

Remembering Wellness with TFH Metaphors

BY MATTHEW THIE

In TFH we use muscle tests to get a sense of the energy flow in the meridians. We develop goals, assess the flow of energy, use various reflexes to balance energy and then reassess how we feel. Our purpose is to increase awareness of all of the aspects of our whole Soul and to facilitate the flow of energy and communication between all of the cells, organs and organ systems, between the conscious mind, the unconscious, our intuition, and our connection to Chi, life energy, or God.

Our premise is that a sufficient flow of information/energy will result in an emotional, physical, mental and spiritual equilibrium that will allow us to feel whole, to do the things that are most important to us, and to find meaning in life. Creative use of metaphors can enhance our assessment of our own wellness in the context of our life, help balance our energies towards our goals and help us discover new passions and purposes that are right for us. Awareness is the key aspect of the process. We may feel a lot better physically, mentally and emotionally after a balancing, but the true power of TFH is in developing our awareness of the things that we really want from life and the things that block our energy to accomplish our goals.

The **Five Element Metaphors**, the **Organ Function** metaphors and metaphors derived from the **test motions/muscle functions** offer a rich resource for exploring the meanings of our experiences, our feelings, our imbalances and our goals. Using the metaphors helps us to verbalize or at least think about the many possible aspects of our goals and the

related imbalances. When we think about a metaphor related to an imbalance indicated by a muscle test, we often have that “Aha!” moment of insight. This may be a highly transcendent, sudden, miraculous moment of enlightenment, like those attained in prayer or meditation, and it may also be a step-by-step process of development through small, everyday insights as we deal with our problems, our life’s work, and seek our Telos, the purpose in life we were born to fulfill.

The mental exercise of contemplating the metaphor increases parallel processing in diverse areas of the brain and the whole Soul, bringing more of our innate resources to bear in balancing our energies for our unique purposes. Just thinking or talking about the metaphor often balances the energy in all of the meridians as indicated by muscle testing. But thinking about the metaphors also provides all kinds of insights and new perspectives for our life experience.

When we use the word “metaphor”, we use it in its broadest sense. We suggest symbolic pictures or actions, figurative or literal similarities, parallels, Corollaries etc. We are looking for any imagery that vividly illustrates or represents some significant aspect of your life. This is largely a creative/associative activity. It may help give you specific conscious insight into your personal life issues, or it may simply help to “get the juices flowing”. The metaphors which correspond to the meridian or muscle imbalance may not apply for your particular goal. They are presented as possibly meaningful, but are

not necessarily applicable at a particular moment for a particular person. It is for the person seeking help to decide if the metaphor makes sense to them, or helps them have meaning in their lives.

See if any of the metaphors fit your life now, or might relate to some event in the past, or are symbolic of your direction for the future. Start with the basic metaphor and see what it suggests to you. The specific explanations of the metaphors and questions provided are merely examples to “prime the pump”. If the suggested metaphor fits, great. If another idea jumps to mind, consider that to be more significant. If the metaphor doesn’t fit, and nothing comes to mind, then you might just move on. Or perhaps there is a particular emotion you are feeling when you think of the metaphor. Try to verbalize it, to express it, or simply to be aware of it.

When we leave ourselves open to imagination, free association and non sequitur responses to the metaphors, we often find strong emotions bubbling up. These may be emotions which have been dismissed or diverted during the day, or repressed over long periods of time. Emotions have a major physical component, and if we can find a safe space to express our emotions, we often find it a great physical relief. Be sure that the authority remains with the person being balanced so that if emotions become overwhelming, they can choose to stop and “think of fresh bread” or some other neutral, calming image.

THE FIVE ELEMENT METAPHORS

In TFH we assume that the 5000-year-old Chinese Five Element metaphors are pictorial or symbolic and thus can have many interpretations. The eleven aspects of each of the elements will be best understood if the words are thought of as pictures that are brought to mind when the words are spoken. The Chinese word-picture symbol for “element”, “ching”, might more accurately be translated as “phase”. The original pictograph means to walk, to move. It suggests action, process and change. Thus, the Five Elements represent the simultaneous

processes which are always occurring and counterbalancing each other.

In TFH, when we are assessing energy, we CAN be analytical, find a dominant imbalance and pinpoint the one most logical place to start balancing, often using only one correction and finding all of the muscles subsequently facilitated. We might be able to prioritize a single key metaphor and balance the energy with that one idea. Certainly there are times when this kind of efficiency is precisely what we want, but when we are remembering Wellness, we want to be aware of as many factors as possible. At any time we may have more than one dominant imbalance and for each different issue or goal we usually see a different pattern of imbalances. Layering of information gives us a whole picture of person assembled within the context of a whole life.

In TFH we use ten traditional metaphors associated with each of the Five Elements, which are easily found elsewhere, and are included in the TFH CD-ROM and the forthcoming book **Remembering Wellness**. We have integrated an 11th metaphor cycle from the study of the phases of cognitive and philosophical development which we call the Faith/Worldview Metaphor Cycle. The phases of human development of beliefs and world-views correspond to a linear model of mental capacity for certain modes of thinking (cognitive development) as well as progression through stages of spiritual or philosophical concepts. However, we can redefine this model for our use as not merely a hierarchical structure of increasingly “better” beliefs. There is a tendency for people to develop along this linear progression of beliefs corresponding to cognitive development and spiritual enlightenment, yet each individual may cycle through these perspectives throughout their life and in relation to different goals or issues.

FAITH/WORLDVIEW METAPHOR CYCLE

Each of us uses a variety of different models of reality to make sense of our experience, to make decisions, to improve performance and have more

personal bests. We use the word Faith in this context to refer to the process by which we actively construct our personal world-view, the set of beliefs which allow each of us to have meaning in our lived lives and make conscious decisions. Faith is the active spiritual element in our walk of consciously striving to discover and be aware of the truest, deepest, most powerful meaning in our lives and to develop our belief, actions, and way of being to be in harmony with these truths. Our beliefs/worldview and Faith are the fundamental forces which shape our experience and perception, our priorities and passions in life.

THE ORGAN FUNCTION METAPHORS

In traditional Chinese philosophy, Organs are seen as metaphors, symbolic representations of FUNCTIONS. Organ Functions take place in the whole person and in every cell. Each cell in the human being has all the functions of the Five Elements and their associated Organ Functions. Physical malfunction of a specific organ may not correspond to energy imbalance of the Organ Function in the whole Soul. Likewise, energy imbalance of an Organ Function may not be reflected in the physical organ. If you are aware of a diagnosed pathology of an organ or any kind of pathology, be sure to consult a professional who is qualified to work within the biomedical model of diagnosis and medical treatment. You can use TFH to supplement medical treatment by contemplating what an ailment means in your life, or what the scientific facts symbolize in metaphorical terms. Think of the Organ Metaphor not in terms of any discrete physical organ, but in terms of the associated Function as a symbol for what is happening in your life.

MUSCLE METAPHORS

Try to become aware of the specific muscle *as you perform the range of motion*. Once you have a conscious and kinetic sense of the range of motion, try to be aware of any thoughts or feelings which come to mind. Think of what kind of action the muscle test or the muscle function suggests. What

might the activity symbolize in your life? Does anything “pop into your head”? Refer to the provided muscle metaphor question as an example. The metaphors are mostly used during the energy balancing and might also be referred to when discussing the outcome of the balancing, but after the balancing, our focus is on the specific meanings for the individual person, rather than the metaphors per se. This allows the person being helped to tell his or her story and discover where their passions are and where they are wounded, damaged or in denial.

Learning to use metaphors effectively involves practice of listening and other communication skills. This may be interpersonal communication, or communication with ourselves— self-awareness. The person seeking help will often have conscious insights related to the metaphors, but also reveal things they might not be aware of through body language, tone of voice, etc. The person acting as helper has an important role in observing responses that the individual may not perceive, may be blind to, or may be in denial about. However, we maintain the self-responsibility model. The helper only offers their observations as possibilities. It is up to the individual to derive his or her meaning.

TOUCH FOR HEALTH METAPHORS

The following is a brief example of metaphors and questions that can be derived from the **Faith/Worldview Metaphor Cycle**, the **Organ Function Metaphors**, and the **Muscle Metaphors** of the basic 14 Muscles.

Central Meridian

The central meridian is where the used energy is stored prior to being released with the breath on exhaling. All the other meridians have connections with it for releasing the excess and/or used energy.

Muscle: SUPRASPINATUS

This small muscle in the shoulder helps to lift the arm in a forward. It is a small muscle and a short meridian. The range of motion is also subtle. Think of the muscle motion as one of shifting your posture

to let go of things that once served you, but can now be released. **Feel this small muscle contracting on top of the shoulder under the neck muscle (under the upper trapezius). The supraspinatus is a deep muscle, so this is a subtle feeling. If you feel a muscle contracting or straining elsewhere consider the supraspinatus inhibited.**

What do you need to let go of, large or small, that worked for you in the past but is not useful now?

Governing Meridian

The Governing meridian is connected with all the other meridians including the Central/Conception vessel. It is a storage vessel for excess/used energy before this energy is released with the breath.

Muscle: TERES MAJOR

This is a small muscle of the back of the shoulder, when it isn't working at its optimum (when it's not facilitated /strong) the shoulders tend to slump forward as if you were carrying a weight or heavy burden. **Feel this small muscle contracting between the top of your arm and the bottom of the shoulder blade.**

What burden or weight needs to be removed from your life?

Earth Element

Faith/Worldview Metaphor: Conventional/ Synthetic Faith relates to **Late Adolescence and Early Adulthood**. This is a transitional phase characterized by disillusionment with literalism and blind acceptance of rules. We increase our abilities of abstract thinking and reflection upon the self and one's own actions from multiple/others' perspectives.

Are you placing too little or too much reliance on the values of your peer group, community or culture and seeing yourself through the eyes of others?

Stomach Meridian

The Stomach Function involves receiving potential nutrients and beginning the digestive functions. Digestion begins in the brain and the Stomach Function has a strong mental/emotional component as well as a dietary component. Sometimes we don't see what we're taking in (watch what we eat), or we swallow something without chewing, or without realizing that it's poison.

Are you receiving the proper resources to fulfill your purposes? What nutrient, emotion, or idea are you digesting?

Muscle: PECTORALIS MAJOR CLAVICULAR

This chest muscle helps bend and turn the arm at the shoulder. Contracting this muscle also elevates and opens the chest. **Feel this muscle contracting at the top of your chest between the shoulder and the area below the collarbone.**

In relation to your goal, do you need to hold your chest up and be more proud or are you too proud?

Spleen Meridian

While the stomach receives raw materials, the spleen functions to transform them into usable forms and to distribute them. It is a moment in the cycle of assimilating what is appropriate and identifying toxic or harmful elements to be eliminated.

How are you at breaking down problems into digestible parts? Are you able to identify and eliminate toxic influences in your life?

Muscle: LATISSIMUS DORSI

This muscle extends from the back from the hip to the spine and to the shoulder and is involved in all the movements of the arm across the front of the body. When it is out of balance posture is effected from the shoulders to the pelvis. **Feel this muscle contracting at the side of the back when the elbow is held tightly against the body, arm straight, with the thumb pointing to the back.**

Are you taking swings, or striking at things, physically, mentally, spiritually? Or are you inhibited from making large gestures in trying to reach your goals?

Metal Element

Faith/Worldview Metaphor: Responsible Faith relates to **Adulthood**. In this phase all of the “parts” of our life are integrated to form a whole system. We begin to assume personal responsibility for our own personal life-style, beliefs, and attitudes. We work to construct an individual, rational, functional worldview. Symbols are considered as conceptual/metaphorical, rather than having singular, literal, fixed meaning. Paradoxes, polarities, and complexity are a challenge at this stage as we balance our personal priorities and seek to distinguish relative and absolute truths.

Do you feel that you can take personal responsibility for your beliefs and your actions, or do you feel that your life is shaped by the roles you play for others and the meaning you have in the life of others?

Lung Meridian

While we may not go without water for more than a few days, or without food for more than a week or two, *we can't last without air for more than three minutes*. The lungs are the chief organs of respiration and exchange of gases, mainly oxygen and carbon dioxide, serving both as a primary and essential source of life energy as well as an important channel of elimination. The lungs also supply the air for speaking and making other vocal sounds. In addition to drawing in air (oxygen), the Lung Meridian Function is said to draw in or release Chi, and regulate the status of chi in the whole Soul.

Can you breath/speak or express yourself easily? Do you have a free flow of fresh air and/or inspiration to nourish the various functions of your life, or are you feeling constricted or inhibited?

Muscle: ANTERIOR SERRATUS

This large strong muscle draws the shoulder forward and raises the ribs. Weakness will make it difficult to push things forward with the arms straight. It needs to be functioning fully for ideal breathing and activities that require good breath control. Bilateral weakness is sometimes associated with neck pain, and rotating the head and neck may loosen and relieve this pain. Feel this muscle contract on the side of the chest when you hold your arm in front of you and then reach forward with power as if you were going to punch.

Do you need to push, or punch, or are you pushing so hard that you're giving yourself a pain in the neck, literally or figuratively?

Large Intestine Meridian

The Large Intestine Function is to absorb the last useful products of digestion and store the waste materials until they can be eliminated. Approximately 80% of the material entering the large intestines is absorbed, but it is mostly water.

Do you retain things you can no longer use in your life or are you letting too much go?

Muscle: FASCIA LATA

This very long muscle has its bulk on the pelvis and then a very thin band of tissue runs down the side of the leg to just below the knee. It helps flex or bend the thigh, draw the thigh away from the body sideways, and keep it turned in. It helps to align the planting of the foot and contributes to the forward thrust in walking or running. Feel this muscle at the top and side of your pelvis and on the side of your leg when you turn your foot inward.

Do you feel that you have power and thrust in your walk (or race) of life? Can you open your legs and still retain power/control?

The Water Element

Faith/Worldview Metaphor: Reintegrative, Universalizing Faith is related to **Late Maturity and Death**. In this phase, we rehabilitate all of the aspects of ourselves that have been left undeveloped, ignored, evaded, or denied. Paradoxes and Polar opposites are not seen as puzzles to be solved, but mysteries to be accepted and appreciated. We sense a transcendent value of faith and community among all humanity and a fellowship among all beings. We tend to sacrifice the personal, individual life for the benefit of all.

Is this a time for you to let go of concern for personal success, failure, contradiction, or injustice and simply concentrate on the greater good, or do you need to be proactive in your own interests?

Bladder Meridian

The Bladder Function is to store waste liquid before elimination, not only in the urinary bladder but also in all of the cells and throughout the Soul. In the Chinese system, the Bladder is said to be the storehouse of emotions, and so the Bladder Function is involved in the water balance/emotional balance in the whole Soul.

Are you hydrated, lubricated and feeling a free flow of energy? What emotion do you need to let flow?

Muscle: PERONEUS

The muscles making up the Peroneal group are associated with maintaining foot and ankle balance. When they are inhibited, they can effect the entire posture. Feel this group of muscles between the foot and the outer side of the calf when the lateral side of the foot is elevated .

How are you mis-stepping? Are you using too much caution, pussyfooting around?

Kidney Meridian

The Kidney Meridian Function is involved in controlling the volume, composition, and pressure of fluids in all the cells as well the whole Soul and is important in growth, development and reproductive functions. Blood flows through the kidneys at its highest pressure, toxins are filtered out, and nourishing materials are directed to where they are needed. Water is symbolic of mystery, emotion and spirit. Kidney Meridian Function is involved in the balance of these aspects of life. In Chinese medicine the Kidney is also said to be a storehouse of life force and has a strong spiritual aspect.

Where are you feeling pressure in your life, literally or figuratively? Do you feel that you have sufficient vitality for continued growth and development, or are you operating on reserve energy and just surviving?

Muscle: PSOAS

This muscle both flexes the thigh on the trunk and the trunk on the thigh, thus it has paradoxical origins and insertions depending on the action in which it is used. This muscle is used both in sitting up motions and kicking to the side, or sidestepping motions. Feel this muscle contracting between the inside lateral portion of all the lumbar vertebrae and the inner portion of the upper thigh at the groin. The Quadriceps muscle is a synergistic muscle and if it is painful or felt strongly contracting in the test position use caution and consider this an indicator of a inhibition of the Psoas.

What does the motion of kicking suggest to you? Is there any paradoxical aspect to your goal?

The Wood Element

Faith/Worldview Metaphor: Intuitive-Projective Faith involves the **Formistic Implicit** process where structure and function are seen to exist separately. Processes and systems are essentially invisible and

mysterious. This corresponds to the **pre-faith** stage of **Infancy** and the **Intuitive** stage of **Early Childhood**. We have difficulty seeing cause and effect at this stage and are given to “magical thinking”. **IMAGINATION**, dream and vision imagery is essential for creating meaning at this stage. We see our own perspective as the only one that exists and assume everyone else sees things in exactly the same way that we do.

Do you need to use your intuition, creative vision and dream imagery to find new meanings, or are you dwelling in your own personal dream-world, ignoring cause and effect, assuming that what seems right to you will be accepted by others?

Gall Bladder Meridian

The gall bladder is a small organ that stores and concentrates the bile from the liver, which aids in digestion, particularly of fats.

How are you coping with the “heavy” aspects of your life? Do you have too much “bile” or bitterness?

Muscle: ANTERIOR DELTOID

This muscle, along with the coracobrachialis, is used in flexing the shoulder with the elbow bent, as in combing the hair. Inhibition in this muscle is sometimes associated with headaches related to toxicity from dietary indiscretions or eating fatty foods. Feel this muscle on the front of the shoulder nearest the body and from the collar bone when the hand is lifted about twenty degrees from the thigh with the palm down.

Do you pay too much or too little attention to the details of grooming, or taking care of yourself? Do you do things that result in headache, figuratively or literally?

Liver Meridian

The liver has more known functions than any other organ. Each cell has more programmed instructions than the most sophisticated computer program, and the Liver Meridian may activate a large number of the absorption and detoxification instructions. The liver is said to store blood while the body is at rest, and also to exert particular influence over the lower abdomen, and so is considered of central importance in women’s menstrual cycle and sexuality. Liver Meridian Function is involved in digestion, metabolism, storage and distribution of nourishment, filtration, detoxification, and immune function.

How are you handling your multiple responsibilities? Are you overwhelmed/toxic, or do you need to absorb more, literally or figuratively?

Muscle: PECTORALIS MAJOR STERNAL

This muscle is responsible for moving the arm in, turning and drawing it forward. The test motion suggests opening up, letting go, or throwing your hands up in surrender. Feel this muscle of the chest contract between the breast bone and the top of the arm when the extended arm is brought down towards the center of the body with the thumb pointed down.

Are you open to too many things and becoming overwhelmed/toxic, or do you need to absorb more, literally or figuratively?

The Fire Element

Faith/Worldview Metaphor: Literal/Mythic Faith is related to **Childhood** or “**School Years**”. This phase is characterized by the **Mechanistic, Circular Causality** where linear thinking sees all effects as directly related to causes that precede them. In this stage we are given to literal interpretation of moral

rules and attitudes and favor a singularity of meaning, in which fact is distinguished from and valued over fantasy. There is a focus on Reciprocity and a tendency to Perfectionism.

Are you hemmed in by a narrow, literal interpretation of rules, morals or beliefs or could you benefit from being conscious of conventions and not always having to reinvent the wheel or go it alone? Do you expect precise reciprocity in your dealings with others?

Heart Meridian

The Heart Function involves the cycling of the blood as well as electrical communication with the rest of the cells of the whole Soul. The heart generates 5000 times more powerful electrical messages throughout the Soul than the brain. In the Chinese belief system, the heart is also strongly associated with mental processes, while in the West we have the traditional metaphor of the heart as an emotional center and a center of wisdom.

How is your circulation and communication within your Soul, or in your daily activities, literally or figuratively? Is there any conflict between your logical thinking, intuition, wisdom or emotional feelings?

Muscle: SUBSCAPULARIS

This muscle functions to hold the shoulder blade in place. It is *hidden* behind the shoulder blade, and so cannot be observed or felt by another person, except by secondary inference. Feel this muscle contracting under the shoulder blade when the arm is held at ninety degrees from the side of the body and the forearm is held to form a right angle and pulled posterior to feel the contraction of the muscle.

Do you feel that you have sufficient privacy, or are you too private, hiding too much?

Small Intestine Meridian

The Small Intestine Function is primarily absorption of nutritious substances and the separation of waste material. These same functions take place on the cellular level, and in the Soul as a whole.

Are you having trouble digesting or absorbing things in your life that are meant to be nourishing, literally or figuratively?

Muscle: QUADRICEPS

This muscle straightens the knee and flexes the thigh. This muscle is also associated with the function of the jejunum and ileum, which are the last 2/3 of the small intestine, and weakness in this muscle may correspond with digestive problems. Feel this muscle in the front of your thigh when you bend your thigh at the hip as you would in taking a step up and keeping your foot in front, ahead of your knee.

What do you need to step up to or are you taking steps that are too large? Are you having trouble digesting or absorbing things in your life that are meant to be nourishing, literally or figuratively?

Circulation Sex Meridian

The many functions of the Circulation/Sex Meridian are intimately associated with the hormones and chemical messengers related to all reproduction whether it be appropriate balance in cell production or sexual procreation.

Do you feel that you have sufficient circulation of blood, warmth, nutrition or sexual energy? What are you doing to see that your legacy will be passed on in your family, work, play, spiritual community?

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MetaphorsMuscle: GLUTEUS MEDIUS

The Gluteus Medius is used to pull the thigh out and rotate the leg. If this muscle is weak, there may be a corresponding high shoulder or hip. There may be a tendency to limp, or the legs may bow out. The test motion involves holding the legs apart. Feel this muscle at the side and back of the pelvis, it contracts when you lift your foot off the floor to prevent tripping over little things and when you raise your leg to the side.

What little things are your tripping over, or bumping into? Do you have any difficulty holding your legs open, literally or figuratively?

Triple Warmer Meridian

The Triple Warmer is a somewhat mysterious. It is said to have function, but no form, or it is alternatively defined as having its functions through the **interactions** of three different groups of organs found in the thoracic, upper and lower abdominal areas. The functions of the Triple Warmer take the form of three “heats”, the heat of metabolism and maintaining body heat, the heat of the “fight or flight” heat of life passions.

What gets you hot, physically, mentally, spiritually or emotionally? What are you running from? What are you fighting? Do you feel that you have the fire, the passion, to reach your goals?

Muscle: TERES MINOR

This shoulder muscle rotates the arm and forearm and can be involved in wrist and elbow problems. The action of the muscle test suggests opening the arms or gathering things in. This muscle is associated with the 3 “heats” of the triple warmer meridian, particularly the heat of metabolism. Feel this small muscle between the lower tip of the shoulder blade and the back of the humerus head/top of the arm, when the forearm is bent about 100 degrees at the elbow and the hand is open facing away from the body and rotated externally.

Do you need to be more open, to receive or are you too open, trying to take in too much? Are you having difficulty assimilating or making efficient use of the nourishment in your life, literally or figuratively?