

Shiatsu and Asian Bodywork Therapy

Shiatsu is a popular form of Asian Bodywork Therapy (ABT) developed in Japan in the 20th century. It has ancient roots in traditional Japanese massage and in Chinese medicine. Shiatsu literally means finger pressure (shi-atsu). The manual techniques of Shiatsu are applied to the body to balance the flow of vital energy, improve health, and support healing.

Shiatsu and other forms of ABT can release stress and tension, increase vitality, strengthen immunity, relieve pain and discomfort, increase self-awareness, promote emotional balance, and address common ailments. Central to understanding Shiatsu are the concepts of Ki, energy pathways, and acupoints.

Ki and Energy Pathways

Ki (pronounced *key*) is “the vital energy or life force that permeates the universe, flowing through and animating all things.” According to traditional Chinese medicine, Ki flows through the body in energy pathways called channels or meridians. There are 12 primary meridians, 8 extraordinary meridians, 12 divergent channels, and several connecting channels. These energy pathways run along the surface and deep into the body. Shiatsu and other forms of ABT harmonize the ease and flow of Ki along these pathways.

Ki functions in the human body to transform, transport, hold together, protect, and warm. The aim of Shiatsu techniques is to strengthen Ki that is weak, disperse Ki that is too concentrated, move Ki that is stagnant, uplift Ki that is sinking, quiet Ki that is rebellious. According to Chinese medicine, balanced energy flow is the basis for health, and restoring lost balance is the key to healing.



Acupoints

Acupoints are specific points on the body where Ki energy flows. They are used in Shiatsu and other forms of ABT to stimulate and balance the flow of Ki.

Acupoints are located along the meridians and are used to treat a variety of conditions. They are often used in combination with other techniques such as breathing exercises and visualization.

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