

Book Review

“Finding Effective Acupuncture Points” written by Shudo Denmai, translated by Stephen Brown

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What a treasure! This book provides both the beginner and the advanced acupuncturist, with valuable insights on how to correctly identify, locate, and treat acupuncture points with great results.

One of the most neglected areas of TCM Education in the United States is the limited use of palpation techniques for diagnostic assessment. Most students in the US are taught early on that the superior physician diagnoses by observation and listening, while the inferior assesses primarily through palpation. This bias has been truly unfortunate, when so much information can be received and understood, by developing a sensitive touch. Numerous medical studies support the fact that developing “listening hands” will not only benefit a practitioners ability to properly interpret what is happening within the patient, but is incredibly therapeutic for the patient’s mental & emotional well being. A well-developed touch provides numerous benefits, not always measured, in patients who live alone, have limited social support, or lack frequent day-to-day contacts. Being “in touch” enhances both patients and practitioners understanding of one-another, while giving greater

Insights in to the metaphorical language of TCM. Shudo Sensei challenges US educated practitioners to re-evaluate the conventional ways we have been taught to locate acupuncture points, and provides us with practical advice on how to enhance our sense of touch in both diagnosis and treatment

The beginning student always wrestles with how to locate acupuncture points correctly. Most students spend their first year in acupuncture school locating the points according to standardized locations based

on anatomical landmarks. While this method is great for developing an awareness of surface anatomy, it can become a limiting crutch, when a student fails to pay attention to the deeper messages the patients skin is telling them through their fingers. All too often, upon the basic mastery of anatomical landmarks, students shift their attention away from what is being experienced to what point prescriptions would best fix a patients problem, instead of further listening to what the patient’s skin is telling them based on changes in temperature, texture, & tension. Shudo Sensei’s approach encourages the western student to view both locating the acupuncture points and the use of palpation as an assessment tool in a new way. By looking at the acupuncture points as organic, living phenomenon arising in response to a decline in vitality, students begin to practice their palpation skills with a renewed curiosity. As an organic process, an acupuncture points’ size, shape, and location will change according to the patient’s circumstance. With this in mind, we are reminded that the anatomical landmarks serve merely as guides to finding the precise location, but are not the end and be all. This attitude of curiosity brings new meaning as every palpation experience becomes like searching for buried treasure. Students are thus better able to “tune in” to discovering the bodies subtle messages, and interpret what is present at that given moment. With “listening hands”, point location takes on a new dimension, as we begin to discover what is being experienced with a heightened awareness.

Incorporating Shudo Sensei’s attitudes of curiosity and exploration, in addition to his various methods of palpation assessment, further enforces our direct experience of the healing power of touch, as we reconnect with our hands as an essential diagnostic tool as well as an instrument of healing. In an age of medical practice where the cultivation of palpation skills are being less emphasized, the methods and ideas presented in this book add tremendous value into interpreting the geographical landscape of the

human body. An overview of the additional topics discussed in this book includes:

I. Background on Points

- What Are Acupuncture Points
- How to find points- Active Points, Depths, Characteristics
- Methods of palpation, parts of the fingers to use & amount of pressure

II. Specific points for Hyoji Treatment

- Location of specific points
- How to find the points
- Needle Insertion
- Point Indications
- Discussion/Commentary

III. Providing Effective Treatment

- Needle Gauges, Insertion Methods, Depths
- Sensing the Arrival of Qi
- Inducing Arrival of Qi
- Needling 5 phase & Regular Points

In addition to the information on palpation, the sections on point utilization and providing effective treatment are also worth their weight in gold. On behalf of all practitioners whom struggle to provide effective relief for those who are suffering, I am truly grateful for the information presented in these sections, as they have tremendous potential for dramatically shortening our learning curves for treatment effectiveness. Shudo Sensei has not only provided us with his personal insights and stories into which points have yielded him the greatest results for symptomatic relief, but has also given us the methods and historical commentary for understanding why these points work, and how to reproduce these results for our patients. Additionally, he introduces us to his personal application of various treatment techniques, and gives us keen insight into how to assess our accurate utilization of these methods. With humor and clarity, “Finding Effective Acupuncture Points” provides us with the inspiration and encouragement to test the wisdom gained from Shudo Sensei’s 50 years of practice, and is a true gift to acupuncturists the world over. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you.