

The three sources of energy

By Xiaoyao Xingzhe

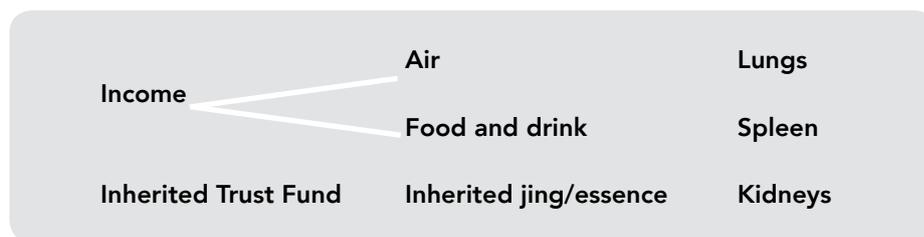
PATIENTS often ask why they are no longer as fertile as they were in their twenties. “I mean, I am only 35, its not like I’m old or anything. Why should I be less fertile than when I was 25, or even 20?”

In attempting to answer this question over the years, a diagram emerged (right) that illustrated the situation in financial terms. This seemed to be the most understandable for patients. But just by the way it also illustrated the need for *yang sheng* practices—practices that nourish life, regular practices that reduce the leakage of *jing*, *qi*, and *shen*: vital essence, energy, and spirit.

We have only three sources of energy: the air that we breath, the food that we eat, and the inherited *jing*/essence which is stored in the Kidneys. It is this last which supports our growth in our mother's womb until we are born, and then continues to support the growth of the bones of our frame until we are more or less fully grown. This inherited *jing*/essence then turns into our own reproductive energy. Like a family trust fund passed down the generations, intended to be preserved and increased, the *jing* should be employed only for reproductive purposes or for emergencies, while we live day-to-day on our ‘income’ — the air and food we take in.

But we don’t.

We, like little rich kids bedazzled with our wealth, spend beyond our income, and simply borrow from our trust fund whenever we need more



energy — or simply want a ‘buzz’. This in fact is the tell-tale sign that we are borrowing from the Kidney *jing*: instead of the normal feeling of quietly sufficient energy, we get the fine tremor, the ‘rush’, and even occasionally palpitations and insomnia when we really overdo it. Coffee and other stimulants do not give us energy, they simply facilitate a loan from the trust fund.

This trust fund is not bottomless, however, as much as it may seem so in our 20s: we begin to notice that our hair or skin is not so shiny or resilient, we don’t heal as well as before, and in fact, we are aging. Shock.

It’s an even greater shock when (or more like ‘if’) we ever think through the consequences of the scenario:

- We have never lived solely on our ‘income’, and
- We have been borrowing steadily from our trust fund, but
- This is now depleted, so
- We are forced to live on our income, but
- We still spend at the same rate.

No wonder things are breaking down! And they can only break down so far, before ...

The Daoists, among others, very

early on saw the way this scenario played out, and decided to take steps.

Over the centuries they researched and developed a variety of methods for turning this process of depletion around, starting with reducing the loss of whatever *jing*/essence still remains, then starting to replace it.

Kidney *jing*/essence can be replaced, built up again, but it is a slow process because this energy is a reservoir of concentrated potential, whose main defining characteristic is accumulation in stillness, over a long period.

Unfortunately for us, stillness over any period of time is not a feature of Western society, and lest we be consumed in the fires of our own mad activity we desperately need to learn and practise these life nourishment techniques that the Daoists (and others) have developed and preserved for us, the later generations.

In each future issue, this column will be introduce and discuss aspects of life nourishment techniques, methods and practices, whether it be movement techniques, diet, breathing exercises, martial arts, meditation and so on.

As the Daoists would say, if we can extend our lifespan we might have a *chance* of learning something worthwhile ...