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Yang-Sheng

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WHAT IS YIN YANG

- Chinese Astrology:
Green (Wood) Horse Year
- Yin and Yang: Unify to Create Daily Orgasm
- Can You Grasp the Sparrow's Tail?
- Mind-Body Medicine Research



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Cultivate Qi for Body, Mind & Spirit

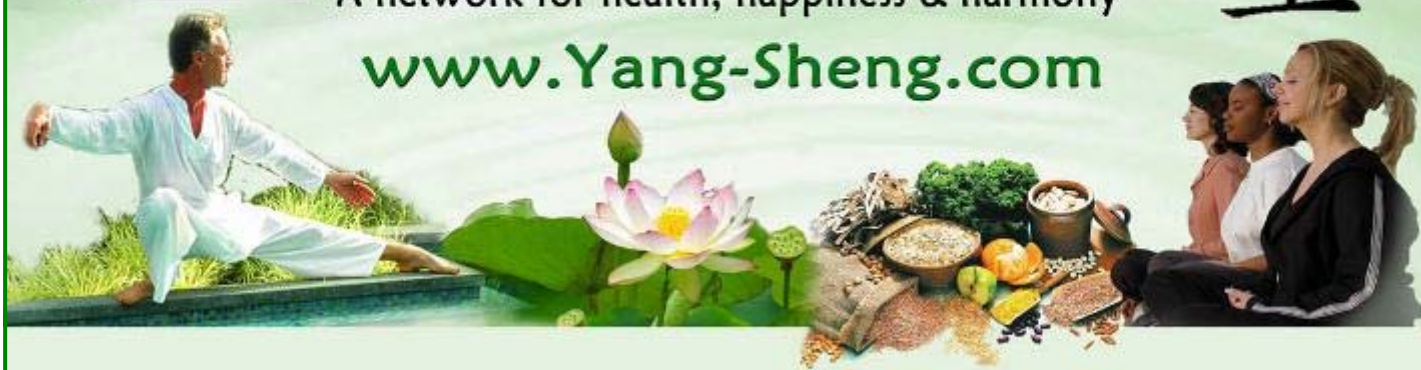
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Your participation, contribution, sharing and feedback are truly appreciated.



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From the Editor 编者的话



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the March/April issue of Yang Sheng! If Spring has not yet visited your area, I'm sure it will soon! Members of our Yang Sheng staff live all over the United States (with one in China!), and our Spring experiences so far are as diverse as we are: We have everything from "four feet of snow still covering our garden" to "it was sunny and seventy degrees here yesterday!"

Our theme this month is Yin-Yang, and our columnists share many wonderful insights into cycles, change, and movement.

Our feature this month is **What is Yin Yang** by Casey Kochmer. He opens with a **starting definition**: The nature of change, balanced as two halves of a whole. However, a

clearer understanding of Yin and Yang requires looking back into the Tao which can be considered as the fundamental absolute.

Another interesting theme article is **Yin, Yang, and Work Life Balance** by Peter Morgan. These two energies cause everything to happen. Yang is the masculine principle, and evokes words like active, creative and hard. Yin is the feminine: passive, receptive and soft. The key belief is that one cannot exist without the other!



As always, **Early Summer – Blossoming**, our Seasonal Harmony author Ellasara Kling leads us into harmony and balance with the season through Five Element Theory of Chinese Medicine and mouth-watering recipes for keeping cool in the heat of summer: Watermelon-ginger juice, Yellow Squash/Red Pepper Congee, and Dandelion/Sweet Potato Soup, to name just a few!

We open with an astrological look at the explosive wood and fire energies of 2014 as explained by Michael Winn in **Chinese Astrology: Green (Wood) Horse Year**



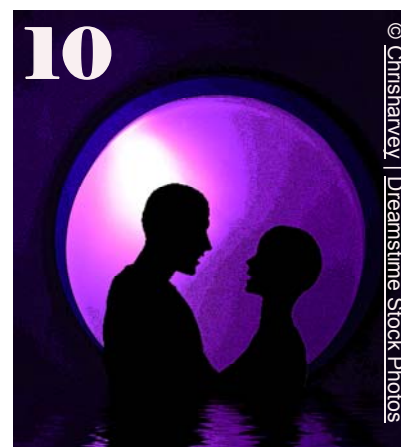
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Our Dancing Doc, Sharon Montes takes us to new heights in **Yin and Yang: Unify to Create Daily Orgasm**, revealing that “orgasm offers a perfect model of yin/yang and Tao. Orgasm offers the physical experience of unity, although it is the result of a balance of duality.”

You Taiji and Qigong lovers will enjoy two columns! In **Can You Grasp The Sparrow's Tail?**, Bob McBrien and Natasha Shangold show how taiji is not only about movement, but also about stillness; and Eric Borreson, in **Manifesting Yin and Yang in Taiji**, explains how Wuji, neutral emptiness and separates into the yin and yang as you begin to move.

We have a sweet poem, [Yin Yang You](#) by frequent columnist Raven Cohan, and the fascinating article **The Chakras Part One: How the Rainbow Colors came to be** by Cindy Cicero.



For the scientific-minded, there are excellent columns by Marty Eisen PhD on **The Divergent or Distinct Meridians** which can be used as a first approach to acute problems before surgical or pharmaceutical therapies are initiated, as an adjunct to the conventional treatment or after the medical treatment has failed, and **Research Updates** compiled by Kevin W Chen PhD revealing study results on the benefits of meditation, qigong, tai chi, taiji, and yoga on pain management, creativity stimulation, memory, and the ability to concentrate among other topics.

Many blessings,

Michelle Wood

The Editor-in-Chief



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Chinese Astrology: Green (Wood) Horse Year

by Michael Winn



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Taoist Living Astrology vs. Abstract Mental Astrology

My top focus is on HOW TO CONNECT TO HORSE ENERGY this year. Most modern astrology has devolved into an abstract mental exercise. I myself didn't take it seriously until I re-read a Chinese astrology reading done before Joyce and I got married, and realized, 20 years later, how incredibly accurate it was. Until then, astrology for me was "interesting mental garbage in/ interesting mental garbage out." Readings for most people are like New Year resolutions: we think about

it for a day or two, and then forget it as life's real demands overwhelm our abstract ideas or wishes about Life.

I now take very seriously the Taoist art and science of Living Astrology, which preserves the lost initiatic roots of inner alchemy. It gives a PRACTICAL way to interact with the planetary cycles that link our personal Energy Body to the Cosmic Energy Body of the stars. What is beyond the Zodiac is what underpins all astrology and karmic patterns - the great Central Sun of Oneness and pure love (called Tai Yi by Taoists).

Let me emphasize the Independent nature of horse types. In China, Fire Horse female babies were often killed because they were considered too independent and so unmanageable (by men) as to be un-marriageable. I valued my former wife Joyce's high level of independence, so I have a different cultural perspective than the Chinese. My current wife is equally independent. When astrology systems cross borders, they must adapt to new cultural values.

Transition from Water Snake to Wood Horse Year is BIG!

The Lunar calendar Chinese New Year (2nd new moon after Winter Solstice) starts Jan. 31 in China, and runs through Feb. 18, 2015. The Solar calendar New Year starts on Feb. 4, 2014 and runs to Feb. 4, 2015. There is a 4-day cusp between Jan. 31 and Feb. 4 where newborns may have qualities from both the departing Black Female Water Snake and the arriving Green Male Wood Horse. I recommend doing your own "welcome in Horse qigong ceremony" during the first week of the New Year to capture the billions of Asians charging it up emotionally with their festivities.

Horses are skittish about Snakes, so this cusp period could be a delicate transition period for some - and possibly for the planet. My wife Jem and I got a very strong omen about this just before we did our first set of "Welcome Horse Ener-

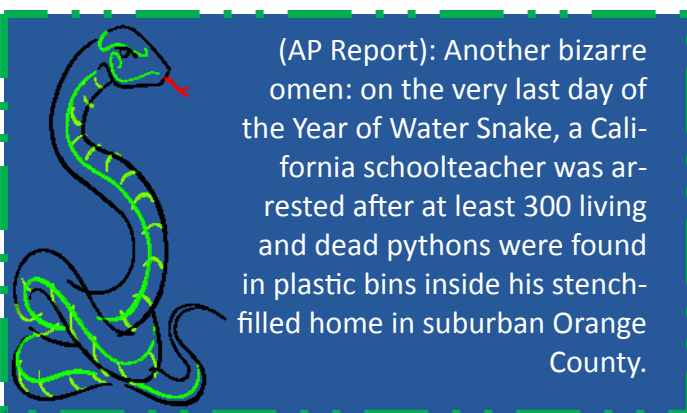
gy" qigong ceremonies last night. Within two minutes we each broke a favorite water vessel - an antique ceramic tea cup and a glass tea decanter with a lovely yin-yang symbol on it.

Were these two rare household accidents happening at random, or an omen of how the Male Yang Wood Horse Year is literally busting out of the Yin Water Snake Year container? By Tao theory of synchronicity, there are NO ACCIDENTS. As an omen, it may portend that people will be shocked by how powerful and rapid changes coming this year will "break" the comfortable patterns of their old life.

The Big Picture Astrologically

The Female Water Snake Year 2013 was about digging up deep unconscious personal patterns and bringing them into the Light so they can be shed, like an old skin, by our wise inner Snake. We've been in a re-boot and cleanup pattern for the first six Animals of the Chinese zodiac. The Yang Water Dragon 2012 year was about reshaping our personal and collective Mythic Self. The Wood Horse of 2014, number 7 Animal in this 12-year cycle, is about kick-starting the second half of the cycle into action.

I used the Water Snake Year to explore the roots of the Healing Tao lineage on Mt. Changbai, a lake-filled active volcano in China. If you missed that story, I feel its one of the most important I wrote this year: <http://www.healingtaousa.com/cgi-bin/articles.pl?rm=mode2&articleid=168>



Mobilize your Will to Ride Your Inner Horse

This Yang Wood Horse Year promises to give us a yang boost in manifesting our newly cleansed selves - BUT ONLY IF WE CHOOSE TO ALIGN WITH THAT POTENTIAL. Nothing is automatic

Qi Cultivation & Dao 炼气与道

within these large cycles of Nature. People struggle against the flow of nature all the time, and suffer for it. The ultimate result is often disease, unhappiness, poverty, divorce, etc. All personal evolution requires exercising our free will, love, and imagination. That's called "embracing life and responding to it creatively, in the Present Moment."

The essence of Taoist self-cultivation is to harmonize with the broader cycles of change and put its Qi (chi) to work **within** our body and our personal destiny. We can ground the macro-cosmic Qi cycles with qigong and dynamic Taoist meditation like the Micro-cosmic Orbit. You don't have to be born in the Year of the Horse to benefit from it - you can tune in and CAPTURE the creative horse qualities through your intent and energetic practice. Horse Qi is "in the air" this year - just start breathing it in.

The best qigong ceremonies for capturing these large planetary energies involve facing all four cardinal horizontal directions and connecting that Qi into our body's core channel. This in turn aligns our worldly outer life with the vertical Heaven-Earth spiritual axis. I rely on three qigong forms that best meet this criteria: **Primordial Tai Chi** (aka Wu Ji Gong), **Deep Healing Qigong**, and **Shamanic Big Dipper 7-Star Stepping Qigong**. The first two are available on DVD, the last one is currently only taught to those who come on my China Dream Trip. Each works a little differently. There is an acquired skill to focus the Qi they gather to accelerate your evolution.

12 Animals = Chi Clock in Mother Earth's Body

Chinese medicine has a 12-hour "Chi Clock" that describes the progression of Qi flow through the 12 major vital organ and bowel meridians of the body. (I'm interchanging Chi and Qi to get



readers used to the fact they are identical in meaning and pronunciation). The Chi Clock works like a snake swallowing and digesting a meal - there is a large "lump" of expanded energy that moves every two hours from organ to organ. Think of the 12 Animals of the Chinese zodiac as the 12 organs of Mother Earth's planetary body. This makes the animal zodiac - the 12 Earthly Branches - into the meridians of the planetary "chi clock." Earth is just beginning to put its inner mouth around the Horse lump.

Every 12 years Mother Earth cycles through 12 animal-organ energies, one per year. Now we have Horse energy for an entire year. To make sure the energies are well digested, and keep our "energetic diet" varied and interesting, the Tao rotates the Five Element/5 Phase Qi from Heaven through the 12 Animal cycle FIVE times. 12 Animal Years x 5 elements = 60 year cycle. This gives each of the 12 animals a chance to experience all five elements (five, earth, gold, water, wood). This is THE operating system of Nature, just like your computer has an operating system. This natural system ensures that change (= evolution) is balanced and harmonious.

If you can sense the Horse energy as the vital organ Qi from Mother Earth, it makes it more tangible. When I called in the Horse Qi during my "welcoming the New Year qigong ceremony", I knew exactly where it is coming from and its function in the planetary psyche. In 2014, the "yang" or male Qi and the Wood element are like flavors from Heaven that color the Horse-earthly Qi. This is a big energetic "meal" to eat, and we'll be digesting it all year long. But the key is to start inviting the Horse Qi into your qigong practice. Your yang wood qi will gradually increase.

I'm feeling this Yang Male Wood Horse Qi in 2014 is essentially a Fire Horse on Steroids. Horse is naturally excitable, due to its dominant Fire element. Horse hour is high noon in the human body daily chi clock, the time of greatest fire. The Horse month is June in the planetary chi clock - a time of high heat and the longest day. When you feed a fire-horse Wood-element fuel, it is like pouring gasoline on a flame. Then you add Yang/male Qi into the mix, and it becomes even more volatile due to its extreme expansiveness.

So that's why I theme this Yang Male Green Wood Horse as the Year of Explosive Creativity. Horse is considered the most yang of all 12 animals. It's a fire horse stoked up on steroids (Wood element) and Yang force as "speed" (the street drug). That makes for huge potential - both positive and destructive. In 1954, during the last Wood Horse Year, they exploded the first atomic bomb above ground on the Bikini Atoll. In 2014, it could be the global economy or some major government that blows up.

The 2014 horse energy is amplified by the galactic cycle that we are in, just two years shy of finishing our 36 year journey across the dark rift of the Milky Way's Galactic Center that began in 1980. That empowers this Creative Horse energy with super-charged potential on a collective scale.



Michael Winn is the founder of Healing Tao University with 30 Tao summer retreats in Asheville, NC and is the past President of the National Qigong Association. Michael has over 30 years experience in

Taoist arts and leads an annual China Dream Trip. He has co-authored 7 books with Mantak Chia, and is also the author of 10 Qigong and Inner Alchemy home study courses, as well as a free e-book, **Way of the Inner Smile**. All are available on www.HealingTaoUSA.com or call: 888-999-0555.



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Yin and Yang: Unify to Create Daily Orgasm

by Sharon Montes, MD

I had my first orgasm when I was 10 years old. Over 40 years later, the vivid memory of the joy of that experience still burns bright.

As you read these words, what vision comes to mind? Was I in bed? Making love with someone? Practicing masturbation? Actually, I was alone walking on a dirt road in northern Michigan. Under a deep blue summer sky, surrounded by grass, bushes and trees, feet crunching on the gravel, my body filled with light. I sensed connection with all that was around me, profound peace and the rightness of everything. I truly was the bridge between heaven and earth. A few weeks ago, after remembering this experience, I recommitted to experiencing daily orgasm. Are you experiencing daily orgasm?

You may say, "WAIT! Your childhood experience may be cosmic consciousness but that was not an orgasm." I reply, "Given many decades of life experience since that walk in the woods, it was more memorable and consciousness-expanding than many of the orgasms I experienced due to genital stimulation." We then could continue this conversation with you asking, "How is orgasm at all related to yin and yang?" I clarify, "orgasm offers a perfect model of yin/yang and Tao. Orgasm offers the physical experience of unity, although it is the result of a balance of duality. Genital-stimulated orgasm results after intense sympathetic activity (the yang-like aspect of our nervous system) followed by a flood of parasympathetic activity (the yin-like aspect of our nervous system)."

Let's look at the experience achieved during orgasm. I once heard orgasm defined as "the

space between our thoughts.” Stepping back from believing that genital stimulation is the only way to experience certain states of awareness allows us greater freedom. People around the world spend thousands of waking hours thinking about, worrying about, and craving orgasm, and most think genital stimulation is the only path to achieving this type of consciousness. I propose that meditation, laughter, physical activity and many other experiences also offer ways to achieve this state of being. Orgasmic consciousness is an important reminder of the unity that saturates duality.



The Yin/Yang symbol is an important reminder of unity in the presence of duality. The reality of dualism permeates our world. Our physical body effectively models duality in structure and movement – right and left; front and back; top and bottom. Our thoughts reflect duality – good and bad; right and wrong. At the same time we are also an expression of unity.

Thirty years of marriage provided me with many opportunities to see unity in the presence of duality. For many years I was married to a man that saw the world 180 degrees differently than I did. For the first several years of our marriage, this situation caused a great deal of stress. I held a **DEFINITE** preference for my world view. Actual-

ly, I **LOVED** my world view and was very attached to the belief that it was the correct world view. My husband was equally attached to his world view and we wasted much time and energy working to convince the other of the correctness of our individual perspectives. One day while drinking a cup of tea I had an insight that promoted peace. It occurred to me that from the table level I saw the smooth side of the cup, while my husband saw the handle. In contrast, from above I was able to see the entire cup. That third perspective of the cup viewed from above, unified the two polarized views.

A new writer friend from Argentina recently shared a lovely perspective of global unity. (Hurray for Skype, a lovely unifying technology.) She is consulting for a group of people from Ecuador. Her employers are clear that the earth's equator is a region that unites, rather than divides, two halves of the world. As a child, I was taught to see that line on the globe as a division. I enjoyed this perspective of unification rather than polarity. Five times a month, I share a meditation for world peace with this writer and others who live in North and South America. I love that in mind and action we are bridging the hemispheres, uniting our focus and will towards promoting world peace.



How is your attachment to your judgment and point of view showing up today?

How are you dancing with the concept of opposites?

Of polarity?

What inner question, technique, process, inner question gets you to a unifying perspective?

To a daily mind expanding embodiment of light?

To your daily orgasm?

The Dancing Doc 舞医

Sometimes it is as easy as a breath. Sometimes it is as easy as the choice of a word ... "yes, AND!"

**Right or wrong * Good or bad *
Rich or poor * Us or them * East and West**

compared with

**Right and wrong * Good and bad *
Rich and poor * Us and them**

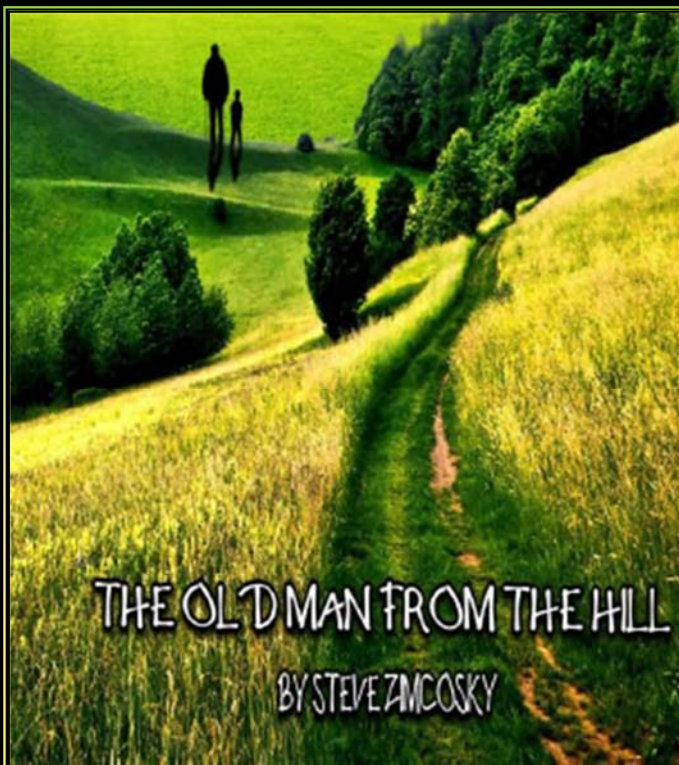
Sometimes the embodiment of unity in a deep orgasmic way requires more effort – Dancing, using breath to move energy up and down my axis. All I know is that for now my commitment to experience daily orgasm is **FUN!** I wonder if we could start a new health movement ... "an orgasm a day keeps the doctor away."

Wishing you a daily orgasm - an embodied experience of unity.



Sharon Montes, M.D. – practiced and taught family medicine in medical schools for 17 years. Former medical director of University of Maryland Center for Integrative Medicine, Dr. Sharon Montes is currently living in Loveland,

Colorado, joyfully dancing with 10,000 things and starting a Lifestyle Medicine practice. Her email is thedancing-doc@gmail.com, her Skype ID is "livingjoynow" and her blog site is <http://>



Available at Amazon, Kindle and Barnes and Noble

The Old Man From The Hill (Lessons in Qigong and Tai Chi) by Steve Zimcosky. The story of a young boy who is sent to spend the summer with his grandparents in the small town of Smock, Pennsylvania due to health reasons. A chance encounter with an old Chinese man leads him to learn the ancient Chinese health exercises of Qigong and Tai Chi. As he learns these exercises he finds that his health and his life is changing for the better and the encounter is the beginning of what would be a life long friendship.

This book is a sweet story told from the eyes of a ten year old who discovers with wonderment the virtues of Qigong.
– Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S.

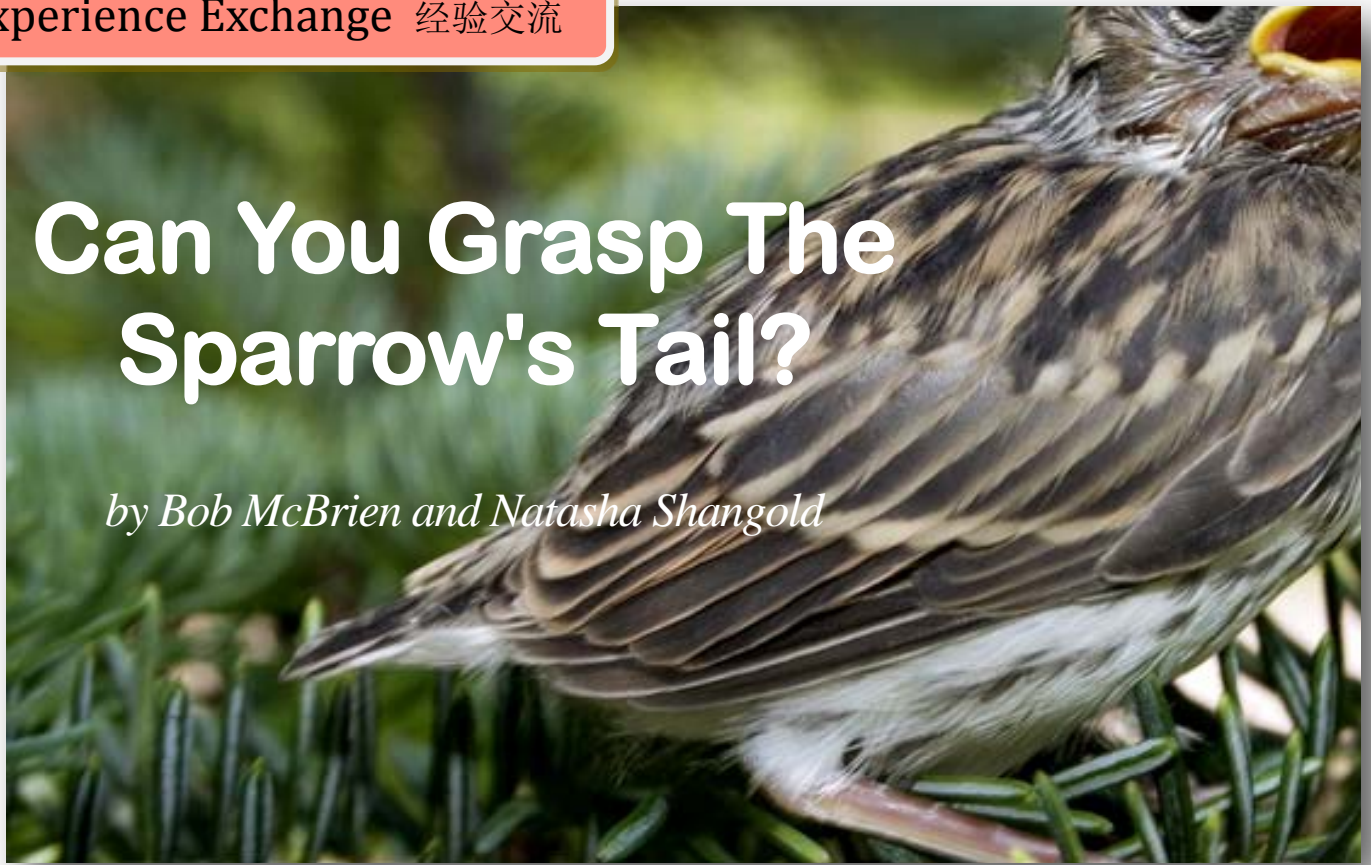
This really needs to be shared with a wide audience. It is appropriate for both adults and younger folks. There is a great deal of wisdom shared through the book but in a very non-threatening and clear way.
– Brother Bernard Seif, SMC, Ed. D, DNM

Your book is a wonderful short read that inspires the layperson to seek out and explore these wonderful exercises of old for health and rejuvenation of mind and body.
– Ted Cibik, Ph.D., ND, DMQ (China), CHFS

Great Qigong lessons in a coming of age story for all ages.
– Richard Leirer

Can You Grasp The Sparrow's Tail?

by Bob McBrien and Natasha Shangold



When tai chi chuan students learn and practice "Grasp the Sparrow's Tail" (also called "Grasp Bird's Tail"), they learn that the four movements are expressions of: ward off (peng), roll back (lu), press (ji) and push (an) (1). The importance of these movements is illustrated by Wong Kiew Kit 2. Wong reports that Yang Lu Chan, the patriarch of Yang-style Tai Chi Chuan, after defeating all the masters he met, earned the title, Yang the Ever Victorious. According to Master Wong, Yang Lu Chan used "**Grasp the Sparrow's Tail**" as his principal move.

Master Wong describes the postures as the "four primary Tai Chi Chuan hand movements" (2) (p.56). As students flow through the four movements, Master Wong explains how the force starts at the foot, is controlled by the waist, expressed at the hands, and is executed from the spine. This delivery of force is executed with "full mindfulness" (p. 56). *See postures on next page.*

When university students studied the course, "Taoism, Tai Chi and Mindfulness," their tai chi training focused on experiencing both gentle exercise and moving meditation. Master Wong devotes his chapter 21 on Taoism and spirituality (2). He describes tai chi's relationship with the Tao Te Ching's verses. Also, Wong's chapter on the importance of learning the essential principles of qigong (Chapter 6) as a path to receiving the full benefits of tai chi prompted the inclusion of The Eight Pieces of Brocade Qigong in the course (3).

For three mornings each week during the semester, novice tai chi students gathered in the university's dance studio to learn and practice qigong and tai chi. During the third week of tai chi instruction, (we learned the Yang 24 Forms, also called the Simplified Tai Chi Set) "Grasp the Sparrow's Tail" was taught (4). Readers familiar with Yang 24 Forms will recall that this form occurs at movements 7 and 8.



Ward Off



Roll Back



Press



Push

Along with their instruction in the studio, students were assigned written reflections on their experiences with qigong and tai chi (see McBrien & Gutierrez) (5). Here is the assignment, the reflection follows.

Assignment:

In the Tao Te Ching, Verse 26 states: **The heavy is the root of the light;
The still is the master of unrest.
To be light is to lose one's root.
To be restless is to lose one's control.**

In tai chi, this passage serves as a warning concerning root and balance and offers a strategy for applying tai chi principles in our life. Preparation for your reflection:

- ✦ **Take time to find your personal quiet space and take a few minutes to warm up using tai chi principles.**
- ✦ **Stand in the wu chi posture for about 10 or more slow deep breaths.**
- ✦ **Perform "Grasp Sparrow's Tail" to the left and the right (just as we do performing Yang 24 in class). Move slowly, breathe into the belly and allow yourself to relax completely. Repeat the movements at least four times.**
- ✦ **Take a moment or two to stand in wu chi and breathe slowly. Now you are ready to write. Reflect on how the verse from the Tao Te Ching is expressed while performing Grasp Sparrow's Tail.**

Learning Yang 24 with the goal of developing a mindful awareness, students are encouraged to become aware of what is experienced when employing the essential principles. Emphasis on standing in wu chi at the start of each class helps learners move towards mastery of this "keystone" posture. This posture is also emphasized in qigong.

Within the first two weeks of the class, students, on arrival to the studio, were able to quietly stand in wu chi as they waited for class to begin. It was very satisfying to see the students take their place, stand with feet parallel and about shoulder-width apart, slightly bend their knees, tuck in their tail bone, and stand straight with head gently held high. Learning to relax the shoulders down and broaden the back was a challenge for some. Most were taught to stand with a "proud chest." This was a habit that needed to be changed. Using the imagery of holding an egg in each armpit was helpful.

Below, Natasha's reflection as she practiced the four postures of "Grasp the Sparrow's Tail" begins with her experience with the wu chi posture.

When I stand in the wu chi posture and I feel the heaviness of my feet rooted on the floor, I feel more secure with my practice of tai chi. I am able to feel the control of my movements in a heavy manner than when I do not try to position myself correctly in a light way. I have noticed that if I do not place myself correctly and if I do not feel firm, I usually end up losing my balance, which disrupts chi flow. This is not the right "way of energy." However, when I am positioned to my comfort level and I am firmly grounded, I feel in control of my forms and my forms are able to flow gracefully like they should. Whenever I want to practice any form, I always start in the wu chi position, since it is better to feel much more balanced than if I just go straight to the form.

Learning and practicing "Grasp the Sparrow's Tail" has several challenges. Maintaining the "bow and arrow" stance while moving through the four hand postures seemed daunting for some students. We learn how the reading of Verse 26 helps Natasha overcome this challenge in her practice.

So, when I want to do "Grasp Sparrow's Tail" and I want to feel my feet rooted, sometimes I have to shift around until I feel the right spot. As I perform "Grasp Sparrow's Tail," my rooted posture allows me to gain confidence and do the movements to my liking. Though my left side is fine, I feel that my right side still needs more practice, but if I stay rooted and focused, I should be able to perform the right side just as well as my left side in good time.

As we read the reflection, we appreciate how Natasha understands that the Tao Te Ching brings a deeper understanding to her experience as she does tai chi.

When Verse 26 states that "[t]he heavy is the root...; [and] to be light is to lose one's root", this definitely applies to my learning of tai chi because when I am rooted, I do not lose my control. When I have control, I am able to be "the master of unrest", which makes me feel more accomplished about my practice of tai chi.

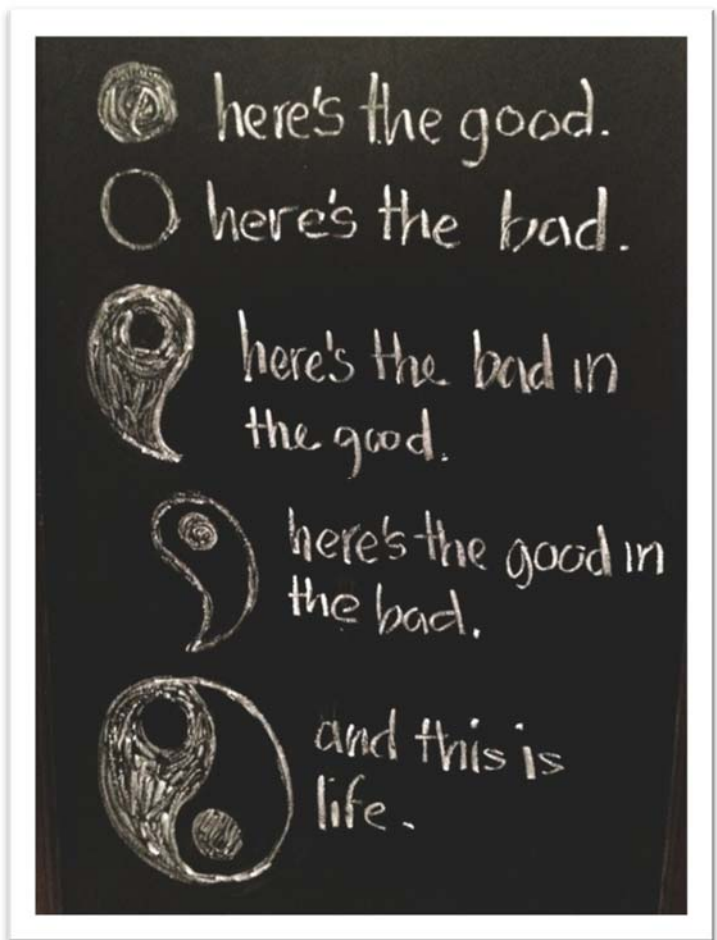
Students' reflective essays indicate that a mindful awareness of correct alignment, diaphragmatic breathing, and an inner feeling of harmony is experienced. This sense of harmony is one of the benefits of practicing "Grasp the Sparrow's Tail." Striving to be in harmony with nature is a key goal to achieving a Taoist or Tai Chi frame of mind. When their tai chi experiences generate feelings of harmony, students go beyond reading and talking about discovering the way of energy.

Experience Exchange 经验交流

They experience feelings of harmony and are newly aware of mastering the unrest as they discover how to “Grasp the Sparrow's Tail.”

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Dr. Bob McBrien is a Professor Emeritus of Education and was the instructor of the tai chi section of the course: Tao, Tai Chi and Mindfulness taught during the Fall semester of 2011 at Salisbury University in Salisbury, Maryland. Dr McBrien has been teaching Tai Chi for Health classes and has studied Qigong, Sun and Yang tai chi styles as well as the 32 Sword Form

Natasha Shangold graduated from Salisbury University in May 2014 with a B.A. in Environmental Studies and minors in Religious Studies and Biology. She would like to work in Environmental Education. Though she has always appreciated keeping her qi in balance, this course was her first experience with tai chi and qigong.



What is Yin-Yang?



by Casey Kochmer

<http://personaltao.com/taoism-library/questions/what-is-yin-yang/>

A starting definition: The nature of change, balanced as two halves of a whole.

Yin and Yang is perhaps the most known and documented concept used within Taoism.

Yin and Yang is the concept of duality forming a whole. We encounter examples of Yin and Yang every day. As examples: night (Yin) and day (Yang), female (Yin) and male (Yang). Over thousands of years quite a bit has been sorted and grouped under various Yin and Yang classification systems.

Yin and Yang illustrated from the Tao Te Ching [2]

*When people see things as beautiful,
ugliness is created.*

*When people see things as good,
evil is created.*

Being and non-being produce each other.

Difficult and easy complement each other.

Long and short define each other.

High and low oppose each other.

Fore and aft follow each other.

Diving Deeper into Yin and Yang

A few basic concepts which define the nature of Yin and Yang are:

Neither Yin nor Yang are absolute.

Nothing is completely Yin or completely Yang. Each aspect contains the beginning point for the other aspect. For example: day becomes night and then night becomes day...

Yin and Yang are interdependent upon each other so that the definition of one requires the definition for the other to be complete.

Yin and Yang are not static.

The nature of both Yin and Yang flows and changes with time. A simple example is thinking about how the day gradually flows into night. However, the length of day and night are changing. As the earth ages, its spin is slowing causing the length of day and night to get longer. Day and night are not static entities.

Sometimes the changes in Yin and Yang can be dramatic where one aspect can literally just transform into the other. As an example: some species of fish have females that transform quickly into males when the population of males aren't enough.

The summation of Yin nor Yang form a whole.

One effect of this is: as one aspect increases the other decreases to maintain overall balance of the whole.

The balance of Yin and Yang can be skewed due to outside influences.

Four possible imbalances exist:

Deficiency Yang

Deficiency Yin

Excess Yang

Excess Yin

These imbalances can be paired: so an excess of Yin can also simulate a Yang deficiency and vice versa.

As an example this concept is especially important for Chinese healing practices. So an excess of Yang results in a fever. An excess of Yin could mean the accumulation of fluids in the body. Chinese healing examines a person's health in terms of the eight principles: Internal and External stimuli, Deficiency and Excesses, Cold and Heat and Yin and Yang.

Yin and Yang can be subdivided into additional Yin and Yang aspects.

For example a Yang aspect of Heat: can be further subdivided into a Yin warm or Yang burning.

Additional principles defining Yin and Yang qualities exist.

The concepts listed here are merely a starting point to illustrate the nature of Yin and Yang. Usually as a practice Taoism does a good job of not codifying life. Which is ironic since many Taoist's

can happily list out what is Yin and what is Yang. Typically Taoist texts will list a few examples of Yin and Yang and then meander off to the next topic. Which makes sense as from a Taoist perspective it's for the reader to reveal life from their own perspective. As an example go back to the Taoist passage quoted above from the Tao Te Ching. You will discover a few additional aspects to Yin and Yang, but the passage isn't a complete definition either. The author of this passage fully expects you as the reader to go out and to explore the ideas on your own.

Additional material for Yin Yang can be read here:

[Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Yinyang](#)

Now forget everything you have learned about Yin and Yang for a moment. Step back from all the descriptions and classifications of Yin and Yang to consider the following passage from the Tao Te Ching:

*The Way begot one,
And the one, two;
Then the two begot three
And three, all else.*

A clearer understanding of Yin and Yang requires looking back into the Tao. The Tao can be considered as the fundamental absolute. Upon examination: the nature of the Tao expands out. This process of expansion defines a pattern, splitting apart into finer and finer patterns. Yin and Yang is the point where perception demarks the Tao's expansion from one into two.

Taoism as a practice enjoys examining patterns. Over the years countless sects of Taoism have formed and quite a bit of literature written over the delineation and description of these patterns. Often times Taoists use the concept of Yin

and Yang as a familiar starting template to work with patterns.

For example [Qigong](#) is based upon the patterns of breath and physical movement. Knowledge of bodily patterns forms the basis of this Taoist practice to keep a body healthy. The human body and its movements are divided according to Yin and Yang categories. So the upper body corresponds to the Yang, while the lower body roots into the Yin. The body's center is where the Yin and Yang meet. Qigong exercises are grouped and explained in terms of Yin and Yang to help classify the body's harmonies into a working practice. Knowledge of Yin or Yang isn't required to perform Qigong, instead it's an additional filter which helps people connect to the practice.

Another example is Taoist divination within the [Book of Changes](#) / [I Ching](#). Divination in Taoism is a practice of examining human interactions based on well known psychological patterns. To generate a result either coins or yarrow stalks are tossed down to form a pattern. The patterns generated correspond to Yin and Yang defined qualities. The nature of the Yin and Yang pattern are applied against the psychology of the

[continue on page [29](#)]

Casey Kochmer: I teach kindness and help people explore life. The process is mod-



est and requires no judgment. To post a bio here has no meaning for me, instead it really needs to help a reader see angles of their own path ahead. Discovering A Personal Tao is opening to your own journey.

Work with your own potential to discover grace, so I send you a blessing towards taking the time to always dream ... even when awake, it's your life to embrace.



One of the fundamental principles of tai chi is that we start in wu ji, or neutral emptiness. As we begin to move, wu ji separates into the yin and yang that our body manifests throughout the forms. Yin corresponds to storing energy. Yang corresponds to delivering energy. Throughout a form, our hands and feet continuously transition between yin and yang.

Why is this important? What difference does it make whether a hand or a foot is yin or yang?

The answer to these questions is simple, yet subtle. Intention, thus visualization, is very important in tai chi. We need to learn to visualize the movements of the forms. When we become

Manifesting Yin and Yang in Taiji

by Eric Borreson

aware of yin and yang as described above, we start to develop a mental image of a linkage between our hands and feet.

According to the classics of taiji, "Internal force is rooted in the feet, developed by the legs, governed by the waist, and expressed in the hands." This internal force is a spiral force generated

at the feet that causes the waist to rotate, which leads the hands in the various taiji forms.

When you mentally link your hands and feet, you also link your upper body with your lower body so the top and bottom follow each other. With practice, it becomes more natural for the movement of your legs to create movement of your hands.

In turn, this awareness of connectedness helps you become more aware of substantial and insubstantial as you shift your weight. In turn, this makes you more aware of your balance and weight. You become more rooted.

It's a virtuous circle. As you practice your tai chi, you become aware of the interconnected principles that underlie tai chi. Spiral force helps you move properly. Moving properly helps you understand yin and yang, which relates to substantial and insubstantial. It develops into a never-ending spiral of deeper and deeper understanding.

Be aware though, you can't just read about it. You have to do it. Each time you practice, focus on one principle until it becomes second nature. Then focus on another principle. And so on. Then go back to the beginning and do it again with your newer understanding. Practice your forms. Thousands of times. There are no shortcuts. ㄣ

Eric Borreson – a student and teacher, finds teaching taiji, 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 teaches taiji, qigong, and meditation at the prestigious Heartland Spa, a top 10 destination spa, located in Gilman, IL. In addition, he teaches taiji (Yang 24, Sun-style taiji, and Dr. Lam's Taiji for Arthritis and Taiji for Diabetes) at other venues. He conducts workshops and teaches private lessons on request. He writes a weekly wellness column at <http://eric-taichi.blogspot.com>.



Coming to our pages

THIS SUMMER



Food As Medicine

Read about Traditional Chinese Food therapy

Find out why food is good medicine

Nutritional Therapy for Health

Organic vs. Non-Organic

And more!



Part 2. The DIVERGENT OR DISTINCT MERIDIANS

by Marty Eisen Ph.D.

[continued from January/February 2014 issue]

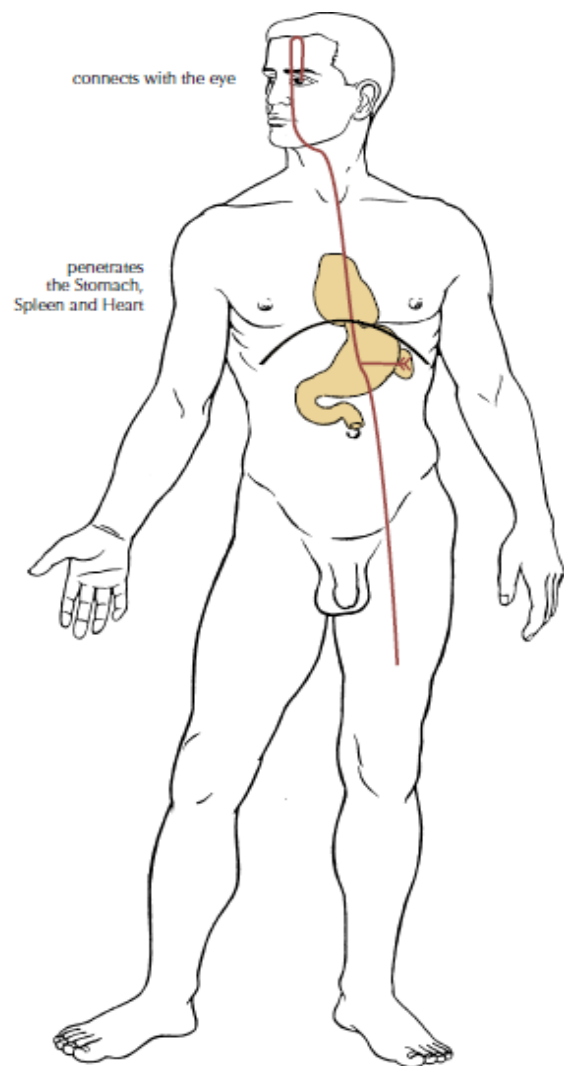
The Third Confluence

(a) Stomach Divergent Channel

Departing from the Stomach Meridian on the thigh, it enters the abdomen, connects with the stomach and disperses into the spleen. Then, ascending through the heart and alongside the esophagus, it reaches the mouth. Continuing upward, it runs beside the nose, connects with the eye and finally joins the Stomach Meridian.

Its Access Point is S 30 (Qi Chong or Surging Qi), which is close to the departure point, near the symphysis pubis and inguinal ligament as described in (2).

Its Return Point is officially B 1 (Jing Ming or Bright Eyes, which is near the inner canthus of the eye. Needling this point can be stressful to most patients and S 1 (Cheng Qi or Tear Container) is used instead. There is a branch from S1 to B 1 (2).



The Stomach divergent channel

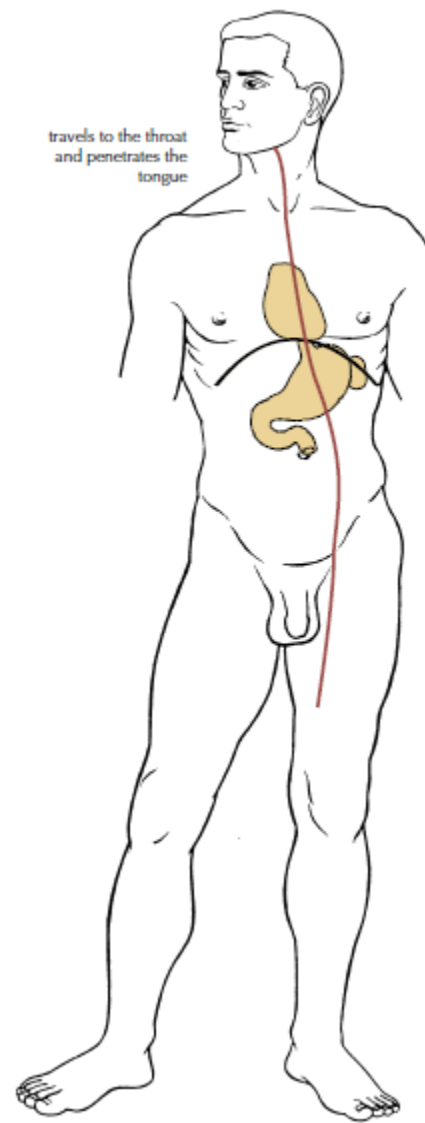
Stomach Divergent Channel

(b) Spleen Divergent Channel

Diverging from the Spleen Meridian on the thigh, it converges with the Stomach Divergent Meridian, runs upward to the throat, and finally enters the tongue. Another description of the departure point is near the symphysis pubis and inguinal ligament (2).

Its Access Point is Sp 12 (Chong Men or Surging Gate), which is near to the departure point in (2). It has the same Return Points described in (a).

The region of greatest activity for this couplet is the abdominal and pelvic cavities (uterus, ovaries, large and small intestines, stomach and spleen). However, the esophageal, tongue, nasal, frontal and maxillary sinus regions also can be treated with good results.



Spleen Divergent Channel

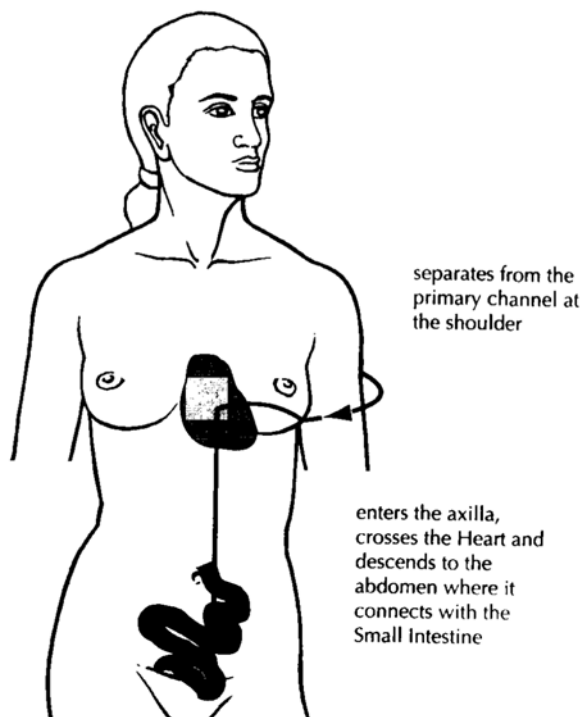
The Fourth Confluence

(a) Small Intestine Divergent Channel

It starts by leaving its principal meridian from the posterior aspect of the shoulder, passes downward to the axilla, goes deeper to pass into the heart and then further downwards to pass into the small intestine. The Small Intestine Divergent Channel then joins its principal meridian, which it follows upward through the throat. Finally, it runs in a branch of the Small Intestine

Meridian to terminate at the inner canthus of the eye at B 1, joining the Heart Divergent Meridian.

Its Access Point is SI 10 (Nao Shu or Upper Arm Shu) and its return Point is B 1.



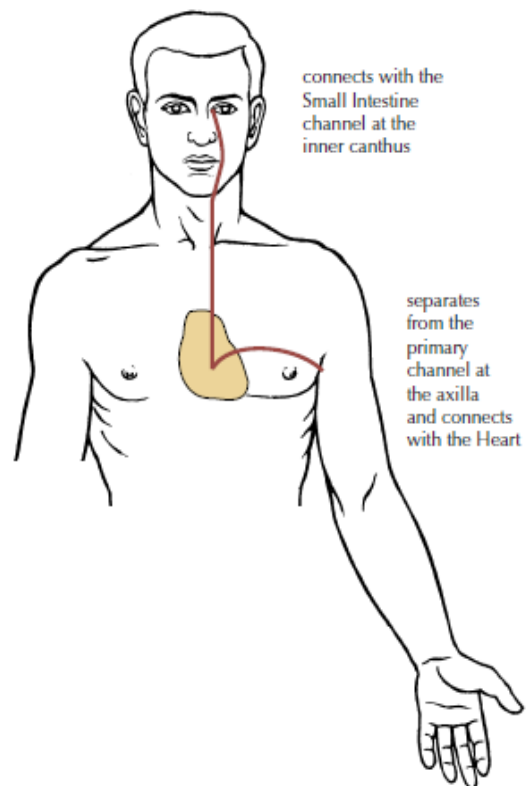
Small Intestine Divergent Channel

(b) Heart Divergent Channel

After diverging from the Heart Meridian in the axillary fossa, it penetrates the chest and enters the heart. Then it ascends to the throat, emerges on the face and joins the Principal and Distinct Meridians of the Small Intestine at the inner canthus of the eye (B 1).

Its Access Point is H 1 (Ni Quan or Highest Spring) and its Return Point is B 1.

This couplet's pathway passes through the heart and loops through the small intestine. However, its range of influence is limited to the heart and pericardium and their immediate vicinity. Even though it passes through the small intestine organ, clinical results show that it is not effective for treating abdominal problems.



Heart Divergent Channel

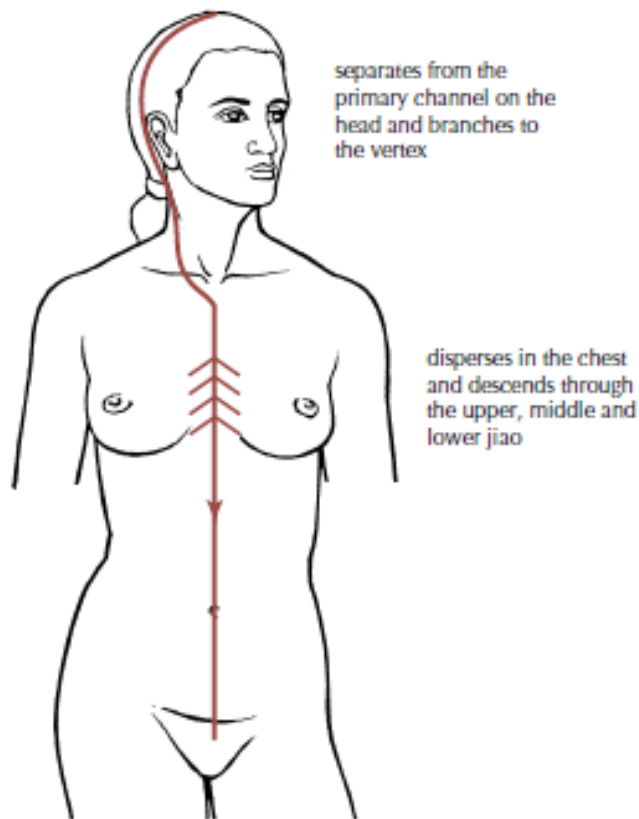
The Fifth Confluence

These pathways are the most poorly defined and also used the least in clinical applications.

(a) San Jiao Divergent Channel

The San Jiao Meridian has a branch which connects to Du 20 (Bai Hui or Hundred Convergences), from which the San Jiao Distinct Meridian takes its origin. From there it descends behind the ear to SJ 16 (Tian You or Celestial Window), where it meets the Heart Divergent Meridian and also has a connection with the brain. Then, it descends through the supraclavicular fossa and penetrates the thorax to disperse into the Upper, Middle and Lower Jiaos.

Its Access Point is SJ 16 and its Return Point is Du 20.



San Jiao Divergent Channel

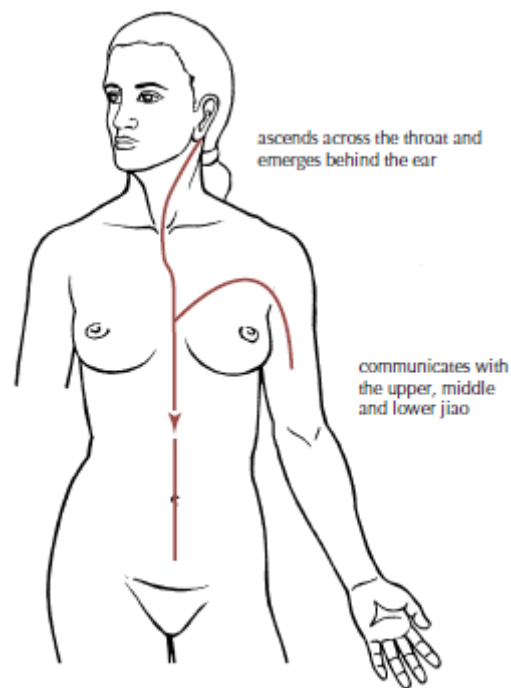
(b) Pericardium Divergent Channel

It starts 5 cun below the axilla (1), while other sources (4) state the starting point as P 1 (Tian Chi or Celestial Pool). It travels to the chest, penetrating deeply and branches into two. The descending branch communicates with the Sanjiao. The ascending branch passes through the thorax, becoming superficial at the neck, and unites with the Divergent and Principal Meridians behind the ear at SJ 16.

Its Access Point is P 1 and its Return Point is Du 20.

This couplet influences the body's autonomic activities. The functions of the Pericardium are likened to those of the sympathetic nervous sys-

tem, while the functions of the Sanjiao to those of the parasympathetic in (2).



Pericardium Divergent Channel

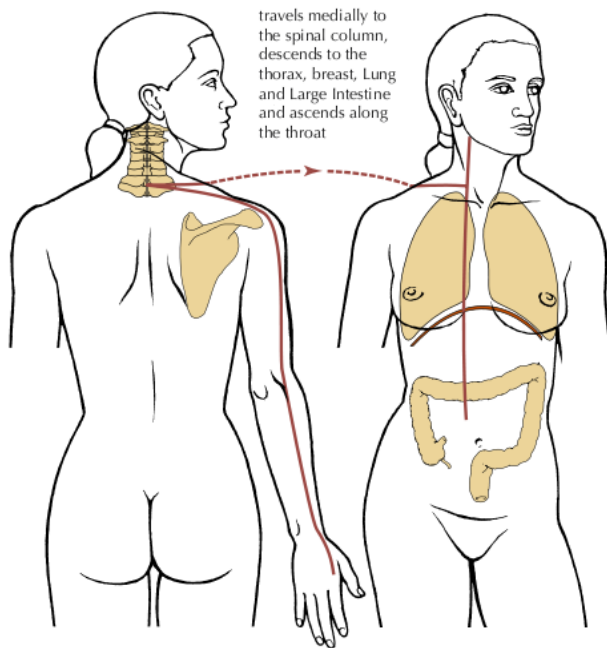
The Sixth Confluence

(a) Large Intestine Divergent Channel

It separates from the Large Intestine Meridian on the hand and ascends the arm to the shoulder to LI 15 (Jian Yu or Shoulder Bone) according to (1). However, in (4) this is its starting point. Two branches are formed at LI 15. One travels backward over the superior border of the scapula to meet the spinal column at Du 14 (Da Zhu or great Hammer). The other branch travels anteriorly to the chest, where it goes deep and branches into two. The descending branch penetrates the large intestine. The other branch ascends through the lungs to surface at the supraclavicular fossa at S 12 (Que Pen or Empty Basin). Then it passes up the side of the neck to LI 18 (Fu Tu or Protuberance Assistant), where it unites with the Large

Intestine Meridian and the Lung Divergent Meridian.

Its Access Point is LI 15 and its Return Point is LI 18.

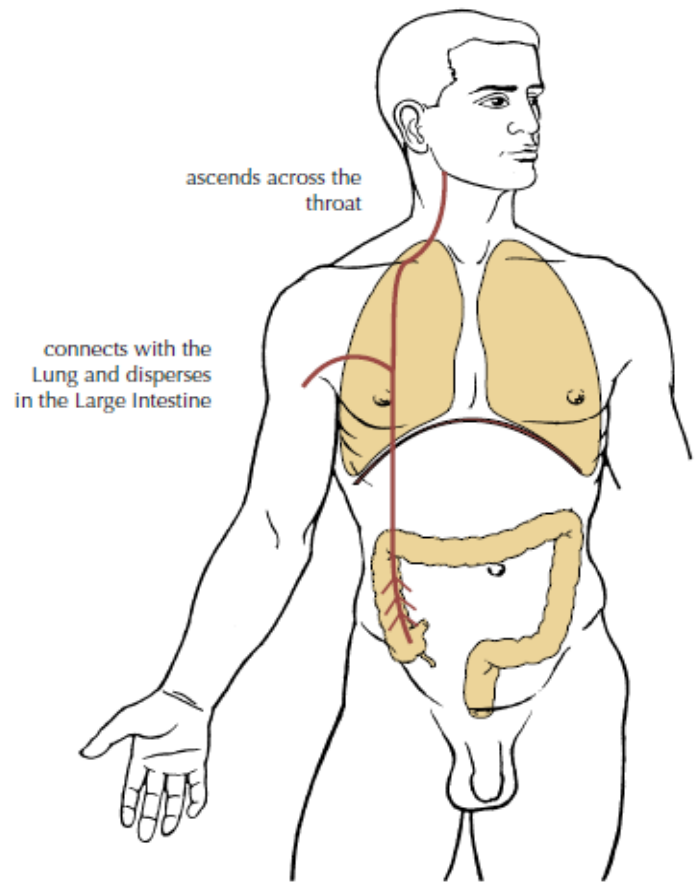


Large Intestine Divergent Channel

(b) Lung Divergent Channel

It derives from the Lung Meridian in the axilla, runs anterior to the Pericardium Meridian into the chest, penetrates into the lungs and branches into two. One branch descends to penetrate the large intestine. The other ascends up the throat to LI 18, where it joins the Large Intestine Distinct Meridian.

Its Access Point is L 1 (Zhong Fu or Central Residence or Central Treasury) and its Return Point is LI 18.



Lung Divergent Channel

This couplet influences the associated respiratory contents of the thorax (the trachea, vocal cords, larynx, pleura, lung parenchyma and bronchi). Even though it passes through the large intestine, it has no influence on this organ. Clinically, this organ is affected by the Liver/Gallbladder, Spleen/Stomach and Kidney/Bladder Distinct Meridian couplets.

Non-acupuncturists can influence the Divergent Meridians using Tuina (6). Another possibility, instead of actual needling, is to follow the proper acupuncture protocol, but use the Qigong invisible needle technique, as described in (5).

5. Use of the Divergent Meridians (2)

The Distinct Meridians are not use to treat functional problems or energetic disturbances,

but disorders of a material basis that can be detected by examination of biopsied tissues, laboratory specimens, x-ray or nuclear medicine studies.

They can be used as a first approach to acute problems before surgical or pharmaceutical therapies are initiated, as an adjunct to the conventional treatment or after the medical treatment has failed.

The rules for activating the Divergent Meridians are:

- (a) Needle the Access Points bilaterally on both the Yin and Yang Principal Meridians.

- (b) Needle the Return Point bilaterally on the Yang Principal Meridian.

- (c) Use Mu, Shu or local points to focus the energy flow to the desired anatomical region.

The couplet pathway influences an anatomical region as much as it influences the two associated organs. In some couplets only one organ lies in the region of greatest influence. In others, both organs are in the anatomical region, but the influence of the Divergent Meridians on the region is greater than on the organs. Table 1 lists some conditions that can be treated by using the Divergent Meridian couplets.

Table 1. Some Conditions Treated by the Distinct Meridian Couplets

| Confluence | Some Treatable Conditions |
|------------------------------|---|
| Bladder/Kidney | Descending colon, rectum & anus: spastic colitis, bowel inflammation, diarrhea, hemorrhoids; anal fissures. Urinary tract: pyelonephritis, nephrolithiasis, cystitis, prostate disease, urethritis; incontinence. Ovaries & uterus: pelvic adhesions; pain on posterior wall of pelvis. Coccygeal & deep, central back pain unresponsive to Principal Meridian treatment. |
| Gallbladder/Liver | Liver disease: acute or chronic hepatitis, cholecystic problems; postoperative atonic ileus & pain. Dysfunctions of this region overlap with those of the Stomach/Spleen region & sometimes treatments of these two regions are alternated at each treatment. This input sometimes helps vague, digestive problems that are not precisely located or follow definite patterns. |
| Stomach/Spleen | Uterine, ovarian & visceral problems: pelvic adhesions, pelvic cramping pain, abdominal cramps & pain, colitis, bloating, postoperative ileus & pain, decrease inflammation & pain of gastritis, gastric or duodenal ulcers & esophageal pain from reflux or spasms. Sinuses: Helpful in treating frontal or maxillary sinusitis, unresponsive to Principal Meridian treatment. |
| Small Intestine/Heart | Myocardial & pericardial lesions: myocarditis, pericarditis, rhythm disturbances after cardiac surgery; pectoral & rib pain not related to a cardiac problem. Don't use for unmonitored myocardial infarction. |
| San Jiao/Pericardium | For autonomic irregularities causing disorder & poor coordination of internal functions: some hyperventilation syndromes and symptoms seen in chronic fatigue; vertigo. Hypoactive autonomic conditions resulting from anesthesia or illness, when the patient complains of not feeling normal with integration of mind, body and emotions. |
| Large Intestine/Lung | Lower respiratory tract & its supporting structures: laryngitis, acute pneumonia or asthma, chronic bronchitis, chronic obstructive airway disease, nodules, edema or inflammation of the vocal cords, post-intubation edema and inflammation of the vocal cords; pain of pleuritis & rib fracture. No functional influence on the Large Intestine organ, for which Spleen/Stomach, Kidney/Bladder or Liver /Gallbladder couplets can be used. |

[continued on page 29]

Yin Yang You

by Raven Cohan

A swirl on one side, black.
A swirl on the other side, white.
A dot in the thick parts...
Like a star in the night
And a cinder in the cream.
The two parts mesh together, (a team...)
As eternal mates they link.
But reality has them in motion.
Only then you get the notion
That they represent the ocean
Of Extreme opposites
Yin and Yang.
You are that.
That is you. Yes it's you.
Before that split
You were Wu Chi too....
Before the split happened
A Oneness was a Womb.
And you'll return there after...
'You' are put in a tomb.

[continued from page 27]

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Marty Eisen, PhD, is a retired scientist, who constructed mathematical models in medicine. He has studied and taught Yoga, Judo, Shotokan Karate, Aikido, Qigong, Praying Mantis Kung Fu, and Tai Chi. Dr. Eisen studied Chinese Medicine through apprenticeships and correspondence courses. His new Amazon Kindle and hard copy books "Healthy Exercise for Seniors and Non-Athletes" describes classical Yoga, Tai Chi and Qigong to encourage practitioners to learn more about these arts. For more information about Dr. Eisen please visit <http://home.comcast.net/~carolezak>

[continued from page 19]

moment to return advice for the person asking the question.

Yin and Yang is a fundamental aspect of Taoist thought. We always naturally apply human based values over naturally occurring patterns. However, remember it's also important not to chase finer and finer descriptions of these patterns, to do so would be to chase down infinity.

Yin and Yang is a system of recognizing how to separate out patterns in our life while also relaxing to accept the overall whole and complete nature of the Tao.

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It attaches to the
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The Chakras Part One: How the Rainbow Colors came to be...

by Cindy Cicero

Did you ever wonder how the colors of the chakras found their way into our present culture? I have.

As an energy worker and certified teacher of yoga, I have been taught through a variety of systems how to activate my chakras. I invested time in private training with those who specialized in chakra activation. I'd spent numerous hours in meditative focus trying to activate my chakras based on their associated color. The reason for this effort, I was told, is that once I balanced the chakra's colors I would enjoy a healthier body and mind. I was promised spiritual enlightenment would occur through the chakra's activation process. After putting in considerable time and effort, I was disappointed.

So I decided, to do my own research into chakras. This is when I began to dig into the historical understanding of chakras. The first thing I found

out was that ancient chakras were basically colorless.

Beginning with the origin of the chakra colors, I've learned there is no mention of "chakra colors" in The Upanishads, a collection of ancient texts that supposedly have secret and sacred knowledge.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upanishads>

One authority states, "The Hindu religious texts, the Upanishads, dating from around the 7th -8th century BCE, first mentioned the existence of this cosmic energy called prana, which was received by all living creatures upon the Earth; however it was not until sometime between the 2nd century BCE and the 2nd century AD that the first mention was made of "chakras". <http://users.adam.com.au/bstett/SkepticsChakras137.html>.

Still another authority states, "the first known mention of chakras appeared in a number of early Upanishads around 7-800 BCE. Later Upanishads around 200 BCE – 200 CE, namely Shri Jabala

Darshana Upanishad, Cudamini Upanishad, Yoga-Shikka Upanishad and Shandila Upanishad, made reference to tantric concepts such as chakras and mantras, and gave both locations and symbolism. In the 10th century, the Gorakshashatakam, written by Guru Goraknath, gave information on the powers of awakening and meditating on the chakras "[HISTORY OF THE CHAKRAS – article \(2\).](#)"

Then there are authorities such as this author in Wikipedia who discusses the color orientation of the "Chakras" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chakra>. However, upon closer examination, the references to the "color" claims are in need of a "citation," meaning their statement is in need of references to reliable sources not yet provided by the author per Wikipedia.

Other Chakra articles, such as http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Ray_Baskerville,



points out "Despite everything you may have heard or read about chakras, there is no unified theory or explanation of exactly what the chakras are and what they do. Unfortunately, much of the information on chakras is simply a repeating of what has been said or written elsewhere and the basis of its authority is only from in their repetition. Very often components from different theories become mixed together adding to the confusion and misunderstanding."

I began to see the repetitive way that chakra authorities state their position and meaning according to their unknown sources.

Here is one authority I believe sums the chakra current claims: "While all these references are suggestive and intriguing, they are ultimately only precursors to what we currently understand as the chakra system. Despite the extravagant claims made by some chakra enthusiasts, there is little evidence that the seven-chakra system as we know it today, is really any part of an unbroken tradition dating to antiquity."

<http://chakras.egoplex.com/chapter1.html>.

Based on this last author's comments, we may understand that the Chakra system has been transformed. The Chakras as told in the historical story had been ratified over time by the ancients who had interpreted the ancient Upanishads Vedic texts. This is even present in the chakras origin on the dual yogic and Tantric systems that founded and interpreted these subtle energy centers. If this wasn't complex and fractured enough, it becomes more so as the west interprets the eastern view on chakras.

First was an adaptation of the Kundalini chakra system with a western view, then a Theosophical view of chakras, and lastly our present New Age interpretations.

It was Sir John Woodroffe's complex body of chakra work called titled The Serpent Power <http://www.scribd.com/doc/117167217/seprent-power-complete> that took Kundalini to a

new level. Later, from this complex Kundalini body of work, came the now-predominant Western Theosophical view of C.W. Leadbeater in his book *The Chakras* that took strong hold of the western view of the chakras

www.anandgholap.net/Chakras-CWL.pdf look for [Mahatma C.W. Leadbeater: Chakras](#).

Now this is where it gets interesting. Christopher Hills, the last influential person, develops his own personal version of the rainbow colours of the chakra system. He published a book entitled *Nuclear Evolution* in the early 70's which probably did as much as Leadbeater to influence Western thinking about the chakras. Today, this book is the Western New Age foundation for the Chakra Rainbow System.

"In a very thick book, *Nuclear Evolution*, published in the early 1970s, Hills suggests that each of the chakras corresponds to one of the seven colours of the spectrum. He then associates each chakra and colour with a particular personality type. A great deal of his book *Nuclear Evolution* is devoted to explaining each of these personality types in detail. His typology is quite fascinating, and certainly equal in profundity to the personality typology of comparable systems of character analysis, such as Carl Jung and Humanistic Astrology.

Although the psychological aspects of this theory did not catch on, the idea of matching the sev-

en chakras with the seven colours of the spectrum was so appealing that just about every book on the chakras written since then show the chakras in rainbow colours." [136 leadbeater-charles-the-chakras](#)

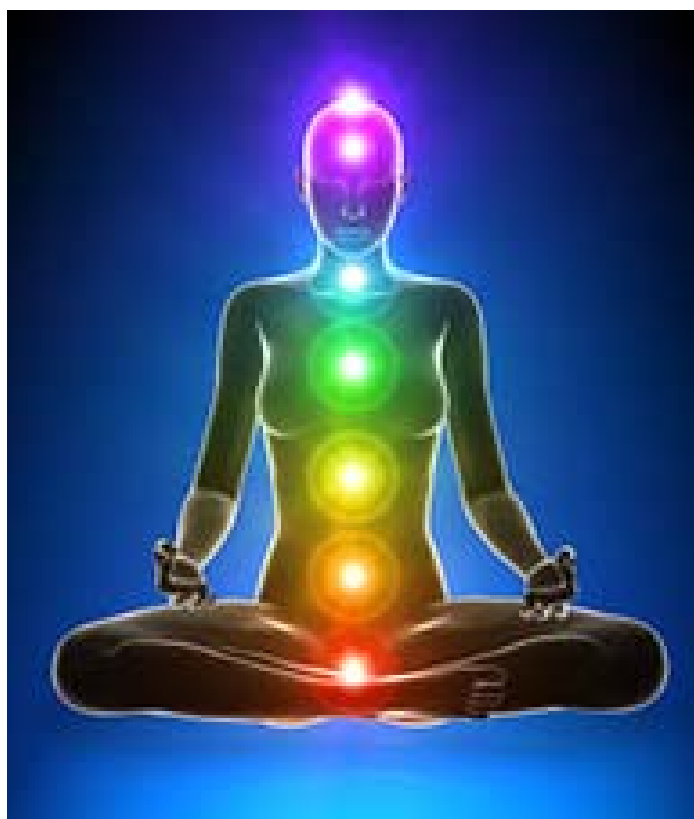
"It would seem plausible to identify the rainbow chakras with the etheric body chakras in Barbara Ann Brennan's formulation, and perhaps

also the focal concentration points in Mantak Chia's "Healing Tao" microcosmic orbit. The rainbow chakras therefore, if they have any validity at all, have validity inasmuch as they pertain to the etheric bodies." [136 leadbeater-charles-the-chakras](#).

Or as quoted in Wikipedia on the New Age rainbow chakras, "The convergence of these two distinct healing traditions and their common practitioners' own inventiveness have led to an ever-changing and

expanding array of concepts in the western world. According to medical intuitive and author Caroline Myss who described chakras in her work *Anatomy of the Spirit* (1996), "Every thought and experience you've ever had in your life gets filtered through these chakra databases. Each event is recorded into your cells..." In effect, your biography becomes your biology.

After studying all this research, I started to understand why trying to activate my color chakras had no effective change for my physical or emotional stability. Nor did I experience my greatest desire which was tuning more deeply into my spiritual self. Some of the side effects I experienced from focusing on chakra activations were



very sleepy reactions and headaches, but I had no lasting significant expected changes from chakra training.

These unfulfilled desires are what led me to the online School of Chi Energy. At the School of Chi Energy, I learned that chakras are bioenergy circuits that work like a vortex. These vortexes are activated with the student's ability to make a bioenergy form together along with taking it through that particular body part. I learned through practical application and practice that various repetitive flow patterns resulted in extraordinary experiences in consciousness along

with emotional stability and better physical health. These results were more of what I expected. I learned to activate my (chakras) or seven vortexes in the School of Chi Energy. The School based all their chakra information on the latest scientific research of how energy actually affects your body. By going through the School, I was able to change what were metaphysical concepts into practical application. I learned that chakras were something that you could physically feel and sometimes physically see. Stay tuned for the next article on Chakra training and information on how chakras really activate.



Certified Instructor Sifu **Cindy Cicero** is the Director at the School of Bioenergy www.chienergyheals.com chienergyheals@gmail.com (919) 771-7800.

Cindy is also a certified Chi Energy Instructor skilled in bioenergy healing techniques and mentoring. Sifu Cicero has over 20 years experience in energy work and 12 years experience in teaching energy skills. Cindy Cicero is a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Meditation teacher who has studied under doctors Jon Kabat-Zinn and Saki Santorelli from the University of Massachusetts Medical School, and Dr. Jeff Brantley of Duke University's Center for Integrative Medicine, Nationally Certified in Therapeutic Massage

and Bodywork by the International Oriental Bodywork Association and licensed in the state of North Carolina, Certified as a Spring Forest Qigong Healer and Teacher, Certified as a Yoga Teacher & Yoga Therapist in the Kripalu Yogic Healing Tradition, Certified in the Eastern Institute of Transpersonal Hypnotherapy, Member of the Rhine Center Parapsychology Center, Member & volunteer on the Board of Directors for the Qigong Institute.



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Early Summer – Blossoming

by Ellasara Kling

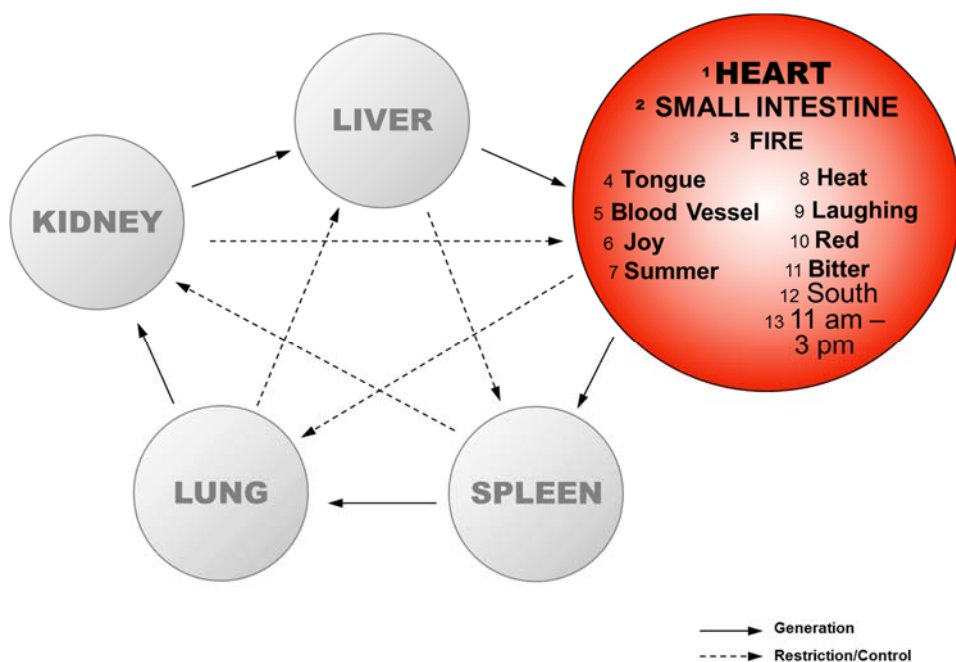
“The wise nourish life by flowing with the four seasons and adapting to cold or heat, by harmonizing joy and anger in a tranquil dwelling, by balancing yin and yang, and what is hard and soft.”

The Nei Jing

Throughout the Nei Jing, in a myriad of ways, we are exhorted to balance our lives, be in harmony with nature and follow the flow of the seasons, adapting to each as it appears.

Balancing our lives can be restated as “Everything in moderation,” including tempering our emotions so that we are not “locked” into too much concern, too much anger, or even too much joy. By letting go and not holding fast to anything, we can create an active detachment, neutrality, calmness of mind. But in our technological, modern lifestyles that seem to demand a great deal of outer focus and almost crushing levels of activity

to get through the day, we may feel bewildered about how to actually live in greater balance/harmony/flow. Summer is a season that calls to us to open up, breathe deeply, relax, smile more. Just doing those things throughout the day can relieve tension and the sense of stress and urgency that can be placed upon us from external factors. Just take a couple of minutes before walking into the door at work to stand in a safe place, close your eyes, and just breathe. Nothing else. At your meal break, take another couple of minutes before and after eating to do the same thing. Make these little 2-minute breaks a regular habit. It can help you to change many things. There are more ideas related to the season in the next section – Five Element Theory.



FIVE ELEMENT THEORY

Viewing the Five Element chart with the Summer as its focus, we can easily identify some of the major relationships that are part of this season. This is the season that is ruled by the Heart and Small Intestine. Naturally, it follows that the emotion for the season is Joy. This is the Joy that comes from within ourselves and is not based on external events or circum-

Seasonal Harmony 季节之和谐

stances. An over-excited heart may show up as too much or inappropriate laughter, or an inability to stop chatting. During Summer, **Qi flows outward and upward** (just like plants grow) and occupies the body surface during this season. This Yang outward movement requires that we nurture our internal energy so that we do not dissipate it too much. For example, during the summer months people tend to perspire more easily in response to the external heat. This creates natural body cooling from the evaporation of perspiration. *Be certain to replenish liquids, be careful to not dehydrate, but always drink liquids that are warm, not ice cold.*

The Bitter taste which is related to this season contracts over-expansion and creates balance. Often, there is an absence of bitter foods and herbs in our diets even though they are present in nature, easy to find and seasonal for summer. Adding foods that have some bitterness to them is, according to Five Element Theory, good for your heart. **The balancing “emotion” for the Heart is calm and peacefulness.** Moving meditation such as taiji which, among many other things, calms and directs the flow of qi, or pleasant walks outdoors, perhaps in a park, taking in the beauty of Summer and just letting the body relax and enjoy will bring experiences of greater balance, harmony and that natural joy that is part of this season.

Eat foods that are not too rich or greasy and which are easily digested. Even though the external temperature is hot and it would seem a good idea to consume lots of cold foods and liquids, doing so can lead to digestive problems later. It is recommended that people drink flower or fruit teas (such as chrysanthemum tea) which naturally cool the body internally. Watermelon is another natural coolant that is plentiful and eating a bit of the rind adds a touch of bitter. (There are recipes below for a refreshing watermelon juice drink

and for cooling teas.) The daily diet should contain more vegetables and fruits so as to stimulate the appetite and provide adequate fluids.

Always follow your own intuition about what foods are good for you as well as taking into account your own individual circumstances and situation. The principles of Five Element Theory are guidelines that are applicable universally, but who you are, where you are, how you are and when you are will affect how you apply them at any given time.

Some Foods that are harmonious with Early Summer include:

apricot, asparagus, beet, bitter melon, black coffee, broccoli, broccoli rabe, celery, chrysanthemum, chamomile, coffee, cucumber, dark unsweetened chocolate, escarole, ginger, job's tears, lettuces such as boston, chicory, endive & radicchio, romaine, lavender, 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, spearmint, spinach, strawberry, summer squashes, sunflower seeds, tamarind, teas, tomato, water chestnuts, watermelon, Chinese yam, zucchini, and others.

Grounding in Summer: Because the natural flow of energy in Summer is up and out, we may sometimes feel “ungrounded.” A simple, fun, seasonal “exercise” for this is to go outside, remove your shoes and stand on the grass or the sand at the beach. Really **feel** the ground beneath your feet and your connection with the Earth. Earth is the next season coming up and relating to it now can assist in bringing balance and centering in Early Summer.



*Dandelion/Sweet Potato
Soup. Recipe on page 41.*

Photos by Robert Pease Photography

RECIPES





Yellow Squash/Red Pepper Congee

Ingredients:

1/4 cup sweet short grain rice
8 cups water
1/2 tsp tangerine rind
1 tsp grated ginger
1/2 tsp of garlic
2 TB grapeseed oil
2-3 small-medium yellow summer squash
1 cup red bell pepper
dash of salt

side dishes

chopped cilantro or watercress
red beans cooked (adzuki beans)*
mushrooms - sautéed
scrambled egg
toasted cashews

Directions:

Lightly toast the rice for a couple of minutes in your pot before adding 8 cups of cold water.

At the same time, add tangerine rind, ginger and garlic.

Simmer for a couple of hours or more until nearly finished, in the meantime . . .

Wash and cut the squash into large diagonal chunks (2" long)

Cut the red bell pepper into 1/4 inch strips and then cut in half

Heat a skillet with the oil and add the squash

Lightly braise the squash and red pepper and set aside

When the congee is almost done, add the squash and pepper; this way the yellow squash, which tends to be very tender, doesn't disintegrate into the congee but remains in pieces and the red pepper still has some "bite" to it.

Stir lightly.

Serve with small side dishes as mentioned above, or ideas of your own.

Congee is an all-time wonderful nurturing dish. It can be combined with a myriad of foods to create a nourishing, season appropriate "soup" that nurtures appetite, digestion.

**Adzuki beans are available dry in most Asian markets and if not, many supermarkets have Eden brand Adzuki beans. Other small red beans may be substituted.*



Watermelon/Ginger Juice

Ingredients:

- ½ cup water
- 4 cups of watermelon (include some of the rind)
- 2 TB fresh ginger root
- tiny pinch of salt

Directions:

Place all of the ingredients in a blender and juice. You can add more water if you like to make it more "liquid," but do not add ice. The addition of a tiny pinch of salt will enhance the sweetness of the watermelon. A great way to start a hot summer day or for an afternoon "pick-me-up!"

This is so refreshing and delightful on hot days. Watermelon relieves heat, quenches thirst.

Mung Bean Sprouts and Chinese Chives with Yellow flowers

Ingredients:

4 cups uncooked mung bean sprouts
2 cups yellow flowered Chinese Chives
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup oil for stir-frying
1-1/2 TB minced fresh ginger
2 teaspoons soy sauce
1/2 teaspoon sugar

Directions:

Wash and drain the mung bean sprouts and chives.

Cut the chives into 4" pieces

In a small bowl, lightly beat the eggs with the salt
Heat a wok or heavy skillet and coat bottom with 1-1/2 TB oil

Add the eggs and so that they cover the bottom of the pan like a pancake.

Turn them over gently and the cut into thin strips and set aside on a platter

Add 2 TB oil and add the minced ginger when the oil is hot.

Add the mung bean sprouts and stir-fry for about 1 minute then add the rest of the ingredients. Stir-fry for about another 1 - 2 minutes, until the chives just begin to be limp

Transfer to a platter and top with the strips of egg.



Chives are an aid to digestion, blood circulation and have antiseptic properties.

Mung bean sprouts are cooling, relieve dampness.





Dandelion/Sweet Potato Soup

Ingredients:

- 2-3 TB grapeseed oil
- Sprinkle of salt
- 5 small-med. cloves garlic
- 2 large fat scallions – whites only
- 2 stalks of celery
- 4 small carrots
- 1 medium sweet potato – organic so you can eat the skin
- 1 small bunch young tender dandelion leaves – from Texas
- 3-5 cups (or more) of either or combination of: water/ chicken broth/veggie broth
- 1 cup sliced, lightly sautéed mushrooms – either button or crimini
- Ground fresh black pepper

Optional – 1-2 small red hot pepper*

Directions:

Slice garlic thinly lengthwise – no chopping, it gets bitter

Very thinly slice the scallions into rings

Small dice of celery

Cut carrots into thin rings

Small dice of sweet potato into little pieces

Lightly sauté the mushrooms and set aside – it's 1 cup after cooking.

Dandelion leaves:

Thoroughly wash the leaves in cold water because there is often sand on them; drain and remove the leaf from the stems by hand. (Plants are smart and in their own self-defense, they increase their anti-oxidant value when they are ripped by hand over knife cutting). You can leave the more tender stems at the top. A little time consuming, but worth it.

Seasonal Harmony 季节之和谐

In a large skillet/wok/soup pot (3-5 qt.)

Heat oil with sprinkle of salt (prevents splattering) – medium heat

* If using small red chille to make this spicy, add it now and remove before serving.

Add in garlic and scallions – just heat through

Add celery and carrots – stir in and sauté for only 1-2 minutes

Add one cup of water/broth, stir and let simmer for a couple of minutes

Add sweet potato and rest of broth/water; cover and let simmer on low until the sweet potatoes are almost done.

Then, add the dandelion leaves all at once and stir in to soup. Let them wilt and cook for only 2-3 minutes on low. Turn off heat and let it sit covered for an hour or so. The dandelion leaves should still be bright, jewel green – careful not to over cook. Also, not under cook else they will be too tough or bitter.

When heating for eating, add the lightly sautéed mushroom a little black pepper. . DONE.

Dandelions are an excellent leafy green that are available throughout Spring and Summer. Their

health benefits are amazing, especially from the TCM point of view. Because they are slightly bitter, many people do not like them. This soup, which can be easily eaten at room temperature, (never cold, but really doesn't need to be "hot") balances the dandelion flavor and the way they are cooked combats the toughness that people also find difficult. Dandelion has been used for relieving heat and dampness and it focuses the qi downwards.

Tea Recommendations for the Season:

Chrysanthemum Tea with Hawthorne Berries; Chamomile Tea alone or with Lavender – so peaceful. Chamomile is a flower that is related to Chrysanthemum. It is commonly known to be cooling and drying (a mild diuretic) and relaxant.

Chrysanthemum is a natural internal coolant that is said to promote circulation and is naturally sweet. Hawthorne berries (available dried in most Asian markets) are said to be a heart tonic that assists circulation and improves digestion of fats.

Another idea is: Strawberries are prominent in this season, slice a few strawberries, mash them slightly, cover them with warm water and a squeeze of lemon juice adding a bit of honey. Let this mixture sit for about 5 minutes.

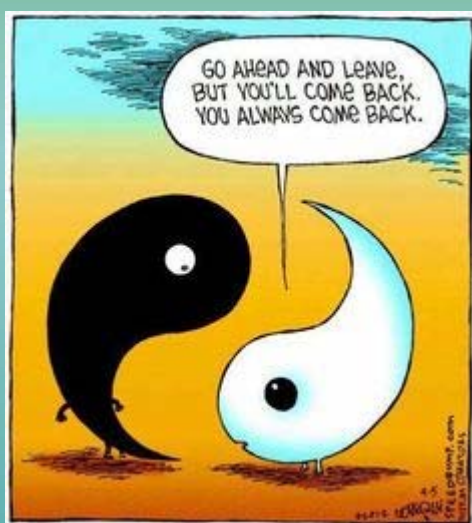
Strain, add a crushed mint leaf and feel the coolness, the lovely fragrant flavor and no need for ice!

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



The information in this article is based on the theories and principles of Chinese Medicine/Five Element Theory. **Ellasara**, a practitioner of *Wu Ming Qigong*, has been studying with Master and Dr. Nan Lu for many years and has participated in special classes through TCM World Foundation and the Tao of Healing in New York City.

Comedy Moment 开心一刻



**Don't frown.
You never know who is falling
in love with your smile.**



Yin, Yang, and Work Life Balance

by Peter Morgan



**The typical soloist is a
master of Yang, i.e. hard work, striving and
making things happen. But what about Yin,
and the magic, ease, flow and balance it offers?**

Most of us recognize the Yin-Yang symbol. The outer circle represents "everything", while the shapes within represent the interaction of the two energies - "yin" (black) and "yang" (white).

These two energies cause everything to happen. Yang is the masculine principle, and evokes words like active, creative and hard. Yin is the feminine: passive, receptive and soft. The key belief is that one cannot exist without the other.

The curse of unbalanced Yang

In the world of work, Yang predominates. Most workplaces are the domain of the masculine principle – hard work, busyness, long hours and making things happen. Yang is not a bad thing and many of our great achievements come as a result and the extra push it gives us.

However, the problem is *unbalanced* Yang. This can become a tyrant, leading to loss of work-life balance, stress, ill-health and burn-out. Unbalanced Yang doesn't let us switch off the computer. It torments us with ever growing to-do lists and unsympathetic schedules. It keeps us in work mode when we are with our loved ones and forces us to do things when our heart is telling us otherwise.

There's no doubt that using willpower and force means things get done, but does this fulfill us and what is the cost?

Ultimately, Yang on its own is highly inefficient and potentially very costly in terms of time and money.

The power of Yin

So how does bringing Yin into our working lives help us? For me, Yin is about the power of waiting and attracting. It's about becoming a magnet and allowing magic, ease and flow into our lives. It's about having the courage to wait, learning to use our intuition and the guidance of our feelings to discern the right time to act and the right thing to do.

Yin gives me the trust that the right people and information will turn up in their own natural, perfect time without my having to go out searching for them.

So, how can we bring more Yin into our work lives? The best way I find is to switch off my computer and get away from my desk. Most of my best work is done walking in nature, or whilst running or cycling.

It's at these times that I get answers to my most difficult problems, or clarity about my direction. Whether or not to make the follow-up phone-call, when it's time to wait for a client to contact me or put certain projects on the backburner.

Plus it is here I get my best and most creative ideas.

Other ways of connecting with Yin include meditation, conscious relaxation, yoga, getting a massage or simply spending time sitting and contemplating.

The key to Yin is to take a break from "trying" and all our agendas, and to become passive and receptive to our inner knowing or wisdom.

Creating real work-life balance

When I balance Yin and Yang work-life balance happens naturally. This is *real* work-life balance, not simply another item on my to-do list ("*Go to Yoga – get Work-Life balance!*"), but rather a natural state of being.

I feel more confident, clearer in my thinking, decision making and discernment and more relaxed. And even though I may occasionally find myself working some long hours from this place, it happens effortlessly and does not affect the overall harmony within my life.

[Peter Morgan](#) is a Personal and Business Coach, Group Facilitator and Trainer in Australia who is dedicated to creating a life he loves and inspiring others to do so too!

<http://www.flyingsolo.com.au/member/34063/contributor>
<http://www.copiavita.com/>



Mind-Body Medicine Research Updates

*Compiled by
Kevin W Chen, Ph.D.*



Meditation-based treatment yielding immediate relief for meditation-naïve migraineurs. Pain Manag Nurs. 2014 Mar;15(1):36-40. By Tonelli ME, Wachholtz AB.

Meditation is gaining popularity as an effective means of managing and attenuating pain and has been particularly effective for migraines. Meditation additionally addresses the negative emotional states known to exist with migraines. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of meditation as an immediate intervention for reducing migraine pain as well as alleviating emotional tension, examined herein as a negative affect hypothesized to be correlated with pain. Twenty-seven migraineurs, with two to ten migraines per month, reported migraine-related pain and emotional tension ratings on a Likert scale (ranging from 0 to 10) before and after ex-

posure to a brief meditation-based treatment. All participants were meditation-naïve, and attended one 20-minute guided meditation session based on the Buddhist "loving kindness" approach. After the session, participants reported a 33% decrease in pain and a 43% decrease in emotional tension. The data suggest that a single exposure to a brief meditative technique can significantly reduce pain and tension, as well as offer several clinical implications. It can be concluded that single exposure to a meditative technique can significantly reduce pain and tension. The effectiveness and immediacy of this intervention offers several implications for nurses.

Read the original article at:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1524904212000707?via=ihub>

Health benefits of qigong or tai chi for cancer patients: a systematic review and meta-analyses. Complement Ther Med. 2014 Feb;22 (1):173-186. By Zeng Y, Luo T, Xie H, Huang M, Cheng AS.

BACKGROUND: Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide. Mind-body interventions are widely used by cancer patients to reduce symptoms and cope better with disease- and treatment-related symptoms. In the last decade, many clinical controlled trials of qigong/tai chi as a cancer treatment have emerged. This study aimed to quantitatively evaluate the effects of qigong/tai chi on the health-related outcomes of cancer patients.

METHODS: Five databases (Medline, CINAHL, Scopus, the Cochrane Library, and the CAJ Full-text Database) were searched until June 30, 2013. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of qigong/tai chi as a treatment intervention for cancer patients were considered for inclusion. The primary outcome for this review was changes in quality of life (QOL) and other physical and psychological effects in cancer patients. The secondary outcome for this review was adverse events of the qigong/tai chi intervention.

RESULTS: A total of 13 RCTs with 592 subjects were included in this review. Nine RCTs involving 499 subjects provided enough data to generate pooled estimates of effect size for health-related outcomes. For cancer-specific QOL, the pooled weighted mean difference (WMD) was 7.99 [95% confidence interval (CI): 4.07, 11.91; Z score=4.00, $p<0.0001$]. The standardized mean differences (SMDs) for changes in depression and anxiety score were -0.69 (95% CI: -1.51, 0.14; Z score=1.64, $p=0.10$), and -0.93 (95% CI: -1.80, -0.06; Z score=2.09, $p=0.04$), respectively. The WMDs for changes in body mass index and body composition from baseline to 12 weeks follow-up were -1.66 (95% CI: -3.51, 0.19; Z score=1.76, $p=0.08$), and -0.67 (95% CI: -2.43, 1.09; Z score=0.75, $p=0.45$) respectively. The SMD for changes in the cortisol level was -0.37 (95% CI: -0.74, -0.00; Z score=1.97, $p=0.05$).

CONCLUSION: This study found that qigong/tai chi had positive effects on the cancer-specific QOL, fatigue, immune function and cortisol level of cancer patients. However, these findings need to be interpreted cautiously due to the limited number of studies identified and high risk of bias in included trials. Further rigorous trials are needed to explore possible therapeutic effects of qigong/tai chi on cancer patients.



Improving creativity performance by short-term meditation. Behav Brain Funct. 2014 Mar 19;10(1):9. By Ding X, Tang YY, Tang R, Posner MI.

BACKGROUND: One form of meditation intervention, the integrative body-mind training (IBMT) has been shown to improve attention, reduce stress and change self-reports of mood. In this paper we examine whether short-term IBMT can improve performance related to creativity and determine the role that mood may play in such improvement.

METHODS: Forty Chinese undergraduates were randomly assigned to short-term IBMT group or a relaxation training (RT) control group. Mood and creativity performance were assessed by the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) and Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) questionnaire respectively.

RESULTS: As predicted, the results indicated that short-term (30 min per day for 7 days) IBMT improved creativity performance on the divergent thinking task, and yielded better emotional regulation than RT. In addition, cross-lagged analysis indicated that both positive and negative affect may influence creativity in IBMT group (not RT group).

CONCLUSIONS: Our results suggested that emotion-related creativity-promoting mechanism may be attributed to short-term meditation.

Empirical study of the influence of a Laughing Qigong Program on long-term care residents. Geriatr Gerontol Int. 2014 Feb 18. By Hsieh CJ1, Chang C, Tsai G, Wu HF.

AIM: To determine the psychological and physiological effects of a Laughing Qigong Program on an elderly population in an institutionalized setting.

METHODS: Participants were recruited from a long-term care institution in northern Taiwan. A total of 99 residents were interviewed and 66 enrolled, there were 33 control participants and 33 experimental participants. The participants were matched according to their abilities as measured by the Barthel Index of Activities for Daily Living. Experimental participants attended the Laughing Qigong Program, twice a week for 4 weeks. Comparisons were made on the Mini-Mental State Examination, Faces Scale, Geriatric Depression Scale and cortisol levels.

RESULTS: Psychometric measures for participants in the experimental group improved, whereas those in the control group decreased. The experimental group showed the following changes: improved Mini-Mental State Examination scores ($Z = -2.28$; $P < 0.05$), improved mood states ($Z = -4.47$; $P < 0.001$) and decreased Geriatric Depression Scale scores ($Z = 3.79$; $P < 0.001$). There were no significant changes for the experimental group in cortisol levels. By comparison, the control group showed: decreased mood states ($Z = 2.53$; $P < 0.011$), increased Geriatric Depression Scale scores ($Z = 4.34$; $P < 0.001$) and significant increases in cortisol levels ($Z = 2.62$; $P < 0.009$).

CONCLUSIONS: The Laughing Qigong Program has shown to be an effective, cost-effective non-pharmacological therapy for cognitive impairment, mood states and elderly depression.





A meta-analytic review of the effects of mindfulness meditation on telomerase activity.

Psycho-neuroendocrinology. 2014 Apr;42:45-8. By Schutte NS, Malouff JM.

The enzyme telomerase, through its influence on telomere length, is associated with health and mortality. Four pioneering randomized control trials, including a total of 190 participants, provided information on the effect of mindfulness meditation on telomerase. A meta-analytic effect size of $d=0.46$ indicated that mindfulness meditation leads to increased telomerase activity in peripheral blood mononuclear cells. These results suggest the need for further large-scale trials in-

vestigating optimal implementation of mindfulness meditation to facilitate telomerase functioning.

Non-directive meditation activates default mode network and areas associated with memory retrieval and emotional processing.

Front Hum Neurosci. 2014 Feb 26;8:86. By Xu J, Vik A, Groote IR, et al.

Non-directive meditation techniques are practiced with a relaxed focus of attention that permits spontaneously occurring thoughts, images, sensations, memories, and emotions to emerge and pass freely, without any expectation that

mind wandering should abate. These techniques are thought to facilitate mental processing of emotional experiences, thereby contributing to wellness and stress management. The present study assessed brain activity by functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) in 14 experienced practitioners of Acem meditation in two experimental conditions. In the first, non-directive meditation was compared to rest. Significantly increased activity was detected in areas associated with attention, mind wandering, retrieval of episodic memories, and emotional processing. In the second condition, participants carried out concentrative practicing of the same meditation technique, actively trying to avoid mind wandering. The contrast non-directive meditation > concentrative practicing was characterized by higher activity in the right medial temporal lobe (parahippocampal gyrus and amygdala). In conclusion, the present results support the notion that non-directive meditation, which permits mind wandering, involves more extensive activation of brain areas associated with episodic memories and emotional processing, than during concentrative practicing or regular rest.

<http://journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00086/full>

A week-long meditation retreat decouples behavioral measures of the alerting and executive attention networks. Front Hum Neurosci. 2014 Feb 17;8:69. By Elliott JC, Wallace BA, Giesbrecht B.

PREVIOUS STUDIES HAVE EXAMINED THE INFLUENCE OF MEDITATION ON THREE FUNCTIONALLY DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF ATTENTION: executive control, alerting, and orienting. These studies have consistently found that meditation training improves both executive attention and alerting, but there has not been a consistent

and clear effect of meditation training on orienting. In addition, while previous studies have shown that the functional coupling of the alerting and executive networks increases the processing of task irrelevant stimuli, it is unknown if participating in a meditation retreat can decouple these components of attention and lead to improved performance. The current study investigated the influence of a week-long intensive meditation retreat on three components of attention by randomly assigning participants to either pre- or post-retreat testing groups. A modified attention network test (ANT) was used. Executive attention was measured as the difference in response time (RT) between congruent and incongruent task irrelevant flankers (conflict effect). Reflexive and volitional orienting were measured by manipulating cue validity and stimulus onset asynchrony (SOA). The coupling of executive attention and alerting was measured by examining flanker interference as a function of the SOA of an alerting cue. The meditation retreat improved task based indices of executive attention, but not reflexive or volitional orienting. There was clear behavioral evidence of coupling between executive attention and alerting in the pre-retreat group, as the conflict effect peaked when an alerting cue was presented 300 ms before the target. Importantly, there was no increase in the conflict effect for the post-retreat group. This is consistent with the notion that the retreat decoupled the executive and alerting networks. These results suggest that pre-



viously reported improvements in the executive and alerting networks after meditation training might be mediated by the same underlying mechanism.

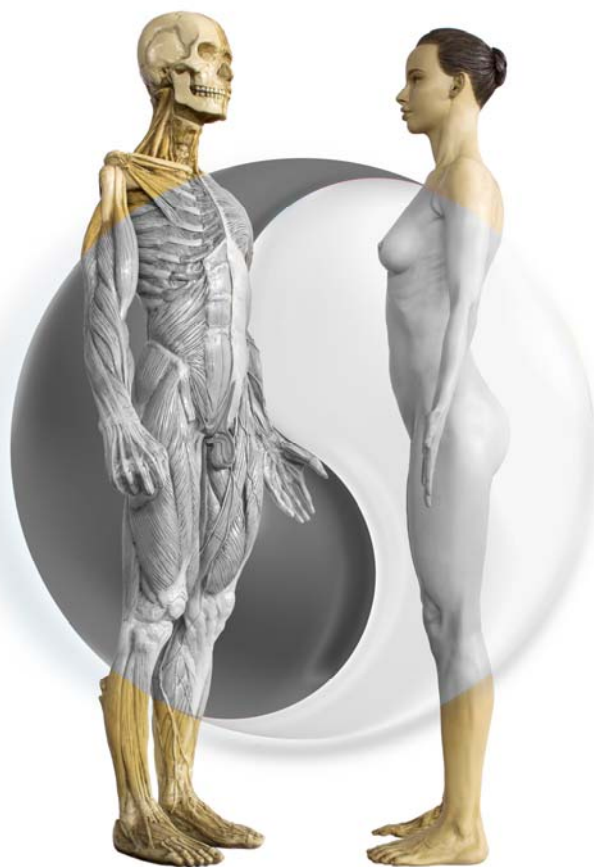
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Group vs. Single Mindfulness Meditation: Exploring Avoidance, Impulsivity, and Weight Management in Two Separate Mindfulness Meditation Settings.

Appl Psychol Health Well Being. 2014 Feb 28. By Mantzios M, Giannou K.

Recent research has identified that mindfulness meditation in group settings supports people who are trying to lose weight. The present research investigated mindfulness meditation in group and individual settings, and explored the potential impact on weight loss and other factors (i.e. mindfulness, impulsivity, and avoidance) that may assist or hinder weight loss. Specifically, the hypotheses tested were that the group setting assisted dieters more than the individual setting by reducing weight, cognitive-behavioral avoidance, and impulsivity and by increasing mindfulness. Participants ($n = 170$) who were trying to lose weight were randomly assigned to practice meditation for 6 weeks within a group or independently. Measurements in mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral avoidance, impulsivity, and weight occurred twice (pre- and post-intervention). Results indicated that participants in the group set-

ting lost weight and lowered their levels of cognitive-behavioral avoidance, while impulsivity and mindfulness remained stable. On the other hand, participants in the individual condition lost less weight, while there was an increase in cognitive-behavioral avoidance and mindfulness scores, but a decrease in impulsivity. Seeing that benefits and limitations observed in group settings are not replicated when people meditate alone, this study concluded that mindfulness meditation in individual settings needs to be used with caution, although there are some potential benefits that could aid future weight loss research.



Evaluation of Vipassana Meditation Course Effects on Subjective Stress, Well-being, Self-kindness and Mindfulness in a Community Sample: Post-course and 6-month Outcomes.

Stress Health. 2014 Feb 11. By Szekeres RA, Wertheim EH.

Residential Vipassana meditation courses, which teach mindfulness skills, are widely available globally but under-evaluated. This study examined effects of a standardized, community-based Vipassana course, on subjective stress, well-being, self-kindness and trait mindfulness in a community sample. Participants completed self-report measures of these variables at pre-course and post-course ($n = 122$), and outcomes were compared to a control group of early enrollers (EEs) ($n = 50$) who completed measures at parallel time points before course commencement. Six-month follow-up was undertaken in the intervention group ($n = 90$). Findings, including intention-

to-complete analyses, suggested positive effects of the Vipassana course in reducing subjective stress and increasing well-being, self-kindness and overall mindfulness (present-moment awareness and non-reaction). Although some reductions in post-course gains were found at follow-up, particularly in stress, follow-up scores still showed improvements compared to pre-course scores. Mindfulness change scores between pre-course and 6-month follow-up were moderately to highly correlated with outcome variable change scores, consistent with the idea that effects of the Vipassana course on stress and well-being operate, at least partially, through increasing mindfulness. The present research underscores the importance of undertaking further investigations into Vipassana courses' effects and applications.

Yoga as an alternative and complementary approach for stress management: a systematic review. J Evid Based Complementary Altern Med. 2014 Jan;19(1):59-67. By Sharma M.

Stress has become a global public health problem. Yoga offers one possible way of reducing stress. The purpose of this study was to look at studies from 2011 to May 2013 and examine whether yoga can be an efficacious approach for managing stress. A systematic search of Medline, CINAHL, and Alt HealthWatch databases was conducted for quantitative articles involving all schools of yoga. A total of 17 articles met the inclusion criteria. Six of these were from the United States, 3 from India, 2 from the United Kingdom, and 1 each from Australia, Brazil, Germany, Iraq, Sweden, and Taiwan. Of the 17 studies, 12 demonstrated positive changes in psychological or physiological outcomes related to stress. Despite the limitations, not all studies used a randomized controlled design, had smaller sample

sizes, had different outcomes, had non-standardized yoga intervention, and had varying lengths, yoga appears to be a promising modality for stress management.

Effects of yoga on cardiovascular disease risk factors: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Int J Cardiol. 2014 Feb 25. By Cramer H, Lauche R, Haller H, et al.

BACKGROUND: The aim of this review was to systematically assess and meta-analyze the effects of yoga on modifiable biological cardiovascular disease risk factors in the general population and in high-risk disease groups.

METHODS: MEDLINE/PubMed, Scopus, the Cochrane Library, and IndMED were screened through August 2013 for randomized controlled trials (RCTs) on yoga for predefined cardiovascular risk factors in healthy participants, non-diabetic participants with high risk for cardiovascular disease, or participants with type 2 diabetes mellitus. Risk of bias was assessed using the Cochrane risk of bias tool.

RESULTS: Forty-four RCTs with a total of 3168 participants were included. Risk of bias was high or unclear for most RCTs. Relative to usual care or no intervention, yoga improved systolic (mean difference (MD)=-5.85mmHg; 95% confidence interval (CI)=-8.81, -2.89) and diastolic blood pressure (MD=-4.12mmHg; 95%CI=-6.55, -1.69), heart rate (MD=-6.59bpm; 95%CI=-12.89, -0.28), respiratory rate (MD=-0.93breaths/min; 95%CI=-1.70, -0.15), waist circumference (MD=-1.95cm; 95%CI=-3.01, -0.89), waist/hip ratio (MD=-0.02; 95%CI=-0.03, -0.00), total cholesterol (MD=-13.09mg/dl; 95%CI=-19.60, -6.59), HDL (MD=2.94mg/dl; 95%CI=0.57, 5.31), VLDL (MD=-5.70mg/dl; 95%CI=-7.36, -4.03), triglycerides (MD=-20.97mg/dl; 95%CI=-28.61, -13.32), HbA1c (MD=-0.45%; 95%CI=-0.87, -0.02), and insulin resistance (MD=-0.19; 95%CI=-0.30, -

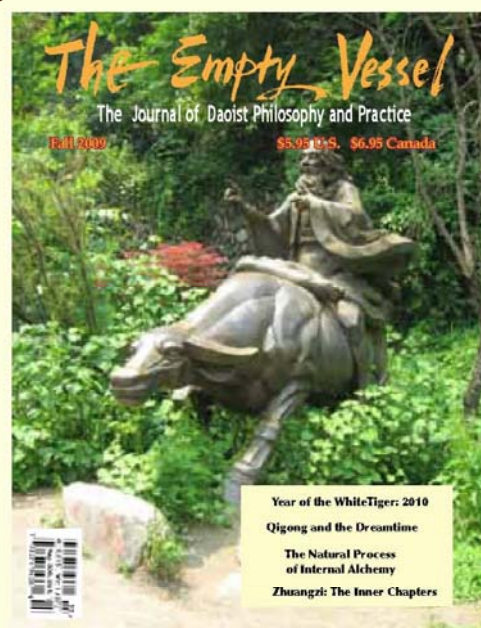
0.08). Relative to exercise, yoga improved HDL (MD=3.70mg/dl; 95%CI=1.14, 6.26).

CONCLUSIONS: This meta-analysis revealed evidence for clinically important effects of yoga on most biological cardiovascular disease risk factors. Despite methodological drawbacks of the included studies, yoga can be considered as an ancillary intervention for the general population and for patients with increased risk of cardiovascular disease.



Kevin W Chen, Ph.D. – is an associate professor at the Center for Integrative Medicine, University of Maryland. Dr. Chen was educated in the universities of both China and the United States, and has years of experience and training in blending eastern and western perspectives, and in the practice of life-nurturing methods. As a long-time practitioner of Qigong Yang Sheng, he is one of the few scientists in the U.S. to have both hands-on knowledge of mind-body practice, and an active research career in mind-body medicine, which is funded through grants by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and various foundations. Dr. Chen devotes his career and life to the practice of Yang Sheng, and promotion of self-healing and mind-body-spirit integration.

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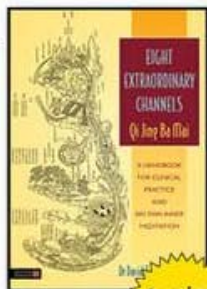
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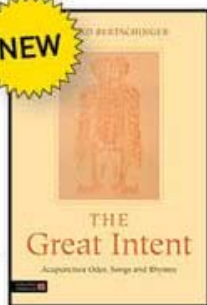
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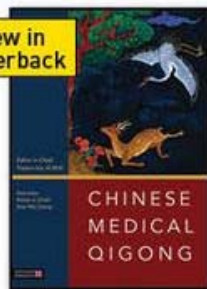
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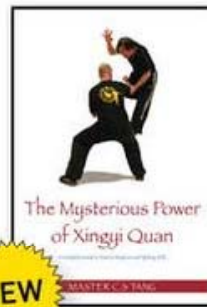
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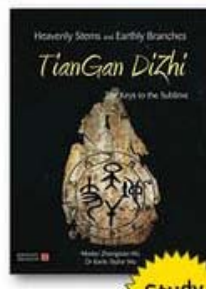
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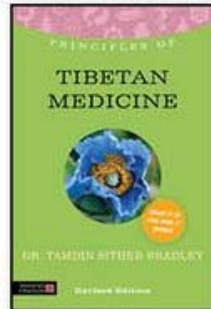
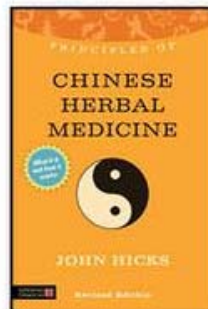
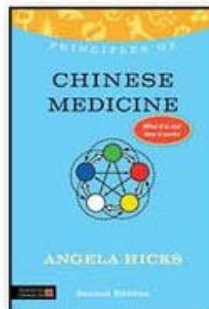
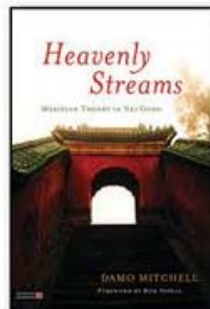
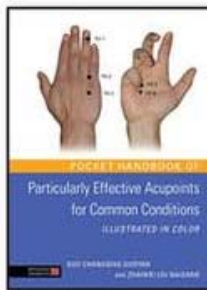
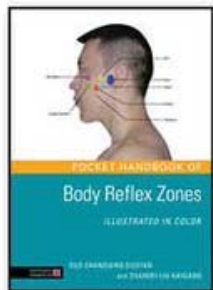


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