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The Liver



Nona Taylor

ORIENTAL MEDICINE

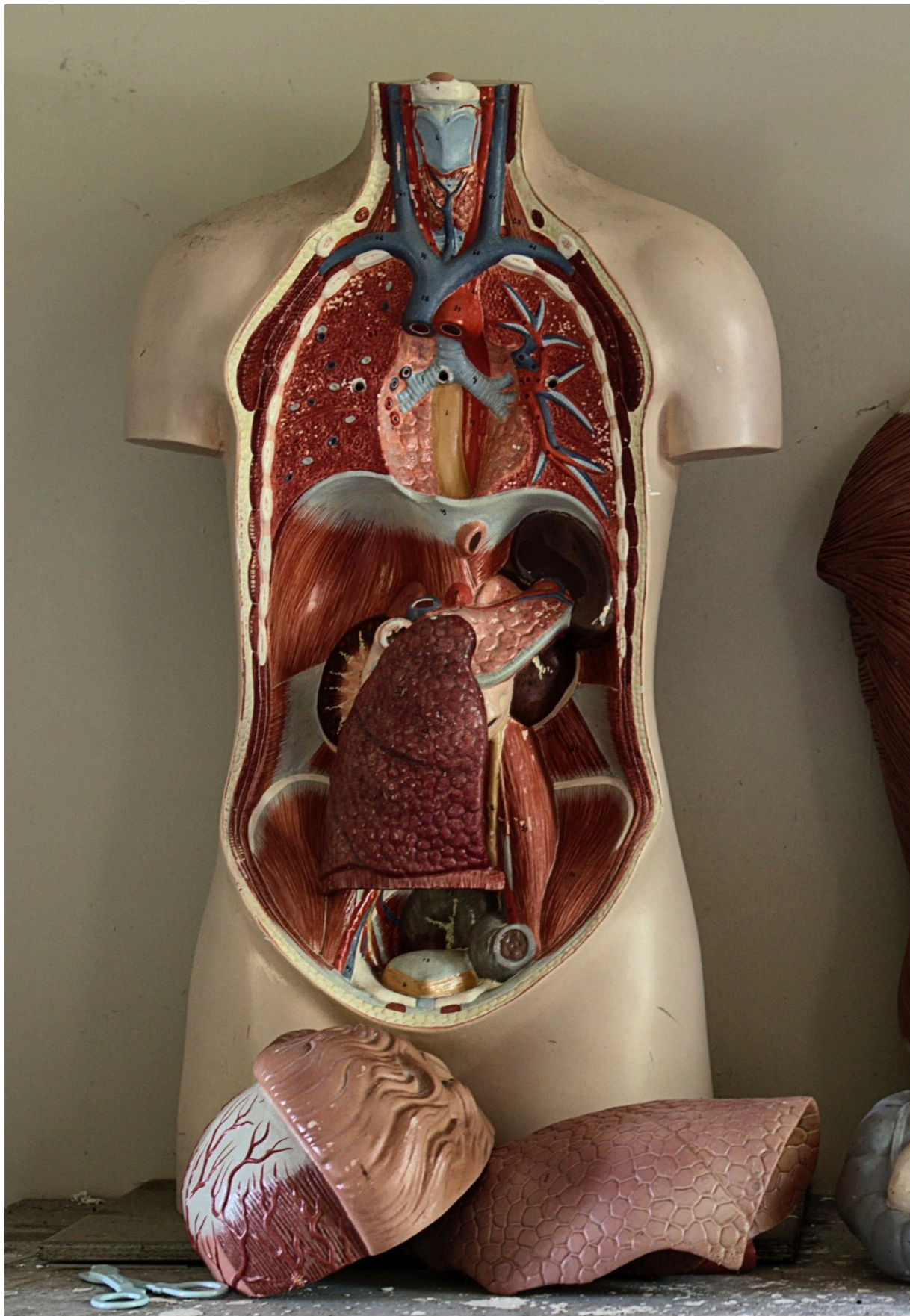
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The Liver

Conventional medical view

The liver is the largest solid organ in the body & it has about 500 different functions. Below are just some of the main ones:

- * Filters the blood, detoxifying & removing harmful substances.
- * Breaks down carbohydrates to glucose & then stores it ready to be used as a quick source of energy.
- * Removes waste products that are not filtered by the kidneys.
- * Plays a role in fighting infections.
- * Produces bile for digestion of fats.
- * Produces & breaks down fats.
- * Produces & breaks down cholesterol.
- * Creates proteins responsible for blood clotting.



Oriental Perspective

All the organs have a greater role than just the physical as seen from western medicine - There is an energetic role effecting us on a mental, emotional & spiritual level as well. The energetic life force that flows within us is known as **qi**.

(Pronounced “Chee”)

Qi is seen to flow within channels throughout the body known as meridians, each one named after the internal physical organ to which it is connected. Qi is the energy that runs through all of us, it is what keeps us warm & every cell in motion - **Qi is life**. The quality and movement of Qi through the body determines our health. When you stimulate your blood flow or lymphatic flow it is the Qi that allows this movement - they are intrinsically linked. The ideal state is one of smooth flow with no imbalances or blockages, which are called stagnation or stagnant Qi. If you have stagnation, whether physical, emotional, mental or spiritual, this will eventually manifest as disease.





The role of the Liver

The **Liver** is paired with the **Gall Bladder**

The season = **Spring**

Gall Bladder time = **11 pm - 1 am**

Liver time = **1 am - 3 am**

Element = **Wood**

Colour = **Green**

Weather = **Wind**

Spirit = "**Hun**" = **our self awareness & self control mechanism**

Liver opens into the **eyes**

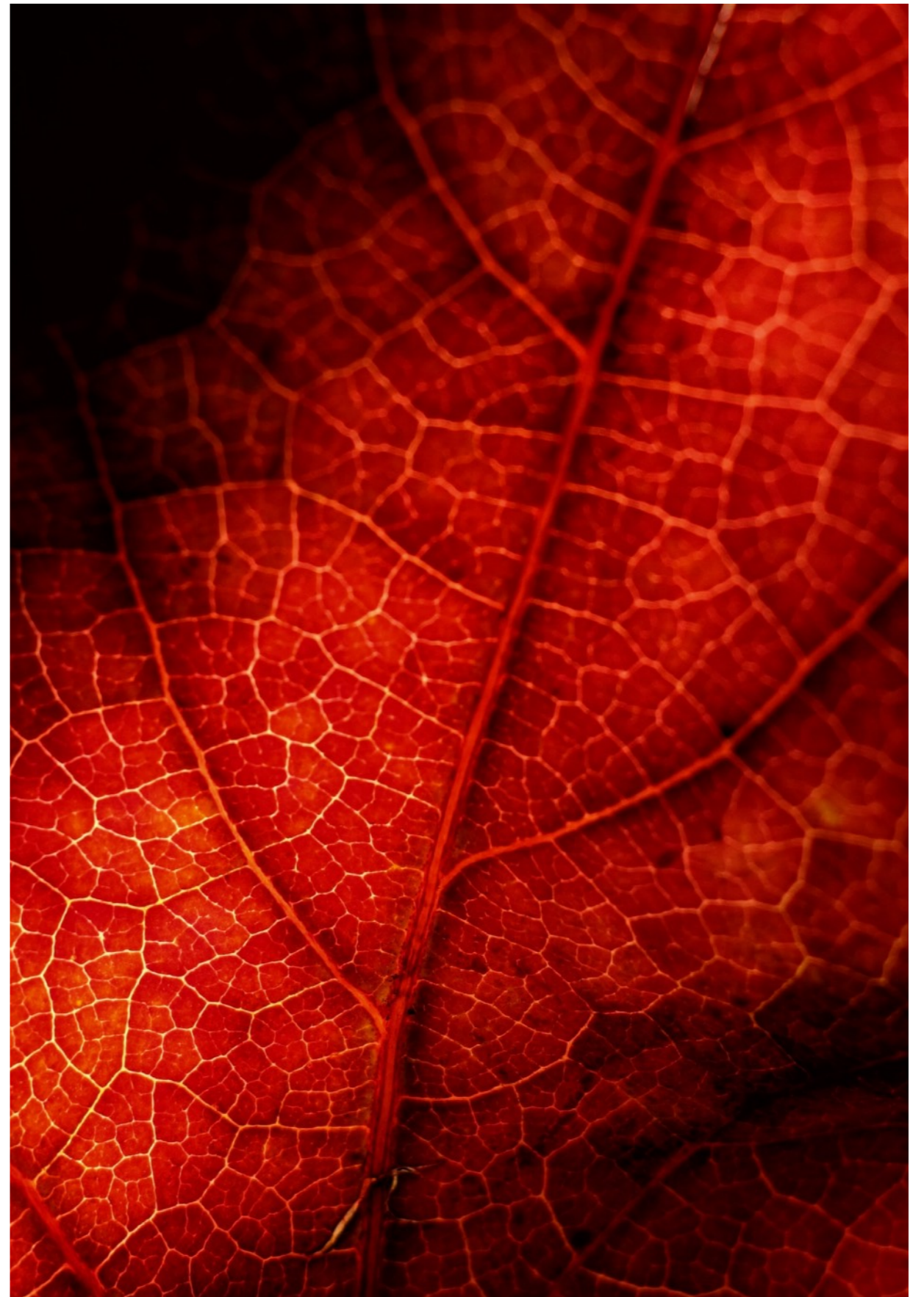
Body fluid = **Tears**

Negative emotions = anger, frustration, Irritability, belligerence, inertia, feeling blue, apathy, depression.
Positive emotions = Compassion, patience, benevolence, honesty.

What does liver control

The liver controls the **amount of blood** that circulates within the body as well as supporting the **smooth flow of Qi** throughout all the organ/meridians. It acts as the **“planner”** for all the meridians - telling the body what to do & when to do it. When healthy it regulates sleeping rhythms, ensures vision is clear & allows the emotions to be in proper balance.

If liver is weak, the smooth flow of Qi & blood around the body is disturbed & **stagnation can manifest**. Stagnation can create physical & emotional disturbance. It is frequently caused by stress.





Physical signs:

If liver is imbalanced you may experience any of the following:

Lack of energy

Neck & shoulder pain or stiffness

Insomnia & vivid dreams

Dry, red, itchy eyes

Excessive lacrimation (tears)

Period pain

Gynaecological issues

Sore breasts

Sensation of a lump in the throat

Pre-menstrual tension PMT

Heartburn (acid reflux)

Sciatic pain

Dizziness

Headache on the sides of the head



Emotional signs

In Chinese medicine we associate a different emotion to each organ/meridian. For the liver this is **anger**.

Emotions are something we cannot see, you cannot dissect a body & find one - yet we all feel them, so take them to be real.

With the liver we may be we are under stress, tired or something riles us - like a **red rag to a bull!** We don't like the feeling of anger, it feels hot and spiky, so we try to hold ourselves, this creates **stagnation of liver Qi**, it takes energy, & like trying to restrain a bull, inevitably emotion bursts out. The liver **Qi might internally attack** another meridian/organ maybe causing nausea, bloating, upset stomach, PMT or just **send heat up** (liver yang rising) resulting in headache, high blood pressure. There are **2 sides to the liver emotion**; irritability, frustration, anger **OR** apathy, depression. **Mad turns too sad!**



Foods to help your liver

Avoid eating very spicy foods, bad fats, excessive caffeine & alcohol

Sour is the flavour of the liver:

Lemons/limes, vinegar, sauerkraut, apple, yoghurt (sheep or goat milk) sourdough (Spelt, Einkorn, Kamut).

Fruit: pineapple, plum, mango, grapes, pomegranate, peach, pear, strawberry, olives

Green is the colour of the liver:

Green tea, Green leafy vegetables, sprouts, asparagus.

Fragrant herbs such as coriander, parsley & peppermint.



How to help your liver

Quick fixes:

- * Take up some form of **regular gentle exercise** such as walking or hiking, swimming, yoga, tai chi, bicycle riding or golf. Exercise moves the Qi & circulates the blood.
- * **Eat at least 2-3 hours before sleep.** Eating too late creates stagnation in the liver, which impedes the bodies ability to repair at night.
- * Practice the **healing sound** for the liver: **Shhhhhhhh.....**
- * **Take up gardening,** grow plants, even house plants or a window box. Have green plants around your home.
- * **Spend time around trees,** in forests or any other green space or garden.
- * Use a **wooden** comb or brush or wear wooden or bamboo accessories.
- * Change your screensaver to an image of **flowers, plants or the forest**
- * If you like gemstones, consider jade, emerald or green tourmaline.



Change you screensaver to a picture of green plants or trees.

- * You can do a quick exercise where you **shake or vibrate your body.** Like shaking the leaves in a tree. This shaking motion will release tension, dislodge stagnation & improve your general circulation. You simply shake your body all over from head to toe, shake your, bum & belly, arms & legs, hands & feet. It is fun!
- * **Liver qi stagnation accumulates around the head & neck.** Try massage of these areas especially - Rub your hands together so they are warm, Then place your right hand on your left shoulder, role your hands over your shoulder, gently pressing & pulling your hand down to your chest between your breast (heart area), Take your hand off, rub your hands together to warm them again & swap shoulders, left hand to right shoulder. Repeat 3x on both sides.

More self help techniques

Deeper shifts for the liver

- * **Laugh** at your self & have empathy for others - cultivating a sense of humour & especially to not take oneself too seriously!
- * **Admit when you are wrong**, or being impatient, cynical, rigid or downright hostile!
- * Do a **daily reflection on your emotions** that you experience throughout the day. A sort of emotional body scan, let go of any anger, frustration or upset
- * **Working with ones emotions** - to not take them so seriously, as something fixed, solid, intractable. Replaying in our minds the same stuck record of “he did this” or “she did that” or “this happened to me”, the same story on constant replay. This just keeps the loop of negative emotion that is provoked by the story alive. It is said in Tibet that **anger is like holding a hot burning coal**, who is it burning? Certainly not the person or thing you feel angry about! It is also said that anger distorts our perception up to 90% - so prevents us seeing a situation clearly. Think how in a moment of madness or rage such murderous harm is done - just in a moment!



Take up meditation to create space between you & the emotion

- * **Harmful emotions for the liver are anger & hate.**
- * **Healing emotions for the liver are kindness, compassion, empathy**
- * **Take up meditation** & learn to create space between you & the emotion. You are not the anger - just that there may be anger there - create a space - “mind the gap” - a little pause, separation, realisation that you are not the emotion - more that you notice there is emotion there. You can choose not to become it. This can reduce, even deflate the emotion. We can never stop the emotions and feeling rising but we can choose not to have them overwhelm us. Take a mental step back, do not get on the “emotion bus” - rather we can be at the “bus stop” - see the “anger bus” but choose not to get on it, not to run with the anger story.



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“My wish is to
inspire you to heal
yourself naturally.”

www.nona-taylor.com