

### ***A Note to the Reader...***

First and foremost I want to show my deepest appreciation that you even opened my book to see what I have to say. It is an honor.

Secondly, I want to remind you that we are all humans: Flawed beings living in a world that has become ever more hyper-focused on those flaws. The human journey is hard. One minute we think we have everything figured out and the next minute we say the wrong thing, trust the wrong person, make the wrong decision, or any number of things. It's crazy how fast our world can seem to crash. I used to believe that there is no right and wrong; only decisions and outcomes, but in today's world it has become understood that there truly are certain things that are wrong and no one should ever do to another living being. What constitutes these wrongs though is in the eye of the beholder, making the lines ever increasingly blurred. When you lay down to sleep at night, if you are able to put your stamp on the day by saying that you tried your best and acted purely out of kindness and good intention, that's the best you can hope for. It's why it's important to remember that no matter what happens today, the sun is going to come up tomorrow and life will move on. Tomorrow CAN be a better day.

If you are reading this book, you probably have some sort of deep introspection into your own body, emotions, or spirit that you are trying to heal or fix. Self-reflection is hard and facing your flaws is one of the toughest things we can do as humans; but it almost always leads to a life that is happier and more peaceful. I commend you for being brave enough to do so.

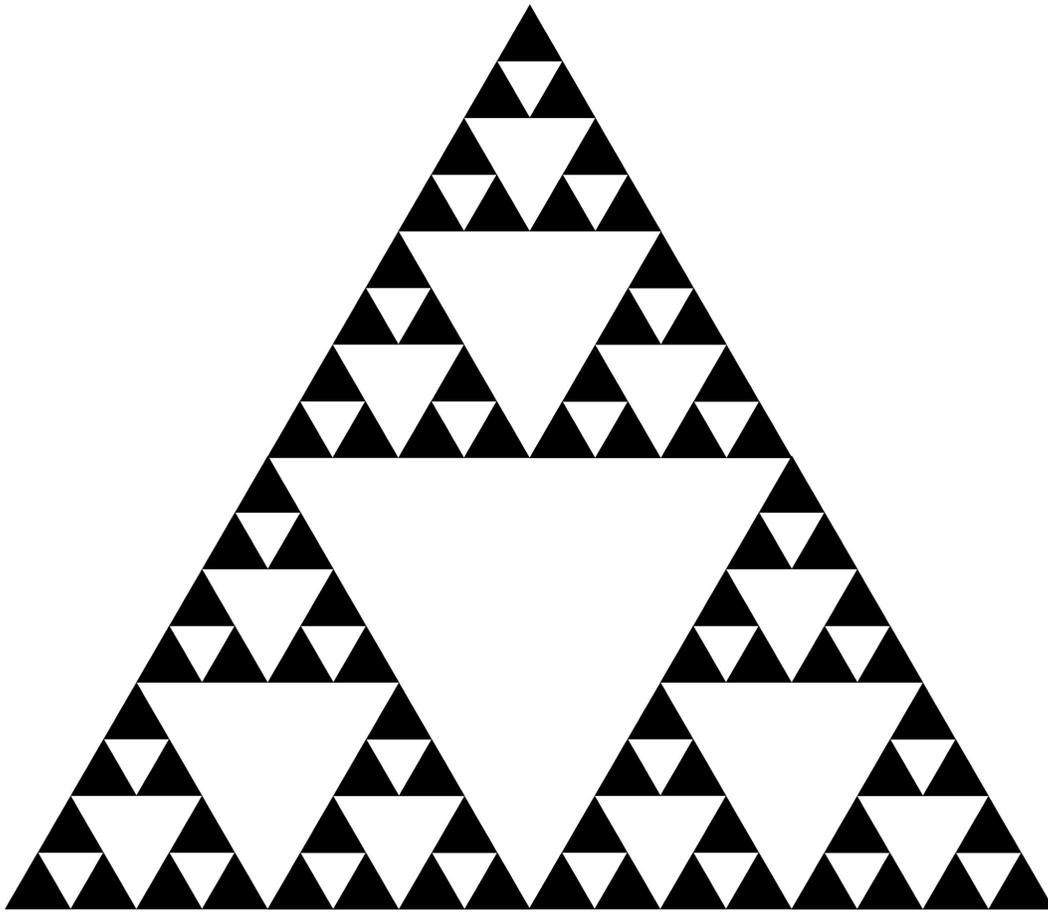
It should be clear that while I talk a lot about acupuncture in this book, I in no way speak for anyone else but myself. If I use someone else's words, I cite them. If I use an idea someone said, the words written are my own and do not represent them. Do not be surprised if you speak to an acupuncturist or really anybody else and find that they have a different opinion than what I write in this book.

Lastly, I want to give you a big reminder that while I talk about health, acupuncture, energy work, and many types of complementary medicine in this book, none of it is to be taken as personal medical advice.

**Who the book is intended for ...** In my experience as a practitioner, I've found the patients who fare best are the ones with the most vested interest in their health. The ones who take the time to understand the "why" behind my treatments.

Because of that, I've written this book not just for complementary medical professionals, but for anyone who has an interest in understanding acupuncture and energy medicine philosophy, using it to strengthen their health and wellbeing. Admittedly, that made creating this book much more difficult, because writing for a practitioner of any kind is not the same as writing for someone who doesn't work in the health field. I've done my best to make the content understandable for the non-practitioner who simply wants to know more about their health and the subject of acupuncture and energy medicine, while also giving practitioners and members of the complementary medical field material to enhance their practices. In the back of this book, I've provided a full glossary for terms specific to acupuncture and anatomy and may not be known by non-professionals.

**Fractals ...** Fractals are everywhere in nature and make seemingly complex patterns simple. For example in the book *The Nature Fix*, author Florence Williams has this nice tidbit: "In addition to the lungs, capillaries, and neurons, another human system is branched into fractals: the movement of the eye's retina" (Williams, 2017, p. 116).



What the author is referencing here is how the complexity in these systems is actually very organized. In the lungs, each part has the same structure as it gets smaller and smaller. This way, the code for the structure is the same, and it can simply be scaled. Because the human body has so many fractals, and because nature also has fractals everywhere, a major part of my life philosophy is based around them. In this way, I feel like I'm simplifying life and making it easier to understand the world and other people. Due to this belief, the philosophy of this book is that fractals make the complex world more easily understood and that acupuncture and the health of the mind/body/spirit wouldn't be any different. I will delve deeper into fractals in Chapter 1.

***A story to show the Physical/Emotional/Energetic connection ...***

I could hear the worry in the woman's voice. Over the phone, she told me her 11-year-old daughter Shira was experiencing nausea and terrible headaches in the morning, and was miserable at school. The pain was turning Shira into a girl she didn't recognize; where was her bubbly, art-loving daughter? Shira had seen a chiropractor on a regular six-week basis for years, but these new symptoms hadn't yet been explained.

When Shira walked into my office, she acted like most kids do when I first treat them: She avoided eye contact and barely spoke, answering my questions with as few words as possible. Shira also sported a defensive posture, holding her arm across her belly.

I started asking Shira a few questions. How often were the headaches and nausea occurring? (Not every day, but more often than not.) What time of day? (Only in the morning.) How strong were they? (Moderate to severe.) Her answers led me to a pressing question: How was school going? This revealed a major source of stress – Shira was being bullied at school by another girl. It was a critical juncture where her true stress had been brought to the surface and was ready for shifting. This is like the difference between telling a friend everything's fine and actually talking about the things that are causing you stress. Now that she was primed for some change, I asked her to hop onto my table.

During a typical appointment in my practice, I perform both physical work and energetic work in order to balance patients in a holistic way. With Shira sitting on my table, I started the physical aspect of my treatment by performing a basic range of motion assessment. Shira's neck, while able to go through the whole range of motion, felt very tight in certain spots. I began treatment on these tight spots in her musculature and fascial tissue (using acupressure since Shira, like most kids, refused needles). I rechecked her neck after performing the acupressure and it released beautifully. Shira agreed that her neck felt looser. She also became more responsive to my questions, which is how I found out that her favorite class in school was art.

With her neck feeling balanced, we started the energetic portion of the treatment. I had Shira lay down on the table, face up, and gently pulled on her legs to see where the fascial tissue was being restricted. (This is my personally developed unique form of assessment to determine energetic imbalances.) The fascial web is intricate and alive, and I could feel the subtle stresses

and tension spots by engaging and interacting with it. By gently pulling on Shira's legs, the points I felt directed me to use the External Dragons (EDs) treatment, a classic acupuncture treatment. The EDs treatment typically uses seven needles placed in the body in a tuning fork pattern to put the qi of the Urinary Bladder (which monitors the physical safety and vigilance of self and others) back in balance. In Shira's case, instead of needles, I did about one minute of acupressure on each of the seven acupoints in the protocol. As she lay still on the table with her mom sitting near her, I left the room.

When I came back in after about 10 minutes (kids don't like to lie still for very long), the girl who got off my table was not the same girl who entered my office. Shira was bubbly and happy, with a big grin on her face. It was the type of shift that makes being an acupuncturist so rewarding for me. Shira's mom and I gave her a little pep talk about letting the bully's words go in one ear and out the other, and how her bully was most likely using her words because she was sad or angry on the inside.

Shira wasn't completely cured of her symptoms after one visit. There were other sources of stress in her life, and it took two additional visits to discover those episodes and treat her pain and stress. A month after her final visit, I checked in with Shira's mom. She remained symptom-free and was doing very well at school.

### ***Acupuncture explains physical symptoms through energetic blockages ...***

Why was Shira in so much physical pain? She didn't suffer a fall or get hit, she wasn't sick, and she didn't have an allergic reaction.

The reality is that the bully was causing Shira to fear for her own physical safety, even though her bully had never physically harmed her. The headaches and nausea were at their worst in the morning – before Shira had to go to school and be confronted by her tormentor.

As an acupuncturist, I'm a firm believer in the idea that emotional stress manifests in the physical body when the mind can no longer cope. This was the case with Shira: She couldn't manage the stress in her life, and it caused her to be in debilitating pain. Going even further, acupuncture draws from the location of the pain and connects it to the organ in the body

experiencing energetic disharmony. In acupuncture theory, each organ plays a role in energetic functioning. When it's out of tune, the body can reflect that disharmony with specific symptoms. Because emotional stress can have such a significant effect on the body, I like to blend physical and energetic work in my acupuncture practice. I wanted Shira to walk out of the office feeling looser and in less pain, but I also wanted her to understand that fear and anxiety were contributing to the muscle tension that was causing her headaches. With patients, I'll normally start by performing some body work or trigger point needling to release the muscles and alleviate the pain; physical treatment can help people feel comfortable and more stable. But then I'll work on their emotional (or energetic) imbalances by trying to identify what organ is most out of tune and rebalance it energetically. In Shira's case, even though I identified the Urinary Bladder as being out of balance, any number of additional organs could've been contributing to her pain.

By treating patients on multiple levels (body and energy), I am able to take a more holistic approach to their health. By describing how acupuncture explains their symptoms in terms of their emotional state, I'm empowering them to create change in their lives. I hope they will embrace this and work to clear their own energetic blockages – and that by doing so, it will help alleviate their physical symptoms.

Some patients embrace this concept completely and hunger for more information. Others look at me like I have two heads.

***Life is a fractal ...*** A fractal is a pattern that looks the same no matter the lens. While these patterns are everywhere in nature, most people have never heard the term “fractal.” Many vegetables grow as fractals; for instance, broccoli, cauliflower, and other members of the cruciferous family as well as dill, fennel, angelica, and other umbellifers. Snowflakes are fractals. Nautilis (the plural of nautilus) and other ocean creature shells are fractals. Even rivers and forests can be fractals. Whether on a microscopic or a macroscopic level, the truth is, fractals are everywhere.

I am a huge proponent of fractals because they make understanding something as complex as the human entity (comprised of the body, mind, and spirit) much simpler. Anyone can make a

quicker analysis by understanding the concept that one pattern is reflected in all the different patterns of life. From a holistic medical standpoint, understanding fractals allows anyone to see how multiple symptom patterns may all be related to each other, leading to fewer interventions that treat more symptoms. For example, one could be seeking therapy for deep anger issues while also seeing a doctor for potential liver issues as well as a physical therapist for pain in various joints of the body. In acupuncture, these are all related. One could find ways to process the anger, help the liver improve, and ease the pain, though it's never quite that easy or seamless because people have old injuries, other stressors in life, and emotions that aren't processed.

Fractals are a basis of life. These patterns are reflected in our bodies by the way certain organs grow in fractal patterns. It's like a tree. In an open field with ideal sun, it will grow as a fractal – perfectly symmetrical and in the same pattern. Health is a fractal, and our bodies will find their own balance when blockages are removed; this is a very common idea in the complementary medical field for finding optimal health. Real life is complicated, though, and people will have blockages. These blockages will also present in fractal patterns, showing up in the various portions of our lives. This, too, is like the tree growing toward the sun amongst other trees, which is damaged from storms, insects, or human intervention. It tries to grow in its innate fractal pattern, but deals with the blockages in life to find a different one. Fractals are all over nature and create order within chaos.

My love of fractals started in high school, when a math teacher showed the class a DVD from the popular science TV series *NOVA* about fractals. It elucidated the origins of fractals in mathematics, the fractal nature of life, and, of course, how an understanding of fractals was changing modern technology. Have you ever wondered why cell phones don't use those old extendable antennas? It was found that fractal chip antennas were much better at doing the same job.

In acupuncture school, I realized that two of the most basic tenets of acupuncture, yin/yang and the five elements, were fractals. Despite my observation, none of my teachers were using the word fractal. Even as I spoke about the ubiquity of fractals, nobody had the same enthusiasm about the connection I was trying to make, or even knew the word "fractal," for that matter. This

led me to my first essential question about acupuncture: If two of the most basic tenets were fractals, were others? What about six stages, seven emotions, and the organ system? In my first years of practice, I tried to explain things to patients using the language I learned in school. What I discovered was that many people didn't understand the basic vocabulary of acupuncture. I was, in essence, speaking a foreign language. This led me to try to answer a bigger question: How could I take the most important basics of acupuncture and put them into a language that people would understand? This is one of the driving forces for me to write this book – to have an outlet to explain fractals and other basic universal ideas and apply them to acupuncture. After years of patients asking me for a simple book to understand the medicine they were getting so much relief and transformation from, I was going to create my own and tailor it so regular people didn't need to comprehend the language of acupuncture to understand it.

***How does acupuncture work? ...*** This is probably the most common question I get when I talk about my profession. The answer I learned in school was very basic: Acupuncture moves blood and qi to balance the body. Qi is defined as the vital force that lives within all matter on earth – even things people don't consider living, such as a rock. It's a very Eastern explanation, and I find it doesn't resonate with many of my patients; they crave something they can understand in order to take a more active role in their health and wellbeing.

That's where the problem lies: There is no standard Western answer to the question of how acupuncture works. Various answers circulate, from the needles creating endorphin release, nerve stimulation, tissue changes, increased oxygenation in the blood, and (the most common explanation) stimulating the body's natural ability to heal itself. While some or all of these may be true, none of them give an exact physiological answer that Western medicine typically seeks when researching how certain treatments work. The same is true for energy modalities: All explanations focus on how the body reacts versus a mechanism.

Trauma was something that was rarely (or rarely encouraged to be) openly shared. This was especially true in the mid-20th century, when people were told to keep their issues bottled up, do their jobs and go about their everyday lives. Now that society has become more accepting of personal trauma, it's becoming more fully understood that many people experience trauma in

their lifetime. According to the National Center for PTSD, “About 6 of every 10 men (or 60%) and 5 of every 10 women (or 50%) experience at least one trauma in their lives. Women are more likely to experience sexual assault and child sexual abuse. Men are more likely to experience accidents, physical assault, combat, disaster, or to witness death or injury” (“PTSD in Adults,” 2018). That’s over half the population, by those estimates. That’s a lot of people. This is where it gets tricky, though, because what defines trauma? Personally, I’ve seen a range of trauma with patients in my office – some trauma I don’t think anyone would ever sign up for, and some that may not look that bad by comparison. No matter what, the trauma isn’t in the experience, but in the reaction to the experience. Trauma in America right now has never been more openly discussed, but our country is also rife with personal judgement and victim shaming. It’s a mixed message that can leave people feeling helpless. I don’t judge in my treatment room, and try my best not to judge in life. I have many patients who spill their guts to me about how they’re feeling, then immediately say they’re complaining about nothing. I always comfort them and tell them their stress is exactly that – stress – and they’re here to shed it and feel better. Acupuncture and other energy work modalities are able to treat trauma, and I have regularly and successfully treated trauma in my practice. Treating trauma is one of the most important functions of my practice, as many trauma patients have spent years trying to feel better with little to show for it. But I’ve found there’s a significant difference between acupuncture theory on treating trauma and what has proven effective in my practice.

***Directing medicine toward treating people, not just symptoms ...*** One of the biggest arguments in all disciplines of medicine is whether to treat the symptom directly, or to try to determine the cause of the symptom, treat that cause, and hope or expect the symptom will be fixed. The truth is that there’s no single answer; every situation is unique. However, I’ve already discussed the idea that a person’s energetic state can create physical symptoms in the body, and illustrated the benefit of treating the symptom *and* the cause. I believe most situations will require some symptom-based treatment and some root-based treatment.

Diagnostics are always needed. Consider the extreme example of someone suffering a heart attack. The emergency room workers should be 100% focused on treating the symptoms. Their job is to keep people alive, and to do that, they need to get the heart stabilized. Once that patient is able to be released from the hospital, they will need to take the appropriate actions to

rectify the causes of the heart attack, including the physical, emotional, and chemical causes. Physically, that person may have a blocked artery. Emotionally, they could be very stressed out. Chemically, they could have an incredibly poor diet. Without fixing any of these potential stressors, the patient is bound to have another heart attack at some point.

Acupuncture has a core philosophy called the law of root and branch, where the branch represents the actual symptoms and the root represents the underlying cause of the symptoms. As a core belief, students are taught that both need to be taken into account, and that any good treatment will focus on both root and branch. The exact proper ratio isn't determined because every situation is different. It's in this vein that acupuncture really has a chance to shine in its ability to treat the symptoms on the surface to keep pain, anxiety, and other difficulties at bay while also creating changes in the fascial and energy systems, easing the root cause of the recurring symptoms. The Fractal Energy Balancing system is at its best discovering and treating these root issues, and on many occasions, I've helped people identify issues when they struggled to put it into words.