

Sasang Medicine Part III

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Note: Access part one and part two on the AAOM website www.aaom.org under "American Acupuncturist."

THE PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIORS OF EACH BODY TYPE

It is very difficult to discern the constitution of a person simply by asking him about his personality, since his own opinion can be quite biased, too lenient, or harsh. For example, a person might consider himself rash, impatient or frivolous when he makes a few mistakes. On this basis, you cannot consider him Shaoyang. Someone else might think of himself as indecisive because he is unsure of a few decisions that need to be made. Again, you cannot jump to the conclusion that this person is a Shaoyin. Similarly, if a person believes himself to be open with regards to his inner self, simply because he was indiscreet at some point in his life, it is wrong to conclude that he is of the Shaoyang constitution.

As you can see, it is more productive to attempt to discern constitutional types through physical characteristics rather than personality structures because people tend to have illusions about themselves, while their true natures remain untold.

TAIYANGS

Taiyangs have characteristics that resemble springtime. Like a budding sprout, they have plenty of energy in reserve, and are able to powerfully push that energy out. In other words, they are full of vitality and confidence. They are courageous, positive, masculine, and thoroughly unconcerned about what other people think. They are self-righteous, and know no regrets.

As the energy of a sprout is directed straight up, so too is the Taiyang's, as they are obsessively single-minded. This,

combined with their excellent minds, make them ideal leaders. Resolute decision-makers like Hitler and Napoleon were Taiyangs. People tend to follow Taiyangs implicitly, because they are so bright, seemingly clear-headed and decisive. Other body types do not fare as well as leaders: Shaoyins are too indecisive and hesitant, while Shaoyangs tend to change their statements and intentions whenever they run low on energy, or encounter obstacles. Taiyins, meanwhile, are slow in decision making and in getting things started (action).

As Taiyangs are single-minded, they develop as one-sided characters, capable of plowing forward, but incapable of reflection or introspection. While this leads to success in most endeavors, it can at times cause them to fail miserably. Although most obstacles can be overcome by their intelligence and overflowing vitality, some cannot, and Taiyangs lack the reflection necessary to tell the difference. Witness Hitler's attack on Russia, resulting in a war on two fronts, or Napoleon's devastating winter campaign against that same country. Insurmountable obstacles also have a deleterious effect on the health of Taiyangs; they make them extremely angry, like gunpowder set off in a small, enclosed space. Any extreme of anger results in a deterioration in their health.

Taiyangs have an urgent nature, and are always in a hurry. This allows them to finish their work quickly, but it also makes them unceasingly restless and impatient, especially when things don't go as smoothly or swiftly as they'd like. Taiyangs need to learn a little from Taiyins. Taiyins have a "take-it-easy" attitude towards life. When they get stuck in their pursuit of their goals, they

take a break. They do not seriously think about how to get over the next hurdle. Instead, they indulge themselves in recreational activities to refresh themselves. If you are sure that you are a Taiyang with an urgent nature, you should pay careful attention to the Taiyins around you. If you can learn from them, and practice their strengths, then you will not get sick or commit yourself to terrible mistakes. If you combine a few Taiyin qualities with your inherent diligence, then you will be able to succeed in all of your endeavors, and live the remainder of your life in peace and harmony.

SHAOYANGS

Shaoyangs have the characteristics of exuberant summer energy. They resemble people who are drunk, as they are constantly cheerful, loud, and in high spirits. They are also unfailingly optimistic and always think that things will turn out all right.

Like the bright summer sun, they enjoy shining in the eyes of others. They make grand displays of their abilities, and when they describe events, they exaggerate and embellish their stories. Shaoyangs actually consider the concealment of emotions to be a disgrace.

Part of this philosophy of full disclosure involves telling people whenever they make a mistake. Shaoyangs never hesitate to point such things out, nor are they reluctant in pointing out the way to their idea of viable solutions. Still, Shaoyangs abhor hurting others, and only say such things because they are staunch believers in expressing their thoughts and feelings. They themselves are not immune to this policy, and will frankly disclose their own mistakes, whenever they are aware of them.

When learning something new, Shaoyangs think they fully understand it after spending just a few moments in study. This is because they are unwilling to take the time to sit down and absorb anything completely. They are constantly on the lookout for new projects. Yet, once they find a new project, they immediately quit it, and look for something else. This restless, roaming behavior is due to the fact that Shaoyangs possess the nature of fire. Like fire, they ignite swiftly and passionately, and just as swiftly burn themselves out. Just as fire is always restlessly spreading on to new fuel, Shaoyang people are unable to stay in one place. As a result, they cannot observe the “step by step” of a process, and can only know the world through the blurs of hurried glances.

Since they learn things quickly but roughly, they appear to know everything, but in truth, they do not know anything in any great detail. Thus, at work, although they may be able to get by for a while with broad generalizations, they get stuck whenever anything more deep, detailed, or specific is required (any topic to which they did not pay adequate attention). When they encounter such an impasse or any insurmountable obstacle, for that matter, the energy within them becomes obstructed, and anger arises to attempt to penetrate through it. At these times, Shaoyangs can fly into sudden rages.

In order for Shaoyangs to be able to persistently work at something, it must be constantly new and interesting. Unfortunately, jobs of this sort are rare. Moreover, since Shaoyangs always adopt a sort of “know-it-all” attitude towards work, they are liable to run into many obstacles, particularly in fields that are constantly shifting. Once they do hit a wall, they will either explode into a rage, or move on to something more interesting. Thus, a vicious cycle ensues. In the East, this aspect of the Shaoyang

personality was described as “A dragon head with a snake's tail.”

Although Shaoyangs are very helpful to others, they tend to neglect their own family affairs. Although others may praise them, and call them good and kind-hearted people, their wives and children consider them insubstantial, empty, and false, since they only pay attention to the affairs of others, neglecting the concerns of their own families. In this, Shaoyang people are like the summer. Recall that in the summertime, the energy of all things in nature is exuberant on the outside, but lacking on the inside.

This “externally strong, internally empty” aspect of Shaoyangs manifests itself in other ways. While Shaoyangs may wear brand name clothing and drive fancy cars, this flashy exterior may conceal the fact that they don't have enough money to pay the rent, or that they have no money in the bank.

Shaoyangs always have anxious, fearful minds. In Shaoyangs, as Yang is in its most exuberant state, Yin begins to develop. As energy consumption is at its extreme, it begins to materialize. As this energy contracts, it leaves an empty feeling in Shaoyang people, resulting in an ever-present anxiety. When confronted by this inexplicable anxiety, Shaoyangs easily give up on any work that they have started. This is true even when they are earnestly helping other people out. Because Shaoyangs give up on such projects, and renege on their promises, they get complaints from other people, even though they think they have suffered significant losses helping others to the best of their ability.

Both Shaoyangs and Taiyangs have urgent temperaments. Taiyangs have the ability to overcome most difficulties when they arise (due to their penetrative, propulsive power). Shaoyangs, however, simply give up halfway when

faced with obstacles. This is because they have already consumed most of their energy by the time they confront the obstacle, and have nothing left to back them up in the ensuing struggle. Again, since Yang is in its extreme state in Shaoyangs, it has already begun to transform into Yin. The braking, suppressive force of anxiety interrupts the propulsive drive of their urgency, halting them dead in their tracks (like a parking brake applied to an accelerating car).

Although both Taiyangs and Shaoyangs have short tempers, there is much difference in the frequency of their anger. Taiyangs do not lose their tempers over trivial matters, but they explode when faced by insurmountable obstacles. Shaoyangs, on the other hand, frequently lose their tempers over trivial matters, dissipating their energy like the summer sun, and prematurely giving up on the project or work that's troubling them.

TAIYINS

Taiyins resemble the autumn season. In autumn, energy is gathered inward and transformed into substance, so that fruition may take place. Like the autumn energy, Taiyins have an inward, reserved, prudent personality. Their words and actions are always considered, like carefully grown autumn harvests. And, through steady cumulative efforts, they seek to eventually reap the benefits of those harvests.

As Taiyins place the most importance upon the “harvest” (the security and comfort of themselves and their families), they do not participate in any affair that endangers or jeopardizes its full fruition. They are in fact extremely doubtful and fearful of any variables or changes that might affect their works in progress. They also have little interest in “idealistic” ventures, such as helping in the affairs of their country, or assisting others in need. Instead, they prefer to look at people and issues strictly in terms of profit and loss.

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Taiyins are secretive. They dislike it when others find out what their true plans or intentions are. They also dislike it when others discern their true feelings. This extensive concealment is purely for the purpose of safeguarding their accumulated harvest of knowledge and wealth. Hiding things, after all, is nature's way of gathering energy: think of squirrels gathering nuts, for example. Those who carry a lot of keys (implying that they have a lot of things that are "locked up") are generally Taiyins.

Taiyins don't get excited very easily. Nor do they move very much, unless they absolutely must. This is because Taiyins try to conserve energy, in order to complete the process of materialization that they embody. Many Taiyins take greater pleasure lying down on the couch watching TV and eating potato chips, than they would traveling and adventuring around the world.

Associated with this propensity for immobility (both physically and emotionally) is a somewhat dull sensibility. Taiyins do not react to stimuli unless they are very strong. Stimuli that might frighten Shaoyangs are usually no big deal to Taiyins. In situations where other constitutions might be in a panic, Taiyins are often able to maintain themselves with equanimity, eating their meals calmly, and sleeping soundly. They have the capacity to enjoy themselves in recreational activities, even in the middle of a battlefield!

Taiyins are born businessmen, for many reasons. First of all, Taiyins do not allow themselves to get carried away with emotion. Thus, even when they feel good about something, they don't get overjoyed, and even when they dislike something, they don't hate it. The capacity to avoid extremes of emotion allows Taiyins to keep a practical, level headed view of things, necessary for good business. For example, as they never get angry over the impudent actions of their customers, they are appreciated by their patrons as stable and secure individuals. Taiyins are also

extremely patient. They are able to wait situations out until they are in their favor. Other body types, on the other hand, tend to be relatively rash, trying to close their business deals as quickly as possible (more often than not, to their disadvantage). Yet another reason why Taiyins make natural businessmen is their inscrutability. As stated above, Taiyins by nature do not display their inner selves. Thus, their competitors are never able to figure out what they are doing.

According to the I Ching, all good things have a shadow, and all bad things contain a redeeming light. Although most of the characteristics of Taiyins make them successful in a variety of fields, they are also associated with the possibility of poor health. The accumulation of wealth is desirable; however, the accumulation of fat (stored energy) within the abdomen (and other parts of the body) is not. This fat can form plaque that lines the walls of blood vessels, impeding circulation and metabolism, and resulting in serious conditions like heart disease, stroke, hypertension, and diabetes.

In order to become healthy, Taiyins should learn to emulate some of the characteristics of Taiyangs and Shaoyangs. They should strive to convert the accumulated substances of their bodies back into energy, and use that energy to activate their sluggish metabolisms. Their metabolism should then be able to smoothly eliminate the accumulated wastes burdening their systems. Emotionally, Taiyins should stimulate a feeling of urgency within themselves. They should also stir themselves up into anger occasionally, or allow themselves to get a bit frightened or shocked now and then. Cultivating these emotions within themselves will help them to invigorate their physiologies.

SHAoyINS

Shaoyins take on many of the characteristics of winter. In the wintertime, energy is stored and conserved. On the inside, pressure builds, as energy struggles to push upwards and outwards against powerful compressive forces.

This is true of seeds, for example, and of the homes in which people confine themselves through the winter season. Shaoyins take on this energetic quality, and thus have shy, depressed personalities.

Shaoyins seem gentle, possessing the softness of the water that represents Shaoyin qualities. However, this water isn't able to flow freely, as it freezes and stagnates in the cold winter air. Thus, Shaoyins are generally inflexible in thought, and obstinate in character. Oftentimes employers fail to see this aspect within their Shaoyin workers, simply because Shaoyins follow orders obediently, without expressing their opinions (the reason for this is not that Shaoyins lack opinions, but that they store them inside). Shaoyins are actually the most stubborn-minded of the four constitutions. Ordinarily, they will listen to what others say, but once they determine that what others say is wrong, they will staunchly hold to their own position, no matter how much subsequent evidence others might find to the contrary.

In the winter or at night (Shaoyin times), people tend to think more, thusly, Shaoyins think a lot. Weighed down by so many thoughts, they are unable to make decisions. They are also extremely meticulous, calculating gains and losses down to the very penny, and considering both the bright and dark aspects of every single task, such that they are hesitant to begin new projects, and slow at working on projects already begun. They lack the urgency of the Shaoyangs needed to leap into things.

Like Taiyangs, once Shaoyins believe that their work is correct, they close their minds, and do not think about anything else. They hang onto their beliefs as though their lives depended upon it. Despite this stubborn faith, however, Shaoyins are unable to act quickly. Again, their pensive nature causes them to consider the positive and negative aspects of what they do, slowing their resolve (like a car running through molasses).

When Shaoyins get emotionally hurt, it stays with them for a long time. This

is because Yin changes slower than Yang. Thus, although it may take some time to offend a Shaoyin person, once it happens, it is difficult for them to either forgive or forget. It is usually the Shaoyins who do not talk with their spouses for a long time after a fight. In contrast, although offended Shaoyangs cuss at others until it seems as though they want to kill them, shortly afterwards, they turn a full 180 degrees, and become sympathetic. This is one of the clearest differences between the temperaments of these two types.

Shaoyins like to judge the rights and wrongs of other people's actions and behaviors. The same is true for Shaoyangs. This is because (if you refer to the Sasang symbols) there are both Yin and Yang in these body types. Thus, both Shaoyins and Shaoyangs are concerned about distinguishing between the Yin and Yang in others. This makes them both meddle in affairs that do not concern them. The method of meddling differs according to the amount of Yin and Yang in the body type. Shaoyangs, for example, point out the faults of others directly and immediately, whereas

Shaoyins discern the faults of others when they are not around (in other words, they talk behind their backs).

If you consider Shaoyangs as optimistic and active, then Shaoyins must be pessimistic and passive. Whereas Shaoyangs are always thinking about the positive side of life, Shaoyins consistently consider the negative side. To use the cliché, when the cup is half full, Shaoyangs would simply relish that there is still half a cup of water, whereas Shaoyins would lament that there is only a half cup.

Member's Profiles Updating (Important – Please Review Immediately!)

Over the past few months, the AAOM has been consolidating and bringing in-house the Web-based features and services we have been using to keep our membership informed, and allow the public to connect with our active practitioners.

Early last year, we brought the AAOM.ORG Web site in-house. In so doing, we greatly magnified our ability to be flexible in how the site was displayed and in providing new features: online submission of articles and proposals to speak at our conferences, an online job board, online group insurance, an interactive advocacy/legislative program, a new library, new merchant services (credit card processing), new news alert functions and press room, etc.

Online Updating of Member Profile: For the active members of the AAOM, one other feature has been brought in-house, and is now ready for your use; *you may now update your information the public sees when searching for a practitioner in their area*. This feature will also serve as the entry point to *Members Only* content on the AAOM site.

If you have reason to change or add information to your profile, the AAOM extends this invitation for you to examine that information and to make the appropriate changes, but let's first review the rules.

Rules:

- **AAOM Privacy Policy:** While not required to do so, we encourage you to read the AAOM's Privacy Policy. A link is available at the bottom of almost every page of our web site.
- **Sign-in page:** The sign-in page will ask you for your Last Name and your AAOM Membership number. See the mailing label on this journal's envelope. The top line is the Name and Number you will use.
- **Secret Question:** An interim page, seen only if you have never logged in through Member Services before, asks for a secret question and the answer to that question. Should you forget your log-in information, a function of this page will use that question and response to serve as a means to remind you.
- **Updating your Member Profile:** The next page is where the main business of updating your information takes place. Here, you can specify two office locations as well as your residential address.

Determining which address to provide:

- If you choose to include your residential address, this is where the AAOM will send any and all correspondence.
- If you prefer to receive *The American Acupuncturist* and other AAOM communications at your first office address, **leave your residence address fields empty**. You will find a box to check that allows you to enable each address for public view on the profile information page placed online.

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