

# LIFE'S NEWS: A NEWSLETTER ABOUT CHINESE MEDICINE FOR WOMEN



SUMMER, 2008 ISSUE 7

LIFE'S NEWS IS A NEWSLETTER FROM LIFE HEALING LIFE & FERTILE GROUND CHINESE MEDICINE CLINICS IN MINNEAPOLIS, MN SPECIALIZING IN WOMEN'S HEALTH & FERTILITY. IT IS WRITTEN BY NICOLE LANGE & KARA YORKHALL. WE HOPE YOU ENJOY IT!

## ENJOYING SUMMER IN THE FERTILE HEARTLAND

by Kara Yorkhall, LAc MAOM

Summer in Minnesota is the time of year when the earth is alive with the fertile pleasures of the land. It is the time when the environment around us is bursting with lush fertility- sending out more seeds than will ever take root and, growing gang-busters over night to turn barren soil into greenery as far as the eye can see. Many locals wait all year for summer to arrive. With the burst of warm temperatures and activity after many months of cooler temperatures and darker days, we are now at the most yang time of year.

It is an important principle in Traditional Chinese Medicine to look to the earth and our natural surroundings to help guide our understanding of our health, our activity, and our decisions about our diet.

While winter is the yin of the yin, a perfect time for extra rest and quiet reflection, summer is the yang of the yang. The environment around us speaks of creativity, movement, activity, growth, light... this is the time of year to follow these principles- if it feels right for your body and your constitution.

In summer, letting the earth's brilliant pallet speak to our senses can help bring us into harmony with our environment and help us to restore internal balance. For some this may mean heading off on rugged camping trips. For others it may be as simple as enjoying a summer's evening in the back yard or on the shores of a nearby lake.

One way to enjoy the bounty of the season is to dip into the culinary pleasures of summer. Winter in Minnesota requires that we consume fresh fruits and vegetables that are shipped from far-off places. Now in the summer months, we have the opportunity to enjoy the delicious produce of this fertile heartland where we live. From farmer's markets, to CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) membership, to visiting farms, to growing our



### IN THIS ISSUE:

ENJOYING SUMMER IN THE FERTILE HEARTLAND  
PG 1 & 2

EXPRESSING EMOTIONS AROUND INFERTILITY  
PG 3

SEASONED COOKING: BEAT SUMMER HEAT PG 4

ASK THE ACUPUNCTURIST CAN ACUPUNCTURE  
HELP ME? PG 4

MINDFULNESS 101 PHYSICALLY MINDFULNESS  
PG 4

own produce in backyard or community gardens, we have many opportunities both to connect to the natural cycles of the earth and to enjoy nutritious and delicious home-grown victuals.

When we eat local produce we learn more about what is in season, and we may discover new tastes, varieties, or combinations to inspire our cooking all year round. Perhaps you have seen oddities like the garlic scape, swiss chard, or Jerusalem Artichoke in your grocer's produce department and opted for the company of more familiar vegetables. Well, now is the time--be adventurous! If not now, when they're fresh, in season, and calling your name, you will certainly be disinclined in winter when they've been stored for 5 months or shipped in from Chile.

**CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)**

If you are unfamiliar with Minnesota's seasonal vegetables and would like to learn more, there are quite a number of resources available. CSA, or Community Supported Agriculture is an agricultural business model that has gained tremendous popularity across the country in the last 15 years or so. In spring or early summer consumers commit to a season-long membership (usually 16-18 weeks) with a given farm. In return for their investment (typically \$400-\$600) they receive a weekly box of produce full of whatever is in season at the time. Farmers usually have one or more drop-off sites in the metro area.

This model allows for genuine personal connections to be made not only between consumers and suppliers--an unusual event in our day and age--but between consumers as well. Because a CSA farm typically serves anywhere from 20-150 families, the drop-offs are often bustling community events, with much fun and cooperative swapping, planning, and sharing. In addition to produce, some farms offer eggs, meat, and/or dairy products as well. For more information about Community Supported Agriculture and a list of local CSA farms visit the land stewardship website at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org)

**Farmer's Markets**

If you would like to enjoy local produce and other local products but would prefer to take on less of a weekly commitment, farmers' markets may be the perfect option for you. There are local farmers' markets in Minneapolis and St. Paul, as well as most surrounding suburbs. Many

markets host live music and offer a variety of food and non-food items, so your produce shopping can easily become a fun outing. Farmers' markets do not always encourage the same connection to the farmer or the growing practices as a CSA, so if you are concerned about finding food that is free of herbicides and pesticides you can inquire at the farm stand. There are some markets that only allow vendors that use sustainable growing practices, others that require that farms be within a certain radius of the market and others that will allow just about anyone to sell any quality of produce-- so getting to know your farmer at the market can also prove valuable depending on what you're looking for. To find the market nearest you go to : <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/minnesotagrown/farmersmarkets.htm>

**Berry Picking**

Yet another option for local summer gustatory pleasure is to travel to the farm directly. This is a perfect time of year to enjoy one of the most popular of summer foods in great abundance-- berries! In addition to being delicious, berries are good for you too. The nutrient content varies with the species, but overall berries are rich in nutrients, and good for nourishing the blood. Most contain vitamins A and C, fiber and potassium are full of antioxidants.

Strawberries are in season right now; and raspberries and blueberries are right around the corner. 'You Pick' Farms enable you to head to the berry patch, basket in hand and pick berries to your hearts content. Most of these farms also have options to buy pre-picked berries as well. Some berry farms also offer other products such as apples, (which will be ready August-October), produce, and speciality items such as pumpkins. The Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture website has a long list of local berry farms. <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/minnesotagrown/berries/berries-quicklist.htm>. The farms listed below are a few of my personal favorites. Be sure to call before you go to make sure they are open and have berries available.

I hope you will have a chance to enjoy the bounty of the Northland this summer in whatever ways most appeal to you. The short summer months are full of opportunities to experience, connect with, and remember Mother Earth in her fullness. Enjoy!

Jacobson's Pine Tree Apple Orchard White Bear Lake, MN <a href="http://www.pinetreeappleorchard.com">www.pinetreeappleorchard.com</a> 651-429-8026 (You-Pick) 651-429-7202 (Pre-Picked)	Now until mid to late July is the time to pick strawberries. Call to see how long the season is lasting this year.
Rush River Produce Maiden Rock, WI <a href="http://www.rushriverproduce.com">www.rushriverproduce.com</a> 715 594-3648 Open Thursdays-Sundays 8-2 \$4.19/lb.	Blueberries available in abundance throughout July 17 into early September. Gooseberries and Red, Black and White Currants are also available from early-July to early-August.
Breezy Hill Certified Organic Orchard and Gardens Maple Lake, MN 320-963-6554	Pick-your-own raspberries and pre-picked raspberries available from about July 20 through the end of September. \$4/pint Also- pears, apples, apple cider, heirloom tomatoes, and grapes are available.

## ACHING HEARTS WHEN IT SEEMS LIKE EVERYONE ELSE IS PREGNANT BUT YOU

by Nicole Lange Lic.Ac. MAOM

How can a person express what it feels like to be filled with sadness at the arrival of a birth announcement, anxious upon opening a baby shower invite or even angry at the sight of yet another pregnant woman? The logical mind says, "I'm happy for them," "what a gift a baby is," "I wish them the best," but mixed with those logical thoughts come the gut feelings too - all the heartache, sadness, frustration and fears:

"Why not me?"  
"I would have been due this month."  
"This isn't fair!"

When you want to be a parent more than anything else, it is difficult not to compare your situation with others and think these thoughts. In fact, these emotions are just as logical as the others given the reality of fertility struggles. Once more, having one set of thoughts doesn't negate or preclude the others or make you a better (or worse) person.



Chinese medicine views emotional expression and realistic emotions as an important part of being balanced, healthy and fertile. By acknowledging and expressing your emotions you don't use up as much energy trying to constantly control them AND your body doesn't need to clench and be as rigid - both healthy shifts towards feeling more balanced! Emotional expression means outwardly expressing your emotions when reality warrants them. On the other hand, emotions that are excessive, prolonged or constrained (in relationship to the reality of the situation) are unhealthy.

And the reality is... It makes sense that you would feel happy for the person AND sad, frustrated, or angry you aren't in their shoes.

### Outward Expression

*Direct Communication:* Sometimes it makes sense to express your emotions directly to the person to whom they relate. If you are struggling with whether or not to go visit a friend and their newborn or go to a baby shower, sometimes a handwritten note or personal call to explain your mixed emotions or need to steer clear for a while is helpful. Direct communication can help you express yourself and help the other person appreciate your point of view and know it isn't personal.

When direct communication doesn't feel right, it is still important to outwardly express your emotions in some other form. In fact, one study showed that the act of naming one's emotions out loud changes the brain activity and decrease distress from a brain function perspective (for an interesting article on this study see: <http://www.apa.org/monitor/oct06/talking.html>)

*Indirect Communication:* expressing your emotions in a less direct context can keep you more holistically balanced and less distressed too. Try some of these options:

*Out Loud:* Talk therapy, talking to your significant other, a compassionate friend, even going for a walk and talking out loud to yourself all are healthy ways to outwardly express.

*Written Word:* Journal, write a letter (even if you don't intend to give it to the person, it's to God, your unborn baby, etc.), write a poem, rant (write down something that upsets you on the top of a page and then write everything that it brings up). Even if you shred it, recycle it or otherwise destroy it, the act of getting it out is the main idea!

*Creative Acts:* if speaking or writing is a little too literal, try expressing your emotions in some other creative way. Scrapbook, make a collage, paint, play music or dance. The possibilities are endless.

*Explore the reality and other emotions:* It's the old "glass half empty, glass half full" adage. In addition to exploring your immediate feelings on the situation it is also helpful to explore the reality of the situation. While your gut might say, "everyone around me is pregnant and this isn't fair!" Another way of looking at it might be, "Wow, I'm surrounded by fertility and I'm going to open myself up to it." Again, you don't have to be 100% pollyanna (nor should you strive to be), but at least explore the other options and take a moment to see if you can find another perspective in the situation.

*Author's Note:*

### Upset About Something Else?

The suggestions in this article are useful for ANY emotional situation. Any time you are stressed, anxious, sad, angry or fearful try emotional expression and see what a difference it makes in how upset you feel!

## ASK AN ACUPUNCTURIST

If you have a question you'd like answered please email it to [nicole@lifehealinglife.com](mailto:nicole@lifehealinglife.com)



Dear Nicole,  
How do I know if acupuncture will help me?

I would start by first making the basic distinction of what Chinese medicine is best at. In my mind it is an especially good fit for 1) chronic issues 2) pain 3) subclinical issues (where there is something wrong, but western medicine can't figure out what or doesn't have a treatment for it 4) complicated issues (often emotional and physical) all stemming from one source (ie. side effects from cancer treatments, PTSS etc.). Chinese medicine is not particularly good at life-threatening issues that need immediate intervention, but can be helpful after the acute phase is addressed and further healing is needed.

Second, I would call several acupuncturists and ask their professional opinion on your case. Compare and contrast what they say, go with the practitioner who makes the most sense and speaks to your concerns/needs directly.

Lastly, give it a try! Acupuncture is helpful for many conditions. You should notice subtle improvements showing you are on the right path within 2-3 treatments for most concerns and make more significant progress in acute complaints. If you aren't getting ANY results you might want to talk to your practitioner, try another practitioner or try something else.

### Mindfulness 101: In the Moment

This simple sensory exercise is an easy mindfulness technique that will bring you back to the moment. Try it next time your mind is racing and see how your body responds!



Take a moment and focus on 5, 10, 15, even 20 things you can physically feel right now... the temperature of the air you breathe, your clothes on your skin, your feet on the ground, your tongue in your mouth, a breeze ... keep going ...

## SEASONED COOKING: SUMMER FOOD THERAPY 101

*In traditional Chinese food therapy, foods are thought to be inherently warm, neutral, or cool. These warming and cooling properties are independent from the actual temperature the food is served. Summer food therapy focuses on increasing cooling foods to offset the extra heat outside.*

Try these naturally cooling foods to tame summer heat:

watermelon, cucumber, celery, bean sprouts, mint, citrus, cilantro, spinach, lettuce, asparagus, zucchini, apple, pear, tofu, soy and mung beans



Limit foods that actually add to the heat: chillies, cinnamon, ginger, black pepper, red meat.

*Try this drink next time you are outside for an afternoon:*

Blend some watermelon into juice (keep or skim off the pulp depending on your preference) Add some fresh lime juice, a splash of sparkling water, some crushed mint (or cilantro) and enjoy!

If you have received this newsletter through a friend and would like to be added to the mailing list or would like more information on treatments or classes please contact Nicole Lange or Kara Yorkhall. The information in this newsletter is based on classical Chinese medical theory and was written by board certified, licensed acupuncturists. It is intended for use as general information and should not replace individual care or be used in place of a medical diagnosis or specific treatment (by an acupuncturist or western medical doctor). Stock Photo Credits: istockphoto & microsoft clipart

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“True life is lived when tiny changes occur.”

-Leo Tolstoy