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Greetings,

We are now well into the early autumn by the Chinese calendar and I hope it is fruitful for you thus far! We just had our presentation on the qi of the autumn and the traditional images of the spirits within traditional Chinese medicine. I have an audio recording of it on our member site for those who missed the program.

This month's feature article is "Vision and Awareness." It discusses how our awareness and many health issues are directly linked to perception, with a particular focus on vision.

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### **Membership Program**

Thanks to our membership program, this month we have been able to begin providing care to several people who would otherwise not have been able to afford traditional Chinese medicine treatment. We are also providing ongoing care to a growing group of people in similar circumstances. It is always rewarding to see people reaping the benefits of Chinese medicine. Thanks for your support!

### **Recent Updates in the member section**

#### **Harvesting the Inspiration of the Spirits (approx. 90 minute audio file)**

This is an audio recording of my recent presentation on the qi of the autumn, including the nature of the *shen* (spirits), *hun* ("ethereal soul") and *po* ("corporeal soul") and simple traditional guidelines for the upcoming season.



- **Vision and Awareness (article)**

This is the complete article. I have the first part of it below as our feature newsletter article.

- **Cultivating Qi (Article)**
- **Quiet Action: Quiet Qigong Seminar (2 hour audio file)**
- **Cultivating Nature (Article)**

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### **Vision and Awareness**

by Sean Fannin

Within traditional Chinese medicine, perception and awareness are intimately linked. To be able to accurately perceive what is in front of us we need to have awareness. Awareness leads to clear perception, which leads to understanding and knowledge. Perception in this sense in some classical texts is almost synonymous with knowledge; if we truly see something we can understand it.

In order to see, hear, taste, smell and feel accurately we need to actually pay attention to what we are experiencing. This requires a certain amount of internal quietness or calm. This quality of inner calm is often described through the example and imagery of water. If we look at a mountain lake that is rippled over with choppy water, there is no way to see into the lake and whatever reflections that are visible on the surface are distorted. However, if the lake is quiet and calm we can see down into the depths easily and the reflections at the surface are clear and accurate. Quietness then, in a certain sense, is the spaciousness that allows clarity and awareness. This is quite important as it allows us to perceive what is actually present.

Perception, like everything, can be divided into two interrelated categories: yin and yang. The yin aspect of perception is a more generalized, open awareness ( I wrote about this and gave a specific exercise in the article "Regulating the Heart/Mind" in the June newsletter with the full article [here](#) in the member section.). This is a soft, open and receptive awareness that allows us to take in our connection and relationship to everything around us. The yang aspect of perception is focus or concentration. This is a narrowing of our awareness on to one particular thing in order to focus specifically on that without interference. Both soft awareness and focused concentration are important aspects of perception. However, there needs to be a rhythm that alternates between general awareness and focused concentration. Most of us spend the majority of our day with a specific focus whether it is working, being on the computer, phone calls, television, texting, and so on. This leaves very little space for a greater awareness. A more natural, biological balance would probably be more along the lines of 60-70% wide, relaxed awareness and 30-40% focus.

You can see this with animals in nature that shift between awareness of their general environment and specific focus on what is happening within that environment. Think of a cat sitting in a field. It does not focus on one thing then focus on another, then another. It has a quiet, diffused awareness that allows it to see and hear changes in the environment that present either a threat or opportunity. Only then does the focus hone in, leading to a whole series of physiological changes in preparation for whatever is there. This is a marvelously efficient use of energy and quite characteristic for most animals.

Within Chinese medicine, each of the sense organs is correlated with a quality of qi that encompasses a wide range of associations from internal organs to seasons, environmental influences to flavors. We can understand the importance of our sensory perceptions as the link between our internal state the world around us. While all of the senses are obviously important, vision is one of the most dominant in humans. We can take the same yin yang division of our vision as we can with awareness. The two essential types of vision are wide-angle or generalized and focused vision. All animals, whether it is with vision, hearing, etc. cycle between these two states. From a natural perspective, we should use our relaxed, wide-angle vision a good deal of the time with specific episodes of focused vision. With modern life however, we spend most of our time focusing visually, with very little relaxed, open vision. The problem with excessive focus is that we are no longer in a natural rhythm, but are rather in an exaggerated state of the yang, which means elevated non-productive activity.

Many common problems relate to this dynamic. If you feel "tired and wired," have trouble sleeping, eye strain, headaches, anxiety, a high stress response, and so on, one of the simple things that you can do to begin changing this is to shift your vision in order to shift your awareness and the energetic patterns within the body. As I mentioned earlier, this causes positive physiological and psychological changes at many levels...

*Read the full article including vision and awareness exercises on our members site.*

[Membership information is here.](#)

[Direct link to the full article for members is here.](#)

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As always, feel free to write or call with any thoughts or questions. Wishing you all the best for the early autumn!

Sean



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Center for Traditional Health Arts  
5 Keller Street, Suite A  
Petaluma, California 94952  
US

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