

# **Burning Mountain Fire and Penetrating Heaven Cold (Classic Tonification and Sedation) using Dr. Miriam Lee's Ten Great Needle Treatment**

In Tung's acupuncture, we often use very strong stimulation with an "even" or neutral technique. This involves inserting the needle to its proper depth, then strongly rotating it in both directions equally, allowing the body to adjust as needed and desired, which it definitely will do. However, there are a few occasions when either tonification or sedation techniques are required. When I teach classes on Tung's acupuncture, I usually combine my lecture on **Dr. Miriam Lee's Ten Great Needles Treatment** (described in *Volume One*) with the lecture on tonification and sedation. This treatment is an excellent way to illustrate the fundamentals of Burning Mountain Fire (classic tonification) and Penetrating Heaven Cold (classic sedation).

First, let's review the Ten Great Needles Treatment, which I fondly refer to as Miriam's Tune-up (ML10):

When I studied with Dr. Lee, I watched her use the Ten Great Needles Treatment ten to twenty times every day for a very wide variety of ailments. It was her primary "go-to" treatment for all colds, flus and allergies (with LI20 Welcome Fragrance), and for qi- and blood-deficient conditions such as: exhaustion and fatigue, postpartum anemia, post-surgical weakness, recovery from chemotherapy and radiation, severe blood loss, deficiency-type epilepsy, hypotension, hypothyroid, weakness causing mental instability, depression, confusion or anxiety. This treatment is excellent to address grief after the loss of a loved one, as it releases metal and bolsters the earth beneath the patient's feet. Miriam often needled ML10 to address blood-deficient-type insomnia, adding Yin Tang (Extra Point) and DU20 Bai Hui, a combination also used with auricular points to increase metabolism in treatments for weight loss. *Note: ML10 is not used for treating excess-type high blood pressure or other Liver-excess-type conditions.*

**History:** Dr. Lee's O.M.D. thesis was published as *Insights of a Senior Acupuncturist* (1992). In this work, she explained the origin of her Ten Great Needles Treatment, which she created to address the widespread depression and mental health disorders she began to see in America. These types of disorders were less common in China, where the struggle for life itself took so much energy that few people were able to suffer anguish over the quality of their life. Consulting the *Nei Jing*, Dr. Lee found the following passage: "When the Stomach and Spleen, the central jiao, are attacked by emotion, pure qi cannot ascend to the brain, and the evil qi, the waste, cannot descend. It will remain stuck in the Stomach." She rationalized that in Western terms, pure qi equates to oxygen, and evil qi equates to carbon dioxide, and when the pure qi, or oxygen, is not ascending to the head and the evil qi is not dispelled, mental disorders ensue, and the patient is not able to find their way forward in life. She needled these points and asked the patient to doze for half an hour, if possible. When we returned to the patient, we knew if the pure qi had arrived because the color of the patient's face had changed; their cheeks were pink and their face had *shen*.

**Dr. Miriam Lee's Ten Great Needles Treatment:** ST36 Zu San Li, SP6 San Yin Jiao, LI11 Qu Chi, LI4 He Gu and LU7 Lie Que. In cases of deficiency or weakness, the points on the legs are tonified first, to raise the pure qi; then, the points on the arms are sedated to remove the evil qi and to make room for the pure qi to arrive. If the patient has excessive stagnation in the upper body, we may want to disperse the upper points before tonifying the lower points, to avoid causing a blockage in the center and pushing against the excess.

ST36 Zu San Li frees up stuck qi in the middle jiao, causes the pure qi to ascend, adjusts the qi and blood of all the channels, strengthens the Spleen and Stomach, calms the spirit, and strengthens the Kidney, vision and hearing. ST36 has a regulatory function that can address blood pressure, help to increase or decrease white blood cells, and increase stomach acid, making it an effective remedy for food stagnation. I usually use a 30mm needle on this point for a constitutional type of treatment; however, if a patient has Heart excess, use a deep needle (50mm) on ST36.

**SP6** San Yin Jiao is chosen because stagnant Liver qi can cause depression, and SP6 links the Liver with the Kidney and Spleen. SP6 controls yin blood, regulates the reproductive system, and strengthens the Kidney qi to restore memory and vitality while bringing equilibrium to the Three Leg Yin.

**LI11** Qu Chi and **LI4** He Gu help to move the bowels, eliminating waste and helping the evil qi to descend and drain. Additionally, LI11 dispels wind and relieves the surface, regulates qi and increases white blood cells. LI4 opens the Lung and Large Intestine and treats many diseases from the neck up. This point has a close relationship to the San Jiao, which regulates qi through all the jiao, regulates the pores, and expels wind. This point causes energy to rise and scatter.

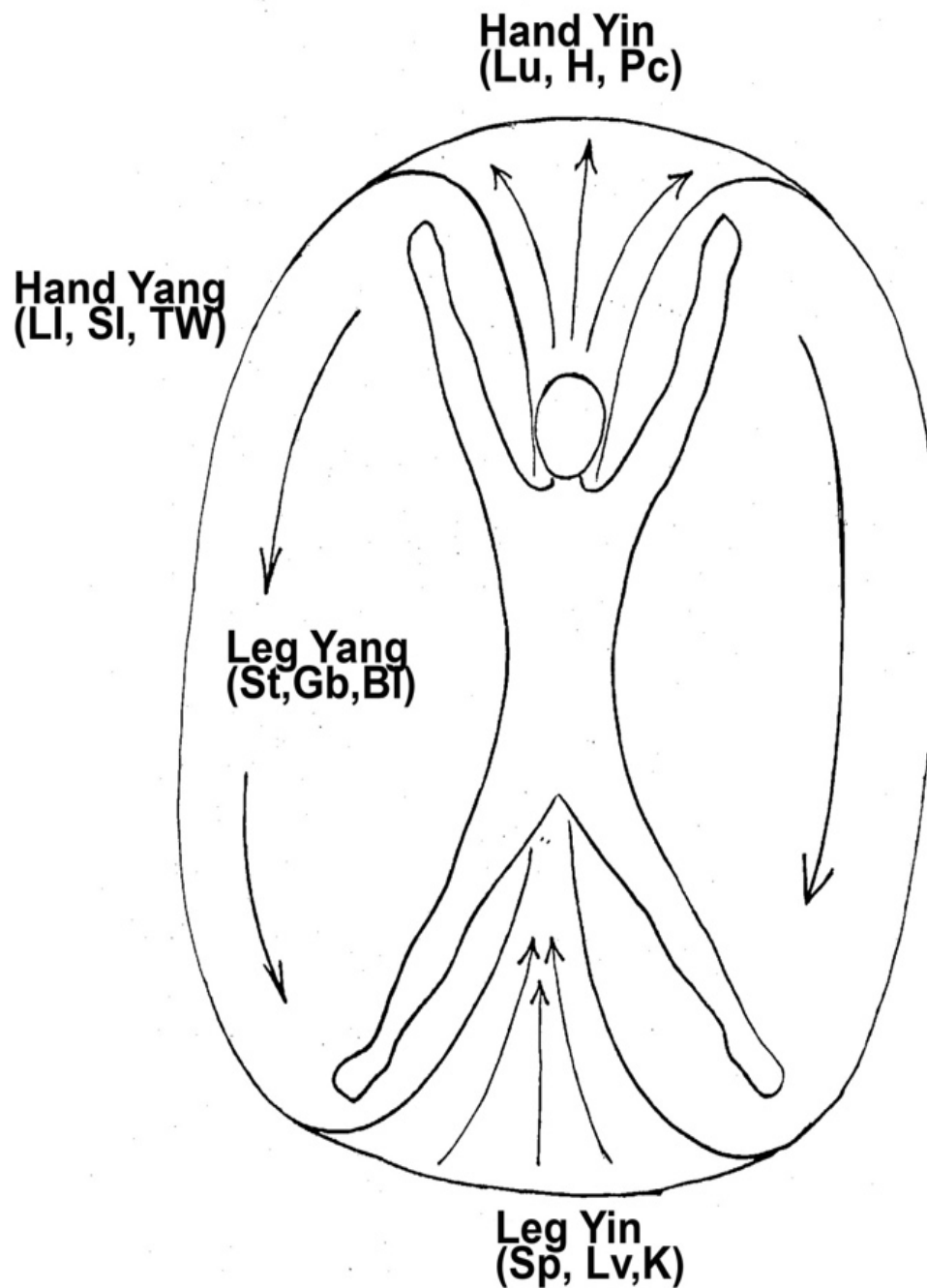
**LU7** Lie Que clears the Kidney (which rules the brain), treats the head and neck, clears the chest, and treats the intestines. Because Lung is the mother of Kidney, we can use the analogy of a straw in a glass of water to describe the ability of the Lung to draw qi upwards, strengthening the Kidney. If we cap the top of a straw with our finger and lift it out of the water, the straw remains full. This illustrates the action of strong Lung qi. When we uncapped the straw, the water drops out; this can be likened to Lung deficiency causing Kidney weakness (incontinence). If the Lung energy is weak, there may be anal prolapse, menstrual spotting or urinary incontinence. If Lung qi is excess, fluids are retained, causing difficult urination in conditions such as prostate enlargement. This is why an excess-type cough can delay labor and delivery. In order to induce labor, we must sedate the Lungs.

**ML10 variations:**

**Shen Guan:** For patients who are elderly or extremely qi deficient, 77.18 Kidney Gate (Shen Guan) can be added to the ML10 protocol. Please note that I sometimes define “elderly” as 40 years or older, as this is the age when the qi begins to wane. Shen Guan is frequently added when conditions are chronic, or for elderly patients.

**ML10 during pregnancy:** It is important to treat a pregnant patient less frequently, using fewer needles and lighter stimulation. Miriam created a variation on her Ten Great Needles Treatment specifically for pregnancy: bilaterally needle Four Flower Upper (ST36), 77.18 Shen Guan, LI11 Qu Chi, and LU7 Lie Que (30 mm needles with only light stimulation). *Caution: While treating pregnant patients, do not forget that both LI4 He Gu and SP6 San Yin Jiao are forbidden to needle during pregnancy!*

## **The Energetic Flow**



**Diagram 1**

The above drawing is an ideal illustration of the constant, continuous circulation of qi within the twelve regular meridian pathways. What is unique about this drawing is that it clearly shows the mirrored, side-to-side flow of the bilateral energetic channels that

acupuncturists seek to directly influence with needles. The success of a treatment has everything to do with the practitioner's clear understanding of this circulation of qi.

One day when I was cutting an apple in half, I noticed that the resulting shape perfectly illustrated this mirrored bilateral energetic flow of qi, which moves out from the center of the body to the extremities, around, down, and back upward again. The image became my inspiration to draw this diagram, which shows the classic meridian pathway flows in a way that no one else had previously drawn.

Starting from the Lung channel (Hand Tai Yin), the energy flows outward through the thumb, enters the index finger with the Large Intestine channel (Hand Yang Ming), and continues toward the torso as the Large Intestine channel, where it transitions to the Foot Yang Ming (Stomach channel) as it travels all the way down the lateral aspect of the leg. The qi then merges from the Stomach channel into the Foot Tai Yin (Spleen channel) at the toes and continues back upward. The diagram shows the entire circuit of energy through the pathways (LU-LI-ST-SP-HT-SI-UB-KD-PC-SJ-GB-LV) as it comes full circle and begins again with the Lung channel.

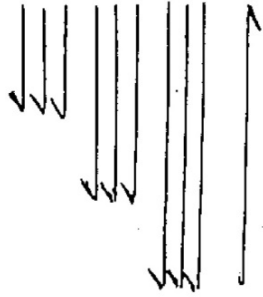
I once had a patient who systematically traced this entire circuit for me after the insertion of a single needle. This patient knew absolutely nothing about acupuncture or Chinese medicine, but he described feeling the sensation of qi as it perfectly followed the circuit. The accuracy of his description convinced me of meridian theory more than any teacher or experience ever did or could.

This complete circuit through all twelve channels has been documented to occur in precisely 28 minutes and 48 seconds, which is why needles should be retained for a minimum of thirty minutes whenever possible.

Please take a moment to study the energetic flow of qi shown in the above diagram. It will help you understand the discussion that follows our explanation of the classic textbook methods of tonification and sedation.

# Tonification and Sedation

Burning Mountain Fire  
To Tonify



Penetrating Heaven Cold  
To Disperse



**Diagram 2**

This diagram gives us a visual depiction of how we tonify or disperse using needle insertion and withdrawal.

Tonification, using Burning Mountain Fire, entices or calls the qi to the needle and is performed via three progressive levels of penetration (superficial, medium, and deeper) with three rotations of the needle at each level for a total of nine needle rotations, which tonifies. At the end of the treatment, to prevent the qi from leaking out (which would disperse), we withdraw the needle quickly and cap the point to seal the qi.

Conversely, when we are sedating or dispersing, we plunge the needle in to its furthest desired depth to push the qi away from the needle and apply the six rotations to sedate. When the treatment is complete, we withdraw the needle slowly, gently, and discreetly, maintaining the intention of retrieving the needle without drawing the qi back toward the point. This is called Penetrating Heaven Cold.

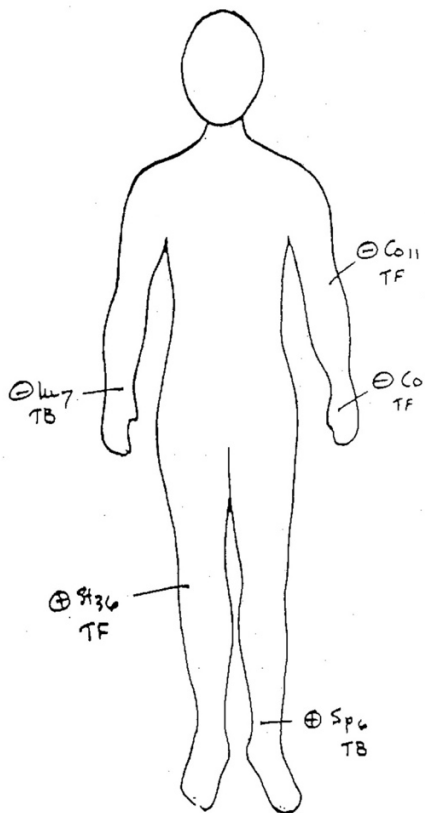
Please note: I always apply my tonification or sedation technique – nine or six rotations of the needle – directly after inserting the needle. After the needle has been retained for the duration of the treatment, I remove it either quickly (for tonification) or slowly (for sedation).

Before continuing, please study Diagram 2: Tonification and Sedation again, so you can integrate this additional knowledge with your understanding of the energetic flow diagram.

TECHNIQUE ON THE NEEDLE

Tonify = ⊕ Sedate = ⊖  
 TF= Thumb Forward  
 TB= Thumb Backward

	9 X's ⊕	6 X's ⊖
HAND YIN (LU, HT, PC)	TF	TB
LEG YANG (ST, GB, UB)	TF	TB
LEG YIN (SP, LV, K)	TB	TF
HAND YANG (LI, SI, TW)	TB	TF



Miriam's Tune-Up  
 10 Bi-lateral Points

Diagram 3



This last diagram may appear confusing at first, but through the following explanation you will understand its components and learn how to combine the energetic flow to manipulate qi with tonification and sedation techniques specific to each meridian pathway.

To make this concept as easy as possible to grasp, let's do an exercise that will help you understand needle rotation as it applies to tonifying and sedating. Grab two pencils, one in each hand, and hold them vertically between your thumbs and index fingers as you extend your arms out in front of you. Keeping the energetic flow in mind (as depicted in Diagram 1: the Energetic Flow), push your thumbs forward. Notice how the pencil in your left hand rotates in a counterclockwise direction, while the pencil in your right hand rotates in a clockwise direction.

Now, imagine standing at the feet of a patient who is lying face up on a table.

Superimpose Diagram 1 on the patient's body and visualize the flow of energy. Imagine that the pencil in your left hand is a needle you are applying to the patient's right leg at ST36. If you rotate the needle by pushing your left thumb forward, this motion on ST36 will tonify, build or strengthen the whole body's qi. Your right hand, also moving thumb forward on a needle placed in ST36 in the patient's left leg, likewise tonifies the point and therefore the whole body. Moving the thumb forward on the Foot Yang Ming (ST channel), using each of your hands on the patient's corresponding legs (your left hand on their right leg, your right on their left), enables you to more easily grasp the concept of tonification and sedation. We move the thumb forward to tonify on the Stomach channel because the Foot Yang Ming is traveling away from the torso, until it reaches the second toe and transitions to the Foot Tai Yin Spleen channel. Before you let yourself feel utterly overwhelmed, please let us continue for just a moment.

In the opposite direction of the Stomach channel (which travels down), the Spleen channel moves the qi up the medial side of the leg, returning it to the torso. Because of this change in direction, to tonify on the Spleen channel we pull our thumbs backward on the needles (rotating them in the opposite direction to those placed on the Stomach

channel). Remember how you held the pencils, arms extended out in front of your body, practice pulling your thumbs back, and observe the direction of rotation. Pause to contemplate these two instructions for tonification, based on the direction in which the pathway is traveling.

We will continue in a moment, but first I want to take this opportunity to point out that because moving the thumb forward on ST36 tonifies, we can deduce that moving the thumb backward on ST36 will sedate. Likewise, if rotating the needle with the thumb moving backward tonifies SP6, then moving the thumb forward on SP6 will sedate. Notice that internal/external paired meridians are stimulated in opposite ways to respectively tonify or sedate.

Studying Diagram 3, notice the “plus” and “minus” symbols assigned to tonification and sedation. Now look down the column on the left until you find the Stomach channel under the heading LEG YANG. Look just to the right and find TF, meaning thumb forward, under the column designating tonification, or 9X’s (referring to the rotation of the needle three times at each of the three levels of penetration – superficial, medium, and deeper – for a total of nine rotations). In classical Chinese medicine and most textbooks, this is referred to as Burning Mountain Fire. Now proceed downward in the left column until you find the Spleen channel under the heading LEG YIN. Look to the right until you find TB, meaning thumb backward, also under the 9X’s/tonification column. This is also referring to Burning Mountain Fire.

If there is any confusion about what I have just explained, please grab two pencils and practice rotating them as if they are needles.

Once you have grasped the concept of thumb-forward tonification on the Stomach channel, and thumb-backward tonification on the Spleen channel, the thumb-forward tonification technique can be applied to all three foot yang channels (Stomach, Gallbladder and Urinary Bladder), and the thumb-backward tonification technique can be applied to all three foot yin channels (Spleen, Liver and Kidney).

Additionally, by reversing the direction of rotation on the Stomach and Spleen channels described above, you will be sedating instead of tonifying. In other words, thumb-backward movement on the three leg yang channels or thumb-forward movement on the three leg yin channels will sedate.

Before proceeding to the hand yin and yang channels, solidify your understanding of how to read Diagram 3: Technique on the Needle.

To continue explaining tonification and sedation using **Dr. Miriam Lee's Ten Great Needles Treatment**, once we have tonified ST36 and SP6 on the legs, we then move to the arms to sedate LI11, LI4 and LU7. Continue to imagine only using your left hand on the patient's right side, and your right hand on the patient's left side. In order to sedate the Large Intestine channel, we reverse the technique that we used on the Stomach channel. Since sedating on the Leg Yang Stomach channel is done by moving the thumb backward, we move the thumb forward in order to sedate on the Hand Yang Ming Large Intestine channel. If sedating on LI11 and LI4 is done by moving the thumb forward, then it follows that tonifying on the Large Intestine channel is done by moving the thumb backward.

Again, internal/external paired meridians use opposite rotation to direct their flows. Therefore, because sedating LI11 and then LI4 is done by moving the thumb forward, we move the thumb backward to sedate LU7. Additionally, LU7 is inserted horizontally from the base of the styloid process toward the elbow, just beneath the skin. This is done because there is little flesh on top of the radius, and by inserting the needle against the natural direction of the Lung channel, the sedation technique is maintained.

When sedating on the Large Intestine and Lung channels, we utilize the Penetrating Heaven Cold technique, whereby we insert the needle quickly to its maximum depth and rotate either thumb forward (yang channels) or thumb backward (yin channels), stimulating six times (rather than the nine times used in tonification). Please notice that

if you have grasped the concept of sedating the Large Intestine channel by moving the thumb forward, you now also know how to sedate the Small Intestine and San Jiao channels. If you know how to sedate the three Hand Yang channels, you have also learned how to tonify them by moving the thumb backward nine times. Continuing, because the Hand Yang Ming (Large Intestine) is traveling toward the torso, and the Hand Tai Yin (Lung) is moving toward the fingertips, by sedating the Lung channel (moving thumb backward), you now also know how to sedate all three of the Hand Yin channels because the Pericardium and Heart channels flowing in the same direction will likewise be sedated by moving the thumb backward. If the three Hand Yin channels (LU/PC/HT) are sedated by moving thumb backward, you also now know how to tonify them, which is by moving your thumb forward on the needle. Pretty cool, huh?

Please sit quietly with the three diagrams in this chapter and carefully conceive of using these concepts one by one in the steps of performing **Dr. Miriam Lee's Ten Great Needles Treatment**. Utilizing Dr. Lee's profound wisdom, you will soon embody these techniques until they become so automatic that you do not have to think about what you are doing on each needle, but simply tonify and sedate accordingly. I guarantee profound results if you can spend the time required to work it all the way through. I will give you a couple of bonus tips to make this easier:

1. Miriam told us, "Tie one hand behind your back" (figuratively speaking) - meaning, only use your left hand while stimulating on the patient's right side, and only use your right hand on their left side. It is fine to insert needles using your dominant hand on either side, but when it comes to tonifying or sedating, you must use the side-appropriate hand.
2. It is important that you know how to tonify and sedate on all meridian pathways because the knowledge will be extremely useful in certain situations. For example, in the proper application of 66.05 Golden Gate (Tung's ST43), we strongly sedate the Stomach channel on the side opposite a very painful instance of abdominal distention or pain from residual scarring after the surgical removal of intestine due to Crohn's disease. To sedate 66.05, we place our appropriate hand on the patient's foot that is opposite the side of the abdomen that we are

addressing. Grasping the needle firmly between thumb and index finger, we pull the thumb backward on the needle (with qi), then very, very gently rolling forward (sneaking forward) in the attempt to sedate the qi without calling it back in our forward motion on the needle. You can see how if we were only moving the thumb back, we would have to let go of the needle and grasp it again to repeat that motion six times. This would be cumbersome, and as the technique is done very quickly in a matter of seconds, we quietly roll forward on the needle (to avoid calling the qi which would tonify), in order to reset its position for the next strong backward pull. This sedation of Tung's ST43, when done properly, will relieve the most intense abdominal pain in 30 seconds or less, before you can even return to palpate the belly (assuming you carefully palpated the entire abdomen diagnostically). If you accidentally stimulate 66.05 with a tonification technique instead of sedating the point, the patient will feel significantly worse. However, when done correctly, this very opportunity will immediately amaze your patient, and they will refer their friends, families, neighbors, and coworkers, enthusiastically, to your office. Not only that, but you will also shock yourself by demonstrating the incredible impact of sedating Golden Gate for abdominal pain.

3. Occasionally, a patient has such an excess or stagnation on the top (upper body) that you cannot tonify the bottom (lower body) first without creating a stuffing or jamming of the qi on top. In this case, sedate LI11, LI4 and LU7 first, making room for the qi to arrive from the tonification of ST36 and SP6. Check the pulse to determine whether the Large Intestine and Lung are in excess. If the patient has Heart and Lung excess (bounding pulse), first sedate the top and then deeply needle ST36 (at least 50mm needle). Your patient will feel terrific when the treatment is finished.