

Reducing and Reinforcing

Introduction and Overview of Class 7

Reducing (same as sedating) is used to clear excesses. Reinforcing (same as tonifying) is used to tonify deficiencies. You generally use these techniques once you have inserted the needle and brought up the Qi sensation. In cases of severe deficiency (of qi, yin, blood, etc), you may need to tonify Qi in other ways to increase it and therefore get sensation since a severely deficient patient may not be able to get Qi sensation. Look for the symptoms of deficiency as learned in [Diagnostics](#).

Examples:

- Qi deficiency = fatigue, sweating
- Blood deficiency = poor sleep, poor memory
- Spleen deficiency = poor appetite and digestion, loose stool
- Yin deficiency = dryness and lack of fluids + emaciation
- Yang deficiency = coldness
- Heart deficiency = palpitation, s.o.b.
- Lung deficiency = cough, s.o.b.

Basically, the substances of the body are not enough, so you must tonify.

Reducing/Sedating

You reduce when pathogens, viruses, bacterium, etc are too much. Often these exist in the body, but when they become excess they cause illness/problems/excesses. Damp invasion, for instance, after walking in a damp environment during a long walk can express as heaviness in the body and coldness. You must remove these excesses before they cause problems.

A “retention” is the same as an excess. Phlegm retention caused by a diet of animal and dairy products with sugar and simple carbohydrate chasers (think “Big Mac with Cheese, fries, and a Coke”) cause phlegm to be retained in the body. You can feel it in the throat and cough it. It might express as foggy mind, masses, and other phlegm signs. Use reducing techniques for this too. Blood stagnation is another example of retention. Blood should flow freely, can be retained in the body in the form of stagnation.

As a practitioner, you can sometimes feel deficiencies or excesses in the patient’s body when you needle. You may detect an empty feeling – soft or hollow – which signals a deficiency. Or you may detect a tight feeling at depth or shallower signaling an excess or retention.

You only reduce *or* reinforce at a single point, not both. However, you *can* both reduce at one point and reinforce at *another* using a variety of techniques on a single patient.

Some factors to consider

1) Condition of the Body

Pathogenic conditions of the body. Acupuncture has dual regulating functions. Can either sedate or tonify a point. Stomach 36 for instance can both decrease the activity of the stomach in the case of something like a stomach spasm or stomach pain, but can also activate a stomach suffering from food retention.

The regulation is automatic.

Finger numbness due to blood deficiency – needle locally to increase the flow. The same points could also be used to sedate a hypersensitivity.

2) Function of the point

Some points natively lend themselves to tonification or reduction more readily.

- a. Stomach 36 = a point that tonifies more readily
- b. Stomach 40 = more reducing
- c. Stomach 34 (xi cleft pt) = stops acute pain.

3) Technique

Choose more tonifying points and then use tonifying techniques for the best reinforcing action.

Note: blood flow, temp at tonification point + tonification technique = warmer, more blood flow, pinker. When you pick a reducing point with a reducing action the temp will decrease as will the blood flow.

Lifting/thrusting to tonify/reduce

You are pushing qi into the point or drawing excess out. Use a small range of motion within the range of the Qi level even if it's only 0.2 cun in depth. Deeper locations and more muscular locations might have a deeper range of Qi.

- 1) Get the Qi sensation
- 2) Manipulate within this range.

Tonification technique:

Push in forcefully, pause, lift out slowly/gently. You are trying to push qi into the point. Feel the tip of the needle and make the needle an extension of your hand. Don't bounce! That's why you pause.

Reduction technique:

Push in gently, withdraw more forcefully, pause, repeat. You are trying to draw out the excess/pathogen/retention with the lift, but don't want to push any back in on the thrust, so do this gently like you are trying to lay something on water without making a ripple.

Rotating the needle to tonify/reduce

Once Qi has arrived, then rotate.

Method 1

Speed of rotation can determine reinforce/reduce. (*Median speed is 1-2 times per second.*) Rotate the same force and speed both forward and backward

- Slower gentler force = reinforcing
Dr. Qiu likens it to gentle rain that nourishes the soil.
less than 1-2 times per second
- Faster and more forceful = reducing
Like a hard rain that doesn't soak in or nourish.
more than 1-2 times per second

Method 2

In this method the slow/gentle part is like a slow recoil—you want no impact upon the energy, sort of like a tiptoe or soft step.

Reinforcing:

Rotate forward with thumb thrusting out from hand—rapidly and more forceful. When you pull the thumb back toward you, do so slowly and gently

Regardless of left or right hand used:

Thumb out from hand is yang and reinforcing

Thumb back toward hand is yin and is reducing.

Reducing:

Reverse of the reinforcing method: thumb pulls back toward hand fast/forceful. Thumb pushes out slower and gentler.

How long do you do these techniques? Depends on the sensation. Usually, you do this less than 1 minute, stop, retain the needle a while (5 minutes or so), come back and stimulate again.

Opening and closing the needle hole to reinforce/reduce

Leave the hole open - reduce

Leave it open to allow pathogenic Qi to escape. Combine this with other reduction methods for greatest effect. You can lift forcefully to siphon off excess, retain the needle, stimulate again, then leave the hole open when the needle is removed.

Close the hole – reinforce

Again, combine this with other tonification/reinforcing methods for best effect. Example: push Qi in with forceful thrust or rotation. At removal, remove gently then quickly press the hole closed.

The most important point: *have the intent to retain the Qi when you close the hole!*