

Chi Nei Tsang Abdominal healing – getting to the Core

Article by Kim Knight



"Chi Nei Tsang is one of the most profound therapeutic massage forms found in classical Chinese and Thai Medicine. Chi Nei Tsang practitioners assist those they work with in maintaining their health through tissue and organ massage and wind release techniques. It is essentially a facilitated form of self-care since the highest form of its practice is teaching people to maintain their health and optimize their energy. The final goal is to allow people to set themselves free physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually".¹

What is Chi Nei Tsang?

Chi Nei Tsang (CNT) is the 'physical branch' of the Universal Healing Tao, a practical system of self-

development that enables individuals to complete the harmonious evolution of their physical, mental and spiritual bodies. Chi Nei Tsang translates literally as 'The energy and information of the guts' which when put into practice and phrased more politely becomes 'Internal Organs Energy Transformation'.

CNT works to train our internal organs to work more efficiently. Rather than working on the muscular or skeletal structures, it focuses on the vital organs and fascia, helping to unwind tension from the navel outwards and purify the cells of physical and emotional toxins.

Where does it come from?

Master Mantak Chia, the founder of the Universal Healing Tao, learnt the ancient art of Chi Nei Tsang from a traditional Thai healer called Dr Mui. Master Chia was intrigued by how working on the abdomen seemed to profoundly heal so many ailments, many of them located in other areas of the body.

In the Forward to Gilles Marin's book "Chi Nei Tsang – Healing from Within" Chia describes how "My uncle had a debilitating pain behind his shoulder blade that sent him from doctor to doctor without hope of ever getting better. He was finally told that the only thing conventional medicine could do for him was exploratory surgery without any guarantee of improvement. Friends told me about Dr Mui, a traditional healer who was performing miracles using a form of traditional Chinese and Thai healing massage. He was the last member of a long lineage of healers who had virtually disappeared after the Chinese cultural revolution.

Dr Mui made my uncle lie on his back and started to poke around his navel with one finger for a long time even though my uncle kept repeating to him that it was his shoulder that was in pain. After an hour the old man asked my uncle to stand up and move around. My uncle stood up and an astonished look

¹ Master Mantak Chia, "Chi Nei Tsang II – Chasing the Winds" North Star Trust 2000 p xii

came upon his face: the pain in his shoulder blade was greatly relieved.

I was very impressed and immediately asked him to teach me his technique. He answered that it was not possible, that 'it takes too long to learn' and that he could offer very little instruction other than showing the fact that it works. Nevertheless I begged to assist him with his long line of patients. Day after day for the next three years, until his death, I helped him with domestic chores and patients: I witnessed miraculous healing experiences. I saw countless cases of suffering cured before my eyes. Some people came in wheelchairs to get treatment and would come out pushing their own wheelchairs.

Dr Mui never gave any explanations. Sometimes he took my hand and let me feel a lump or a tension that needed to be worked on. He showed me some of his drawings of the meridian system, the flow of blood and chi, and the nerve pathways. I even went to Chulakongkorn University Hospital in Bangkok to study gross anatomy through dissecting cadavers and only after years of dedicated practice was I able to understand the principles of this form of healing"²

How is Chi Nei Tsang different from massage?

Although to the untrained eye Chi Nei Tsang may look like massage, technically it is not massage at all. As befits its translation, it is 'Internal Organs Energy Transformation'. There are also differences in its delivery:

Firstly, CNT cannot be applied with any muscular force. Because we are working on the abdomen, which is a highly sensitive area, any sense of force felt by the client will result in their body psychologically shutting off with muscular tension. On a psychological level, muscles play a protective role in the body. So, in order to make a connection, on both a physical and emotional level, the practitioner needs to use Chi instead of muscle, and this takes training.

So one of the first lessons in learning CNT is 'No Chi, No Chi Nei Tsang'³. CNT uses principles of Kung-Fu and Tai Chi Chuan and practitioners are trained in Chi Kung, which translates as 'Energy Management'. CNT can therefore be described as "applied Chi Kung". The ability of the practitioner to use Chi rather than muscle means that (a) the client feels *safe*, (which is a

number one prerequisite for healing) and (b) the techniques care *applied safely*.

One of the benefits of the use Chi Kung during treatments is the high level of energetic protection it affords both client and practitioner. Practitioners become very conscious of both their own and their clients' energy flows, and learn how to prevent themselves from absorbing any discordant energies that inevitably start to release during treatments. This also helps to prevent energetic burnout. The bonus of learning these techniques is that they can be applied to any healing modality.

Chi Kung techniques such as Bone Packing and Fusion⁴ also give practitioners the ability to simultaneously refine their own Chi *whilst* giving treatments. Through the principle of entrainment, this also encourages the *client's* body to transform any negative Chi within themselves.

What are the benefits of CNT?

Chi Nei Tsang is used for many different reasons. Firstly it **detoxifies**: CNT manipulations help relieve the body of excess stagnation, improving elimination and stimulating the lymphatic and the circulatory systems. CNT also strengthens the immune system and resistance to disease. In doing so, it augments other health care modalities with optimal results. For example, clients using CNT before and after surgery recover better and faster.

Secondly, CNT helps **restructure and strengthen** the body: Because it addresses the visceral structures and positioning of internal organs, CNT stimulates them to work better and also helps correct the postural problems resulting from visceral imbalances. It releases deep-seated tensions and restores vitality. CNT has been helpful with chronic pains such as back, neck and shoulder pains and problems related to misalignment of the feet, legs and pelvis.

Thirdly, CNT helps people **become more aware** of their emotional life: All of our unprocessed emotional life is stored in our digestive system waiting to be addressed. Poor emotional digestion is also one of the main reasons for ill health. CNT facilitates the unfolding of emotions and the clarification of our emotional life. This makes it possible for us to evolve and grow in the direction of our better self. CNT has also been successfully used in combination with

² Marin Gilles, "Chi Nei Tsang – Healing from Within", North Atlantic Books 1999

³ Gilles Marin during a seminar

⁴ Bone Packing: packing the bones with Chi. Fusion: transforming negative energy into purified Chi which is then used to nourish the organs and tissue.

psychotherapy.

Lastly, CNT teaches us to **know ourselves better**: The CNT philosophy is that we are all responsible for our own health and that true healing can only come from within. Both practitioner and clients learn how to improve breathing, because breath is the bridge between all levels of awareness. Not many people realize that we breathe according to how we *don't* want to feel. By becoming aware of our breath we make a connection to those parts of ourselves that we have been hiding from, integrating them so that we move towards wholeness.

What specific techniques make CNT different from other massage techniques?

Unlike some massage which uses indirect methods to contact the internal organs, CNT massages the vital organs directly. There are a number of techniques which address specific organs, such as the stomach, spleen, pancreas, duodenum, small intestine, large intestine, kidneys, liver and gallbladder.

In addition, CNT works on what are known as 'sick winds' in the body. Remembering that all the elemental forces of nature are contained within our body as well as without, there is a tendency for energy to become stuck. According to Master Chia "Trapped wind is heavy, gray and sick, like a damp room with no ventilation. Using Chi Nei Tsang is akin to opening the right windows to let the stagnant wind go out and assist in re-establishing a healthy flow of vital energy".⁵

It is not within the scope of this article to describe the techniques, as they need to be taught in a proper learning environment to ensure maximum safety. And again, as stated above, the ability to work with Chi is of paramount importance when implementing any of the techniques.

Do I use it alone or can I incorporate it into my current practice?

Chi Nei Tsang can be used by itself or with other modalities. On the one hand it is a stand-alone practice, and an hour and a half session passes surprisingly quickly for both client and practitioner, even without exhausting all the many techniques. However, Chi Nei Tsang has also proven to

complement a multitude of therapies including Reflexology, Osteopathy, Psychology, Reiki, Shiatsu and Swedish Massage.

Why is it important to massage the abdominal area?

According to Taoist philosophy, 'our organs are the source of life and death'. Taoist sages observed that humans often develop energy blockages in their internal organs which then form knots and tangles in the abdomen. These obstructions occur at the center of the body's vital functions and constrict the flow of Chi (energy) or life-force. The negative emotions of fear, anger, anxiety, depression and worry are said to damage the organs the most.

The navel area also plays a key role in the body. It is referred to as 'the original scar' because this is where the fetus first connected to the mother in the womb. Both nutrition and waste travel through the umbilical cord, and due to body-memory toxins have a tendency to accumulate in this area.

The abdomen is also our energetic centre, or core: the Tan Tien or 'Elixir Field'. This is our Chi battery, where we can store energy. If this area is blocked with physical and emotional toxins, it will not be able to do its job properly. Always in search of an outlet, any negative emotions and toxic energies create a perpetual cycle of negativity and stress, and if they cannot find an outlet, will build up in the organs and then move into the abdomen and navel area. The abdomen can process some of this energy, but more often it cannot keep up with the flow. Thus the energetic center of the body becomes congested and ultimately disconnected from the rest of the body.

The internal organs also provide the physical lines of force which hold the body together and give it structure. The vital organs are also said to contain the Spiritual Essences of a human being, which is probably one of the reasons why the ancient Egyptians took so much care in preserving them after death. Of course, physical pain can also be caused by overwork, stress, accidents, surgery, drugs, toxins, poor food, and bad posture.

Whatever the cause, (remembering that energy can never be destroyed - only transformed), by working on the abdomen we can release blocked Chi on both a physical and emotional level. It can then be moved to the Tan Tien for transformation by the abdominal (second) brain or to the colon where we can take what is useful and eliminate the rest.

⁵ Master Mantak Chia, "Chi Nei Tsang II – Chasing the Winds" North Star Trust 2000 p xiii

What conditions can it help?

Before answering this question, it is important to note that Chi Nei Tsang addresses first and foremost the person in the body, rather any condition they may be manifesting. This is because you are everywhere in our body: If your liver is hurting, it is **you** in your liver that is hurting.

Thus it can be said that CNT can help any condition if a person is willing to make a connection with whatever they have been disconnected from in their body. That being said, CNT has been found to be particularly useful in relieving many physical symptoms such as intestinal blockages, fibroids, cysts, knots, lumps, scar tissue, headaches, menstrual cramps, poor blood circulation, back pain, infertility, impotence, frozen shoulder and many other problems.

On a mental / emotional level, one of its key strengths is in switching the body from a sympathetic (stress) to parasympathetic (relaxed) response. Not only does this feel good to the client, it is important to remember that in order for the body to heal, it needs to be in parasympathetic mode. So one of the most beneficial aspects of a Chi Nei Tsang treatment is to bring the client into a place of deep relaxation so that their body's own wisdom can send Chi to wherever it is needed for healing.

Why are there so few practitioners?

According to Gilles Marin, Director of the Chi Nei Tsang Institute USA, when asked why there are so few CNT practitioners, he replied "It's not easy. It takes a lot of discipline. It's not trying to fix anything. A true holistic approach is something not many people do. You have to understand health, life and the forces of nature. It took a lot of training and work on myself. If I improve, my work improves. I do Chi Kung every day. I learn more by practicing year after year. Chi Nei Tsang is applying meditation on a physical level." ⁶

It was only when I read this quote that I realized, even after years of study, how true this statement is. Anyone can learn the techniques taught in a Chi Nei Tsang class, but the ability to deliver superlative treatments really comes from the Chi Kung practices that one does for oneself. This also applies to clients.

⁶ 'Chi Nei Tsang master Gilles Marin palpates my internal organs to promote greater enjoyment of life' by Amy Moon San Francisco Chronicle March 2007

Part of a CNT treatment is to be given Chi Kung homework, such as self abdominal massage, breathing practice and inner organs meditations. The difference in improvement between clients who do and don't do the homework is quite noticeable.

In conclusion, Chi Nei Tsang allows one to release and unwind tensions that are manifesting as pain in many areas of the body. It does this by connecting directly with any unprocessed emotional charges and physical toxins stored in the cells, by working at a fascial level with lines of tension that can be traced back to the navel, and by working to release trapped winds. Simultaneously, through breath awareness and gentle touch, CNT helps one to become aware of what has previously been in the unconscious, paving the way for personal growth, inner transformation and good health.



Kim Knight is a Chi Nei Tsang practitioner and Universal Tao Instructor in Auckland, New Zealand. She is the founder of *Tao Workshops and CNT Retreats NZ* and teaches introductory workshops in New Zealand and Australia. She also hosts Senior Tao Instructors from overseas. Her teacher, Gilles Marin, Director and Founder of the Chi Nei Tsang Institute USA will be in New Zealand September 2008 to teach The Fusion Meditation practice, Chi Nei Tsang and Space and Boundaries / Sexual Chi Kung. See www.taoworkshops.co.nz for more details.