

The Korean Four Constitutional Types, Part I

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Most students and practitioners love looking at the different constitutional types in Chinese medicine and find it very useful in their practice. People who have studied Asian bodywork are familiar with the Five Element constitutional types.

Many also know the European Six Division way of assessing fundamental characteristics, as popularized by Yves Requena. But unless your teacher was Korean or you had the good fortune of studying with Alex Tiberi at the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine, you probably are not familiar with the Korean constitutional types. Most of this information grew from seminars with Alex. I am sure you will find it useful in understanding more about your clients' nature and selecting which meridians on which to focus. I will talk about *taiyin* and *taiyang* (greater *yin* and *yang*) constitutional types in part one and then *shaoyin* and *shaoyang* (lesser *yin* and *yang*) in the following issue.

***Taiyang* -- Greater *Yang* -- Small Intestine /Bladder**

When we think of *taiyang*, we consider our most external structure and protective framework. This is created by the Small Intestine and Bladder meridians, on the back of the shoulders and down the back. Strong musculature in this area of the body forms our armor, our protection. It's also the framework that creates our upright position and propels us forward. So that is what we consider in assessing whether an individual is *taiyang* or not -- strong structure and forward movement.

People who are *taiyang* are large and muscular. They are stocky and appear strong and sturdy. Their complexion is usually reddish or ruddy, appearing "thick-skinned." Their movement is always forward, allowing nothing to get in their way or distract them. For this reason, they are great people for starting companies. You will find that often they are ambitious entrepreneurs. They love to be in charge and noticed, and often display aggressive and outgoing personalities. Nothing is ever a problem for them, except for

minute details that they will quickly glaze over as unimportant. *Taiyang* people never get sick or goes to a doctor. When they do get sick, it is usually sudden and serious. They'll be going along and then "*blam*"; they get hit with a heart attack or stroke that kills them. But we don't see them in our clinics often because they never admit to anything ever being wrong. They may be totally stressed out, but they just don't feel the impact like most people do.

Sometimes their partner will drag them into your office. (They won't come on their own because they always "feel fine!") You will give them a medical history to fill out, and they'll check nothing: name, address, signature at the bottom, that's it. So when you do the interview, you ask again, "any problems?" and of course they'll say no, even though the girlfriend who made the appointment said that he passed out from a bleeding stomach ulcer and is living on Tagamet. When you ask about it, they'll say, "Oh that? That's nothing." Treatment for **taiyangs** must include deep, strong work on the SI and Bl meridians. They will absolutely love it for one reason: it helps to relax the taiyang structure that has been propelling them forward their entire lives! You will find that *Nuad Bo Rarn* (Thai bodywork) is very effective for taiyang folks, as well as barefoot shiatsu. *Taiyang* people feel so good afterward, they often say that they didn't realize that they were not relaxed. Book another appointment right then and there, before they get back into their taiyang routine. You'll find that after a thorough assessment, they may have imbalances with the Kidney or Heart meridians, which after treatment will bring more long-lasting results.

Gradually suggesting lifestyle changes also will increase the efficacy of your treatments. Suggest that they take time off without their cell phones or laptops. Could they possibly find another favorite vegetable other than French fries? If they eat meat three times a day, maybe they could cut down to two? The more you work with them, the more likely they will trust and follow your advice.

***Taiyin* -- Greater Yin -- Spleen and Lung**

The *taiyin* meridians, Spleen and Lung, both help regulate the water/fluids in the body. Remembering that for this type of person, these meridians are their greatest strength as well as their greatest weakness. You will notice that a *taiyin* person tends to have water buildup. Combine that with the extreme qualities of a "Spleeny Weeny" Earth person: one that ruminates obsessively and that of a stuck Metal element person with the inability to let go, and you have the classic *taiyin* constitutional type.

Taiyin people are large, like *taiyang*, but not as firm. They tend to be soft and flabby, kind of like big phlegmy yin balls. Their complexion is yellowish and their flesh feels mushy when you work on them.

Both *taiyin* and *taiyang* have "greater" in their name; they are people with "large" conditions. But whereas the *taiyang* person is excess in *yang*: motion - activity - energy, the *taiyin* person has excess of *yin* substance and stagnation. *Taiyin* people tend to have accumulations and blockages, such as cysts and tumors. They not only have stagnation in their bodies, they also have it in their lives. They will stick with a job as long as it takes to get it done, no matter how boring it is. They are great people to have working for you, because they are loyal and pay attention to details. But they get stuck in jobs that they hate, relationships that they hate, and living situations they hate for years and years. They always have a million excuses for why they couldn't possibly change! That is classic *taiyin*: the inability to let go, with the tendency to stagnate.

Interestingly enough, after receiving shiatsu for a few sessions with a focus on the *taiyin* meridians, they will start to shift. It will still usually take more work, but as you strengthen the Spleen and move through some of their phlegm, they will be able to see the possibility of change in their lives. Diet-wise, they probably need to cut down on sugar and dairy. Walking would be an appropriate form of exercise to suggest.

Conclusion

The Korean constitutional types are one paradigm among many! I always utilize it in combination with a more detailed assessment, using the tongue and pulse. I love the imagery used in this system; it's so easy to see parts of others and ourselves in these classic types. Enjoy!

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