

*Japanese Finger-
Pressure Therapy*

SHIATSU

By Tokujiro Namikoshi



In 1953, a group of chiropractic schools invited me to lecture in various parts of the United States. In Los Angeles, during one of a three-day series of talks, a watchmaker in the audience asked me the following question.

"I am a watchmaker. It takes me three years to train a watch repairman. How can you explain in only three days how to repair the human body, which is much more complex than a watch?"

I replied that his question was reasonable but that he should remember two things: first, a watch is only a machine; second, the human body has powers of regeneration and self-repair which no machine can equal. For instance, when a foreign object falls into the eye, tears immediately wash it away; when a bite of food or a little liquid goes into the trachea, the person naturally coughs to dislodge it. Scraped skin grows back in a few days. In other words, the body can do so much of its own repair that we need no repairmen.

I went on to say that shiatsu can work apparent miracles because it uses the natural instinct to press ailing parts of the body and because it takes advantage of the body's wonderful natural powers. Certainly, some few scientific points need explanation, but the real purpose of my talks is simply to have you realize the power inherent in the body and use it by applying pressure where it is needed. The watchmaker seemed convinced.

Depending too much on doctors, drugs, and injections, people today tend to overlook the importance of natural cure. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, had just such cure in mind when he said that nature is medicine and medicine the servant of nature. The people who coined the proverb, "Nature cures the illness, but the doctor gets the fee," were thinking along the same lines.

All the tense, nervous semi-invalids crowding doctors offices would be much better off if they opened their eyes to the miracles the body can do by itself. Shiatsu tries to help open some of those eyes.

The Effect of Shiatsu

About 450 muscles, attached to bones at either end, by contracting, produce movement in the human body. The contraction

Applying Pressure

Never jab your fingers into the flesh of the patient; instead apply firm pressure with the soft bulbs of the fingers or thumbs as if you were resting all your body weight on them. The degree of pressure needed depends on the symptoms and the personal condition, but your posture should always be such that, if necessary, you can apply your entire weight. The area of contact between the thumb and the body of the patient should be about the same as that inked on paper when fingerprints are taken. Pressure should be gentle and perpendicular to the area being treated.

Basic Pressure Points

Although certain points will need additional attention according to the nature of the patient's complaint, in general, to be effective, treatment must begin with applications of pressure on all the points illustrated in (Fig. 5). To treat a specific illness, points nearest the ailing part demand attention, but sometimes pressure on distant areas brings greatest improvement: for instance, pressure on the soles of the feet for kidney disease and on the left hand to strengthen the heart. Experience proclaims the efficacy of shiatsu on apparently unrelated parts of the body, and factual medical bases substantiate it.

All points of pressure are described later in full detail in sections arranged according to complaint.

Degree of Pressure

Except around the neck, where it must never exceed three seconds, the duration of a single application of shiatsu pressure should be from five to seven seconds. It should be sufficient to cause a sensation midway between pleasure and pain (A professional therapist can apply pressure that produces deep bodily effects without discomfort.) Although, under clinical conditions, normally healthy patients usually undergo about thirty minutes of shiatsu treatment and invalids about one hour, the treatments described in this book require only three minutes each.

