

I'm so happy you took a chance and decided to click on this episode, because most TCM practitioners love Chinese medicine. They want to help people. However, they're not too keen on **learning the business aspect** of being a solo entrepreneur or a solo self employed person.

Today, make sure you take notes because this is action packed with lots of tips and steps you can take to grow your acupuncture practice, because you may have all the beautiful knowledge to help people. But **if nobody comes to the door, then you can't help anybody.**

When I was first starting practicing, I remember I went to shadow a practitioner that had been in business or in practice for about five years. When I was there watching him, he said, "**We as practitioners have to be 50 percent knowledgeable in TCM and 50 percent knowledgeable in business.**"

I remember thinking, "*No, we just need 90% TCM and 10% business because TCM is what's going to help our patient.*" However, he was completely right. We need to understand how to grow a successful practice. So all this knowledge we have and all this value and service we want to provide can actually impact our patients.

If no one comes to the door, we're not impacting anybody.

Today, we are going to talk about specifically using The Five Element Theory, the generating sequence to help us grow a successful acupuncture practice. I've been there, I've done it. I'm here to share what has worked with me, what hasn't worked and what can help you soar and make an impact on all your patients.

Welcome to Acupro, a show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I'm your host, Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students like you in changing the world one patient at a time. My goal is to share my passion for TCM and empower you to achieve superior patient care.

I love to showcase the amazing benefits of acupuncture, because after all, acupuncture rocks!

I wanted to use The Five Element Theory to showcase how to grow a successful practice because I think we can relate to it much more easily.

Okay, so let's look at the generating sequence in the five elements. Just a quick recap, Wood generates **Fire generates Earth generates Metal generates Water, and Water, again, generates Wood.** This is the generating sequence. We're going to use it today. To grow a practice and to take steps and action.

Now, I want to make sure that what you're going to learn today, you are going to take at least one action in order for this to work. If you're just listening to this episode and you're not making any change, nothing's going to change, right? It makes sense. By the way, I have a [Seven Day Business Challenge](#) that you can join.

It's completely free and it will help you grow a successful practice. You'll receive seven emails with action steps and anything you need to know in order to grow your practice. You're welcome to sign up for it. Again, it's completely free. You can find the link in the show notes. Okay. So let's talk about the five elements.

The 5 Elements

Wood

Wood is related to the **Liver, Gallbladder** and it's the **planner**. The **goal oriented**, the **visionary**, so we're going to use this and we're going to start with, obviously, everything needs to start with goals. We have to have goals in order for things to occur, right? So when it comes to the planner, the goal oriented, the visionary, which is would or liver, It's crucial to have a plan and write it down.

Set Goals for your Practice Every Year

At the beginning of each year, I set goal for my practice. It's really important to know what is it you're going to do in order to grow your practice. For example, plan **which seminars you will attend** to help elevate your knowledge, right? **What continuing education courses** are you going to take?

What interests you? Start looking for it so you know. What courses are you going to take, either online or in person? What would you like to accomplish? How many patients a week you'd like to treat? What is your income? How many days a week are you working? What is your favorite system or disorders or category of disorders you like to treat? Visualize it.

For example, I love to treat women's disorders. I want to attract patients that are women that are trying to balance their hormones. So pregnant women, or people trying to conceive, or postpartum, or menopause, a woman that have irregular menstruation cycle, anything that's women's focus, I love it. This is my strength and this is where I took a lot of my continuing education over the years, right? So this is all planned and I visualize a lot of people calling me and coming to see me that are focused into women's health.

What has worked for you? What needs to improve?

Now also reflect on what has worked for you and what needs to improve, right? This is, if you're listening to this episode, this is the beginning of 2024. This is a time to reflect on what has worked in 2023 and what needs to change. Because if we're not making a change, nothing can. Okay, plan blog posts or plan social media.

This is really important that you have a plan for that as well. Plan your promotions. If you're going to have promotions, know when they are going to occur. Set measurable goals with dates.

For example, if you're going to plan your blog post, make sure you write something about spring allergies or hay fever.

In March, because you know it's coming up. Educate your patients on allergies, let's say in March. Makes sense? In October, you can write something about boosting the immune system. How does acupuncture boost the immune system? How does Chinese medicine can help boost the immune system to prepare for the winter season?

Plan what you're going to do on your social media.

Now, I know social media is very hard for a lot of people and it feels overwhelming. Have a plan. You're going to post, let's say, Monday and Thursday. And then what you're going to do is you're going to batch. So you're going to write 10 posts for 10 Mondays and 10 posts for 10 Thursdays.

You are going to **make** all those, **create** them, and then you'll **schedule** them. That way you don't have to worry about it. You cannot wake up in the morning on Monday and think, *"Oh, what am I going to post? I don't know what to post. I don't know what to do."* No, start writing down how you're going to plan this.

Get ideas for what to write about

Write this down: there is a website called answerthepublic.com. Go in there, it's completely free. Put the word *acupuncture* in there and click search and you'll see it will come up with about a hundred to 160 most asked questions on the internet about acupuncture. Now that's a gold mine

Let's say the most occurring question on the Internet is **"How does acupuncture work?"** Write a post on how acupuncture works, explain to people how it works, or if people's question is, how does acupuncture help anxiety, write a post about how acupuncture helps anxiety, Those are going to be what you're looking to do in order to educate your potential patients and they're going to really be connecting with you and the fact that you can help them. It's all about education.

People don't know that you can help them with anxiety because maybe they read that acupuncture is great for pain, but it's not just great for pain, but they don't know that. They need to be educated. Make sense?

Make sure you plan everything

That's going to help you out. It's very important to use your goal orienting and your planification when you have a practice. Now plan how you're going to do your treatment. Make sure that your room is set. It's all ready for you.

So everything is planned. You know where everything is and you don't have to get all worried or *"Where did I put my gua sha? Where did I put the moxa? I can't see where I have my lighter."*

You need to know where everything is and everything is planned. So it's seamless and easy once you treat your patient. That's for the wood.

Fire

Wood generates fire. The fire stands for passion. It stands for **connection** and **people**. The fire personality in TCM **loves to be around people**. It's very **passionate**. So that's what we're going to do now. We're going to talk about The Fire Element and how it can help us grow a successful practice.

Now, **it's important to connect with people on social media**. And it's so important to connect with people in real life as well. If you are an extrovert, it's much easier for you to go out in the world and meet people and explain what you do. If you are an introvert, it makes it much more difficult. So I'm going to talk about the two different polar opposite Yin and Yang personality and how both can grow successful practice with different way of doing it or going about it.

If you are an extrovert

It's crucial that you go out there and **give free talks**. Again, it's all about education. You can talk about TCM nutrition. For example, you can approach a community center, health food store, a yoga place. Or other practitioners in your area that have a lot of clients already, like a chiropractor, a physiotherapist, a naturopathic medicine doctor, a multidisciplinary clinic, whoever you think could relate and have the same kind of patients.

When you give a talk, let's say you talk about TCM nutrition, make it simple. Talk about cold food versus hot food. Which one are cold? Which one are hot? Bring two recipes. One for the hotty, one for the coldy. And that way you can explain to people if you're always cold, this is what you should do according to TCM.

If you're always hot, this is what you should do according to TCM, and if you want to know more and you need more help, you can come and see me. **Make sure you connect with people**. Because once they meet you, they can see that you have so much knowledge. So this is a good idea to start giving talks.

If you're an introvert, that makes it very difficult because you might not want to, give a free talk. Years ago, I used to do a free talk in a tea store that was local next to my clinic. That was **fabulous to bring new patients in**.

If you are an introvert

Now, if you're an introvert, what you want to do is connect to local people on your social media, **share their post, comment on their post, give positive feedback**. So for example, make sure you follow the chiropractor down the street or the physiotherapist or the yoga place and participate in the discussion.

Give free little nuggets about how Chinese medicine can do certain things. This is your way to get in as well. That's the start. Makes sense?

Now, the fire personality is passionate. **Be passionate when you talk to your patients** as well. Explain to them all the many ways TCM can help. If someone comes in for insomnia, they don't know that you might help infertility or fertility issues, or you might be able to help pain because they don't think that way, right?

Keep educating your patients because they are going to be your best referral forever and ever.

Fire

Now the next one, fire generates earth and earth personality is the **caregiver**. It's the **nurturer**. It's who we are at the core in this profession. Most of us went into this because we want to help people. We want to serve the public and make an impact.

The nurturer, the caregiver is going to help others, right?

Happy, cared for patients will be your best referrals.

You have to go the extra mile. You have to go beyond expectation. First of all, you have to be compassionate and caring while treating patients. You want to make sure you're listening, you're compassionate, you're caring, and then you want to answer the questions and **communicate your treatment plan in a clear manner**.

You don't want to say, "I think you have Stomach Qi Rebellious with Spleen Qi deficiency." Because that doesn't mean anything to your patients. Explain to them, your heartburn, your acid reflux is coming from the stress that's put upon you. We need to decrease the stress and we can also address the diet as well because of course your digestive system is now depleted due to the fact that your diet hasn't been really healthy.

The next thing you want to say is acupuncture is like interest, it compounds with time. So one session is not going to do it because your chronic issue has been there for two years. So we need to do weekly or twice a week, whatever you think is best for your patient, acupuncture.

You'll see within two to three sessions, you are going to feel a difference. If you don't, then we're not on the right track. But if within two to three sessions you are doing better, then we are going to continue you. And get to where we want to go. So it's really important to **tell patients how many times a week they need to come**, when they need to come and why, because they need an answer.

[TCM Courses for Continuing Education](#)

A lot of people know that I have [three books](#). However, many don't that I also offer [continuing education online courses](#). This is actually how I started Acupro Academy to support new

practitioners. You can choose from TCM treatment for common Mental Disorders, Fertility, Pregnancy, Thyroid disorders, but also specific ones like Scalp acupuncture or Cosmetic Acupuncture online courses.

All are prerecorded so you can watch them on your own time. And since you have access to them forever, you can revisit the information anytime you need. You will receive a certificate with your name on it after you pass a multiple choice quiz. And if you truly not satisfied with any of my online courses, I offer a **seven day money back guarantee** as I stand behind my products and truly, truly want you to benefit from them.

So go check them out on my website, acuproacademy.com and click the [TCM course tab](#) on the menu bar or check out the link in the show notes below.

Patients want to know three things

How much is it going to **cost** them? Can you **help** them? And is it going to **hurt**? SO how much? Your cost, they know that from your website, if you have shared that on your website. Not everybody does, unfortunately, which can be a really shocking news to patients when they first come.

Your Prices

Be upfront, be authentic, just tell your price. Either people can afford you or they can't, but put that on your website. I think you should share the price on your website because, it's important for people.

It's if you go to a store and you want to buy a jacket. And the jacket is really pretty and you love it. It's beautiful jacket, but you don't know the price. Then you get to the till and they tell you it's \$500 and you're in shock. But they're like now that you took it down the rack, you have to buy it. That's just a shock because now you don't want it. It's too expensive for me.

However, somebody else has the \$500 and can afford it. So make sure you tell your prices. That way there's no surprises and people know what to expect and I think that is really important to think about.

Can you help?

The second thing is people want to know can you help them? This is when you have to communicate and explain that either we're managing the problem if the root cause is not taken away, right?

So if the root cause is the person is on their knees all day long because they're fixing commercial fridges, then we are managing the knee pain. This person is still going to be eight hours a day on their knees. We're not going to help it get rid of it or eradicate it. We're just going to manage it so this person can continue to work.

However, if we can take the cause or the root cause away, let's say it's diet and we change the diet and we're doing a lot of acupuncture and we're doing the right treatment. Then everything is going to get better and better. Now we're going beyond managing. We're now treating. Does that make sense?

Does it hurt?

And then people are going to want to know if it hurts. It's really important to communicate well with your patients and caring. We are used to needles, but some people are really scared and they still made it through the door and they came to see you. That's a big deal.

What I say to patients that are scared or anxious, and I always ask patients. "**Are you scared or are you anxious about needling? Or are you worried about the needle?**" And some people will say, "No, I'm fine." Some people say, "Yes, I'm quite nervous."

So what I say to them is, "You know what, we'll just put one needle. If you think it's horrible and you can't do it, I take it out. You go home, we don't have to do it." And people get surprised, because they're like, "Oh, okay, and where are you going to put this needle?" "I'm just going to put it on your leg. Is that okay?" "Yeah." Then you pick a point, maybe Stomach 36, because that's an easy one, and you do it.

Then the person realizes, "Oh it's not bad at all. It's actually fine." And some people are like, "That's it. That's it. Can I continue?" Yes, you can. **Now we have a trust of the patient** that they can lay there, relax, be in a parasympathetic state and allow the body to self heal you want to gain the trust of the patient. That's really important.

Give a Courtesy Call after every new patient

Okay. Now the last one, and please write this down because this is a gold mine tip. Always give a courtesy **call to every new patient within 48 hours of their first visit.** *Not a text, not an email*, a courtesy call.

If it's a voicemail, because often you're going to get the voicemail, I'll say, "Hey, it's Clara, your acupuncturist. We just saw each other two days ago. I just wanted to check on you, see how you were doing after treatment. If you have any questions, because I know we talked about a lot of things, feel free to call me, email me and let me know. Otherwise I'll see you next Tuesday at 6 p.m."

That way, you remind them of their appointment, you're asking them how they felt after treatment. Often people feel really good after treatment, but a week later, they might have forgotten that they felt so good. So it reminds them that, "Oh, this is working. I slept really well that night." And you're also letting them know that if they have questions, they don't have to be shy. They can ask you, they can reach you.

It doesn't mean because they're not there anymore that you are not available. Of course, we are available to answer questions, right? So this is really good. Often over the years people have

said, thank you for your call. I was so really delighted that you actually took the time to call me. So always give a courtesy call to every new patient, only for new patients, within 48 hours of the first visit.

You'll see a tremendous connection with your patient after that and they will refer you to everybody.

Metal

Now let's talk about the next one, which is metal personality. It's the strong personality so metal is **strong**. And so it embodies **trust**. It embodies **loyalty, reliability, dependability**.

You have to be trustworthy, dependable and you have to be an authority in your field that makes you stand out. It's an important part of a strong, sustainable business is that people are going to go, "Oh my God, I got to go see this person because they are very good with Fertility."

That's what happened to me. Now, I have a practitioner in my area that is fantastic when it comes to skin. He is what I think the Skin Guy. Because he's taken all his continuing education courses on skin disorders, and so he's really good at it. I'm not, I am not ashamed to say that when it's deep seated, let's say rosacea, I don't know what to do. I'm not very good when it comes to skin disorders, because it's not my passion, because I haven't treated a lot of people, and I haven't taken a lot of extra medication, curriculum on it, but he has.

If someone comes and sees me for rosacea, I will send them directly to this other practitioner because I know he's the perfect person for them. If I send this patient away, another one will come my way that is interested in seeing me because I'm the fertility authority. In my field. Does that make sense?

Be dependable, trustworthy and become the authority in something that you have lived or you love

Lived means if you have a Thyroid disorder and you've seen how TCM has helped you, that's what you lived. If you love something, like I love Women's disorders, then that's what I will focus on my field.

The second thing is the metal is very trustworthy and dependable and reliable. **Always be on time and always apologize if you're late**. If I'm five minutes late for the next patient because my previous patient was a bit slower and things got a bit delayed, I will always apologize for being five minutes late.

I'm always on time. I've seen practitioners coming through the door with a coffee in their hand while their patient is sitting there waiting for them for 20 minutes, because the appointment was at 1, it's now 1:20. This practitioner just came right through the door and said, "Oh, I just needed

to grab a coffee on the way here." That is so disrespectful to patient. This is something that it just, blew me away that practitioners would do something like this.

Make sure you're always on time. If obviously things happen in life, that's when you apologize. Make sure though that you're always there for your patient. If I start at 1 I'm there at 12:15 setting up everything calming myself getting myself ready for the day.

Do not come right at the same time as your patient because they feel disrespected.

Make sense? Also return messages within a timely matter because people want to be respected and not ignored. Refer out if you can, right?

You can send your patient to a massage therapist, a chiropractor, a counselor, so you have a team of people that can surround you to help all your patients care. This is so important. and always, *always* thank someone when they refer a new patient to you by sending them a card, sending them an email, or even offering them a free treatment.

Because if someone takes the time to refer to you, there have been people over the years that refer to me I've never met. I'm always touched, and I always thank them either via email, or with a card, or exchanging a free treatment.

The reality of growing your practice

When I first started, when I first opened my practice, I had nobody like most of us, right?

The first month I had nobody, no patients the first week, second week, third week. I just wanted to grow a practice and help people.

However, nobody was coming. I had to learn this the hard way. That was in October. By March, six months later, I was seeing 40+ patients a week because I went and took action. One of the things that I did is I went and bartered treatment. I went and basically knocked on doors of similar practitioners, chiropractors, counselors, massage therapists, physiotherapists, naturopathic doctors.

And I said, "Listen, I'm new. I don't have patients to refer back to you, but if you send me a patient for each patient you send me, I'll give you a free treatment."

Everybody said "No, not interested." Some people laughed at me.

Some people said, "I keep on true," Whatever, and that's okay. That's there. They are not rejecting me. They're just rejecting the idea and that's hard, but that's the challenge, right? That we are going to be challenged. However, eventually when you keep going. One person will say, yes, that is the law of numbers.

So one massage therapist said, "I love acupuncture. That's a done deal" Absolutely. I said "Come, I'll give you a treatment. If you like what I do, then you can refer to me." So I gave her a free treatment first. So she knows how I work. After that, she referred people to me and I gave her a treatment for each patient. And that helped me a lot at the beginning of my practice.

Water

Okay. And the last one is the Water. The Water Element is the creative water is flowing. It's **creative**. It's **easygoing**. It's **adaptable** to change, right? Water in the river. If there's rocks, they'll adapt. They'll go around the rock or over the rock. So the water personality is creative, easygoing and adaptable to change.

That will make you stand out and eliminate the competition. So don't be beige, don't be blah, don't be like everybody else. Be unique, be bold, be yourself. This is really important. Be authentic, do you. This is key to growing a successful practice, to be yourself. Why? Because **people come to see you for you.**

All of us have the same TCM knowledge. We all went to school, we all graduated. We're all licensed. But people come and see you because of you and who you are. So be authentic and treat people with respect and listen to them and care for them and be passionate about TCM and plan everything so everything flows properly.

This is how you're going to have all your patients loving you and referring you.

Does that make sense? Okay. Now, it's important to adapt to change as well, right? For example, if there's a cancellation in the middle of the day, use it to be productive instead of getting upset, right? Because it always upsets us when someone cancels at the last minute.

It's not fun. Be productive. This is the time to create. Post for social media. This is the time to answer email. Use this time as a productivity instead of being upset. Learn to adapt to technology and it's constant change.

Go on a social media platform that you enjoy and share your knowledge there. Be creative with it. Have fun with it. It's really important to have fun, right? Decorate your treatment room to create a warm, soothing environment that suits you and who you are.

When you are on social media, educate people.

Entertain people and inspire people, share testimonies. Share what we can do, entertain people, make them laugh. You've seen me on social media. I do serious posts and I do fun posts because it's all about balance. When it comes to your website, you can create something that represents who you are, because your website is now your new business card, right? That's how people found you most of the time.

Your website is now your new business card

Make sure you answer people's questions on your website, which means no pictures of acupuncture needles. Because, have you ever seen a dentist's website? Do you ever see a mouth open with a bunch of instrument in the mouth, like going in there and cleaning?

No, you see a beautiful smile. Always make sure you show pictures of after. After they've come and seen you, how good they feel. For example, I do fertility, I have a picture of a baby and I say, do you struggle with fertility? Because obviously the outcome is you have a baby.

If you focus on pain or injury, put a picture of someone that's running and put run injury free. Ask how acupuncture can help relieve pain. That's how you do it. Does that make sense? So be creative, be yourself, be inventive, but do not create a website for you.

Create a website for your potential patient.

Does that make sense? Wow, I hope that was useful and you took a lot of notes today on all the five Element generating secrets which we can use to grow a successful practice again. This is very short very succinct very to the point however, if you want more sign up to my free seven days business challenge, it's completely free.

Thank you so much for spending your time with me today. I truly hope you benefited from this episode and I would love for you to share it with a friend that may benefit from it as well. Follow the show, leave a review, and if you want more, go to my website acuproacademy.com. I have tons of resources there with treatment protocols, case study, free courses, and so much more. And connect with me on all social media @acuproacademy. I'm on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, X, Pinterest and LinkedIn and TikTok. And no matter what, keep rocking it using TCM.