

Interview : Jutta Koehler

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 it's 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.

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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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