

Cultivate Qi for Body, Mind & Spirit

# Yang-Sheng

## Nurturing Life

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Living the Integral Way of Life  
Sex: The Great Healer  
Lessons from a Grand Master  
Chinese Astrology & Inner Cultivation  
Tai Chi for Musicians  
Qi in Chinese Medicine  
Counting Breath Method  
Seasonal Harmony  
...and more!

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



[From the Editor]



## Welcome to Yang-Sheng!

Welcome to another issue of Yang-Sheng! As usual, this one could not have been possible without the submissions from our regular columnists as well as the generous work of this month's associate editor, Michelle Wood and our "da ge" (big brother) Kevin Chen. You will read a wide variety of articles and stories in this issue. We hope that you will take something precious from each one, and share with your friends....

This subject of Nourishing Life practice is a very ancient one yet many of the ideas and practices offered in these pages are as up to date as can be. Many of the problems facing humankind today are the same as those of the Tang Dynasty and earlier. Yet some are totally new. This world of ours, racing faster and faster and becoming more and more toxic, is full of modern ills. Alternative

health modalities, including Chinese medicine and many more, have also been developed and can be of much help for many of the illnesses and complaints of the modern world.

It is our hope that we will be able to present many of the alternative health modalities in our upcoming issues — including Chinese health practices (acupuncture, herbs, qigong etc) as well as Ayurveda, massage, yoga and many other health practices, both East and West.

The challenges of living in this ever-shifting world are very great. Yet there are many wonderful people out there, working on the front lines of health and healing. Please join us in presenting and supporting them as we move forward into the future!

Solala Towler, Editor-in-Chief (<http://yang-sheng.com>)

[Solala has been involved with Daoist practices such as taiji, qigong and meditation for almost 23 years now. He has been publishing *The Empty Vessel: The Journal of Daoist Thought and Practice*, for almost 18 years. He has written a number of books on Daoist thought and practice (including *Cha Dao: The Way of Tea* and the *Inner Chapters of Chuang Tzu*) and has been leading tours to China to study qigong and other Daoist practices in the sacred mountains of China since 1997. In addition, he has recorded four CDs on meditation/relaxation/movement music using Tibetan singing bowls, both Chinese and Native flute and harmonic overtone singing. He can be reached at [solala@abodetao.com](mailto:solala@abodetao.com) or at his website at [www.abodetao.com](http://www.abodetao.com) ]



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## [Featured Article]

## Living the Integral Way of Life

by Michelle Wood

### What Is an Integralist?

One of the topics dear to my heart is balance and harmony, both the inner balance and harmony of your body systems and organs working perfectly, and working perfectly together for your health and wellness, and outer harmony with your environment. To be in this sort of relationship with yourself and your environment means that your needs are fulfilled, and you both receive pleasure and give pleasure to everyone and everything because you acknowledge and appreciate the unity of all things.

Being in harmony with your environment can take many and diverse paths and routines, from following the energy of your astrological chart, arranging your home according to the principles of *feng shui*, eating foods in their season, to appreciating the cycles of sun and moon, and the seasons.



I have found that many people who live “green” and take care of the environment by paying attention to and reducing their carbon footprint as much as possible, who “eat organic” for the benefit of both the soil and the body, who appreciate the everyday miracles they see in their surroundings are the people who give pleasure to the environment. We don't often think of that as “giving pleasure” to the environment, and the environment probably does not feel pleasure in the same way a person does, but there is an interaction on the energetic level, and the vibrations of the happy and appreciative emotions we emit while breathing fresh air, drinking clear water, and eating wholesome foods, not to mention the peace and joy we feel when surrounded by the beauty of the natural landscape, have an effect on our surroundings.

Being out of harmony with your environment is often felt as the loss of the sense of peace and contentment, which frequently happens throughout the day of a busy life. It means not paying attention nor connecting with your surroundings. It means rushing from here to there without noticing what is going on around you, eating convenience foods whether the food is nutritious or not, forgetting to take the time you need for yourself and your spiritual practice, leaving you feeling vaguely hungry and thirsty without being able to identify the source of the hunger or thirst, that nebulous “something is not right, but I don't know what” feeling.

Inner balance means taking care of yourself by eating healthy, nutritious foods, getting the right amount of sleep for yourself, making sure you balance work time with play time. It is less about the physicality of living and more about the metaphysical aspects, the thoughts, feelings and beliefs you have that nurture you and allow you to have respect and appreciation for your emotional wellness as well as your body and your physical health. When your spirit is nurtured, your emotions and beliefs are in balance and the universe is a place

of wonder and joy. You want the best for everyone without exception; you appreciate each individual for the unique talent and gift they each bring to our universal Oneness or Wholeness.

I believe this is possible only when you have a practice of self-cultivation, take responsibility for every action, and have a strong sense of spiritual connection. As Master Ni says on page 25 of *The Way of Integral Life*, “The best thing you can do for the world is to develop yourself spiritually.”

You create your life and your experience. On page 25 of *TAO: The Subtle Universal Law and the Integral Way of Life*, Master Ni writes:

“It is the energy projected by an individual's own mind which creates his experience. Consciousness is the vessel. The events in one's life are merely the physical or mental manifestations of the vessel's contents. The events are thus nothing more than reflected images of one's own mental energy. The secret to leading a positive life is to refine and harmonize one's energy so as to live in consonance with the order of the universe. Conversely, by holding negative energy in one's mind in the form of distorted thought patterns and attitudes, one's life will reflect negativity and disharmony.

“Every facet of our being is a manifestation of energy.”

So, are you an Integralist? I didn't really think of using that term until a few years ago following an interesting teleconference. About the same time, I learned that there are at least two different kinds of Integralist, and they embrace quite different principles!

I participated in a teleconference call with Dr Roger Jahnke in 2008. We were at the end of the call, and I had asked a question which was being answered by Dr Jahnke. In the ensuing conversation, I don't recall my exact words, but said something like, “I believe we already have inside us everything we need to be completely healthy,” and he responded by telling me that I am an Integralist.

In spite of reading and following the writings of Master Ni Hua-Ching for many years, I did not apply the label of Integralist to what Master Ni calls “The Integral Way” in his writings on Daoism. In fact, Integralist frequently refers to a political philosophy, and that is not the Integralist to which I refer in this writing.

So, for perfect clarity, here is the definition of Integralist as I understand it and live it, and intend it for this article: a person who believes in the harmony of body-mind-spirit, conscious and unconscious, inside your body and outside with your environment, not necessarily just your local environment, but your universal (spiritual) environment. These are the teachings of many Daoist leaders, included in many Daoist writings, and in particular the writings of Master Ni Hua-Ching in his books on “The Integral Way.”)



### The First Steps are Qigong and Meditation

As most people do, I searched for the “cure” when the “disease” became nearly overwhelming. I don't want to spend a lot of time describing my darkness; this is going to be different for everyone, and its purpose is to make you open your eyes and heart and look around with Consciousness, Awareness, and Connection. In my case, the disease was not physical, it was emotional. Most of my fifty-seven years have been spent living with people who crushed my self-esteem and self-worth, who also convinced me that I had no other choice

than to stay with them because I was too incompetent, too incapable of taking care of myself. They told me that I did not have the brains nor the skills to survive, especially financially, on my own. They said they were “doing me a favor” by taking care of me. I dwelt in that darkness for a long time.....too long.

However, when things are at their darkest, a ray of light (dare I say enlightenment) always appears; *always, without exception*, but it takes Consciousness and Awareness to see it and follow it.

There is a direct correlation with spiritual connection, self-love, and physical well-being. Feeling bad about yourself puts you out of harmony with your environment. The energy you emit can be damaging to your surroundings because you really do influence everyone and everything around you. Additionally, being in a state of powerlessness often engenders an “I don't care” attitude which can lead to actually engaging in activities that may feel good in the moment but are ultimately harmful. Many addictions come from this state of being.

I myself smoked cigarettes from the time I was 17 until age 51; I quit six years ago and have not had one cigarette since. This is not to say I am better than other people who have quit and then gone back to smoking, but I believe discoveries happened like rungs on a ladder that let me climb up and out of the darkness. I made the spiritual connection I required that's allowed me to feel that self-love that's given me the ability to nurture myself emotionally instead of trying to “feel good” with a nicotine high.

One of the things I have come to believe very sincerely is that all problems, without exception – physical, mental, and emotional – are due to a spiritual disconnect.

The first rung on the ladder toward my own Integral Way of Life was the taiji class I started in 1995. Unfortunately, the class went only a few months and we were not able to learn the entire form, but that class was my first exposure to qigong; the taiji instructor used several qigong movements as warm-up exercises, and I enjoyed them so much that after the class ended, I continued doing these miscellaneous qigong moves until learning the *Baduanjin* (Eight Pieces of Brocade) form a couple years later.

I had no knowledge of metaphysics when I began qigong, but quickly enough began to sense a difference in myself, that I began to feel the stirrings of both peace and power, the kind of peace that allows clarity of thought and vision, and the kind of power that breeds self-confidence and self-esteem. These were quite new sensations, for sure, and even though it felt confusing and precarious at times, I liked them!

Quite frankly, I didn't really understand what was going on at that time. However, I have the perfect words now, quoting Dr. Roger Jahnke in his appearance on Lama Tantrapa's “The Secrets of Qi Gong Masters” Blog Talk Radio show <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/qigongmasters/2010/11/23/interview-with-dr-roger-jahnke> from November 2010 in which Dr. Jahnke spoke about wellness and qigong as a mind-body practice:

Dr Jahnke: “So, I think we have agreement on the first way [to remove that restraint to the natural expressiveness of our inherent well-being], which is a body-oriented result which arises from the will and the intelligence making the decision to focus, have a radical attentiveness to the present moment, which you stated very nicely a moment ago.

“The second thing that happens is a non-body-associated process, but it has an influence on the body which is that in the absence of the past and the future, we are naturally in the – I'll put quotes around it – the “eternal now.” There's a whole school of thought around this concept of present moment focus. There's also a school of thought around the whole idea that in the absence of paying attention to the multiplicity, the layers of life, the past, the present, and the future, and just isolating our intention into the present, that we're actually tapping infinity.



“And, what's interesting about that, is that in that state, which could be called the “qigong state,” which could also be called the “oneness state,” could also be called the “non-dual state,” in that state, what we believe to be true, according to the great thinkers, and the great practitioners of qigong and taiji and including perhaps yourself and myself, is that when we go into that state of radical attentiveness to the “now,” we're actually in a relationship with the part of ourselves that is whole. And that we are in a direct relationship with the part of ourselves that is eternally well. The part of ourselves that cannot get sick, and does not die. And, uh, this starts to sound a little trippy or esoteric...”

Lama Tantrapa: “At least metaphysical to some extent.”

Dr Jahnke: “Yes, so those are the two ways, one is that you shift the nervous system and that your body reflects less stress and therefore it moves naturally toward a state of greater well-being, and the second way - and they happen at the same time - is that when you tap into the “now,” you're connecting with your eternal self, the part of yourself that isn't just here in the four dimensions. . .”

So there it was, without my even knowing it at the time, along with the normal relaxation-response and well-ness that qigong delivers, I was tapping into the state of Wholeness, of Oneness.

### Introduction to the Integral Way

A couple of years into my qigong practice, I attracted a mentor who introduced me into a new qigong style, *Zhan Zhuang*, Standing Tree or Standing Pole, as taught in the book *The Way of Energy* by Master Lam Kan Chuen. As that practice progressed, my understanding and experience of that state of connecting with, as Roger called it, “your eternal self” grew enormously. (I like to call it Standing Tree rather than Standing Pole because a pole has not the same life force as a tree; a pole does not bud in the spring and flower in the summer and bear fruit in the autumn as does a tree which, to me, seems much more alive with life-force and qi.

The first stage of Standing qigong for me was to experience the energy of the Earth, and as soon as that happened, I knew there was something much bigger going on than mere feelings of “energy.” We in the West tend to think of the word “energy” in terms of calories or electricity.



There is, however, a much broader and larger experience of the living nature of energy when you practice qigong in that Oneness or Non-dual state. I like to use the words Consciousness or Awareness because they bear the connotation of the living essence of the experience. It is spiritually nourishing and consciousness expanding. On an everyday level, much more takes place than simple observation of and being in harmony with the seasons and the stars.

In seeking to understand more about these unusual experiences I had during Standing Tree qigong practice, I started learning about qigong as the self-healing facet of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and discovered the Daoist writings of Master Ni, Eva Wong, and others who talked about the earth and the sky as living, conscious entities of which we were a part . . . an Integral part!

Along with being an entity in and of myself that contains everything I need to be healthy and whole, I am – we all are – cells in this “body” of our planet, perhaps we are ever waves or particles in this “body” of our universe. Authors and scientists are revealing more surprises every day, and we are learning that even though

cells that were once connected are separated (say a few of your cells are removed and placed across the building, or across town), they will maintain a non-physical connection that is evident when both groups of cells react to an event that is directly experienced by only one, a mild electric shock for example.

We all are connected in ways that may be challenging to describe or discuss but if you train yourself to become sensitive to it, the connection can be experienced daily.

The best part is that you don't even have to go anywhere to learn about or experience this Oneness. Verse 47 of the *Daodejing* (John C. H. Wu translation) clearly points to an inward direction in order for you to discover and make this connection: meditation, qigong, whatever practice allows you to tap into the “now.”

*Without going out of your door,  
You can know the ways of the world.  
Without peeping through your window,  
You can see the Way of Heaven.*

*The farther you go,  
The less you know.*

*Thus, the Sage knows without traveling,  
Sees without looking,  
And achieves without Ado.*

(I know I have mentioned this before but I love it so will mention it again) is also a song sung by George Harrison and the Beatles. . . a Daoist verse with Hindu iconography. . . which you may view here: <http://enlightenmenteveryday.blogspot.com/2011/02/inner-light-george-harrison-daodejing.html>

There is a great paradox about looking inward: you see so much further outwardly at the same time.

### **Touching in with Source**

As the proverb says:

To improve your health –

- Medicine supplement is not as good as nutrition supplement;
- Nutrition supplement is not as good as Qi supplement;
- Qi supplement is not as good as shen (spirit) supplement.

The best way to supplement the spirit is to cultivate that “qigong” state, that state of Oneness, mentioned by Dr. Jahnke in his interview with Lama Tantrapa. Gently throughout the day, bring your mind back and back again to living in the moment instead of fretting about the past or worrying about the future.

You can do this by sitting quietly in meditation at times, or by practicing qigong movements with your full attention on the movement and your full intention in achieving the deepest level of spiritual connection that you are able at that moment. You may be surprised at how deeply you may go and how quickly you may get to that level after you have cultivated this state for a while. Your body, mind and spirit have an integrated memory, and work together to re-experience it, and to go deeper still, when given the opportunity to do so!

At times it may even seem to be a mystical experience! Which leads me to a quote I saw just yesterday that describes the word “mystic” quite perfectly: “It simply means one who has moved from mere belief systems



or belonging systems to actual inner experience. All spiritual traditions agree that such a movement is possible, desirable, and available to everyone.” - Fr. Richard Rohr, Founding Director, Center for Action and Contemplation in his article “Mysticism In Religion: Three Ways to View the Sunset” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/fr-richard-rohr/three-ways-to-view-the-sun b 822092.html>

Fr. Rohr also said: “Some call this movement conversion, some call it enlightenment, some transformation, and some holiness.”

I like to call it Being In The Dao.

When your cultivation practice takes you from belief to experience, you can maintain this mystical state of Consciousness or Oneness for longer and longer periods of time. You will discover the peace that enables you to feel content and happy, the state that also allows your body to relax and regenerate, which is the physiological equivalent to spiritual cultivation. This also brings these same feelings to everyone and everything around you, the Greater You, your relationships and your environment.

That, to me, is Living the Integral Way of Life. The best part is that it's readily available to you, you already have within you everything you need: the desire and the discipline to cultivate it.

**[Michelle Wood** – has a degree in Holistic Relaxation Therapy from Natural Health Institutes, is a student of the Yijing since the early 1990s, and embraced the philosophy and shamanic roots of Daoism at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Ms. Wood is a counselor for a weekly grief-recovery and transitions group, and leads discussions on Daoist principles for the on-line community at FindingAnswers.info. She offers meditation and Qigong classes and workshops, both privately and through Central Oregon Community College. Her participation in kirtan, Indian devotional singing, lead her to study the archetypal vibrations found in Sanskrit mantras and chants. Excited by the practice of Toning, Ms.

Wood developed a wellness program utilizing the phrases, tones and vibrations found in Sanskrit bhajans, devotional songs. She has just launched her new business Everyday Enlightenment, Transforming emotion and attitude into positive, life-enhancing lessons! She helps you do this through Consciousness and Awareness Development techniques such as qigong and meditation. Find her online at "Everyday Enlightenment" <http://www.everyday-enlightenment.com> and "Everyday Enlightenment" blog at <http://enlightenmenteveryday.blogspot.com/> ]



**[Mind-body Research Update]**

**The effect of breathing exercises on the fatigue levels of patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.** *Acta Med Indones.* 2011; 43(1):29-33. By Zakerimoghadam M, Tavasoli K, Nejad AK, Khoshkesht S. from Tehran University of Medical Sciences, School of Medicine, PO Box. 14155-6447 Tehran, Iran.

**Abstract** Aim: to assess the effect of breathing exercises on fatigue level of the patients with COPD. Methods: this quasi-experimental research was conducted on 60 COPD patients hospitalized at hospitals affiliated to Tehran University of Medical Sciences. The subjects were randomized into "experience" and "control" groups. Data were gathered by interview and data registration from the files. The data gathering tools were questionnaires, fatigue severity scale (FSS) and respiratory exercise usage checklist. The data were analyzed using SPSS software with the descriptive and deductive statistical methods (Paired-T, Chi-Square and Pearson correlation tests). Results: the average fatigue severity before (55.766) and after (40.166) using the respiratory exercises in the experience group ( $p=0\%$ ) was significantly different. While in the control group ( $p=0.002$ ) before (54.166) and after (52.200) the study has a slight difference. There was a significant inverse correlation between using respiratory exercises and fatigue severity ( $r=-0.593$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). Mean fatigue intensity for the experience and control groups decreased to  $40.916 \pm 14.4$  and  $52.20 \pm 8.539$  after the study, respectively ( $p=0.001$ ). There was a significant difference in fatigue severity between experience and control groups after the study. Conclusion: respiratory exercise is effective in reducing the fatigue in the patients with COPD.

<http://www.inaactamedica.org/archives/2011/21339543.pdf>

**Tai chi Qigong improves lung functions and activity tolerance in COPD clients: A single blind, randomized controlled trial.** *Complement Ther Med.* 2011 Feb;19(1):3-11. By Chan AW, Lee A, Suen LK, Tam WW. From The Nethersole School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine, Esther Lee Building, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong.

**OBJECTIVE:** To evaluate the effectiveness of a Tai chi Qigong (TCQ) program in enhancing respiratory functions and activity tolerance in clients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). **DESIGN:** A single-blind, randomized controlled trial. **SETTING:** Five general outpatient clinics in Hong Kong. **INTERVENTION:** In total, 206 COPD clients were randomly assigned into one of the three

groups, namely, TCQ, exercise, and control group. Subjects in the TCQ group received a TCQ program consisting of two 60-min sessions each week for three months. Subjects in the exercise group were taught to practice breathing techniques combined

with walking as an exercise. Subjects in the control group were instructed to maintain their usual activities. Data collection was performed at baseline and at the 6-week and 3-month marks. **OUTCOMES:** Lung functions, 6-min walk test, and COPD exacerbation rate. **RESULTS:** Results of repeated measures of analysis of covariance demonstrated that there were significant interaction effects between time and group in forced vital capacity ( $p=.002$ ,  $\eta(2)=.06$ ), forced expiratory volume in 1s ( $p<.001$ ,  $\eta(2)=.02$ ), walking distance ( $p<.001$ ), and exacerbation rate ( $p=.006$ ,  $\eta(2)=.06$ ) at 3 months. Improvements were noted in the TCQ group. No changes were observed in the exercise group, while a decline in lung functions was noticed in the control group. **CONCLUSION:** Tai chi Qigong was able to improve respiratory functions and activity tolerance level in COPD clients. The breathing and walking exercise helped maintain lung functions and slow down disease progression.

**Community vs. institutional elders' evaluations of and preferences for yoga exercises.** *J Clin Nurs.* 2011 Feb 9. By Chen KM, Wang HH, Li CH, Chen MH. From College of Nursing, Kaohsiung Medical University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

**Abstract:** Aims. To evaluate and compare the appropriateness of the Silver Yoga exercise programme for community and institutional elders and to determine their preferences towards yoga exercises. Background. has been used to promote the health of elders. The Silver Yoga was developed to accommodate the physical tolerance and body flexibility of elders and applied to community and institutional elders with positive Descriptive design with quantitative health promotion benefits. Design. A programme evaluation and semi-structured interviews. Method. convenience sample of 97 participants (64 community elders; 33 months of institutional elders) was interviewed individually after six Silver Yoga exercises. Participants rated the level of difficulty, acceptability,



feasibility and helpfulness of the Silver Yoga programme (four phases: warm-up, hatha yoga, relaxation and guided-imagery meditation) and the abdominal breathing technique, based on a 10-point Cantril ladder scale. Further, participants expressed their preferences. Theof yoga exercises based on four open-ended questions. Results. programme was fairly acceptable, feasible and helpful for community and institutional elders (means ranged from 8.33-9.70). The warm-up, relaxation, guided-imagery meditation and abdominal breathing are fairly easy to follow and perform (means ranged from 0.20-0.94). However, the postures in hatha yoga phase were relatively challenging but still 1.97, SD 2.33). Further,=manageable for the institutional elders (mean minutes everyday in acommunity elders preferred to practise yoga 61-90 group of 11-20, while the institutional elders preferred to practise minutes three times per week, in a group of yoga 31-60 <10. The Silver Yoga exercise programme is acceptable,Conclusions. feasible, helpful and manageable for community and institutional elders. However, different exercise protocols, such as practice intensity and group size, could be applied to different older populations. Relevance The Silver Yoga exercise programme could beto clinical practice. applied to both community and institutional elders to promote their health.

**Qigong training and effects on stress, neck-shoulder pain and life quality in a computerised office environment.** *Complement Ther Clin Pract.* 2011 Feb;17(1):54-7. By Skoglund L, Josephson M, Wahlstedt K, Lampa E, Norbäck D. from Department of Medical Sciences, Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Uppsala University and University Hospital, Uppsala, Sweden. [leni.skoglund@akademiska.se](mailto:leni.skoglund@akademiska.se)

**BACKGROUND:** Qigong is a Chinese health promoting exercise with a rhythmic pattern of slow movements and breathing affecting the autonomous nervous system. **OBJECTIVES:** To examine the implementation of Qigong for half an hour daily in a computerized office, and to study effects on health state, general health, neck-shoulder and lumbar spine symptoms and stress after six weeks training. **DESIGN:** A crossover intervention study with 37 employees randomised in two groups. A questionnaire was completed one week before starting study and every second week during the training period. After 6 weeks the first group stopped and the second group started the training. **RESULTS:** There was a small significant improvement of neck pain and disability following therapy. **CONCLUSION:** Qigong training may reduce neck disability in office workers. A longer training period might be needed in further Qigong studies in healthy, normal populations.

**Effects of yoga on balance and gait properties in women with musculoskeletal problems: a pilot study.** *Complement Ther Clin Pract.* 2011 Feb;17(1):13-5. By Ulger O, Yağlı NV. From Hacettepe University Health Sciences Faculty, Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Department, Samanpazarı, Ankara, Turkey. [ozlemulger@yahoo.com](mailto:ozlemulger@yahoo.com)

**OBJECTIVES:** The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effects of yoga on balance and gait properties in women with musculoskeletal problems. **DESIGN:** Twenty-seven women (30-45 years old) with musculoskeletal problems, such as osteoarthritis and low-back pain, were included in the present study. The patients participated in 8 sessions (twice weekly for 4 weeks) of a yoga program which included asanas, stretching exercises, and breathing techniques. **MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES:** Patients' static balance measurements and gait parameters were determined before and after the study using a stabilometer and a gait trainer, respectively. **RESULTS:** Post-study values of patients' gait parameters were found to be statistically higher than their pre-study values ( $p < 0.05$ ). The values of patients' balance addressed anterior and right positions with patients' eyes open and subsequently closed pre-treatment. However, it was notable that balance post-treatment was minimal when subjects eyes were open or closed. Anterior-posterior values and right-left values were almost equal after treatment. **DISCUSSION:** The results showed that yoga has a positive effect on balance and gait parameters of women with gait and balance disturbances that are caused by musculoskeletal problems. It is feasible to conclude that asanas and stretching exercises included in the yoga program brought about such a positive effect, and therefore it is possible to use yoga programs to solve problems caused by musculoskeletal disorders.





### **Impact of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Training on Intrinsic Brain Connectivity.**

Neuroimage. 2011 Feb 17. By Kilpatrick LA, Suyenobu BY, Smith SR, Bueller JA, Goodman T, Creswell JD, Tillisch K, Mayer EA, Naliboff BD. From Center for Neurobiology of Stress; Department of Medicine.

**Abstract:** The beneficial effects of mindful awareness and mindfulness meditation training on physical and psychological health are thought to be mediated in part through changes in underlying brain processes. Functional connectivity MRI (fcMRI) allows identification of functional networks in the brain. It has been used to examine state-dependent activity and is well-suited for studying states such as meditation. We applied fcMRI to determine if Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) training is effective in altering intrinsic connectivity networks (ICNs). Healthy women were randomly assigned to participate in an 8 week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) training course or an 8 week waiting period. After 8 weeks, fMRI data (1.5 T) was acquired while subjects rested with eyes closed, with the instruction to pay attention to the sounds of the scanner environment. Group independent component analysis was performed to investigate training-related changes in functional connectivity. Significant MBSR-related differences in functional connectivity were found mainly in auditory/salience and medial visual networks. Relative to findings in the control group, MBSR subjects showed (1) increased functional connectivity within auditory and visual networks, (2) increased functional connectivity between auditory cortex and areas associated with attentional and self-referential processes, (3) greater anticorrelation between auditory and visual cortex, and (4) greater anticorrelation between visual cortex and areas associated with attentional and self-referential processes. These findings suggest that 8 weeks of mindfulness meditation training alters intrinsic functional connectivity in ways that may reflect a more consistent attentional focus, enhanced sensory processing, and reflective awareness of sensory experience.

**Intracerebral source generators characterizing concentrative meditation.** Cogn Process. 2011 Feb 25. By Lavallee CF, Hunter MD, Persinger MA. From Psychology Department, Laurentian University, Sudbury, ON, Canada, cx\_lavallee@laurentian.ca.

**Abstract:** Previous researchers have studied meditation practices as a means to understand consciousness as well as altered states of consciousness. Various meditation techniques, such as Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Qigong, have been explored with

source localization tools; however, the concentrative meditation technique has yet to be fully studied in this manner. The current study demonstrates findings, which outline differential activation in a self-referential default network during meditation in participants who espouse themselves as regular concentrative meditation practitioners, as well as comparisons with a control group practicing a modified version of the relaxation response. The results are compared with other putative experimental findings employing other meditation techniques, and the findings outlined in the current study are discussed with respect to changes in perceptual awareness often reported by meditators.

**Activation of the anterior prefrontal cortex and serotonergic system is associated with improvements in mood and EEG changes induced by Zen meditation practice in novices.** Int J Psychophysiol. 2011 Feb 16. By Yu X, Fumoto M, Nakatani Y, Sekiyama T, Kikuchi H, Seki Y, Sato-Suzuki I, Arita H.

**Abstract:** To gain insight to the neurophysiological mechanisms involved in Zen meditation, we evaluated the effects of focused attention (FA) on breathing movements in the lower abdomen (Tanden) in novices. We investigated hemodynamic changes in the prefrontal cortex (PFC), an attention-related brain region, using 24-channel near-infrared spectroscopy during a 20-minute session of FA on Tanden breathing in 15 healthy volunteers. We found that the level of oxygenated hemoglobin in the anterior PFC was significantly increased during FA on Tanden breathing, accompanied by a reduction in feelings of negative mood compared to before the meditation session. Electroencephalography (EEG) revealed increased alpha band activity and decreased theta band activity during and after FA on Tanden breathing. EEG changes were correlated with a significant increase in whole blood serotonin (5-HT) levels. These results suggest that activation of the anterior PFC and 5-HT system may be responsible for the improvement of negative mood and EEG signal changes observed during FA on Tanden breathing.

**Impact of integrated amrita meditation technique on adrenaline and cortisol levels in healthy volunteers.** Evid Based Complement Alternat Med. 2011; 379645. By Vandana B, Vaidyanathan K, Saraswathy LA, Sundaram KR, Kumar H. from Department of Physiology, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Amrita Lane, Ponekkara P.O., Cochin 682 041, Kerala, India.

THE OBJECTIVE was to find out the effect of integrated amrita meditation technique (iam) on the stress hormones: adrenaline and cortisol. One hundred

and fifty healthy subjects were randomized into three groups. Blood was collected at 0 hour, 48 hours, 2 months, and 8 months after the first visit. Adrenaline was analyzed by ELISA and cortisol by Chemiluminescent method. In the IAM, PMR and control groups 44, 44, and 36 came, respectively, for the baseline visit. Within group, cortisol and adrenaline levels reduced in the IAM 48 hours onwards and the fall sustained until 8 months ( $P < .05$ ). ANCOVA (Repeated measures) on adrenaline taking the four levels of observation showed a highly significant ( $P = .001$ ) drop in the IAM group. The mean cortisol values between groups were not statistically significant ( $P = .138$ ). IAM Technique was effective in reducing adrenaline and cortisol levels within group comparisons.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3034982/>

**Tai chi as a balance improvement exercise for older adults: a systematic review.** *J Geriatr Phys Ther.* 2010 Jul-Sep;33(3):103-9. by Liu H, Frank A. from Physical Therapy Program, University of North Texas Health Science Center, Fort Worth, TX 76107, USA. [hao.liu@unthsc.edu](mailto:hao.liu@unthsc.edu)

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this systematic review was to identify exercise parameters and the most common outcome measures used in tai chi (TC) research. **METHODS:** Ovid Medline and PubMed were used to identify longitudinal studies published from January 2000 to July 2007 written in English with the key words tai chi, tai ji, tai chi quan, tai ji quan, bal-

ance, falls, and falling. Qualifying studies had subjects aged 60 years or older. **RESULTS:** In all 19 qualified prospective studies, older vigorous and likely transitional frail individuals seemed to benefit more from TC than did older frail individuals. The most commonly used TC parameters were Yang's style, with 12 or fewer forms, durations of 12 weeks or longer, frequencies of twice a week or more, and session lengths of at least 45 minutes. The most common outcome measures observed were a combination of 2 to 5 of the following 10 measures (from most to least common): fear of falling, single-leg stance, posturography, rate of falling, flexibility, walking velocity, Berg Balance Scale, Timed up and Go, Functional Reach, and ankle and knee joint strength and range of motion. Improvements were reported in almost all of these measures. **CONCLUSIONS:** This review indicates that TC may be an economic and effective exercise program for improving balance and balance confidence in older adults.

[Compiled by Kevin Chen]

### [Quotes from the Editor]:

*...the only way to know the Tao is to experience its power in practice, not just to talk about it in theory.*

Daniel P. Reid

*The joy for the Taoist is that things have no use, and they future is not important.*

Alan Watts

*A simple, plain, and natural life is essential spiritual completeness.*

Hua Ching Ni

*Take the "s" out of cosmic and enjoy what's left.*

Chungliang Al Huang


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[From the Master]

## Chinese Astrology and Inner Cultivation

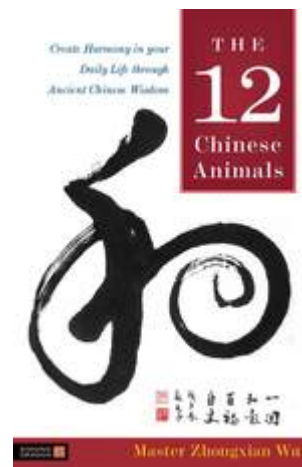
Master Zhongxian Wu

### 1. Introduction

After my book *The 12 Chinese Animals -- Create Harmony in Your Daily Life through Ancient Chinese Wisdom* was published, some friends often ask me, “Why should I learn about the Chinese animal symbols? Are the animal signs related to my Qigong practice or spiritual cultivation? How important is it to know about this knowledge?” To answer these questions, I would like to start with a little background on my studies of Chinese astrology:

I grew up in a traditional fishing village in southeast China, and for my entire upbringing, I saw that people commonly used astrology to help make decisions about important events (finding a spouse, setting a wedding date, building a house, opening a business, health issues, etc). Because our village had no electricity, pipe water, or roads larger than a footpath, we all lived very closely with the rhythms of nature. Chinese astrology is the art of living in harmony with the hourly, daily, monthly, and yearly cycles of life.

As long as I can remember, my mother has always consulted the local Yijing or astrology experts when she needs help or advice. As a child, I was fascinated by the accuracy of their advice and their ability to predict outcomes. I became interested in learning more about astrology and its connection to Chinese medicine and the Yijing prediction system. I began to study this art with the intent of being able to help others. Now, my main focus is teaching Qigong, Taiji and the Yijing to help people create harmony in their life. Through my experience of over 20 years of teaching these ancient Chinese wisdom practices, I have seen that Chinese astrology is a great tool to help guide people through their life and their inner cultivation.



### 2. The Complexity of Chinese Astrology

In the West, most people think that Chinese astrology is only about their yearly animal sign. I think the misconception in the West is mostly for convenience sake, to offer a view of Chinese astrology that is over simplified and therefore more available for the general public and more for entertainment value.

In China, we call astrology BaZi 八字 (8 characters) or MingLi 命理 (principle of your destiny or karma), but only a small amount of people actually understand how to put together and interpret a chart. Most Chinese have to find an

expert to help them, and finding someone really qualified and skillful can be challenging. Of course, you may easily find a fortuneteller on the street, but they are usually not very accurate. The Chinese astrology system is extremely complicated, and the deep intricacies of the system is difficult for most people to understand.

Hour	Day	Month	Year
Yi 乙 Yin Wood	Ding 丁 Yin Fire	Gul 癸 Yin Water	Ji 己 Yin Earth
Si 巳 Snake Yin Fire	Si 巳 Snake Yin Fire	You 酉 Rooster Yin Metal	Chou 丑 Ox Yin Earth
庚丙戌	庚丙戌	辛	辛己癸

The yearly animal sign is a small percentage of what influences your entire chart. In my book, *The 12 Chinese Animals*, I also discuss the monthly and daily animal sign, which will help people develop a fuller understanding of their chart. Most people do not realize that the 12 animals also relate to the 12 tidal hexagrams of the Yijing. The Yijing, of course, is a method of understanding the rhythms of nature and of life. When I wrote this book, I wanted people to get a little taste for the complexity behind the Chinese astrological system. It is important to realize that the 12 animals is just one aspect of Chinese astrology -- creating and understanding a whole chart for the sake of prediction is a



much more complicated process.

### 3. Make Better Choices

The use of Chinese animal symbols is a key to understanding the principles of your life and of your karma. They can help you understand your strengths and your weaknesses. Becoming conscious of your own patterns will give you information about how to cultivate your gifts and refine your challenges, which will help make your life flow more easily, with fewer struggles, and bring you success in your pursuits.

I use the practices to guide my inner cultivation in order to balance and strengthen my astrological chart (which varies depending on the hour, day, month, season, year, or external life event), so that I feel more harmonious with my self, my family, and with nature. For example, I will check the Chinese calendar to pick out dates for travel, signing a contract, or teaching. Based on the animal symbols, I also chose special colors for our home and office in order to create the right Fengshui for those environments. My wife and I set our daily routine (sleeping, cultivation practices, menu planning and food preparation, etc) according to the principles of the Chinese animal clock in order to create a healthy daily rhythm for our family.

### 4. Shape Your Destiny

If you want to change your karma, you have to know what your karma is. A good understanding of Chinese astrology does more than just help you understand your karma and make predictions for the future. The real purpose of the reading is to guide you to make changes in your life, from daily lifestyle habits to larger life decisions. Knowing your chart will direct you when you are seeking healing and balance in yourself and in your relationships. Understanding the interplay of the Universal energies present in your life will help you guide your Qigong practice and spiritual cultivation to change your karma, remain centered when something unexpected happens, steer clear of trauma, and put you on the path of health, prosperity, and longevity.

For thousands of years, the essence of Chinese philosophy holds that life is not merely controlled by fate or karma -- *wo ming zai wo bu zai tian* 我命在我不在天 -- "My life is in my hands, and is not controlled by fate." Through mindfulness and effort, we all have the ability to change our karma and achieve true autonomy. By understanding the Chinese 12 animal symbols and 12 tidal hexagrams from *Yijing* wisdom, you will be able to learn a way to find your inner peace and live in harmony with your family, your community and with nature. The winter season is the best time for you to looking within and it is time for you to recreate your new karma, especially in the winter solstice time period. I would like to share some information here about the energetic pattern of winter solstice and inner cultivation from my new book *The 12 Chinese Animals -- Create Harmony in Your Daily Life through Ancient Chinese Wisdom*.

### 5. Hexagram Fu (Rebirth)

*Fu* is the tidal hexagram that represents the energetic pattern of the Rat animal symbol. The Chinese character *Fu* means return, repeat, recover, and rebirth. The symbol of the hexagram made with one *Yang* line at bottom and 5 *Yin* lines on top, which represents *Yang Qi*, or new life energy, returning back in a natural cycle. It is the symbol for rebirth and rejuvenation.

In an annual cycle, *Fu* represents *Zi* – the month in which winter solstice occurs. *Zi* month lasts from approximately December 7<sup>th</sup> to January 5<sup>th</sup> in solar calendar. Winter solstice is the shortest day and longest night of the year, which in the Chinese tradition, means *Yang Qi* has dropped to its nadir and *Yin Qi* has climbed to its zenith. Literally, winter



solstice landmarks the point at which we begin to experience the gradual reversal of lengthening nights and shortening days. The winter solstice is the turning point of Yang energy. Depending on the sun's changing position, the winter solstice occurs some time between December 21 and December 22 each year (in the northern hemisphere).

In old Chinese tradition, we have a big winter solstice celebration. It was one of my favorite childhood Chinese festivals. In my memory, families gathered in the kitchen to prepare the sacrificial food on the winter solstice eve. My grandmother made many kinds of animal dolls from rice flour. My brother and I would help make the *TangYuan* (small rice balls). In the early morning of the next day, the first thing my family did was bring out *TangYuan*, rice animal dolls, and other sacrificial foods to offer to Nature. Although most modern city people in China do not make this kind of offering, most northern Chinese families will still eat *JiaoZi* (dumplings) and most southern Chinese families will still eat *TangYuan* at the winter solstice.

Both *JiaoZi* and *TangYuan* are symbols representing *Yang Qi*. Eating *JiaoZi* or *Tangyuan* during the winter solstice is a way to remind us to hold *Yang* energy within and keep warm during the cold winter. In Chinese wisdom traditions, it is one of the best times of the year to do your inner cultivation because the universal *Yin* energy will reach the peak level and the *Yang* energy will be re-born. We need spend more time doing Qigong and meditation to support the re-birth of our inner *Yang* energy on the winter solstice day.

In the daily cycle, *Fu* stands for *Zi* time which is 23:00 – 00:59. Like winter solstice, midnight is the time when *Yang Qi* returns in your body and begins to increase. *Zi* is the great time for you to do inner cultivation. Or, if you are not practicing any inner cultivation, it would be a good habit to go to bed before 23:00.

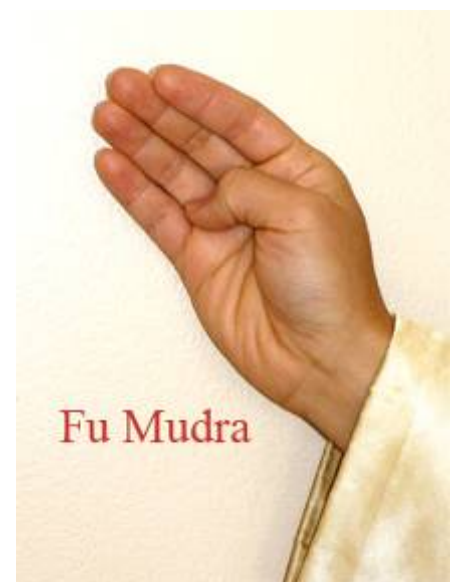
Let us uncover more information about *Fu* from *Yijing* wisdom. Like all hexagrams, hexagram *Fu* is made up of two trigrams. In this hexagram, the top trigram is *Kun* (Earth) and the bottom trigram is *Zhen* (Thunder). It is an image of Thunder within the Earth. Thunder is the symbol for shaking off old patterns of stagnation and creating new life energy or power. Earth is the symbol for holding yourself stable or centering your mind. Hence, hexagram *Fu* is an image of inner cultivation. Just like your meditation, when you steady your body, mind, and breath, you will be able to feel your *Yang Qi* generating automatically within your body. If you can center yourself from deep within, you may feel *Qi* shaking in your body just like thunder and lightning.

When I do not feel well or when I am beginning to feel sick, first thing I do is to practice some Qigong or meditation to help me find my life energy back and recover by the inner cultivation. Many my students have recovered from sickness through their Qigong or Taiji practice. When I have a challenge in my life, first thing I do is to take a deep breath to my *Dantian* and bring my mind back to my body. And this always helps me shift the challenge quickly and makes my life easy and peaceful. This is what I have learned from the hexagram *Fu*, Rebirth. I hope you can try some inner cultivation with me at *Fu* time, the time that will give you feeling of rebirth everyday. I would be happy if you learned more about the hexagram *Fu* from your inner cultivation practice.

## 6. Inner Cultivation *Fu* ceremony:

*At 11pm every night, light a candle in front of you and start the meditation with your hands in Fu mudra. (figure) Fu mudra is made by touching each thumb to the base of the ring fingers. The palmer crease of the ring finger is associated with hexagram Fu. (figures-mudra and palm with fu hexgram) Make sure to keep your fingers together and relaxed. Then, place your mudra with palms on your belly and middle fingers touching the navel. First open your eyes and look directly at the candlelight. Then, close your eyes and imagine the candlelight in your Dantian (lower belly). Adjust your breathing to be slow, smooth, deep and even. Feel how each breath makes the light brighter and brighter in your Dantian. Meditate as long as you can. Before ending, please say a little prayer –*

*“May the Spiritual Lights shine within my heart and body,  
May the Spiritual Lights shine within my family and friends,*



*May the Spiritual Lights shine within all beings,  
May the Spiritual Lights always shine with peace and harmony for the World!"*

[**Master Zhongxian Wu** is the recognized master of multiple lineages of classical Qigong, Taiji and martial arts. He synthesizes wisdom and experience for beginning and advanced practitioners, as well as patients seeking healing, in his unique and professionally designed courses and workshops. He is the author of *Seeking the Spirit of The Book of Change*, *The Vital Breath of the Dao*, and *The 12 Chinese Animals -- Create Harmony in Your Daily Life through Ancient Chinese Wisdom*. Please visit [www.masterwu.net](http://www.masterwu.net) for further details about his teachings.]

(**Acknowledgements:** Karin Elizabeth Taylor Wu provided editorial assistance for this article.)



**Master Wu -- Fu Meditation**



[Root of Daoist Meditation]

## Cracking the Matrix

Shifu Michael Rinaldini

(This article is a continuation from his previous publication in *Qi Dao* -- [Daoist Zuowang Meditation](http://yang-sheng.com/?p=859) <http://yang-sheng.com/?p=859>)

If you know the good visage, do not hold on to externals.  
 (Your) mind-spirit is your true teacher.  
 The problems and riddles (gong'an, a Chan Buddhist term) posed by men of old should be investigated,  
 (But) your own school (of thinking) must be spread about.  
 Little by little you come to penetrate your past enlightened nature,  
 More and more you show forth your compassion of old.  
 When your compassion and purity are both (re-) established,  
 You will attain sudden enlightenment and absolutely nothing will bind you.<sup>i</sup>

I have been talking about the experience of cracking the matrix for some time now. I even went back to the movie, *The Matrix* to review the exact words which were said in the movie to describe the matrix.

Morpheus to Neo: "It is everywhere.  
 It is the world that has been pulled  
 over your eyes, to blind you from  
 the truth."

Neo responds accordingly: "What  
 truth?"

Morpheus: "You are a slave in a  
 prison. You can't be told what the  
 matrix is. You have to see it for  
 yourself."



Yes, we live in a world of delusion. It is the matrix of separation, I and other, and we don't even know it. You have to crack the matrix yourself through a *direct realization experience*. It still needs nurturance of many years of daily practice and the step by step transformation of our identities. But then gradually and naturally, we become one with the Dao. A contemporary Catholic mystic Bernadette Roberts describes her experiences of seeing it for yourself: "it is a raw, pure and unadulterated reality without the imposition of concepts and ideas."<sup>ii</sup> Indeed, this message confirms the old saying, seeing is believing. And I must emphasize the *suddenness of the experience*. Yes, despite our daily practice of zuowang meditation where we cultivate the virtues of wuwei and doing things naturally, without desires and expectations, there are moments of awakening which transcend our ordinary perceptions of reality. Even Wang Chongyang (Wang Zhe), founder of Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) School of Daoism during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries acknowledged the suddenness of the awakening experience. In one of his poems (the full poem is offered above), he states: "You will attain sudden enlightenment and absolutely nothing will bind you."<sup>iii</sup> These awakenings are sudden, and unpredictable when they occur. And, it is possible for them to occur at a very early stage of spiritual practice, as my following story reveals.

<sup>i</sup> *The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters*. Stephen Eskildsen. State University of New York Press. 2004. Pg. 22.

<sup>ii</sup> Bernadette Roberts-Wikipedia free encyclopedia.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid., Stephen Eskildsen. Pg. 22.

## A Personal Account of Cracking the Matrix

Grant me the self-indulgence to tell you about my first “sudden” awakening experience. The story begins when I was 21 years old and attending the University of Oklahoma during the early 1970’s. I had been studying and meditating in the Zen tradition for less than six months. One afternoon, I was reading Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind by Shunryu Suzuki out loud to my roommate. The words about Buddhature, enlightenment, etc., suddenly hit me like a sledgehammer, cracking my ordinary consciousness into something else. I excused myself from my roommate, not knowing what was happening to me. I decided to walk over to my Zen teacher’s house for the evening meditation session. But, on the way out of the building, passing a window on the second floor, I got a glimpse of the large oak tree in front of the house. It stopped me in my tracks. Every branch, every leaf of the tree was shining brightly in the afternoon sun. It wasn’t simply that I was seeing all the leaves, there was more. I was seeing all the leaves simultaneously in a heightened awareness. There was no separation between them, like the net of Indra, all interconnected. This experience was so overwhelming that it brought tears to my eyes, and I remember thinking to myself, I better get out of here before someone sees me. I immediately left the house and started walking down the street. The next thing which happened was equally remarkable. The neighborhood I lived in had a sizable number of unfriendly country dogs. More than once I had close encounters with them, and didn’t care to walk alone in the area. But now, something was different. Perhaps the energy I was radiating was sensed by the dogs because all of a sudden a pack of them came out of nowhere and they were all heading for me. Due to the state of mind I was in, I wasn’t affected by the sight of these dogs merging on me. I walked, and they followed, immediately behind me, as if I commanded them to do so. As I walked on, they gradually left my presence. Next, arriving at my Zen teacher’s house, I said nothing, and sat with the others for the evening’s meditation. Nothing Special. Except that it was the most perfect session of “just sitting.” No leg problems, no distractions, no-mind. Afterwards, I left without saying anything to the teacher, I thought, why bother, everything was perfect. This direct experience of everything lasted until I went to sleep. Waking in the morning, my old consciousness returned. However, the experience left its mark permanently on a deep level.

It is this experience and several others I’ve encountered over the years which make me believe in the necessity of seeing through the surface appearance of things. I love the essence of the zuowang approach, but I feel it runs the risk of deluding the practitioner into thinking that the gradual path is all there is. I really love this next quote by a Zen Master on the need for the awakening experience:

“Until we realize the Way (Dao) by satori, we cannot help but be agonized by our own delusions. It is like binding ourselves with rope. To free ourselves from the agonies of the dualistic world, we must forget ourselves in Samadhi at least once in our lives.”<sup>iv</sup>

Here is another example of cracking the matrix by a well-known writer on Buddhist and Daoist spiritual practices. This is an interesting account taken from the book on the life and experiences of John Blofeld, *My Journey in Mystic China: Old Pu’s Travel Diary*. This book was written by Blofeld in Chinese during the last years of his life while living in Thailand. Daniel Reid, a qigong and Daoist author, and also a great lover of Chinese teas, living in Australia, translated it into English, it was published in 2008. It’s a revealing story of the real man John Blofeld who wrote so extensively about Chinese Daoism and Buddhism, but yet, struggled so intensely with his own worldly passions. Below is a rather lengthy quote on his experience of cracking the matrix. This may have been Blofeld’s only direct experience of the really real:

### Blofeld’s Cracking the Matrix

“At that moment, a very peculiar sensation suddenly arose within me. All of a sudden, he, I and everything in the space between us, while still retaining their external appearance, seemed to condense into an inseparable singularity, as though we had suddenly dissolved into one amorphous entity. This dimension of existence gave me a feeling of great joy. For a short while, my mind was mesmerized and my spirit was lost, but at the same time, I knew that this condition was definitely not a distorted fantasy. The strange thing was that although I felt very happy and at ease in that state, I also felt that I could not withstand this man’s spiritual power much longer, and that if I did not soon break free

<sup>iv</sup> *The Gateless Gate, The Classic Book of Zen Koans*. Koun Yamada. Wisdom Publications. 2004

of his gaze, I might never return to the normal world, and so I quickly lowered my eyes and terminated that mysterious sensation.

But Old Dzung had definitely caused me to experience the phenomenon known as “myriad objects uniting into one whole,” and for a very short time I had entered into this mysterious dimension. I’d like to discuss in more detail the meaning of this so-called “uniting as one whole” phenomenon, both from the perspective of Taoist teaching as well as modern science. When Old Dzung fixed his penetrating gaze on me, I definitely and very clearly, perceived the inseparable and boundless nature of all phenomena. That is to say, my perception at the time was that even though all objects had their own separate relative identity, at the same time they were also all completely unified as one primordial entity. That of course defies logic, and is a principle that lies beyond rational debate. I had long ago learned from my Buddhist and Taoist studies about the relative nature of reality, and that only through a higher level of wisdom could one really understand the true nature of phenomena. And yet, in only a few fleeting moments, Old Dzung had given me a direct experiential perception of the fundamental nature of reality.”<sup>v</sup>

The words that Blofeld uses to describe his experience are so similar to my own story. And, I am sure that Blofeld (if he were alive) would agree with me when I say that the experience of cracking the matrix leaves a residue on one’s psyche never to be forgotten. This reminds me of a long time ago when I had several Catholic monk friends, and we talked about these kinds of things. They said they know many fellow monks who had similar powerful experiences as youths. And it was those early experiences which motivated them to live the rest of their lives as monks. Perhaps the sudden awakening experience is the fuel for the long gradual work of refining the spirit.

What method am I proposing to break open “conscious activity and sensory involvement” as Livia Kohn calls it in her new translation of the Zuowang Lun: *Sitting in Oblivion, The Heart of Daoist Meditation*? If I am not content with the mere practice of sitting in oblivion, (which I highly value as the essence of Daoist meditation) what am I offering, suggesting as an alternative? I like what Livia Kohn, perhaps suggests, in her chapter on the Buddhist Dimension in the practice of Daoist Zuowang meditation. She talks about the “breakthrough” effort required for the experience of “a sudden opening of conscious” and even admits that this is different from the “Daoists who emphasize the slow, one-by-one overcoming of inherent patterns in gradual progress.”<sup>vi</sup> And then, this is where it gets interesting, for me. Livia explores the Chan (Zen) practice of solving riddles or koans to “break open the conscious mind and let universal mind come to the fore.”<sup>vii</sup> Livia also points out that Daoists never developed this method as deeply as the Buddhists, but some similarities exist in the Chuang Tzu, for instance, “What is really me? Am I Zhuang Zhou dreaming that he is a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming that he is Zhuang Zhou?”<sup>viii</sup> And let’s go back to Wang Zhe and the poem I quoted from earlier. He also recommended the study of Buddhist koans as a cultivation method: “The problems and riddles (gong’an, a Chan Buddhist term) posed by men of old should be investigated.”<sup>ix</sup> This is a reference to the Sudden school of Zen practice, known as Rinzaï, and still practiced today. And if you are not familiar with Wang Zhe and Quanzhen Daoism, it was this school of Daoism which sparked a revival in Daoist interests in the Middle Ages, and continues to this day in its many sects, for example the Longmen Dragon Gate sect, and outside of China, the recently formed American Dragon Gate Lineage. So, is there a Daoist koan that is capable of cracking open the conscious mind, and at the same time, remain faithful to the Zuowang practice? I suggest the koan of asking: what is the direct experience of Not Two? Or, more simply, just ask: Not Two? References to Not Two as a core Daoist principle are found throughout the Daoist and Buddhist scriptures, as well as within the writings and sayings of masters. Below is one of my favorite quotes on not two things.

Bill Porter in his most inspiring book, *Road to Heaven*, asks a prominent Daoist master, Jen Fa-jung, the abbot of Loukantai Temple: “What’s the goal of Daoist practice?”

<sup>v</sup> *My Journey in Mystic China, Old Pu’s Travel Diary*. John Blofeld. Translated from the Chinese, Daniel Reid. Inner Traditions. 2008. Pgs. 234-235.

<sup>vi</sup> *Sitting in Oblivion, The Heart of Daoist Meditation*. Livia Kohn. Three Pines Press. 2010. Pg. 114.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid. Livia Kohn. Pg. 115.

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid. Livia Kohn. Pg. 115.

<sup>ix</sup> *The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters*. Stephen Eskildsen. State University of New York Press. 2004. Pg. 22.



*Man's nature is the same as the nature of heaven. Heaven gives birth to all creatures, and they all go different directions. But sooner or later they return to the same place. The goal of this universe, its highest goal, is nothingness. Nothingness means return. Nothingness is the body of the Dao. Everything is one with nothingness. There aren't two things in this universe. To realize this is the goal not only of Daoism but also of Buddhism. They seek only the Dao, which is the nothingness of which we are all created and to which we all return. Our goal is to be one with this natural process.*"<sup>x</sup>

And here is a quote from a Buddhist and Daoist text which makes clear references to saying Not Two as part of a spiritual practice.

*The Faith Mind Sutra*

In the mind without effort  
Thinking cannot take root.  
In the true Dharma world  
There is no self or other.

To abide in this world  
Just say "Not Two."  
"Not Two" includes everything.  
Excludes nothing."<sup>xi</sup>



In responding to the koan of Not Two, it is tempting to respond with similar examples as above. But this would miss the point. It would be like the Zen story of pointing at the moon's reflection in the puddle and call out, "look there's the moon." Not Two doesn't point out at the illusory moon either, it points directly to the formless Dao, and without words. Blofeld in his book, *The Secret and Sublime: Taoist Mysteries and Magic*, further highlights the importance of not relying on the intellect to know these things: "The Tao and the myriad objects are not two!" He says it's "a mystery that can be apprehended but not explained. It is not enough for you to suppose (with the intellect) that you know these things. You must perceive them directly."<sup>xii</sup> And what is it that Blofeld says we should know directly? "The Buddhist doctrine is that the spotless, illimitable Void perceived during mystical illumination is pure mind in its quiescent state, while the unending flow of appearances falsely conceived to be separate objects is pure mind engaged in the play of thought. To use a telling Taoist expression, *these are not two!*"<sup>xiii</sup>

## Working with Sitting in Oblivion .... Working with Not Two!

"Things just arise and pass away one after the other, one is fully merged with the natural processes and completely free from all reactions, feelings, classifications, and evaluations."<sup>xiv</sup> This is the heart of Zuowang. In the silence of the mind, the question naturally arises, what is the true meaning of Not Two? Free from concepts, the mind in all its clarity and purity stays with that deep yearning to know the Dao intimately. The mind turns away from the superficial answers which tease you into thinking that you know what Not Two means. You say to yourself-stop being a fool by listening to your thinking mind. Instead, rest in the open space of freedom from thought, freedom from reactions to seeing, hearing, feeling. Even freedom from mechanically asking, what is Not Two. It is not a mantra, repeatedly asked. And, we are not trying to forget one kind of thinking, merely to replace it with something else. The important point is "to sustain the sense of questioning, not the repetition of the words."<sup>xv</sup> Allow the questioning to "penetrate

<sup>x</sup> *Road to Heaven, Encounters With Chinese Hermits*. Bill Porter. Mercury House. 1993. Pgs. 56-58.

<sup>xi</sup> *Zen Sourcebook, Traditional Documents from China, Korea, and Japan*. Edited by Stephen Addiss, Stanley Lombardo and Judith Roitman. Hackett Publishing. 2008. Pg. 17.

<sup>xii</sup> *Taoist Mysteries and Magic*. John Blofeld. Shambhala. 1982. Pg. 184.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Ibid*. John Blofeld. Pg. 196.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Sitting in Oblivion, The Heart of Daoist Meditation*. Livia Kohn. Three Pines Press. 2010. Pg. 99.

<sup>xv</sup> *The Way of Korean Zen*. Kusan Sunim. Translated by Martine Batchelor. Weatherhill. 2009. Pg.61.

deeply” into the quiet mind.<sup>xvi</sup> And, just as in Zuowang, forget the past, forget the future, just “sit on the meditation cushion, investigate” Not Two “and awaken to its meaning.”<sup>xvii</sup>

## Postscripts

1. You are no longer a slave in a prison. The Matrix.
2. “At the time of the Great Awakening, we will all wake up and see that it has all been just a dream.” Chuang Tzu<sup>xviii</sup>
  - Don’t think that I am saying, that when you experience, or realize Not Two directly, that you will have attained something new, or something like that. What I am saying is that you will have realized that there is “nothing to attain” and what you have realized-experienced is nothing other than what was there all along. And yet, what you did realize was something not readily accessible to ordinary consciousness, but was in fact, “a sudden opening of consciousness.”<sup>xix</sup>
  - “The beauty of the Dao is that it is something that must be personally experienced.”<sup>xx</sup>



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<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid. Kusan Sunim. Pg. 65

<sup>xvii</sup> Ibid. Kusan Sunim. Pg. 66.

<sup>xviii</sup> Chuang Tzu, *The Inner Chapters, The Classic Taoist Text: A New Translation of the Chuang Tzu with Commentary*. Solala Towler. Watkins Publishing. 2010. Pg. 41

<sup>xix</sup> *Sitting in Oblivion, The Heart of Daoist Meditation*. Livia Kohn. Three Pines Press. 2010. Pg. 114.

Note: The full statement is mine.

<sup>xx</sup> *Recitation of Scriptures: Preserving the Tradition of Daojiao*. Article presented at 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Daoism, Loyola Marymount University. Christina Barea. 2010

## [Tales from the Dao]

## Down By the River

By Solala Towler

The old man sat on the muddy bank of the great river, fishing quietly and watching the water flow. He liked it here, out with the sun and the mosquitoes, his toes squishing delightfully in the mud, his bottom getting wet with the early morning dew. He didn't mind a little dampness. He just liked sitting by the river and watching the water flow by. His line trailed out into the water, though he used no bait. Catching a fish was not important. The simple act of sitting by the river, toes in the mud, line dancing over the water, was enough for him.

The old man had been a philosopher and student of the Way for quite some time. He knew he was not popular with certain segments of society, those pedantic logicians and the like who used words as a screen to hide behind or else brandished them like weapons. His teaching had always been a bit convoluted and full of riddles, puns and a sublime sense of the ridiculous. As for arguments with other scholars and philosophers—he just wasn't interested. He often said that if two people argue and one wins and the other loses, does that mean one is right and the other wrong? Or are they both partly right and partly wrong? Or are both all right and also all wrong? Waiting for final answers is like waiting for nothing, he told his students. Look at everything in relation to the great Tao and leave differing viewpoints as they are. That's the way to live out one's life in peace and harmony.

He knew he was often laughed at behind his back, and sometimes to his face. So what? He didn't care! He knew what he knew and he also knew what he didn't know and that was enough for him. Still, his fame had spread lately and he was continually being bothered by people seeking the ultimate truth, as if such a thing could ever be conceptualized and put into plain words. Besides, it wasn't up to him to tell people the "ultimate truth." He could only share *his* truth, and even that

changed from day to day, just like the ongoing cycles of the seasons.

No, he was better off here by the river, alone except for the mosquitoes and an occasional bird. He loved looking at the river and thinking about the great, unfolding Way and his place in it. He had learned a lot just by sitting here and watching the water flow by. He noticed that many people's energy flow was like water. Some people just had little trickles, like a small creek.

Other's energy was clogged and muddled, like a dammed up stream. Others' was wild and turbulent like a river in the spring. Others' flowed serenely along, like the great river in front of him. Still others' flowed fast and furious like the rapids he knew were up river, then at other times it grew sluggish and heavy like the part of the river that flowed past the village downstream. The trick was to find a rhythm that suited one's self and

try to stick to that. It was far better to be harmonious and consistent than it was to change one's flow every other day or even many times a day. He himself had been quite turbulent in his youth, but a combination of self-cultivation and suffering had changed that. Now he just liked to sit here, toes squishing, line dancing, mind empty, bottom soaking, and enjoy the day.

Suddenly he heard a commotion behind him. Two men were sliding down the muddy bank toward him. They wore the insignia of messengers for the local Lord who lived on the other side of the river, in a great castle. The old man had never seen this great Lord, since the Lord did not condescend to travel among the common people. Years ago the old man had lived in the capital and had known many such men. They were mostly a very boring and irritating crowd, their energy stuck in their feet. They were the reason he had left the capital long ago and retired to this small village by the river.





The two messengers, who wore costly robes of silk, were struggling to hold up their hems to avoid getting them muddled. They were out of breath by the time they reached the old man, who sat with his back to them.

"Honored sir," they panted. "Are you the one they call ——?" They used an honorific title he had been given years ago at the capital in recognition of his sagehood. He thought at first of denying it but realized they already knew who he was when they first climbed down the riverbank. They were only using a formality. He knew it all so well—the empty, flowery phrases that fell from their tongues like rancid butter.

Sighing, he got up slowly and turned to face them. "Yes," he answered. "I am that most unworthy person." He knew how to play the game.

The two silken messengers looked at each other. Could this really be the great sage that their Lord had sent them after? Why, he looked like a ragged fisherman! Yet there was something about his direct and piercing gaze that held them for a moment, like the sun coming out from behind a cloud. Then, just as suddenly, it was gone again and the old man stood before them, idly picking his nose.

"We have been sent by the great Lord of this province to bid you come to his castle so he may humbly prostrate himself before you and beg of you to share some small part of your great wisdom with his lowly household."

What a crock! The old man knew just what would happen if he allowed himself to be led to the castle. Hours and hours of fawning and false modesty, to be followed by days and days of being a virtual prisoner, arguing with a dim-witted nobleman who had never had an original thought in his head. He would have to deal with whatever other "sages" the noble had ensconced there to argue philosophy in front of him. All his life he had dealt with those high-minded, long-winded Confucians who confused propriety and wisdom, duty and Tao, classism and true spiritual freedom. He wanted no more to do with them.

And the logicians were even worse. How they loved to confuse and conspire with endless torrents of words—words with no spirit, no real energy behind them, words which clouded the mind and induced a narcotic, hypnotic effect that numbed the mind to the true reality of the Way. How many endless hours had he already spent trying to get them to let go of their precious con-

cepts and opinions and open themselves to the simple, unadorned truth of the integral and eternal Way?

No, he could not stomach any more of that. He had to find a way to turn them away without incurring the wrath of their great Lord. Suddenly an idea came to him. "You have the shell of a ritual tortoise at the castle, do you not?"

The two messengers did not know what to say. This old man was a little abrupt. They had expected him to jump at the chance to be set up in the castle. After all, he would be paid well for his efforts and he would be wearing much finer clothing than the old rags he presently wore and be enveloped in much richer surroundings than this mosquito-infested, muddy riverbank.

"Yes," answered one of them, finally. "We do have a great and ancient tortoise shell which, as you most assuredly know, great sage, is used for divination at certain times of the year."



The old man could imagine the pomp and circumstance of the divination ceremony: The ancient tortoise shell would be carried into the hall of divination between rows and rows of seated nobles and servants, all stiff




and formal. The procession would be accompanied by the ancient sing-song music of the Confucians, more irritating and less musical than the whining of the mosquitoes in his ear. Endless speeches and formal testimonials would follow. At last would come the ceremonial heating of the tortoise shell; the cracks that appeared on it could then be read. Would the year in question be good or bad for the great Lord and his fief? The priests were not fools; they were not stupid enough to share bad tidings, even if they read them on the tortoise shell. The great Lord would not want to know about the floods, the many farmers going hungry, the diseases and the pestilence that would be visited upon the common people that year. No, the great Lord would want to hear how beneficent and wise he was, what a great ruler of men he was, what a generous and compassionate father to his people he was. The very thought of it made the old man want to vomit right there at the silken feet of the great Lord's messengers.

"Well," he said, "what do you fellows think? I can see you are intelligent men. If the tortoise himself had been given the choice between being slaughtered for his shell to be venerated for hundreds of years or to be left alone to drag his tail in the mud, what do you think the tortoise would have wanted?"

The two messengers looked at each other again. Was this some kind of test? They had been told that the old man was a bit odd, some even thought him crazy. They both decided to take their time in answering, just in case. Finally one of them took a deep breath and spoke. "I suppose," he said slowly, "that if it were truly up to the tortoise, why of course he would rather have been left alone to, as you say, drag his tail through the mud."

"Then that is precisely what I intend to do with mine," said the old man and abruptly turned his back on them, his muddy bottom winking obscenely. He gathered up his fishing line and trudged down the bank, singing an old folk song at the top of his lungs.

The messengers watched him for some time as he walked slowly away. What would they say to the great Lord? They were not even sure themselves what had just happened. To think they had walked all this way and gotten muddy and mosquito bitten for this! It was true, they would tell their Lord, the old man was crazy, not a sage, not a wise man. Just a crazy old man sitting on his ass in the mud.



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## [Sexuality and Health]

**Q & A on Issues Specific to Women's Practice**

Master Mantak Chia

**What can I practice during my period?**

During your period, the upward draw is very useful. One precaution: do it gently. Gently draw the energy up without squeezing the uterus because the blood might be drawn up into the urethra. This can be a problem if a woman has any level of urinary incontinence. If her urethral sphincter does not contract easily to hold urine and release it only when she wants to, there is the possibility that when she squeezes the vagina shut, the urethra remains open a little and any vaginal secretions can be sucked up in the urethral opening and then drawn up toward the urinary bladder. This might lead to an infection in the urethra or bladder. This is sometimes a problem as women get older and nearer menopause, but can happen at any age. This problem can be avoided by gently drawing up orgasmic energy without tightly squeezing the vagina or buttocks. By urinating right after practice a woman can help avoid this problem, but she should recognize that urinating right after practice can drain some energy. But "safety first" for women with urinary incontinence. As a woman continues to practice vaginal contractions and the upward draw, her urethra and bladder will gradually strengthen so she will eventually be able to practice with normal force.

**Is Dong Kuai Good For Women Trying to Get Pregnant? How Often Should She Take It Before She Gets Pregnant? Can It be Harmful During Pregnancy?**

For getting pregnant, Dong Kuai augments a woman's blood, the chi flow in the lower part of the abdomen, and hormones. If a woman can't get pregnant because chi is not flowing smoothly in the pelvis, Dong Kuai can help. If a woman cannot get pregnant because her body is too weak, Dong Kuai can help build up her strength. After childbirth, Dong Kuai will restore the blood and the chi to the vagina and the uterus and help these organs return more quickly to their pre-birth shape, by strengthening the

muscles.

**What practices are good to do before getting pregnant?**

To help get pregnant, ovarian breathing and orgasmic upward draw will promote energy flow, and bring chi and blood to the ovaries to strengthen the sexual organs. A woman might have difficulty getting pregnant because her ovaries are not on the same level, that is, one is lower. This means that the tubes also are not in the correct position. This change from the natural position is usually caused by muscle tightness on one side of the pelvis. Chi Nei Tsang massage of these muscles can bring the two ovaries to the same level in the body. The timing of the egg release as well as the mucus from the cervix, and the time it takes for the egg to travel from the ovary to the uterus, all determine whether a pregnancy will "take." [Note: Additional information is available in the Chi Nei Tsang book regarding massaging the ovaries]

**What practices are good to do during pregnancy?**

During pregnancy the ovaries are quiet so it's not necessary to do ovarian breathing. However, when a woman finds she has increased sexual energy during pregnancy, the Upward Draw will bring up the aroused energy. Bring it down and circulate it in the baby.



Do everything gently: Microcosmic, Fusion I and II are good - if doing Fusion II, avoid the thrusting channels - too strong for the fetus; 6 Healing Sounds but not too much stretching upward; Iron Shirt, no packing, just standing and gathering the forces; avoid the turtle position; above all, use your judgment - if something feels uncomfortable, just don't do it.

The first three months a woman has to be very aware of her energy and everything should be done gently. After the 2nd trimester, a woman can do her practices more naturally because the placenta and its attachment to the uterus is stronger. She can add in more movement, like tai chi and a lot of walking. This will help the labor go more smoothly.

### **Postpartum? When can a mother resume all her practices (Iron Shirt, Upward Draw, etc)?**

Right after childbirth, gently start with vaginal contractions and orgasmic upward draw, emphasizing the mind with gentle movements of the vagina. Gradually increase the number and strength of the contractions each day. This will help the uterus, vagina, and bladder get back into shape. This will also help prevent loss of energy through the vagina. Six Healing Sounds, Inner Smile and Microcosmic Orbit and all meditations are safe at this time.

When the bleeding slacks off, a woman can resume tai chi and iron shirt practice - embracing the tree with packing if she likes - but not the turtle yet. Some stretching exercises can be reintroduced at this time.

### **At What point does a woman stop doing ovarian breathing in order to get pregnant?**

Not every woman has to stop ovarian breathing in order to get pregnant. The first part of ovarian breathing strengthens a woman to get pregnant. When a woman gets to the next level of controlling the menses, that is, her periods are shorter and cycles are longer, she may have to stop ovarian breathing and eat more stimulating food. That way her cycles will return and she will have signs of ovulation, such as changes in mucus.

### **What techniques can help morning sickness?**

The Six Healing Sounds, with emphasis on spleen/stomach/pancreas sound, plus the Microcosmic Orbit Meditation will disperse clogged or congested energy.



### **Should a woman try to circulate the microcosmic orbit in her fetus?**

Yes. The fetus will be stronger. As the energy comes down the front channel, the mother can circulate the energy around the fetus for a few minutes, and then let it rise up again.

### **During FUSION II, do the thrusting channels go through the fetus also?**

Yes. But in the first three months It's too strong for the developing baby, so a woman should wait till she's at least in the 4th month before resuming practice of the thrusting channels. Belt channels are okay. Also, during pregnancy, a woman should not do iron shirt packing or the turtle position. When doing the six healing sounds, she should not stretch her arms too much in the lung, liver and heart sounds. This is because the tendons connect between the arm and the uterus and the lower abdominal area. This kind of strain may cause a miscarriage. (avoid movements like pushing open a window or reaching for a very high shelf). These precautions are particularly for women who are weak



in the uterus, especially if they had miscarriages in the past. If a woman is strong before her pregnancy she generally won't have problems.

### Which practices help restore her organs most quickly after childbirth?

Vagina contractions, ovarian breathing she can start right away. Egg exercise (after the blood stops).

### Should a woman with an IUD restrict or adapt any exercises?

Be gentle doing egg exercises. If she wants to use weights, she should use a weight that creates only a little resistance

### If a woman has had any of her reproductive organs removed, or is in menopause, what benefit can she derive from ovarian breathing? For the orgasmic upward draw, should she use ovarian energy or from some other source?

If a woman has a uterus or ovaries she can do the practices easily. If she had her uterus AND ovaries removed, she will have to use pituitary energy. The gland massage will definitely be beneficial.

### During menopause, which practices are most beneficial?

Ovarian breathing, vaginal contractions, and orgasmic upward draw will help balance and control the energy and the hormones in the proper way.

### For hot flashes, what else do you recommend?

Some say that hot flashes occur because the energy that would normally be lost during a period accumulates in the body. However, hot flashes indicate a woman's energy is also unbalanced and out of control. Ovarian breathing, vaginal contractions and upward draw will circulate energy and transform this extra energy so a woman can use it. These practices plus the gland massage will be very helpful for balancing the chi and hormones.

The triple warmer sound can provide temporary relief because it circulates the energy from the bottom up. Exhale the unbalanced energy down to the earth, and bring earth energy up through the soles of the feet. Sometimes in menopause a woman might lose her sexual desire. These practices will help enhance her sexual response and increase self-confidence (personal power).



[Master Mantak Chia, the creator of the Universal Healing Tao system, and is the director of the Universal Healing Tao Center and Tao Garden Health Resort and Training Center in the beautiful northern countryside of Thailand, <http://www.universal-tao.com>. Since childhood, he has studied the Taoist approach to life. His mastery of this ancient knowledge, enhanced by his study of other disciplines, has resulted in the development of the Universal Healing Tao System, which is now being taught throughout the world. Throughout decades of teaching, he has written a series of instruction books and published a number of workshop videos. Mr. Chia is known as an author, a teacher and a healer, but he views himself primarily as a teacher who, "helps his students empower themselves through cultivation of their chi energy." His students include many well-known people from the "west", such as [Michael Winn](#), [Eric Yudelove](#) and [Dennis Lewis](#). His books include, *Taoist Secrets of Love: Cultivating Male Sexual Energy*

(1984); *Fusion of the Five Elements: Basic and Advanced Meditations for Transforming Negative Emotions* (1991); and *Cosmic Healing: Cosmic Chi Kung* (2001) ].

## [Topics in Research]

## Qi in Chinese Medicine (Part 2 of 2)

Marty Eisen, Ph.D.

In part 1 of this series, the universal concept of Qi was introduced. Then, the various types of bodily Qi, used in traditional Chinese medicine to explain health and disease, were defined. Here the functions of Qi and its relation with the Chinese Organs and various substances in the body will be discussed.

### 4. Functions of Qi

The following are six observed functions of Qi.

**Moving** --- Produces motion within the body and moves the body.

**Transforming** --- Kidney and Bladder Qi transform fluids and urine, respectively.

Spleen Qi transforms fluids into food Qi, which is transformed into Blood (the Chinese concept discussed below) by Heart Qi.

**Holding** --- Lung Qi holds sweat. Spleen Qi hold Blood and fluids in the blood vessels. Kidney and Bladder Qi hold urine.

**Raising** --- Spleen Qi raises the organs.

**Protecting** --- Lung Qi protects the body from external pathogenic factors.

**Warming** --- Spleen Qi and, especially, Kidney Qi warm the body.



### 5. Movement of Qi

The internal organs perform specific functions, normally in relation to a specific type of Qi. In order to perform these functions, the various types of Qi have to flow in appropriate directions. The Liver controls the smooth flow of Qi in all directions. The movement of Qi is based on directions and can be described by: ascending, descending, entering and exiting. Ascending refers to the upward movement of Qi from a lower area; descending means the downward flow of Qi from an upper area. Exiting means the outward movement of Qi, and entering indicates the inward movement of Qi. The following examples illustrate this directional flow.

The Lungs cause the Qi to descend directing it downwards to enter the Kidney and Bladder. The Kidneys receive the Lungs' Qi, while Kidney Qi ascends to the Lungs. The Lungs control exhalation and the Kidneys inhalation. Furthermore, Liver Qi flows upward to help balance the downward flow of Lung Qi. Spleen Qi ascends to the Lungs and Heart, while Stomach Qi descends. Thus, the clear Qi obtained by the transformation of the Spleen ascends and the Stomach sends the unrefined part of the food to the Small Intestine for further processing. Some organs perform movements in all four directions. Lung Qi moves in and out during breathing. However, when disseminating nutritional essence to the body, Lung Qi ascends, but descends when liquefying waste is to be sent to the Kidneys. Qi exits the Yin organs to flow in the corresponding meridians, while Qi enters the yang organs from their Yang meridians. Qi can also enter and exit the body from acupoints.

Besides the basic four movements, Qi movement is sometimes described as gathering (entering into a location) and dispersing (leaving to a different location). The terms expanding and contracting are also used, but these are just examples of exiting and entering.

### 6. Qi Pathology

There are four different types:

**Deficient Qi** --- The Lungs, Spleen and Kidneys are prone to this condition.

**Sinking Qi** --- Deficient Qi, especially Spleen Qi, can lead to sinking, which can cause prolapsed organs.

**Stagnant Qi** --- Qi does not move. Liver Qi is susceptible to this condition.

**Rebellious Qi** --- This occurs when Qi moves in the wrong direction. For example, when Stomach Qi ascends instead of descending, nausea, vomiting, or belching can occur.

### 7. Blood and Qi

In Chinese medicine Blood (Xue) is not the same as in Western medicine. Of course, Blood is a dense form of "Qi". However, Blood is derived from Qi in two ways:

(i) Food Qi, produced by the Spleen, is sent upward to Lungs, and Lung Qi pushes it to the Heart, where it is trans-



formed into Blood. The transformation requires the assistance of the Original Qi stored in the Kidneys.

(ii) Kidney Essence produces Marrow, which generates Bone Marrow which also forms Blood.

Note that although Essence plays an important role in the formation of Blood, it is nourished and replenished by the Blood. The blood-forming function of the bone marrow was introduced during the Qing dynasty, before this concept appeared in western physiology!

After a massive loss of Blood, one can develop signs of Qi deficiency, such as, breathlessness, sweating and cold limbs. Qi depletion, such as after heavy, prolonged sweating, can lead to signs of Blood deficiency, such as, palpitations, pallor, numbness and dizziness.

Nutritive Qi is closely related to the Blood and flows with it in the blood vessels and the channels. Four aspects of the close relationship between Blood and Qi are:

(a) Qi generates the Blood (See 7 (i).)

(b) Qi moves the Blood --- This relationship is contained in the sayings “When Qi moves, Blood follows” and “If Qi stagnates, Blood congeals”. Lung Qi infuses Qi into the blood vessels to assist the pushing action of the Heart.

(c) Qi holds the Blood --- This action is a function of Spleen Qi. The saying “Qi is the commander of Blood” is often used to summarize the above three aspects.

(d) Blood nourishes Qi --- Qi relies on the Blood for nourishment. Moreover, Blood provides a material and “dense” basis, which prevents Qi from “floating”, and giving rise to the symptoms of the disease pattern of Empty-Heat

(1). These two aspects are often summarized by the saying “Blood is the mother of Qi”.

## 8. Qi and Body Fluids

Body Fluids in Chinese medicine are called “Jin Ye”. The character “Jin” means “moist” or “saliva” and so can be interpreted as anything liquid or fluid. The word “Ye” means fluids of living organisms. There are two types of Body Fluids:

**Jin** --- These fluids are quick-moving, clear, light, thin and watery, and they circulate in the exterior of the body (skin and muscles) with the Wei Qi. They are controlled by the Lungs, which disseminate them to the skin aided by the Upper Burner, which controls their transformation and movement towards the skin. They moisten and partially nourish skin and muscles. The Jin is manifested as sweat, tears, saliva, mucous and parotid secretions. They are also a component of the fluid part of Blood.

**Ye** --- These fluids are the more turbid, dense, heavy and slower moving fluids, which circulate in the interior of the body with the Ying (Nutritive) Qi. They are under control of (transformed by) Spleen and Kidneys. They are moved and excreted by Middle and Lower Burners. They lubricate the joint cavities; nourish and lubricate the spinal cord and brain, bone marrow and the “orifices of the sense organs” i.e. eyes, ears, nose and mouth

**Production of Jin Ye (Body Fluids)** --- Body Fluids arise from food and drink. They enter the Stomach from which they are transformed and separated into pure and impure parts by the Spleen. The Spleen sends the pure part upward to the Lungs and the impure part downward to the Small Intestines. The Small Intestine separates the impure part into a pure and impure part. The pure part of this second separation goes to the Bladder and the impure part to the Large Intestine, where some of the water is re-absorbed. The Bladder, aided by the Qi from the Kidney, further transforms and separates the fluids it receives into pure and impure parts. The pure part is sent upwards to the exterior of the body, where it forms sweat. The impure part flows downwards and is transformed into urine. The Lungs disperse part of the pure part to the space under the skin and the remainder down to the Kidneys. The Kidneys vaporize some of the fluids they receive and send it back up to moisten the Lungs.

## 9. Organs and Transformation and Movement of Qi

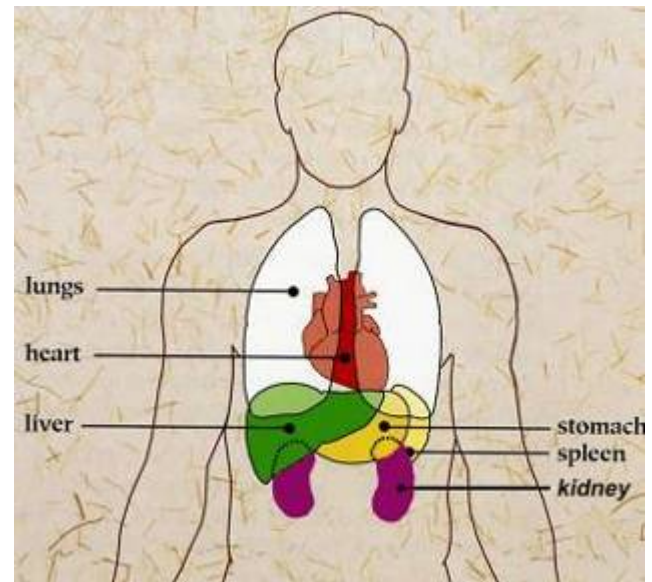
Chapter 5 of the book Plain Questions states: “Water and fire are symbols of Yin and Yang.” This means that water and fire represent opposite aspects. Based on the properties of water and fire, everything in the natural environment may be classified as either Yin or Yang. Those with the properties of fire, such as heat, movement, brightness, upward and outward direction, excitement and potency, pertain to Yang. Those with the properties of water, such as coldness, stillness, dimness, downward and inward direction, inhibition and weakness, pertain to Yin. Accordingly, within the field of Chinese medicine different functions and properties of the body are classified as either Yin or Yang. For example, the Qi of the body, which has moving and warming functions, is Yang, while the Qi of the body, which has nourishing and cooling functions, is Yin. Yin Qi is sometimes called “Water” and Yang Qi, “Fire”. Qi condenses to

form the material body and is Yin. When Qi disperses, it moves and is Yang. These Yin and Yang aspects of Qi are the basis of Chinese physiology. The proper transformation of Qi allows birth, movement, growth and reproduction to take place. The movement and transmutation of Qi depend on the function of Chinese organs and will be described below.

The motive force for the transformation of Qi is the Fire stored in the Gate of Vitality or Life Gate (Ming Men), an area between the Kidneys. Historically, the Life Gate's location has been postulated in several different places. Its Fire is referred to as the "Minister Fire". This Fire supplies heat for all bodily functions and for the Kidney Essence. The Ming Men Fire and the Essence provide another example of the Yin-Yang concept. The Fire depends on the Jing to provide the biological substances for all life processes. Jing relies on the Ming Men Fire for the motive force and heat that transforms and moves the various physiological substances. Without the Ming Men Fire, Jing would be a cold and inert, incapable of nurturing life. This relationship is summarized by the expressions "Qi is transformed into Essence" and "Essence is transformed into Qi". Gathering Qi flows down to the Life Gate to provide Qi and Ming Men Fire flows up to the Lungs to provide heat.

### Mutual Assistance of Heart and Kidney

The Heart is in the upper Jiao and corresponds to the element Fire. It is Yang in nature, and relates to movement. The Kidneys are in the lower Jiao and correspond to Water. They are Yin in nature and relate to non-movement. These two elements represent the Yin and Yang of all the organs (Fire and Water). Heart Fire is called Imperial Fire. Heart Yang descends to warm Kidney Yin, Kidney Yin ascends to nourish Heart Yang. The Heart and Kidneys are constantly communicating. If Kidney Yin is deficient it can't rise to nourish the Heart Yin, which leads to hyperactive Heart Fire (insomnia, restlessness, anxiety, flushed cheeks, night sweats, red tongue with no coat and a midline crack). If the Fire of the Heart does not descend to the Kidneys, Heart Heat develops which can damage Kidney Yin and so Water cannot rise. Kidney Yang becomes deficient and edema results. The ascending and descending of Kidney and Heart Qi also affects other organs. If Kidney Yin does not nourish Liver Yin, Liver Qi may ascend too much, causing headaches and irritability. If Heart Qi does not descend, Lung Qi may also fail to descend, causing coughing or asthma. Heart and Kidney Qi provide the Fire and Water necessary for the functions of the Spleen and Stomach in digestion, transformation and transportation.



### Spleen and Stomach

Spleen Qi normally ascends to the Heart and Lungs to direct the pure food essence up to these two organs, where it is transformed into Qi and Blood. Stomach Qi normally descends to send the impure part of food, left after the Spleen's transformation, down to the intestines. If Spleen Qi does not rise diarrhea can occur. After some time, Qi and Blood deficiency will occur, since insufficient food essences will be transported to the Lungs and Heart. Prolapse of various organs and hemorrhoids can also ensue, since the rising of Spleen Qi lifts and keeps the organs in place.

### Liver and Lungs

Qi flows smoothly when the ascending of Liver Qi and the descending of Lung Qi are balanced.

If Liver Qi does not ascend and extend, it can stagnate in many different areas of the body causing feelings of constriction or distention. Stagnate Liver Qi can also invade the Stomach, causing epigastric pain, nausea and vomiting, or the Spleen, causing diarrhea. It can go downwards to the Bladder, resulting in distention of the hypogastrium and slight retention of urine.

Excessive rising of Liver Qi to the head causes headaches and irritability. It can also affect the Lungs preventing Lung Qi from descending, causing coughing or asthma.

If Lung Qi does not descend, fluids will not be carried to the Kidneys and Bladder, resulting in urinary retention or edema of the face. Lung Qi may also stagnate in the chest, causing coughing or asthma.

### Transformation of Qi by the Triple Burner (San Jiao)

The Triple Burner is a Yang organ and has been historically defined in several different ways (1). The three divisions of the Triple Burner in the Table 1 are based on the functions of the pertaining organs and not on their location. It ensures the correct movement of all types of Qi. If it malfunctions, Qi, Blood and Fluids will not flow harmoniously and they will overflow, routes will be blocked and Qi will stagnate.

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[Dr. Eisen is a retired scientist, who constructed mathematical models in medicine. He has studied and taught Judo, Shotokan Karate, Aikido, Qigong, Praying Mantis Kung Fu, and Tai Chi in different places. He took correspondence courses in Chinese herbology and studied other branches of Chinese medicine with a traditional Chinese medical doctor. He was the Director of Education of the Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture Institute in Upper Darby, PA. You can get more information about Dr. Eisen from <http://home.comcast.net/~carolezak>



"YOUR CHI IS IMPRESSIVE - THOSE BROWNIES ARE BAKED,"



*"Are you not thinking what I'm not thinking?"*



[From the Taiji Master]

## *Lessons from a Grandmaster*

By Chun Man Sit

In 2000 I met grandmaster Feng Zhizhang and my tai chi practice changed forever. He came to the US to teach a workshop sponsored by Master Yang Yang, one of his top disciples. At that time, I had practiced tai chi for 25 years, and I thought I knew a lot about tai chi chuan. Well, a lot maybe, but not enough. In those four days, I learned a few things that were crucial to my tai chi improvement. Here is the story.

### **What is a grandmaster?**

Before I begin to tell my story, let's define what is a tai chi grandmaster? In the old Chinese tradition, there is only one grandmaster per martial art style. That was because in the old days people usually didn't travel outside their province. This is no longer true. In modern times, practitioners of many Chinese martial arts live all over the world. Some popular styles like tai chi, wing chun and hung ga kungfu claim millions of practitioners, spreading over the world. Naturally there should be many grandmasters as a result. So, what is a grandmaster?



A grandmaster should have the following qualities:

1. Skill level – must have an extremely high skill level of the art.
2. Knowledge – must have deep knowledge of the art.
3. Seniority – must be high in the lineage, therefore quite old.
4. Contribution – must contribute something to improve the art.
5. Dedication – must dedicate much of his time and effort to the same art.

These are the qualifications of a grandmaster. Nowadays, we have a prolific amount of grandmasters showing up in magazines and seminar ads. Most tai chi teachers coming from China to teach seminars are labeled as grandmasters. Anybody with the correct last name automatically becomes a grandmaster. Surely, anyone born into the house of a grandmaster has a certain advantages, such as early tuition from a great master and inside secrets. However, a grandmaster is someone very special; he or she is the supreme teacher of the whole style or branch. Just name one superstar in the sport world such as base ball, football, boxing, tennis, etc., who also has a son or daughter as great as him. People inherit money, not talent.

Many western tai chi students have been led to believe that the title of tai chi grandmaster is an inheritance thing, like royal families inheriting titles. This is not a Chinese tradition, but rather a new trend. The truth is: it is all about money. As the world becomes global, grandmasters attract more people to their expensive seminars. In the old days in China, grandmasters did not make lots of money by teaching their art. To prove my point, let's look at some tai chi grandmasters in history.

Grandmaster Cheng Man Ching was a disciple of Yang Ching Fu. It's obvious he was not from the same family. Cheng's three top disciples are: William Chen, Tao Ping Siang and Huang Sheng Shyan; none are family members. All three are of grandmaster caliber.

Let's look at one of the oldest tai chi styles in China – Zhaobao style. I'll list a tai chi family tree of nine generations to illustrate my argument.

The zhaobao style originated from a town called Zhaobao, thus the name. The founder Zhiang Fa (born 1514) learned from Wang Zhong Ye. There was no blood relation, obviously. And here are the nine grandmasters in proper order:

- Jiang Fa(born 1514)
- Xing Qiwei
- Zhang Zhucin
- Chen Jinba
- Zhang Zhongyu
- Zhang Mu \*
- Chen Qingping (1795 – 1868)
- He Ziyuan (1811 – 1890)
- He Qingqi (1857 – 1936)\*\*

\* Zhang Mu was the nephew of the 5<sup>th</sup> grandmaster, Zhang Zhongyu, who appointed his favorite disciple Yuan Fakong as the successor of the title. When the grandmaster passed away, his nephew Zhang Mu disagreed and challenged Yuan to a duel. Zhang won the fight and became the next grandmaster.

\*\* He Qingqi was the grandson of the grandmaster. Please note that his father was not listed as a grandmaster.

The message is clear: Descendants of any grandmaster can also become grandmasters; they have a better chance. But there should be no inheritance on titles.

### **Grandmaster Feng Zhizhang**

Grandmaster Feng Zhizhang was born in 1928. He began training in martial art at a young age, learning Shaolin, Tongbi and Xinyiquan. At age 20 he was accepted as a disciple by the famous Chen style grandmaster, Chen Fake. In his book "Entering the threshold of Chen style tai chi", Grandmaster Feng talked about 12 guidelines for tai chi students to follow. These 12 guidelines are great principles for all tai chi styles, not just Chen style. In my opinion, this book is a great contribution to the art of tai chi. I have studied this book carefully and have benefited greatly from it. When I met Grandmaster Feng in the fall of 2000, he was 73 years old. At five feet seven and 150 lbs, he looked healthy and happy. There's a childlike quality about him. He's always curious about things that were new to him, and he kept asking simple questions. "What is this? What is that?" From housekeeping carts, coffee machines, to cars and foods, he wanted to understand. It was obvious fun for him to learn about new things. Another thing is that he was always at ease and could improvise at any time. Once when Feng was teaching a workshop in Japan, he told the hundreds of participants that when they practice holding a standing posture with the tai chi ruler, they should do 10 minutes on each of the high, middle and low hand postures. There was a hush in the crowd, as people are adding the total minutes of standing qigong they had to do. Stopping for a few seconds, Feng raised his tai chi ruler to show the three postures. He said, "Five minutes, five minutes and five minutes. That is okay too."

Before the two day workshop began, Master Yang sat down with Grandmaster Feng to explain the curriculum of the entire seminar. Yang said, "Shifu, We want to do three two hours lessons each day. We should work on the 48 form (a form created by Feng), since most students have learned this routine. Then we should work on gong training, push-hand and anything else that you want to teach. Above all, I'll like you to expound on the twelve essential points of tai chi training from your book. Mr. Sit will do the translation while you're lecturing. Shifu, do you think this is good?"

Immediately Feng agreed that this was a good plan and he would follow the curriculum. Well, the curriculum went smoothly. Feng did the lectures on the 12 essential points, and he led the gong training and taught some push-hand methods. But he never taught the 48 routine, not even a single posture. He didn't seem to have a lesson plan; instead he just taught whatever came into his mind. But for some reason there seemed to be order in this chaos and every two hour class ended in a comfortable pace. And the Grandmaster was always in complete control of the workshop, without even trying. It was wu wei (non doing) at its best.

There is always something magical to observe a real master at work. For example, when Feng said that any movement performed with tension could only be action from parts of the body, but not the whole body, I immediately understood what he meant. I had come across this concept many times. But this time it clicked.

Another time when Feng demonstrated push-hand with my friend Bob, he sent Bob jumping up and dropping down without any visible motion. Bob was six feet two, with over 20 years of tai chi practice and a solid push-hand background.

At one lesson, Feng had me come to the front for an internal force demo. I stood in front of him in a casual stance. Feng raised his right hand and tapped my chest lightly with his fingertips. I felt no force but I stepped back without knowing why. I didn't feel the fajin of internal power. Instead, it was a common tap that somehow caused me to move. It's very mysterious. This was the first time I had encountered the 'ordinary force' from a great master. (Photo A – Feng demonstrated the "ordinary force" to Sit).

The second encounter came after the seminars. On Monday, Marvin, the editor of Tai Chi Magazine, did a photo session with Grandmaster Feng and his assistants. At one point when Marvin was photographing Feng's daughter and Master Yang, Feng told me to come to him. "Come and push with me." He said. So I went to him and we made contact with our hands. "You push me." said Feng. I complied and pushed, but I didn't push hard. I was very careful. He looked at me, smiled, and said, "I'll push you then."

"Here it goes." I thought to myself, "the moment of truth, at last." Much to my surprise, I sensed only a common touch. There was nothing special about his hands and touch. In fact, if I didn't know who he was, I would have convinced this person did not know tai chi or any martial art at all. And then he pushed me. Again it was a common nothing push. But it worked. I was pushed backward without knowing why or how.

"Ni dong ma?" asked Feng, "Do you understand?"

"Wo dong." I replied, "I understand."

Of course I didn't understand. But I figured that even if I asked him to explain more, I still wouldn't understand anyway. It took me several years to figure out the truth. That was the shortest tai chi lesson in my life, less than a minute. And what a lesson!

Feng was confident of himself as a grandmaster. And like most serious masters, Feng also had a great sense of humor. He would make fun of himself. One time when we were getting back to the hotel, he stopped in front of the lobby and gestured to my wife Maryann that he wanted to arm-wrestle with her. My wife did not speak Chinese, nor did Feng speak English. But they communicated quite well. Anyway, as Maryann raised her arm and wrestled against Feng's arm, he stumbled back and faked losing balance. Then he laughed joyfully, like a child.

Many western tai chi students think only China has high level in tai chi practice. Somehow they believe that there is Chinese tai chi and then there is American tai chi. And Chinese tai chi is good and authentic and American tai chi is not. The following story will prove this false.

On the first morning of the two-day seminar, Master Yang arranged a group practice of Chen tai chi 48 form in front of Grandmaster Feng. Over 100 of practitioners joined the performance. Most of them were American students. Then Yang invited Feng to critique the group. Feng went up the platform and said,

"Tai chi friends, how are you? I'm happy to stand here and observe your tai chi practice. When I was traveling from China to the United States, I thought that maybe tai chi practitioners in USA are slightly below those of Japan and Korea. But today after I have watched your performance, I realize the tai chi standard in America is very high. I consider you people are as good as those in Japan and Korea, if not better. In fact, you are as good as practitioners in China. I am very happy about this."

There is only good tai chi or bad tai chi. Nations and races have no meaning in the art of real tai chi.

Grandmaster Feng is famous for his push-hand skill and fighting ability. But I think the most important contribution is that he has given us the direction of a straight path towards mastering the art of tai chi.

### **Grandmaster Feng's important teachings:**

Standing gong practice



Feng emphasizes the standing gong practice greatly. He points out that this simple training method holds the key to tai chi power and energy. He says students should do a lot of standing gong, and they should do it in a calm and relaxed manner. According to Feng, standing gong is the soul of tai chi.

#### Slow form practice

Feng considers slow form practice as better practice. He says slow practice nurtures your qi, improves your health and increases your power in self defense. According to Feng, too much fa-jin and fast form training actually can have a debilitating effect on your health and energy. You should practice your tai chi form as slow as possible, but without struggle.

#### Looseness in Chen tai chi

Looseness, or song in Chinese, is an important aspect of Chen Style. Feng says some people think “song” is unimportant in Chen Style. This is a wrong concept. It is not easy to be “song” while practicing the form, but students should try very hard to relax. Without the element of “song”, it will be impossible to enter the threshold of tai chi.

#### About turning – silk-reeling

Silk-reeling, or turning, is crucial to good Chen tai chi practice. All parts of the body should have silk-reeling property. This is the key to what the classic called “to use 4 oz. to move a thousand lbs”. Silk-reeling exercises are the high-level of gong training in Chen style. The ability of rotating any parts of one’s body like a ball is the key to avoiding double heaviness, or fighting force with force.

#### Nurturing

Feng puts the concept of nurturing at the top of his list. Once while being interviewed by a Chinese magazine, he said, “After decades of tai chi practice, I finally realize one word – nurturing.” He also said, “In a ten years practice, you should nurture your qi and body for ten years.” Nurturing is good for both health and martial art.

#### Conclusion

There are many roads to mastering the art of tai chi. Some are straight paths that take less time. Others are crooked roads that take forever. Master Feng once said, “Famous teachers might not be illuminating teachers.” An illuminating teaches a straight path; and a straight path is the path with the least detours. In this sense, I can say Feng is a real grandmaster and an illuminating teacher.

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



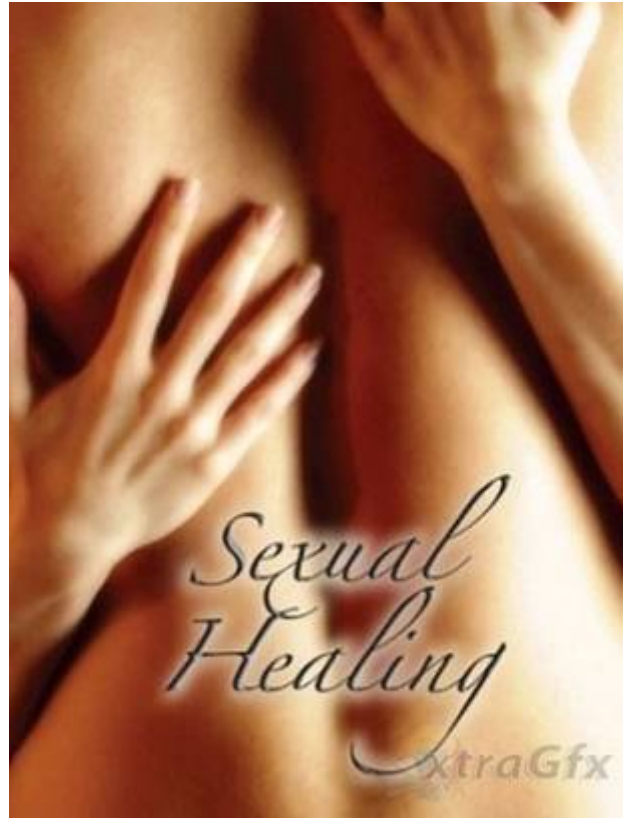
[Healing Through Pleasure]

## SEX: THE GREAT HEALER

Felice Dunas, Ph.D.

Recently, the esteemed practitioner and teacher, Dr. Shen, came to Los Angeles to teach a weekend seminar. A few fortunate patients had the benefit of his diagnostic abilities and were permitted a consultation. One woman in her early 20s came to him with great weakness and overall fatigue. With the prescription of her herbal formula, he also gave a firm reprimand, no sex for 6 months. A colleague who works in a prestigious university pain clinic happened to meet me at an oriental medicine day event that same weekend. Dumbfounded by the doctor's suggestion and knowing the nature of my work, she pulled me aside and presented the situation. Why on earth would Dr. Shen consider sex a bad thing for a young woman with an adoring lover? Would not the quality of that connection support the building of her strength? Why should any one who does not have to give up sex due to lack of partnership, choose to do so in the name of health?

Unfortunately, we are not taught the answers to these questions even though the answers were among the very earliest to be discovered by our professional ancestors. Oriental Medicine (OM) has always understood the value of sex, its expression and avoidance, in the name of health.



Our genitals are open doorways leading chi into and out of our bodies. If the door is sealed shut with a strong, protective energetic shield, little energy leaks out. But when the body is weak and the door stands ajar, sexual play can further weaken us as chi literally drips out of the holes that are part of the genital system. This is primarily because we as people and practitioners are not trained to transform our sexual encounters into chi building events.

Among the oldest teachings in OM is the understanding that sex can be used as an anti-aging, vitality building strategy. It can also, if conducted without the appropriate skill, further weaken the body. Its negative ramifications are profound as are its benefits.

Sexual teachings were kept very quiet even among the most elite in ancient China. Not all children of great emperors or noblepersons were trained in the erotic healing arts as to be cultivated in such skills would bestow great power. Only those who it was felt could benefit society with their exceptional strength would be taught. Those who were trained in these practices cultivated greater physical, intellectual and spiritual strength. Their lifespans would be longer and their leadership roles assured. No enemy could outwit a well-trained warrior unless that opponent was also educated in the erotic arts. His great stamina and brainpower would overwhelm any opponent.

Unfortunately, US based practitioners are not trained to understand the majesty or significance of these practices. Few of us have even heard of them. In my 31 years of study and practice in our field, I feel blessed to

have had a few teachers who supported my studies in this area. Years of apprenticeship were required before I was considered worthy.

Without understanding the role of sex in healing and illness, many patients sabotage your work. Unknowingly, they express sexual love in a manner contradictory to their bodies needs which slows down their healing process.

In my best-selling book *Passion Play: Ancient Secrets for a Lifetime of Health and Happiness Through Sensational Sex*, I introduce these teachings to the American public and to my colleagues. How do your patients reflect their energetic profile behaviorally? Upon questioning them can you see a correlation between your diagnosis and their interpersonal challenges? By viewing a patient's behavior the same way you would their eating or sleeping habits, you can more accurately assess their needs and more effectively alleviate the pain in their lives.



[Born in Los Angeles and raised in a medical family, Felice Dunas, Ph.D., is an acupuncture industry founder, international lecturer, published author and executive coach. She earned her Bachelors degree in Sociology/International Health Care from UCLA, and her Doctorate degree in Clinical Chinese Medicine and Pharmacology from Samra University. She uses ancient principles of the body and human behavior to enhance the lives of individuals, couples and corporate executives. Having lectured in over 60 countries, she addresses health, vitality, interpersonal intimacy and sexuality. Dr. Dunas is the author of the best selling book from Penguin-Putnam, "PASSION PLAY: Ancient Secrets for a Lifetime of Health and Happiness Through Sensational Sex".]





## [Echoes of Emptiness 虚之響]

*Selected Poetry by Jacob Newell*

Since ancient times, Daoists have used poetry and other art forms to express mystical experience, convey teaching, and transmit energy. A Daoist poem arises naturally out of the stillness of an empty mind, like fresh grasses in the springtime. Embracing both wuji and taiji, Daoist poetry can clear the mind and reveal the Dao.

I started experiencing poetic inspirations during my priest training in the American Dragon Gate Lineage from 2007-2010. They were born out of my qi-cultivation practice and were particularly influenced by the combined practice of studying the Daozang

(Daoist Canon) and practicing Zuowang meditation (Sitting & Forgetting).

Discovering the poetic process has exposed me to the creative process that many artists experience – without any deliberate intention to create something, we spontaneously find ourselves channeling inspiration from mysterious places. I consider this to be an example of the spontaneous arising (ziran) which appears out of wuwei practice.

1  
*Cultivate strength*  
*End up weak*  
  
*Cultivate weakness*  
*End up strong*  
  
*When strength appears*  
*Only return to weakness*  
  
*Not using strength*  
*This is called true strength*  
  
 2  
*Blade of grass*  
*Soft, weak*  
*Fresh, rising*  
*Watching the sunrise*  
*Green tiger*  
  
 3  
*Complete perfection*  
*Our natural endowment*  
  
*Moment, by moment*  
*Act very carefully*

4  
*Chamber empty*  
*Fire burning hot*  
*Purple smoke rising*  
*Sweet dew seeping*  
*Wild birds riding on the wind*

5  
*Compressing essence*  
*Elixir rises on its own*  
*Penetrating the passes*  
*Golden sprout in full bloom*

6  
*Relaxing everything into a stable base*  
*A powerful geyser wells up from deep inside*  
*Lifting me beyond my senses*  
*Without excitement, I ride the rising mists*

[Jacob Newell (Daoshi Gu Shen Yu) is an ordained Daoist Priest in the American Dragon Gate Lineage. He has been practicing Daoist cultivation since the early 1990's and presently lives and practices in Sonoma County, California, with his wife, Emily. He also enjoys practicing Chinese calligraphy, acupuncture, and the way of tea. Jacob is the founder of Old Oak Daoist Center ([www.oldoakdao.org](http://www.oldoakdao.org)) and can be reached at [oldoakdao@yahoo.com](mailto:oldoakdao@yahoo.com). His book of poetry, *These Daoist Bones*, is available through his website.



[From the Master]

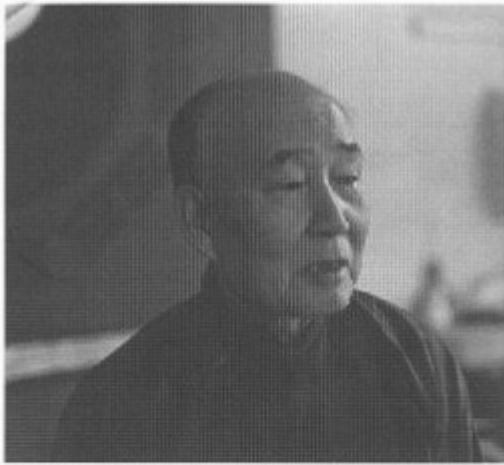
Foreword by Kenneth S. Cohen to

## Lessons with Master Liang: T'ai Chi, Philosophy, and Life

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### T'ai-Chi Ch'uan

#### Lessons with Master T.T. Liang



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by Ray Hayward

Revised and Expanded Edition

Imagine if you had access to unpublished notes of one of the world's greatest sports coaches that included his or her guidelines to Olympic success. Or, as an industrial spy, you learned the proprietary secrets that had allowed your competitors to outsmart you. This may explain some of my excitement when I read Ray Hayward's "field notes" from his years of dedicated study with Master T. T. Liang (梁棟材). The reader should remember that this is oral tradition, words based on both experience and the perceived needs of the student. Don't expect the chiseled perfection of a textbook nor the entertainment of a novel, though Master Liang's dry humor will sometimes have you in stitches. These are words that need to be acted on, put into practice, not stored away for "headucation." For students of T'ai-Chi 太極拳, this is the most valuable form of literature, similar to the handwritten manuals that, in ancient China, were given only to the most promising students.

When students become teachers, most keep such manuals or notes secret, giving them perhaps a technical and financial edge over other schools. Many boost their egos by keeping students in the dark or implying that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. But the tunnel may take twenty years to cross. Ray Hayward, because he is a teacher with wisdom and maturity, has decided to make his notes public. He knows that the only real secret is "practice." The notes will remain secret if you don't put them into practice. But if, on the other hand, you master the teachings, then

you honor both Master Ray and the Masters who came before him. Like love, real wisdom grows when it is shared.

I will never forget my own all-to-brief experience with Master Liang. I was introduced by one of his other senior students, Paul Gallagher, my T'ai-Chi colleague and friend. In response to a delightful conversation about push-hands and T'ai-Chi applications, the 80 year-old master agreed to dem

onstrate one of his many *gong*, unique skills. I knew I was being honored because a teacher like Master Liang is not interested in impressing people with *his* ability,

but rather in fostering *your* ability. "I want my students to be better than I am," he says. Yet, sometimes a demonstration inspires the student to reach new heights.

Master Liang asked me to stand in my most stable stance. I assumed a T'ai-Chi bow stance, one leg in front of the other with a comfortable length and width. My front foot pointed straight ahead, my rear foot at a 45-degree angle. My weight was shifted to the front leg, knee bent and aligned with the toe, back straight, whole body rooted into the ground. I had used this posture before to maintain balance even when pushed by 250 pound human battering rams! Certainly I could be confident in providing resistance to a lightweight old man. Master Liang assumed a similar stance directly facing me, left leg forwards. He raised his left arm to a rounded "ward-off" position at the height of his sternum. His left wrist was resting gently against my chest. He then placed a chopstick that he had whittled to a sharp point at both ends between his wrist and chest, so that it was held horizontally in place. I already knew what was com-

ing. Master Liang made a slight rolling movement, dipping and rising a few inches. I was thrown back several feet and hit a mattress standing on the nearby wall with my feet at least a foot off the ground. He had not dropped the chopstick, demonstrating that only body power was used—no push from the arm. And when he removed the chopstick, he showed me his wrist—the chopstick had not left a mark. This means that neither my weight nor my root had caused his arm to press towards his chest. As the T'ai-Chi Classics say, “The energy begins at the feet, rises through the legs, is controlled by the waist, and manifests in the hands.” Master Liang had used his perfect posture and absolutely stable frame to transmit the force generated by his feet pressing the ground. It was the ground that was pushing me, amplified by Master Liang’s superb understanding of body mechanics and qi. Not only was I unhurt. I was exhilarated and ready to train harder. I thanked Master Liang for his kindness.

If you are a beginner in T'ai-Chi or related arts, read the book now, but read it again after six months and then again after a year or more of practice. If you are a more advanced practitioner, you will stop periodically to think about and plumb the deeper meanings or return to various sections of the book as you train the skills described in it. And you are committing no sin if you disagree with some of the ideas. Master Liang was fond of saying, “If you believe everything in books, better not to read books!”

I am certain that Master Liang, with his characteristic insight, leaves some information slightly veiled, so that the student will have to train sufficiently to understand and earn what he or she learns. As Confucius said, “If I hold up one corner of the paper, and you don’t show me the other three, I stop the lesson.” Or, there is a Taoist saying, “Knowing when to stop is wisdom.” Let me give you two examples, based on my surely limited understanding. Master Liang explains the meaning of three technical terms: T’ing-Chin 聽勁, Tung-Chin 動勁, and Shen-Ming 神明. “In Ting-Chin (hearing energy), you feel the muscles stir before your opponent pushes. In Tung-Chin (interpreting energy), you feel the ch’i stir. In Shen-Ming (spiritual insight), you feel their mind stir.” Each of these stages obviously requires a greater level of physical, energetic, and even spiritual sensitivity. It is the secret of a saying from the T'ai-Chi Classics, “If the opponent doesn’t move, I don’t move. But if the opponent makes the slightest move, I move first!” How can you move before the opponent? You must catch his/her intent. Now we have the secret, but it is up to us to learn how to diligently train and master it.

Another example: Master Liang tells Ray to find “the line” when practicing push hands. That is, if you wish to upset a person’s center of gravity, you must find the place that is stagnant and stiff. If, by contrast, you push an area that is *ling huo* 靈活-- supple, alive, and reactive—your partner will just move out of the way, and you may fall on your face. But what Master Liang is not saying directly is that if the line (which is a straight, angular, and “linear” region of the body) is vulnerable, then the opposite, the circle tends to be powerful and stable. A circle, whether the circular motion of the waist or the circular shape that meets linear force, neutralizes an aggressive attack. And because it is a circle, one turn of the waist avoids the incoming strike and returns fire at the same moment. As I have heard from other teachers, reiterated and elucidated by Master Liang, “In combat, there is no one-two, only one!”

Master Liang’s *k’ou chueh*, oral teachings, contain a perennial wisdom. That is, the lessons go beyond the sphere of T'ai-Chi and have relevance to human issues in general. “I am teaching you to yield. I try to intimidate you. If you laugh, you win. If you get angry, I win.” Liang sees T'ai-Chi as a way of changing one’s temperament, but marriage, he tells us, is even better. You can avoid T'ai-Chi, but you cannot avoid the everyday lessons you receive from your spouse. Hayward’s book reminds us that life is the best teacher, and T'ai-Chi is a natural part of life. We are all students; we are all teachers. For Master Liang, “Everyone is my teacher, that’s all. I don’t want to be a teacher myself, everybody is my teacher.” I am reminded of a passage in the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*. The warrior Arjuna does not call God’s incarnation, Krishna, his “teacher,” but says, rather, “I am your disciple.” A scholar commented, “To a true disciple, everyone and everything is the teacher.” In accord with this philosophy, Liang neutralized challenges and avoided fights with an attitude of “You are the best, please be my teacher. The trouble is neutralized.” Fools may actually believe that they are thus Liang’s teacher. But that is their problem!

I cannot help recounting a similar example of “non-violent resistance” from my own experience. I was teaching a Yang Style T'ai-Chi class in a park in Boulder, Colorado. At the other end of the park, about 100 yards away, another Yang Style T'ai-Chi teacher was teaching her class. I had always thought that I had a civil, perhaps even cordial relationship with this colleague, so you can imagine my shock when I heard her say, in a deliberately loud voice, “Students, when you know this T'ai-Chi form, you have learned the best. No need to learn other styles or from other teach-



ers. This is it, as good as it gets!” My students looked at me inquisitively and with some obvious discomfort. I immediately rejoined, in an equally strong voice, “Students our T’ai-Chi is the worst. If you want to learn the best T’ai-Chi you should learn from someone else. Ours is the worst!” In Chinese culture, my strategy is called, “Put the egotist on a pedestal of ashes.”

Master Liang had many masters and continued to learn and teach throughout his lifetime. He “retired” several times, but then, compelled by eager students, he would start teaching again. My favorite anecdote about Liang’s philosophy of lifelong learning concerns my own teacher B. P. Chan. Master Liang was visiting New York City and decided to stop by the studio of his respected colleagues, Masters William C. C. Chen and B. P. Chan. At the time, Master B. P. Chan had just finished teaching an intermediate marital arts class. After introducing the students to Master Liang, Master Chan, asked Master Liang, in all sincerity, “Please Liang *Lao shih* (Teacher) would you give me a brief lesson, a few pointers?” Liang tried to refuse, perhaps not wanting the teacher of this school, to lose face or appear inferior to a visiting master. B. P. Chan’s students were dumbfounded. Chan, seeing the expression on their faces, chastised them. “What’s wrong with you? Do you think that I or anyone else knows everything? A fountain of wisdom like Master Liang is here and you don’t want to avail yourself of the opportunity? I am ready for a beginner’s class!” Hearing this story, I said inwardly “*P’ei Fu, P’ei Fu*” Bravo, Bravo. In 2002, Master Liang passed on to the Tai Chi Paradise he so often visited. He was 102 years old. Now thanks to this book, you can continue to train with him. He hasn’t retired yet.

*Lessons with Master Liang* is available from  
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[The Tai Chi Examiner]

## Tai Chi for Musicians

By Violet Li

Performing Guitarist and Senior Artist Teacher [Joe Rea Phillips](#) of the Blair School of Music of [Vanderbilt University](#) (Nashville, TN) has studied Wushu for 35 years. He started with [Northern Shaolin](#) and then [Wing Chun](#). In 1984, Mr. Phillips studied with [James Cravens](#), President of [Chinese Boxing Institute International \(CBII\)](#) and a disciple of Chen Style Tai Chi lineage holder Grandmaster [Chen Xiaowang](#). Joe Rea has learned [Baguazhang](#), Walu, [Yang Style Tai Chi](#), and [Chen Style Tai Chi](#). Joe Rea became a “senior student” of Professor Cravens in 1994. Through Professor Cravens, Mr. Phillips was introduced to Grandmaster [Chen Xiaowang](#) and his teaching methods. Mr. Phillips even traveled to [Chen Village](#) with James Cravens to study with Grandmaster Chen.

In 1989, Sifu Phillips and a group of students established the [Vanderbilt Kung Fu Club](#) where Joe Rea serves as an instructor and faculty adviser. This club offers Chinese martial arts classes of Baguazhang, Tai Chi, Walu, and other Chinese boxing styles and hosts special workshops with James Cravens. But in 1997, Joe Rea’s passion for Tai Chi led him to another venture. As a musician, he realizes that many musicians and musical students suffer from [Repetitive Stress Injury](#) (RSI or Repetitive Motion Disorder). As a Tai Chi practitioner, he fully understands how Tai Chi can help to relieve pain from the injury and prevent RSI to occur. He did a study and found out that Southern Methodist University, Webster Conservatory, and Southern Illinois University offered Tai Chi for credit from their theater departments. Syracuse University offered Tai Chi for credit from their school of education. Allison Bert, a guitar colleague of Joe Rea’s from Syracuse University, has taught clinics in Tai Chi for musicians at Julliard and the Manhattan School of Music. He presented “Tai Chi for Musicians” to the [Blair School of Music’s](#) curriculum committee and his proposal was accepted unanimously. Sifu Phillips has been teaching this course since.

With Joe Rea’s extensive training background in Tai Chi and knowledge of musicians, “Tai Chi for Musicians” has a very rich curriculum that includes the following:

1. Warm-ups
  - a. Chen and Yang - Stretch muscles, tendons, ligaments. Work on circulation of blood and Qi.
  - b. Chen joint opening exercises - very helpful for wrists and shoulders since many musicians working to get their Qi to the fingers.
  - c. Walu energy exercises. Walu is referred to as a "Bridge" of the "external" to the "internal" in martial arts. It has a few bare hand forms and others, but the core of the art consists of 44 energy exercises. Sifu Phillips finds that these energy exercises help to get tension out shoulders and wrists. He selects 4 exercises for the class.
2. Silk Reeling exercises and Qigong
  - a. Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang’s [Silk Reeling](#) exercises
  - b. Silk Reeling by fleshing out movements from the Tai Chi form
  - c. Various Qigong exercises (some from Chen Style lineage holder Grandmaster [Zhu Tincai](#) and a couple from [Dr. Yang Yang](#))
  - d. 8 Pieces Brocade ([Baduanjin](#))
3. Stillness Posture ([Zhan Zhuang](#) )
4. Form
  - a. Students learn the 1st section (or six movements) of the Grandmaster [Cheng Man-Ch’ing](#)’s Yang short form.
  - b. The students do the 1st section in 4 directions on their final exam for this course.



5. Study and use as a training supplement [\*the Essence of Tai Chi\*](#), a DVD made by Joe Rea's teacher, Professor James Cravens.



As a seasoned Tai Chi instructor, Joe Rea understands the importance of the proper posture and body alignment. He spends much time on one-on-one guidance and tirelessly corrects student's posture. Joe Rea said that many students took the course due to a pre-existing condition. The results of this course are quite impressive. Students with tendonitis reported that their problem improved greatly after taking this class. One semester he had a student who suffered from scoliosis who claimed improved condition after the course. In the past fall semester, a harp student had tennis elbow and informed Joe Rea that her tennis elbow was significantly better at the end of the course.

Tai Chi and music are different types of arts. But to Sifu Phillips, there are many similarities between these two art forms.

- ❖ Body State: both require the body state to be soft but full of energy (or [Peng energy](#)).
- ❖ Relaxation: a musician must resist tension to play well, just like Tai Chi will not flow with tension.
- ❖ Balance: both Tai Chi and music need physical, mental, and emotional balance to perform.
- ❖ Centeredness: Tai Chi practitioner needs to be Zhong Ding while a musician needs a focus.
- ❖ Projection: To Sifu Phillips a Tai Chi practitioner projects Qi and power while a musician projects to the audience.
- ❖ Unitary ( "Link together" ): Joe Rea explains that Tai Chi links with unitary motion and a musician links by smooth connection of patterns, motifs, and phrases, etc.
- ❖ Changeability or "Change and Flow": Joe Rea interprets it as that Tai Chi flows like a river and a musician should always keep flowing even if there are mistakes along the way.
- ❖ Posture: a good posture is important for both.
- ❖ Concentration: Joe Rea appreciates the famous quote "Not 10,000 things (at a time), but one thing only" from Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang and thinks that this principle applies to musicians too.
- ❖ Rhythm: both music and Tai Chi have rhythm that enhances each other.
- ❖ Slow Movement: Joe Rea refers to Grandmaster Chen's saying that he moves slowly in order to move fast. Joe Rea says that is exactly what a musician must do to develop techniques and play flawlessly.



[Violet Li is an award winning journalist, certified Taiji (Tai Chi) instructor, and certified Heart Zone Trainer. She has studied Tai Chi, Qigong and heart fitness with many grandmasters and experts. She has taught Tai Chi, Qigong and other fitness programs to different demographic groups. NBC of St. Louis featured one of her classes in "[100 Year Old Tai Chi Artist](#)". Her passion for Tai Chi, Qigong and fitness motivates her to write articles on the related events, people, theories, techniques, practices, and health benefits for you. Violet writes regularly for [St. Louis Tai Chi Examiner](#) and [National Tai Chi Examiner](#) with readership from over 18 different countries. Do you have a story or comment to share? Please contact her at [violet.li@tadi.com](mailto:violet.li@tadi.com).]

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## [Method to Improve Meditation]

## Counting-Breath Method 数息法

Kevin W Chen, Ph.D. MPH

Counting breath has long been a method used in meditation training. It appeared in Chinese literature as early as the Eastern Han Dynasty (25—220AD), when Buddhism was introduced to China. The famous Buddhist classic *The Wisdom and Contemplation Sutra or An Ban Shou Yi Jing* in Chinese (安般守意经)[1], discussed prolonged and intense contemplation, which played an essential role in cultivating oneself in Buddhism. Under the guidance of Buddhist doctrine, the practitioner's mind was to be fixed in contemplation or meditation. The phrase "Anban Shouyi" (安般守意) literally means entering the state of Dhyana (Sanskrit term for mental focus) and Samadhi (Sanskrit: mystical unity) by counting one's breaths. Two techniques of Zen ("Chan" in Chinese) meditation are presented in this sutra. The first is generally called "counting one's breath" and includes "the mind follows the breath, ceasing counting to reflect inwardly, and returning to purity ...", -- all of these may be considered the foundation of Buddhist practices such as "Six Marvelous Methods" (Liu Miao Fa, 六妙法) and Breath-counting Contemplation (Shuxi Guan Pai, 数息观派).



When I introduced qigong meditation to the patients of drug addiction, I heard many of them saying "meditation is not for me as I cannot sit still for one minute." I realized that counting-breath method could be a very effective way to get them in a meditative mood, and boost their quality of awareness. Here I would like to share it with you, and to see if it may help your meditation as well.

For many beginners, sitting down to meditate for 10 to 15 minutes could be a very frustrating or challenging experience since they have great difficulty calming their minds. However, it is much easier to get them to do slow abdominal breathing exercises on a daily basis, since everyone has to breathe anyway. One of the key components in my Integrative Meditation (IM) is belly breathing at the near resonance frequency (**RF**), also known as heart rate variability biofeedback.

The human cardiovascular system is known to have resonance characteristics, with the first RF at ~0.1 Hz or about 6 cycles/minute.[2, 3] RF varies between 5 and 7 cycles per minute, probably depending on blood volume.[3, 4] RF breathing stimulates the cardiovascular system to oscillate at that frequency at a very high amplitude and greatly stimulates the baroreflex system.[5, 6] RF breathing is known to affect depression and stress symptoms as well as various somatic disease states.[7, 8]. I believe that including near RF breathing at the beginning of meditation training will make meditation easier and more feasible, and produce immediate physical and mental benefits for practitioners since clinical studies reveal that breathing at RF has therapeutic effects on asthma, hypertension, panic attacks, fibromyalgia, and major depression.[5,8] Therefore, the first thing I do with my addiction patients is teach them to practice belly breathing, after showing them how beneficial it is to breathe slowly and deeply.

Study participants either get a MP4 player from me that includes a breathing instruction program (breathing at 6 times per minutes, or 10 seconds per nhale/exhale cycle) or download the EZ-Air program from [www.bfe.org](http://www.bfe.org), set to 6 bpm. They use these materials to practice belly breathing everyday. In addition, I instruct them to make slow belly breathing a habit, to do it whenever possible, and to track how long they can practice each time without interruption. (Sample video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBMDwGB4HHM> )

**Benefits of Counting Breaths**

Counting breath is a very easy and effective way to start meditation training, as one can do it anytime and anywhere.

The ideal count is about 10 seconds per breath, which is near the resonance frequency of your body and will help tune up your autonomic nervous system... By counting your slow belly breathing, you will achieve multiple benefits at the same time:

- You are doing belly breathing, instead of shallow breathing, to detoxify your body
- You are intentionally breathing at a slow frequency that tunes up your autonomic nervous system, helping you to relax more effectively
- Your attention is on the breathing, instead of whatever is bothering you, so your mind gets a chance to take a break
- You are training your breath, mind, and body all at once
- Your attention span will lengthen and you will gradually become more focused.



### Basic Method or Technique

First, find a clock with a second hand, and practice counting the seconds. This will teach you the speed and rhythm for counting your breaths.

Then, choose the suitable method to count breaths. There are three basic methods for counting belly breaths. Choose the one that fits you best. Try lengthening your exhalation; this may help you relax better since your heart rate slows down when you breathe out.

(See a video instruction at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbPUGnGaTQw> )

**Method 1** – silently count the seconds, 4 seconds inhale and 6 seconds exhale:

Inhale – count “1, 2, 3, 4”; Exhale – count “5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10”

Inhale – “2, 2, 3, 4”; Exhale – “5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10”

Inhale – “3, 2, 3, 4”; Exhale – “5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10”

(Continue up to 12 breaths)

**Method 2** – silently count only the exhalations,

Inhale – “One”..... Exhale “2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8”

“Two”.... Exhale “2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8”

“Three”... Exhale “2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8”

(Continue up to 12 breaths)

**Method 3** -- Choose a short sentence or a motto to count while exhaling, divide the sentence into syllables:

Inhale – One..... ; Exhale, “I, am, very, re-laxed, now.”

Two..... ; Exhale, “I, am, very, re-laxed, now.”

Three.... ; Exhale, “I, am, very, re-laxed, now.”

(Continue up to 12 breaths)

You can create your own sentence with breakdown syllables for exhaling, such as:

“I enjoy slow brea-thing a lot.”

“I can take care of my-self.”

“I am ready to make a change.”

At the beginning, most people can usually count to 3, 4 or 5 breathing cycles before their mind wanders away. That is quite normal since mind tends to think all the time, and it is difficult not to think (Learning to quiet the mind is how meditation help us to relax and stay focused). Then, they are instructed to attempt counting to 3 or 5 (the usual number of breathing mind starts wandering away) plus 1 for the next two days until they feel comfortable and easy to reach the next level (4 to 6). The next day, their goal would be to count to 6 (5+1) breaths for every session. And then count to 7, 8,... up to 12 in the period of 2 to 3 weeks. If they can count up to 10 to 12 without being interrupted by random thoughts (that is about 2 minutes), they should have no problem starting meditation.

To help students form the habit of slow belly breathing whenever possible, I have developed the following guideline for finding suitable times to count the breath and to integrate breathing exercise into daily life:

- 1) When you wake up in the morning, before getting out of bed, bring your attention to your breathing. Observe six slow belly breaths (or count as far as you can).
- 2) Use any sound as your cue to starting a slow belly breathing (phone ringing, bird singing, train passing, a car, laughter). Really listen and integrate the sound into your slow breathing pattern.
- 3) Throughout the day take a moment to bring your attention to your breathing. Observe 5-6 belly breaths.
- 4) Notice your steps when you take a walk. Try to slow your breath to the rhythm of walking -- 4-6 steps inhale, and 6-8 steps exhale – it may become automatic after some practice.
- 5) While waiting in line or waiting for your turn, use this time to count your breathing. Turn all your waiting time into rest time, recharging time, or slow breathing time. Try to do slow belly breathing and direct your attention to either your abdomen or the bottom of your feet.
- 6) Be aware of any points of tightness in your body throughout the day. See if you can apply relaxation by breathing into them – As you inhale, notice the tightness of the body, and as you exhale, let go of the excess tension – repeat it 3 to 5 times or until you feel relaxed.
- 7) Before you go to sleep at night, take a minute to bring your attention to your breathing. Observe six slow belly breaths (or count as far as you can reach).
- 8.) If you have difficulty falling asleep, take out the MP4 player, and start the breathing or meditation instruction. Even if it does not put you to sleep quickly, a high-quality breath counting or meditation will let your body and mind rest similar to when you are asleep.

These guidelines worked well for most of my study participants. It not only helped them cope with stress, anxiety, and craving when it was most needed, but also trained their attention to the mind-body connection. This got them mentally ready for next step of meditation training. Eighty percent of participants in my study were able to move from counting breath to meditation in 2 weeks, and continued meditating 5 days or more a week (15 to 25 minutes each day).

In addition, counting breath is an effective way to deal with random thoughts during meditation, and to bring attention back to lower Dantian or to a state of rest. The other methods to deal with random thoughts that may occur during meditation include: listening to the breath, observing the thoughts as a bystander (don't judge them or get upset about them, just relax and observe as if you are watching a "movie"), and noticing the content of thought with the intent of using that as a cue to return to the meditative state..

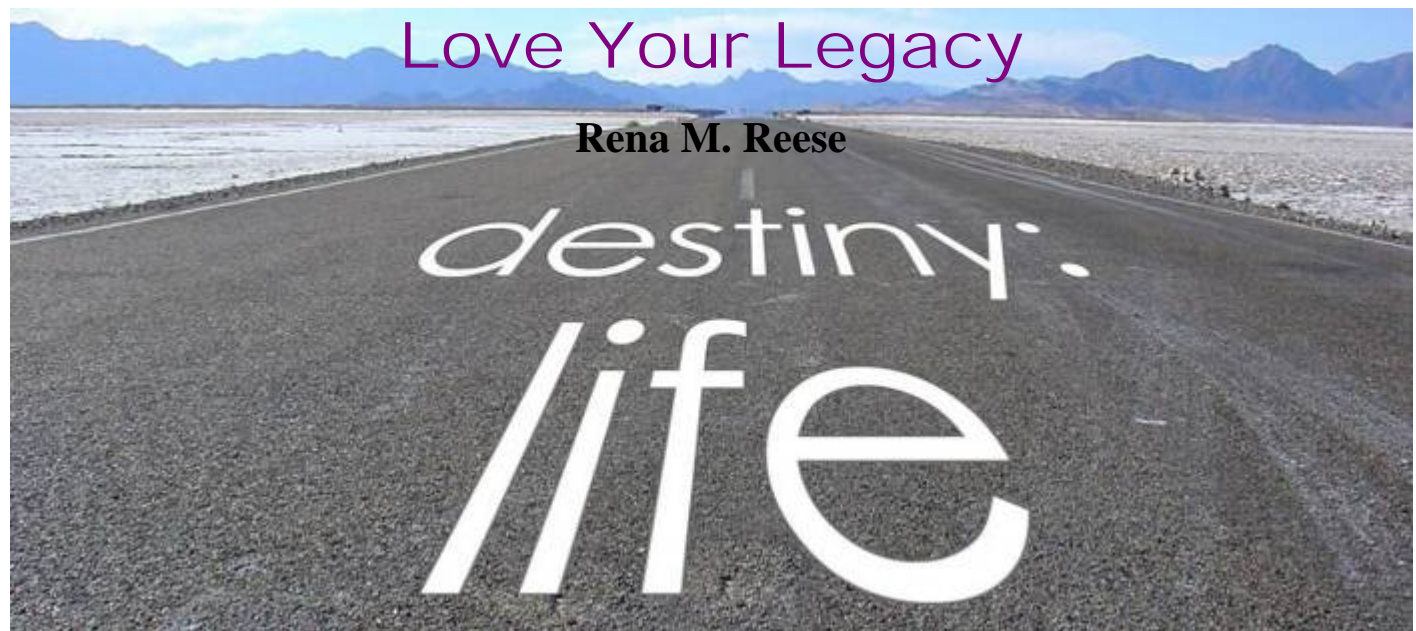
If you have had difficulty starting your meditation, or getting into the deep meditation state, you may try these methods in your daily practice. You could soon become a master meditator before you notice it.

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[Soul Salon]



Mention the names of Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King and Eleanor Roosevelt, and people immediately associate each of them with their legacies. Reflecting on the lives of Albert Einstein, Gandhi, and Helen Keller will naturally call us to celebrate their life's work and achievements. The achievements of each of these people were quite varied, important and far-reaching. But don't be fooled into thinking you'll have to win the Nobel Peace Prize to have a legacy that matters; a modest life holds a powerful legacy too.

There was a time that each of us filled our lungs for the very first time with our first breath. Juxtapose this awareness in considering that you will one day exhale your very last breath too. All of the breaths you'll take in-between will make up your personal timeline yielding *your legacy*. Whether a life lasts moments, months, or a century will not diminish this truth. Further, the value of a legacy is not measured by the degree of fame attained in life or in the size of our last will and testament. Although these can be components of the final footprint we will leave in this life, there is much more that makes up the awesome concept of a legacy. Mindfully creating our legacies as we make decisions, build relationships and invest our energy each day will leave us with greater peace when our last day-- and last breath-- arrives.

How do you mindfully create a legacy when it is something that seems so illusive and intangible? A legacy is most often built upon a lifetime of simple interactions and daily decisions. Occasionally legacies are built on a heroic act like that of Todd Beemer and Navy Seal Michael Monsoor. When Todd Beemer heroically stormed the cockpit of a hijacked plane with other passengers on September 11<sup>th</sup> and Michael Monsoor threw his body on a live grenade to shield his fellow Navy Seals from the blast, they were making decisions *in the moment*. And in the same way, our day-to-day decisions matter in constructing a life legacy too. Deciding who you will be in every day relationships, at work, and in moment-to-moment decisions will offer a great place to mindfully build your legacy.

Things to consider as you design your legacy:

- **Financial abundance** is more than a means to power, attainment of luxuries and security, but it is also an opportunity to further a cause, lift up individuals and support something you value. How can you put some of your financial resources to work for what and whom you value most?
- **Your relationships and connections**, whether they last a lifetime or mere moments, house the potential to propel people to greatness and inspired living. Recognize the gifts of those you meet, acknowledge the efforts of those who do a job for you and show gratitude without measure.
- **Pour love and acceptance into a child.** Whether you are a parent or not, you have the opportunity to mold a new generation with every interaction you have with a child. Buy some lemonade from the child who has set

up a stand on the corner, mentor a child, donate to a scholarship fund or simply turn off your TV and cell phone when you are eating dinner with your child.

- **Extend your sphere of influence.** The Internet has made it possible for a woman who lives in South Carolina to learn from a woman who lives in South Africa. Be open to opportunities to positively impact people you may or may not ever meet in person.
- **Seek opportunities to give help and give hope.** These simple four letter words have a way on etching themselves on a person's heart for a lifetime. An encouraging word, a leg-up, offering support in a crisis or a simple acknowledgment can provide the opportunity to completely change the trajectory of another's life. And most often, it won't even cost you a dime.
- **Respect the planet and all living things.** Switching to a refillable bottle for your gym jaunts may not seem like much, but the small decisions you'll make to walk instead of drive or bring your own travel mug to the coffee shop to get your morning latte add up. Crank up your awareness that the earth is a living host.
- **Be a person of integrity** and you will earn the respect of those in your life. This will have your family and peers celebrating you and your biggest critics admiring you. This respect most often comes from speaking truth, acting humbly, and offering respect in your connections with others.
- **Be a smile-maker.** We are presented with countless opportunities every single day to make someone smile. Whether it is a compliment, a gesture of support or breaking out that hilarious one-liner at just the right time, seizing those opportunities imprints your legacy on the heart of another.
- **Share your talents and natural-born gifts.** Whether you own a company that builds beautiful homes or you are responsible for lovingly landscaping them, share your innate talents with the world. Your beautiful voice, ability to advocate for another or gentle manner with a child may be examples of some of the special things that you have to offer the world. Share them.
- **Participate in values-based work.** Honoring your values in your work will carry over to your home life too. This creates a whole-life scenario that is congruent with your core beliefs. This is a powerful element to include when creating a legacy you'll love. Participating in work that opposes your values will erode your health, level of happiness and muddy the vision of your legacy.

When Mattie Stepanek was approaching the end of his short life he asked his mother Jeni, "Have I done enough? Will it last?" This young man of 13 had not only appeared on The Oprah Show many times promoting his message of peace, but enjoyed a very special, personal friendship with Oprah too. Mattie wrote several New York Times best-selling books, inspired audiences of thousands with his eloquent speeches, and raised millions for MDA. So one might wonder how it is possible that this child, who was an acclaimed poet, peacemaker and philosopher could possibly query his mom in this way. The answer to this is that it is in our nature to wonder if our life has made a difference in the world. We want to know that the world is somehow better because we were here. We want to feel extraordinary—even if it is well hidden in the very ordinary aspects of our lives.

President Jimmy Carter eulogized Mattie saying, "We have known kings and queens, and we've known presidents and prime ministers, but the most extraordinary person whom I have ever known in my life is Mattie Stepanek." And the truth is, whether a person lives thirteen seconds or lives 113 years; his life matters and holds a legacy. Mattie taught us to distinguish being important from being famous and that it is a right and a gift to be able to touch another human being. So if you want a place to mindfully begin building a legacy you will love, why not begin there?



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

## [Healing Recipes of the Month]

## Six Soups with Therapeutic Affect on Insomnia

Now a day more and more people suffer from stress and anxiety problems, while insomnia is one of most common symptoms. If you notice the side effects of most sleeping pills, you may want to try some of natural recipes from Chinese medicine for tranquility and sleeping-aid.



**Chinese-date kernel soup:** The Chinese-date kernel (酸枣仁), a.k.a. spiny jujube, 9 grams, smashed, and boiled with water, taking the soup one hour before going to bed every night. The Chinese date kernel can suppress the central nervous system, and have a constant sedative effect. It has good therapeutic effect on the annoyance or restless insomnia caused by blood deficiency, palpitation, and anxiety (or related conditions).

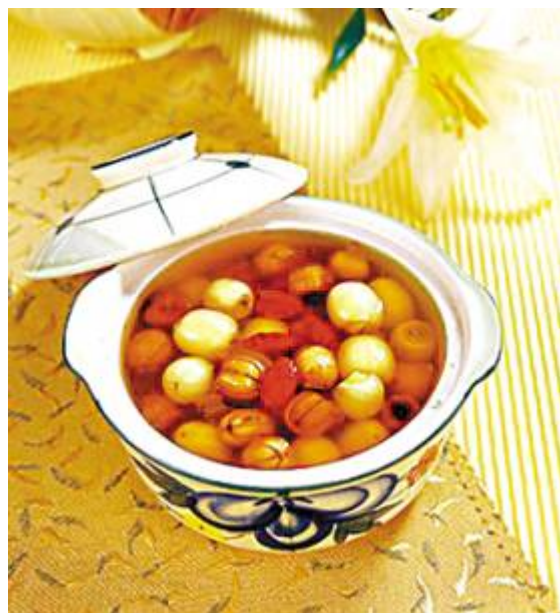
**Tranquil-mind soup:** Longan meat (龙眼肉) and Sichuan salvia miltiorrhiza (川丹参) 9 grams each, with two bowls of water, boiled to half a bowl, taking it 30 minutes before going to bed every night. Sedative and calming effect can be achieved, especially for the insomnia due to cardiovascular weakness, blood deficiency and related debilities.

**Calming-spirit soup:** Raw lily flower (生百合) 15 grams, steamed thoroughly, add one egg-yolk, stirred with 200 ml of water, add some rock sugar, then boiled, add 50ml of cold water, drink one hour before going to bed.

**Three-taste sleeping soup:** The Chinese-date kernel(酸枣仁) 9 grams, ophiopogon(麦冬) and polygala (远志) 3 grams each, boiled with 500 ml of water until 50ml left, taking before going to bed. All three herbs have calming, resting and sedative effects, and together they produce nice hypnosis effect.

**Longan lotus-seed soup:** Takes the dried longan (桂圆) and lotus seeds (莲子) 100 grams each, boils into soup (25 to 30 minutes), which has the effect of nourishing the mind, cultivating the spirit, strengthening the spleen, and supplementing the kidney, most suitable for the middle-aged or old persons with long-term insomnia.

**Mind-Nourishing Rice-Soup:** Take codonopsis (党参) 35 grams, 10 pieces of date without seed, Ophiopogon (麦冬) and root poria (茯神) 10 grams each, add 2000 ml of water to boil into 500 ml, get rid of the residue. Wash the rice (about 50 to 75 grams) and boil with the herbal water into rice soup. After the rice is cooked add brown sugar to take. The soup has significant effect on accelerated heart rate, forgetfulness, insomnia, and profuse dreaming.



(Translated by Kevin W Chen)

[Source: Chinese Medical Yang-Sheng Network [中医养生网](http://www.yangshengdiy.cn/zhichangyangsheng/jingshen/487.html)  
<http://www.yangshengdiy.cn/zhichangyangsheng/jingshen/487.html>]



[From the Editor]

## Volunteer Opportunities at *Yang Sheng* magazine/network

*Yang-Sheng* is an E-magazine and network run by the non-profit World Institute for Self Healing (WISH), and all of our writing, editing and publication are done by volunteers since we do not have a stable financial support to it at this moment. We welcome more volunteers join us to serve the community and to make Yang Sheng a better place for everyone. Together we can build a unique community of our own that is dedicated to a healthy, happy and harmonious life for all.

Here are the things you may consider to help us for a better E-magazine and online community:

- 1) You may start writing a column for Yang Sheng (养生), if you are passionate to write. You can write anything for the existent column (see web site for details) or start your own column. We will list you as a columnist. You need write about 3-4 times a year, the more the better as long as you enjoy what you are writing.
- 2) You may review new books or classic books that you think our readers may be interested in, and write a book review or new media review once a while
- 3) You may help search internet to help us finding the interesting links (web sites, videos, inspirational story, and news), and add a brief introduction and present those links to the readers so that they do not have to search it themselves
- 4) You may help collecting interesting quotes, inspirational quotes or stories, jokes related to mind-body cultivation (such as Daoism, Buddhism, Yogo and meditation) and share them with the readers.
- 5) If you are bilingual, you may help us translate some materials from other language into English, we especially need bilingual volunteers to translate from Chinese to English.
- 6) Other things you may contribute to this virtual community may include:
  - Refer Yang Sheng to the merchants, companies or schools who may be interested in advertising in our web site and magazine.
  - Help pass the words around and get more people subscribe the e-magazine, explore the possible access to email lists of other practitioners of qigong, taiji, yoga, reiki, mindfulness, and mind-body medicine, and we will invite them to join us.
  - Recommend experts in the field to write for the e-magazine
- 7) Last but not least, you may make financial contribution to Yang Sheng, or to WISH, if you have the ability, so as to help us to pay the bill and staff to run the web sites, and eventually publish hard-copy of Yang Sheng magazine for the health community. Your contribution will be tax-deductable if you are in the U.S. ☺

Please contact us at [editor@yang-sheng.com](mailto:editor@yang-sheng.com) or [info@yang-sheng.com](mailto:info@yang-sheng.com) if you decide to help us one way or other, and we look forward to hearing from you.



[A Comedy Moment]

## Zen Humor



### CLASSIC HUMOR FROM THE CH'AN / ZEN BUDDHIST TRADITION

Compiled by Timothy Conway

#### POSTMORTEM

Before Japanese Zen Master Takuan Soho (1573-1645) died, he instructed: "Bury my body on the mountain behind the temple; throw earth on it and go away. No scripture reading, no offerings—go on with your meals. Afterwards, no pagoda, no monument, no posthumous name or title, and certainly no biography full of dates!"

When, earlier in his ministry as a Zen roshi, Takuan was asked by a monk whether he ever performed the sacred Nembutsu recitation of the Name of Amida Buddha, he replied, "No, never." "Why not?" "Because I don't want my mouth polluted!"

#### SPEECH-SILENCE

Chinese Ch'an (Zen) master I-tuan (9th century), disciple of Nan-ch'uan, declared: "Speech is blasphemy! Silence is a lie! Above speech and silence, there is a way out."

#### TRADITION

When Ch'an master Yün-men (864-949) was asked by a monk for details about the life and teaching of ancient sage Nagarjuna, the renowned Indian master of the 2nd century, considered a primary Patriarch of Ch'an/Zen and other schools of Buddhism, Yün-men smilingly replied: "In India there are ninety-six classes of heretics, and you belong to the lowest."

#### SUCCESSION

When the 6th Patriarch of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism, Hui-neng (638-713), was asked on what basis he succeeded the 5th Patriarch in this lineage of Buddhism, Hui-neng instantly replied, "Because I do not understand Buddhism."

#### PRACTICE

Hui-neng's successor, Master Nan-yüeh, came upon young Ma-tsu who had been ardently spending all his days sitting in meditation at a temple. The master asked Ma-tsu, "What are you doing?" "I'm practicing meditation." "Why?" asked the master. Said Ma-tsu, "I want to attain enlightenment; I aim to become a Buddha." Master Nan-yüeh thereupon picked up a rough tile lying nearby and began to vigorously rub it against a rock. "What are you doing?" asked Ma-tsu. Said the master, "I want to make this tile into a mirror." "How is it possible to make a tile into a mirror?" asked Ma-tsu. Retorted Nan-yüeh: "How is it possible to become a Buddha by doing meditation?... If you keep the Buddha seated, this is murdering the Buddha." Modern-era Zen master Shunryu Suzuki clarifies: "We practice zazen meditation to naturally express True Nature, not to 'attain enlightenment.'" And one of Zen master Sengai's (1751-1837) famous cartoonish Zen paintings shows a smiling frog sitting on a lily pad, with the caption: "If by seated meditation one becomes a Buddha... [implication: then all frogs are Buddhas!]"

#### VISIONS

Harada-roshi's successor Hakuun Yasutani (1885-1973) declared: "To see a beautiful vision of a celestial Buddha does not mean that you are any nearer to becoming one yourself!"

[Submitted by Joy Staller]

## Seasonal Harmony

By Ellasara Kling



the season.

Spring is beginning. It may not yet appear so with Winter snow storms still occurring, but it is beginning nonetheless. The first stirrings of the season are happening now. The Universal has been shifting from the messages of sleeping, storing and gathering to awakening, reaching outward and then, later on, beginning the Spring time show with the appearance of buds and sprouts. The weather begins to warm and daylight is extended. Welcome changes, yet change is not always easy. One way we can help create an easy transition is to eat more of those foods which are lighter and in harmony with the season such as the foods that are listed below. Giving our bodies a rest from the denser foods associated with Winter and choosing lighter fare, allows our body's energy to be in accord with the outward movement of Spring. It helps the Liver function to resonate peacefully with

This bursting forth of new energy promotes circulation, movement, free flow of emotions, new beginnings, creativity, and enthusiasm. The related emotion of the season is anger which is an outward flow of energy. Enjoy teas like the one described later in this article that help to clear Liver heat and soothe nervous irritability. This season is another opportunity to find ways to “give yourself a break” and to be kind to ourselves and others. It's the beginning of Spring and we most want to engage in the freshness of life and enjoy all things!

### Some Foods That Harmonize With Spring

Artichoke, Asparagus, Avocados Bamboo shoots, Basil, Bay leaf, Bean Curd (tofu) – use non GMO organic, Beef Liver, Bee Pollen, Blackberry, Bok Choy, Broccoli, Broccoli rabe, Buckwheat, Caraway, Carrots, Cashews, Celery, Chicken Chicken Liver, Chives, Chrysanthemums, Clams, Corn silk, Crab, Dandelion greens, Eggplant, Fennel, Garlic, Ginger, Green veggies in general, Green Bell Pepper, Kiwi, Lemon, Lime, Lotus, Mulberry, Milk thistle, Nettle Tea, Oats, Parsley, Pickles, Quail, Raspberry, Rosemary, Rosebuds, Rye, Safflower oil, Scallion, Spinach, Sprouts of all kinds, Vinegar (raw, unfiltered apple cider vinegar has many uses), Watercress, Wild Rice, Zucchini

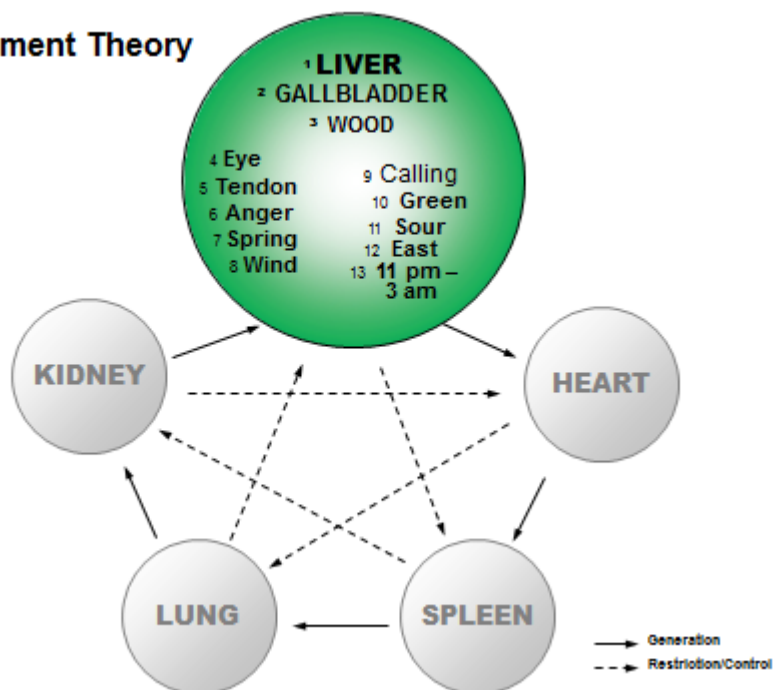
### RECIPES

#### Spinach Soup w/Snow Fungus

##### Ingredients

2 bunches of fresh spinach  
 ½ cup of Snow fungus  
 2 beaten eggs  
 1-1/2 qt light vegetable broth or chicken broth  
 2 thin slices of ginger  
 1 TB soy sauce

### Five Element Theory





½ tsp salt  
1 tsp black pepper  
4 oz tofu – cut in ½” cubes  
2 TB toasted sesame oil

**Directions**

Carefully and thoroughly clean the spinach, remove the stems and cut leaves into 2” pieces  
Soak the Snow fungus in hot water and rinse a few times. Cut into small pieces  
Bring the broth to a simmer; add the snow fungus, soy sauce, ginger, salt and pepper – bring to a boil and then simmer for 10 minutes, add the spinach, stir simmer until spinach begins to wilt  
Pour in the eggs slowly in a steady stream stirring the soup gently in one direction only  
Add the tofu and heat through.  
Serve and sprinkle a little sesame oil on top of each bowl.

**Scallion Pancakes**

Makes 8 - 10 pancakes

**Ingredients:**

2 1/2 cups plain flour  
2 teaspoons yeast (instant)  
1 cup water  
2 teaspoons oil  
3 spring onions/green onions/scallions, washed and thinly diced

oil to brush on pancakes  
salt to sprinkle on pancakes during frying  
Oil that can handle high heat for shallow pancake frying

**Directions:**

Mix together the first four ingredients until you have a ball, then cover with a clean cotton cloth and let it rise in a warm room for about 2 hours. The dough will be springy to the touch  
Wash and dice the spring onions.  
Flour a surface and knead the dough. Cut the dough into thirds and knead some more until the dough is very smooth. Add extra flour if needed while kneading the dough. Kneading too long or roughly will make the dough tough.  
Roll the dough out into one flat piece approximately 1/8 inch thick.  
Lightly brush the pancake with a little light oil, and sprinkle with the diced spring onions.  
Roll up the pancake and cut into 8 - 10 pieces.  
Using your palm, flatten each piece and then roll it out to pancake size.  
Using oil like peanut oil which can handle high heat, heat the oil in a large skillet. You do not want to drown your pancakes in oil. This is not a deep fry, but a shallow fry of the pancakes until both sides are golden brown, Sprinkle with a little salt while frying.  
Serve whole or cut into wedges. Serve plain or with a dipping sauce.

**Basic Vegetable Stock I**

12 cups of water  
4 medium size carrots  
4 celery stalks with leaves  
6 scallion whites  
2 cloves garlic- peeled  
1” of fresh ginger – peeled and sliced – but not chopped  
1 small turnip - peeled  
1/2 cup flat parsley or cilantro – leaves only – no stems  
peel of one tangerine  
salt and pepper to taste

Clean all the vegetables very well and cut into large pieces. Place in a stock pot with the water. Cover and simmer for 1 to 1-1/2 hours.

#### **Version A:**

Remove all the vegetables and use the liquid or freeze in 2 cup portions for future use.

#### **Version B:**

Remove all the vegetables and separate out the tangerine peel and ginger slices. Put through a food processor or blender until smooth and liquid, adding more water as needed since the vegetable pulp will thicken the stock. Again, you may reserve this in the freezer for future use.

### **Bean Sprouts**

#### **Ingredients:**

1 tablespoon walnut oil  
1 clove garlic  
1 TB ginger diced  
3 scallion whites cut into thin rings  
1-2 little red chilies - whole  
1/2 teaspoon rice wine vinegar  
2 cups bean sprouts  
3 scallions greens cut into 1-1/2" pieces  
1 beaten egg (optional)  
1 tsp Pure Sesame oil



#### **Directions:**

Wash and drain the bean sprouts  
Heat the oil in a wok or heavy skillet.  
Add the garlic, ginger and scallion whites, sauté lightly till whites are wilted.  
Add the vinegar and chilies' and stir  
Add the bean sprouts and stir-fry briefly till the sprouts are heated through. Add the scallion greens and toss.  
If using egg, add now and stir-fry another few seconds till the eggs have cooked.  
Drizzle a little sesame oil over sprouts just before serving.

### **TEAS**

The aromatic fragrance of flower teas as they are brewed and poured automatically induces an instant relaxation response. That is their first healing benefit. The second can easily be the visual effect of the flower(s) in the teapot (especially if it is glass), cup or tall glass. And then, each flower imparts its unique medicinal qualities to the infusion. This tea is quite beautiful and sweetly scented. **For each cup of tea, put together 5 white chrysanthemum flowers, 3 rose flowers, and 1 T honeysuckle flowers in a sachet. Place the sachet or loose flowers in a pot with 1-1/4 cup of water for each "flower group" and bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 1-1/2 minutes. Enjoy.**

According to TCM, this tea strengthens the liver function, clears heat, relieves toxicity, reduces liver and gall bladder inflammation, improves vision, improves appetite and relieves a dry throat.

I originally found this tea recipe in *Chinese Herb Cooking For Health*.

**Health Topic: Stress** Each person has a different tolerance level and "stressors" vary from one person to another. Simply put, we each react to life's situations and circumstances uniquely. When we experience stress, our bodies respond to protect us. Short term, this can benefit us by giving us a boost of energy for a presentation, or the intense focus to solve an immediate problem, for example. However, chronic, long term stress that is not relieved causes damage to our systems. What damage is again particular to each person. For some people, it may manifest as graying hair, others may not be able to lose (or gain) weight. The list of the out of balance effects of long term stress is quite long and many say that unrelieved stress is the underlying cause of all out of balance situations. It's as if, with long term, unre-



lieved stressors that the body forgets how to shut it off by itself. This is where our practice (qigong, taiji, meditation, yoga, or other) is of the utmost benefit. How we use what we learn from our practice in our moment-to-moment, day-to-day can make a big difference in every area of our lives and especially how we deal with stressors. It's a process of integrating our practice into our lives so that the practice continues 24/7. It continues when we are walking in the woods or down a city street, during our jobs, home life, etc. Everything in our lives becomes an integrated whole and is the reflection of our practice.

**Seasonal Self-massage: Relieving Stress:** Think of a cat. Picture this cat curled up on a rug in

sunlight. Peaceful. It awakens. It uncurls and stretches its limbs, neck and tail. Arches its back and lets its head fall forward. It opens its mouth and stretches its jaws. It stretches every inch of its body in purposeful, gentle, graceful movements. Never straining or over doing. Doing just enough. Then, it moseys on to its next cat event. This is a wonderful lesson in self-massage. Simply stretching like a cat. Almost regardless of where we are, we can stretch out our arms from the tips of our nails to deep within the shoulder muscles; stretch our legs the same way, one by one if standing or both together if seated. Even just stretching our fingers and palms and flexing our feet and stretching our toes can feel so relaxing.

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





## [Book Reviews]

**Eternal Spring** by Michael W. Acton.

\$19.95 . Softcover. 233pp. Singing Dragon, London, UK

ISBN: 978-1-84819-003-0

Michael Acton has written a very insightful and inspiring book. He distills his 30 plus years of qigong and taijiquan experiences into a flowing informative narrative. This book is very appropriate for all levels of qigong and taijiquan practitioners no matter the style. In addition, the information presented will benefit all involved in energy work since the principles and practices presented are fundamental in nature. He states in his preface, “ The practice of Qigong and Taijiquan is also self empowering, since it not only brings physical health and mental well being, but engenders the courage to accept and understand our condition and the ebb and flow of our lives and to take responsibility for our own nature and actions.”(p.9)



The book contains 14 chapters with the first one discussing qigong and taijiquan as two fundamental energy practices. In chapters 2-10 principles and concepts for effective qigong practice are discussed. Chapters 11 and 12 deal with taijiquan as a moving qigong discussing training modalities and concepts. The book comes full circle in the last two chapters in emphasizing meditation practices which enhance the qigong and taiji experience.

Utilizing Daoist teachings and concepts the author shows how the practice of qigong and taiji increase one's ability to live in accordance with a nature filled environment, eating natural foods and practicing harmonious techniques to connect the mind, body and spirit. I was intrigued by the title of the book which at first thought made me feel it was about immortality. “Eternal Spring” infers that through the prudent practice of qigong, life is nourished, health is maintained, the ageing process is slowed, and wisdom is achieved, physical and mental freedoms abound. In our modern world, people are living longer due to the advances of modern medicine; however, this longevity brings a life filled with cognitive deficiency, decrepitude, mental deterioration, along with a myriad of diseases and chronic conditions caused by poor lifestyle choices and increased stress factors.

The author makes the point that we need qigong to nourish life through self cultivation which will conserve, replenish and rejuvenate the ability to maintain your health, mobility, functionality and mental capacity into old age. A graceful aging process with dignity being the goal. Qigong starts with outside movement and inside stillness progressing to outside stillness and inside movement. Both qigong and taijiquan practices help balance the “3 Treasures (San Bao) which are Essence (Jing), Vital Breath (Qi) and Spirit (Shen). Jing can be thought of as sexual, or generative energy and is associated with fluids (physiologically e.g. neurotransmitters, hormones, blood) whereas Qi refers to breath/oxygen, body functionality and physical integrity, and finally Shen referring to the emotions, intuition, intelligence, consciousness and spirit. The balance of the “3 Treasures” are goals for our modern wellness programs and holistic health modalities. Through a discussion of Daoist theory, and Traditional Chinese medicine( e.g. Yin-Yang theory, 5 element theory , et.al) the author discusses the ever-changing flux we have on all san bao levels and the importance of finding harmonious balance. As examples of this flux, we are subject to the “5 Emotions “(i.e. Joy, anger, sadness, anxiety and fear )as well as the “6 External Pernicious Influences”( i.e. wind, cold, fire, heat and dampness ) which threaten our quest for balance and harmony.

Using concepts taught by his teacher, Grandmaster Ma Yuen Liang a foundation for meaningful qigong and taiji practice are defined. One must persevere, be precise, be slow as well as buoyant and stillness. Additional principles include using mind not force, posture control, awareness, proper breathing, mental intention and awareness. The book contains an excellent presentation of the importance of proper standing and body alignment which is fundamental to all qigong and taiji practices. Many of the nuts and bolts needed for these practices are contained in the book and explained in great depth. In Chapters 11 and 12 , the author continues to bring the relationship between qigong and taiji practices together. The beautiful part of these sections is that they address the arts themselves and not the various styles and nuances of each style. Whether it be qigong or taiji the importance of some fundamental practices are paramount in achieving harmony and balance in our lives.

Meditation whether it be standing, sitting or lying down is an important contributor in cultivating your internal energy. The author prefers sitting meditation and describes the classic “Small Heavenly Circuit” or “Microcosmic Orbit” sitting meditative practice. “Meditation is a “healing rest” and a “means to stop the leakage and dissipation of our life Energy” (p.129). In addition, meditation allows for looking inwards and cultivating higher states of consciousness. One of the best practices for cultivating energy and rooting is “Pole Standing” (Zhan Zhuang) which is very important to taiji practice. The practice of Wu Zhang( 5 Element Qigong) is important in targeting the spine and the visceral organ energy systems( lungs, heart, liver, spleen and kidneys) which enhances health and well being. The author discusses the importance of solo practice of taijiquan form, the energies of the 8 Gates and 5 Doors (Basic 13 postures in taijiquan), as well as the rationale and importance of “Pushing Hands” practice. In addition, the training in one of the tai chi weapons such as straight sword is discussed . Weapons forms help produce power, grace, balance and greater qi flow.

The book concludes with an informative description of a very simple qigong form practice. Photographs of the author in various poses helps relate to the narrative. Breathing technique is emphasized in doing the qigong. In closing, sitting meditation is reviewed and encouraged. In China, Qigong and Taijiquan are practiced to nourish life Energy (Yang Sheng) and for self cultivation. Their goal is to increase the potential for a healthier, happier life. “If we can learn, and practice these arts, we give ourselves a chance to stay healthy ....for as long as possible. It is the chance of Eternal Spring.” (p.216)

In summary, this book is loaded with ingredients to help nourish your life, your health, your mind, and your emotions. You truly experience the author’s journey in practicing these arts. As the cover states, “Taijiquan, Qigong, and the Cultivation of Health, Happiness and Longevity- Eternal Spring” This book delivers on all accounts.

Reviewed by S. Casano , Ph.D.(Holistic Health), R.N.



**[Salvatore Casano R.N., PhD** – a registered nurse with a PhD in Holistic Health, and is an ATCQZ certified Tai Chi and Qigong instructor. His Tai Chi and Qigong journey began over 20 years ago while working as a chemistry instructor, when he felt the need for a more holistic approach to health care. Participating in many programs and projects relating to health, Dr. Casano educates the community on living a healthier lifestyle to avoid obesity and diabetes, and as a way to reduce stress. Over the years, he has learned from many masters including Bill Philips, Marc Issacs, Richard Chu, as well as two ATCQA advisors, Dr. Roger Jahnke, and Bill Douglas. Dr. Casano, along with his wife Veronica, often sojourn together on his healing path, as they use their skills in helping others connect the mind, body, and spirit. They have four adult children, seven grandchildren, and a cat, “Tiger.”]



## Guideline for Submissions

**Yang Sheng (Nurturing Life)** accepts unsolicited submissions from professional and amateur writers, artists and practitioners, both original article/media, and those previously published (with copy-right clearance). For a good sense of our format, style and content, it is recommended to read some of the articles first. After that, here is a general guideline to assist you in developing your contribution to the E-magazine and network

### Contents:

We are looking for featured article and brief essay, as well as new media like photograph, painting, and videos, which fall under the broad concept of “nurturing life,” “self healing,” “daily wellbeing practice” and “mind-body-spirit integration”.

We are promoting the philosophy and culture of self-healing, positive mind and health preservation, and shares knowledge and experiences with each other. We are not only looking for articles or contribution on traditions, histories, famous practitioners, practical methods, and reviews; but also on innovative new approaches and applications, as well as anecdotal stories about implications of Yang Sheng principles to your own life and family or communities. We believe the stories of ordinary persons in quiet corners of the world, improving their health, well-being, and spirituality with the daily practices, are sometimes more interesting and relevant than the historical figures or current teachers who introduced them.

Short stories, brief instruction and practical tips are always welcomed.



### Style:

We do not have specific requirement on style, as long as it reads well, has interesting point(s), and is easy to understand.

Our regular columns run about 500 to 2500 words. Shorter submission is encouraged. For a featured article we can run up to 3500 words. If you are unsure where your article fits in please send us an email about your subject and what you want to say and we can offer you some feedback and help you make it fit.

Images are always welcome (and encouraged) be they photos or line images. Please send them as tiff files or jpg file if possible.

Author(s) should include a brief biosketch about himself/herself at the end of the submission if possible so that readers would be better informed on where the article comes from.

In addition, we request that all submissions be properly cited (given references whenever possible). We suggest the APA, or Chicago style systems, but you are free to choose other citation system.

### Copy Rights:

If your piece is accepted for publishing at Yang Sheng, we acquire the non-exclusive, one-time, publication rights to the accepted pieces. Authors continue to own the rights and are free to sell or license the ‘Work’ elsewhere. However we retain the right to keep the materials archived on the site for readers in the future.

### Payment:

While we cannot afford to pay for articles at this moment, as we are a free publication, we can offer reduced rates or free advertising for our contributors. Please see our ad rates and sizes for more information.

As the magazine grows we hope to be able to offer payments and honorariums in the future for featured articles. Payments and considerations for solicited material will be handled on an individual basis.

Please send your submission (as attachment) to

[editor@yang-sheng.com](mailto:editor@yang-sheng.com)

Or [yangsheng.mag@gmail.com](mailto:yangsheng.mag@gmail.com)

Thank you very much for your support !

<http://Yang-Sheng.com>





# Yang Sheng

## Cultivating Qi for Body, Mind & Spirit

### (A network for health, happiness, & harmony)

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

<http://www.Yang-Sheng.com>

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## Mission Statements

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