

**REGENERAR**  
**Wellness manual for living according to the seasons**  
**Lourenço de Azevedo**

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## FOREWORD

Lourenço de Azevedo is a good friend and regular teacher at the Macrobiotic Institute of Portugal (IMP), of which I am founder and director, and it is with great pleasure and pride that I write this foreword for his book *Regenerar*.

I met Lourenço in 1999, when, still a student of traditional Chinese medicine, he knocked on the door of the IMP and proposed to teach regular chi kung classes in our space. I liked his humility, combined with the deep, lively eyes of those who are enthusiastic about life and treat matters seriously.

Lourenço was so determined that during half of the year he taught chi kung to himself because he had no students, and in the other half he taught only one student. Not that this caused him the slightest problem. He did what he had to do, and if there were students, fine. If not, there was no problem either.

We continued to work together, the number of students began to increase and his reputation as a chi kung teacher and as a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine (particularly in the acupuncturist field) grew gradually and safely. His patients always praised his patience, empathy and level of technical knowledge. He also began teaching different subjects in our curricular courses.

About two years ago, I was asked if I knew anyone who could write a good book in the area of natural therapies, and the first person that came to mind was Lourenço. I was very pleased that he gladly accepted the challenge and set out to work. The result is *Regenerar*.

This is a book that will teach you how to adapt better to natural cycles, so you can live with more awareness, greater energy and flexibility, and more in line with nature.

The study of nature and its cycles and how they influence human life is crucial in the study of traditional medicines. Our physical and emotional health, longevity and harmony with the world around us depends on how well we adapt to the seasonal and daily cycles. For example, the *Nei Ching* (Acupuncture Classic of the Yellow Emperor), the oldest known medical book (over 2000 years old), makes exhaustive recommendations on how we should live each season in order to prevent and treat major health problems.

In *Regenerar*, Lourenço de Azevedo manages to combine the erudition of an oriental scholar with modern scientific studies in order to help the reader understand how the different seasons influence the different areas of our life and what to do in order to make the most of the seasonal flow. Through exercises, life strategy, emotional expression, sleep, food and more.

I am sure that this book will be a very useful tool for anyone who reads it and decides to put into practice the philosophical and technical recommendations contained therein.

Francisco Varatojo

Lisboa, February 5th, 2017

## HEALING WITH NATURE THE METHODS AND PRINCIPLES

**«We can eat whatever we want, it all depends on how, when and how much.» Chinese proverb**

Each of us, as unique beings, have our own rhythms, preferences, expectations and observations of the world around unlike anyone else. Therefore, it is natural that your individual needs vary according to your physical and emotional states, the times of day, the seasons of the year and the phases of life you pass through. During these phases, you find joys and challenges, some momentary, and others that are ongoing throughout different stages of life.

As human beings, the pursuit for health, happiness, comfort and well-being is inherent within each of us as well. Throughout history, this search has been approached in a number of different ways. There are at least two possible approaches we can take:

The approach by *methods*, which results in the human pursuit of happiness and stability through the search for a formula or recipe - a safe path - that allows us with some reliability and certainty to reach our purpose of a full life.

As a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine, this approach has led me to observe the following:

- Every year there is a diet or «fashionable» formula that promises - effortlessly – a sudden loss of weight that undermines the diet of the previous year.
- That every month a superfood is discovered with increasingly antioxidant, detoxifying, regenerative and anticancer (super)properties, that leaves behind the one from the previous month which was also the most reliable discovery for health and longevity.
- That the trends of what is healthy for the human body, in terms of physical exercise and movement, change from generation to generation. It all depends on the tests performed that tell us how good it is to run long distances or short distances, how good it is to run barefoot or how important it may be to wear running shoes, how good it is to do an intensive workout or even better to have recovery periods.
- That the ideal food for the human being has fluctuations very similar to the tides. Theories fluctuate between raw, cooked, powdered diets, juice cleanses, the fasting diet, the Paleo diet, the blood type diet, diets without carbohydrates, diets that eradicate the acidity of the organism, the gluten-free diet, diets that identify histamines as a target, some diets using supplements, others using none.
- ...

In addition to creating confusion, most of these methods, despite their short-term effectiveness, do not survive the test of time. It's a matter of weeks or months before a new study is published, then comes another formula that guarantees you lose even more weight, which offers even more suitable nutrients, gives you the ability to be even faster, stronger and more flexible and promising you an even longer life.

The second approach to the search for health, happiness and well-being is found in the quotation that opened this chapter: it is the study of the universal principles that apply to every human being on the planet. In this brief excerpt, the principles of healthy eating and living are defined. It does not prescribe what food you should eat, how many meals you should have per day or the calories and grams that each dish should have. However, this sentence

has survived the test of time and continues to maintain relevancy anywhere in the world and for anyone. Let's look at it in detail:

- **How** refers to the cooking method: raw, heated, steamed, boiled, poached, stewed, sautéed, fried, dehydrated, baked, pressure-cooked, juiced, steeped, crushed, made into soups, solid, fresh, hot, with sauces, without sauces, caramelized, with or without condiments...

- **When?** In the morning, at lunch, at dinner, before bed, on an empty stomach, before meals, between meals, in the middle of meals, early, middle or late summer, in the fall, in the spring or in the winter; during childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age, old age; during pregnancy, when ill, weak, when there is vitality; on holiday, when doing hard work, when focus, relaxation or creativity are needed, for an initial boost or resistance energy...

- **How much?** Can be a little, enough or too much, depending on the circumstances. Each food can have different proportions depending on the intended effect, age, lifestyle, individual needs and season or stage in life.

One can easily transpose the examples offered to other aspects of the life that are directly related to food. **How you accomplish them, when you accomplish them and how many times you accomplish them** can be the key factors for a more balanced and full life.

As you read this introduction, you have the opportunity to make a conscious choice: choose to live your life in constant pursuit of the ideal formula or method, or expend the necessary time, resources and energy for understanding the *principles* of nature, which will provide you endless resources and a better understanding of life and wellness. This understanding will give you the authority and autonomy to create your own health and wellness plan - tailored specifically to your unique needs and circumstances as an individual. In this case, you won't be limited by the rules or labels that the 'methods approach' proposes - however effective they may be, they create limitations from the outset - and although they *seem* to be, they were *not* designed with your personal needs and circumstances mind. The difference between methods and principles is similar to learning a foreign language. The methods approach is like learning through memorizing key sentences, which only work in certain situations - or, the principles, which requires you to delve deeply into the structure of the language you want to learn. This allows you - sometimes with fewer resources - to apply the language in any situation and in a contextual and intelligent manner.

This book was not written to provide you with more methods or formulas. It was, however, written for anyone wishing to learn a universal language for everyday life - wherever they are and wherever they may go. This language for strengthening your vital energy has served humankind for more than 2000 years and is based on the Eastern therapeutic tradition. This tradition has lasted through present day solely because it has been useful and effective for thousands of years to the groups and individuals who have adopted it; and thus, has been transmitted and refined from generation to generation. This knowledge was developed at a time when there were no quick fixes, where health and longevity were not palliative, but preventative in nature, in which the superior physician was the one who treated the diseases before they settled in the body. It was therefore essential to master the principles of this language, and the probabilities of survival and longevity depended upon that mastery.

By turning this page, I cannot guarantee you will be embarking on the journey of your life, but I can guarantee that you will be taking a step that can make the journey you are currently on more nourishing and transformative - for you, for others and for the planet itself.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

When this material is presented in one-day introductory courses, annual courses or in multi-year courses such as traditional Chinese medicine, macrobiotics or feng shui, there is a natural expansion of perspective that occurs.

Given the vast nature of the information presented here, I have sought to give it a coherent structure, but as you will discover throughout this book, each season has unique features, and as such, each is presented within a separate and unique structure that lends itself to that particular season.

However, there are points in common in all chapters:

- The text of the Book of the Yellow Emperor - one of the classics of traditional Chinese medicine - in which the essential principles for living in harmony with the seasons are described.
- The principles that make it possible to recognize the beginning of each season without it being obligatorily related to the calendar.
- The essential points of organ and systems diagnosis, which, according to the traditional Chinese medicine, correspond to each of the seasons.
- The description and use of food and therapeutic movement practices that can help you better understand and align with the season you are living.
- Specific living habits for health and longevity that may act as resources, so you may live each season of the year as fully and as consciously as possible.
- The principles that allow you to transition into the next season.

Before beginning this journey, I leave you with some recommendations:

- To make the reading as nourishing as possible, start with the first chapter. It explains the basis of the language for understanding the rhythms of the seasons and their application to daily life. Then, check the season you are currently in and read this chapter referring to both the previous season and the next season when necessary. For example, if you are in the first half of the winter, you should also consult autumn; if you are in the second half of winter, it is recommended that you also read spring.
- When you read each of the seasons, you will be invited to try teas, foods and therapeutic exercises that are designed to strengthen the alignment with the season you are living. By accepting this invitation, you move beyond a theoretical understanding, and explore instead a practical universe that, season after season, allows you to create your own understanding of what you are experiencing in the present moment. From an Eastern perspective, this is far more important than theory devoid of any practical manifestation.
- This book is intended to be used as study material, which means you can make notes, underline and use markers for quick reference.
- Share the proposals and knowledge provided with friends and family, so they are integrated into other levels of your life.
- Here, it is intended that, by knowing the rhythm of the seasons, you also discover your personal rhythm, which means, daily, to learn how not to compare your path with that of others who may have already traveled it. Its potential lies in the deep knowledge of your own resources, not the imitation of the resources of others. In this sense, curiosity and pure experimentation are proposed as starting points for this discovery.

- Some support bibliography was used in the creation of this book. If you wish to expand this knowledge, I recommend that you consult and study it. I guarantee that you will find no end in sight, but a nourishing path for the rest of your life.

- This book has no end, and once you have completed a cycle for all the seasons of the year, I invite you to start the journey again, noting the differences between last year's season and the one you are living now.

- I wish you an excellent journey through the seasons, and, after the year has passed, may your understanding of this cycle be renewed.

## 1. LIVING WITHOUT EFFORT (*Chapter 1 excerpt*)

### ONCE UPON A TIME, FOUR THOUSAND YEARS AGO

We are in 2200 B.C., in the Sichuan region of China. The constant floods prevented social and economic progress from following a steady growth. Here we find a man named Yu, the son of a dam engineer who had been contracted to mitigate the constant risk of floods in this area of China. For nine years, his father built dams and dikes to contain the waters. However, their efforts were ineffective in the long run. Dams, though more secure than those of the previous generations, required constant maintenance against the movement of water. Per succession, Yu continued his father's work and studied in detail why this had been ineffective. This reflection led to the construction of a system, over the course 12 years, that included, in addition to dams, also irrigation canals. It was possible to channel the immense power of water to the fields, thus controlling the flooding. In the long run, it allowed the inhabitants of that region to establish themselves safely on the shores of the Yellow River and brought prosperity throughout the region. Today, Yu is known in China as the Great Yu and recognized as a national hero.

### WHAT YOU CAN LEARN WITH THE GREAT YU

The dams erected by the father of the Great Yu, which *appeared* to be working, in reality needed much maintenance. It was the framework that his son created to embrace the volatile and fluid characteristics of the water that allowed the floods to end and the population to thrive. Preference was given to understanding and following the principles of water - channeling it - instead of creating methods to contain and subdue it.

You can also find this story, which motivated the Great Yu to reshape a pre-established process, in your life - without needing to study dam engineering. This story is represented in the elements of your life that «look good», but like the dams of the father of the Great Yu, require a high maintenance energy to be functional. In other words, they are not flowing. If they were, the consumption of energy would not be so great. Observe your daily life and see if you can identify the presence of some of these elements.

- They may be work-related: a job that wears you out and does not fulfill you, despite the prestige, recognition or monetary value that it brings to you at the end of the month.
- They can be elements of your social or intimate life. Although everything looks good, there is a feeling of routine and emptiness.
- They can be monetary elements. Although you have everything you want, you do not have the time nor the space that allows you to enjoy what you have so far acquired.
- It can be your physical and emotional state. Despite appearing to be well and balanced, you may feel that your dam will collapse at any time.

Think about these aspects, especially when you experience some of the following symptoms:

- You cannot organize your spare time.
- You cannot disconnect from the daily demands.
- You cannot relax from physical and mental tensions.
- You feel emotional fluctuations between joy and sadness.
- Variations in appetite - between eating too much and not being hungry.
- Difficulty in falling asleep or getting out of bed.
- Difficulties in setting priorities and making resolutions.

Are you supporting a high maintenance structure? Imagine how long that structure can be sustained. What is not flowing?

When he was given the task of continuing his father's work, Yu reinvented it and did not reject it. This reformulation of an established paradigm took him 12 years to complete. If you want to transform your daily life, think about the history of the Great Yu and that transformation does not necessarily imply the rejection of the present condition. The most consistent changes are often those that use the resources available. These resources, when used from another perspective, can serve as a lever for the simplification of the current processes of your life - without necessarily having to produce a 180 degree change.

By better understanding the rhythm of the seasons, you will learn to use your creative force in more propitious and more advantageous times. It is not the external factors that prevent us from creating transformation, but the ability to recognize the moments that are most conducive to movement or stillness. There are moments of creation, moments of action and celebration, reflection, organization and introspection. When you recognize them, you can flow in life with creativity, freedom and a minimal expenditure of resource, while using the existing resources in the here and now.

#### THE GREAT YU HEIRS

Although historians are divided over the existence of the Great Yu, the story that once upon a time there was a man who discovered it was easier to let flow than to block has had a great impact on Chinese society and has passed from generation to generation to this day. Thus, in some traditional arts, you can find the principle of flowing instead of blocking, applied by the Great Yu.

- In **feng shui**, the art of understanding and organizing space uses this principle. If there are many approaches to creating healthy housing, one of the most important is simplification. To free what is excessive and prevents the vital energy of the inhabitants from coexisting and flowing harmoniously with this space. In doubt, the first approach should be to cleanse and simplify what is unnecessary in order to create openness to what is needed. This concept applies not only to a dwelling, but also to larger areas. In Beijing, the Imperial Palace, also known as the Forbidden City, was designed according to this concept.
- In **Taoism**, the principle of water is widely used. It is represented as a force that cannot be contained. Simultaneously, it has the characteristic of flowing, of adapting to any type of geographic configuration and of assuming a multitude of forms.
- In **traditional food**, simple but nutritious foods that can create the least amount of effort in your digestion are preferred. The simpler the meal, the easier it is ingested, digested and assimilated. More complex approaches distract the body from what is essential and nourishing. A good bread does not need more than four ingredients: flour, water, yeast and salt. A good meal may contain very little: a soup, a whole grain cereal and vegetables. One does not look for more ingredients (for more effectiveness), but for simplicity, without losing the nutritional quality of the meal. Quantity and complexity give way to simplicity and sustainable quality - tailored to those who consume them.

- In **acupuncture**, the imbalances that may arise are related to blockages in areas of the human body; like dams that prevent the vitality of flowing. The structures known as meridians are, for the acupuncturist, the rivers that nourish the entire human body. The needles restore circulation in blocked areas and the accumulated vital energy is taken to other areas where it is deficient. The same applies to **massage**.

- In exercises of therapeutic movement like **chi kung**, the various systems of the body are seen as a river. When there is too much sedentarism, these rivers stagnate, and the organism enters into imbalance and gets sick. To move the body is to move the water and prevent it from stagnating. Through the movement, the water begins to circulate and health can be restored. The first references to this concept arose between the 21st and 16th centuries BC. In a certain area of China, an abnormal excess of humidity had made the joints of the inhabitants painful. Then the shamans created a dance that, when performed, relieved joint pain and restored health. It was known as the «Great Dance».

## **2. SPRING: SPROUT AND BE REBORN (Chapter2 excerpt)**

*"The three months of spring carry with them the period of the development of life.*

*The influences of Heaven and Earth are prepared to generate, everything develops and flourishes.*

*It is advisable to lie down early and get up early in the morning;*

*One should walk energetically around the yard to exercise tendons and bones; loosen the hair, slow down your movements and relax your physical appearance; so you will be strengthening your intentions to be healthy.*

*Life should be promoted, not destroyed. Give and do not subtract. Reward instead of punish.*

*All this is in harmony with Spring and all of these are the methods to nourish human life.*

*Opposing yourself will cause imbalances in the Liver. In the summer there will be cold and there will be no support for growth. "- Book of the Yellow Emperor Chapter II<sup>1</sup>*

### **WHEN DOES THE SPRING BEGIN?**

Recalling the first chapter, spring, in its essence, has an upward movement of chi and can be identified as the emotional movement of anger - the impetus that brings your creative visions to light. This is the spring proposal: what is latent finds ground for its realization. Although this season begins around March 21, this upward movement - with the potential of bringing something new to the world - is already present in your life before that date.

### **MATTER AND ENERGY**

Matter and energy can be considered as two complementary movements that are reflected in the arrival of this season. Matter refers to a fixed date on the calendar, in this case, March 21st. This is the date that is socially and politically accepted as the arrival of spring. It's when Arbor Day is celebrated, and it is announced that 'love is in the air' and the colors in the fields begin to appear with a heat that has carefully returned. Here, Spring enters suddenly, from one day to the next. It occurs at the spring equinox, when day and night have the same duration. Traditionally, in many cultures, there are celebrations that mark the end of winter. Arrival of spring means that you survived the austerity of the previous season, which opens new opportunities after the trials that winter has put you through.

There is, however, a movement that does not appear on the calendar and precedes or follows the spring equinox. It is related to the timing of your personal spring. This movement arrives when events or sensations related to the upward movement of chi arise. It manifests in your life when something new happens with sudden characteristics - the proposal of a new job, a new project, a new relationship, a new journey, someone you know has a baby bringing new life to the world, a feeling of childish joy, which can arise spontaneously and creates surprise, the contemplation of the sunrise or the feeling that a new beginning is also possible in that moment.

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<sup>1</sup> Comparative translation of several editions of this work. See bibliography for more references. All quotations in this chapter refer to the Book of the Yellow Emperor Chapter unless when noted.

You may also feel a stronger movement, like thunder that stirs and creates sudden movement and simultaneously cleans the air, as it does in «real» thunderstorms. This thunder is the visceral scream that was trapped and has finally managed to be expressed, the punch on the table that releases the tension of the whole body, the latent eureka that echoes in every corner of the universe.

While these sensations may spring up in all seasons, they bring a sense of release and relief from accumulated tension.

#### AND WHEN THE SPRING DOES NOT HAPPEN?

The arrival of personal spring or solstice spring may be accompanied by a feeling of deep asthenia, frustration or inability to keep the pace with nature:

- Notice that around you plants are growing in full vitality, that there are people in love, the air gets warmer and lighter, there is a request for creation and growth by nature. Internally, you don't feel in harmony with these manifestations, and they may even give rise to deep irritation or sadness.
- It may be the frustration of not being able to embrace a new moment, project or adventure that is proposed to you. Not because you don't want to, but because of a lack of physical or mental energy.
- It is in this season that the inability to get up in the morning full of energy is accentuated. You feel a slight irritation or nervousness that persists throughout the day. This state makes your view of the world warlike and less optimistic.
- There is more dissatisfaction and disagreement in which «others are to blame» for what happens to you. Time, pain, traffic, pollution, government, family, noisy neighbors or conspiracy theories become the most common scapegoats.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, when these characteristics arise for you in springtime, it means that you lived the winter season at an intense pace - when it should have been lived in a calm and more internal manner. Winter prepares spring, as night prepares the vitality with which you wake. If you go to bed after midnight, you often have trouble waking up and are unable to keep up with the pace of the morning; it is easier to postpone or procrastinate tasks that are proposed to you than to do them. Irritation may increase throughout the day, and you may experience frustration, physical sensations of tightness in the diaphragm, digestive problems and difficulty finding solutions to problems, which causes you even more frustration and discouragement.

The same goes for spring; the inability to live this season is often not related to what you live in the moment, but to the winter, which was probably less restful than it should have been. In this chapter, we will explore how you can reverse this situation and generate creative alignment with your life purpose.