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Have a wonderful holiday!

Why is it that a certain number of us wind up depressed during the Holidays at the end of the year? I would guess that part of the answer lies in expectations that are unreasonably high, in the expense, and in our relations with others. Were you aware that the hospitals fill up at Christmas? It is not that many of the elderly who go there are ill; they are lonely and the holidays reinforce that feeling.

In Chinese Medicine, we think that depression results from the emotional damage done by unresolved worry, fatigue, unfulfilled desires, etc. I do encourage you to give up on worry. Most of it does absolutely no good because the subject you are worrying about is beyond your control or you would not be worrying about it. It becomes like a dog chasing its tail. When you allow yourself to be caught up in worry, in sadness or resentment because your needs and desires have not been fulfilled, or you overtax yourself, the liver cannot function normally and your first unhappy symptom may be gastric distress. Emotion targets the liver first and then spreads to different organs and meridians.

Liver malfunction also affects the heart, which means your spirits sag into anxiety and depression. This usually results in loss of appetite, obscure pains in the side, constipation, a vile headache, and loss of menstruation. There is a pharmacy of Chinese herbs for these unpleasant symptoms and, always, acupuncture, to get things balanced again. I recommend Xiao Yao Wan, loosely translated as "Happy Pills" to restore balance.

Try to look at the Season as a test of your ability to know when to stop trying to control the universe (yes, trees are expensive this year; yes, this was the worst possible time to have a flat tire; yes, yes, yes) and how to appreciate what you have.

It is a spiritual truth that the most-precious commodity is gratitude. Take a deep breath and exhale. And have a wonderful time.