



Summer and the Fire Element

Listening to our Heart and Small Intestine

There is a point in the year when the light no longer feels tentative. The warmth settles in, the days stretch long into the evening, and something in the body begins to open. I notice it in myself quite quickly. There is a natural joy in this heat, something that seems to radiate from within rather than needing to be created. My eyes feel full of sunshine, my body is lighter, brighter, and I can feel my energy moving more easily upwards and outwards.

Connection feels different at this time of year. I feel there is something spontaneous at play. Our evenings are becoming more social, our conversations are flowing more freely, and there is a quiet generosity that seems to arise with the longer days. I find it easier to be present, with less striving. I notice I can do less, with less effort. There is a sense of being more at ease in myself and in my surroundings. At peace.

And yet, even within that openness and peace, I'm aware it can be a fine balance.

At times, I notice myself seeking shade so I can step back from the intensity of the heat, as I'm aware that too much sun can tip me into restlessness (seeking shade, lighter clothing, a hat, sunscreen).

In clinic, I see this reflected in different ways. Some bodies respond to the rising warmth with ease and contentment, while others become more scattered and seem a little less contained. The same energy that brings joy can, when unsupported, feel overwhelming.

Fire in the body and in life

In Traditional Chinese Medicine and Zen Shiatsu, summer belongs to the Fire element. **It is the phase of connection, expression, and full outward movement.**

If Wood is about growth and direction, Fire is about arrival. It is the moment of fullness, when energy in the natural world (and within us) is at its most expansive, reaching outward, connecting, and engaging fully with life. In the body, Fire is associated with circulation, warmth, and the vitality that animates our presence.

In life, it relates to how we connect, communicate, and experience joy. When our Fire energy is balanced, we feel a sense of ease. This might feel like being open but not overwhelmed, being fully engaged with no sense of depletion. There is an easy warmth in our interactions, and our natural ability to connect with others is strong and adaptable, yet deeply and peacefully anchored in ourselves. When the Fire energy becomes excessive or unsupported, that same outward movement has the potential to become scattered. It can feel like energy rising but not settling. In this moment, sleep may feel lighter, the mind more active, and the body less able to fully rest.



The Heart: presence, connection and spirit

Our Heart, in Five Element theory, is considered the centre of awareness and connection. It houses what is often referred to as the Shen: the spirit, or a brightness that is reflected in the eyes. When Heart energy is settled, it is often immediately recognisable. The breath is steady, the eyes are bright, but calm. There is a sense that thoughts can come and go without pulling the whole system in different directions. A person feels present (at home in themselves) and able to meet others without losing that sense of inner steadiness.

In Shiatsu, this quality of presence is something we listen for through touch as much as through observation. When the Heart is supported, connection feels nourishing rather than demanding, and there is space for both self and other.

The Heart invites a gentle question: Am I truly present with myself and others?

The Small Intestine: clarity and discernment

Working alongside the Heart, the Small Intestine plays a quieter but essential role. It is associated with our ability to sort, to take in what is useful and let go of what is not. This applies not only to food, but to experiences, conversations, and emotional exchanges.

At this time of year, when life often becomes fuller and more outward facing, this function becomes particularly important. I sometimes notice in clinic that people are taking in a great deal (socially, emotionally, energetically) and yet have less space to process or filter. There can be a sense of holding or protecting, or of feeling slightly overwhelmed without knowing exactly why.

The Small Intestine invites a gentle question: What am I taking in, and what do I need to release?

The emotional landscape of Fire

Fire is often associated with joy, but like all elemental qualities, it has a spectrum. When it is balanced, joy feels warm, steady and quietly expansive. It moves through the body with a sense of ease and an openness in the chest, a lightness in the breath, a natural outward flow. When Fire becomes too strong or unsupported, that same energy can feel like agitation or restlessness. Our whole system becomes more easily stimulated, less able to settle: what begins as openness can suddenly tip into overwhelm.

In clinic, I see both expressions. Some people arrive feeling lighter, more content, more connected to themselves, while others feel slightly uncontained, their energy lifted but not anchored, their thoughts moving more quickly, and their bodies less able to fully rest: both are expressions of the same seasonal energetic movement.



Supporting Fire energy in early summer

Unlike the gradual activation of spring, summer invites a fuller expression of life, but balance remains key, especially if the flames begin to burn too brightly, too quickly. Finding moments of stillness becomes just as important as moments of connection. Seeking shade, pausing between activities, and allowing time for the body to settle can be simple ways to support your system to remain steady within expansion.

In my own experience, something as simple as opening the doors to let light into the house, or sitting quietly outside in the evening, can feel deeply regulating. Remember a fire does not need to be amplified, it just needs to be held well in its container.

The wisdom of Fire

Summer carries a particular kind of fullness. There is a sense of ripeness of things coming into being, of energy being expressed more freely, of connection feeling more available. Yet, within that fullness, there is also a quiet knowing that it will not remain in this form for long. Towards the height of summer, I often notice a subtle shift. A soft awareness that the light will begin to wane. That the long evenings will gradually shorten. That the outward energy of the season will, in time, turn again towards something more grounded and nourishing. This is not a loss: it is part of the natural cycle.

Just as joy arises, it also changes. Just as energy expands, it will eventually return inward. Fire can teach us to be fully present with what is here, so we can fully embrace connection, warmth and aliveness, without needing to hold onto it.

Three gentle Fire practices

1. Spend a few moments each day simply noticing warmth in your body without needing to act on it.
2. Allow space between social interactions to let your system settle.
3. Step into shade when needed and notice the shift in your energy.

Three reflective Fire questions

1. Where in my life does connection feel nourishing right now?
2. Where might I be taking in more than I have space to process?
3. What helps me feel settled and present within openness?

The body knows how to open, just as it knows how to rest. When we listen carefully, there is a natural rhythm between connection and stillness, expression and quiet. **Summer invites us to trust that rhythm, to enjoy the warmth and light, while also allowing space for it to be held gently within us.**

Reflection written by Vicky Evans

07749281625 www.wyevalleyshiatsu.com

Offered in the spirit of seasonal care.

