template and customize or change it as you see fit.

A healing session following this structure and sequence should result in an overall balancing of the body. In other words, when you're done your healer buddy should feel really good!



Some Notes on Posture

When you are giving a treatment, you should consider yourself a conduit for, and exemplar of, healthy *qi*. This means that your own body should be the best possible conductor. Stay well hydrated. Keep your mind calm and easy. Be focused on what you are doing. Radiate love and compassion. Sit or stand with good posture. All these things will help you be a good needle healer.

On the topic of posture, all the rules of internal martial arts apply:

1. Whether you are seated or standing, “float the bones and hang the flesh,” as the saying goes. That is to say, expand the spaces in each joint, between the bones, and engage the muscles as little as possible to hold the body up. Make yourself taller and nobler. Let your structure hold you up. Relax but don’t slouch.

2. Relax the pelvis and take out some of the curve in the low back by slightly pointing your coccyx forward, towards your feet.

3. Bend your knees and rest the weight of your body through your ankles and feet by engaging the ground with your feet, distributing mass evenly through the tripod-like “pods” of the heel, inner ball, and outer ball of your feet.

Some Notes on Posture

4. Slightly tuck your chin to elongate the neck and take out some of the spinal curve there. Feel your entire spinal column like it is hanging vertically from the heavens, like a string of pearls.

5. Connect your two hands to each other through the upper back/neck, like you have one large bow of an arm that is connected to your torso where it crosses the spine.

6. Connect your feet and your hands like a “X” where the lines intersect through your middle, right foot connected to left hand and left foot connected to right hand through your engaged core.

7. Feel all the connections: back of the head to spine to sacrum; legs to hips to

low back; arms to shoulder to neck to head and upper back; shoulders to hips, elbows to knees; wrists to ankles; and feet to hands.

8. At any point where you or your needle is touching your buddy, and where you are touching the needle, press just enough until you feel that your pressure engages the connective tissue under the skin. It takes some practice to achieve this, but it is essential. A good way to practice is by first pressing too much, then gently easing up until you feel “sticky,” that you are connected but very lightly so.

9. Relax.

10. Breathe.

11. Internalize these alignments so that you can devote your full attention to the person you are treating, and to the sensations you are feeling with the help of your needle.



ZHÈNG

The Chinese character ZHÈNG (Japanese: *tada* or *masa*, or SEI or SHŌ when part of a compound word) is usually translated as “right,” “righteous,” “correct,” “straight,” or “true.” This gives a good idea of the proper attitude to take in your body and mind while doing acupuncture: upright, true, connecting Heaven and Earth with integrity.



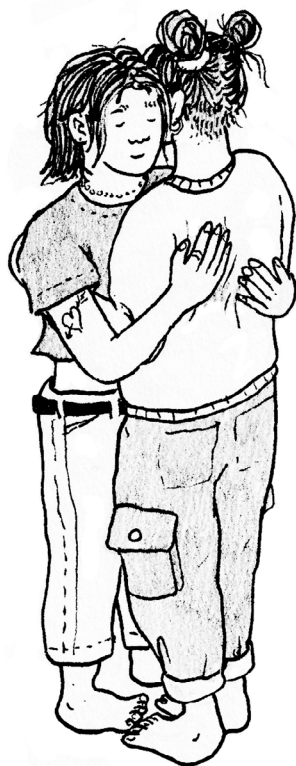
A Philosophy of Healing

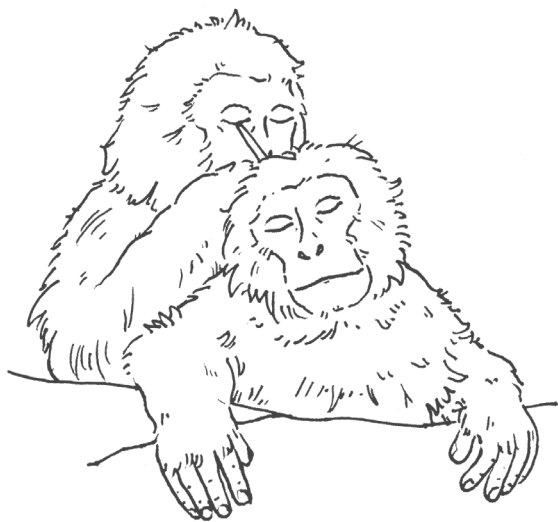
Any method of healing is guided by an underlying philosophy. The philosophy behind this book is quite simple. The premise here is that we are all natural-born healers, that healing is a fundamental ability, in fact a pre-human skill. Modern humans spend far too much time doing very strange things they are not evolved to do. As a consequence we develop all sorts of pathologies: neck and back pain, depression and anxiety, diabetes, texting thumb, the list goes on. So, if we want to be healthy

and happy, we should do those things that we are designed by evolution to do: eat real food, move our bodies, interact with other humans, spend time in nature. Getting our hands on each other, providing comfort and support, easing each other's pain and suffering, are part of this obvious medicine.

There's a reason this book is a "manual" and not a treatise or encyclopedia. The needle is an extension of the hand; acupuncture is a manual medicine. It is learned by doing, it has more to do with exploring, feeling, and perceiving than with thinking or analyzing.

Acupuncture is also a humanistic medicine. Approach another human with kindness, curiosity, compassion, and respect, and all sorts of wonderful things will happen.





About the Author

Kaz Wegmüller is an acupuncturist, herbalist, writer, and educator residing in Northern California.

He is the founder of Healer Monkeys, a loose affiliation of healer buddies around the world.

You can read more about him at his website: www.kazwegmuller.com.

About the Illustrator

Issa Wegmüller is a Seattle-based visual artist and art educator. In their work Issa navigates themes of identity, self, and relationships to the natural world. As a teaching artist, Issa works with young artists to cultivate their voices through a range of expressive mediums including drawing, comics, painting, and illustration.

View more of their artwork on Instagram: [@issawegmuller](https://www.instagram.com/issawegmuller).

"Acupuncture for Curious People offers insight into subtle forms of acupuncture that rely not on needle insertion but instead on awareness of energetic touchpoints."

—Nancy N. Chen, Professor of Anthropology,
University of California, Santa Cruz

Welcome to the art of needle healing! In this handy manual designed for the lay reader and seasoned healer alike, acupuncturist Kaz Wegmüller presents his art in a format that is clear, concise, instructive, philosophical, and practical. In a field dominated equally by clinical jargon and metaphysical Orientalism, Kaz's approach is refreshingly down-to-earth. He starts by expanding acupuncture's usual definition to encompass "a unique way of engaging with the mystery of existence," and goes on to guide the reader in an exploration of this ancient art that centers on touch, curiosity, sensitivity, and humanity.

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