



The Natural Healing Podcast

with Dr. Setareh Moafi & Salvador Cefalu

Episode 81: Reset in 2024: Wellness Tips for the Year of the Dragon

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:00:02] AD// I'm sure you've tried a variety of natural deodorants as part of your basic self-care, and recently we've tried a natural deodorant that actually works for both of us. It has a fully sustainable design, with an aluminum case that comes with biodegradable and recyclable refills that you just switch out, so it's super convenient. You can get the flexible subscription option or just purchase them as one offs. The orders are customizable. You can choose your case, color the scent combinations, and you can get a variety of beautiful fragrances of essential oils.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:00:36] It's also eco-friendly, with all natural ingredients, aluminum and paraben free, as well as vegan and cruelty free. And I really appreciate that this product doesn't stain my clothing, and it seems to last all day long with one application.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:00:50] Yeah, it's pretty amazing. You just put it on in the morning and you're done for the day, so go wild today if you want to try this product with a special discount of 25% off your first order when you use the promo code Natural Healing at checkout, go to wearewild.com with promo code [naturalhealing](http://naturalhealing.com) at checkout. Enjoy! //AD

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:01:13] Welcome to the year of the Yang Wood Dragon and welcome back to the Natural Healing Podcast. We've taken a little hiatus and are ready to start fresh with some new episodes that will begin with kind of this examination of this New Year, this Chinese New Year, and ways that you can cultivate yourself and connect to nature, to kind of cope with and also to feel comfortable in these turbulent times that we're in.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:01:40] Well, turbulent indeed. And there's some interesting new cycles that we're starting and also we're completing a small cycle. So this new year is the start of what they call period nine. And period nine is a 20 year cycle represented by what they call star nine. And star nine is one of the nine stars of the Big Dipper. So I know some of you may be thinking, well, there's only seven stars in the Big Dipper, and the Chinese ancestors always considered that there was nine stars, and two stars actually are visible astronomically. So. This 20 year cycle started on February 4th as



part of the solar calendar, and with the onset of the Dragon year. That's considered part of the lunar cycle, and that was considered to start on February 10th.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:02:55] Welcome to the Natural Healing Podcast, the show designed to guide, inspire and empower you to elevate your health so you can achieve your goals and dreams. We are your hosts Dr. Setareh Moafi

Salvador Cefalu: [00:03:07] And Salvador Cefalu.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:03:11] A husband and wife team of acupuncturists and owners of A Center for Natural Healing and integrative wellness clinic based in the heart of Silicon Valley.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:03:21] We're here to make the ancient wisdom of healing practical and accessible for your modern lifestyle.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:03:34] So, as most of us know, to the Asians, the number eight is really significant, considered to be an auspicious number. It's shaped like the infinity symbol. So they always look at it as a number of abundance. And we just came out of a 20 year period relating to the number eight. So you can see how that was really extra auspicious. So now in period nine the number eight is losing some of its glory here. And actually it's still going to be auspicious but not quite as significant. So so they're going to be really emphasizing number nine. And then what follows number nine is number one the number representing water. So number nine is the number representing fire. So the next 20 years we could say is a time of expansion, a time where there's going to be a lot of communication and a lot of enthusiasm. So it's obviously the number of passion. So we'll see what develops in the next 20 years. There's going to be a lot of growth. So now we have another cycle that's also happening. And this is relating to the element of wood. So this relates to the Chinese zodiac. So the last two years we had the tiger year in 22 we had the rabbit year in 23.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:04:53] And so that's yang wood and yin wood. And in 24 we have the Earth dragon. Now the dragon is also associated with wood. It's the Earth sign. That is the transition from wood from spring into fire, the summer cycle. So we're basically going to be going from this exuberant wood energy to now it's grounding out. So



perhaps in 2024 we are going to be seeing. A little bit of, um, they consider the earth transitions as periods of evaluation. So it's it's a time we're going to look back. We're going to reflect on what's been going on, what we started, what's been growing. Do we want to continue that? You know, we saw a couple of major wars start in 22 and 23. So it's going to be interesting because those might start to settle down as they reevaluate their positions. And what instigated all that. So that would be wonderful. So 24 is a time of evaluation, and it's a time of perhaps letting go of some things that just don't seem to be appropriate in our lives at this time. So this may seem a little confusing, because Setareh was just describing this year as a wood dragon year. And it is a wood dragon year because the year in Chinese astrology is made up of a stem and a branch, and this is considered to be jiu wood.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:06:28] So it's yin wood and dragon. But dragon is the earth, and the earth is considered the branch. And so the branch is actually going to have more influence than the stem. So this is look at this as more of a really as more of an earth year, although the stem has this wood energy. So this relationship between wood and earth is part of what they call the control cycle and five element theory. So that means if you want to interpret this there could be some hesitation. Because there could be a little bit of push and pull between the wood and the earth throughout the years, so that could create some hesitation in moving forward. But I think the most important theme to take away in terms of this year is that it's it's a dragon year, which is the Earth sign, which represents Earth, and it represents the transition between what started two years ago as wood cycle. So wood is about new beginnings. It's about something sprouting and growing and what is also about being temperamental. So if that energy gets too intense, there could be some fighting. And we saw that with two wars breaking out over the past two years. So this year, hopefully that starts to get tempered because the Earth is going to ground that wood energy.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:07:56] So that would be a wonderful thing to see happen. And it's a time of evaluating our actions of the past. So hopefully we can see the light globally and as a as a collective humanity to start taking it easier on each other and maybe reevaluate how we want to go forward, because next year is going to be the start of a fire cycle. So now you got the summer season is going to start for the next three years. So that's that's intense energy. So that's going to be it's going to be interesting to see what happens. But we could definitely see this year is kind of like a time of kind of like



regrouping and grounding out now. Now every cycle and every person, if you look at their chart has positive, you know, has ebbs and flows, positive periods, negative periods. And what we wanted to discuss today is not about getting caught up in any of those ebbs and flows. It's to think about mitigating the challenges that we face or mitigating, you know, when we get too high on something, you know, we're just like you're you win the lottery and you're just so ecstatic, and then your life falls apart. So how do you how do you keep a more balanced lifestyle.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:09:18] And how do you follow the Daoist concept of Wu Wei, kind of going with the flow, accepting things as they are, not letting things shake you one direction or the other? The last three years have been really shaking us up. They've really. From Covid to all of the turmoil in the world, it's really forced us to reevaluate, to look at what are our values, what do we want to create in our lives, and also to look at like life and death struggles, you know, like the meaning of life. And so this year, as an Earth animal, as an Earth zodiac. So even though it's the year of the wood dragon, dragons are by nature Earth. So Earth is about transitions. It's about kind of regrouping. As Salvador said, it's about reevaluating. So whatever the energy is of the year, that's also the energy that we're going to be cultivating within ourselves. And the tools and even some of the shamanic practices that we're going to teach you today are going to help you to have the resources to be internally resourced to deal with whatever lies ahead. Because obviously, at this point in history, we have no idea what's to come. We would never have guessed that Covid would have come in 2020. We would never have guessed that all of these wars would have broken out over the last couple of years.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:10:33] Maybe we would, you know, be able to guess that something is going to change. But you never know what that change is going to look like. And even in your own personal life as a reflection. So we're talking very globally because obviously we don't know your life personally, but all of us have struggles personally. How do we navigate these ebbs and flows without letting them destroy us? And the best way to do that is to cultivate practices and tools that help us navigate these ebbs and flows.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:11:04] AD// Balancing your yin and yang energies can shift mental, physical, and emotional patterns that would otherwise lead to accelerated aging, illness, and disease. The microcosmic and macrocosmic orbit meditations help



circulate energy through the primary source channels of yin and yang, known as the Du and Ren meridians, to bring greater clarity and vitality throughout your life. For a limited time, you can purchase my one of a kind, guided introduction to both of these Daoist meditations for just \$36. Visit our online store at [acementernaturalhealing.com/shop](https://www.acecenterfornaturalhealing.com/shop) to begin your transformation through the microcosmic and macrocosmic orbit meditations. That's [acementernaturalhealing.com/shop](https://www.acementernaturalhealing.com/shop). //AD

Salvador Cefalu: [00:12:01] Since we're leaving this small cycle of wood. You know, the pathology of wood is wind. And as we've talked about in a number of our podcasts. Wind brings chaos. It brings confusion, it brings unpredictability. And this is why when a person is faced with things in their life where there's too many changes going on or life does seem unpredictable, they might get symptoms relating to wind, like they get dizziness, they might start getting high blood pressure. They might start getting headaches. They might. Develop irritable bowel syndrome. You know, things of this nature where you get like these inflammatory flare ups. So whenever there's too much wind going on, just like the cycle of nature, you want to throw some earth on it. To settle it down to anchor. As they say in Chinese medicine. Anchor the excessive yang qi, ground the wind. So that is what you might want to consider in terms of working with your body. And your mind is get on the floor more. And this is something that I wanted to touch upon because of course, practices like yoga and qigong and tai chi. You know, these are important practices to help, you know, harmonize the body and mind and and support flexibility. But if you don't know these types of practices, I wanted to just basically keep it simple and suggest that you practice getting on the floor, because a lot of people don't do that. Many cultures around the world, they live close to the floor and they eat on the ground. And, uh, as we saw in that Netflix series, Lived to a Hundred Secrets of the Blue Zone, one of the main things was, uh, people maintain flexibility to support their longevity.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:14:02] Well, one of the things you mentioned earlier that's interesting is that Earth is what grounds the wood. That's what creates the counterbalance when there's excessive wood. And I think in our modern, fast paced society, we've lost a lot of connection to Earth. I mean, I know a lot of people who hardly cook for themselves. A lot of people wear shoes all day long. So where is your connection to the earth, even just physically? You know, we sit in chairs and then now the modern thing, you know, we were told that sitting is the new smoking. So then



people started developing different ways of working in the office, and it became, you know, to stand to have a standing desk. But that equally can be very taxing on the body. It's not really building mobility in your body. It gives you a different way of being versus sitting, of course, but it doesn't allow the qi or the blood to circulate properly throughout. And when we get on the floor, when we learn to kind of squat, to lay down, to get up that up and down motion, that back and forth really helps to open the hips. It helps to build mobility through the regions of the body that get very tight, especially as we get older.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:15:05] The hips are a big deal in Chinese medicine. It's associated with the gallbladder meridian and the gallbladder meridian is the main meridian for detoxification, and especially it's the main meridian to help cleanse the brain. And it has a lot to do with also keeping your heart healthy, because it relates to the upper left chamber of your heart, where a lot of congestion of the mitral valve develops or hardening, and mitral valve and congestion of the vessels from damp heat. So it's damp. So it's like fat buildup in the arteries. So there's an association here with these health issues relating to the mind, relating to the heart, relating to your hips. So keeping your hips flexible is going to maintain better circulation. You can say or optimize the circulation of the gallbladder meridian to prevent these types of problems.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:16:04] And you'll just feel better. You're going to feel like you can move better. You're going to suffer from less lower back pain, from less stiffness and congestion in your joints. In general, it's just very important to keep the hips open for the total circulation of your body. So that's an area that we often neglect, especially, like I said, in our modern society. And I would say even especially in like Western society, more and more, unfortunately the good things about the East are turning, you know, doing what we're doing here in the West. But if you go back into the eastern cultures, especially the ones that are more ancient, you see a lot of movement, a lot of mobility through the hips that we just don't cultivate in our Western culture.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:16:47] Yeah, I love looking at old photos of Setareh's family in Iran. They're all gathered on the floor. Big blanket or whatever they would use, and they.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:16:57] Would spread.



Salvador Cefalu: [00:16:58] A they'd spread all their food out on the ground. And they're in a big circle and the elderly people are on the ground with them. So you could just see how that helps you maintain flexibility into your later years. And this is so important, especially you see, you know, people's mobility just declining these days. It's not good.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:17:20] Yeah. And it's important for mobility. It's important for circulation. It's important for longevity. But even if you're not interested in living for many, many years and getting old, you're just going to live the years that you do live with greater quality, having that mobility and ease in your body.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:17:35] So if you're thinking, well, my legs are weak, I really can't do this well, start conditioning your legs. And, um, one of the important exercises, qigong exercises to, um, to strengthen your kidneys, which is also going to reinforce the strength of your, your lumbar, your whole spine, actually, and your structure, because you consolidate your kidney energy, you are supporting your your structure. And this is basically squatting. So squatting exercises. So just slowly squat. You don't have to go low. Just squat up and down. And I'm going to suggest as you squat down you're going to inhale. And then as you rise up you exhale. And as you squat down inhale. And imagine that energy is being pulled down your spine into the base of your spine. And then as you exhale up, that energy is going to come up the front of your body. And as it comes up, it's lifting you back up. And then you're going to inhale and you're going to pull yourself back down. Now, if you feel unstable, hold on to a table. A chair might not be good because it's not supported.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:18:51] So we don't want anybody falling. An excellent way is to hold on to the door. So open your door, hold on to the two handles and then you could squat as you hold the handles. So that's a great way to practice. Now if you want to be more refined, you would have your feet together and your knees together, and you're slowly descending and ascending with your legs close together like that. But if that's hard, just have your feet, you know, foot apart, two feet apart, whatever you have to do to be comfortable. But just start doing the squatting exercise to bring circulation into your hips, to start strengthening your leg muscles and improving your flexibility. And you might find that over time, you could get on the floor and get off the floor more easily. Now, once you're on the floor, you might want to crawl. You know, there's lots of yoga



exercises to open up your hips that people do, but it's also good just to crawl around on the floor and experience that too. So.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:19:56] And take your shoes off while you're doing this. So a lot of times we, you know, I mean in our home we don't wear shoes in the house, but I know a lot of people do. And that's one of the things that also keeps you very disconnected from earth, from the ground, from just feeling more connected to the essence to nature. So taking your shoes off is important to keep you connected to earth. But it's also really important to build the mobility through your ankles and your feet, because those are areas that also accumulate a lot of congestion and the two joints that inhibit our most inhibited, I think, in people are the wrists and the ankles, and those are often reflections of tight hips, tight knees that goes into the ankles, and also tight neck and shoulders that reflects into the wrists. So if we keep our, you know, our hands are free most of the time, but our feet, when they're confined in that way inhibits the circulation through that region, which also creates more constriction through the joints above, so the knees and the hips. So it's important to keep those areas open as you do these practices. And in terms of squatting, you can do it with your feet and knees together as Salvador suggested. And over time, you start to widen your stance even more and kind of sit deeper into your squat, kind of like all the way down to the floor when possible.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:21:11] Of course, for some people it's going to take a very long time to develop that ability, which is fine. Practice makes progress. So just do it regularly and consistently and you're going to see a difference. But you want to make sure to get down and to really stretch the lumbar spine because that's an area that gets very, very restricted when we sit a lot, even when we stand a lot and we want to release that compression. So we kind of want to work against gravity. Gravity compresses the spine. And that's why a lot of people start to hunch and get shorter as they get older, because there's a lot of compression in the intervertebral spaces, the space between each of the vertebrae in your spine. So what we want to do to counter that is to hang for those who can. So hanging from a bar. But squatting is an amazing way of doing it, elongating the spine and creating space between the vertebra so that fluids and blood and qi and oxygen can circulate through those regions. So we stay nice and long and lifted and can express ourselves as we get older.



Salvador Cefalu: [00:22:12] This conversation also makes me think of, um, how many of us work on laptops? Um, and, uh, your teacher used to always talk about get on the floor and work on your laptop, but he would always talk about at least, you know, Setareh would tell me you have to have that laptop lifted up, because if you have it on the ground now, you're going to be overstretching those muscles and ligaments, especially in the lumbar. And that's why you're going to have a hard time getting off the floor after that, because, uh, everything's going to stiffen up. So you got to have that lifted up. So you're not so stretched out in your back.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:22:50] Exactly. So what you could do is you could practice this squatting and work toward creating kind of a floor desk for yourself. So instead of standing or seated desk, especially for those of you who work from home, because I know this is not always going to be conducive if you're an office, but if you can instead of, you know, once you start to open up your hips, once you're able to squat comfortably and sit on the floor, what you can do is create kind of a platform for your laptop or your computer to go on to. And then when you're sitting on the floor, you sit with your hips wide open so you can sit in postures like butterfly or dragonfly if you're familiar with those yoga poses. So that you can keep the hips open so the circulation continues to move in those regions. And because the hips are such an area that gets easily congested, you want to make sure to keep this region open, not just for the vitality and mobility in your hips and in your legs, but also for the circulation throughout the rest of your body.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:23:45] So when the hips are open, you're going to be able to keep your spine more long. That will allow circulation to go up in the spine, up to your brain, so that you can have better focus, more clarity, you can be more productive. So really, the hips are such an essential part of the body to keep open in order to support everything that you want to have, like, you know, more energy and more clarity throughout your day. So in this year of the Yang Wood Dragon, it's important that we really cultivate the earth energy, that we really ground ourselves and get to a point where we feel connected to the earth, that we open the hips, we get really into our bodies, bring calm to the mind so that we can really reevaluate and get clear about how we want to move forward. This is going to give us an opportunity to look back on what we've done as a means to create what we truly want with our lives as we move forward.



Salvador Cefalu: [00:24:42] I think that sums it up, Setareh.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:24:45] So if you want to learn more about what we talked about today, you can visit acenterfornaturalhealing.com/wooddragon. And there you can leave us a comment about what you learned or what you'd like for us to know about in this year of the Yang Wood Dragon. What are your questions? What is it that you're curious about? Or what was your biggest takeaway from this episode? Thank you so much for joining us for another episode of The Natural Healing Podcast.

Salvador Cefalu: [00:25:15] And as always, we look forward to next time.

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:25:18] Bye!

Dr. Setareh Moafi: [00:25:19] Hey, if you haven't already done so, be sure to rate and review us on Apple Podcasts. This ensures that we can share this invaluable information with more listeners just like you.