


Cultivate Qi for Body, Mind & Spirit

Yang-Sheng

Nurturing Life



THREE STEPS TO BECOME
A MASTER OF MEDITATION
CHI & EMOTIONAL STABILITY
BASIC CONCEPTS OF YAO SHAN
SCIENTIFIC QI EXPLORATION:
QIGONG'S EFFECTS ON BLOOD
IMPORTANCE OF LET LOOSE - FANG SONG
WHAT ARE THE POWERS OF THE UNIVERSE?
10 SPIRITUAL SECRETS TO PRODUCTIVITY
SEASONAL HARMONY...AND MORE!

養生



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Yang-Sheng (Nurturing Life) is an E-magazine for all Qigong,, Tai Chi, Yoga, Reiki, mindfulness and meditation practitioners, spiritual cultivators and health seekers. It promotes philosophy and methods of self healing and positive mind power, and shares knowledge and experience in daily healthy practice. Yang Sheng merge ancient wisdoms and knowledge with scientific research evidence and clinic applications, and combines traditional mind-body practice with modern living experience. Your participation, contribution, sharing and feedback are truly appreciated.

From the Editor

Welcome to the June issue of *Yang Sheng*! I recently returned from a journey to the Middle Kingdom and feel recharged and renewed in my interest in healing, both spiritually as well as physically (as soon as my body finishes adjusting to this time zone that is!) As usual we have fine articles, stories, poems and images for your enjoyment. The theme of the last issue, Daoism in the West issue, is one that is very dear to my heart. I have been promoting and sharing the Daoist arts for 19 years now through my magazine, *The Empty Vessel*. I have received so much inspiration, illumination and healing through the teachings and practices of Daoism, I love to share with others this invaluable treasure!

While I was high in the Wudang mountains, my group and I visited an old Daoist, named Jiaye, or Old Grandfather. He has lived in a cave high above the Purple Heavenly Temple for over 30 years! His only companions is a hive of wild bees that moved into a cupboard in his outdoor kitchen. They constantly swarm all about him while he is cooking or eating but they never sting him. (You can find him on youtube under “Bee Daoist.”)

While we were there a Chinese film crew showed up who are making a documentary for Chinese television on the various Wudang masters, including Jiaye. They were excited to find a group of mei guo ren (Americans) up there and made sure to include us in their footage. I think they liked the idea of the universality of Daoism, where there is room for an old man who lives in a cave and travelers from the other side of the world!

Indeed, the teachings and health practices of Daoism as well as other health practices from the East, work for anyone, Western or Eastern. The wisdom you will find in these pages is indeed a valuable treasure, good medicine for the soul as well as the body!

Solala Towler,
editor in chief

P.S. Thanks to Christina for doing such a good job with the last issue!

Medical Editor: **Sharon Montes, M.D.** Graphics Designer: **Rebecca Kali**

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[Featured Article]

The Basic Concepts of Yao Shan for Yang Sheng and Its Functions

Helen H. Hu. MD, OMD, L.Ac

Yao Shan (*Yao* – medicinal spices and herbs; *Shan* – food cooked or prepared as a meal) has a long history in the legendary stories of China, an indication of humans having explored and experienced the various benefits of natural foods and plants (herbs) since ancient times. Until around the period of the Zhou dynasty (1000 BC), Chinese medical doctors who worked inside the palace were divided into one of four specialties, one of the four being a Yao Shan specialist. Yao Shan became one of the sophisticated trends in medicine that integrated medicinal herbs into food, with a specific way of preparing food with a good taste, color, and specific properties to promote the emperor's well-being, physical performance, longevity, and the prevention of diseases.

The *Inner Classic* states that herbs and food come from the same source (having the same properties) and the different tastes of foods have different medicinal nutrients that balance different organs. This is why the Chinese call food therapy “Yao Shan” – *Yao*, medicinal herbs and spices, and *Shan*, food in general, prepared to best provide nutrients to the body, strengthen energy, nourish organs, improve circulation, detoxify the body, and support immunity. At the same time, not eating the right food according to one's physical condition might be detrimental to one's health.

A Chinese medicinal diet is not a simple combination of food and herbs, but a specially prepared dish made from Chinese herbs, certain foods, and condiments according to theoretical guidelines on the properties of the food and the way it should be prepared. Such a diet is in response to the different symptoms of disease and its diagnosis according to TCM, and is used to prevent and treat disease, improve well-being, enhance immunity, and slow down the aging process. At the same time, the body's physical condition changes according to different life stages, seasonal changes, and health status changes. The diet should be modified accordingly to assist the body in restoring its normal health status and to ensure free-flow of vital Qi (energy).



The Specific Characteristics of Chinese Yao Shan

TCM food therapy is based on the medical theory of TCM, of the balance of yin and yang and the five elements. According to the patient's constitution and patterns diagnosis, a specific food therapy is formulated by properly utilizing/assessing the different temperatures, colors, flavors, and tonic (or draining) properties of foods. In order to make a TCM diagnosis for an individual, a Chinese medical doctor has to understand the health condition and constitution of the individual in general, the condition and stage of the illness, and the seasonal considerations and changes according to geographic location. The doctor may then formulate the Yao Shan as it applies to that particular individual's condition. For example, a patient with a chronic, cold type of gastritis should be instructed to eat a certain kind of grain soup with warm herbs, such as dry ginger and cinnamon bark. A patient with menopausal syndrome, a yin deficiency resulting in feeling warm with hot flashes, should avoid hot, spicy food and add more cooling herbs to her diet, such as a tea made with chrysanthemum flowers, and goji berries added to a recipe for black rice soup.

Another common condition that people can self-treat with Yao Shan is digestive system weakness (spleen deficiency). A person manifests with low

spirits, limb weakness, loss of appetite, and abdominal distension and cramps. First of all, it is important to avoid cold, raw, and greasy foods that will continue to weaken the energy in the digestive system. Rice soup should be made, with herbs such as Chinese red dates, ginger, Chinese yam, and ginseng, to restore and strengthen spleen function.

The fundamental aspect of TCM food therapy is to nourish Qi, blood, and body essence. Qi and blood are the basic materials for the body and organs to function. Essence is the most refined and fundamental substance for the body. However, the essence that the body acquired since birth, called pre-heaven essence, needs to continue to be replenished and nourished with a proper diet. In particular, those individuals who were born with a weak stomach or weak lungs (such as those with childhood asthma) should integrate Chinese food therapy as a lifestyle in order to continue to nourish and strengthen those organs, to prevent disease in a natural way and to treat the root causes, rather than passively doing nothing, only to have more health problems later in life. There are many natural foods to nourish the blood: dates, longan, lychee, sesame seeds, chicken liver, and chicken blood. Fruits that nourish body fluids include sugar cane, pears, water chestnuts, and watermelon. Deer meat and turtle meat nourish the body essence.

The key to Chinese food therapy is supporting and balancing the organs. The key to wellness and longevity is to balance the organs and the body, the mind, and the spirit. This does not mean that everyone needs to tonify, or that everyone needs to detoxify, without regard to individual body and organ conditions. If there is excess, there is no need to continue to tonify. If the body is accumulating toxins because it is too weak to expel them, one should strengthen the body with gentle, natural means in order to empower or restore the body's own Qi to detoxify itself, rather than utilizing harsh detoxifying methods—colonics or purging methods—which sometimes just do the opposite.

The basic principle is this: TCM food therapy is formulated according to the different patterns of each individual in order to facilitate and support the body's natural capacity. There is no one universal form or method for everything and everyone.

Believe that our body has its own capacity to heal itself. Whatever we do, we have to work with our body to facilitate it by following its natural path for healing. Even the greatest healer on the planet cannot revive the health of someone who has no desire or capacity to heal; trying to force the body

against its own biological rhythm will not succeed.

TCM food therapy is a form of art. Prepared dishes should have attractive colors, smells, tastes, and designs. The formulation of a food therapy diet follows the same principle as when a TCM doctor writes a prescription for herbs, which is also an art form (there is the chief herb, the deputy herb, assistant herbs, and convoy herbs that work together like a battalion on the battle field). This means that the TCM doctor prepares the TCM food therapy not only for its therapeutic effect, but also considers the way to prepare, considering color, taste, body condition, the seasons—just like an art form. There are thousands of dishes, soups, congees, desserts, and herbal wines, and hundreds of books through the different dynasties, up until today. TCM food therapy is a specialty within the whole of TCM.

In general, foods that help promote well-being and increase body immunity are considered to be anti-aging foods, such as black sesame seeds, mulberries, wolfberries (goji berries), longan fruit, black walnuts, Chinese yams, Chinese red dates, grapes, lily bulbs, ginger, and pearl barley.

The Functions of TCM Food Therapy

1) Strengthening and Nourishing the Body Constitution

Food provides fundamental nutrition to all living things through the Three Treasures, Jing (essence), Qi (energy), and Shen (spirit). According to the different flavors of food, the nutrients of each flavor will nourish different organs. As mentioned previously, there are five flavors of food that enter five different organs accordingly. Sour food enters the liver first; sweet food enters the spleen; pungent food the lungs; and salty food the kidneys. Different colors of foods have a tendency to enter certain meridians and their related organs. For example, tea (green color) tends to go to the liver meridian, pear (white color) to the lungs, rice (brown color) to the spleen and stomach, and black beans to the kidneys.

2) Nourishing the Body Essence, Nourishing Qi, and Supporting Shen

The design of TCM food therapy is based upon the classification of each kind of food's properties of nourishing, sedating, and balancing the condition of the body. Therefore, TCM food therapy can be used for the following:

Nourishing the Body Essence: Some of us

were born with certain organ deficiencies or different body constitutions; that is why one person may have had childhood asthma (kidney deficiency that is not in harmony with the lungs), while another may have been a child with many gastrointestinal complaints and hyperactivity due to spleen deficiency that does not properly nourish the heart. Food therapy to strengthen the organs, beginning in childhood, is one of most common prevention treatments for childhood problems in TCM. It not only treats the childhood disease, but more importantly, it prevents health problems in adulthood that are related to the weak organ later in life. (The spleen-deficient child tends to gain weight in adulthood; the asthmatic child, if the asthma is related to the kidneys, tends to have fear, back problems, allergies, and low sexual drive later in life). When the TCM doctor asks a patient for their medical history, including childhood health problems, it will lead to the exploration of the adult disorder in order to develop the appropriate herbal and food therapy. For example, a patient who has complained of asthma since childhood may now be an adult with kidney deficiency problems, low back pain, and/or prematurely grey hair and low sex drive.

Nourishing Qi: The body's energy is dramatically depleted after chemotherapy, surgical procedures, childbirth, and chronic disease. Food therapy is commonly used to revive and strengthen the body's energy, restore the function of the vital organs, and restore the body's immunity (defensive system). Food therapy is most beneficial for recovering Qi in chronic conditions, alone or when combined with other treatments.

Supporting Shen: The spirits and emotions reflect each organ's energy. When the body and organs are harmonized, Shen (spirits and emotions) will be balanced and within normal boundaries. Healthy Shen reflects the organ's well-being. If an organ is in disharmony, the emotion related to that organ will be imbalanced. (The emotion related to the liver is anger; spleen is worry; heart is joy; kidney is fear; and lungs are sadness.) At the same time, obsession with or overindulgence in an emotion can have an impact on the related organ. TCM food therapy can play a part in overall well-being and treatment for emotional support. Sometimes we crave certain foods because of certain organ deficiencies; in another words, we will crave the taste that is related to the deficient organ. For example, when an elderly person has a kidney deficiency, osteoporosis, and back and knee weakness, they will tend to crave salty foods and have an element of fear in their emotional makeup, as

these are the tastes and emotions related to the kidneys.

3) Treating and Preventing Diseases

TCM food therapy can help strengthen the deficient organ and balance the body's energy, nourish the blood, and normalize metabolism. Historically, TCM used fresh vegetables to treat scurvy, animal liver to treat night blindness, and kelp to treat thyroid problems. At the same time, the same food was used to prevent those diseases. There are many foods we eat every day that have therapeutic effects; we just need to know when to eat them more in order to prevent disease. For example, traditionally, mung bean was used as a soup for the prevention of summer heat stroke, and for cleansing the toxins in the body.

Garlic should be eaten when the common cold is going around, as well as diarrhea. Green onions (the white part), ginger, and garlic soup should be eaten for the prevention and treatment of the early stages of a cold.

4) Promoting Anti-Aging and Well-Being (Longevity)

We should understand the word "longevity." It means that we can do whatever we can to delay the process of aging, but no one can stop the aging process, because aging is one of the laws of nature. But what we can do is to live healthier lives and enjoy life more, not suffering much disease or pain or becoming dependent as we age.

TCM food therapy is not the only answer to delay aging, but we should be aware of which food combinations can benefit us more. In the Qing dynasty, Dr. Chao Tin Dong, a longevity specialist, mentions *congee* for the promotion of well-being and the delay of aging. He stated, "When the elderly reach the golden age, they should eat congee several times a day or whenever they feel hungry to live a long life." There are hundreds of recipes for congee available in his book.

Throughout the long history of observation and practice, TCM has taught that certain foods have the property to promote well-being and should be considered to be anti-aging, or to delay aging. Some examples of these foods are sesame seeds, mulberries, longan, goji berries, black walnuts, royal jelly, Chinese wild yams, human milk, ginger, mushrooms, black/white fungus, tea, seaweed and kelp, and certain meats.

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Dr. Helen Hu, originally from Beijing China, has studied Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) since the age of 12. A Cardiologist and practitioner of integrated medicine for nine years before immigrating to the United States, Dr. Hu passed the "U.S. Licensing Medical Exam" (USLME) in 1997 while simultaneously obtaining her Oriental Medical Degree (OMD) in the US. Dr. Hu currently directs and manages a successful TCM practice in San Diego. She lectures locally on Acupuncture and the benefits of combining Eastern / Western styles of Medicine. Dr. Hu has been practicing Tai Ji and Qi Gong over 25 years, and she teaches these ancient Chinese arts Saturday mornings on Shelter Island in San Diego as a gift to the community and to help promote well being and longevity. www.bodywithoutmystique.com or www.OMDweb.net


Story of Yin-Yang Transition



In Daoism, Yin and Yang abound, and recycle back and forth. A famous story illustrates this dynamic relation:

Once upon a time there lived a farmer in the three kingdoms of China.
This farmer had a son who worked the farm with the help of a horse.
The horse ran away one day.
The local farmers came and said, "How unlucky, your horse ran away."
The farmer said, "Perhaps."
The next day, the horse came back, but was followed by a whole herd.
When the local farmers found out, they said, "You have great luck."
Again, the farmer said, "Perhaps."
Another day passes, and the farmer's son broke his leg while riding some of the new horses.
The local farmers again came, and this time they said, "What bad luck, your son broke his leg."
The farmer repeated, "Perhaps."
On the fourth day, the emperor's army were recruiting for the army and because of the son's broken leg, did not recruit him.
The local farmers this time said, "What great luck, your son did not get recruited."
The farmer again, repeated, "Perhaps."

Thus, like the Yin and Yang, sometimes unlucky situations lead to lucky situations.



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[From the Master]

Chinese Shamanic Cosmic Orbit Qigong

Master Zhongxian Wu

1. The Shamanic Root of Qigong 气功

When I was a child in China, I was curious about the way that the local *Wu* 巫 (Chinese shaman) would give treatments to patients. How could an acupuncture needle release the pain when the *Wu* placed it in a suffering patient's body? How could chanting, meditation, and use of talismans help patients recover from illness? Although I gathered more knowledge about the principles of Chinese medicine as I grew up, I did not get answers to my questions during my childhood. Ever inquisitive, I sought the answer to more questions: What are meridians? What are acupuncture points? Where did this knowledge come from? How did this intricately layered system of medicine develop? Through decades of dedicated Qigong and self-cultivation practices, I gradually found the answers to these questions. As my practice of ancient Chinese wisdom techniques deepened, I began to understand that ancient *Wu* 巫 (Chinese Shamanism) is the root of all Chinese culture.



In ancient China, shamans were respected as sages, or enlightened beings who understood the way of nature and how it related to human beings. Ancient Chinese shamans considered human beings as the precious treasure residing between heaven and earth. How then, does one protect this precious life? Through study and observation of the Universal way, the ancient Chinese sages realized that achieving harmony in the body is possible when a person follows the balancing principles of the universe in everyday living. With living in harmony as the final goal, the ancient shamans created an ancient life science system designed to keep the physical body, the mind, and the spirit healthy. Today, we know this ancient life science system as Qigong 气功.

2. Choose A Beneficial Qigong Form

The term of Qigong made with two Chinese Characters: Qi 气 and Gong 功. In English, Qi translates conceptually as vital energy, vital force, or vital breath, while Gong translates as working hard in the correct way. In general, Qigong 气功 means Qi cultivation. Any movements, postures or activity done in a conscious relationship with Qi can be called Qigong. If you are not yet aware of the Qi flowing through and around your body, you can cultivate this consciousness through correct traditional Qigong practice, and develop a better understanding of the internal and external Qi network.

Qigong is a way of cultivating knowledge and a method of practice that should be learned through correct and careful guidance and through personal experience. You will feel it is easier to merge the principles of your Qigong practice into your life and to feel its powerful effects if you have the support of an experienced teacher to guide you. People often ask me what kind of Qigong form will be suitable for them. I always suggest that they choose a traditional style of Qigong, one with deep cultural roots that has proven to be authentic over centuries of practice.



3. Chinese Shamanic Cosmic Orbit Qigong

Three of the essential practices of Chinese Shamanic Qigong are the *Fu* 符 (talismans), *Jue* 訣 (mantras), and *Yin* 印 (mudras). Talisman, mudra, and mantra are specific rituals common to ancient shamanism. In my tradition, we still preserve and utilize many spe-

cial talismans, mantras, and mudras as specific techniques for cultivation and healing/self-healing. *Fu* (talismans) are Qi (vital life energy) energized diagrams, symbols, or Chinese characters used to channel a vital energy in order to create a harmonious Qi field for healing or living. *Jue* (mantras) are special syllables, spells or sounds used spontaneously to resonate with Universal Qi and to circulate the Qi within the energy network through the vibrations created by your voice. *Yin* (mudras) are ancient hand positions used to connect with universal energies and act as a vehicle to access ancient wisdom of the Universe that is bound within the body.

Chinese Shamanic Orbit Qigong is a time-honored, esoteric style of Qigong, which focuses on cultivating internal Qi circulation and attaining enlightenment. Ancient shamans discovered that the energetic patterns of nature are reproduced in all levels of the cosmos, from the largest, macrocosmic (Universal level) scale to the smallest, microcosmic (living organisms and the cells, organelles and particles within them) scale, they deduced that the flow of Qi in the body is just like the ceaseless rotation of the sun, moon, and stars. Therefore, in Qigong terminology, orbit refers to the Qi circulation in the body. The fundamental concept of balance in Chinese wisdom traditions holds that you will maintain health and experience well-being if Qi is free flowing in your body.

Chinese Shamanic Cosmic Orbit Qigong — Esoteric Talismans, Mantras, and Mudras in Healing and Inner Cultivation: This book illustrates the details of the Shamanic Orbit Qigong practice, including talismans, mantras, mudras, movements, visualizations, and therapeutic benefits. I hope you will enjoy this book and gain great benefits from your daily practice.

Master Zhongxian Wu is the recognized master of multiple lineages of classical Qigong, Taiji and martial arts. He has been teaching unique and professionally designed courses and workshops to beginning and advanced practitioners, as well as for patients seeking healing, for over 25 years. He is the author of *Chinese Shamanic Cosmic Orbit Qigong — Esoteric Talismans, Mantras and Mudras in Healing and Inner Cultivation*; *The 12 Chinese Animals — Create Harmony in Your Daily Life Through Ancient Chinese Wisdom*; *Seeking the Spirit of The Book of Change — 8 Days to Mastering a Shamanic Yijing (I Ching) Prediction System*, and of *The Vital Breath of the Dao — Chinese Shamanic Tiger Qigong*. He and his wife, Dr. Karin Taylor Wu, live in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of central Virginia and together founded Blue Willow Health Center. You can find more details about



[Breathing in This Life]

Avoiding Burnout:
What Women Need to Know About ABS (Adrenal Burnout Syndrome)
by Ginger Garner *MPT, ATC*



2007 - Awaiting our newest addition to the family. We were in for a surprise having two in diapers at the same time. It was a crash course in the work/family balancing act. Now in 2011, about to welcome our third child, we are welcoming the new challenges to maintaining our equilibrium (and sanity).

Sometimes there comes a time in our lives, as women and men, mothers and fathers, and corporate ladder climbers and exhausted parents alike, when we must choose rest. And if we do not listen to our body we end up being forced to rest. We run the proverbial hamster wheel until we chronically fatigue our body and its systems.

How do you know if you are dangerously close to **BURNOUT**?

During my musings today (aka finishing the third volume in my medical therapeutic yoga textbook series), I was doing research on recognizing signs of burnout, part of a complex dysfunction called the HPA (hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal) axis dysregulation phenomenon, or adrenal burnout.

If you are living and breathing today, especially in the American workplace (whether it is at home or in an office building), you should know how to recognize the signs of adrenal burnout and more importantly, what to do about it to get you or someone you love back into balance:

Adrenal Burnout & Fatigue (Wilson, MD 2007; Farin, ND 2008, and others*)

RECOGNIZE BURNOUT

[Here is a quiz](#) that can help you determine if you should see your health care provider about possible adrenal fatigue or burnout.

- Low cortisol symptoms - fatigue, low blood pressure, use of stimulants to get through the day; joint pain, cravings for sweets or other unhealthy foods, low back pain, excessive thirst; emotional and psychological symptoms (depression, mood swings, bipolar disorder, emotional instability, anxiety); loss of faith in people and the world (hopelessness); compulsiveness and obsessive-compulsiveness; addiction
- Systemic dysfunction affecting metabolism, sleep, immunity, the nervous system, and digestion.
- Copper toxicity – chronic infections; degenerative conditions (cancer, heart disease, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's); panic attacks, bipolar disorder, mood swings.
- Thyroid imbalance – premenstrual syndrome, hot flashes, hypothyroidism
- Reduced cellular energy production – depression, apathy

HOW TO DIAGNOSE IT

- Hair mineral analysis (sodium/potassium ratio; sodium/magnesium ratio; copper level)
- Blood, urine, saliva hormone testing

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF BURNOUT

- People with burnout can hold full time jobs, and are often found to be using stimulants in order to get through their day.
- Burnout is not just psychological.
- Vigorous exercise is not a solution for burnout.
- A vacation, diet, or nutritional supplement can “cure” burnout.
- Burnout occurs more commonly in women today, mostly related to the fact that most women hold both a job and are primary manager of their household, which includes childrearing. In fact, it was found that mothers who also held full time jobs outside the home still handled 75% of household management tasks (Crittendon 2002)
- Burnout does not only occur in people who have high stress jobs.
- Burnout does not only occur in adults.
- Burnout can possibly have a genetic link, or be influenced by mothers' diets during pregnancy.
- Burnout affects all facets of one's health, physical, emotional, psychological, social, intellectual, energetic, and spiritual.

RECOVERY

- Improve diet (research suggests a diet that oxidizes slower - higher in protein, lower in carbohydrates, especially simple ones, low in sugar, seasonal and organic)
- Get adequate water intake (8-8 oz. glasses a day)
- Make lifestyle changes. Consider who and what you fill your life with and make changes accordingly. Ask your employer for a flexible work schedule i.e. working from home or telecommuting, compressed work schedules, or job sharing. Mend or eliminate relationships or activities which are a constant drain on your psycho-emotional health.
- Take a multi-vitamin. (pro-biotic, organic)
- Begin a detoxification program (where needed, one must consult with a holistic physician or therapist for close supervision and instruction in completing a detox)
- Meditation (this can include spiritual methods of prayer as well)
- Consider shifts in attitudes and perspectives (what would be most important to you if you lost your health, or someone you love lost theirs?)
- Consider music therapy
- Make time for quiet reflection. Researchers describe the constant din of activity and noise in urban areas as an "emerging humanitarian health disaster" (Patel and Burke 2009) and report numerous psychological and physiological health threats associated with a lifestyle constantly filled with sustained noise and stimulation.

All of the recommendations listed are not a substitute for medical advice and in no way offer a cure or solution for adrenal burnout. See a physician or therapist to identify strategies which best fit your life and needs.

The best way to have optimal health is to be your own advocate. Get educated before you visit your doctor or therapist, so you know your rights and all of your options for treatment and intervention. When in doubt, ask questions. In addition, know your insurance coverage before you go. Know what your co-pay is, how many visits you are allowed (visits are often limited with therapies), and if you have an annual cap or limit on benefits.

Being proactive is the best medicine for getting and maintaining optimal health.

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4. Nervous System: Rowe et al 1995, Naschitz et al 2003, Gerrity et al 2002.
5. Digestion: Wallace and Gallegua 2004, Sivri et al 1996, Triadafilopoulos et al 1991, Pinmental et al 2004, Pimental et al 2001.
6. Music therapy: Brandes et al 2009.



Ginger Garner MPT, ATC — is an educator and subject matter expert in medical therapeutic yoga and women's health. As a published author and sought after speaker, Ginger pens the popular blog for mothers — *Breathing In This Life (BITL)* — which is one of the columns in *Yang-Sheng* magazine and network). Ginger is founder of Professional Yoga Therapy (PYT), the first education program for Complementary and Alternative Medicine practice in medical therapeutic yoga in the US. Ginger's focus is on education and activism for maternal and child health — through BITL, her school, PYT, through the organization she founded for Haiti relief in 2009, Musicians 4 Missions, and her work with the Initiative to Educate Afghan Women. Ginger has spoken and performed across the US to educate people about medical yoga and to raise awareness and funds for improving women's health. As a working mother of three she has learned a thing or two about finding work/life balance through the healing arts, which she shares through BITL, at www.gingergarner.blogspot.com See Ginger's work

at www.gingergarner.com.

[Inspirational Quotes]

Be kind to unkind people — they need it the most.

Unknown

There is no man living that can not do more than he thinks he can.

Henry Ford

The greatest of all gifts is the power to estimate things at their true worth.

La Rochefoucauld

Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

[Methods to Improve Meditation]

Three Steps to Become a Master of Meditation

by Ken Andes

I wish someone had given me the information in this short article when I first started meditation practice in 1989. It would've literally saved me years of confusion and frustration. The concepts that I am about to teach you are universal to all forms of meditation and thus can be applied to whatever meditation practice you feel drawn towards. Whether you are practicing yoga, zen, taiji, or any other practice, these concepts will be of immense help to you on your journey. These meditation concepts are what I consider to be the essential foundation behind every practice of meditation broken down into a format that is easy to understand. I hope that they will help you as much as they've helped me.

The practice of meditation means different things for different people. For our purposes I will define meditation in these two terms:



1. Meditation is the unification of the three centers of being: mind, body, and spirit, into a harmonious state of wholeness.
2. Meditation is a method for stripping away the illusion of a separate identity (ego) and coming into intimate, personal contact with the universal consciousness that dwells within you. This consciousness has been called many different names such as qi, spirit, prana, aenema, force, etc.

These two effects feed off of each other. Reaching a state of internal unity where you no longer experience inner turmoil and conflict allows your being to become *still*. It is only in this stillness that you can feel and perceive the universal energy that dwells within you. Conversely, experiencing this energy on an intimate level has an effect of dissolving internal conflict and bringing you to a state of mental, physical, and spiritual unification.

What do you mean by “internal conflict”?

I'm talking about the nagging feeling inside of you that is never content with life, is always viewing life as a struggle, makes you miserable, and would never allow you a moment of peace if it had its way. And this feeling is not always from mental conflict, it could come from physical tension or deeper, spiritual/energetic disturbances.

Take for instance, you reading this article. Is your mind fully absorbed in the act of reading, or is your mind being pulled toward other issues *that are not relevant right at this moment*? Is your body relaxed and allowing your mind and spirit to function properly, or are you holding on to nagging tensions and pain? And finally, from an energetic standpoint (I tend to like using the word “energetic” rather than “spiritual”, it's not as loaded with concepts.), do you feel a sense of peace and contentment inside of you, or are you constantly fighting with feelings of unexplainable anxiety and angst?

The practice of meditation is a tool to help you focus the mind, relax the body, and calm the spirit. It brings these three centers of being into harmony with each other and reduces the internal conflict that makes you miserable. From this state of internal harmony, the experience of life becomes easier. If it's something that interests you, this state of internal harmony is also the foundation for developing the metaphysical powers that can come from meditation such as: extra sensory perception (ESP), energy healing, aura reading, Mesmerism, and clairvoyance. I make

no judgments as to whether or not developing these powers are good or bad. It's neither good nor bad, it just depends on whether or not they're important to you. But unless you have cultivated a state of internal calm and clarity, your ability to manifest these powers will be sporadic at best...and they also will have a potential to injure you.

So to summarize, these are some of the benefits of meditation practice:

1. Unification of the mind, body, and spirit into a state of internal harmony and clarity.
2. A focused mind, relaxed body, and calm spirit.
3. Relief from physical pain, heightened ability to recover from illness, and a healthier body overall.
4. Relief from anxiety, depression, anguish, and lack of concentration.
5. Greater understanding of life. Acceptance of life as it is, and with that comes more enjoyment in living.
6. Coming into a more intimate connection to the universal energy that dwells within you and all of creation.
7. If it's something that you want, the development of extraordinary powers.
8. I could go on, but I think this is enough for now.

How do I unify my three centers of being?

I will discuss with you the nature of each center of being and how to bring it into harmony with the whole. Let's start with the body since it's the easiest to understand.

The First Center: Physical

The key word here is "*relax*". You need to relax your muscles as much as possible. And if you're meditation practice requires movement or holding physical postures (like Taiji or Yoga), then you need to use only as much tension as is necessary to perform the movement or hold the posture, nothing more.

The reason why relaxation is so important is because excess physical tension will keep your mind and spirit from realizing its potential. You cannot concentrate or experience the sensitivity that comes from stillness if you are too tense. The analogy I like to use is that the spirit is a powerful thoroughbred racehorse while the body is a feeble old man who is tied to the back of the horse. Although the spirit is infinitely more powerful than the body, *it is still limited by the constraints of the physical form*. When the body is tense, the feeble old man (physical form) is fully attached to the racehorse (spiritual form) and the horse cannot fully exhibit its potential. Through relaxation of the body, the feeble old man becomes less attached to the horse...and the horse can show more of its power. Notice that I said "less attached" and not "detached". The only way that the spirit can become completely free of physical limitations is through death. As long as you are in physical form, your spirit will in some way be limited by what your body can handle.

So keeping that in mind, it makes sense that good physical habits will directly benefit your meditation practice. Be sure to keep good hygiene and clean living conditions. Get enough exercise and rest, drink plenty of water and don't eat junk food.

As for learning how to relax the body, I'd like you to stand up and imagine your body as a skeleton holding itself up by its own structure, with as little assistance as possible from your muscles. Imagine that your muscles are simply hanging off of your bones. If your posture is correct, this will be easier to do. From here, mentally scan your body from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. As you do this mental scanning, feel the level of tension or relaxation in each part of the body. If you feel a certain part of you is too tense, pay gentle attention to it and ask it to relax. If for whatever reason it refuses to relax, move on to the rest of your body and come back to that part later. Scan your body as many times as you need to in order to reach a state of physical relaxation.

The reason why this simple technique is so effective is because you are giving your body the conscious attention that it craves. Please remember:

Attention is love. Love is attention.

Now I don't mean to come off as sounding spongy here, but a lot of our physical problems are due to the lack of attention/love that we give to our bodies. Your body does everything for you. It is the thankless servant of your mind and spirit that never takes a day off and always does its best to obey. From an energetic perspective, when a part of your body is holding on to excess tension that is its way of asking for conscious attention on your part. Give that part of you the attention/love that it is craving. It will eventually relax and thank you in the form of better health, relaxation, and a better meditation practice.

To summarize:

The key to unifying your body is to relax and let go of physical tension. Whatever posture or movement you perform in meditation, do it with the least amount of tension necessary. Practice the scanning exercise mentioned above to develop more control over the amount of tension in your body.

The Second Center: Spiritual

Now that the body is not inhibiting you with excess tension, we can focus on unifying the spirit. We do that through the breath.

Have you ever asked why almost every meditation practice from every part of the world places an emphasis on deep, diaphragmatic breathing? The reason why is because the act of breathing can be used as a conscious method to connect to the unconscious (spirit). Let me explain.

There are very few physical processes that are involuntary (unconscious) in nature that we also have voluntary (conscious) control over. The act of breathing is involuntary because we do it without thinking about it and we also breathe while we sleep. However, we also have voluntary control over our breath because we can hold our breath or breathe faster or slower at will.

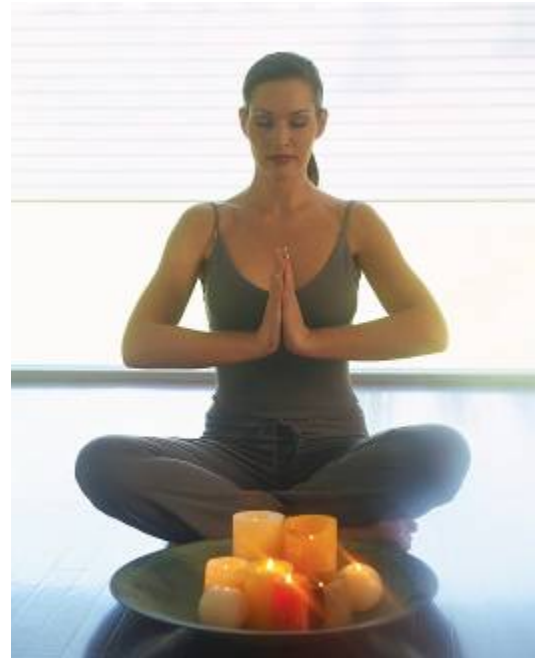
Because it has both involuntary (unconscious) as well as voluntary (conscious) qualities, *the act of breathing can be used as a conscious method to access the unconscious*. Breathing is a bridge to the unconscious.

The type of breathing that is most conducive to this is slow, effortless, and from the belly. It's exactly the way infants breathe. In Taoist philosophy, an infant is a brand new manifestation of pure spirit, the universal energy that gives life to us all. Because the infant is still so close to being pure spirit, he is the perfect example of what our natural state is like. I think this is a major reason why people are so attracted to infants. Even on an unconscious level, infants remind us of our most natural state...one of pure spirit.

As long as his basic physical needs are met (food, shelter, touch, etc.), an infant:

- Accepts the world as it is and does not judge the world as good or bad.
- Is completely present in the moment and does not hold resentment over the past or anxiety over the future.
- Is totally relaxed and free of excess tension.
- Breathes slowly and deeply in the belly. It's only as the infant becomes older and reaches adulthood that he becomes exposed to the vices of the
- world and begins to breathe shallow in the chest.

It's my observation that 99% of all the patients that I treat for anxiety, depression, and fatigue breathe shallow breaths from the chest. It's also my observation that the vast majority of my patients who suffer from obesity, stomach problems, constipation, migraines, fibromyalgia, obsessive compulsive disorder, and a host of other issues also breathe shallow breaths from the chest. Now, I'm not saying that bad breathing habits directly caused their prob-



lems, but I am saying that *correcting their breathing habits has helped every single one of them overcome their problem to some extent*. For some patients the breathing practice alone has cured them, for others it has helped them along with a program of more vigorous methods. But every single one of them has improved with better breathing habits.

The use of this breathing technique in your meditation practice will not only improve your emotional and physical health, it will allow you to connect to the deeper subconscious levels of your being. It's free, accessible at all times, and you don't need to buy any gadgets to do it. Over time, this breathing practice will help to heal injuries of the spirit that result in anxiety, depression, resentment, guilt, and anger. When the burden of these injuries is lifted, you will be able to experience a deeper connection with the spirit of life. It is difficult to experience this connection to spirit, this connection to your most essential form of being, unless your spirit is still and sensitive like a calm lake. Your spirit cannot be still when the heart is heavy. This breathing method will help free the spirit and unburden the heart. It is not just a breathing technique, it can serve as an entire meditation practice in of itself. In fact, it was the first one that I learned as a kid and is one of the few that I still practice to this day.

Here it is:

Begin by lying down on a flat, comfortable surface. A towel or yoga mat on the floor is the best option, although a firm mattress is also acceptable. If you can, it is best to do this without a pillow, so that the entire spine may be kept naturally straight.

Place a small folded towel over your dan tien. You will use this towel as a kinesthetic reference for your dan tien. The dan tien is the area about 2-3 inches below your naval. This is one of the most important body areas in qigong, as it is considered to be where the source of your vital energy is located. This breathing technique will magnify the amount of vital energy, or qi, in your dan tien.

Keeping your lips gently closed, begin by inhaling through your nose and directing the air downwards towards your lower hips. As the air moves down, I want you to feel your dan tien begin to slowly expand upward towards the ceiling. As this happens, feel the skin of your lower abdomen pushing against the towel and lifting it up. Breathe as deeply as you can without forcing it. This exercise should feel comfortable and no strain whatsoever should be felt.

As you exhale through the nose, feel your abdomen gently contract as the towel moves toward the floor. Now, continue to breathe. It is important that the chest does not move during this exercise. Breathing from the chest is very inefficient and counterproductive to the practice of meditation. Allow all of the breathing to take place in your lower abdomen, your dan tien. If you feel your chest expanding during this exercise, gently relax your chest and ribcage, and direct the air downwards towards your lower hips.

Continue to breathe. Slowly...deeply...and evenly. With each breath out, feel your muscles relax. Pay special attention to letting go of tension stored in your face, your shoulders, your hands, and your hips. These areas are particularly prone to harboring excess tension.

Feeleverything. Feel the relaxation taking hold of your body. Feel the air entering through your nostrils and moving into your abdomen. Feel the sensation of your clothes against your skin. Feel the weight of the towel over your dan tien as it rises and falls with your breath. Feel the air leaving your nostrils.

Feel....everything. Feel your facial expression relax. Feel the muscles in your hands let go. Feel your body sinking into the floor with every breath out. Feel the gentle currents of air in the room, the movement of energy around your body.

Feel...everything. Become engrossed in the act of feeling your breath. Observe the internal movement of energy inside your body. Observe your mind and body, without judgment or attachment. Allow the slow rhythm of the breath to overtake your mind, and overtake your being.

You will find that this practice of qigong breathing will purify your mind of reckless and uncontrollable thoughts. This practice of becoming centered in the breath and body will calm the mind and give you the gift of focus and concentration. The breathing technique shown here is one of the most prized treasures of Chinese qigong meditation. It has been shown to strengthen the internal organs, detoxify the body through the lymphatic system, regulate the autonomic nervous system, and calm the tortured mind. It is especially effective, for those suffering from fatigue, digestive disorders, insomnia, anxiety, and various forms of chronic pain.

Practice this exercise for at least 10-30 minutes per day, or whenever you desire to feel calm, energized, and centered in spirit.

The Third Center: Mind

I talk about harmonizing the mind last because without a relaxed body and proper breathing, it is extremely difficult to focus the mind.

The use of the mind in meditation can be summed up in two ways: form and no form. The first involves focusing on *something*. The second involves focusing on *nothing*.

A meditation with form is one where the mind has a specific purpose or objective. An example of this would be visualizing the light of the sun coming into your body and permeating your cells. Other examples can include focusing on the form of a religious symbol or a phrase/mantra that has special meaning to you.

A meditation without form is one where the mind is allowed to dissolve so that the experience of formless emptiness can be had. You can say that this is actually a *disuse* of the mind. In my personal experience this is a bit harder to do but the practice is extremely profound. In this type of meditation the mind is viewed for what it is...an illusion. *The mind is not a noun, it is a verb.* Mind is the process of thought. Without the process of thought the mind does not exist. When the process of mind is allowed to fall away during meditation, there is a connection with pure spirit that is impossible to describe in words.

Both of these forms of meditation have value depending on your background and situation. The problem that most meditators have with either method is being able to keep their mind from getting out of control and wandering towards other thoughts.

Here's what to do:


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When extraneous thoughts come into your mind during meditation (like what to have for dinner, the fight you had with your spouse, etc.), practice *observing* your thoughts and do not become attached to either having or not having them. Don't do what I used to do and try to force yourself to keep focused. That will only give power to the other thoughts and make them more prevalent. I'd like you to try simply watching the thoughts pass through your mind like scenes in a movie. Let them come if they must, don't get upset, just watch them and let them go on their own accord. As the thoughts leave, gently bring yourself back to the focus of your meditation.

I view this process of thoughts coming in and out as sort of cleansing process. It's a way for you to unburden yourself of thoughts and impressions that you may be holding onto for some reason.

During meditation it can happen that many of the thoughts and feelings that we repressed come to the surface as we become still. Be grateful for this cleansing process, getting mad only stifles it. Let the thoughts pass and come back to focus.

The harmonization of the mind in meditation (either through form or no form) will lead to a state of stillness within the mind. Most of us walk around with a mind that's very noisy and uncontrollable. It's like all of a sudden you get a thought in your head and you can't get it out. It takes control over you and you feel like a prisoner trapped inside your mind. This is what the Chinese sages talk about when they liken the undisciplined mind to that of turbulent water.

When the mind becomes still through meditation, specifically *observing your thoughts without judgment*, the mind becomes like a calm, placid lake. When you throw a pebble into this lake it senses it immediately and reacts to it. When the mind is still, only then will you be able to sense the subtle aspects of spirit and consciousness. If your mind is noisy, you will be able to sense very little of your physical and psychic surroundings. That's how car accidents happen, by the way.

To recap, here's what you can do to become a master at whatever meditation practice you have. I use the term "master" because if you follow these concepts you will achieve what I feel is the essential goal of meditation: Harmonization of the three centers of being and an experience of intimate connection to the universal.

1. Keep the body relaxed.
2. Breathe correctly. This means slow, effortless, and in the belly.
3. Focus the mind by observing your thoughts, should they appear. The practice of observing your thoughts with detachment will free you of the power that they have over you and bring you to stillness.

Ken Andes, L.Ac. – a licensed acupuncturist, Chinese herbalist, and Medical Qigong practitioner, Mr. Andes has studied Qigong since 1989, and has taught Qigong since 1997. His greatest influence has been Master He Binhui, whom he studied Taiji Five-element Qigong. In addition to his full-time Chinese Medicine practice in Ramsey, New Jersey, he participates in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded research, on the applications of medical Qigong to cocaine addiction, and Mr. Andes is also an avid practitioner of Zingyiquan Kung Fu.



[Research Update]

Mind-Body Medicine Research Update

Buddhist group therapy for diabetes patients with depressive symptoms. *Arch Psychiatr Nurs.* 2011 Jun;25(3):195-205. by Rungreangkulkij S, Wongtakee W, Thongyot S.



Abstract: The objective of this study was to assess the effect of Buddhist group therapy on patients with type 2 diabetes who had depressive symptoms. A quasi-experimental design study using a control group with matching technique was conducted. After informed consent was obtained, the "Nine questions for assessing depressive disorder symptom" (Isan language) was used to determine the patient's condition. A total of 62 patients with type 2 diabetes who had depressive symptoms were assigned to either the experimental group ($n = 32$) or the control group ($n = 32$). Patients in the experimental group were divided further into four groups (8 patients per group) and attended the Buddhist group therapy. The intervention consisted of a weekly Buddhist group gathering lasting 2 hours for 6 weeks plus home meditation practices. Patients in the control group received treatment as usual. Both groups received standard physician treatment, including medication. Physicians did not know who was in either the control or experimental groups. Results show that 6 months after the intervention, 65.6% and 100% of patients in the control group and experimental group, respectively, returned to normal level. The intention-to-treat analysis, which included two participants in the experimental group lost follow-up, yielded a small reduction in the number of patients who re-

turned to normal level (93.8%). With intention-to-treat analysis, the relative risk on depressive symptoms between the experimental and control groups was 6.5 (95% confidence interval, 1.4-30.6). Qualitative data from the experimental group supported that there were therapeutic group factors involved. However, patients realized the truth of being oneself and also accepted their current living condition. In conclusion, this program is effective in reducing depressive symptoms.

Effect of 12 weeks of tai chi training on soleus hoffmann reflex and control of static posture in older adults. *Arch Phys Med Rehabil.* 2011 Jun;92(6):886-91. by [Chen YS](#), [Zhou S](#), [Cartwright C](#). from School of Health and Human Sciences, Southern Cross University, Lismore, New South Wales, Australia.

OBJECTIVE: To investigate the effect of 12 weeks of Tai Chi training on soleus (SOL) Hoffmann reflex (H-reflex) modulation and postural control in standing under 4 sensory conditions in older adults. **DESIGN:** Experimental research design with pre- and posttraining tests in a training group and a control group. **SETTING:** University biomechanics laboratory. **PARTICIPANTS:** Community-dwelling older adults ($N=34$) were assigned to a training ($n=20$; mean \pm SD age, 72.9 ± 4.4 y) and a control ($n=14$; mean \pm SD age, 72.9 ± 6.5 y) group. **INTERVENTION:** Tai Chi participants attended a 1-hour session of Yang style Tai Chi, 3 sessions a week, for 12 weeks, while control participants maintained their regular daily activities during the same period. **MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES:** SOL H-reflex (maximal amplitudes of H-reflex [H(max)] and M-wave [M(max)] waves) and mean displacement of the center of pressure (COP) in the anterior-posterior (COP(A-P)) and medial-lateral (COP(M-L)) directions were measured during bipedal standing, with the feet placed on a forceplate and the heels 6cm apart, under 4 sensory conditions: stable surface with eyes open, stable surface with eyes closed, unstable surface with eyes open, and unstable surface with eyes closed. **RESULTS:** SOL H(max)/M(max) ratio in the Tai Chi group was upregulated significantly in all 4 sensory tasks after the 12-week Tai Chi training ($P < .05$). No significant change in COP measurements (mean displacement of COP(A-P) and COP(M-L)) was found in either the Tai Chi or control group after

the 12-week period. **CONCLUSIONS:** An increase in SOL H(max)/M(max) ratio during static postural tasks is observed after 12 weeks of Tai Chi training in older adults under all 4 sensory conditions. However, training-induced changes in H-reflex were not accompanied by improvement of performance in the static postural control tasks.

A pilot study of qigong practice and upper respiratory illness in elite swimmers. [Am J Chin Med.](#) 2011;39(3):461-75. by [Wright PA](#), [Innes KE](#), [Alton J](#), [Bovbjerg VE](#), [Owens JE](#). From Virginia Integrative Medicine, Charlottesville, VA 22903, USA. pegawright@aol.com.

Abstract: Upper respiratory tract infections (URIs) are a common complaint in competitive swimmers and can adversely affect performance. No intervention has yet been shown to reduce URI incidence in intensively trained athletes. The University of Virginia varsity swim team received three weeks of training in qigong for the purpose of reducing stress and improving health. Our primary objective was to assess the relationship between qigong practice and symptoms of URI during a time when swimmers would be at high URI risk. Secondary objectives were to assess degree of compliance with a qigong practice regimen, to evaluate differences between qigong practitioners and non-practitioners, and to determine the response-rate and reliability of a newly developed internet-based, self-report survey. The design was observational, cross-sectional, and prospective. Weekly data on cold and flu symptoms, concurrent health problems and medication use, and qigong practice were gathered for seven weeks. Retrospective information on health and qigong training response was also collected. Participants were 27 of the 55 members of the University of Virginia Swim Team in the Virginia Athletic Department. Main outcomes were measures of aggregated cold/flu symptoms and Qigong practice. Survey completion was 100%, with no missing data, and reliability of the instrument was acceptable. Cold and flu symptoms showed a significant non-linear association with frequency of qigong practice ($R(2) = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$), with a strong, inverse relationship between practice frequency and symptom scores in swimmers who practised qigong at least once per week ($R(2) = 0.70$, $p < 0.01$). Qigong practitioners did not differ from non-practitioners in demographic or lifestyle characteristics, medical history, supplement or medication use, or belief in qigong. These preliminary findings suggest that qigong practice may be protective against URIs among elite swimmers who practice at least once per week.

Complementary medicine, self-help, and lifestyle interventions for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and the OCD spectrum: A systematic review. [J Affect Disord.](#) 2011 May 25. by [Sarris J](#), [Camfield D](#), [Berk M](#). from The University of Melbourne, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, Australia; Swinburne University of Technology, Centre for Human Psychopharmacology, Australia.

BACKGROUND: In Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) current standard pharmacotherapies may be of limited efficacy. Non-conventional interventions such as Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), self-help techniques, and lifestyle interventions are commonly used by sufferers of OCD, however to date no systematic review of this specific area exists. **METHODS:** We conducted a systematic review of studies using CAM, self-help, and lifestyle interventions for treatment of OCD and trichotillomania (TTM). PubMed, PsycINFO, China Academic Journals Full-text Database, The Cochrane Library and CINAHL were searched (up to Jan 11th 2011), for controlled clinical trials using non-conventional interventions for OCD. A quality analysis using a purpose-designed scale and an estimation of effect sizes (Cohen's d) where data was available, were also calculated. **RESULTS:** The literature search revealed 14 studies that met inclusion criteria. Methodological quality of nutraceutical studies (nutrients and herbal medicines) were rated as high (mean 8.6/10), whereas mind-body or self-help studies were poorer (mean 6.1/10). In OCD, tentative evidentiary support from methodologically weak studies was found for mindfulness meditation ($d=0.63$), electroacupuncture ($d=1.16$), and kundalini yoga ($d=1.61$). Better designed studies using the nutrient glycine ($d=1.10$), and traditional herbal medicines milk thistle (insufficient data for calculating d) and borage ($d=1.67$) also revealed positive results. A rigorous study showed that N-acetylcysteine ($d=1.31$) was effective in TTM, while self-help technique "movement decoupling" also demonstrated efficacy ($d=0.94$). Mixed evidence was found for myo-inositol (mean $d=0.98$). Controlled studies suggest that St John's wort, EPA, and meridian-tapping are ineffective in treating OCD. **CONCLUSIONS:** While several studies were positive, these were un-replicated and commonly used small samples. This precludes firm confidence in the strength of clinical effect. Preliminary evidence however is encouraging, and more rigorous research of some of the more hypothesis-based interventions in the treatment of OCD and TTM may be indicated.

Effects of tai chi training on antioxidant capacity in pre- and postmenopausal women. [J Aging Res.](#) 2011 Apr 11; by Palasuwan A, Suksom D, Margaritis I, Soogarun S, Rousseau AS. From Faculté des Sciences du Sport, Université de Nice Sophia-Antipolis, Nice, France.

Abstract: The risk of oxidative stress-related metabolic diseases increases with menopause and physical inactivity. We hypothesized that an 8-week Tai Chi (TC) training program (2 sessions in class; 2 sessions at home; 1-1:15/session) would improve antioxidant capacity and reduce cardiovascular risks in both pre- (n = 8) and postmenopausal (n = 7) sedentary women. Selected measures of physical fitness and blood parameters were analyzed before and after the program. Besides the well-known effects of TC on balance, flexibility, and maximum leg extensor strength, TC (1) increased erythrocyte glutathione peroxidase activity-an aerobic training-responsive antioxidant enzyme-and plasma total antioxidant status and (2) decreased plasma total homocysteine, a cardiovascular risk marker. In addition to being a low-velocity, low-impact, and relatively safe, TC is a suitable physical activity design for pre- and postmenopausal women to increase antioxidant defenses. Investigating breathing effects during TC movements would be an interesting area for further research in diseases prevention.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3092538>

A randomised controlled single-blind trial of the efficacy of reiki at benefitting mood and well-being. [Evid Based Complement Alternat Med.](#) 2011;2011:381862. Epub 2011 Mar 27 by [Bowden D](#), [Goddard L](#), [Gruzelier J](#). from Psychology Department, Goldsmiths, University of London, ITC Building, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, UK.

Abstract: This is a constructive replication of a previous trial conducted by Bowden et al. (2010), where students who had received Reiki demonstrated greater health and mood benefits than those who received no Reiki. The current study examined impact on anxiety/depression. 40 university students-half with high depression and/or anxiety and half with low depression and/or anxiety-were randomly assigned to receive Reiki or to a non-Reiki control group. Participants experienced six 30-minute sessions over a period of two to eight weeks, where they were blind to whether noncontact Reiki was administered as their attention was absorbed in a guided relaxation. The efficacy of the intervention was assessed pre-post intervention and at five-week follow-up by self-report measures of mood, illness symptoms, and sleep. The

participants with high anxiety and/or depression who received Reiki showed a progressive improvement in overall mood, which was significantly better at five-week follow-up, while no change was seen in the controls. While the Reiki group did not demonstrate the comparatively greater reduction in symptoms of illness seen in our earlier study, the findings of both studies suggest that Reiki may benefit mood.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3092553>

A randomized controlled trial to assess effectiveness of a spiritually-based intervention to help chronically ill adults. [Int J Psychiatry Med.](#) 2011;41(1):91-105. by McCauley J, Haaz S, Tarpley MJ, Koenig HG, Bartlett SJ. From Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, USA. jmccauley430@yahoo.com

OBJECTIVE: Creative, cost-effective ways are needed to help older adults deal effectively with chronic diseases. Spiritual beliefs and practices are often used to deal with health problems. We evaluated whether a minimal intervention, consisting of a video and workbook encouraging use of patient spiritual coping, would be inoffensive and improve perceived health status. **METHODS:** A randomized clinical trial of 100 older, chronically ill adults were assigned to a Spiritual (SPIRIT) or Educational (EDUC--standard cardiac risk reduction) intervention. Individuals in each group were shown a 28-minute video and given a workbook to complete over 4 weeks. Selected psychosocial and health outcome measures were administered at baseline and 6 weeks later. **RESULTS:** Participants were mostly female (62%), with a mean age of 65.8 +/- 9.6 years and had an average of three chronic illnesses. More than 90% were Christian. At baseline, frequent daily spiritual experiences (DSE) were associated with being African American ($p < .05$) and increased pain ($p < .01$) and co-morbidities ($p < \text{or} = .01$). Energy increased significantly ($p < .05$) in the SPIRIT group and decreased in the EDUC group. Improvements in pain, mood, health perceptions, illness intrusiveness, and self-efficacy were not statistically significant.

CONCLUSIONS: A minimal intervention encouraging spiritual coping was inoffensive to patients, associated with increased energy, and required no additional clinician time.

Spirituality at the End of Life: Conceptualization of Measurable Aspects-a Systematic Review. [J Palliat Med.](#) 2011 May 25. [Epub ahead of print] [Gijsberts MJ](#), [Echteld MA](#), [van der Steen JT](#), [Muller MT](#), [Otten RH](#), [Ribbe MW](#), [Deliens L](#). from EMGO

Institute, VU University Medical Center, Amsterdam, the Netherlands .

Abstract: Although spiritual caregiving is a key domain of palliative care, it lacks a clear definition, which impedes both caregiving and research in this domain. The aim of this study was to conceptualize spirituality by identifying dimensions, based on instruments measuring spirituality in end-of-life populations. A systematic literature review was conducted. Literature published between 1980 and 2009, focussing on instruments measuring spirituality at the end of life was collected from the PubMed, Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), and PsycINFO databases. Inclusion criteria were: (1) the studies provide empirical data collected with an instrument measuring spirituality or aspects of spirituality at the end of life; (2) the data report on a (subgroup) of an end-of-life population, and (3) the instrument is available in the public domain. Content validity was assessed according to a consensus-based method. From the items of the instruments, three investigators independently derived dimensions of spirituality at the end of life. In 36 articles that met the inclusion criteria we identified 24 instruments. Nine instruments with adequate content validity were used to identify dimensions of spirituality. To adequately represent the items of the instruments and to describe the relationships between the dimensions, a model defining spirituality was constructed. The model distinguishes the dimensions of Spiritual Well-being (e.g., peace), Spiritual Cognitive Behavioral Context (Spiritual Beliefs, Spiritual Activities, and Spiritual Relationships), and Spiritual Coping, and also indicates relationships between the dimensions. This model may help researchers to plan studies and to choose appropriate outcomes, and assist caregivers in planning spiritual care.

The Role of Spiritual Experiences and Activities in the Relationship Between Chronic Illness and Psychological Well-Being. [J Relig Health](#). 2011 May 21. [Epub ahead of print] by [Ballew SH](#), [Hannum SM](#), [Gaines JM](#), [Marx KA](#), [Parrish JM](#). From Doctoral Program in Gerontology, University of Maryland,

Baltimore and Baltimore County, 1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore, MD, 21250, USA, sballew@jhsph.edu.

Abstract: Our research explores the correlates of spiritual experiences over a 2-year period in a sample of older adults (N = 164; mean age 81.9 years) living in a continuing care retirement community. Utilizing responses to the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale, scores were analyzed for changes over time and for their hypothesized moderating effect in the relationship between chronic illness impact and markers of psychological well-being (as measured by the Geriatric Depression and Life Satisfaction scales). Repeated measures ANOVA indicated a significant decline ($P < .01$) in the reported spiritual experiences over a 2-year period of time, and t tests showed a significant difference by gender ($P < .01$) in years 1 and 2, with women reporting higher levels of spiritual experiences than men. Analyses found low spirituality scores associated with low life satisfaction in all years (baseline: $r = -.288$, $P < .01$; year 1: $r = -.209$, $P < .05$; year 2: $r = -.330$, $P < .001$). Only weak associations were detected between low spirituality and the presence of depressive symptoms at baseline ($r = .186$, $P < .05$) and year 2 ($r = .254$, $P < .01$). Moderation effects of spirituality on the relationship between chronic illness impact and markers of psychological well-being were explored in all years, with a statistically significant effect found only for the presence of depressive symptoms in year 2. Higher impact of chronic illnesses is associated with more depressive symptoms under conditions of low spirituality. Future research may center upon longer-duration evaluation of reliance upon spiritual practices and their impact in care management models.

[Compiled by Kevin Chen]



[Taiji and Science]

The Importance of Let Loose - Fang Song 放松

by Chun Man Sit 薛振民

There are many important principles in taiji and qigong. The most critical principle is fang song – let loose. Many taiji practitioners have trained diligently for years but have not yet entered the threshold of taiji. The main reason is that they have not mastered the art of fang song – let loose.

What is fong song, or let loose?

Fang means to release or let go. Song means looseness. Together they can be translated as let loose, or relax. The Chinese term indicates that you must let it be if you really want to be loose. You cannot force yourself to be loose nor can you try harder to relax. The difficulty is that you must always remember to work on this principle but you must also never try very hard. This is the most important principle if one wants to become a taiji or qigong master.



Fang song and qigong

Fang song is the most important aspect in qigong practice. When practicing qigong, we gather energy and turn it into qi. For example, if you gather 100 units of energy per qigong session, but you spend 90 units of energy while practicing. You have 10 units of energy left. You have accumulated 10 units of qi in your qi saving account. By following the fang song principle, you relax your body and your mind more. Now you only spend 80 units of energy per qigong session. You have double your qi saving.

The more qi(energy) you have in your account, the better your health. Qigong healing is just energy healing.

Fang song and taiji

If you practice your taiji routine following the principle of fang song, you'll gain more qi in your routine practice. Your taiji practice has become qigong practice. There is not much difference between the two arts. It's all about qi (energy). This is why we say slow taiji practice nurtures our qi but fast taiji practice hurts our qi. If we spend more money than we can make, we'll be in debt. Any sane person can see this logic clearly.

Fang song and taiji applications

It is simple: without the ability of fang song, we'll have no sticking-hand ability, we can't punch fast, and we can't listen to our opponent's intention through the touch in push-hand. To strike fast with our hands, we must have loose shoulders joints. To stick to our opponent's arms, our own arms must be soft. Sticking is the action of friction force. In order to listen, we must first be quiet. To listen to our opponent's force, we must not use force.

Fang song and rooting

To be rooted is to be in harmony with the gravity pull of the Earth. No energy is needed. In fact, we use energy to fight against gravity. For example, if three people are pushing on your body, and you try to stand your ground by pushing against them, you will be pushed back easily. Because when you use force against another force, the stronger force will win.

How should you do it then? It's easy. Do not fight against their push. Instead, relax your body and try to connect with all the hands that push on your body. Try to imagine all four people have become one unit, like a giant spider

with eight legs. At this point, allow your body to connect with gravity. So now you are in harmony with gravity, and they are in harmony with you. There will be no fight. United we stand. (As shown in photo)

Fang song practice



The training method for fang song is simple. And it is the same with qigong and taiji.

First we learn about correct body structure and correct movements. Then we just try to relax and use less strength. Every time we can relax a bit, we improve our fang song ability. There is no ending to this training.

“In the pursuit of the Dao, we strive to decrease. Decrease and decrease, until we reach the point of wu-wei. When we reach the point of wu-wei, we have returned home.

The training method for fang song is simple. Unfortunately, we regard simple method as low level method. We don't work hard to reach the level of fang song that is the trade mark of taiji masters. And as a result, we are not taiji masters.

Zen Master Seung Sahn said, “Students always want to learn some high class method.”

We become bored with simple methods. That's why we fail.



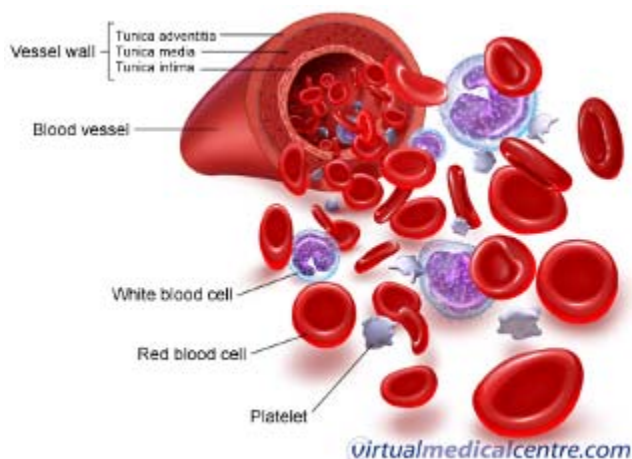
[Chun Man Sit - born in 1950s in southern China, his family moved to Hong Kong when he was six years old. He lived in Hong Kong for twenty years and in 1976, he moved to the United States. Master Sit began his martial arts training in 1969 and has studied and practiced continually for forty years; learning many styles such as Karate, Tai Chi, Qigong and Kungfu. He is the expert on Wu style Taiji, Tai Hui Six Elbows Kungfu, and many Qigong methods, including 6 Healing Sounds, Drifting Cloud Moving Qigong, Nei Gong, Silk-reeling Gong, etc. Master Sit has been a chief judge in many national Tai Chi and Kungfu tournaments in the United States of America for the last 18 years and has taught Tai Chi, Qigong, and Kungfu workshops. His articles appear regularly in Tai Chi and Kungfu magazines and he is currently writing a book on Tai Chi. Master Sit and his wife Mary Ann, live in Overland Park, Kansas.]

[Topics in Research]

Scientific Qi Exploration - Part 14

Qigong's Effects on Blood and its Biochemical Constituents

Martin Eisen, Ph.D.



1. Introduction

Some effects of Qigong on the immune system components in the blood appear in (1) as well as its effects on DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone). Other effects on the blood, plasma viscosity, lipids and glycolysis will be presented below.

2. Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate (ESR)

In the ESR test, blood is drawn from a vein and sent to a lab. The lab measures how fast red blood cells (erythrocytes) fall to the bottom of a tall, thin tube. The rate at which they settle is measured as the number of millimeters of clear plasma present at the top of the column after one hour (mm/hr). The test is used to monitor inflammation. It cannot be used to diagnose a specific disorder.

After tuberculosis patients had practiced Qigong, 89% of these patients' ESR returned to normal (2). This result shows that practicing Qigong improve the health of tuberculosis patients.

3. Blood Clotting and Viscosity

A study, published in 1986, investigated the effects of practicing Standing Post Qigong for three months. In 51 participants their whole blood clotting test improved and their plasma viscosity decreased significantly (2).

Another report published in 1989 studied the effects of combining meditative and dynamic Qigong on hypertension. The platelet aggregation test was used. This test checks how well platelets in the blood clump together, leading to the formation of a clot (thrombin). In the 100 participating patients, their platelet aggregation tests were improved and their blood viscosity also dropped significantly (3).

This research indicates that Qigong practice promotes blood circulation, by decreasing blood viscosity, and reduces blood stasis, by decreasing blood coagulation. It follows that Qigong can be used to prevent and help heal problems caused by poor blood circulation and clot formation obstructing blood vessels, such as, strokes and heart attacks.

4. Electrophoresis

Electrophoresis is a technique for separating the components of a mixture of charged molecules (e.g. - proteins, DNAs, or RNAs) within a gel or other support according to size and electrical charge by applying an electric current to them. Each kind of molecule travels through the medium at a different rate, depending on its electrical charge and molecular size. This technique was used to study the effects of Relaxing Quiescent Qigong on hypertension in a 1990 paper (3). The red cell electrophoresis tests of 150 hypertensive patients improved after periodic practice of this Qigong. Their whole blood viscosity also dropped significantly.

5. Blood Lipids

A lipid is a substance that is insoluble in water but is soluble in alcohol or some other type of solvent. Blood lipids are lipids in the bloodstream – for example, cholesterol, cholesterol complexes, and triglycerides. Since blood lipids are insoluble in water, they are surrounded by proteins called apolipoproteins. The binding of the apolipoprotein and the lipid form a lipoprotein, which is water-soluble and so can be carried efficiently through the water-based circulation (i.e. blood, lymph).

Ingested lipids from food and drink are digested in the small intestine and transported to the liver in large complexes of lipid and protein, called chylomicrons. In the liver the lipids are bound to lipoproteins and released as apolipoproteins into the blood stream. The liver is essentially responsible for ensuring that all tissues receive enough lipids for proper functioning and for normalizing the concentration of blood lipids.

There are six major classes of apolipoproteins, denoted by A, B, C, D, E and H, and several subclasses, denoted by the capital letter and a numeral (e.g. A1).

Apolipoprotein A1 is a major protein that is a component of high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or "good cholesterol". Also known as Apo A1, it helps clear cholesterol from the blood by removing cholesterol from organs and tissues to be destroyed by the liver. The test for Apo A1 is also called the Apo A test.

Apolipoprotein B (Apo B) is the primary apolipoprotein of low-density lipoproteins (LDL), or "bad cholesterol", which is responsible for carrying cholesterol to tissues. Through a mechanism that is not fully understood, high levels of Apo B can lead to plaques that cause atherosclerosis, leading to heart disease. There is considerable evidence that levels of Apo B are a better indicator of heart disease risk than total cholesterol or LDL. However, primarily for historic reasons, cholesterol, and more specifically, LDL-cholesterol, remains the primary lipid test for the risk factor of atherosclerosis.

Lipoproteins are also classified as "alpha" and "beta", according to the classification of proteins in serum protein electrophoresis. Any lipoprotein that has Apo B on its surface is termed a beta-lipoprotein and those with Apo AI are alpha-lipoproteins.

Alpha-lipoproteins are lipoproteins that transport cholesterol in the blood. They are composed of a high proportion of protein and relatively little cholesterol; high levels are thought to be associated with decreased risk of coronary heart disease and atherosclerosis.

Beta-lipoproteins are lipoproteins that transport cholesterol in the blood. They are composed of moderate amount of protein and a large amount of cholesterol; high levels are thought to be associated with increased risk of coronary heart disease and atherosclerosis.

The lipid theory, developed in the 1850s, postulates that high levels of blood cholesterol lead to heart disease. This hypothesis is accepted by many researchers and clinicians, who claim that years of scientific research have confirmed this association. However, there is some disagreement with this mainstream view. Opponents of the lipid hypothesis argue that less than half of heart attack patients have high cholesterol levels. They propose that inflammatory processes, which are always present, are more to blame for heart disease than blood lipid levels.

A 1988 study discovered that after practicing Qigong the total cholesterol level fell from 292.1 mmol/L to 263.3 mmol/L and beta-lipoprotein fell from mmol/L to 527. mmol/L ($P < .01$). Another study in 1989 reported that after 6 months of Qigong practice, by 39 hypertensive patients, their triglyceride and cholesterol levels dropped and their HDL levels increased, whereas, a control group of 30 patients showed little change. A 1990 paper stated that triglycerides, total cholesterol, and apolipoproteins were lower in the Qigong group than in the control group. After one year's Qigong practice, the negative correlation between HDL and its sub-type with coronary heart disease and arteriosclerosis increased significantly (3).

Observations on the effect of Qigong on lipid metabolism revealed that the Apo A level increased from 117.98 g/L to 133.58 g/L, while the Apo B level decreased from 118.15 g/L to 102.21 g/L. These results show the beneficial effect of Qigong on lipid metabolism (3).

An experiment was conducted on the anti-aging effects of Qigong after 3 months of practice (4). The serum total cholesterol decreased by 1.2 mg, the serum triglycerides decreased by 23.1 mg, and the serum HDL level increased 5.9 mg, on average, compared with the elderly control group.

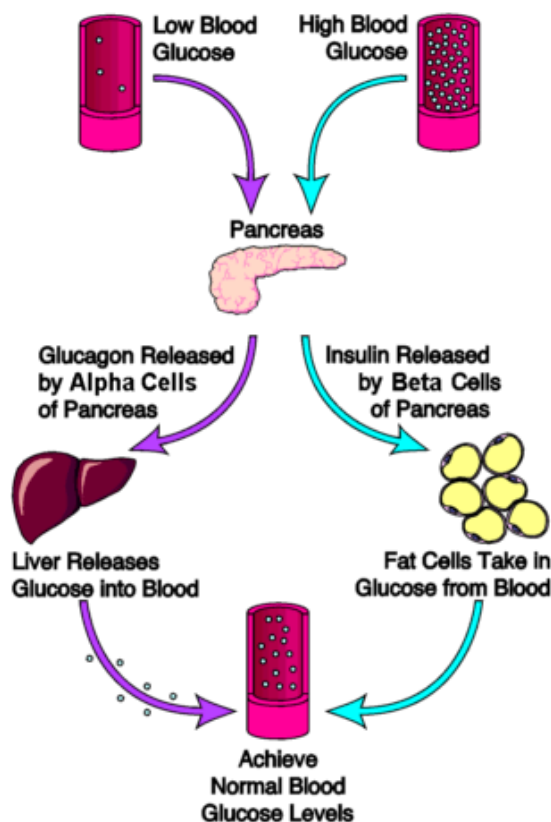
The increasing prevalence of obesity among college prompted an experiment to see if Qigong could help. After a month of Qigong practice, the morning urine ketone content of male and female practitioners was elevated within the normal range (.0153 mg/100ml - .0681mg/100ml for males and .0498 mg /100ml - .0836 mg/100 ml for females) (3). Since ketones are produced in the body when lipids are used to produce energy, these findings show that Qigong can enhance lipid metabolism.

6. Red Blood Cells and Hemoglobin

Experienced Qigong practitioner's blood constituents change after Qigong practice. The red blood cell count increased by 2,679,000 mm^3 , on average, hemoglobin increased about .5 – 2.5 g/L, and saturated arterial oxygen also increased. The partial pressure difference of oxygen between the pulmonary alveoli and pulmonary artery decreased by 19%, the ratio of oxygen consumption was 16% lower than normal and 6% lower than in the fast sleep state (2). This indicates that the state of the body changed from energy consumption to energy conservation.

The hemoglobin level was also studied before and after Standing Post Qigong. Blood sample samples were taken before practice, 30 min after starting, and 30 and 60 minutes after finishing. The hemoglobin level of the Qigong group increased 1-3 g, with an average increase of 1.55 g ($P < .01$) and the increased level lasted for about 60 min before returning to the level before practice (2). The main function of hemoglobin in the body is the transport of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Hence, these results show that Standing Post Qigong can energize people by shortening the time for recovery from fatigue.

7. Blood Glucose



Glucose ($\text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6$) is a simple sugar (monosaccharide). Blood sugar concentration or blood glucose level is the amount of glucose present in the blood. Why is blood glucose measured? Glucose is the only monosaccharide present, in significant quantities, in the blood after a meal, since 80% to 100% of the monosaccharides absorbed from the g.i. tract are glucose and the other main monosaccharides, fructose and galactose, have entered cells within one hour after a meal.

Glucose is the primary energy source for the body's cells. How energy is actually supplied to the cells by glucose will be discussed in the next section. Glucose is transported from the intestines or liver to body cells via the bloodstream. It is made available for cell absorption via the hormone insulin, produced by the body in the pancreas. Glucose is continually entering cells and when the extra glucose is not required for energy, it is converted to glycogen and stored in the cells. Glycogen can be converted back to glucose by glycogenolysis, when glucose is required for energy. If the cells become saturated with glycogen, then the extra glucose is converted into fat, primarily in muscle and liver cells.

In the early 1960s, Chongqing and Shanghai First Medical Colleges performed glucose tolerance tests on 30 Qigong practitioners. They were asked to drink 100 g of glucose on an empty stomach in the morning. Their peak value of blood sugar was lower than those in the control group. The blood sugar level of 29 tests of the 30 lowered to different levels with an average reduction of 27.3% (5, 6).

This result shows that Qigong is helpful in preventing weight gain. It may also be useful in preventing diabetes by lowering blood sugar. Consistent high levels of blood glucose may impose a strain on the pancreas leading to impairment of insulin production.

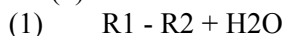
8. Digestion and Glycolysis (7)

The importance of the effects of Qigong on glycolysis requires an understanding of glycolysis, which is the beginning of the energy supplying process to cells utilizing glucose. In turn some background on digestion is required to see how glucose is produced for glycolysis. Glycolysis is the major process leading to energy production for cells using glucose

Almost all carbohydrates are polysaccharides, which are combinations of monosaccharides bound together. The binding results from removing a hydrogen ion

from one monosaccharide and a hydroxylion from the next. The two monosaccharides link at the sites of the removals. The hydrogen and hydroxyl ions combine to form water. This process is called condensation.

Carbohydrates are digested back into monosaccharides by the help of enzymes that return the hydrogen and hydroxyl ions to the polysaccharides and thereby separate the monosaccharides from each other as shown in equation (1)

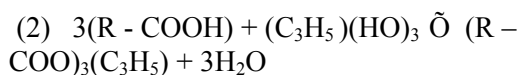


This process is called hydrolysis.

Proteins are amino acids bound together by peptide linkages formed by condensation – a hydrogen ion is removed from one amino acid hydroxyl ion form the next one. Once again the removed ions form water.

Digestion of proteins is also by hydrolysis. Proteolytic enzymes help return water to the protein molecules to split them into their constituent amino acids.

Most common dietary fats are triglycerides, consisting of molecules formed by the condensation of three molecules of fatty acids and a molecule of glycerol. Each acid molecule contributes a hydrogen ion and the glycerol molecule contributes three hydroxyl ions to form the triglyceride and water as shown in equation (2).



In digestion, the process described in equation (2) is reversed by cellular enzymes and three molecules of the fatty acid and a molecule of glycerol are produced. Only a small fraction of dietary fats contain short chain fatty acids, which can be absorbed directly into the portal blood and so enter the bloodstream. The majority of fats are digested as described above. Then, on passing through the intestinal cells, they are re-synthesized into new molecules of triglycerides. These enter the lymph as minute droplets called chylomicrons. These chylomicrons are composed primarily of triglycerides, but contain small amounts of phospholipids, cholesterol and proteins. The chylomicrons are transported up the thoracic duct which empties into the venous blood at the juncture of the subclavian and jugular veins.

The chylomicrons are transported to liver, adipose, cardiac, and skeletal muscle tissue, where their triglyceride components are unloaded by the activity

of lipoprotein lipase. The blood also contains small amounts of lipoprotein lipase, which catalyzes the hydrolysis of triglycerides in the chylomicrons into glycerol and fatty acids. The fatty acid molecules are combined with albumin, known as free fatty acids, and transported to cells of the body. The left over chylomicron remnants are taken up by the liver for processing.

The result of digestion is that mainly amino acids reach the blood and are carried to cells of the body. Most amino acid molecules are too large to diffuse through the pores of the cell membrane. They are transported through the cell membrane by active transport utilizing carrier mechanisms.

After entering the cell they are conjugated into cellular protein so that the concentration of amino acids in the cell is low. However, many of these proteins can be rapidly decomposed into amino acids under the influence of cellular enzymes, called Kathepsins. These amino acids can be transported out of the cell into the blood. However, the nuclear genes and structural proteins, such as collagen and muscle, don't participate significantly in this reversible storage of amino acids.

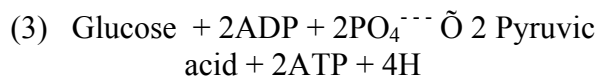
Nearly all carbohydrates are absorbed in the form of monosaccharides, mainly glucose, and some fructose and galactose. These pass through the liver, absorbed in the portal blood and carried everywhere in the body by the circulatory system. No disaccharides or polysaccharides are used by the cells, but are excreted in the urine. After being actively transported into the cells, the monosaccharides are phosphorylated enzymatically – for example, glucose becomes glucose - 6 – phosphate. In most tissues this prevents the monosaccharide from diffusing back out. However, some cells, liver, renal tubular and intestinal epithelial, contain enzymes that can reverse the phosphorylation. Another reason for the phosphorylation is that monosaccharides must be converted to glucose – 6 phosphate or fructose - 6 – phosphate to be used in glycolysis, described below. Glucose transport into cells is enhanced by insulin.

After absorption into cells, glucose can be used for the release of energy or stored as glycogen, a large polymer of glucose, formed by a process called glycogenesis. Other monosaccharides are converted to glucose before they are stored as glycogen. Liver and muscles cells store the largest amounts of glycogen. When the cells are saturated with glycogen, additional glucose is converted into fat. This conversion occurs primarily in cells of the muscles and liver.

Glycogenolysis, is the breakdown of glycogen to produce glucose. In the liver glucose – 6 phosphate is produced, which is enzymatically converted to glucose. This glucose can immediately pass into the blood and so cause a rise in blood glucose concentration. Glycogenolysis in other cells only makes glucose - 6 - phosphate, since they lack the enzymes for dephosphorylation. The molecule is only released into the extracellular fluid, where it can be used for energy production. The blood glucose concentration is not changed.

Rapid glycogenolysis can be activated by the two hormones epinephrine and glucagon. Epinephrine is released by the adrenal medulla when the sympathetic nervous system is activated. Glucagon is secreted by the pancreatic alpha cells when the blood glucose concentration becomes dangerously low.

The main way that energy is released from the glucose molecule is glycolysis and then the oxidation of the end-products of glycolysis. Glycolysis consists of 10 steps of chemical reactions catalyzed by enzymes. The net reaction is given in equation (3)



where ADP is adenosine diphosphate and ATP is adenosine triphosphate.

ATP is present in every cell and essentially all the energy for physiological processes is derived from stored ATP. The energy is stored in two high energy phosphate bonds. After the loss of one phosphate

After the loss of the second phosphate radical ADP becomes AMP, adenosine monophosphate. The breaking of each of these bonds liberates about 8,000 calories. Energy for the replenishment of ATP from AMP comes from food.

Generally, not enough energy is produced by glycolysis. The next step is the conversion of 2 molecules of pyruvic acid by 2 molecules of coenzyme A (Co – A) into 2 molecules of acetyl – Co – A and carbon dioxide and 4 hydrogen atoms. This step is followed by the citric acid or Krebs' cycle. The net reaction is that the 2 molecules of acetyl Co – A are combined with 6 molecules of water and ADP to produce 4 molecules of carbon dioxide and 2 of Co – A, 16 hydrogen atoms and 2 molecules of ATP.

Only small amounts of ATP are formed in glycolysis and the Krebs' cycle. About 90% of the ATP is formed during subsequent, enzymatically catalyzed, oxidations of the hydrogen atoms released by the first two processes.

Sometimes oxygen becomes unavailable or insufficient so that cellular oxidation of glucose cannot occur. The two end products hydrogen atoms and pyruvic acid could build up and stop the reaction. Fortunately, when these products become excessive they react with each other to produce lactic acid. This allows the glycolytic process to proceed for several minutes, instead of seconds if the end products were not removed. This can be life saving, since ATP can be supplied even without respiratory oxygen.

When oxygen becomes available the chemical reaction for lactic acid formation reverses itself. The lactic acid becomes pyruvic acid. Large portions of this are immediately available to the citric acid cycle and large quantities of ATP are formed. The excess ATP causes the conversion of as much as $\frac{3}{4}$ of the remaining lactic acid into glucose. Most of this conversion occurs in the liver, but a small amount can occur in other tissues. The heart muscle is especially capable of converting lactic acid into pyruvic acid and then using this for energy. This occurs in heavy exercise when the muscles release lactic acid into the blood.

When the body's store of carbohydrates decrease below normal, moderate amounts of glucose can be formed from amino acids and the glycerol portion of fats by a process called gluconeogenesis.

The effect of Qigong practice of elderly people on glycolysis was studied in (8). Glycolysis increased significantly after Qigong practice by an average of .193 units

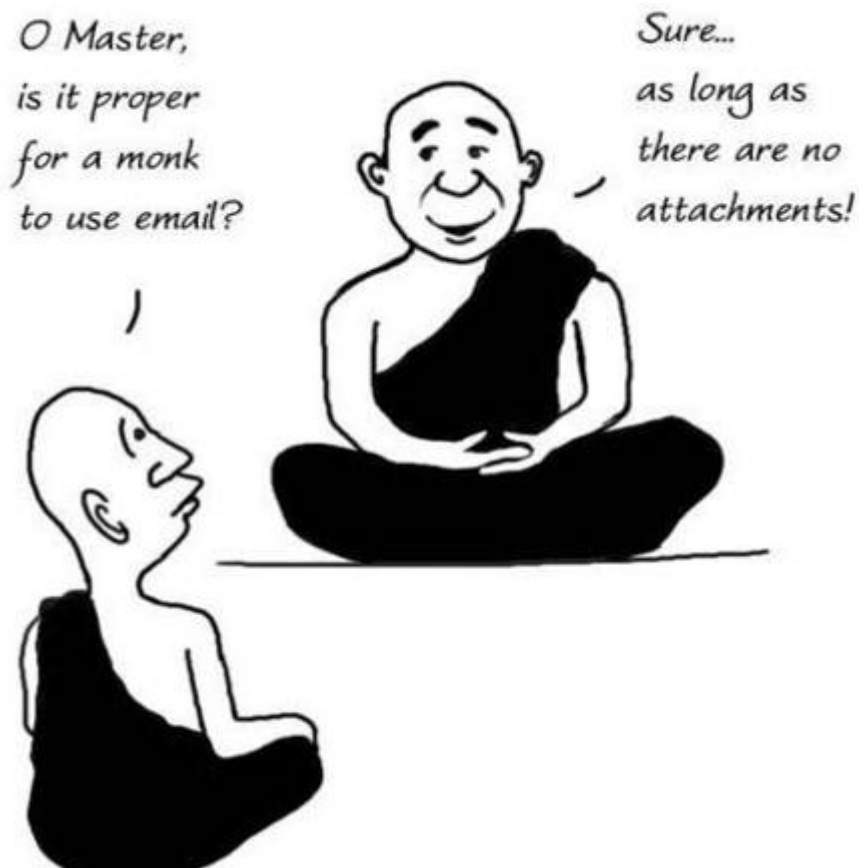
In other reports (3, 9), the plasma concentration of lactic acid decreased remarkably by 2.3 mg on the average, after three months of Qigong practice. Moreover, plasma ATP significantly increased by 60 nmol/ml on the average.

Hence Qigong practice promotes glucose metabolism and decreases energy consumption. Thus, it can prevent tiredness and fatigue by promoting energy production and storage.

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[Martin Eisen: By profession, Dr. Eisen was a university Professor specializing in constructing mathematical models such as those in cancer chemotherapy and epilepsy. He has studied and taught Yoga, Judo, and Aikido. Dr. Eisen was the founder and chief-instructor of the Shotokan Karate Clubs at Carnegie-Mellon and Duquesne Universities and the University of Pittsburgh. He helped teach Yoga in Graterford prison. His curiosity about the relation of Qi to healing and martial arts led him to study TCM, Tai Chi and Praying Mantis Kung Fu. He was initiated as a Disciple of Master Gin Foon Mark. Dr. Eisen now teaches (at his Kwoon and by webcam), writes and researches Praying Mantis, Qigong and Yang Tai Chi - see <http://home.comcast.net/~carolezak>]



What Is Love?

An exploration of culture and truth

by Felice Dunas, Ph.D.



While reading a Harvard Business Review article on Authentic Leadership (as in leadership that includes the wholeness of self rather than just ambition based endeavors), I was intrigued by research addressing the importance of a strong support network for leaders. By loving and being loved, by leaning and being leaned upon, leaders fly higher, bringing more goodness and transformation into the world. Without people with whom a leader can completely feel love and let down, their wings are clipped and their power to positively influence the world is limited. This inspired me to think that we as leaders and need to feel loved to optimize our effectiveness.

What is the energetic dynamic that expresses as human loving in the medicine we practice? What is happening to qi and blood and organs and shen and po and all the energetic components of the “beingness” that we are: body, intellect, emotions and spirit? My life and career, like yours, has a high level of commitment to generating love happiness, self awareness, kindness and authenticity, pleasure, truth and the use of these wonderful experiences in creating health. Do you believe that our professional ancestors did the same thing? Did they understand love as we did? Where their treatments goals in alignment with ours?

Our patients live in heart-starved cultures. Their behaviors and yearnings reflect that there isn’t enough

love expressed in their small, arbitrary encounters. They go through extended periods surrounded by people without having anyone smile at them. They pay to go to “personal growth” seminars and are told to hug and be hugged more often. They consume bitter, fire element tonics, like chocolate and coffee, to warm their hearts from the inside. They take medications to ameliorate their despair and take more medications if the ones they already take aren’t strong enough to make the despair go away. Where is the love?

We take our concept of love for granted yet the cultures from which our medicine evolved thinks quite differently than we do about it. This is important for you to understand because the texts you read may use words that you know, like love, but meanings that you don’t. As a result, it is easy to misdiagnose a patient or misinterpret the necessary treatment.

Zhuang Zi [莊子](#) was an influential Chinese philosopher who lived during the 4th century BCE during the Warring States Period. When his wife died, initially he felt sadness. Then he sat on a rock and meditated on the changes of Qi and realized that death is nothing but a transformation (a dispersal) of Qi the same way that birth is a transformation (aggregation) of Qi. At that, he said, his sadness dissipated and he felt joy. Some people might find this story philosophically uplifting and the source of great wisdom. This has been true for many of Zhuang Zi’s students and his students’ students for over two millennia. But we would say he is being incredibly callous and insensitive, that he has a big problem in not acknowledging his grief and that he is going to get cancer as a result of his emotional emptiness/stagnation in a decade or two. Same patient, different prognosis from the eastern and western acupuncturist.

Love, as we know it, is the result of a Western concept of self developed over 2500 years starting from Plato down to through Aristotle, the Stoics, St Paul and the continuing evolution of biblical translation including St Augustine, St Thomas, and St Francis. European philosophers such as Locke, Hume, Descartes, Berkeley, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, Jung,

Nietzsche, Sartre have tremendously influenced our view. Currently, the loud voices of psychologists, neuroscientists, gurus and "human potential" movement authors define consciousness and selfhood for us.

But the Chinese philosophies do not envisage an individual, inward-looking, autonomous self as we have in the West. They do not perceive themselves as unique, emotional people needing time or room or opportunity for support of cultivation of the "self". There is no "self", as we know it, to fall in love or need love or get needs fulfilled!

This has to be seen with reference to the three major philosophies of China, i.e. Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. I believe Confucianism has been the dominant philosophy, at the very least, since the Song dynasty. The Confucianist view of love is not vital to them as it is to us.

Their focus would be on duty, responsibility, care, kindness, and, crucially, obedience. The translation of the Confucian *Ren* as "compassion" is misleading. *Ren* is a state of family and social harmony that occurs when everybody behaves according to their duties and takes care of others. It is based on ethics, morality, duty, and respect. But not love. We must also remember that to the Confucians there was nothing worse than losing control, which passionate, romantic love can lead to.

The Daoist does not "love" the Dao. Ideally, the Daoist witnesses and, with great dedication, experiences the Dao. But there is nothing personal about one's relationship to it. No silent communication. No self.

Self esteem is paramount in American culture and you use your work to enhance a patient's self esteem. This would be unheard of in China. Your view of patients is based upon your culture of origin. Is it possible that by seeing through this lens you are missing something? If a patient is not of Western culture could you be misinterpreting their need for care, sending them in a direction that is not appropriate to them?

I once worked with a middle aged Chinese woman who had come to the US as a child. She explained to me that in her home emotions were not expressed and that she never felt very high or very low. She lived in a comfortable world but was aware that other people were different. She was fond of her husband, cared deeply for him but felt minimal passion. She described the relationship as appropriate and good. Pas-

sion wasn't something she understood well. It was helpful to her when I explained that supporting yin qi in her would allow her to become more receptive to her husband. Cultivating this form of qi could grow the marriage and alleviate the menopausal problems, for which she sought treatment, at the same time. I told her that we could use the medicine to merge her culture of origin and Western culture by helping her feel more receptivity to everything, including love as it is defined in the west. She was very excited about this. But not all patients would be, and this is important for you to realize.

As published in the *Handbook of Emotions*, Shaver, Wu and Schwartz interviewed young people in the USA, Italy and the People's Republic of China about their emotional experiences. In all cultures, men and women identified the same emotions and they agreed completely except on one, love. The US and Italian subjects equated love with happiness; both passionate and compassionate love were assumed to be intensely positive experiences.

Chinese students, however, had a darker view of love. In China, passionate love tended to be associated with "infatuation", "unrequited love", "nostalgia" and "sorrow-love". In short, love was viewed more as a negative experience, the result of obsessive thinking, jealousy and the like.

Many Chinese books only talk about "love" (*ai* 爱) as a cause of disease without specifying what it actually is. The term could be referring to the dark aspects of personal affection reflected in the responses Chinese students gave in the study above.

The old pictograph for "love" had "belching" at the top, a heart and "gracious gait" (as in one's walking gait. "Belching" was later replaced by a "hand" and a "covering over the heart" and "gracious gait". The modern Chinese removed the "heart" from the character so that now it looks very much like the character for "friendship", (i.e. are they more comfortable with friendship than love?).

Yes of course, Chinese people (very few!) fall in love too and have passionate sexual desires. This happens more frequently now due to exposure to the Western world. But, going back to the philosophies of China, all three considered "desire" the root of most of our psychological and existential problems. Love is a form of desire. When we are in love we crave that person intensely. In Asian cultures there has always been an awareness of emotional preference and affection and inebriation (as in drunkenness for wanting) and need for sex and jealousy and despair over not

having the person one wishes. But these are not considered positive experiences and are not to be cultivated.

Does this mean that the rich, gooey, chocolaty goodness of snuggling with someone your entire being feels a “connection” with, is not inherent to human nature? Can it not be found in our medical theory?

Yes, it can. One of the many areas of greatness in our medicine is its range and flexibility. Absolutely everything that any of our patients experience can be defined and understood within the theoretical constructs of TCM. This is how we know the universality of it, the inherent correctness of it. People whose belief systems and perceptions of life are utterly different can all find answers here. The inherent truth of this medicine allows us to find wisdom that reflects our beliefs even if they directly contradict those of our professional ancestors, the people through whom this medicine was brought to the world.

For example, the capacity to feel and express love comes from every aspect of who we are and is not limited to a particular “place” in our beings. It isn’t stored within the reserves of our Kidneys. Infants and children, who radiate a compelling, pure, adorable and adoring love have inherently weak kidneys until their bodies age a bit. It isn’t the result of an abundance of qi. The weakest among us, the wounded, handicapped, infirmed and dying, express heroism in their belief and experience of the extraordinary nature of ordinary love. It is not born of an organ. All organs lay the foundation for different experiences and expressions of love. The liver allows us to feel warmth and kindness, the lungs the bliss of bonding, the heart bursts forth enthusiasm and the gift of laughter, the spleen allows us to “know” love and the kidneys are the fountain from which love blossoms into wisdom.

Things to consider.

1. When practicing, think seriously about the culture of origin for each patient. Realize that the structure of their personality and relationship to the

world may be foundationally different than yours. It is imperative to strive for results in alignment with the worldview that they hold, not the one you hold.

2. We are all involved in a sociological experiment. We are the first generations of acupuncturists to integrate this medicine into American culture. We may not be accurate in all our interpretations and, as players in an ongoing medical expansion, mistakes and corrections are inevitable.
3. When we are taught Five Element theory we are told that the locations, the directions, were originally presented to explain lifestyles and disease patterns in China. But this theory can be used to explain differences on a much larger scale. How might Five Element theory help you understand patients from the West, East, North and South worldwide? If you use the entire world as your map, how might you view patients differently?
4. Many use the love of an individual (romantic) as a microcosmic example of divine love that can be spread through all interactions and relationships of life. Essential Being = Essential Loving. We see love as a force that pervades everything and our lives and actions are expressions of it. This is a Western view, not a Chinese one. But that doesn’t make it wrong.

As the Beatles once told us “All You Need Is Love.” While that song was probably not a top selling hit in China, for us its truth is simple and profound. It is our gift to spread love to those we lead and heal. It is our gift to find love within this medicine and to use it to heal ourselves. It is our gift to grow this medicine in the soil of our thoughts and beliefs such that it nourishes western patients as it has so richly addressed the needs of those on the other side of the world and in centuries past whose beliefs have contradicted our own. And yet we bring a gift to the multi-millennium old medicine that we practice. We contribute a blessing and a new dimension to it. We bring our unique brand of love.

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[A Comedy Moment]

Daoist Jokes

by Alan Sondheim

What did one Daoist say to the other? Nothing

Why don't Immortals tell riddles? They don't know the answers. What did the Immortal tell the mendicant? Nothing

How many Daoists does it take to change a lightbulb? None (i.e. Nothing)

Knock Knock. Who's there? Dao. Dao who? Dao art Nothing

What did the priest say to the Immortal? No Way! What did the Immortal reply? Nothing

Two Daoists went into a bar with a rabbi and a priest. The rabbi said to the priest, When we go to Heaven, we're allowed to leave. The priest said to the rabbi, when we go to Hell, we're stuck there. The Daoists said nothing, we're not going anywhere

What happens when you get two Daoists together? Nothing

Daoist riddle: What happens when you cross a duck and a mouse? Nothing

Two Daoists were talking. One asked, When is an obstruction not an obstruction? The other said, When the Dao gets in the Way (i.e. Nothing)

What's black and white and red (read) all over? The Daodejing (i.e. Nothing)

What weighs nothing and a thousand pounds? Two five-hundred pound Daoists (i.e. Nothing)

Two Immortals are in the bathtub. One says to the other, Please pass the soap. The other Immortal replies, No soap, radio.



[Meditation in Motion]

Wuji Posture in Taiji

© Eric Borreson

A foundation of traditional Chinese thought is a belief in a universe full of energy called qi. In the beginning, the universe was an endless void known as wuji. The taiji classics say that wuji gives birth to yin and yang, which are expressed as taiji. Yin and yang are represented by the double fish symbol.

Yin and yang are the all, representing the opposites that exist throughout the universe. All opposites are aspects of yin and yang. Light and dark, day and night, earth and sky, water and fire, and female and male are typical aspects.

We practice taiji to develop our ability to understand and use yin and yang. In traditional qi gong and taiji practice, the wuji posture is used as a resting position before beginning your practice. It symbolically represents the “great emptiness” of the original universal void.

External Physical Aspects and Body Posture

The external is the yang. To stand in wuji, begin with your feet apart about the width of your hips or shoulders. Gently rock back and forth and side to side to feel the weight shift. Take a moment to make sure your weight is evenly distributed on the three balance points of each foot, the ball of the foot, the point at the base of the little toe, and at the heel. Be aware of your weight on your feet and allow your weight to sink down into the ground on each exhale.

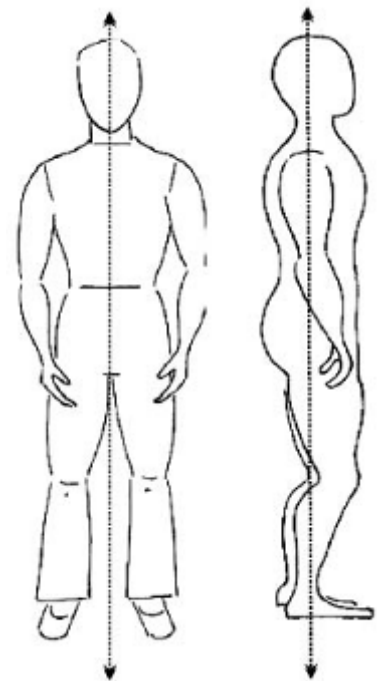
Relax in the wuji posture for a few moments. Stand as still as a tree and pay attention to any sensations you feel. Do not try to change anything. Just pay attention to the sensations. Progressively relax your body from the top down. Don't go limp, but focus on eliminating any unnecessary tension.

Relax your entire body and loosen all your joints. Be sure that your knees are not locked. Adjust your posture so that your weight is supported by your skeleton. Look forward and relax your eyes without focusing on anything. Relax your jaw, neck, and shoulders, and all the other places where you build up tension during the day. Relax your arms and hands, allowing them to hang loosely at your sides. Gradually allow your breath to deepen. Allow it to expand your diaphragm. Don't overdo it and force your breath, but be sure to completely fill and empty your lungs.

Internal Mental Aspects and Flow of Qi

The internal is ying. Let your mind travel through your body. Open all your joints by visualizing them expanding and loosening. Visualize a string, or thread, connecting the top of your head with the heavens. The string lifts from the bai hui point at the crown of the head and pulls down at the hui yin in the middle of your perineum. Imagine the string stretching your spine, opening up the space between the vertebrae.

Standing in wuji is the ideal posture to help you sense the flow of qi. Use your breathing as a point of mental focus. Use this time as a short meditation to calm your mind and body. As you stand, let your mind



follow your breathing. When your mind wanders, bring it back to your breathing. Let the calmness empty your mind of other things. An empty, calm mind can better sense the flow of qi.

As you stand still, become aware of any feelings of comfort or discomfort. Be aware of any muscular tension. Do not be judgmental. There is no right or wrong. The goal is to develop your ability to sense what is happening in your body. Awareness of your body develops your self-awareness.

All the places where qi is not flowing become apparent. Areas of poor qi flow become uncomfortable or even painful. Discomfort during standing reveals places where your body is not functioning properly. Your natural instincts are to move when you are uncomfortable. Move your body to eliminate painful postures, but try to maintain the wuji posture when you are merely uncomfortable.

Instead of moving, bring your attention to any point of tension or pain and imagine that your breath is entering and leaving your body at that point. Let your breath carry away the tension and pain. With every inhale, visualize bringing healing qi into your body at the place where you have tension. With every exhale, visualize expelling stagnant qi. Allow the healing qi to eliminate the discomfort.

Another method to eliminate the discomfort is to image the discomfort dropping through your body toward the ground. Allow it to fall through your feet and into the ground. When the discomfort leaves your body, it should be replaced by a feeling of comfort.

Daily Practice

Try to stand in wuji for a few moments every day. It seems very simple, but it can be very difficult the first few times you try this. The time will drag on seemingly forever. Boredom will drive you crazy. Be persistent and these feelings will pass. Over a period of several weeks, gradually increase the amount of time you spend standing. Remember though, quality is more important than quantity. Do not force yourself to stand when you are distracted.

Regular practice helps to balance your yin and yang, your internal and external. The balance of yin and yang helps you become more aware of the connection between your body and mind and improves your taiji.



[**Eric Borreson** - a student and teacher, finds teaching tai chi, qigong, and meditation to be a path to a more meaningful life. Eric is the founder and director of Meditation in Motion, specializing in teaching about living healthier and happier lives. He is a Master Instructor in the Therapeutic Tai Chi system. He teaches tai chi and qigong at the prestigious Heartland Spa, a top 10 destination spa, in Gilman, IL. In addition, he teaches tai chi (Therapeutic Tai Chi, Yang 24, Dr. Lam's Tai Chi for Arthritis, and Dr. Lam's Tai Chi for Diabetes) at other venues. He teaches private lessons on request. He writes a weekly wellness column at <http://eric-taichi.blogspot.com>.]

[Experience Exchange]

Taiji Enlightenment on Daqingshan

by Todd Elihu

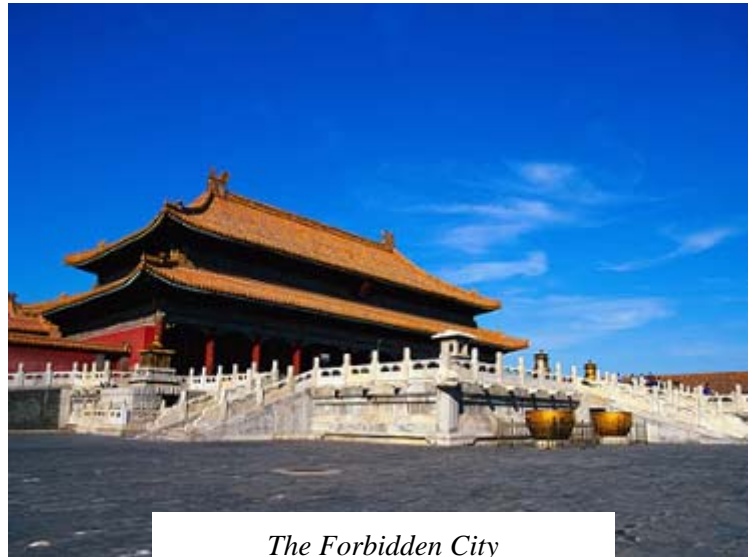
The long transpacific journey over, my wife, Baraka, and I stepped onto Chinese soil, thrilled by the permutations of consciousness that this ancient, yet forward-looking land was already beginning to effect upon us. Our toddling daughter, Akasha, for whom any experience was a delightful curiosity, no matter how mundane or extraordinary her parents deemed it, took in her new surroundings with an uncomplicated wonder which we too, hoped to embrace despite the grown-up demands of intercontinental travel.

We had come to China primarily due to my devotion to the teachings of Chen Zhonghua, a master of Chen Style Taijiquan, who was conducting a full-time training intensive at Daqingshan Mountain Resort in Shandong Province. I would be both a participant and assistant instructor. To Baraka, this getaway meant a chance to write with sustained focus, free to create without the everyday distractions of home. We all were quite pleased that we would be spending so much time together as a family.

Halfway across the world from the place we call home, the altered state that accompanied our desynchronization actually helped fuel our excitement. The treasured relics of a bygone civilization, which we had yet to witness in the flesh, remained a mere un-air conditioned cab ride away. Holding wide-eyed Akasha in my lap, we made our way to the nucleus around which the traffic upon the six ring roads of Beijing orbited — the onetime earthly abode of the Son of Heaven, the Forbidden City. Gilded rooflines boldly reflected the rays of the sun; intricately carved columns and statuary stood as testaments to the skill level of ancient artisans; stark expanses of weathered brick lay wide open to the vast firmament. What feats of human ingenuity these were, summoned from unfamiliar depths of dutiful obeisance to authorities, both divine and human, that once held sway. We had an odd feeling that we did not belong, not simply due to our round eyes and foreign tongues. Rather, we felt as if we were intruding upon a sanctum of ritual mediation between the sea of humanity and the cosmic will, encroaching upon a playground of dragons, who had long since hidden themselves from sight, trespassing into a forbidden realm of pleasure that could now be had for a hundred *kuai*.

We stopped to buy ice cream bars from a vendor situated in the shade of one of the massive arched corridors and I looked out upon the endless parade of tourists. At one time, outsiders like us would have received the punishment of “a thousand slices” for penetrating this palace so deeply. The tables had indeed turned. Those once sanctioned to live herein, in addition to having lost touch with the realities beyond these walls, eventually succumbed to the weaker parts of their nature, becoming drunk with majesty and complacently reckless in its administration. Assuredly, excesses and deficiencies within the empires longed to reestablish the state of balance achieved by kings of lore. Yet beyond the corruption which often beds with power, one can only imagine the splendor that such ritual purity might have cast upon the Earth had it ever been rekindled within the boundaries of such a meticulously designed vessel for such a flame. The construction of its 9,999 buildings had been overseen by the highest priests of *feng shui*; they remained standing as a geomantic invitation eagerly extended toward virtuous brilliance.

Just as the great philosophers of this land once looked back to the sagacity of mythological kings for inspiration, I now beheld the handiwork of mere humans, not unlike myself, who had pushed themselves to the utmost command of their craft, thus fortifying my faith in my own abilities. Each detail enkindled within my chest a bristling determination to master not only the art of Chen Zhonghua, but the art of life itself.

*The Forbidden City*

Emboldened? Yes. Yet, as I reemerged from my reverie, I found that we were surrounded by the red dust and bustle of a city now engulfed and begrimed by the sprawling monster of progress. It is, however, remarkable that we could find ourselves in total serenity within such a belching beast, either at the table of a hospitable family or beneath the shade of a tree at a popular park. Multitudes filled public spaces in the early morning hours, practicing vigorous diversions such as ballroom dance near the heavy foot traffic of the park gates or quiescent activities such as *qigong* under the rows of ancient cypress, offering passersby the illusion of escape from the swollen urbanity. Soon, however, our journey would lead us to a calm center of respite.

Several days later, we were flying down the eastern seaboard from the capital to Qingdao, the low frequency rumbling of the jet engines lulling Akasha to sleep. Upon our arrival, we installed ourselves at a waterfront hotel and spent the next couple of days walking the white sand beaches of this former German concession and stocking up on baby supplies and other convenience items, for such treasures would be hard to come by at our final destination. The night before we left for Daqingshan, I sat by an upper story window sipping a Tsingtao lager and looked out over the shimmering Yellow Sea. Slow-moving Korean merchant ships drifted by. I wondered if the Eight Immortals were drinking now on the mystical isle of Penglai.

In the morning, Master Chen's driver, Tang, packed our belongings into a roomy, black sedan and we set out for Daqingshan. Clusters of nuclear silos punctuated the gloomy, industrial outskirts of Qingdao. Soon, however, we passed through verdant pastures and rich fields, rows and columns of well-managed tree farms, places of earth and heart. Wrinkled, sun-red men drove farm machines that had seen maximum utility wrested from their well-worn parts. I thought back to the small Georgia town where I spent long summer days on my great-

grandmother's farm, walking barefoot on red clay and through tall grass to feed saltlicks to purple-tongued cows.

We pulled off the main road and passed through a dense chestnut grove, arriving at a gate where visitors normally paid a small admission fee to enjoy the splendors of this provincial forest park for a day. The driver beeped his horn to rouse the napping gate guard. Quickly perking up, the old fellow raised the gate and casually waved us on before peering through the window to check on the mushrooms he had drying on a newspaper in front of the guardhouse. As we ascended upon roughly paved roads, the driver shut off the air conditioning and rolled down the windows, softening us with cool breezes blown upward from valleys of locust blossoms. We were met by a quiet symphony of natural sounds — trickling streams, trilling birds and the rhythmic call of a distant goatherd. My wife's eyes welled with tears, overcome by the un-



Our cabin on Daqingshan

kempt beauty of the wilds of Daqingshan.

We finally arrived at a small hillside cabin, the place we would call home for several months. Its lacquered bamboo façade glowed golden in the late afternoon sunlight. From our front stoop we saw folks practicing the First Routine of the Chen Style Taijiquan Practical Method in silent unison on the half-shaded courtyard of the Yulange Hotel. On the other side of the hill from the cabin were luxuriant valleys which the local people have cultivated since time immemorial. We unpacked our possessions, our spirits adjusting to a pace of life guided by natural phenomenon; the cabin became homier with each passing moment.■

I had come here as a disciple, an adherent, a sponge. I had come here, to the homeland of my teacher, in order to ensure that the transmission of a traditional martial art would remain unbroken, from his generation to my own, from my own to futurity.

Master Chen, met us at the door of our cabin, abuzz with excitement, tucking an iPhone into the pocket of his slacks in order to shake our hands with both of his. The sizable contingency of students which had already convened upon the mountain was a source of joyous energy for him. He briefly brought us up to speed on the recent goings-on, and we followed him down to a banquet room where we were regaled with a sumptuous selection of lo-

cal specialties: steaming dumplings filled with minced pork and a seasonal wildcrafted pulse, stir-fried wood ear, sautéed cucumbers, pickled chicken feet, tender *chevon* drowned in a savory brown sauce, flaky onion cakes, glutinous pastries filled with red bean paste, and juicy watermelon. Well-satiated, we sauntered back to our dwelling in the pale light of the moon, wherein we were lullabied by the subtle interplay of the languorous wind with the mildly resonant bamboo.

I awoke the next morning with the reddening of the eastern penumbra. The sensuous downward curvature of the surrounding hills opened themselves to a transient array of clouds, which despite their rapid procession, calmly veiled the source of their warm illumination. I found my way out to the unconfined courtyard where other students had

already arrived in order to warm their blood, but I remained fixated on the amorphous regularity of the vast display of clouds. Below, the mountainous protrusions gave way to cultivated flatlands, creating the epitome of solidity. Above, the incessant altocumulus drifted by, effortless and ephemeral. I began shadowboxing, and felt myself merge with the scenery that lay before me. My lower body became the landscape, which, though it seemed to be static, was actually grinding with immeasurable force beneath its surface. My upper body transformed into the now ochreous clouds. These masses of vapor had drawn corporeality from the elements of the earth, an entity which, in fact, exhibited a tethering influence upon them lest they were to float off, unchecked, beyond the atmosphere. Like this oneness of Heaven and Earth, I, as the observer, had become the observed.

The morning matured, and the golds and yellows of the sky gave way to a dense grayness. I wiped the

sweat from my brow; large droplets darkened the granite pavers below my feet with increasing frequency. The dark continuum, the pluvial blurring of land and sky, thundered toward us through the distant valley. Clouds are not merely whimsical puffs, I reminded myself, but also possessors of dramatic potential, interrupters of human affairs which, under certain circumstances, can be transformed into violent tempests and swirling vortexes of destruction. So it is with fists.

Sensing that my outdoor training time was about to be cut short, I picked up the tempo and intensity of my performance. In my mind's eye I not only conjured images of Master Chen at his most formidable, but also make-believe assailants whom I dispatched with quick ferocity. The fast-twitch musculature of my body exploded with elasticity as I both issued



Early morning view from our cabin



Master Chen Zhonghua on the courtyard in front of the Yulange Hotel

energy beyond my carefully aligned frame and rapidly recoiled it within.

What began as mere drops became furious sheets of chilling rain. We gathered in the lobby of the Yulange Hotel to share a fresh pot of tea. Master Chen, having just made his way down from his solitary chamber, beckoned me to cross hands with him. At times a man of voluminous explanation, tirelessly verbose in his attempts to teach foreign concepts, he now offered me the most direct and true means of transmission — the most basic component of any martial activity — wordless physical engagement.

It is said that Feng Zhiqiang, Master Chen's living master, gained invaluable insights by consistently volunteering to be the crash test dummy upon which his teacher, Grandmaster Chen Fake, would administer jarring throws or crushing blows. To an outside observer, Feng's gluttony for punishment might have been judged foolhardy. However, Master Feng seemed to have learned early in his training that by physically experiencing the violent potential of his teacher's movements, he could bypass the filters of his mind and transfer knowledge directly to a part of his consciousness inaccessible by any other means. His body learned what his mind alone could never apprehend. Even though he may have walked away from such demonstrations feeling beat up or nauseous, he had gained hard-earned knowledge that could never be won by those on the sidelines.

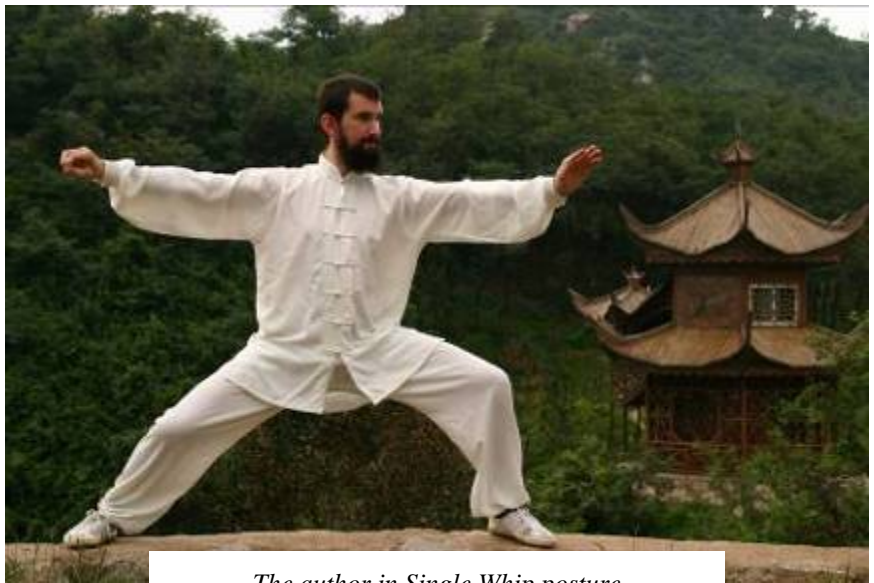
On this morning, my learning opportunity is not destined to have quite that same character of pummeling. Master Chen holds his latent ferocity in check. He instead creates for me an intoxicating and perplexing sensation of constant instability and awkwardness. The Italian marble floor under my feet seems to undulate and warp. This was a feeling characteristically experienced by those who pushed with Master's Chen's late master, Hong Junsheng, a feeling intoxicating in its perplexity. Even though Master Chen still has sleep in his eye, his body is nevertheless awake. Whenever I attempt to push or pull him, his body follows with the precision of a machine, but in greater proportion to the initiating movement. The effect is not unlike an unexpectedly responsive revolving door that speeds up and hits you from behind before you can exit. His mind seems empty. His body, deeply programmed by years of intentional practice, is simply on autopilot. At times I will feel I have the upper hand on him. Then his intention flashes like a surge of electricity. The next thing I know, both of my feet are off the ground, and I am reeling backward both puzzled and delighted, with no idea what just happened. In those moments, what I want the most is to repeat the whole scenario so that I might catch what I failed to perceive the first time.

After granting me this unspoken lesson, Master Chen asked another student how the newly acquired *bage* birds were faring and explained to us how they could be trained to talk. The storm clouds had now blown over, so he wandered off with a child-like enthusiasm to inspect some recent plantings along the perimeter of the courtyard. Having established this mountain enterprise just a hop, skip and a jump from his old hometown, he seemed to revel in these natural wonders of youthful familiarity.

I returned to the drenched courtyard and went through the First Routine several times in an attempt to integrate the subtle alignments I had

just seen and felt on Master Chen's body. Each day I engaged in this process of reshaping myself, guided by the observations culled from close contact with the expert hand of my teacher. Such work slowly began to dominate my unconscious; at night, I often woke myself from playing Taiji in my sleep.

Keen to behold aspects of the mountain which had been enthusiastically described by Master Chen in glorious detail, I ventured forth one foggy morning to explore the lush environs. A hundred yards north of our cabin, I passed a pale statue rising out of a sea of yellow daisies, the larger-than-life likeness of Liu Bang, founder of the Han dynasty. Over two thousand years ago, Liu Bang had wintered on this mountain with his rebel army before launching a decisive campaign against the internally collapsing Qin dynasty.



The author in Single Whip posture

I followed the rain-dimpled trail past Liu Bang and into the welcome shade of overhanging black locust branches. A stern man in military uniform and a woman whose plainness was offset by her watery almond eyes passed me from the opposite direction. Soon I came upon an enormous, phallic rock formation. Local legend tells that Lü Dongbing, perhaps the most venerated of the "Eight Immortals," ascended to heaven from this particular spot, leaving in his wake an abundance of *yang* energy in the form of this granite erection. Just beyond this surprising outcropping, a tonsured monk waved to me from the steps of a small Buddhist shrine. According to the locals, this monk had taken residence near the shrine in order to regularly minister to couples hoping to conceive a son. Perhaps the man and the woman whom I had just passed had come here to display their sincerity and to benefit from the *yang* energy of the place. I had heard that, embraced by its globalized metropolises, China's expanding economy now placed greater value on one's business acumen than on one's gender; here in the countryside it seems old preferences die hard.

I soon reached the summit where I discovered a whitewashed pagoda. Climbing the steep stairs to its uppermost stories, I enjoyed a commanding view of the area, an enjoyment only slightly tainted by the acrid aroma of guano. To the north and west lay wooded mountains; to the east, granite quarries dotted the low-lying plains, their presence barely discernible by sight, but announced daily by means of thunderous blasts. In the hills that lay to the south, nestled amongst familiar buildings, I knew that my wife was sitting in our cabin, finishing the manuscript of what would be her first published book, an ode to the creative process of women.

I left the pagoda and descended eastward upon the "Eight Immortals Trail," where I soon found myself traversing enormous boulders, the random layering of which produced a series of caves varying in accessibility. I lowered my body into the cool exhalation of a particularly large opening of unknown depth, a welcome respite from the stifling humidity of the forest outside. Ancient hermits were said to have sought retreat within these dim, damp



The author sitting within one of the many caves upon the "Eight Immortals Trail"

fissures of meditative withdrawal. I looked for a spot in which I could sit undisturbed in silent contemplation and discovered a nice seat of stone illumined by a beam of sunshine penetrating the cavern from above. Rumor held that Lü Dongbing, the selfsame immortal who supposedly left a mineralized phallus as his last earthly relic, had cultivated his ascendant *yang* energy within one of these moist wombs of spiritual maturation. I sat, timeless in that sacred space, concentrating on my *dantian*, forgetting all else.

I emerge from such subterranean peace fully present in the moment and am greeted from above by the raucous calls of invisible birds, hidden by thicket and cloud. Suddenly, one materializes from the mist and soars overhead. I close my eyes and imagine its point of view; from high in the mountain air, I scan the tenaciously forested mountainside, hardly noticing the bearded man clinging to one of its rocky protrusions, overwhelmed by the alluring immensity of the scene.

I could have spent days wandering the wonders of Daqingshan, yet the real reason I was here was, of course, the intensive Taijiquan learning environment. In the relatively cool weather of the early mornings and late afternoons, Master Chen would offer mind-blowing instruction on anything ranging from the distance-minimizing qualities of geodesics to the vertical neutralization of a horizontal force. When he was not around, I

worked with the other students in order to make sense of the new information and to restructure my body accordingly.

At some point during the dog days of summer, a couple of Master Chen's disciple-brother's came to call on him. When not catching up and sharing stories, they were engaged in a serious exchange and proofing of martial theories. I was a rapt observer. It is one thing to watch Master Chen interact with his students; it is another matter altogether to witness him interact with his peers. The profundity of such matching of skills is rarely seen. Observing the interplay of these masters was like witnessing immortals playing chess within an otherwise inaccessible pavilion atop some remote peak.

One evening, the masters watched the students practice from a flight of stairs that faced the moonlit courtyard. I had just joined the group after putting Akasha down for the night. Master Chen's nephew had come to visit during his summer break from college in order to start learning the art of his uncle; I was directed to push hands with him. As he pressed hard against my arms, I braced the incoming force with my rear leg. Then, slightly sinking my rear hip and rounding my back, I simply rotated my arms as I had been trained to do in the form "Brush the Knee." Suddenly, the young man shot up into the air. His body spun counter-clockwise to my left and landed behind me. I stood there as if I had just finished a movement in the barehanded form, perfectly positioned, but suppressing a grin. I turned to help him to his feet. Master Chen smiled and said that I was "getting somewhere." Up until this moment, push hands had largely felt like wrestling; this had been something totally different. I had hardly moved or exerted any effort, yet the effect on my opponent had been astounding. I had seen and felt Master Chen pull this type of thing off many times, but my attempts at reproducing it had always been less than perfect. It seems that the consistent observation, instruction, analysis, and experimentation over several months had borne an almost imperceptible influence upon myself, like a river that slowly shapes a stone that it ripples over day by day.

I suddenly recalled with new appreciation the words of Hong Junsheng's three-character canon, "Learning":

Contemplate frequently
Practice regularly
Persist
Follow the rules
Seek progress
Don't rush
Without knowing
Ability has increasedⁱ

Day in and day out, I undertook the preparatory work for such epiphanies with great persistence until it was finally time to return to a world of expanded responsibilities. After three months of life on the mountain, we bid



Early morning push hands training

farewell to Master Chen, and were conveyed down the winding cobbled road in the black sedan through a thick fog, acknowledging every rock, tree and bubbling spring. We had accomplished what we had come for. Baraka had birthed her book, a brainchild which lacked only the caring eye of an editor. Akasha had happily received oodles of attention from her parents and had been treated as some sort of fairy being by the child-worshipping locals. I had undergone the rewarding rigors of an otherwise unrealizable training experience. Though I longed to return to such a regimen amidst the exquisite environs of the fabled haunt of immortals, my process of forging was over for now. Guided by my teacher, I had been imperceptibly recast by my own efforts and was quenched by the final communion with the excruciatingly beautiful surroundings of Daqingshan. The memory of the body was fresh and time was of the essence: the tempering process lay before me.

[Todd Elihu is a 20th generation disciple of Chen Style Taijiquan & 3rd generation disciple of Chen Shi Xinyi Hunyuan Taiji under Master Chen Zhonghua. He is the head instructor of the Hunyuantaiji Academy of Athens, a branch of Master Chen's broad organization, and an affiliated instructor of PATHS Atlanta. He holds an A.B. in Chinese Language and Literature and is currently a graduate student at the University of Georgia.]

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[Experience Exchange]

The Gift of Taiji

by David Foulk and Theresa Marolda

Words alone cannot explain the way I feel about the practice of Taiji. I call it a gift because Taiji changed my life at a time when I truly needed guidance for my own healing. Taiji is a gift that continues to give me wonderful opportunities to grow and heal every single day. I am grateful for everything the practice of Taiji has brought into my life. My wish is to pass along the gift of Taiji to others.

If you had asked me about Taiji prior to 1986, I would not have been able to tell you anything about this wonderful meditative martial art. I remember the day someone told me the practice of Taiji could make a difference in my life. I was not able to spell, nor pronounce the word correctly, but I was curious. I wondered how something that sounded so simple could be so beneficial. I decided to give it a try and my life has not been the same since I began to practice Taiji in 1986.

The event that lead me to even consider practicing Taiji occurred the summer of 1982, when I suffered a traumatic brain injury. I was stationed at an air force base in the Midwest and I frequently left base to ride my 650 Yamaha motorcycle. I only wore my helmet to get off the military base and to get back on base. Luckily for me, the accident happened on my return trip to base and I was wearing the helmet.

The details of the accident are sketchy at best, and don't really matter at this point. I was in a coma, broken both physically and emotionally. I do remember making a conscious decision to continue my journey in this life; I wasn't ready to give up and die. My initial recovery happened very slowly and with great physical and emotional effort. I had to relearn how to do many things I once took for granted. I worked with many talented medical professionals when I was an inpatient, and my rehabilitation continued for a few years as an outpatient. They helped put me back together the best way they knew how. Western medicine saved my life and Eastern medicine, including the practice of Taiji, allowed me to live a better life.

I was working as a pool attendant at the League for the Handicapped the spring of 1986. I had been a competitive swimmer when I was younger and I still enjoyed the water. I was still a good swimmer, but I walked with a noticeable limp, my right arm was stiff with restricted movement, and my overall movements were generally spastic. My physical movements were best when I was well rested; when I became fatigued, it was as if certain parts of my body were beyond my control. It is an understatement when I say this infuriated me, made me feel insecure, and not very happy. I also allowed my emotions about the situations I found myself dealing with, to control my behavior. I was alive, but my mind and body were disconnected and working against each other.

One day while working at the pool, I was approached by a woman who had been observing my movements in and out of the water. She thought the practice of Taiji would help my balance and suggested I attend the class she was teaching. I went to class once a week and nothing happened. I didn't feel any change in my body and I had difficulty doing the movements that required balance. I fell many times, so I began to use the wall to help me stay on my feet. I continued to attend class, not because I was interested in learning Taiji, but because I was interested in the women in class.

I practiced as best I could outside of class, trying to coordinate my breathing with the movements while maintaining my balance. My movements were not graceful; however I began to feel a change taking place inside my body a few months after beginning Taiji. I remember feeling a sensation in my hands that was very unusual for me. I was concerned that perhaps it was some latent issue related to my accident. I questioned my teacher about it and she assured me I was fine and it was nothing to worry about.





Gradually, I began to notice my balance was improving. I didn't fall down as much and I was more in tune with my body. My movements were still spastic, but even that was changing. I could feel an internal 'smoothness of movement' that over time resulted in more graceful physical movements. I felt lighter, both physically and emotionally. I was beginning a new and different cycle of healing, unlike any I had ever experienced. The practice of Taiji was truly making a difference in my life and I wanted more. Family and friends also noticed the changes and encouraged me to continue whatever it was I was doing.

I decided to become a more serious student of Taiji and Qigong. I practiced wherever and whenever I could. I also began to meditate daily and I continued to improve. I began to think if Taiji and Qigong helped me, perhaps I could teach others what I had learned. I decided to become an instructor. I began to teach Taiji and Qigong to physically challenged and healthy individuals of all ages in 2001. I have been blessed and humbled by the practice of Taiji and will be

forever grateful for the gift of Taiji

[David Foulk of Mind/Body Exercise, LLC continues to practice and teach Taiji at senior centers, assisted living facilities, and local schools in the Columbia, MD area. He is also a certified level III Qigong instructor and Reiki Master.]



The Empty Vessel

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[Illuminating the Dao]

Be What You Want To See

by Michelle Wood

This video link in today's article is an integral part of the theme. I hope you will take about five minutes to watch it before reading the rest of the column.

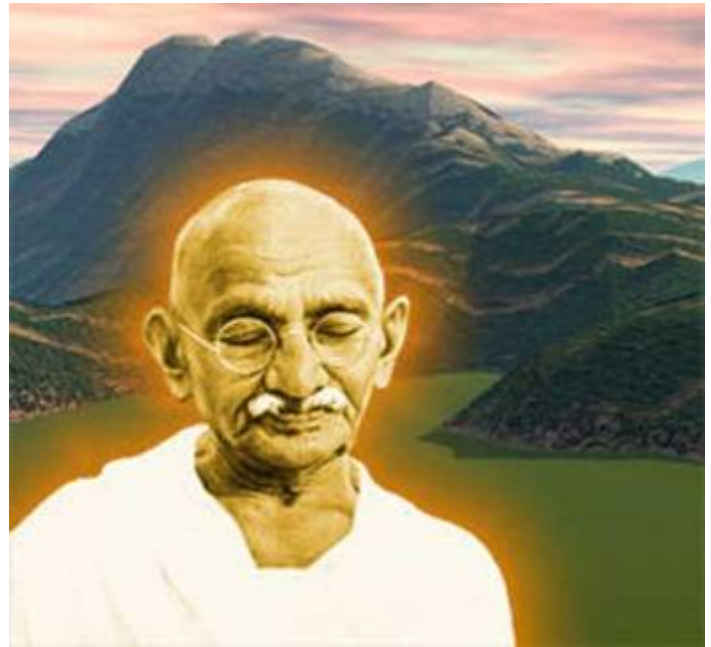
Presentation on Gandhiji's Life with Gandhi rap sung by MC Yogi

[The Ghandi Rap – be the change you want to see](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Qd-fAnHjPg)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Qd-fAnHjPg>

Gandhi was certainly an exceptional man who understood the power of creating his world, and he used that knowledge in the face of seemingly-overwhelming adversity to create the great freedoms he wanted for humanity.

What he understood with startling clarity is this: Your world responds to your every thought, your every feeling, your every breath, so be what you want to see! He focused on what he wanted and let nothing distract or detract from that vision.

Most of us do not really experience the world as it is, we experience it as we are. If the world appears to be a happy place, chances are you were happy to start with. If the world appears gloomy and depressing, most likely that is a reflection of your own inner mood and feeling in reaction to the things that appear to be happening around you.



For many people who observe in the world and then reflect back on to the world the dark and gloomy happenings, this is a reaction cycle. In merely reacting, you become a cog in the machinery, thinking and moving in unison with all the other gears in this amazing mystery we call Life without getting into the driver's seat behind the wheel. To truly experience the wonder and joy, you need to become the driver, just as Gandhi was the driver, the force behind the movement.

The precious thing to be understood, though, is that Gandhi did not think of himself as a driver. His brilliance was in that he envisioned what he wanted to see and then became it. He did not think he had to enlist followers (even though he did), he did not believe he had to lead a great movement (even though he did), he especially did not think he had to change the world (even though he did, most profoundly!).

For further contemplation on this idea of a leaderless leader, consider this excerpt from Derek Lin's translation of Daodejing verse 7:

*Therefore the sages:
 Place themselves last but end up in front
 Are outside of themselves and yet survive
 Is it not all due to their selflessness?
 That is how they can achieve their own goals*

Gandhi simply became what he wanted to see.

The core principle at work here is that, no matter how you try, you really cannot change the world outwardly because that is using force and struggle, which goes against the Dao. The Dao is like water, it flows gently and persistently and unwaveringly toward its goal, going around obstacles instead of trying to move them by force. The force of its Being is the only force it needs, indeed the force of its Being is the only force it really has in order to manifest change

A few days ago, there was a Facebook post made by an acquaintance of mine who states he is going to make our city more spiritual. I smiled in wondering by what criteria it was that he judged the lack of spiritual quality of our city, and wondering how he could “make” the people of a place more spiritual or awake or aware or conscious. (Thinking of Gandhi again, he may guide them only as long as they are willing to follow, and that is their choice, not anyone else's!) If indeed his surroundings are reflection of himself and his feelings and his beliefs, would it not be more appropriate to make himself more spiritual and allow his surroundings to follow?

In Higher Truth, you can only change the world by spiritually and mentally being the change you want to see. In terms of health and wellness when your “world” is your physical body and you want wellness, the first place to start is with your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, which feed your actions, and your actions create your physical reality. A very simple example would be that your thought is that you want to lose 10 pounds. Your feelings and beliefs tell you that happily jogging in the fresh air and sunshine would be a great way to do that. The action of jogging follows, and you lose the 10 pounds. Please notice you are not out there thinking of losing the 10 pounds, you are out there feeling happy and enjoying the sunshine and fresh air, and the loss just naturally follows.

Pure and simple, that's how it works. It's not always easy to see how you got “here” from “there,” but to get back to “there” again, to regain health and wellness, get some good feelings around it and set your mental course on being the wellness you want to see! And, for heaven's sake, don't let anyone talk you out of it!

I'll use Steven Mitchell's translation of verse 29 of the *Daodejing* to assist in illustrating this principle.

*Do you want to improve the world?
I don't think it can be done.*

*The world is sacred.
It can't be improved.
If you tamper with it, you'll ruin it.
If you treat it like an object, you'll lose it.*

*There is a time for being ahead,
a time for being behind;
a time for being in motion,
a time for being at rest;
a time for being vigorous,
a time for being exhausted;
a time for being safe,
a time for being in danger.*

*The Master sees things as they are,
without trying to control them.
She lets them go their own way,
and resides at the center of the circle.*

Here's how it can work for you:

*Do you want to improve the world?
I don't think it can be done.*

将欲取天下而为之，吾见其不得已。天下神器，不可为也，不可执也。为者败之，执者失之。是以圣人无为，故无败；无执，故无失。夫物或行或随；或嘘或吹；或强或赢；或载或隳。是以圣人去甚，去奢，去泰。

*The world is sacred.
It can't be improved.*

Your desire to improve the world requires you to make a judgment that there is something in the world that needs to be improved and there is always the possibility your assessment of the situation is incorrect. You have no way of knowing if your change would do more harm than good in other ways; forcing a change often has unanticipated consequences.

The paradox in this statement is that, since you are component of this world, if you change yourself, you will change the world!

*If you tamper with it, you'll ruin it.
If you treat it like an object, you'll lose it.*

In my opinion, this is a direction reflection of some health-care systems that look at you only as a bundle of separate systems, not an integrated whole.

If you tamper with your health in such a way that you treat one part at a time, you may very well ruin it with too many disassociated cures that create reflective negative, undesirable symptoms in other areas. I give my uncle as an example: he takes two medications for two specific diseases, and then 17 other medications have been added to control the subsequent side effects of each of the additional medications. Has this made him healthy? Not at all.

*There is a time for being ahead,
a time for being behind;
a time for being in motion,
a time for being at rest;
a time for being vigorous,
a time for being exhausted;
a time for being safe,
a time for being in danger.*

Returning to Gandhi and his life, there were certainly times when he was all of these things: ahead and behind; in motion and at rest; vigorous and exhausted; safe and in danger. The one thing that never wavered was his belief and intention. In the face of all adversity, he steadfastly continued to be the change he wanted to see.

In matters of health, your wellness will come as a direct result of the same kind of unwavering belief and intent which will inspire the ideas and put into motion your actions to attain it.

*The Master sees things as they are,
without trying to control them.
She lets them go their own way,
and resides at the center of the circle.*

Observe all but do not try to force change from outside. Trying to control things will not work because there are always unforeseen consequences to forceful acts that, as previously observed, often cause more problems than solutions.

Instead, go into your inner, spiritual center, decide what you want to be, and open yourself to the inspiration that will guide your choices to correct, harmonious actions that will bring you into alignment and Oneness with the Dao.



[Rev Michelle K. Wood holds a degree in Holistic Relaxation Therapy from Natural Health Institutes, has been a student of the Yijing since the early 1990s, and embraced the philosophy and shamanic roots of Daoism at the beginning of the 21st Century. Two years of participation in kirtan led Michelle to study the archetypal vibrations found in Sanskrit mantras and develop a

wellness program utilizing Sanskrit bhajans (devotional songs). Knowing that all wellness has its foundation in strong spiritual connection, Michelle's Everyday Enlightenment programs and services help you transform emotion and attitude into positive, life-enhancing lessons through Consciousness and Awareness Development techniques such as qigong and meditation. She also teaches meditation and qigong classes and workshops for wellness through Central Oregon Community College. Website: <http://www.everyday-enlightenment.com> ; email: michelle@everyday-enlightenment.com

Wisdom From the Dao De Jing (interpretation by Solala Towler)

The highest sage is like water.
Water benefits the ten thousand beings
Yet contends with no one.
It flows in places that people reject.
In this way it is close to the Dao.
In her dwelling the sage values the earth,
In her spirit she values
The qualities of a deep pool.
In her dealings with others
She values human kindness and benevolence.
In her speech she values truthfulness.
In leading others she values fairness and peace.
In serving others she values effectiveness.
In her actions she values proper timing.
Because she does not go against nature
She is free from blame.

(8)

Under heaven there is nothing more yielding
and soft than water.
Yet for attacking what is hard and stiff
There is nothing better.
In this way, the weak can vanquish the strong
And the soft can overcome the hard.
Under heaven, there is no one who does not know this,
Yet no one practices it.

(78)



[Qigong and Fitness]

What are the Powers of the Universe

How does this relate to Qigong?

by Timothy Booth

What are the Powers of the Universe according to the latest research and how do they relate to our practice of Qigong? This is based on an article that I recently read by Brian Swimme, in which he identifies some of the widely accepted scientific knowledge in physics, astronomy, biology, geology, paleontology and thermodynamics. This article will be in the form of musings that are not intended to be definitive but the basis of discussion, further investigation and inquiry. It is my firm belief that if the practice of Qigong is to evolve along with us it must keep up to the latest scientific research for it to be relevant.

First and foremost is the idea of the Ground or Source of all Being: what Brian Swimme calls Seamlessness, the realm of pure potentiality. In my view this would be equivalent to the Daoist idea in their cosmology known as Wuji (literally "without ridgepole") originally meant "ultimateless; boundless; infinite" but came to mean the "primordial universe" prior to the Taiji "Supreme Ultimate". We pay tribute to this as our origin in the cosmos and is the starting position for almost all internal arts including Qigong, Taiji Quan, Xingyi Quan, Baguazhang and others. To me it is a meditative posture that should always be the starting point and ending point of any quality Qigong practice symbolizing our beginning from nothing or the Void and our return to it as the ultimate goal.



Next we have Centration, which is the universe centering upon itself to give birth to a new being, a new animal, a new molecule. This may be what the Daoists meant by the ten thousand things that were created when Yin and Yang were created, or Primordial Qi, what you inherited from your parents. That genetic information compressed into molecular form in each of your cells. This may also be related to our power to act. It is my theory that this is one of the forms of energy that we are working with in the practice of Qigong. One form could be the Sun's energy, which is created by hydrogen atoms created by the birth of the universe, what the Daoists called heaven energy. This is what we are working with when we start moving from the stillness of Wuji posture branching out into the Yin and Yang polarities of movement, up and down, left and right, in and out etc. With movement all energy systems in the body respond, we begin to circulate all of the body's energy and fluids, blood and lymph, etc.

Allurement is what Brian considers to be what holds all the universe together at the level of galaxies. We call this gravitational interaction. At the level of molecules, Allurement is what holds the body together – electromagnetic interaction– and points to all forms of attraction. This is what holds all of the galaxies together as well as our bodies and what I feel is one of the myriad forms of what the Chinese called Qi, which I think is more of a process rather than a thing or a noun. It is one of the many forms of Qi that we work with within the body to create health, food Qi, water Qi, air Qi, etc. When we move that movement creates an electrical potential through gravity, etc., and is balanced by slow meditative movement and consciousness.

We've discovered that the universe is not really a place but a story, a story of an irreversible sequence of emergent events what Brian Swimme calls Emergence: an ongoing creative event. Life bursts into existence! How does this relate to Qigong? I think the very act of wanting to create a vibrant and healthy body is in itself a creative emergent event and falls directly in line with this. Creative imaginative consciousness creates good health, what we now know of as the Mind Body Connection. I agree with Brian that this may be the greatest discovery in the history of

the human sciences.

Homeostasis more generally means how the universe maintains it's great achievements but within the body is one of the main effects of proper Qigong practice. It is all of the body's processes in relative working order and balance and how we as mammals maintain our structure. The interactions of the planet as a whole enable all of these processes to take place. The oxygen around the planet and the sunshine we enjoy all sustain life in this dynamic interaction just as the movement of Qigong stretches the body to circulate fluids and nutrients to their required places.

Cataclysm or the destructive process by which new emergence is established is in nature and is a necessary process. I think related to Qigong this is what is going on when we don't feel well. The body is letting us know that there is a necessary state of imbalance that needs to be addressed and allows for the reestablishment of health by way of vibrant creativity. In more advanced Qigong practice we find ways of being highly attuned to this process in order to adjust what is necessary to stay in a state of balance.

What is Synergy? In biology it is all collaborative associations that arrive together to create more success. A great example of this is how protons and neutrons, when brought into collaboration, support each other and can survive for billions of years, whereas they would quickly disintegrate without this relationship. In Qigong this is like our community, in which there is our teacher- student relationship, in which collaboration and mutual respect is honored as well as student-to-student relationships, which should operate along the same lines. This would represent outward relationship and synergy and also promoting internal synergy and relationship between the different systems in the body cooperating and working as a whole.



Transmutation is the next power and to me represents one of the ultimate goals of Qigong. It is closely related to the next power, Transformation, an interconnected and self amplifying dynamic of self transcendence. This is what the Daoists would call becoming an immortal and union with the Dao or ultimate Ground of Pure Awareness.

The power of Integrity and connectivity Is the power of Interrelatedness or could be called Wholeness. In my own practice this is one of the realizations that has struck me the most and is one of the results of diligence of practice. Realizing that each being in the universe is connected in some mysterious or not so mysterious way. Our existence is dependent for example on tiny organisms in the Oceans of this great planet. From the inside this could be viewed as compassion!

And finally we come to Radiance. Even the coldest and tiniest hydrogen atoms are happily giving birth to and releasing photons of light every instant. The universe cannot contain the magnificence it houses. This may be the final goal of all meditative practice, the ability to radiate the light and joy of life through our practice of the Art and Science of Qigong!

Finally, in my opinion, Qigong is really all about blending and using the Powers of the Universe to become more whole as humans!



[Timothy Booth is a Freelance Musician and Composer in Toronto Canada. Timothy Booth has been practicing Qigong for over 15 yrs., is a member of the National Qigong Association and is the Director of Integral Qigong. He currently instructs private and group Qigong classes in Toronto. He has studied with some of the greatest western Masters of Qigong such as Ken Cohen, and Eric Reynolds, direct student of Dr. John Painter. 1998 Certificate of Attainment- Senior Level in Baguazhang-from Emerge Internal Arts Tai Chi and Meditation Centre Student of Jiulong Baguazhang (Martial Art related to Tai Chi) 1999-2011 with Eric Reynolds and Jan Carstoniu MD, FRCPC – Instructors of Jiulong Baguazhang. He can be reached through his blog at <http://integral96.wordpress.com>]

[Tales from the Dao]

Playing With the Fish

by Solala Towler

Zhuangzi often ridiculed the strenuous efforts of his contemporaries to attain immortality by subjecting themselves to various ascetic practices. At the same time, he was concerned about how the human mind—so vast, so mysterious, yet often so muddled, could ever just relax and be at one with the flow of the Dao.

In the following story we see him having a little fun with his friend Huizi about how he, Zhuangzi, could ever know what the fish knew and how could he be sure that he did indeed know it. This, of course, applies to most things that we are sure that we know or understand in this constantly shifting and ever transforming experience we call life.

Zhuangzi and his friend Huizi were ambling about in the Garden of Perpetual Harmony one fine day. Their conversation ranged from how lovely the weather had been lately to the art of compounding herbal preparations for longevity. Huizi was of the opinion that one could not only live a long and healthy life by ingesting these formulas, many of which contained poisonous minerals, but could attain immortality. Zhuangzi, on the other hand, was of the opinion that what he called “all this grasping after immortality” was a waste of time and utter foolishness.

“We are already immortal,” he would say to his friend. “As we are all part of the great unending and constantly transforming Tao, our immortality is assured. There is no need to ingest noxious brews or stretch ourselves into strange and painful contortions in order to attain immortal-

ity. Just live your life in accordance with the Tao and your immortality will manifest of it self”.

But Huizi was not convinced. “If that were true,” he argued, “then every blockhead that lives is really an immortal.”

“Just so,” answered Zhuangzi.

At one point, when they were crossing the Hao river. Which was spanned by an ancient and lovely moon bridge, Zhuangzi said to his friend, “These fish we see below us come out and swim about so leisurely. This is the joy of fishes.”

Huizi turned to him and said, “How do you know what fish enjoy, you’re not a fish!”

“You are not me,” answered Zhuangzi, “so how do you know what I know about the joy of fish?”

Well,” said his friend, somewhat indignantly. “I am not you and so do not know what you know. But, as you are certainly not a fish, there is no possible way that you can know what fish enjoy.”

“Ah, then,” said Zhuangzi, who was letting his fingers play slowly in the water as little fishes came up to nibble them. “Let us go back to the beginning of our conversation. When you asked me ‘How can you know what fish enjoy’ you knew that I knew. The reason I know this is by walking over the river!”

As was the usual case in these kinds of conversations Huizi glared at his friend who stood, languidly moving his fingers in the water and chuckling to himself.



[Solala’s collection of Daoist stories, *Tales From the Tao* as well as his new book, *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* are available by writing to him at solala@abodetao.com or calling 541.345.8854.]

[Energy Healing Through Science & Spirit]

Chi and Emotional Stability: Moderation is the Key

by Sifu Cindy Cicero

Whether you have a Qigong or Chi Energy practice emotional composure is the essential building block for good health.

In the School of Chi Energy Heals we ask our students to build high levels of chi with a good feeling and cool energy. The advantage of orchestrating emotional balance while building chi or bio-energy for this specific type of practice are the direct and positive physiological benefits that occur in the body.

In this article we'll provide three of the leading health benefits from building chi or bio-energy in the body with emotional stability along with some biology-based principles that are behind this type of method.

Starting any type of exercise with the proper attitude especially an exercise that builds high levels of bio-electricity in the body releases a hormonal response that lays a foundation for long lasting behavioral changes.

It is this specific chi building practice of using a good feeling cool energy that releases these stress reducing hormones which are the key to great health. A chemical reaction occurs when we feel free from past or future concerns. It is what we holistically call the mindfulness moments of our life that floods the blood stream with the right hormones that regulates our metabolism and immune system.

A relaxed good feeling attitude with a genuine smile brings out the serotonin, melatonin, dopamine and cortisol hormones in the right mix for an anti-inflammatory environment for the body to enjoy.

Reference (<http://www.chienergyheals.com/category/mind-right/>)

As the chi practitioner builds up the bio-energy in the nerve fibers with these types of hormones, the body automatically slows down the aging process, increases energy levels and fortifies great emotional habits.

The physiological changes all come about with right mind intent. How we move our mind or act our way into the feelings of wellbeing determines what chemical reactions our body is going to produce. Our mind's intent should be to build chi that invokes a moderation of emotional content. Building up bio-energy in the nerve fibers in this way creates a wellbeing feeling that keeps reproduces these good hormones in a balanced amount.

This moderation is the key to a sound and healthy outcome for a chi practitioner's mind and body. A sound mind and body has the benefit of having plenty of reserves to handle peak loads of stress when called upon. Stress does not build up in the body due to the reserves of Natural Killer and T-cells. It is scientifically proven that only when a person maintains this good feeling mood that NK cells are present and patrolling in the body on the offense before any trouble builds from high amounts of stress.

(Reference: <http://www.chienergyheals.com/category/chi-health-and-longevity/>)

Chi Energy Heals practitioners are always on their game when following the rules of moderation. We at the School of Chi Energy Heals have found that bio-energy is best developed by maintaining emotional stability for moderation is the key.



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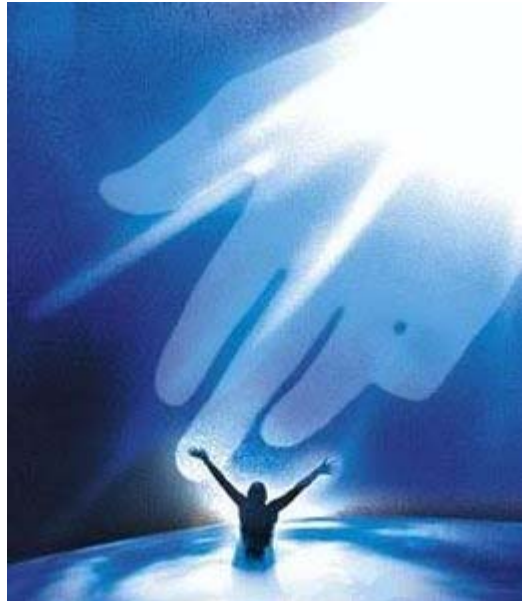
[Soul Salon]

10 Spiritual Secrets to Productivity

Rena Reese

From CEO's to entrepreneurs and entertainers to parents all over the globe, we are constantly in search of ways to boost productivity. To put it simply, we want to get more done each day. For some this goal is rooted in the desire for greater abundance while for others, productivity is the gate-keeper to recreation. It is a means to an end and we are hungry for both the freedom and prosperity that productivity provides. The problem with the “work harder and longer” approach is that it often yields the unattractive side-effects of exhaustion, stress and a lop-sided life. Adopting a spiritual approach to productivity may actually facilitate greater productivity and energize us more quickly than downing a can of Red Bull.

The terms “spiritual” and “productivity” seem to contradict each other. One emphasizes our non-physical nature while the other is rooted in mastering the work of the physical world. Allowing these terms to work together in our lives creates the much-needed synergy we desire to move through life with energy and purpose. This is the force that magically has us *generating inspired ideas* and then gives us the very energy we need to *implement* those gems. When “being” works with “doing”, we allow a dynamic coupling which results in a do-be-do-be-do that is better than anything Frank Sinatra ever crooned. This is the essence of our human experience.



If you are clear on your values and vision, your work is plugged into a limitless energy source. Meaningful priorities will illuminate your path and keep you from mindlessly traveling up a side street that dead-ends in inefficiency. Honoring your values and intentionally stepping toward a clear vision are two forces that fuel our ability and desire to “do”. This premise is simply our “square one” or beginning point, and encourages us to go further.

Entertain these suggestions to tweak your productivity:

Delegate: If during a storm a tree fell on your garage, crushing both your roof and car, you would likely get on the phone to round-up support for your desired outcome and arrange necessary clean-up and repair. You would be quite clear on your vision and you would enlist the help of your insurance company, a tree-cutting service, a roofer, and a towing company. It would be ludicrous to attempt to do each of these on your own. And so it goes with your life and work. When you delegate effectively you allow people with talents and gifts different from yours to handle things you don't have time to do, you dislike doing, or you are less than efficient at doing.

Move your Body: We are quite good at engaging our brains in a lively mental workout, but may overlook the much-needed workout for the heart. On a spiritual level, adequate exercise is critical if you want both the mind and the heart engaged in all of your pursuits.

Substitute Dynamism for Balance: Life-balance is overrated and just a notch above death. Call up a memory when you used a balancing scale back in school. When the scales were balanced, there was complete stillness. Life does not play out like that for most of us. We are constantly allowing an ebb in one area of life, so it can flow to another when needed. Embrace the idea that there are times your family will need you most, a project will be calling out for extra time or your physical body will send you signals that it is time for a vacation, and you will have to adjust. That is real life dynamism.

Tap your contacts and connections as resources: There are people on your contact's list right now that have done what you want to do. Even if their business is different, their goals are varied and personal life the polar opposite of yours; use these contacts. Use *who you know* to glean guidance, learn shortcuts and point you to resources that would otherwise take you years to discover. Query your contacts to learn everything from how to form a charitable foundation to how to create an ebook. There is an untapped reservoir of information (and shortcuts) available to you for the asking.

Sleep: Countless research studies confirm that 6-8 hours of sleep is necessary for your body and mind to be it's absolute best. In order to *be your best*, to *do your best* and to *produce your best*, adequate rest is key.

Capture Inspiration: Mini-tape recorders and pocket journals are terrific tools to record divine nudges that will advance your work, goals, and highest good. Keep a specific journal that you have designated for ideas, intuitive hunches and insights. Often these flashes of clarity will come to us while settling for bed, waiting at a red light, or walking the dog. Oftentimes these divine nuggets fade away quicker than they arrive, but not if they are quickly captured and recorded so they may be acted on in the future.



Journal: Make it a practice each evening to write the priority tasks for the following day. Meticulous planning helps edge out the distractions that take us further from our desired daily goals. Be mindful that even with the best plans there is always a place for flexibility and intuition when implementing our daily priority tasks. You may decide to reschedule the dinner meeting after work and get a much-needed massage instead.

Nutrition: Food is spiritual. In a spiritual sense, food is alive and made of atoms just as you are—and when it's ingested, those atoms join the atoms that make up y-o-u. Be vigilant with what you allow to merge with your physical body.

Believe in the power of small things: Many years ago an American Airlines flight attendant noticed that most first-class customers did not eat the olive on the salad offered to them on flights. When she told the higher-ups, they decided to omit the olives from the salads. Over the course of just one year they saved over a half a million dollars from that small adjustment. Small things add up. If you allocate a little time each day to further a desired outcome, know that the cumulative effect could have massive results over time.

Habits: We are creatures that find comfort in our habits. This is good thing if we are talking about going for an early morning jog each day, but sometimes our habits become detrimental and even pointless. How many people hold a Monday afternoon meeting, not because there was something important to discuss, but simply because it was Monday? When deciding which habits to nix and which to continue, consider asking this one simple question: "Does this habit make me stronger and support my values and goals?" When you ask this question, you'll find your true north is clearly marked.



Productivity comes from the cumulative choices we make each day and not just the obvious decision to sit at your desk, build relationships, engage in meetings and check off the to-do list. Who you are *being* is weaved into all it is that you are *doing* every day. Be mindful that, as Mahatma Gandhi said, "There is more to life than just increasing its speed."



[Rena M. Reese is the founder of Soul Salon International, an inspirational multimedia company which offers coaching and consulting, web-design, publishing support, and fundraising opportunities for individuals and groups. She is the author of several inspirational titles, a professional speaker and coach as well as the host of a weekly [radio program, The Soul Salon](#). Please visit www.SoulSalonInternational.com and connect with her on Twitter @TheSoulSalon and [facebook](#) too.]

[Food as Medicine]

Seasonal Harmony

by Ellasara Kling

An axiom of Chinese medicine is: ***Prevention is the best cure***. Part of prevention is adapting a healthy lifestyle that includes rest, exercise, and eating appropriately. Now that the warm weather is here, cold drinks and foods are readily available at almost all times. We ingest them without a thought about what messages our bodies are receiving from these icy foods and drinks.

The Stomach's natural internal temperature is slightly higher than the rest of our body and this hollow organ acts as if it were a soup pot – cauldron. In its way, it “cooks” the food and drink we send to it. It loves warm things that is its nature. But when we give it cold foods especially in excess, it gets the message to “stop” its activity. Cold has the effect of causing constriction. Chinese medicine informs us that it can stop or slow down the flow of Qi in the body. When we drink an icy liquid, eat a raw cold salad (for example) we give our stomach the message to stop its activity, while simultaneously giving it work to do – digest the cold liquid or cold solid food. These are actions that are not consistent with cooperating with our body's energy systems and can weaken them.



Following Five Element Theory, the relationship between the Spleen/Stomach and the other energy systems is actually quite beautiful and complex. For now, let's take a small look at what might occur when we weaken our Spleen/Stomach energy system through too much cold. One possible effect is to open the door for the Liver/Gall Bladder to over control the Stomach/Spleen. This over control could result in Qi deficiency in the stomach, which, according to Chinese medicine, would have a variety of digestive symptoms including, a dull pain in the stomach, bloating, cold hands/feet, migraine headaches across the front of the forehead, and weight problems as some possibilities. There are many different patterns that can emerge from weakened Stomach Qi and many different possible causes of this energy deficiency. Too many cold foods/drinks could inhibit your stomach's function by weakening its energy and causing other subsidiary problems/symptoms, some of which, such as weight gain, may seem unrelated. We always have to go back to what is the message that we are giving our body with what we are eating and what is the effect of that message.

Another effect of the excessive cold food/drink message is that it causes the body to use more of its Qi to overcome the coldness. Consequently, Qi that could be used for building and saving energy is diverted to strengthening the Stomach/Spleen system.

In the recipe section are salads of a different type that are eaten at room temperature and made from cooked vegetables. Give it a try, make up your own combinations, and have fun!

Eat Seasonal, Buy Local, Think Global!

EARLY SUMMER FOODS:

Some Foods that are harmonious with Early Summer include: apricot, beet, bitter melon, black coffee, broccoli, celery, coffee, cucumber, dark, unsweetened chocolate, escarole, ginger, job's tears, lettuces such as boston, chicory, endive & romaine, lemon balm, loquat, lotus root, lotus seed, mulberries, mung bean, okra, peach, peppermint, persimmons, pumpkin, radishes, red lentils, red peppers, red plums, rhubarb, soy beans, spinach, strawberry, summer squashes, tamarind, teas, tomato, water chestnuts, watermelon, Chinese yam, zucchini, and others.

RECIPES:

With all cooked salads, be careful not to overcook the vegetables. You want them to maintain some “bite” and be a bright color. I have purposely left out exact quantities in these salads so you can proportion them to your own tastes.

Broccoli/Beet Salad

Most people like broccoli florets, but here’s something to do with the often less popular stalks. Although there are a number of steps in creating this salad, they are not all that time consuming. Cooking the beets takes the longest and can be done the night before.

Ingredients

Broccoli stalks
Carrot
Beets
Spinach
Scallion/garlic
Water chestnut and/or apple
Toasted walnuts
Lemon juice
Walnut oil (or another light weight oil)
Salt/pepper



Directions:

Cook peeled beets thoroughly and let cool.

Peel the woody exterior (if any) from your broccoli stalks and julienne them into long matchsticks

Cut carrot into julienned strips as well (I like a proportion of 2xs the amount of broccoli to carrot).

Steam the broccoli and carrot strips till bright in color and set aside to cool.

Steam (or sauté the spinach with a little garlic and a little scallion whites) until it wilts and set aside to cool (this is going to be used as a “bed” for the other vegetables).

Cut the beets into small pieces; cut the water chestnuts and/or apples into small pieces (if using apples put them in lemon water so they do not turn brown while waiting to be “salad”).

Mix lemon juice, oil, salt and pepper together into a light vinaigrette.

Place the spinach on your serving platter so that it covers the plate in a thin layer.

Place the carrot broccoli mixture on the plate so that it forms a well and the “walls” do not cover the spinach completely. Mix the beets and water chestnuts and/or apples together and place them inside the well.

Sprinkle the toasted walnuts over the salad and add drizzles of your dressing across the platter.

This salad is served at room temperature.

Squash and Tomato Salad with Sesame Soy Vinaigrette.

Ingredients

Zucchini, summer squash, green or yellow patty pan squashes
Tomato (proportionately about ½ the amount of tomato to squash)
Sesame seeds - toasted
Arugula
Lemon juice and/or rice wine vinegar
Sesame oil



Soy Sauce
Worcester sauce
Tabasco or hot sauce - optional
Ground pepper

Directions

Cut into quarters lengthwise and then into 1-1/2" wedges for zucchini and summer squash and for patty pan squashes, cut in half horizontally and then into wedges.

Steam in salted water until just "fork tender" the color will be bright. Set aside to cool.

While the squashes are cooking, cut your tomato(s) into wedges (about 6-8 for the average tomato).

Scatter arugula on your serving platter, plate the squashes and tomato wedges over the arugula —you will have a lovely plate of bright red, green and yellow.

Sprinkle the sesame seeds lightly over the vegetables.

Mix together the lemon juice and/or vinegar, sesame oil, soy sauce, a "hit" of Worcester sauce, ground pepper – a hit of hot sauce is totally optional – and drizzle your dressing over the salad.

While most people have the ratio of tart to oil down for their own tastes, generally speaking a good proportion is 2xs as much oil to vinegar. Because Sesame oil tends to be a strong flavor, you might want to "cut it" with a light oil such as grapeseed which will not change the flavor but will soften the sesame oil from becoming overwhelming.

This is a very cooling, palate pleasing and different way to serve watermelon on those hot days of summer that are coming up.

Watermelon Salsa

Ingredients

6 cups 1-1/2" cubes of watermelon – leave a bit of rind on some of the pieces.

1/4 cup grated fresh ginger

1 cup fresh lemon juice

1 cup diced cilantro leaves (or flat Italian parsley leaves)

1/2 cup thinly sliced scallion whites only

1 tsp salt

Directions

Mix all the ingredients except the watermelon together. Pour over the watermelon and toss gently so that all the pieces have had some "dressing" on them. You can adjust the proportions of the dressing to your own preference.



Beet soup w/cucumber is very refreshing on a hot summer day as well as easy and quick to make.

Beet Soup:

Ingredients

Two cups grated or julienne beets

1-1/2 -2 quarts water

1 bay leaf

A pinch sea salt

Juice of a lime or lemon

Cucumber slices (cool)

A few sprigs of dill (dispersed qi)

Directions

Cook peeled beets in the water with the bay leaf and salt until the beets are tender. Let the beets cool, grate, dice or julienne. Return to the water.

Add the lime juice – or lemon if you prefer –

Decorate with cucumber slices and a sprig of dill

Serve warm or at room temperature.

TEAS:

Green tea is cooling in its nature and therefore appropriate for hot summer days to feel relief from the hot weather. With chrysanthemum blossoms or mint leaves added to your tea, the flavor becomes even more enjoyable and the brew has a deeper cooling effect. Remember to drink your tea warm – never iced!

**Health Topic Healthful Eating Guidelines**

Eat foods that are natural to the season – Seasonal eating is in tune with the rhythm of Nature where you are and therefore, in harmony with your body's needs at that time of year. For example, strawberries are not a winter fruit, even if they are imported from South America in January. Although perfectly splendid, strawberries (continuing with this example) are cooling in nature and in the Winter, the body needs warming foods.

As much as possible, eat "local" foods that have grown in your region – they have the energy of your area, are bound to be seasonally appropriate, are picked when ripe and are fresher.

Try to have each of the five tastes throughout your day, if not at each meal – This will help balance your food choices and nourish your entire system, not just a selected part.

Avoid late meals so as to not interfere with liver/gallbladder times of the night (11pm-3am). This will assist in having a good night's sleep, which is incredibly important for good health.

Avoid heavily processed foods – Processed foods are usually denatured and filled with chemicals. Read labels and if you do not know what the ingredients are, maybe they are not really food.

Avoid cold liquids and foods – the stomach likes warm foods as discussed above in the first paragraph of this article.

Eat primarily cooked foods – This will aid the digestive process and save energy.

Choose a pleasant place to eat – It relaxes the mind and body and thereby aids the digestive process. It makes meal breaks a special part of your day, not just another activity to "get through".

Treat yourself as if you were a guest in your home – This helps to add to slowing down and enjoying one's meal and eating in a pleasant environment. Perhaps, especially for people who often eat alone, this idea can add new dimensions to your meals.

Eat slowly – chew your food carefully – As my mother often repeated: "Your stomach doesn't have teeth." The stomach likes its food to be well macerated so it can more easily "cook" it.

Eat until 70% full – Among other things, this leaves energy for activities other than digestion. If you find that you are tired or sleepy after meals, this could help reverse that effect.

Eat a quality breakfast, a large lunch, and a light dinner – Most of us are most active in the mornings and afternoons and "wind down" as evening approaches. The meridian system is set up for this kind of cycle, not the reverse of light breakfast and heavy dinner.

Don't eat and work/ watch TV at the same time. When we eat our attention needs to be on our food, not split to the stress of work or the environment of TV dramas for example.

Avoid nomadic eating – eating your meal(s) while driving or walking. Sit and Savor! No matter how simple your meal, appreciate it.

Listen to your body – learn to follow your intuition when it comes to choosing foods.

Wishing you good health! Remember to smile at all things.



Following the threads of her personal tapestry, Ellasara, a long-time student of Master Nan Lu, weaves her life around the exploration and sharing of self-healing through a variety of modalities, primarily focusing on food, common herbal plants, Qigong Meridian Therapy and Qigong for Women's Health. For comments, questions, consultations, ellasara00@gmail.com





Yang Sheng

Cultivating Qi for Body, Mind & Spirit

Yang Sheng (Nurturing Life), is an E-magazine and a network for all practitioners of mind-body exercises, health/happiness seekers, and spiritual cultivators. It promotes philosophy and methods of self-healing, positive mind and health preservation, and shares knowledge and experiences with those who are interested in the subjects and their applications in everyday life. Your contribution, participation and suggestions are truly appreciated. **We welcome new columnists to join our editorial team to work toward the same goals!**

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- To build up a virtual community for all qigong, taiji, yoga, reiki, meditation practitioners, and other spiritual cultivators. To share experience and knowledge, to support each other's practice, and to illuminate higher spirituality.
- To create a network and platform for those who are seeking health, happiness, longevity and harmony in life through their own effort, sharing and exploration.
- To promote self-healing, self-empowerment and positive mind power through feasible daily practice and effective clinical applications.