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University for the Advanced in Living Time

UGL stands for the University for the Advanced in Living Time (Gevorderden in Levenstijd) and is a social project focused on the issue of “elderly in the health care system” and the quest for self-reliance within this. The goal of the UGL is to create an enriched environment in which the elderly can work on and learn about health. In September a pilot project will be launched for a period of 20 weeks. Here the elderly are one stimulated to learn and do health one day a week.

The pilot project has different goals:

• Care goals
  Enhancing the self-reliance when it comes to preventive health care and stimulation of the own responsibility.

• Social goals
  Stimulate social contact amongst the elderly.
  Creating a common base in which to work on health.

• Research goals
  Measurement of interest in such an educational setting for the elderly.
  Identify guidelines and obstacles for the further development of the program.

How to achieve these goals?

• Educational exercise

The morning program consists of 2 classes, a Qigong and a Fitness class. Classes are accessible to all levels of fitness and are educational and playful in nature. They are tools with which the participant can work on certain aspects of their health but are also a research instrument which assist in assessing the working of the own body. These classes are based on Chinese Health principles and are provided by the Foundation CNYS.

• Connective program

In between the morning and afternoon program we wish to stimulate people to share their experiences. Together investigate what health is. All of this during a cup of tea and a healthy little lunch. The Foundation provides raw vegetables and some fruits but of course people are free to bring in something supplementary.

• Informative or creative afternoon program

In the afternoon we go from a more physical to a more mental part. Here there are two possibilities. An informative program in which a lecture or a teaching is given about a certain subject concerning health. Or a creative program such as drawing or painting. The implementation of this program varies from month to month. For this we look at local business or participating elderly who can share with the people of the neighbourhood in their knowledge about their own field of expertise.
The first pilot project starts on Friday 16th of September in Participation center “De Wachter”

Wolbrantskerkweg 54-56
1069 DA Amsterdam

Duration 20 weeks

Daily schedule:

9u30    Walk In
10h - 11h   Qigong
11h - 12h   Fitness
12h - 12h30  Break / Lunch
12h30 - 14h  Afternoon program

Participation in the program is free for 55 and older. People younger then 55 can of course also participate. For this they pay a small contribution of 10 euro per session (morning or afternoon) or 5 euro if they bring an elderly in a type of buddy project to work and learn together about health.

Background of the project:

The origin of the project can be found in the research of Daisy Xiaohui Yang: “Dusk without sunset, actively ageing in Traditional Chinese Medicine”. University of Pittsburg 2006. In this dissertation Mrs. Xiaohui Yang conducts research about actively ageing in Wuhan, China. A main point of focus within Chinese care policy is promoting self-reliance of the elderly population. Research shows how Yang sheng culture contributes to this goal. Health is something you can learn. It requires knowledge and skills. A university therefore is the ideal place to develop that. Elderly education is in many cultures seen as an important part of becoming of age in a healthy way.

This project is made possible by the funding of RCOAK without whome none of this would be possible.

The issues about the care of elderly is very topical. Multiple organisations and institutions and others are involved in searching for answers how to let people grow old in a healthy manner. Are you as an organisation or care professional dealing with these matters and do you think the UGL project can be of interest to you, then we like to invite you to join with us in dialogue.

For more information about the Foundation, check:

www.cnys-tcm.com
Interview: Cosima Scheuten

My name is Cosima Scheuten. I work independently under the name of “Garden of Chi” and there I give classes in Chi Kung, Tai Chi and meditation, give lectures and organise retreats. I am an authorised Chi Kung instructor in the Chinese lineage of master Lam Kam Chuen and am educated as a movement therapist. The acquired knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathology, psychology and Chi, I use to help individuals as well as companies. More and more I focus on working with groups because I notice that people benefit from it greatly. I try to teach people how to help themselves, this own growth I find very valuable, it makes you less dependent of the therapist.

In your classes you try to stimulate independance?

Yes, and they need each other as a mirror. I work a lot with partner work and with energy work. What’s going on inside of you, is easier to experience in contact with someone else, and working with different partners allows you to encounter different aspects of yourself. You help each other, which is being supported by the energy of the group. It works better than training on your own.

You are also a therapist. From which background is that?

I am a body worker, massage– and movement therapist. People come to my consults with certain complaints. I consider the cause of these complaints to be a disturbance in the energy flow. The symptoms can be of a physical nature, but also emotional, mental and/or spiritual. Bringing people into their body and in contact with what is, is often a first step. In individual consults I guide people in recognising the cause and finding a solution. The forms of movement that I use are from Chinese background, while other parts are from a more Western perspective, like the therapeutic models that I use. So it is a combination of.

What is health to you?

Let me begin by saying what it is not. As a standard answer to that question I often hear people say they should feel vital and energetic, that one has no complaints. Then I explain to people you can never have everything 100% all the time. Natural fluctuations are part of it, certain cycle you go through. People often expect that they can be in a sort of happy-high-state all the time. That is not what I mean with health. Everything which is static, which does not change, you could consider to be ‘dead’. With life there comes a certain movement, a frequency, that fluctuates. If I have been busy a whole day, then I am tired and maybe some muscles feel sore. If I have studied long and hard, then mentally I am tired, maybe have a little headache. And sometimes things happen that make me emotional. Then I ask: how fast do you recover? Are you tired in a good way, full of energy or are you tired and feel empty? The second one I don’t consider to be good for your health. For me it is important that there is resilience and restoring force, that highs and lows don’t go all to far. Harmony in the system is very important. The resilience gets stronger if that person has developed energy of a certain quality and can consciously make healthy decisions. That affects the physical, but also the emotional, spiritual, mental and energetical qualities of a person. If someone has energy of a certain quality, and uses it wisely, then health is usually fairly good. If people can develop a better understanding of this, then their image about health gets more clear. That is why I try to let people experience how to feel energy and what it is, what the qualities of it are. Not everyone can easily feel or see energy, but everybody can learn how to see the effect of it, just by observing.
According to you, what is the relationship between qi and energy?

I use the term qi as an umbrella concept. To me qi is life energy, vital energy. The difference between qi and no qi is easily to explain. Lay down a dead person next to a live one and everybody can see the difference between the two. Everybody can say, there is energy in this one while there is no in the other. If you cut a flower and put it into a vase, she is beautiful in the beginning, but slowly you can see the energy flowing away. She loses her leaves and starts hanging. Replace the word energy with atmosphere and everybody can tell you about it, the atmosphere of a person or in a room, in a group of the land, the season.

In what way do your classes contribute to the health of the participants?

You can see that the classes have a certain effect mainly in the reduction or disappearance of complaints and that students become more aware. Unfortunately most of them start when they already have a complaint. I help people to feel energy, so they can make more conscious decisions. That goes beyond the class itself, it is something they take with them in daily life, in their home, work and relationships. If I see people start eating differently, adjusting their rhythm of the day, the space in their homes, … then I know the effects work through in their life. Also having fun in what you do is very important. Not working to hard all the time and wanting everything, but also just have fun, nothing more. If you cramp up when you try something, then it disturbs the exercise. The atmosphere in class is light, enjoyable. I try to invite people to play with the exercises, to investigate. See how it feels, make little adjustments in your posture and investigate what it does to you. This way you learn how to feel where the blockage is.

Do you consider Qigong to be an important part of TCM?

To me Chi Kung is one of the pillars of TCM. Just like nutrition, herbs, acupuncture, massage and feng shui are. If you are trained to feel energy and work with this, then you can mean so much more for someone. So to me it most definitely should be part of an education in Chinese Medicine. It teaches you to feel when you puncture a needle, how you correct the flow but also you learn to protect yourself against negative energy and it inhibits that you drain yourself. Also in my classes it is essential to know how I can help someone through energy and can make an adjustment. Where the energy is and what a person can handle, what exercise can help in which moment. What happens internally, that is the essence of the internal arts. Sometimes I go stand next to a person to help that person, then I make certain adjustments in myself and invite the person to join me in this. This I can only do through my experience in feeling energy and having knowledge about how it works. If I would only have my cognitive skills to teach, or can just bring someone in the physical posture, then I would have little to offer. Training Chi Kung have definitely made me a better therapist and I am still learning, I still learn every day.

Would you give 3 advices to our readers to improve their health and well-being?

1. Prevention. Prevention is better than a cure. Build a daily routine of preventive health activities for your energy, mind and body.
2. If you already have complaints, realize what is treating a symptom and what is the cause. Remove the cause.
3. Nourish your health. Nourishment is much more than what you put in your mouth, it are all kinds of stimulus. Think about (energy of) people, spaces, material goods, environment, sound, smell, … and ask yourself do I enjoy this? Clean up. Get rid of as much as possible that does not nourish you. Choose food where there is still qi inside.
My name is Jutta Koehler, I work in my own business as a nutrition therapist, I am as a teacher connected to different educational institutes such as Qing Bai and Total Health and I am the author of the book: “Breakfast for vitality”

You work as a nutritional therapist, does this mean most of your clients come with a specific complaint?

Often yes. It would be best if people would come to me more in a preventive way but most people wait until they have a complaint. Often before this they already went through a whole trajectory and they come here because regular medicine does not give enough result or they were sent here by an acupuncturist.

Do you also work together with acupuncturists?

I would very much like so. I do have some colleagues that I use for referral. However my clientele often comes from different parts of the country so I do not always know someone close to their home. Then I do advise them to look for complimentary support with an acupuncturist, shiatsu or tuina masseur, etc… But in general a lot of TCM practitioners just do their own thing. That is unfortunate because within TCM these collaborations are necessary.

Is the subject of nutrition sufficiently addressed within the TCM training?

I think this attention is continuously growing. I do notice an upgoing trend. Shiatsu students have for example one day of class about this subject, that is not much but at least its a start. At least in this way they know it plays an important part within a health care system.

What does health mean to you?

I think health is more than the absence of complaints. It is a balance. Put it this way: having sufficient energy during the day, being able to sleep well and having a good digestion. This last point of course has extra importance from my point of view. If your digestion is good then the nutrients can be better absorbed by the body, that is a crucial thing. Next to that it is a cheap and independent way to enhance your health. People have their own directory about how they eat. Often after 2 or 3 consults people already know enough to get to work themselves. It comes down to learn to feel what is good for you.

How does this work within your profession?

I always start with an extensive questioning, look at the tongue and the face. Then I have a first impression, I give some pointers and ask them to keep an eating diary. In this way I can observe their way of making choices but also how their life rhythm looks like. Then I work it out into a paper and they receive a file with the most important things to adjust. Often that already is enough.
What is the main difference with the Western approach on nutrition?

First of all I wish to emphasize that to me it is mainly about the traditional way of eating. Also in the Netherlands this knowledge was there, but it needs to be rediscovered a bit. I think the main difference is that we don’t work as analytical as the Western approach. You don’t talk about calories, the amount of fat or protein but you talk about what it does to you. So the approach is not so much with the head but more to do with (gut) feeling. Next to that an important difference is that we work with the thermal effect of food. Are they heating, cooling or neutral? What does that food do to my own body temperature? Of course a good digestion is a necessity to make the right decision and observation in this. If your digestion is off then maybe you make the wrong conclusions. That is why some extra support is often indispensable.

Which aspect is crucial?

The most crucial aspect is that people start cooking again. Whether it be stir-frying or steaming, it does not matter so much. What does matter is that you use the stove to save your own digestion system some work. Get back to three cooked meals a day. Not just raw food, bread or a yoghurt meal. Yoghurt and bread are often used as a side-dish in traditional kitchen. It’s something that comes with it, on the side. It is not the meal itself though. I try to give people a reference from where they can work on their health with nutrition in a constructive way.

What role does Qi play in this story?

Food is together with the breath the main source of postnatal qi. That’s why good nutrition is so important. If you supplement this postnatal qi insufficiently by eating badly, the sooner your prenatal qi will be depleted. This you often see with burn-out complaints where the malnutrition through a lousy diet pushes a person over the edge.

Could you give our readers 3 advices to improve health and well-being?

1. A nutritious breakfast is the most important thing. Make this breakfast into a meal that is really prepared.
2. Make a hot meal and take things like yoghurt or bread as a side-dish, not a main menu.
3. Eat as pure as possible. Your body has to recognize it as food. (processed foods often contain elements that have nothing to do with nutrition.)

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