

## THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF THE POSITIVE MIND

SPEECH GIVEN BY DON-LI MEI AT A CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION (1st February 2014) AND MEMORIAL FOR PROFESSOR MAN FONG MEI

When I was little boy my father handed me and my sister a little red book much like Mao's famous booklet of doctrines. My father said that it was to record his personal wisdom, which as you are all I am sure aware, he was always very willing to share with anyone who would listen. The first ever thing we ever wrote in that book was POSITIVE THINKING or PT and this became somewhat of a mantra for our family, whenever we faced a challenge.

Before running off nervously for my first school exams I would hear 'PT' yelled at me from the car window. When I was going through my more moody teenage years all dressed in black, my father would grab me by the shoulders and force me to even fake a smile before he would let me go. Whenever anyone in the family was going through any difficulty we would go to him because we knew that he would make you feel lighter simply by showing us the positives of even the most stressful situations.

My father truly believed in the transformational power of a positive mind. He believed that positive thinking made barriers lower, difficulties easier and brought luck and inspiration. His booming, unrepressed laughter and beaming smile is probably a powerful, lasting memory for all of you. This was always genuine. He had an awe-inspiring ability to allow any problems to slip away whenever he chose to stop and enjoy the moment.

I was lucky enough to work closely with my father for the past 17 years and just like all businesses, things do not always go according to plan. I cannot count the number of times that I went to see him with a mountain of problems to which he would listen carefully and then simply say 'come drink some tea with your old Dad and just relax'. I would sit and try to keep talking about the problems but he instead would joke, philosophise and laugh. He would try to find the funny or the insightful aspects of whatever we were discussing and miraculously, out of nowhere, solutions that seemed impossible, suddenly seemed easy. I would walk out of his office feeling calmer and with a clear direction and was always so thankful of my father's ability to transform any situation with effortless positivity.

My sister recently told me that my father shared a childhood experience with her during one of their late night conversations. He said that he was a little boy in Hong Kong playing football when one of his friends went to retrieve a ball and was electrocuted on a fence. He died before my father's eyes. My father told my sister that this was a pivotal moment in his life when he realised that he should appreciate every moment and approach life only with positivity because you never know when it's going to end.

I returned to my father's birth village in South China with him about 10 years ago and I think that this was one of my most powerful realisations of the transformative power of my father's positivity. The village was like walking back in time, a tiny ancient village 5 hours drive from the nearest city and surrounded by fields and water buffalo with open sewers and crumbling houses. My father walked through the village handing out red envelopes to everyone whilst me and my brother looked on in amazement. It just seemed impossible that our father who had created and achieved so much had started life in such an isolated and other worldly place. We both gained a new appreciation of the journey that he had been on and his fearless and positive attitude to get him there.

From this village my father moved to Hong Kong and at 16 my father flew to London to study Physics at Kings College. His living expenses were covered by part time jobs in a bookshop, as a cleaner and a cook – now my father could not cook, he could just about fry an egg but that was pretty much his cooking limits but somehow with positivity he managed to convince a high end restaurant that he could make Chinese salads!

He also got a small allowance from his Grandfather who had left China many years before to become a successful restaurant owner in New York. Eventually he received a letter from his Grandfather summoning him to the states to join the thriving restaurant business. My father made a very difficult decision to refuse on principle because he disagreed with the American involvement in Vietnam and his allowance was immediately cut off. It was one of many instances in my father's life where moral principle rose far above any other values such as financial gain. He often said to me that you can always earn back lost money but it's much harder to earn back lost honour.

He worked harder and with much excitement he opened his first business EAST ASIA BOOKS AND ARTS dedicated to spreading the words, wisdom and art of his homeland to the West. His first steps into his lifelong passion of East-West exchange began in a tiny office above a sex shop in Soho. He worked hard with my mother to sell books to academic institutions and other bookshops and eventually moved premises to Mornington Crescent just down the road.

From there his passion for Chinese Medicine developed and grew, and at a time when Acupuncture was completely foreign word in the West, he began with positivity to sell acupuncture equipment. He invented the disposable acupuncture needle which completely changed the landscape of acupuncture practise just as AIDS and Hepatitis cross infection was in the media.

Before all of the other small high street clinics, he pioneered the first authentic Chinese Medical clinic and simply believed that people would come. At a time when the majority of the Western medicine community was against this 'alternative' practise he reached out and offered to teach them and many have become very close friends.

When the lawmakers started to make noises of regulating Chinese Medicine he extended his hand and promised to help them which I believe changed the mood of regulation dramatically. When other Chinese Medicine groups that represented competition were speaking with separate voices he extended a welcome to them to come together and speak with one voice therefore creating the CMC. My father never isolated himself or saw others as enemies but always seeked to integrate and bring harmony into everything he did. He truly saw himself as a bridge to bring East and West together for mutual understanding and bring positivity to people's lives.

I am not going to talk about all the amazing things that my father has achieved as a business owner, clinician, teacher, public servant, philosopher and poet because the list is too long and you all probably know much already but there is a printed biography for you to fill in the gaps. Instead I just want to go back to his amazing ability to transform life with positivity.

In one of the last texts that my father wrote to my sister he said that Positive thinking is not something you are born with or inherited, it is something that everyone has to cultivate themselves and that positivity is the only way to

achieve harmony and enlightenment. My father had quite a few setbacks in his life and things did not always go to plan. But he had an ability to learn from mistakes and then simply shed himself of the weight of those negative experiences and move on. He would never dwell on bad decisions or errors in judgement and would not spoil the peace of the present moment by worrying excessively about the future. He would be constantly reminding everyone to stop and smell the roses and appreciate the moment. When he decided it was time to relax then that is exactly what he did no matter what chaos surrounded him. I don't think he ever said that he had a bad night's sleep. If I asked him how he managed to shrug off worries he would simply say that it was a choice that we all could cultivate if we would just stop being such perfectionists.

He would often refer to positive thinking and its relationship to health. In Chinese Medicine, physical health and emotional health are not two separate things requiring different medical disciplines. To a Chinese Medical doctor we are all physical psycho-emotional beings and our mental and emotional wellbeing is inseparable from our physical health.

You have all probably heard of placebo effect, whereby a patient unknowingly given an inert substance or sham treatment begins to feel better. You may have also heard of nocebo, a phenomena where patients given sham, chemically harmless medicine can actually feel physically worse if they have low expectations of success. These terms are often thrown around by the Western medical community as dirty words in clinical trials as drug companies strive to get success rates which are better than placebo but why not really look into the incredible aspects of how placebo and nocebo work and their implication to modern medicine?

In essence, what placebo and nocebo prove is that thinking positively is healing and thinking negatively is harming. In Chinese Medicine this is well known and all treatment at AcuMedic will approach any physical problem from all angles, addressing your physical imbalances as well as your mental and emotional wellbeing to generate the maximum healing response.

In Chinese Medicine, emotions such as love, happiness and inspiration are directly linked to your Qi energy, blood flow and yin/yang dynamic which then

affects your organs and physical health. Similarly, negative emotions such as sorrow, fear, anger, jealousy and regret cause your qi to become deficient and your blood flow impaired which may lead to illness

We cannot control the majority of things that happen to us but we can try to cultivate the right response to them. Sometimes it may be hard to follow the positive and healing path and we need some Chinese Herbs and Acupuncture or meditation or spiritual guidance to nudge us in the right direction.

In Chinese Medicine theory, our mental and emotional state does not only affect our physical health but the health and happiness of those around us. People who carry bitterness and sadness have a draining effect on the Qi of others and this negativity can affect the health of those that they may love. The flipside of the coin is that, as my father knew very well, a positive mental attitude can inspire and breathe new life into those around you, improving their health and spirits for them to pass on to others.

This is one of the wonders of Chinese Medicine theory, we are not isolated and contained physical beings but related to one another in a very real and physical sense. A simple decision made to cultivate positivity may seem a personal one but it has the power to affect you, your loved ones and spread onwards to society as a whole. This was I believe my father's greatest wisdom and power. He understood how positivity could help him more easily shape his destiny, turn enemies into friends, turn illness into healing and problems into solutions not just for himself but all those who were touched by him and who passed on his positivity to others.

The day that I found out that my father had suddenly and unexpectedly died was a day of terrible loss but I realised almost immediately that I should follow my father's teachings from that first page of my little red book. POSITIVE THINKING! I had to make a choice not to fall into a cycle of bitterness, anger and sadness but to choose a positive path and continue his legacy.

My father loved nature and was moved by the poetic flow of birth, blossoming beauty, death, and rebirth of the seasons. He always said to me that 'if you try to fight nature, it is a battle that you will always lose, instead be a like a fish and swim with the current'. So I have resolved not to fight nature and to turn this sadness and loss into a celebration of life and positive energy for my

father, myself, my loved ones and all around me. I urge all of you to do the same, right now, right here.

As we enter the high spirited new year of the wooden horse I am asking you all to resolve to choose positivity in every fork in the road of life no matter how difficult that may seem and if you find it tough then try to remember the genuine smile and unstoppable laughter of my father encouraging you on. Spread that positivity to your loved ones and beyond. From this little corner of the world, who knows how far reaching our collective positivity may be. That would be by far the most fitting tribute that you could all give my wonderful father. Thank you.