

Patterns *Article from "yuantzecentre.com"*

*Patterns determine how we take in the information we are exposed to...
when patterns are at work, they replace the process of conscious
thinking and decision-making.*

In Ren Xue we take a multi-dimensional approach to working on patterns. The three main ways we do this are:

1. Deconstructing and understanding unhealthy patterns and replacing them with healthy ones
2. Cultivating the fundamental qualities (see below)
3. Advanced Yuan Gong methods

The section below provides an explanation of how patterns work and how to approach the effort to deconstruct unhealthy ones and replace them with healthy ones.

Concurrent with this pattern work, it is of vital importance to continually work on cultivating the fundamental qualities of a healthy life: TRUST, OPENNESS, LOVE, GRATITUDE and GONGJING. These qualities are facets of our essential human nature and their ongoing cultivation and deepening create fertile ground for investigating and changing patterns. They can also be used as measuring sticks for assessing the change that has been made.

(Details of these fundamental qualities will be included in the next book of Ren Xue which will be published in November 2014).

Introduction

The consciousness is the master of life. The core of Ren Xue is to transform life through uplifting the consciousness. The core work required for uplifting the consciousness is changing patterns. The work on the consciousness can be roughly consigned to two categories: using the consciousness and cultivating the consciousness. Using the consciousness refers to using it in specific ways to achieve certain purposes. This includes the use of the consciousness in Qigong practice and in external Qi therapy. We can learn to take an active role in using the consciousness in ways that will benefit health and life. For example, we can decide what to focus the consciousness on and we can use thoughts and intentions in certain ways to create the outcome that we desire. We can even improve the consciousness so that it can function better. For example, we can use Qigong practice to improve its strength and ability to concentrate. With consistent effort it is even possible to develop special abilities, which can enhance the power of the consciousness and its work when it is used as intended.

Cultivating the consciousness is work on quite a different level. In Ren Xue, it is emphasized far more than using the consciousness for uplifting the consciousness. This emphasis places the work on patterns as the most important element of life development.

We can use an analogy of a computer. We can learn how to use a computer and practice what we have learned so that we can use the computer correctly. This part equates to using the consciousness. We can even enhance the hardware so that it can be more powerful, as we do with the consciousness. However, it is the programs installed on the computer that will determine what the computer can do. Cultivating the consciousness is similar to improving the programs. The patterns determine what the consciousness does. Working on the patterns is the same as upgrading or changing the programs. Through this work, the consciousness can be made a better master of life.

Patterns and the False Master

If you tell a person that he is not the real master of his own life, rather, it is a ‘false master’, the chances are that he will feel very puzzled. ‘How can I not be the master of my own life? I have my own ideas and thoughts about everything. I make my own decisions. If I am not the master of my own life, who is? Is there a ‘true master’? And so what am I if I am not the real master?’ The terms that can be used interchangeably with ‘true master’ and ‘false master’ are ‘true self’ and ‘false self’. Are these terms only nonsense invented to confuse people? Absolutely not. Not only are they meaningful terms, but understanding them is important for understanding life.

Let’s try to understand the ‘false master’ by firstly looking at how the consciousness works. Consciousness is a manifestation of Shen, or the True Self. Shen is the origin and base of the consciousness and the consciousness consists of the activities and functioning of Shen. It is as though Shen functions through the consciousness and the consciousness acts on behalf of Shen.

The nature of Shen is that it is all knowing and all encompassing, and has an immense power to initiate change. Every human being has a Shen that is pure and cannot be tainted. Why is it that in reality these qualities of Shen is not manifesting when it functions through the consciousness? Let’s look at this further.

Although the functions of the consciousness are inherited from Shen, it operates in a very specific way – through patterns. The patterns dictate how the consciousness receives, processes, stores, creates and transmits information. They determine how we take in the information we are exposed to, how we interpret it, how we relate to it, how we make sense out of it, how we analyze it, how we use it to make judgments and decisions and how we react to it. Since the consciousness assumes the role of being the master of life, and it is the patterns that determine how the consciousness operates and what comes out of the consciousness, we can say that the patterns of the consciousness run one’s life. In this sense, they act together as the actual master of life. When this master runs life, the true master (Shen) cannot manifest its original qualities and potential. It is as though this master has taken over and made the true master redundant. We call this master the ‘false master’ as opposed to the true master. Patterns collectively act as the false master.

Where do the patterns come from?

You might wonder where the patterns of the consciousness come from. Patterns are formed naturally in the course of the life of a human being. Pattern-forming is a function of the consciousness, built on the basic functions of receiving, processing, storing, creating and transmitting information. When information is received, processed and used in the same way repeatedly, patterns will form. We can also say that patterns are the natural products of these basic functions of the consciousness. Interestingly, the formed patterns also participate when the consciousness exercises these basic functions. In other words, patterns help develop patterns. Therefore, a person's patterns are all interconnected.

Patterns are formed starting from the moment of conception through adulthood. At conception, much of the information of the new life is already present, including the information which carries patterns from the previous life. Although at this stage each life is in a relatively pure form, the 'seeds' for this life have been largely sown in the past. Those old patterns will participate in the formation of new patterns from the beginning of life. From then on, all of the information that this person is exposed to will contribute to the formation of patterns.

During the gestation period, although the foetus is in the mother's body it is constantly influenced by information from its environment. The biggest influence comes from both parents, especially the mother. How does a mother influence her child at this stage? Actually everything the mother does can affect her child, especially her thoughts, emotions and inner state. This is why it is very important for the mother to maintain a healthy state and feel calm, relaxed, natural, joyful and positive. Emotional and mental stress can have a negative impact on the child and the formation of its patterns.

The formation of patterns will enter a more vigorous stage when the child is born and becomes an individual person. This stage will last through adulthood. At this time all of the influences from the environment will contribute to the pattern-forming process, including social influences, cultural influences, family influences and the education system. Basically all of the experiences one has in life will contribute to the forming of patterns.

How do patterns work?

A habit on the behavioural level is a fixed way of behaving or doing something. If a person has the habit of smoking a cigarette after dinner, he will light a cigarette after dinner every day. He doesn't have to think about it and it feels like a very natural thing to do. Indeed, the decision-making process can be skipped when we follow a habit. The habit has replaced this process.

The patterns of the consciousness are actually habits on the consciousness level. They act in a similar way to the habits on the behavioural level. They are fixed ways of receiving, processing, storing, creating and transmitting information. This means that we take the information in, interpret it, relate to it, make sense out of it, analyze it, base judgments and decisions on, and react to it in fixed ways.

Let's use an example here. Say a person has the pattern of being defensive. When someone makes a comment that suggests that he is to blame or at fault, he will react to the comment by fighting back. Although fighting back is what he does on the behavioural level, it is the result of many patterns working on the consciousness level. These patterns may have causal relationships. On the superficial level, what can be observed is the pattern of verbally fighting back. When looking deeper, the intention behind fighting back is to clarify the situation. Why is there such a strong urge to make clarifications? Further investigation may reveal that being fair is rather important to him. What underlies this strong need for fairness? The answer may be that being misunderstood makes him feel unfairly treated, and this is something he finds difficult to bear. Digging further, he may be able to see that not wanting to be seen as being not good enough is behind the anxiety about being treated unfairly. On a deep level, there might be lack of confidence and security. This digging can go on if one wants to get to the very bottom of a pattern. Each pattern has specific life experiences relating to it, which may have contributed to the formation of it. Please note that the above linear description of patterns is only for convenience; the true picture of patterns is that they are structured more like a network or web with many levels.

The above is only an example of the possible patterns that may be behind the pattern of being defensive. On the surface, many people may have the same pattern of being defensive. When looking deeper, it can be seen that each person has different patterns on the consciousness level that lead to this pattern, because each person has different life experiences. On the surface, human beings share many common patterns, for example reacting with anger, anxiety, fear, sadness, negative thoughts, competitive thoughts and greed, just to name a few. Behind those surface patterns are many patterns unique to each individual on the consciousness level.

When patterns are at work, they replace the process of conscious thinking and decision-making. In other words, there is no need to think and make a decision on how to react. Isn't this the experience every person has when they react? Emotional or mental reactions occur instantly. If you are told that you must give a talk in front of a hundred people in three days time, you immediately feel nervous and anxious. This anxiety comes as a response to this situation without any time lapse. It feels very natural to respond this way as there is no thinking or deliberation involved. However, this response is not as natural as it appears to be because there are many patterns working together leading to this reaction. It is as though all of the patterns have lined up, each pattern waiting for the information to pass through before directing it to the next pattern. The route for the information to travel is fixed. It is as though raw material is being sent through an automated production line, with all of the processing stations lined up to do their jobs one after another. When it comes to processing information through the patterns, it takes hardly any time. That's why the reaction seems instant.

Each person has countless fixed routes that are formed by their patterns. All of the routes form a web-like network. Particular information will go through certain fixed routes according to its nature. All of the information will find its route and will be processed by all of the patterns on this route. This whole network is the 'false master' that we mentioned previously. It is behind all of the decisions and judgments we make and all of the actions that we take.

If we look closer, we will see that all of the patterns dotted along different routes are actually connected. Each pattern has a 'support network' of its own, made of many other patterns.

Why is it that we are not aware of the patterns that underlie each thought we have and each action we take? We call them 'patterns' because they are very fixed. Over time they have become more and more ingrained in the consciousness; they have become part of the consciousness. They control the consciousness and determine what we see and do. The consciousness cannot easily see this built-in mechanism that makes it work, and therefore many of the patterns are not visible to the consciousness. It is as though the eyes cannot see the eyes themselves. We can call this the level the 'unconscious' or the 'subconscious'.

Problematic Patterns

How well do our patterns work in general? We can find the answer to this by looking at the overall condition of humanity. Problematic patterns are the obstacles that prevent humans from achieving a healthy life, i.e. enjoying high levels of health, true happiness and joy, a strong sense of wellbeing, freedom and a higher level of realization and wisdom. We lose this healthy life when life is dominated by problematic patterns. If we look at the general condition of humanity in these areas, we can probably come to the conclusion that there is a lot of room for improvement in all of them. This tells us that there are many patterns which are causing problems in humanity. In fact, every human being has many problematic patterns.

Problematic patterns are patterns that do not reflect the truth or true reality; they do not reflect the fundamental laws of life and nature. Problematic patterns can only take a part of the 'total information' and they can twist it. As can be expected, what we get at the end of this processing is twisted, flawed or incomplete. To put it more simply, through our problematic patterns we get a twisted or narrow view of everything that we see. We are not able to have a holistic view and see the total reality. We then base our decisions and responses on such a limited view. No wonder our decisions and responses can also be problematic.

Where do problematic patterns come from? Patterns are the products of the basic functions of the consciousness; namely receiving, processing, storing, creating and transmitting information. Problematic patterns come from flaws in these basic functions. In fact, flaws in any of these basic functions can lead to the formation of problematic patterns.

Information is a total existence or a total reality; in other words, it is complete in itself. For example, when something happens, there will be information of this happening that contains everything about it. We can hence call information 'total information' or 'complete information'. To receive information in its complete form, our Shen will need to be in a very clear and natural state so that its abilities can fully manifest. However, for generations human beings have not utilized and developed all of the abilities of Shen, so many of them have become dormant. For a long time most human beings have been operating as though these abilities don't exist. Our current reality is built upon very limited abilities of the senses and the consciousness. Overall, human society operates on this level so from the outset the receiving information function is faulty. Even though Shen can manifest more of its abilities at the early stages of life, these abilities are not recognized by society and will be very quickly lost. This means that the

information that we receive is mostly partial, and our limited consciousness is not able to take in the complete information.

The processing of information is also faulty because most of the time it is done by problematic patterns. Sometimes the information we receive has already been processed by other people's problematic patterns. This means that the information is already incomplete or flawed even before it is received. Problematic patterns are conveyed to us with this information. This means it is possible to take on other people's problematic patterns and turn them into our own. All of the problematic patterns, old and new, will then work together to process information. This processed information will then be put out and become part of the collective information that has an influence on other people and on society as a whole.

This is how society operates with the problematic patterns of the consciousness and information of all individuals. Although this is described in a linear way here, the formation of problematic patterns and how they work are far from a linear process; it is a complex system. Collectively, it is like a wheel that keeps on turning. It is hard to say when the turning started, but we know that the wheel has been going for a very long time and that every person will be brought in by its force and turn with the wheel, and at the same time join force to keep the wheel turning. These problematic patterns affect every human being, and every human being contributes to the building of a society that operates this way. It will take a lot of effort if an individual wants to break out of the wheel and turn in a different way because this will require the individual to change her own patterns. However, when more and more individuals are making an effort to do so, a new wheel may form. This is one way of looking at the relationship between the individual consciousness and collective consciousness and how it is possible to change the collective consciousness through individual change.

Why Change the Problematic Patterns?

If patterns are behind every thought that we have, every decision that we make and every action that we take, then they must also be behind every problem that we have. In fact, we can say that problematic patterns are the main source of the problems we have. Therefore, to clear problems, patterns must be changed.

We can use health problems as an example to look at how the patterns of the consciousness are involved. An unhealthy Qi condition is a fertile ground for health problems. When Qi is deficient and not flowing smoothly, the body can't be nourished properly. This will affect the physical functions of the body and eventually problems can manifest on the physical level.

But what has caused Qi to become unhealthy? Everything we do in life has an impact on our Qi. For example, we can be engaged in activities that are detrimental to Qi. Common ones are binge drinking, smoking, not getting enough rest, eating unhealthy food and there are many more. They are more than just 'habits' or 'things we do'. They all have deep roots on the consciousness level. We do these things in order to fulfil our needs on every level of life, including the physical, emotional and mental levels. So when we try to change any of these, looking at the patterns behind them on all these levels and addressing those patterns will be necessary.

There are also patterns that lead to unhealthy states such as a negative state and mind activities such as negative thinking. Such patterns can do serious damage to Qi, because the negative information from the consciousness can be the dominant information that affects Qi. For example, the pattern of being negative. Some people's negative pattern is directed towards other people, so it may be that they always see the negative qualities of people and they don't like what they see. It is common for them to dislike other people and have difficult relationships with others. Some people's negative patterns can be towards things they hear or see. They are always able to find something negative about anything you tell them and respond with a negative comment. They can often lead the conversation you have with them to negative things or events in life. Some people may even have the habit of complaining about everything, and all the misery in life seems to be the fault of other people. Some people also apply their negative patterns to themselves. They habitually take their thoughts to the worst possible scenario or worry about everything. They also put themselves down in all possible ways. When Qi is damaged by any of the above negative patterns, work on patterns is indispensable when trying to bring positive changes to health problems.

Another type of pattern that can seriously harm Qi is unhealthy emotional reactions. Unhealthy emotions can disturb and damage Qi, especially organ Qi, which will then lead to problems of all kinds, including health problems. An unhealthy emotional reaction is only the end result of the work of a series of patterns of the consciousness. Therefore, when we try to change the way we react, working on the reaction itself is far from enough. The related patterns of the consciousness will have to be dealt with. If we want to deal with the pattern of anger, curbing anger itself is usually not effective enough, whatever methods we adopt. The patterns behind this pattern of reacting with anger will need to be identified and changed.

Personality is another area that problematic patterns can play a role in causing harm to life. People often think of their personality traits as part of their nature and so they identify with them and do not think it is an area they should try to change. While it is true that each person is born with unique personality traits, some traits are actually the work of problematic patterns. For example: being indecisive, being calculating, being inflexible, being a perfectionist, being insensitive, being doubtful (distrusting), being overly conservative, being emotionally volatile, being withdrawn, being uncommitted, giving up easily, being undisciplined, being indulgent, being competitive, being guarded etc. In fact, a lot of what we regard as 'us' is only our patterns. We shouldn't mistake them for who we really are and thereby miss the opportunity to work on them to have a healthier life and allow the True Self to manifest.

When problematic patterns are too strong, they can cause serious health conditions. Let's use depression as an example here. Depression is a common mental disorder; it is estimated that globally more than 350 million people suffer from depression. How do people get this problem? How does one go from not having this problem to having this problem? The causes and the process of the development of this disorder are complex. Here we can look at it from the perspective of patterns in a more general way.

There is a very common pattern of viewing things which I think is strongly related to depression. I like to describe this pattern with a Chinese phrase: 'going right to the tip of a bull's horn'. When pondering or dealing with an issue, instead of opening to a wider view one can keep

narrowing the focus and holding onto it, so that finally it is reduced to a very small point where nothing else can be seen. In this way one can bring oneself to a very small space where there is no room for manoeuvre. This is actually a very common pattern, not just limited to people who suffer from depression. Let's look at a few possible scenarios.

Scenario One

A man in his 40's thinks it is very important to have a successful career. He works very hard to achieve in his professional field. However, no matter how hard he tries he is not making much progress. He keeps setting goals but continues to fail to reach them. He starts to become frustrated and disappointed. He continues to see career success as the most important purpose of his life, and reaching the next goal seems the only important thing for him. He thinks that he is a failure if he does not reach the goals which he sets. Life remains very challenging for him and his feelings of frustration and disappointment grow. He cannot bear the thought that he will not be 'successful' in the career that he has dedicated his whole life to. The fear of being a failure also grows, and he becomes more and more anxious, worried and stressed. He feels heavy and no joy. Eventually he starts to feel exhausted and depressed.

Scenario Two

This is a woman in her early 40's. Her marriage of eight years ended three months ago. She had always wanted to have a happy family and she had made a lot of effort in this relationship, but still the marriage ended. She has been feeling lost and confused and has no confidence. She cannot get away from the thought that she has failed in her relationship, and she has many regrets about the way she behaved in her marriage. All she can see is the failed marriage and the part that she played in this failure. She feels guilty and keeps blaming herself. She cannot see the point of life any more. Nothing seems to be meaningful and worth pursuing.

Scenario Three

A woman in her late 20's has been struggling with her work situation. She feels highly stressed because she always feels judged by co-workers and clients. She is concerned that other people will think her work performance is not good enough. Whenever she senses anything suggesting that someone may not be completely happy about her work, she feels extremely anxious and depressed. She has constant internal dialogue about how awkward she is and how she is going to embarrass herself. She is highly tense at work and feels utterly exhausted when she gets home at the end of a work day. Fear grows and she feels more and more useless, hopeless and helpless.

These may sound like very different stories. One thing these three people have in common is the 'going right to the tip of a bull's horn' way of thinking. They have a very specific, negative way of viewing the situation they are in and they take this to the extreme. They fail to see the whole picture. They magnify what they can see and this leaves them with very little room for seeing other possibilities. In fact, their situations are also partly caused by this very way of viewing their own lives and experiences. They fall into a vicious cycle without seeing the causal relationship between this pattern and the predicament they are in.

You can probably see that ‘going right to the tip of a bull’s horn’ is not the only problematic pattern that these three people have. They each have many other patterns that make them see things in a way that leads to problems in their lives. These patterns twist their views on many things, including the meaning and value of life, relationships and the meaning of success. These unhealthy patterns also lead to twisted views of themselves.

When they have cornered themselves at the tip of the horn, they see no way out and no hope. If they keep going in this direction for a prolonged period of time, their Qi will become more and more depleted. This depleted Qi condition will not support the consciousness properly and will make it even less in control and less stable. A vicious cycle will form, with Qi and the mental condition dragging each other down. When this vicious cycle has gone on for a period of time, it provides a fertile ground for depression. If the vicious cycle has developed to a certain degree, or if there is another overwhelming challenge added to life, then the condition of depression can begin to develop.

Problematic patterns can affect every area of life, not just health. They determine the course of one’s life and how everything goes in life. They are at the root level of the main causes of our problems in life. If your life is not healthy, happy, joyful, with strong sense of wellbeing and freedom, problematic patterns will have to be identified and worked on if you wish to improve life. The fewer problematic patterns one has, the purer and more uplifted one’s consciousness is, and the more one’s True Self can manifest.

How to identify problematic patterns

- Using the good state to help identify problematic patterns

Problematic patterns lead to problems. How then do we know if something is a problem? When something causes damage to life, it is a problem. Therefore, problematic patterns can be defined as damaging to life as well. To be more specific, a person’s problematic patterns can lead to disturbance of his health or disharmony of his Qi and consciousness. On the social level, individuals’ problematic patterns can damage other people, and cause relationship and social problems. When problematic patterns become part of the collective consciousness and human culture, all humans can be under their influence. Furthermore, humans’ problematic patterns have led to damage to nature, especially the environment. Today the damage on all these levels is already more than noticeable and a lot of genuine effort is urgently required to heal on these levels.

As individuals who intend to reduce the damage that we can cause and help to heal the damage done on all these levels, we can start by working on our own problematic patterns. How do we identify problematic patterns if so many of them are deeply ingrained at levels that we are not even aware of? Because patterns manifest in everything we do, we can use their manifestations as windows to begin to see them. One way is by using the healthy state as a reference. The healthy state is a calm, relaxed, natural and joyous state. When we are in this state, there is no damage to life. Not only that, it is a state that facilitates healing and development of life. To identify manifestations of our problematic patterns, we need to maintain this healthy state and be

aware of any changes in our state, as any other state is damaging to life. The aim is to observe how and when we lose the healthy state and change into a different state.

When you become more aware of your inner state, you may soon notice that it is not that easy to maintain a healthy state. You begin to see how your state can change very quickly and frequently. You can be feeling happy one moment, and impatient and irritated the next if your computer is running slowly or someone has just said something that you don't like. If you observe your state closely, you will find that it is always changing and fluctuating; in fact, most people do not maintain a stable state at all. Their states vary according to changes in their environment, and this has come to be regarded as 'normal'.

Problematic patterns commonly manifest as unhealthy emotions; for example anger, anxiety, worry, fear, sadness and many more. They can also manifest as unhealthy mental states such as depression, stress and lack of motivation. In fact there are infinite manifestations because life can be in all kinds of states when we are not in a healthy state.

How then do we deal with the manifestations of problematic patterns? Firstly, continue to be an observer; watch your emotions and your thoughts. Secondly, try to adjust yourself so that you can return to your healthy state as soon as possible to minimize the damage that can occur to your health and to your Qi when you are not in a healthy state. Sometimes techniques such as Qigong can be used to help return to a healthy state. However, observing and adjusting the inner state can only have superficial effects because this doesn't deal with the roots of the unhealthy manifestations – the problematic patterns. Once you have regained your healthy state and your mind is clear, it is time to deal with these patterns.

You can start looking for the patterns behind the unhealthy manifestations by asking yourself some questions. Here are some examples:

- What made me lose the healthy state?
- Was there an external trigger? If so, what was it?
- What was my reaction to this trigger?
- What was the first thought that I had in response to the trigger?
- Were there other thoughts? If so, what were they?
- Where did these thoughts come from?
- What were the assumptions behind those?
- Where did the assumptions come from?
- What were my expectations, desires, likes, dislikes, attachments behind those thoughts and assumptions?
- Were there any judgments of good or bad, right or wrong?
- What were the judgments based on?
- Why was I thinking or looking at situation in this particular way?
- What are the values supporting these thoughts, assumptions and judgments?
- Do I lose my healthy state this way frequently?

All of your thoughts, assumptions, judgments and values are your patterns. Searching for answers to the above questions can help you to get to know your patterns better. When you know your patterns better, you know yourself better.

Let's use an example here. If a person is diagnosed with a serious health problem, she may feel shocked and upset. The healthy state is disrupted by this feeling, and if the feeling is not resolved quickly enough there can be damage and many negative consequences. If we examine the thoughts that might have led to this reaction at a time like this, we may find one of the thoughts we can have is 'Life is unfair, why me?' Let's look at the possible assumptions and patterns behind this thought.

Possible Assumptions

1. Becoming ill is definitely a bad thing; it can only make life worse.
2. Illness is 'out of the ordinary', something beyond your expectations. Even though millions of people around the world are diagnosed with all kinds of serious illnesses every year, it shouldn't happen to you.

Possible Patterns

1. Being negative: You imagine the worst possible scenario and fail to see other more hopeful possibilities.
2. 'Victim mentality': This is a possible pattern behind the belief that life is treating you unfairly, and is actually a very common pattern. This is also related to the pattern of blaming other people. When you are not happy, it is always the fault of something or someone else. You play no part in it, you don't deserve to get sick because you have done nothing wrong and your sickness has nothing to do with yourself. Another pattern related to the victim mentality pattern is the 'self pity' pattern. What lies behind these patterns may be your refusal to take responsibility for your own life.

The process of changing patterns

Identifying our patterns is a big step forward. However, most patterns don't go away just because they are exposed. You may find that even though you recognize your patterns you are still thinking and reacting in the same old way to a situation or trigger. This is because most of the old patterns require work to change, especially those that are strong and deeply ingrained in our consciousness. So, changing them is the next big step.

How do we change problematic patterns? The principle is to replace the problematic patterns with healthy patterns. Why replace instead of clear them? Because the patterns of the consciousness are an indispensable part of the consciousness: the consciousness functions through them. It is not within the law of life for a human being to function without patterns.

Some people believe that, because problematic patterns are the fundamental causes of problems in life, clearing problematic patterns will be the way to deal with problems. The idea of 'letting go' is based on this belief, and for some people letting go of all unhealthy patterns or

conditioning becomes the goal to achieve. How do you get rid of a pattern just like that? After much effort and many attempts, you would probably find that letting go is not easy at all. You want to let go of emotion or thinking or reacting in a certain way. However, each time you are in the same situation, you are thinking and reacting exactly the same way again and again. Why is this? Because your consciousness will still be receiving, processing and transmitting information and will need to have a way to relate to situations in life, to make sense out of them, to understand them, and to make judgments and determine how to react or respond to them. You will need to provide an alternative if you wish to abandon the old way, a new pattern will need to be in place. If not, the old pattern will continue to be the one that the consciousness automatically follows.

Where do the new patterns come from? We can create them. How? By searching for alternative patterns, patterns that do not lead to the disruption of the healthy state.

How do we go about searching for the alternative patterns? There are many leads that we can follow. For example, by trying to look at things from a broader perspective. Because one of the causes of the formation of problematic patterns is the failure to see the totality of reality, taking a holistic view can help us to form better patterns. Everything is a totality and has many aspects; nothing is absolutely good or bad. Instead of only seeing or focusing on the negative side, we should take a balanced view and also look at the positive side. Another example is trying to look at everything from a dynamic perspective. Everything is in the process of change and development. In this sense, there is no beginning and no end. The potential for change is in every moment, and seemingly adverse situations are full of potential for positive changes.

Healthy patterns reflect the truth: the laws of life and nature. That's why learning and gaining a good understanding of the laws is the foundation for creating healthy patterns. This is also one of the main purposes of Ren Xue teachings. The better our understanding, the more clearly we can see reality, and the healthier our patterns will be.

Let's look at some of the possible patterns that can be used to replace the problematic ones, by using the same example of 'Life is unfair. Why me?'

Alternative Patterns

Illness is normal. It is very common and almost every person gets sick at some stage, especially as they grow older. If illness is something normal, just as normal as washing the dishes after a meal or buying shoes, why do you react with shock? Adopting this new pattern may help you to regain balance and peace.

Highly recommended pattern 1 – Positive pattern

There can be many positive changes emerging from this challenge. For example, if we use this opportunity to understand the causes of our illness and clear the causes, not only is it possible to regain health but also life can transform and become better. We can also use this opportunity to strengthen our love and connection with people in our lives. We can even use our experience to show people how to go through this process in a positive way, so that we become an inspiration

to others. Everything is a changing reality. There is so much we can do to transform a challenge into something positive and beneficial for ourselves and for other people.

Highly recommended pattern 2 – ‘Ping chang xin’ (平常心)

Ping chang means ‘normal’, ‘usual’, ‘natural’. Xin means ‘heart’, ‘mind’, ‘intention’, ‘mentality’. Ping chang xin refers to looking at everything with a positive mindset in a calm, relaxed and natural manner. There is no imposition of value judgments. In other words, when you look at something with ‘ping chang xin’, you don’t see it as something special or unusual and you don’t have attachment to it in any way. You don’t go up and down with the changes in that thing. You don’t get disturbed when it is not going the way you wish and you don’t get overly excited when it is. In other words, you are not controlled by it. It is a balanced, unbiased and holistic way of looking at reality and relating to it accordingly. Awareness of change and development and knowing that everything is in the process of change are important aspects of ping chang xin. Nothing is fixed and static. Ping chang xin should be applied to everything in life – your family, your children, your work, your passion, the greatest mission of your life. If you use ping chang xin to look at illness, you will not assign a negative value to the illness because any seemingly adverse situation can be transformed into something positive. Having a serious illness can mean a great opportunity to work on life and grow. If we can grow and uplift life in the process of healing our illness, then the illness is a very positive thing for life. In fact this growth is far more valuable to life than the curing of the illness itself.

Highly recommended pattern 3 – Life is fair, because it is the manifestation of your own law of life

Everything that you experience is part of the manifestation of the law of your own life. There is no good or bad; it just is. The current situation is part of the process and is changing all the time, and what you do in every moment is influencing this change. Instead of thinking that life is unfair, you can take life into your own hands by living every moment in a way that will effect positive change to life.

Once the new patterns are created, we need to acknowledge them and take them into our hearts. Sometimes significant changes can be experienced due to the acceptance of them. However, in most cases, the old patterns can still dominate because at this stage the new patterns are still young and weak. We can still easily look at things and react in the old way. When we catch ourselves doing this, we need to refresh our memory of the new patterns and consciously take them on board, so we can immediately change the way we think and react. This conscious effort will be necessary for some time until the new patterns gradually overpower the old and become firmly embedded in our consciousness.

In this process of identifying and changing patterns, we will find that every pattern is connected with many other patterns, on many levels. When we have changed a pattern, the patterns next to it or on a level deeper will come to the surface and can be identified and worked on. In this process, the hidden patterns will become more visible. Going through them layer by layer, we can gradually get down to the roots of our problems. Interestingly, when we take this approach to deal with a problem, many other problems are also taken care of because they share the same

roots. In other words, the effort made to clear one problem can clear many other problems altogether.

The above is an example to demonstrate the process of identifying and working on problematic patterns. Each person has different problematic patterns and this example is only one possible scenario of one of the many problems a person may have. Each person needs to go through this digging and searching process to identify and change their own patterns. The more the problematic patterns are changed the more the 'false self' will be aligned with the True Self, because the patterns of the consciousness will not filter or twist information so badly. Through this process, the consciousness can gradually become a true representation of the True Self.

Closing remarks

The importance of the work on patterns cannot be overemphasized. When trying to maintain the health of Qi, the work on patterns is even more fundamental than working directly on Qi using Qigong practice or external Qi therapy. It is the main means for slowing down or stopping the depletion and damage to Qi. Therefore, work on patterns has a huge impact on health.

More importantly, when dealing with problems in areas in life other than health, work on patterns is absolutely necessary. This should be the main focus for dealing with problems. Each time we make a breakthrough with a pattern, it feels as though a door is open and life has expanded into a larger, brighter space. The whole life is renewed and taken to a different level where everything seems to be a new beginning. When we have made progress in changing patterns, it is as though life has been reprogrammed. Changes that emerge from this are real and will not be easily lost. A change of patterns prompts a change of the course of life because it is no longer run by the same false master. This means that the individual law of life, or destiny, will change. This change is the most meaningful and important change for life and this way of dealing with problems is therefore the process of elevating life.

Changing our patterns is not an easy task. Patterns are so deeply ingrained in life that it is as though they are a part of us. It feels as though they are a natural and integral part of our being. Some of them have been pushed down to dark corners because we don't wish to face them, and dragging them out and exposing them to the light of day can be a painful process. It can feel as though you are pulling your insides out or facing a side of yourself that you don't want to know.

Changing problematic patterns requires a lot of effort because you are trying to battle with a very strong power. Strong resistance can be expected. Sometimes you may even feel afraid because you have identified yourself with your old patterns for such a long time. You may experience a very uncomfortable feeling when the old identity is undermined and the new identity is still unfamiliar.

However, difficulty should not be a reason for not working on problematic patterns. If it was an easy process, human beings would now be free from problems. Quick and easy solutions to problems may not be the real solutions. The good news is: the effort you make to change problematic patterns will not be wasted; you will reap the benefit of this work. You can expect better health, more happiness, a stronger sense of wellbeing and freedom, and more control of

your life. Your life will improve. Furthermore, your progress will also benefit other people, including your family, your friends and many more; you will be a positive influence on other people, society and nature. You will become an example of how a person can transform, and this will inspire other people to do so too. Society will be a better place when more and more individuals embark on this process of life cultivation.

(Adapted from the Ren Xue book which will be published in November, 2014)