

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Guo and Powell/Listen to Your Body

is published by University of Hawai'i Press and copyrighted, © 2002, by University of Hawai'i Press. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher, except for reading and browsing via the World Wide Web. Users are not permitted to mount this file on any network servers.

Introduction

WE ARE ALL living with our bodies twenty-four hours a day, every day of our lives. But how well do we know our bodies? Do we have to be doctors to understand what is going on? Do we need to hand over our bodies to a professional every time we get a symptom or rely on a prescription to put the problem right?

If you don't understand your body, seeing your doctor is the sensible thing to do. But the first step is working with the medicine that is right there in your own home—the natural medicine of the body. This book will help you use that natural medicine to maintain good health and to improve your condition if you already have a health problem.

Listen to Your Body deserves serious study. It offers a distillation of five thousand years of knowledge and brings the essence of that wisdom into our modern age for the benefit of all, young and old, well and infirm, patient and doctor. Here you will learn about the flow of energy within you that balances and maintains the health of every living cell. You will become aware of the rhythms that shape our lives. Such rhythms are found throughout nature: night follows day, the tides flow with the phases of the moon, the seasons come and go. All life on earth depends on these rhythms. If we listen to our bodies, we will soon detect the ebb and flow of many subtle changes that are going on all the time within us. But we won't notice them

unless we pay careful attention, because so many activities of modern life are not geared to these biorhythms.

Listen to Your Body shows you how to tune in to the signals your body sends out that warn of a developing health problem. A variety of case histories are included to illustrate how theory and practice go together. Exercises and simple routines are given in detail. Prevention of illness and specific guidance for avoiding a number of common disorders are covered. All of this will help you to apply the natural medicine of the body to daily life. The result is a day-by-day program that promotes health, healing, and longevity.

The foundations of this book lie in the *Yijing* (or *I Ching*—The book of changes), whose origins are shrouded in antiquity, more than six thousand years ago. The *Yijing* was the first systematic account of the workings of the cosmos according to the principle of *yin* and *yang*. With the *Yijing* came the cultivation of the esoteric art of *qigong* and the development of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Archaeological findings from the New Stone Age reveal that originally stone needles were used in the treatment of disease with acupuncture. Later, some four thousand years ago, the practice of applying burning herbs to the acupuncture points (now called moxibustion) was developed.

By the fifth century BC, in the Chunqiu Zhanguo period, stone needles had been supplanted by metal needles. This was a remarkable period. The framework of Traditional Chinese Medicine was now established, culminating in *The Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*. The sage Laozi (Lao Tsu) summarized the spiritual essence of the Daoist way of life in the short but profound text of the *Daodejing* (*Dao De Ching*), while in India Buddhism was taking root. Many centuries later, when Buddhism spread to China, a rich synthesis of Buddhism, the *Yijing*, Daoism, and Traditional Chinese Medicine took place that continues to the present day.

There have been a number of great sages in the Daoist tradition who have also been *qigong* masters, doctors of medicine, and experts in *fengshui*, and much of their sound advice is found in this book. The illustrious Wei Boyang, for example, who lived in the Han dynasty, wrote *Zhouyi cantongqi* (Kinship of the three and the book of

changes), which describes the human body as a miniature cosmos, an understanding Wei Boyang reached through his integration of the *Yijing* with *qigong* and Daoist alchemical practice. Ge Hong, living in the Jin dynasty, gave detailed instructions on health care in *Baopuzi neipian* (Preservation-of-solidarity master). Sun Simiao, from the Tang dynasty, is honored for *Qianjinfang* (A thousand golden remedies). Later, in the Ming dynasty, books such as *Leixiuyaojue* (Collective aphorisms of *qigong* healthcare) brought together the teachings of many great masters on the law of the *Dao*, which means “the Way of Nature.” Such books are still widely read in China.

The more visible aspect of the Daoist tradition, as in the art of *fengshui*, has readily caught the attention of the western mind. But for a real understanding of the *Dao*, the innermost principles of this wisdom need to be grasped. This is what the book sets out to do, with particular reference to health care, enabling the reader to take the necessary steps for long-lasting improvements in health, not superficially but from deep within. One condition is attached, however, and in fairness to the reader, it is given here at the start: change takes effort. As the Chinese saying goes, “Pancakes don’t fall out of the sky!”

Modern society has profoundly alienated man from nature, and the cost to human health and happiness is only now beginning to be recognized. This book invites the reader to try a different approach to life, one that both listens to the workings of the human body and reaches out to the timeless majesty of the cosmos.