

TWO STEMS AND TWO BRANCHES

Jia and Ji from Volume 3, Zi and Wu from Volume 4,
exactly as they appear in the books

What this file is

Four real chapters from the six-volume series Stems and Branches Acupuncture: two stems from Volume 3 and two branches from Volume 4. In full, not shortened and not rewritten. Not a summary, not a teaser: a piece of the books, so that you can judge whether you want the rest.

Who it is for. Acupuncturists and acupuncture students. I assume you needle and you know the meridians. I am not writing for patients.

Why these four.

Jia and Ji are a pair: the stem you were born with and the stem that is yours to learn. Zi and Wu are the same kind of pair among the branches. Reading a pair shows you the mechanism of the whole system better than any single chapter: a strong side, a missing side, and what I say to the patient sitting on the couch.

What you will find here.

1. Chapter 9 of Volume 3, Jia: beginning. Who gets it, what it looks like, what I say.
2. Chapter 14 of Volume 3, Ji: what is to come of it. The stem paired with Jia.
3. Chapter 10 of Volume 4, Zi: gall bladder, the idea. The rat.
4. Chapter 16 of Volume 4, Wu: heart, unease is natural. The horse, paired with Zi.

The page numbers on these pages are the original ones, so you can see where each chapter sits inside its volume.

You are welcome to pass this file on to anyone who needles.

Two stems: Jia and Ji

Chapter 9 and chapter 14 of Volume 3. Jia is the sprout, the readiness to begin. Ji is what is to come of it. Each of them is strong in one person and missing in another, and the two are a pair.

9. Jia — beginning

Who gets this one. People with a strong Ji — a year with a nine. Spleen in earth strong, gall bladder in earth to be learned. So, among others, me.

What it looks like. To a patient like this I say: the strong side of your body is that you know perfectly well what the consequences of various actions will be. Sometimes that may get in your way, but it is your strong side — you know what the final effect will be. What your body suffers from, though, is having no readiness to **begin**.

And it is often the case that an exaggerated Ji — what is strong in me — suppresses Jia. I think all the time about the final effect, about how it ought to look, and that is so burdensome that I do nothing at all in that direction. Recommend to somebody like that that they should start drawing — and in their head straight away: aha, drawing, right, in that case I have to sell it, preferably at auction in New York, and for the work to be at that level I have to buy a computer that costs thousands and the right stylus. Whereas the point was for him to take a pencil and a sheet of paper. And nothing more.

What I say. A stem is readiness. Jia is the readiness to initiate. So some sort of beginning has to appear in this person's life — but a minimal one. I ask: what do you feel like doing that you are not doing? Having a go on a swing. Then please have a go on a swing — or at least check the prices of garden

swings on the internet. Do something in that direction, something minimal. The kaizen philosophy: minimal changes that do not provoke fear. That is initiating.

What I say to the patient when we are working on Jia

Your body sees consequences superbly. That is a gift — and it is what blocks the start, because before you begin you can already see the whole ending.

Please choose one thing you have felt like doing for a long time. And make one move towards it that has no consequences at all: check the price, open the website, take it out of the cupboard. Do not begin. Initiate.

If a ten-year plan appears in your head — that is the moment to go back to the sheet of paper and the pencil.

14. Ji — what is to come of it

Who gets this one. People with a strong Jia — a year with a four. Gall bladder in earth strong, spleen in earth to be learned.

What it looks like. A person who initiates, who begins — but it can happen that they do not think about what will come of it. They start an action, “it will work out somehow”. A talent for beginning, no talent for seeing consequences.

What I say. That they should consider **what is to come of the action**. What is to be at the end. What effect they want to achieve, in what direction they want to go — and only then start the process. To the participant with a four I said: what are you taking part in this course for? What is to come of it? You are giving up energy, time, space, money — what is to come of it for you and for others? Once you have answered that for yourself, it will be easier for you to learn, easier to go over it again and to practise in the clinic. A clearly defined goal, clear consequences of the action.

What I say to the patient when we are working on Ji

Your body begins easily. That is a gift. It is weaker on what is to be at the end.

Before the next thing you start — one minute with the question: what is to come of this? For me, for others, a year from now. Not a plan. One sentence.

If the answer is "it will work out somehow" — that is precisely the moment not to start yet.

Two branches: Zi and Wu

Chapter 10 and chapter 16 of Volume 4. Zi is the gall bladder, the rat, the idea. Wu is the heart, the horse, meeting the new. Whoever has one strongly usually lacks the other.

10. Zi — gall bladder — the idea

Who gets this one. People with a strong heart — the branch Wu, the fearless horse — who lack the rat. And most of us, whatever our birth energy, because nobody teaches this.

What it looks like. No ideas. Chaos, racing about, being lost.

What I say. Sit down, my friend, without moving — this is water, stillness — and **think**. Decide what subject you want to think about, what you want to solve. Think about what has happened and what you can do. We mostly think on the run: over a cup of tea, in the car, on the tram, alongside something else. No. Sit down, do nothing, decide what you are thinking about — and think it through. The final stage may be that I did not think anything up. That is a completed process too: no idea is also an idea, because I know I cannot do anything if I do not know what. You are given a maths test, five problems — you deal with each one in turn: first you think, ah, there is the idea, then you write. Let us learn to do that in life, especially when we have a lot on our plate.

What I say to the patient when we are working on Zi

Your body throws itself into new things easily. It does less well with the moment when it sits down and thinks.

Once a day: five minutes, a chair, nothing in your hands. One matter. To think — not to do. If the result is “I don’t know” — that is a result too.

16. Wu — heart — unease is natural

Who gets this one. People with a strong gall bladder — the branch Zi, the rat — who lack the horse.

What it looks like. Fear of the new, of new experience. It costs a huge amount of energy, unease, arousal — and they stop. Often they do a great deal so that **others** can have the experience, while they themselves withdraw.

What I say. Realise that the unease is natural. The body does not know whether the meeting with something new will end in success or in failure — and that is why it trembles. It is not a signal to give up. It is a signal that experience is about to happen. The horse is powerful **and** its legs tremble. The one does not exclude the other.

What I say to the patient when we are working on Wu

Your body has masses of ideas. It does less well when the idea turns into a new experience — that is when the unease appears and you withdraw.

Next time you feel that unease before something new — please notice it, name it, “this is that unease”, and take a step anyway. The unease has a right to be there. It does not decide.

Where to go next

The complete series is six volumes, 526 pages, with a cheat sheet for each volume and one for the whole system. Instant download, PDF and EPUB, personalised with your name.

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Volume 1, The Energy Cloud.

A person is a cloud, not a collection of organs. How to look at a patient in this system, and what a needle actually does.

Volume 2, The Great Movements.

The five elements, the solar year, ten great movements. The level that decides the tempo of a life.

Volume 3, The Ten Heavenly Stems.

The inner life, the I. A stem is a meridian in an element. The two chapters you have just read come from here.

Volume 4, The Twelve Earthly Branches.

The outer life, interaction. The animals, the pairs, what a person does with other people.

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