CC: Today is Chinese New Year. Woohoo! 2025, Chinese New Year, and of course, because of this, I wanted to do what we did last year, which was to look at Chinese astrology, and what this year brings, which is the serpent, Or the snake, the word element and the yin.

So we're discussing all this with Sonia today. She's going to give us a lot of insights in Chinese astrology for the year to come and explain it a little bit. So we learn a little bit more about it. And then if we want to go deeper, then obviously we can go deeper for sure, because that's always so fascinating.

And it's such a deep, deep subject that we really barely. Brush the surface. And then we also talked about the balance system acupuncture because everybody just loves the system in clinic. So we just talked a little bit about the balance system as well. So without further ado, .

Happy New Year. Let's go.

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!

Happy Chinese New Year!

And what is the best way to celebrate Chinese New Year? I've got my ginger tea and I'm sitting down with my friend and colleague, Dr. Sonia Tan. Welcome back to the show!

ST: Cheers, thank you for having me!

CC: Sonia is going to be a permanent fixture because I think this is the third time you are here, which is awesome. The first time Sonia came was last year for the Chinese New Year in 2024. And we were talking about Chinese astrology to understand how it all works. And last year was Yang, Word, and Dragon. And then this year we're going to the yin, we're still in the wood element and we're switching to the snake for the animal characteristics. I wanted to start by asking you is every year in the next one, yang, yang, yang, alternating or not. Second question is, how long is the wood element going to be before it switches to, let's say, fire the next element? Because last year was wood as well. And then I understand that snake there's 12 months.

Yeah. Obviously, animals or characteristics, so then it switches every 12 years, that I understand. But the first two, the yin and yang and the element, how does that work?

ST: Where we talk about what kind of year it is, not the animal, so that's the character on the top. That's what we call the heavenly stems, it's called the Tian Gan. So that's what you could call the energy that comes from heaven, or the heavenly mandate, what's the energy bestowing us from the heavens. of this year. It does cycle through the wuxing, the five behaviors or five phases or five elements, it always starts with the yang, then the yin. So last year we had yang wood, now we have yin wood, and then next will be yang fire, then it'll be yin fire. So it will cycle through the sheng cycle of the wuxing and it'll just go through the polarities first in order, yang, then yin. There is an order to it, like the order of natural law, same thing. And then with the animal signs, there is a certain order to the animal. They are technically Chinese astrology characters, or they're called the earthly branches. And the animal name came in later, and there's a certain order for them. It also goes through a wuxing sheng cycle. The order of the yin yang is not quite the same as in the heavenly stems. So I might be getting my head in myself, but say, the serpent is actually that the Chinese character it's actually yang fire, and it's got a little bit of yang metal, and a little bit of yang earth in it so it's a mixed sign it's not a pure sign of one element.

The serpent has actually a very yang nature, even though it's sitting in a yin position. So it's sitting in what we call a yin position in the order. could say the order of the clock, or order of the rotation of the animals, or the order of the sequence. But within it, it's got a yang energy to it. So, I mean, that helps us define the characteristics of what a serpent or snake is, and that helps us define the personality if you have that in your birth chart, we look at that in the whole year, too.

CC: We alternate yin and yang, I got that. Now for the elements, how long is the element, like how many years in a row before it's switched, let's say, to fire?

ST: Yeah, so it's basically in the heavenly part, the top, two per wuxing. So this is our last one for wood, then we're going to have yang fire, then yin fire, then we'll have yang earth, then yin earth, then we'll go through metal. For the earthly branches, the below, the part below where it's assigned or attached to animal characteristics for us to understand it, it generally goes to per. Season or Wuxing, the five phases, and then there's an earth one in between. So last year we had dragon, which is an earth branch. So it's the earth animal sign. There's a lot of things to talk about with earth animals or earth branches with respect to what are we trying to bury, what are we trying to let go?

What are we transitioning? You know, there's a lot that happens in that. , then we transition the next year to the next Wuxing. Now we are, right, we're going into Serpent, which is Yong Fire.

So a yin year, if we start at the beginning, versus a yang year, is a yin year more, like, supposed to be more introspective, or calmer, like, is there a and yang? Or, it depends what it's attached to, as in the animal and the element.

Very generally, very broadly. Yin years or yin pillars. Cause we look at it as a pillar, right? Because we have something on the top, something on the bottom, they're stacked up on each other. We always look at them together. Generally. Yeah, which tends to be more introspective and calm, but I would say it's so general.

It almost, almost doesn't apply because it really depends on, first of all, what are the two elements involved in that pillar, the heaven and the earthly one. And then really how is that influencing or affecting personally in your life. So basically where are the interactions happening in your own personal birth chart, year, month, day, and time, that will tell you what area of your life is being affected. And then whatever transformation it's doing to whatever Wuxing will also tell you a theme. So that could be quite dramatic, quite moving, quite overwhelming, or it could be quite joyful, abundant Very growing. It really, really can be different. I will say, like, again, in general the yang elements tend to be more, like, energetic and moving.

And, they'll definitely have a lot more literal movement in people's life. Those animal signs try to move and create a change. And this year the snake and the serpent are one of those what we call traveling or mobility animals. So it has a little extra movement to it to push in people's lives. So we could see a lot of movement and change in people's lives and in the world this year.

CC: Oh, that's really cool. Cause I associate wood with growth. I always think if it's a wood year, there's growth. And last year was a wood year. And I feel like starting this podcast was a lot of growth. I had to learn all of it and I'm still learning. And there was a lot of growth to it.

So I feel like this. The word is a growth year kind of thing. So that's how I interpreted it in my head. I would love for you to tell us what the Yin word serpent is and what it looks like for 2025 for us as a whole.

ST: There's so much to unpack, right? In this brief podcast, I will say, Yin wood in general versus yang wood tends to be a little more flexible or malleable in the way they want to grow and adjust.

They're not so hard, like linear. And they're not moving as fast, but they are still fast-moving. So there's a lot of adjustment and pivot in the growth that we might see in the first part of the year if we're looking at what a yin, a wood serpent, is. At the same time, a big difference from this year to last year is the serpent has absolutely no wood within it, whereas the dragon had a little bit. The dragon has a little bit of wood, it grounds the wood, making that wood very strong. This year's wood is not as strong. because there is no wood grounding within the serpent. In addition, with the serpent being a yang fire sign, as you know, with the sheng cycle, fire is the child of wood. That means it's sedating wood. So, and it's also forcing a creative kind of energetic flow. So what we're going to see is a lot of starting to sedate the wood. So when people are trying to learn and grow this theme of this year is about, okay, I have finally learned what I needed to learn. And now I just want to create it and put it out there and all this creativity and these ideas are going to, are you going to put it out there and it's going to start to manifest.

I'm saying very generally. It still depends on your chart, but in terms of the vision of the world, it's a new transformative phase of new ideas, new creation, and really moving along that path in a

quick way, because fire is also quick moving when it has a desire to do so, if fire doesn't have the desire to do so.

So basically when it, if it doesn't have the passion, it's not gonna move. But when it has the passion, it moves quickly and it moves fast as we can see. Both with fire, like a fire, when you light a fire it will just light up a whole room and burn it down. Yang fire is like the sun, it still can flare and move quickly and it wants to shine brightly.

So another theme of this year is joy, compassion, warmth, and a way to create inspiration, inspiration for moving forward in the future. So I'm

Let's get, let's get a quick, quick, quick quick, quick.

Also when I look at the pillar, I look at what we call the four pillars of the year and look at the four quarters and I look to see if there's conflicts or if there's flow. And I will say that for the most part there's mostly flow and there's not very much conflict. As there was this year, that also tells me how much it wants to generate movement change and just forward moving progress forward moving ideas forward moving change in a positive way, it's really at this time, we needed to let go and pack off. , last year was trying to force us to do and now it's like, okay, reset. New time to grow, and to move forward on this path in a quick, quick way, a mindful way, but in a passionate, joyful way, too.

What's interesting is first of all, I love that you say it's going to flow because my word for last year was growth this year. It's seamless, smooth, like, you know, easy. So it's kind of like moving like a flowing kind of like a serpent does, right? They flow, they move smoothly, right?

CC: So I totally love that. You said that it is supposed to be more smooth and flowing. Oh, my gosh, that's my word.

## ST: It is.

CC: It's like it's perfect. Now, the other thing you talked about, which is interesting because there's a lot of polarity when it comes to AI. But when you said things are going to be creative and move very fast and, you know, grow very fast, right away, I thought of AI because it's moving so quickly right now, we can't even keep up with it.

So, and of course, it scares people for some people because it's just moving so fast. For some people, it scares them because they feel like they're left behind. For other people, they scare them because they don't know what that means in their life, in their daily life the consequences of it or not.

But. I can see that's where the creativity and AI shows up. So can you expand on that?

ST: I absolutely think that that's one industry and one area that's going to take off this year and going forward in this new age, you know, last year I talked about how we entered a new feng shui age of nine or the fire and that's a fire age of the next 20 years. So fire in terms of energy is about new ideas and inspiration and transformative. So sometimes transformative means like, you've really literally got to burn down something or of yourself for you to rise and create something new. And it can be very new. I definitely think because serpent and then next year will be the horse is very fire themed that we're going to see any kind of industry in the fire industry going to Really manifest or explode.

So it and tech a fire-themed industry. I think that will really take off as well. Anything related to that people that feel weary you're really going to have to figure out a way to live in a new age. We are in a new age. Now, it doesn't mean you have to adjust as fast. you have to find a way that, well, what is it that grounds you?

Because for fire, some people, it can be very destabilizing, right? As we know in Chinese medicine, it can really disturb our Shen also. So there's also a chance that we might see this year and the next year, a lot more Shen disturbances for people. So there's always the dark side and the light, the positive and the negative side of anything.

As you ride along this fast moving airplane now, the serpent, as I said, has a little metal in it and a little bit of earth. I like to talk about this because serpents or snakes get a bad rap.

They think, Oh, that's sneaky. You're going to hit me when it's just like, you know, a bad time. But really not the way a serpent or a in Chinese astrology is defined. are just simply observers. That metal part within them. about meticulously detailing logically creating a way to organize and implement things because they like to, as a fire sign, they like to create, give some earth and then organise control.

That's the fire controlling metal. So within a serpent, are creative people that like to organize and control. So they're observing first. They're patiently observing the earth sign, patiently observing, patiently observing. Manic thinking of how to organize it, and then finally when they figure it out, they'll organize and implement it themselves, and they'll do it.

But because they're a fire sign, they'll do it quickly. Because they're a fire sign, at the core of them, they are about joy and inspiration and leadership. They really are. So don't give them a bad rap. There are a lot of really important leaders in the world who actually have serpent in their chart. It is really a great positive sign and a lot of entrepreneurs have serpent in their sign because of all these inherent qualities that make them creative people and managing people. They have that entrepreneurial spirit and they have that ability to lead and see.

CC: It makes total sense because I see the serpent or the snake and it's very calm. It's very Yin. It doesn't move. Like you said, it was observed. It organises everything it's creating, it's taking the time. It's really patient. Once it's done all its information gathering, then it becomes a fire passion and it goes at it really quickly.

## ST: Exactly.

CC: It makes sense when you said entrepreneurs, because people that are entrepreneurs are going to get all the facts, organize everything, get ready. And then when it's time, they just go. And then that's it. You know, there's no stopping.

ST: They really deserve a lot of credit. I don't like that. They get a bad rap. One other thing that I think we need to look for and metal translate to the economy like metal literally is It's money, metal.

So because the serpent wants to transform to metal, it does that with certain other animal signs in the chart. There's a lot of flow and there's nothing pulling the metal and we haven't actually had metal in a pillar. In a while, not since 2021, since 2020. So now we have a return of at least a little bit of metal, and we have an animal sign that wants to create metal. So I also believe that economically and financially, we will start to really feel that back and stabilize, and feel like more abundance again that we lost.

AD: 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 course. All these are pre recorded 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're 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.

CC: So can you explain the four pillars? What are they, how do they move around or how do they work? I don't know much about the four pillars when it comes to astrology.

ST: Four pillars is another way your birth chart or your natal chart. The pillars are the year, day, and time of birth and in each pillar we have the heavenly portion. That's whatever energy was cycling in heaven at the time and then the bottom is the earthly portion, the earthly branch. So it's a cycle of energy here on earth. We as humans live between heaven and earth and we're trying to live in harmony with heaven earth. The ancient Chinese discovered a way to figure out our energetic constitution at the time of birth, that we inhale that moment of time of heaven and earth, and that becomes who we are. So those pillars are literally the, the, those four year, month and time. We look at each pillar as parts of our personality. The day pillar is the most important one. The month is the second most important one. They have the most weight in

terms of our personality and what's happening with ourselves in our lives. So whenever a year comes in, or, and we also have 10 year cycles that we go through personally. So when I'm looking at a chart, I'm also looking at what 10 year cycle are they in and how is that impacting their chart? Is it transforming and hitting something in their chart that is now transforming to something like earth or something like metal?

And what does that mean for that person? Is that good for them or not good for them? And if, it's good, how can they take advantage? If it's bad, how can we minimize and avoid it? When we look at the year, we do the same thing. We look at the years coming in, how it interacts with the birth chart, what is it transforming to good elements or not, and specifically what area of your chart will tell you what's the theme or area of your life it's happening. When I look at the four pillars of the year, I'm literally looking at if someone was, was born at that moment in time. That's essentially what the four pillars are.

CC: I'm a monkey,

ST: Yeah.

CC: totally suits me because I love to play and be silly and all that kind of stuff. I'm an earth monkey mostly, so it's kind of interesting to look at that, right?

So one of the things we talked about last year, and I just wanted to mention it again this year, because a lot of people may not have listened to the episode because they joined us later on since we started the podcast last year. You do charts for patients.

If they wanted to, you do a consultation, which basically uses. Chinese astrology to kind of look at that person and what we can do to help them. Can you explain how you go about it and do they love it? Like it's something a lot of patients ask for or not really.

ST: To be honest, I don't volunteer unless I see there's a time we need to look at it because for the most part with the acupuncture style that I do, the results are really good. So I don't necessarily need to look at another tool to break through a plateau. So, but. There are times you need another tool. You can look at astrology and look at what their helpful elements are whooshing and then use that in the acupuncture channels. Then I might have a conversation to say, I preface it saying, The Chinese know what someone's energetic constitutional DNA is. That's based on your Chinese astrology chart, which is more than just the year you're born. also the month, day, and time that comprises eight different energetics that interact with each other. That tells me your constitutional energetic DNA. Based on that and knowing what energy you need or not. I can apply that in a health application way with acupuncture channels and using the I Ching and other resources. it also can really truthfully be used to advise diet, herbs, and feng shui. This is also what we use to guide choices in life or career. geography, where you live, relationships you choose. So then I might say, do I have permission to look at your chart to see what it is that could help.

And most of them have said, Oh yes, please do. When they understand that. And it's usually over time that I've built a relationship with them, that they have that trust, right? Also something to say. This is always confidential, like any consult, it's always confidential. The patients usually say, could I, can I get a little insight of it? And so I might do a little brief reading, not like the same kind of reading I would do for private clients. And if they wanted a full on then I'd say, well, we can book a private consultation reading and then we can bring that to the clinic. But if they wanted something quickly in the clinic, I can do something quickly in the clinic if you wanted something more. And though it's, now, it's been a great tool because I will get some patients because it's given to them. Perspective of themselves and their own life and their direction if they're having a hard time emotionally trying to process a relationship that maybe isn't going well And what they should do or the passing of someone, you know It gives them perspective of the whys and the hows Like the why they're going through it and how they can also get through it. Astrology I'm so tangenting here, Clara, it's because there's so much, but astrology is more than a tool that we can use medically.

It's such a great relationship tool for me to even understand how best to talk to my patient. If their core constitutional self is metal, then I know they really like detail and a lot of information. If they're a water sign, then they really like more broad things and they want to speak more about the feeling of the emotional part. So that helps me reach them and talk as a tool, but even beyond that, I just love seeing how it can transform people's perspective or help them let go of something that they're not able to let go or help them understand purpose. You know, astrology is really about understanding more about yourself so that Your best self can shine through.

Everything that happens to you is happening to you for a reason as much as it can suck at the time. Really, all of those are meant to be, okay, you're supposed to learn something from this or, oh, you're not on the right path. We're gonna push you. We're gonna maybe slap you because you're, you're meant to go this way. you hadn't listened and then we're going to try to lead you to this way and it's really can we listen, can we hear the cues, can we figure it out and then what, what really the universe of the heaven wants is we were here to have our best self or our best as best as we can, our best life shine through and that can be a process.

I mean, for some, they might have that early, that early abundance early, and that might fizzle. Later for others, it might come way later and for others, they might maybe they're meant to have kind of an average life to have just like the family theme or the stability theme or to have like a stability theme because maybe in a different lifetime, they didn't have that.

And this is what they're meant to purposely do this time. And that's going to be their best self. So it's, you know, it's so much more than something medically, but it's so useful medically too.

CC: When you explain all this, I feel like it's kind of like a guidance, right? It's just guiding you when you feel stuck, when you're not sure when you need some help and some guidance.

And there's a lot of ways we can reach out for guidance, like our guts, but sometimes we forget what it feels like to listen to our own inner self. So having guidance that comes in different forms, like. Chinese astrology, for example, that's a form of it. Then I think that's fantastic. And one of the thing you said is, because when I treat patients I have a way of doing things that patients get a lot of results, but sometimes because it's been stuck for a long time or whatever, they're having some issues with, then I start, asking them if they would want to try something that is maybe different and see if that would help them.

So, having said that, the way you practice is very specific, which you are, what I call the balance system queen, in my opinion.

## ST: Yes.

CC: So cool. So, you know, for years, people have asked, Oh, I want to learn balance acupuncture, but I can't travel, etc. So last October, you were so gracious and you basically provided the acupro community, the level one of the balance system acupuncture, which So many people enrolled in and so many people came back saying, this is awesome.

I love it. People are just really using it and seeing the results very quickly. So that was so, so impactful. And so I'm very thankful that you agreed to put it on the Acupro Academy website. And then everybody started saying, okay, well, this was the. Fundamentals or this was the beginning of it. This was awesome.

That was level one. I'm ready for level two now. And when we had discussed how we could really help everybody understand the material and apply it, we had said we want everybody to apply to level one first. So they feel familiar. They feel comfortable. They feel confident. And then we can just Provide level two because now they know what they're doing and they learn more.

So it's not too much at one time. And now level two is finally out for everyone. Woo. From Sonya. So we have it on the website. We'll have the link in the show notes below. So if you missed out level one, you can buy them as a combo, as a bundle if you want to. But if you already have level one, then you can get level two now.

And you're ready. To be more on fire. So my question, Sonia, is to explain the course differences between level one and level two so people understand what it entails.

ST: This is definitely a level up. Now we still call it foundations because this is also like learning the other part of the alphabet of practicing balance system acupuncture. So with level one, you needed to learn the language or the balancing of all the five systems and how the channels can balance each other. In level two, we take that and we create these functional medicine patterns to treat functional medicine disorders. Which is leveling up, right, because level one was really focused on range of motion and pain, musculoskeletal, one for one, bouncing one channel at a time. Level two, we're going to look at bouncing two or more channels at a time. So, if you have

an MSK problem that has several channels blocked, like in the shoulder, for example, there's six. Like in the knee, and you need something more, even in the butt. You know, even the back with bladder and gallbladder that's already two and it's and you need something stronger than we look at those two.

Then we're looking at functionality. So are we looking at digestion? We're going to be looking at women's health, hormone balancing, and also men's health. We're looking at all these functional disorders and we're creating or looking at these patterns that were created by Dashatan, Grandmaster Richard Tan. He created the patterns within level 2. As I mentioned in the course, the balance system wasn't created by Dashatan. He created patterns within it. It's still from the classics. The origins are still from the classics. That's black. When we look at the patterns, you have to have already understood the balancing systems in level one, because you see how these patterns connect and create something called a thrust and create a yin yang flow.

And that's by the relationships we understand or learn in level one. So the relationships we learn in level one, we start to apply them in this pattern way. And then we can use those base patterns to treat functional medicine disorders. And we'll discuss that in level two, this pattern or this strategy combo, you could say. Would be great for this situation. This strategy combo or strategic plan is great for this and it's going to be a minimum of four channels because we still set it up in a yin yang flow we alternate. Channel. So again, you're going to see it and it's going to be game changing because I will tell you that you're probably going to use these base patterns in these, this foundational level two, and at least 75, 80 percent of your clinic.

What we're teaching you, you're going to probably use them that often. That's what you need. And then any of the higher levels deepens your understanding of all of these base patterns. There's not a lot more patterns or strategic maps, I like to call them strategic maps, after level 2. Because that's why we call it the foundation.

So that's basically level two. It's really leveling up to be functional, getting some strategic maps that you're going to use for 75, 80 percent of your time in the clinic. And then further levels, you just learn different applications of these base patterns.

CC: That's awesome. I'm so excited for everyone because it's such a great tool to have. And I had the good fortune to be and take Dr. Richard Dan's workshop, the balance method when he was still alive. And he was such a character and he was very funny. But so I'm glad that, you know, his legacy plus what's great about it.

Sonia's courses. It's a balanced system, but it's also her 19 years of practice and her own little, you know, pearls of wisdom that are really put in there as well because she's practiced this method for a long time. So that's what I love about this course. It's so complete and you get it. Continuing education hours after, of course, passing a test, you get a certificate like it's a very well rounded course.

So I'm so glad and thankful that you agreed to bring it to the community that we have because everybody is loving it. The link to both level one and level two will be below and you can check it out if you haven't even yet. Started level one. I would recommend you check it out because obviously you need to have level one in order to understand level two.

You cannot get level two if you did not study level one because you didn't get completely lost. You won't know what we are talking about, right? It's like nope. So you could start with level one and eventually, move on to level two or you can save by investing in the bundles. It's up to you, but the link is below. So I wanted you. Thanks, Sonia for coming for the third time

ST: Yeah, of course. Thank you.

CC: Thank you for giving us a little bit of a hint of what's coming up for the Serpent Wood Yin year to kind of give us a little taste of it. 'cause of course there's so much more, and like you said, we could be here for hours, but we have to be mindful of everybody's time, including your time.

So thank you. Thank you again and I'm sure you'll be back on the show again.

ST: Yeah. I mean, we can definitely do an annual astrology one. I mean, there's always so much to talk about and people like to know, to know a little like if someone told me they told me that they, they look at it like the weather report, know, so it's kind of like want to look at the weather report before they go into the year or the month.

So, and so when they said that, you know, I said, okay, then I will continue to write about it. It takes a lot of effort to write about and to look at it. So the weather report, so people can be prepared, you know, and it's like in Chinese medicine. If you're preventative or prepared, both of those are the key to optimizing our wellness and our ability to adjust or contemplate or have perspective and really to that self discovery.

That's the perfect way to look at it, like from a weather report. And we'll have all the links to Sonia so you can connect with her in below the show notes. So because she has so much to offer and she has so much wisdom, including feng shui, we should do a whole episode on that as well.

Oh my God. That would be fun.

ST: Yeah. I mean, yeah.

CC: You're like, you have so much knowledge, it's like I just want to jump in your brain and grab everything and leave.

Honestly, I feel like it's just how when you start to discover more, you know how much you don't know. I also don't know a lot , you just see the wisdom of the world. You see the big picture even more.

And You'd have so much more appreciation for everything.

So thank you, my friend, for coming.

ST: I want to say to everyone, and if you're speaking Mandarin, many blessings to everybody.

CC: Yay! Happy New Year, everybody!

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 studies, free courses, and so much more.

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