Holistic specialist strips away my emotional junk

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Does this bitterness make my butt look big?
Is this anger giving me the dreaded muffin top?
OK, from the side, does this guilt look like a double chin?
Nothing a little emotional liposuction couldn't cure.

At least, that's what I was thinking when I headed off last week to see Master Gary J. Clyman at the Chicago Wholistic Health Center in Lake View.

A few weeks before Christmas I'd noticed Clyman's ad for "emotional liposuction" in the Monthly Aspersarian, Chicago's guide to all things New Age.

I figured it must be some kind of post-holiday weight-loss gimmick — ya know, get rid of your emotional baggage and get rid of your saddle bags. Presto!

After checking out his detailed Web site, www.chikung.com, I called up his office and Clyman, friendly and witty, seemed harmless enough.

So last week, off we went, photographer Rich Hein and I, on our New Age fishing expedition to see what we might find.

Clad in a royal-blue, Asian-influenced cotton top [kind of like doctors' scrubs but with frog closures and actual sleeves], a grinning Clyman — who looks like a cross between actor Richard Dreyfuss and folk-rocker Jack Johnson — greeted us at the door and invited us into his simple office.

It did not smell of incense. There were no candles burning. No Zen water fountain burbled in the corner. Just a few bookcases, files stacked around and a shelf of what I would later find out were vials of "emotional power remedies," and a padded treatment table. The kind you might find at the chiropractor's office.

"Jammed up emotions," Clyman, 54, is a Qigong master (though he uses the spelling "Chi Kung").

No matter how you spell it, Qigong [pronounced "kee-jung"] is an ancient Chinese healing art that uses a series of gentle, meditative exercises to focus body and mind.

Tai Chi, a popular fixture at many health clubs, is kind of an subset of Qigong. In this healing art, qi or chi is our life force or energy.

In "emotional liposuction," Clyman, who was raised Jewish but has been a "new-born Christian" since 1983, says he uses his qi to channel through his hands.

"That's bitterness, self-hate," Clyman said. "Take the bitterness and blow it out. Take whatever you have — and you don't even have to know what it is. Bitterness is the worst. Bitterness is the most physically feeling emotion of all them all."

No kidding, buddy. I'm thinking writing in pain.

Something happened

After about 10 minutes of this — mixed with several swift punches to the stomach to get his arm moving inside me, he explained, so it could suck up all the bad stuff like a Dust Buster — we were done.

What does he do with all that emotional junk he sucks out?

He flushes it down the drain in the office kitchen's sink by washing his hands. And that's it.

I had a bruise. It's nearly gone now.

And I feel, well, different.

I'm not one to believe in such things, but something transpired. Something happened. Maybe it was spiritual.

Maybe it was qi.

Maybe it was the power of suggestion.

Who knows?

"It will take you a while to recognize what's missing," he said.

This much I can attest to: About a week later, I yelled less in traffic, and in vain, to shout "Oh!"

"That's bitterness, self-hatred," Clyman said. "Take the bitterness and blow it out. Take whatever you have — and you don't even have to know what it is. Bitterness is the worst. Bitterness is the most physically feeling emotion of all them all."

Using two hands, he does it — literally — pressing down a few inches below my diaphragm.

The pain — it came in waves, I couldn't breath, it was unrelevent. I've never had a child, but from what my friends have described, this may have been in the ballpark.

When Clyman blew it into my hands, Clyman said as I gasped for breath, trying, in vain, to shout "Oh!"

"That's bitterness, self-hatred," Clyman said. "Take the bitterness and blow it out of your hands. Just blow it out. Take whatever you have — and you don't even have to know what it is. Bitterness is the worst. Bitterness is the most physically feeling emotion of all them all."

Nothing, he says.

Clyman was checking for any signs of anguish, abandonment or sorrow.

A spot of guilt

In almost 30 years of practice, he says he's discovered that people have eight "emotional energy release" spots on the upper body.

Not everybody has the same emotional baggage, which would explain why when he found the abandonment spot on my sternum, I felt nothing special.

But when he got to the spot on the side of my right rib cage that indicates anger, I nearly leapt off the table and started to sob in pain.

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