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TANYA'S NEWSLETTER

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Dear Friends,

Thanks to the many people who gave me feedback on my first newsletter in April! Because of their comments, I am switching to a monthly newsletter that is much shorter. That means, I will cover the same subjects as in April but spread out over the course of the next three months. You may find that your favorite category is waiting for you in the next edition!

COMING IN AUG 26:

- Aging Gracefully: Qi Deficiency Part 2
- Kay's Corner: Photo Album
- Daily Activist: Tips About Soap
- Going Vegan: Curried Rice & Lentils
- Living with Lyme: Optimize your Energy

COMING IN SEPT 26:

- Aging Gracefully: Qi Deficiency Part 3
- Kay's Corner: Pigging Out
- Writing Tip: Online Writing Courses
- Going Vegan: Applesauce & Walnuts
- Zen Story: The Farmer's Horse

Happy reading and a big hug,

Tanya



*Strong back,
Soft front,
Clear eyes.*

—Zen teacher Roshi Joan Halifax



FREE BONUS!

Want a little more peace, comfort, and balance in your life? You need a free copy of *Tanya's Collection of Zen Stories*! Five minutes of reading this book will ease your mind and soothe your heart. Best of all, **you can get a copy for FREE!**

Forward this newsletter to all of your friends telling them:

"Sign up to receive this free newsletter under: www.tanyaswriting.com and write: "(Your Name) sent me" in the comments box. We will BOTH receive a FREE PDF containing a Zen story guaranteed to brighten our day!"

And if **five or more** of your friends sign up, I'll send you a **FREE COPY** of the actual book! Your choice: English or German. (With ten or more, I'll throw in a **free audiobook** as soon as it comes out!)

Comb through your list of email friends today and forward this free newsletter to them! Because we can all use a little more peace of mind. Your heart will thank you! I thank you, too.



When you aim at your own thoughts and see through them—including all your hopes and expectations about reaching your goal—then you can simply be in the present moment. Therein lies your full potential. And you have touched the essence of Zen practice.

JUST LISA: Elderly Healthcare Crisis

My friends agree: Just Lisa is timely, because it subtly addresses themes about the challenges of caregiving and the current problems with the Medicaid system.

In January of 2024, I discovered my main character, Lisa, and her search for spirituality, but I didn't really have a through-line—a main problem or driving force that causes a chain of events leading to the emotional growth of the main character. (Writers, see my blog *Creating Obstacles in Fiction*.)

Then, members of my writing group happened to express personal grievances over elderly healthcare in the United States. One member had to remove her father from a facility due to poor care, another told me how some assisted living facilities had evicted residents when their funds ran out because Medicaid didn't cover their costs. I was outraged!

Many skilled nursing facilities and some assisted living facilities establish a limit to how many beds they allocate for Medicaid recipients. Financially, it makes good business sense, but what happens when the elderly are ripped from their new homes? And where do they end up?

A childhood friend mentioned she was trying to legally secure her mother's place at a facility. The monthly costs were high—almost \$6000 a month in an assisted living facility. The contract she signed stated if her mother paid two full years, then she was guaranteed a place even if her bank account ran dry, and she ended up on Medicaid. However, those terms could change if the facility was sold.

All this gave me an external plot line for Just Lisa. What if a respectable assisted living facility went bankrupt and ended up being sold? It also triggered one of the internal through-lines: What if Lisa had family troubles, and her place of work at this facility was her newfound family? This set the stage for the protagonist's growth: What would Lisa do to protect the people she cared about?

Both of my parents passed quite early, and although I cared for a man in a wheelchair for fourteen years (my first husband was injured in a motorcycle accident), I didn't have experience with caring for an elderly parent. I did several interviews with caregivers, read

Old and Sick in America: The Journey through the Health Care System (2017) by Muriell R. Gillick, M.D., and researched nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Many of you are familiar with the challenges faced when your loved ones reach an age where they need assistance—more assistance than you can provide. There is a huge movement towards “aging in place,” but with an increase in both longevity and dementia over the past decades, growing old could end up being unaffordable and uncomfortable. Both for the elderly and their children.

As with every crisis, there are solutions. Many of which depend on community involvement, others which challenge the economic paradigm of “for-profit” business. When Just Lisa comes out in 2028, I hope you'll pick up a copy and see what happened to my protagonist!

NOT SO FUN FACTS:



The U.S. elderly healthcare system faces a looming crisis by 2030, driven by a rapid demographic shift (the massive post-World War Baby Boomer generation), where 1 in 5 Americans will be over 65. Key future problems include a severe shortage of geriatric care workers, unsustainable financial pressure on Medicare/Medicaid, and a critical shortage of and high demand for long-term care, particularly for chronic diseases like Alzheimer's.

Workforce Shortages: The US will need significantly more geriatricians with a projected demand of 30,000 by 2030 while currently having only about 7,300. Additionally, 50% of physicians and 33% of nurses are over 55, raising burnout and retirement concerns.

Financial Sustainability: Medicare's hospital insurance trust fund is projected to be depleted by 2036 and Social Security funds by 2035. The high, rising cost of long-term care (\$5,000 ~\$9,000/month for assisted living or nursing homes) poses a massive financial burden on families.

<https://www.cureus.com/articles/323991>



Sidenote: Trump cancels Haitian TPS status

FACT: Approximately 28% of the total long-term care workforce are foreign-born, and Haitians represent a significant and concentrated share of direct-care workers.

FACT: Currently, an estimated 8,000 caregivers from Haiti holding Temporary Protected Status (TPS), serve thousands of aging parents and children across the country.

Nadia, Leonard's wife, is one of them. She recently completed a course as a Home Health Aid and is (was) looking for work now that her youngest can be left with a sitter (Leonard is my godchild.).

I don't want the supreme court's vote to pass without a reaction. I'm so far away. I can't organize a march or protest. All I can do is sit here in my living room, safe and sound, and press "Send."

PLEASE WRITE YOUR SENATOR OR CONGRESSMAN: research "Senators from (your state)" and their contact information is readily available. They need to hear that the people are against this decision.

https://forumtogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/TPS-Fact-Sheet_October-2023.pdf



Kay's Corner A Dog's Life



- The Mariner flyby July 1965
- The historic July 1976 landing of NASA's Viking1, the first spacecraft to successfully operate on the surface of Mars
- The Mars Pathfinder landing, July 1997
- The launch of the Perseverance rover, July 2020
- Nasa's Perseverance recently discovered what could be fossilized microbes, strengthening the hypothesis that lakes once existed on Mars.

Makes you wonder how they messed things up so bad that everything turned to red dust. It's been so hot here in Switzerland that I decided to check out Mars myself. It's definitely not for me. No grass to run through, ponds to jump in, and definitely not enough sticks. Maybe we'd better clean up our act here at home.

AGING GRACEFULLY: How to Prevent Qi Deficiency, Part One

In the AGING GRACEFULLY series, we take a closer look at the aging process. There are ways we can slow that process before we turn to Qigong or other energy work for assistance. In the APRIL 26 Newsletter, I explained The Four Dangers as viewed by Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). ([Request a free copy of the APRIL Newsletter here.](#)) In upcoming issues, we will look at the **six factors responsible for aging** and how we can prevent or slow these processes. In this issue, we will discuss **Qi deficiency (low energy)** because is central to all the others.

Qi (pronounced CHEE as in cheese) deficiency symptoms include fatigue, weakness, shortness of breath, unwillingness to speak, flaccid muscles, wrinkled skin, low blood pressure, and the inability to digest properly.

You may have just a few of these symptoms if you don't have enough Qi. Some of these symptoms when on their own may be caused by other things. But this is what we call the Qi deficiency pattern.

The causes of Qi deficiency include physical or mental overexertion, problems with the digestive system, and problems with the lungs.

For example, Qi deficiency can be caused by physical or mental exhaustion from overwork (we're not talking about stress here, just long hours). You consume more energy than your body can produce. You are burning the candle at both ends. Perhaps you work too long in the garden or the office, or you worry too much about your parents or children, or you spend hours every day writing a novel (LOL), and you feel exhausted.

Tip: *Listen to your body and don't overwork it. Relax your mind. Make sure you get enough "down time." And trust the universe: repeat to yourself "Just for today, I will not worry."*

Secondly, Qi deficiency can be caused by a weakness in the digestive system. If your stomach doesn't digest well, you won't have enough energy.

PLEASE NOTE: When you crave certain foods, that results from habits. Habits are all in your head. It only takes three weeks to break a food habit. If you can give

something up for just three weeks, you will usually find that you no longer crave it. Sometimes it only takes a few days.

Spicy food is not good for the stomach. Cold food is not good for the stomach. Raw food is not good for the stomach. Young people can handle all these things, just like a new car can drive fast. But you have to be more careful with an older car (I'm referring to anyone over 40)!

The stomach maintains around 99°F (37°C). It cooks your food in order to break down the bonds such as cellulose. So, if your food is cooked ahead, then you save your stomach a lot of energy. Of course, it is best to use fresh fruits and vegetables (no prepackaged food with additives), but steam the fruits and vegetables or cook them gently until they are soft. Soak the whole grains overnight, then rinse them and cook them slowly for an hour. This breaks down the cellulose and saves the stomach a lot of work. Just like babies need baby food because they have a weak digestive system, cooked foods help you save your energy.

Tip: *Eat warm, fresh but well-cooked food.*

Next, the stomach uses various acids to break down fat, carbohydrates, and proteins. If you drink a lot of fluids while eating, these acids become diluted and don't work as well. It is best to drink a half hour before or an hour after your meal. Mostly, drink small amounts of room temperature or warm water throughout the day, but not while eating.

Also, if you eat a lot of different kinds of foods, the acids get all mixed up and don't work very well. The Americans know this well. We have something called a "buffet stomachache" which happens when you eat a little bit of everything. A clump that sits in your stomach, a feeling of fullness. Plus, you will tend to overeat if there is too much variety!

Tip: *Drink small amounts of water throughout the day. Don't drink with your meal, chew well, and don't eat too many different foods at once.*

Try not to think too much while eating, or exercise too soon after eating. If you think too much or walk around while eating, the blood needed to oxygenize your stomach cells goes to your brain or your muscles. Your blood needs to go to your stomach to help digestion.

And it is best not to argue at mealtime. Relax when you eat.

Your stomach also needs a break: at least two or three hours between meals of only fluids. And, if you decide to rest after a meal, be sure to use pillows to prop your head up. If you lay flat, stomach acids may irritate the connection to your throat.

Tip: *Don't work while eating. Eat sitting down. Don't eat between meals. If you lie down after eating, keep your upper torso slightly elevated. Wait one hour after eating before exercising.*

These are common rules, but so many people disobey them! The liver, gallbladder, and intestines also play a role in your digestion. How they affect your energy will be covered in an upcoming newsletter.

If you take care of your digestive system, you will age more slowly. Traditional Chinese Medicine tells us that the Gu Qi from the stomach (digestion) combines with the Da Qi from the lungs (breathing) to produce the Qing Qi, the vital life force responsible for your daily energy. So, what about the lungs?

Do you have asthma or allergies? Do you regularly inhale toxic fumes at your workplace (hairstylists, miners, farmers who spray pesticides) or home (cleaning supplies, mold)? Do you smoke? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then you likely have weak lung Qi.

Tip: *Do you spend all day in an office? Or inside your house? Try opening some windows. Just five minutes to freshen the room. The best time is when there are no fumes from traffic. Go for a walk in the woods! Oxygen is one of the great healers. Meditative, deep-breathing exercises, such as Qigong, are ideal for strengthening the lungs. You can [watch my free Qigong video here](#). The neutral move is the best for the lungs.*

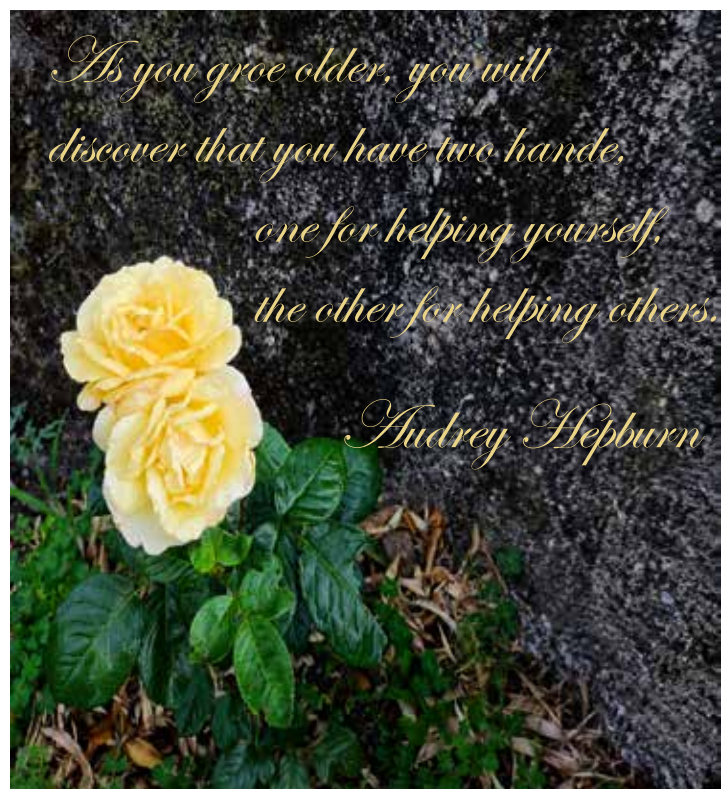
Back to the Gu Qi combining with the Da Qi: how does the digestive system influence the lungs? A weak digestive system often produces phlegm. If your digestive system doesn't cook well, the food you eat ends up a sticky mess. TCM says that the digestive system produces phlegm and the lungs store it. If you have phlegm in your lungs, it may be phlegm resulting from a weak digestive system. And if your lungs can't breathe fully because of this phlegm, that also adds to your Qi deficiency.

Finally, let's consider emotions. In TCM, the lungs are associated with grieving. If you are sad, if you cry, you weaken your lungs. If you listen to a person sobbing, you can hear how the lungs are involved.

One of the biggest problems for the lungs is modern media. Every day we watch the news and see tragedies all over the planet. It has been proven that grieving triggers an immune response. No wonder we have weak immune systems! In the old days, there were fewer tragedies because we only knew what was happening locally. If someone got sick and died, our grief triggered a healthy immune response. But today, our immune systems are overworked.

Tip: *To help the lung qi, breathe fresh, clean air. Breathe deeply and relaxedly, like in Qigong, to reduce the aging process. Don't focus too much on the news and world-wide tragedies. Let go of grief and focus on the positive.*

The stomach and lungs are important to the largest category of the six factors contributing to aging: Qi Deficiency. More on the liver, gallbladder, and colon in an upcoming issue. And if you are feeling a little Qi deficient after reading all this, go ask a loved one for a hug! My mother always recommended a minimum of eight hugs a day. She said a hug is the best Qi strengthener there is!



GOING VEGAN: Quinoa & Snap Peas

I LOVE QUINOA! (Pronounced keen-wah.) This tiny grain is a complete plant protein containing all nine essential amino acids. Rich in dietary fiber, iron, magnesium, and antioxidants, it supports muscle repair, digestive wellness, and healthy blood sugar regulation. Naturally free of gluten, organic quinoa is an ideal base for anyone with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity.

It's a fast cook this time of year, in case you are suffering through the recent heatwaves torturing both Europe and the US. All you need is one cup of organic quinoa, two cups of water, and a pinch of salt.

I like to rinse the quinoa under cold water first using a fine-meshed sieve to remove naturally occurring saponins which can cause a bitter or soapy taste. Then, just add the water, bring to a boil, and reduce to a gentle simmer for 12 to 15 minutes. Next, set the pot aside for an additional 5 minutes, then fluff gently with a fork.

My snap peas began blooming in May, and I feasted on them throughout June before removing the vines last week and hanging them upside down to dry the forgotten pods for seeds. So, I just picked a handful of pods, pulled a carrot from my garden which I then chopped into small pieces, and added both of these to the pot when the quinoa had been simmering about five minutes. That's also when I added the salt.



You don't need meat to make this a filling meal! But if you are still addicted to milk products, you can add 20 to 50 grams of organic feta cheese to go vegetarian. Quinoa is now grown in Switzerland, so I feel good about promoting shorter supply chains and ethical, localized farming.



ZEN STORIES: New Audiobook Coming!

Here's my latest GOOD NEWS!

[Eunice Wong](#) has agreed to record the audiobook for [Tanya's Collection of Zen Stories](#)!

I'm so excited to have such a famous voice carrying my stories to you. Audible honored Eunice as one of Audible's Best Women Narrators, and she has won two Audie Awards! She is also a 7-time Audie Finalist, including Audiobook of the Year and Best Fiction Narrator. In 2024, she was one of 12 winners of the American Library Association's RUSA Listen List: Outstanding Audiobook Narration. Eunice has even lectured at Princeton!

We're still planning, but for Audiobook fans out there, Eunice's voice will reach you soon!

And if you prefer listening to reading, please tell me what podcasts you listen to. I'll be doing my first podcast next month, and I'd like to know what you like and what you don't. Drop me a line in [my contact form](#) or send an email to info@tanyaswriting.com.



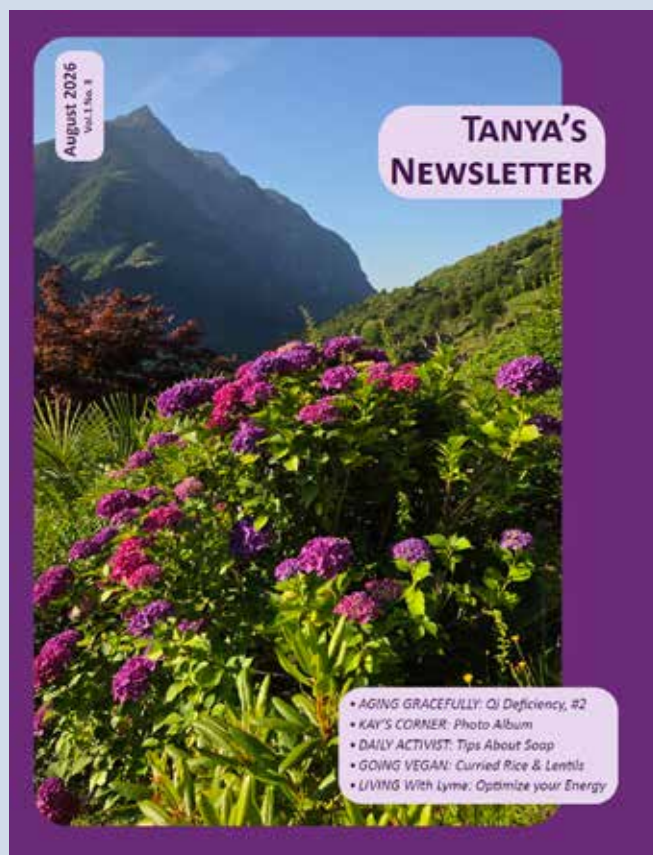
SPECIAL SHOUT-OUT

To my good neighbor, Dante, of [Villa Ricordo](#). This lovely bed and breakfast can be seen from my kitchen window. We exchange veggies from our gardens, and Dante even has his own chickens! German relatives of mine stayed with him last year and raved about the good food and company. If you decide to visit the Valle Blenio region known as Valley of the Sun, you will be well cared for at [Villa Ricordo](#).



UP NEXT:

Coming on August 8th:



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