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**Yang-Sheng** – cultivating qi for body, mind & spirit -- 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]

## Yang-Sheng Welcomes You ...

After a few months of intensive preparation and collective efforts, the new edition of *Yang Sheng* magazine is finally here to welcome its readers in English.

*Yang-Sheng (Nurturing Life) — Cultivating Qi for Body, Mind and Spirit*, is an online magazine and network for all practitioners of mind-body exercises, health 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 these subjects. It is FREE to those who are interested in the subjects. Your contribution, participation and suggestions are truly appreciated.

The prior version of *Yang Sheng* is the E-Journal *Qi Dao* by the World Institute for Self Healing, (WISH, [http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Qi\\_Dao](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Qi_Dao)). The readers of *Qi Dao* may see some familiar columns and many new faces. The new *Yang Sheng* is intended to become both a web-based magazine and a virtual community or network for those who are seeking health, happiness, longevity and harmony in life through their own effort, sharing and exploration.

From my introductory article "[What is Yang Sheng](#)" you may realize that Yang Sheng is one of the most important concepts in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), it is the root of Chinese medicine, and the foundation of human health. However, this magazine or network is not about Chinese medicine, but about the common accessible practices for ordinary people to cultivate health and harmony through daily activities. Rather than treating disease, the focus of Yang Sheng is on maintaining balance through an awareness of our connection to nature, to our own

bodies, and to the spirit. We just use the concept of TCM to promote the idea that Yang Sheng is a way of life for all people at all times, and it is a powerful practice that can preserve and improve health when engaged in daily.

Yang-Sheng will connect the TCM knowledge with modern scientific evidence, and combine ancient wisdom with our own daily experience to support

our daily practice and wellbeing, and to reach true meaning of health in body, mind and spirit. Most of TCM Yang Sheng works and methods are based on long-term experience and clinical observations, not all methods are appropriate for all people at all time, adding



the emerging scientific research and evidence to our knowledge of health or mind-body integration will make our practice more supportive and effective, and make more people accept the concept of self-healing. More importantly, there are many emerging health-related issues that may never be addressed in the ancient literature but which need our current inspiration and understanding; for example, the effects of high-rise buildings (away from grounding qi), electric lights (breaking the boundary of day and night), over use of antibiotics and hormones (creating drug-resistant infections), computer screens and cell phones (strong electronic magnetic field) on our health, to name only a few. Our own experience and integrating ancient knowledge into modern life will help us find appropriate answers to these new challenges.

As you may know, to become a true Yang Sheng practitioner or a mind-body cultivator one needs the guidance of good teachers. When good teachers are

not around, we can learn from each other by sharing and exchange. In ancient time teachers and students interacted with each other through long-distance travel and face-to-face meetings, which was the key to their personal cultivation, life fulfillment and truth illumination. However, with our modern technology and communication tools (especially the development and widespread use of the Internet), we can be much better connected to one another, and have our own voices heard and our own platform of sharing. *Yang Sheng* will become such a platform or community to connect those like-minded practitioners of mind-body exercise, spiritual cultivators and health/happiness seekers.

However, for many true mind-body-spirit cultivators, internet is still a stranger. Some of them do not have the luxury to access internet, and some of them would rather spend time meditating or cultivating instead of browsing around. Therefore, it is important for us to keep the traditional means of a magazine – the monthly issue in PDF format at this moment, as part of our virtual community or network, so that their students or friends can bring a printed copy of the “Yang Sheng” magazine to them, get their feedbacks, and include them into this worldwide network of mind-body-spirit cultivators. So we

truly appreciate your sharing of *Yang Sheng* magazine and its articles with your friends and social networks, which will be the foundation for *Yang Sheng* to grow and develop.

In our new editorial board we have invited many experts in the areas of nutrition, mind-body cultivation, spirituality, sexuality and health, and complementary therapies to form a strong and knowledgeable team to support this virtual community. *Yang Sheng* magazine or network will serve the purpose of sharing and improving our health practice and spiritual cultivation, and enlighten more people who are searching for health, happiness and harmony within. Please join us as part of this virtual community of mind-body-spirit cultivators. We invite you to share your experience and knowledge with your friends and acquaintances. Together we can build a unique community of our own that is dedicated to a healthy, happy and harmonious life for all.

*Kevin W Chen.*

*Yang Sheng* Publisher & Editor

## **From the Editor ...**

Thought I would take a few words and introduce myself as the new Editor-In-Chief. My name is Solala Towler and I have been working with Daoist philosophy and *Yang Sheng* practices for over 23 years. I have been publishing *The Empty Vessel: The Journal of Daoist Thought and Practice* for eighteen years, have published 12 books on qigong and Daoist philosophy and have had my life change in dramatic and magical ways by all of this (see my article below). I am just as excited and inspired by the vast and wonderful world of Chinese medicine, qigong and Daoist thought as when I first discovered it so long ago.

So when Kevin called me and asked if I would be interested in taking this project on, I thought for one and a half minutes about all the other projects I have going and then said yes! I already know some of you in this community and I look forward to getting to know the rest of you. I believe passionately in the world that we are representing here and I know many of you do as well.

Let us move forward then into this world of healing, inspiration and spiritual regeneration!

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



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## [Featured Article]

## Yang Sheng: The Art of Nourishing Life

Solala Towler

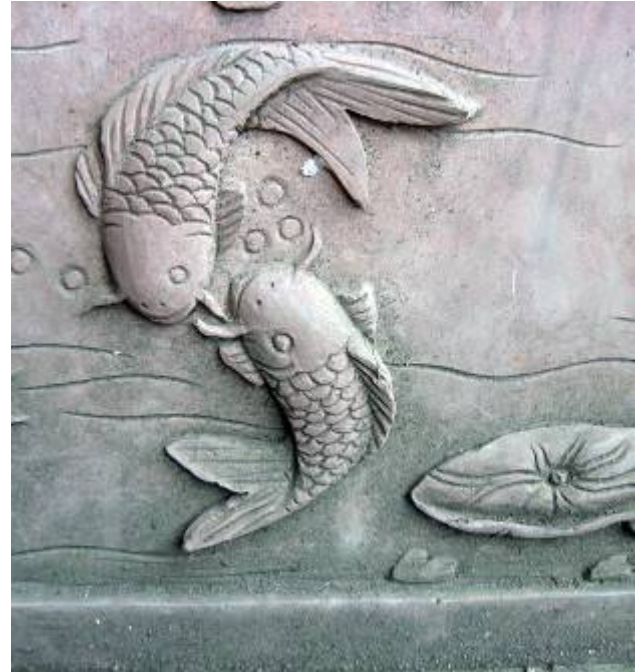
*Yang Sheng*, the art of nourishing life, covers a wide variety of health, spiritual and immortality practices dating back to the times of Laozi and Zhuangzi, and perhaps further back to the early days of Chinese (*wu*) shamanism. Some believe the practices of *yang sheng* go back at least 3700 years, to the time of the Yellow Emperor. They include qigong or energy practices, meditation, internal alchemy practices (*neidan*), and such subjects as medicine, dietetics, astrology and fengshui.

While most, if not all, of these practices have their roots in traditional Daoism, many are practiced in modern times without any Daoist connection. Modern acupuncture, for instance, is practiced widely by people trained in what is called Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), which is actually a form of modern, standardized, Communist medicine, often extremely disconnected from its Daoist roots. In addition, many forms of fengshui being practiced in the West are heavily influenced by Buddhism. Most taiji instructors know nothing about Daoism, understanding only the most basic principles of yin and yang. Indeed, many qigong instructors are unfamiliar with the Daoist cosmological principles underlying many of these practices.

While this can seem problematic to traditional Daoists, it is interesting that these practices work anyway. People are healing from chronic or even acute illnesses and injuries; they are living longer, more fulfilling lives; their level of stress and frustration is dramatically decreased; their sex lives are healthier and, for some, the internal alchemy practices provide ever new and deeper levels of spiritual development.

Many modern teachers and practitioners believe that the greatest influence that Daoism will have on the West will be from these *yang sheng* practices. The number of people interested in becoming ordained Daoist priests (*daojiao*) will always be smaller than the number of people interested in health or longevity practices.

The number of people practicing qigong and taiji is steadily rising. Taiji classes can be found in almost every local community center, including many specialized classes for seniors. Events such as World



Taiji Qigong Day<sup>1</sup> attract thousands of participants worldwide. Organizations such as the National Qigong Association (NQA)<sup>2</sup> bring together teachers, healers and practitioners from across the country, networking teachers and healers with students and patients. The NQA holds a national conference each year, with participants from around the country as well as from overseas. The first qigong clinic was opened in 2000 at the Five Branches Institute of Chinese Medicine in Santa Cruz. This clinic offers medical qigong treatments (*fagong*) only, instead of the usual acupuncture or herbal treatments used in most Chinese medical clinics in the West.

Clearly there is much interest in these “nourishing life” practices in the West. While some traditionalists may decry the separation of these practices from their root source, many modern Chinese teachers do not see this as a problem. While much of the world of traditional Daoism has been lost in modern China, the Daoists with whom I have had contact with in China actively promote these practices in the West by lay practitioners.

“We have common points, you and I,” I was told by Abbot Liu from Xiaqing temple at Laoshan, a sacred Daoist mountain I visited in 1997. “American people love nature. American people love peace. They pursue good health. They have many common points with Daoism, so it is very natural for them to study Daoism. American people also have many scientific achievements. I think that if they can combine Daoist ideas and scientific achievements they will be very strong.”

Then he went on to say, “Study Daoism bit by bit, one thing or aspect at a time. I know that Ameri-



can people love freedom, freedom of the individual. Develop Daoism in America according to the reality of America.”

Of course, when charlatan teachers and healers come from China to the West, making erroneous claims about their abilities and charging outrageous amounts of money, the reverse can happen. Many people in the West do not know how to recognize an authentic master or healer. They believe that being Chinese is identical with being authentically Daoist.

Modern China is also full of qigong teachers who travel through the countryside doing slight-of-hand tricks and making false promises to people while charging large sums of money. In response to such conditions, Wang Qingyu, a well-known qigong

master from Sichuan province says: “In modern times you must be careful to differentiate between the circus type of Daoism, the religious form and the science of nourishing life. China is a culture where all kinds of bizarre things exist all the time. Most of the amazing things you see are tricks.”<sup>3</sup>

So, how does one differentiate authentic teachers and practices from false ones? Part of the answer is more education on the part of the Western students and practitioners. The next part of the answer lies in the practices themselves. Daoists are known for being very practical in their teachings. While they may have some elaborate arcane rituals, they also place a great deal of emphasis on experiential learning. The following is an example of a Daoist cosmological qigong form that I teach and use as my personal practice.

### A Personal Narrative

My own interest in Daoism and especially with the *yang sheng* practices came about, as with many people, through major health issues. I had the misfortune or bad karma, to come down with three serious diseases at once—giardiasis, amoeba histolytica, and infectious hepatitis. Needless to say, I was extremely ill for some time. The problem, though, was once I had been treated and had recovered from these ailments, my health did not return.

I still had many complaints—from extreme fatigue, digestive problems, hypoglycemia, insomnia, dizziness, short-term memory loss, as well as deep depression and anxiety. Finally after years of this, I was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS). Unfortunately, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is a mysterious disease to Western medicine, who see it as a sort of auto-immune disease, somewhat like AIDS. And while Chronic Fatigue Syndrome will not kill you, it can destroy your life, as it came very close to doing with mine. In addition, there is no known cure. The only thing Western medicine has to offer is bed rest and lots of vitamins. Many people are confined to wheelchairs or bedridden, losing jobs, careers, marriages and their lives to chronic illness.

Fortunately for me, Chinese medicine has very good treatments available—including herbs, acupuncture and qigong. After being completely bedridden for three months, I embarked on a course of Chinese “food” herbs. These are specific formulas to be used as part of one’s ongoing diet. Originally Chinese herbs were thought of as highly nutritious, beneficial food. Some of the ancient Chinese formu-



lae, or recipes, are made up of herbal “soups” rather than teas. Herbs were eaten as part of the daily meal, cooked into soups or broths or eaten as salads. There were, of course, purely medicinal herbs, but for the most part, herbs were used as a means of strengthening or maintaining the integrity of the body. As Stephen T. Chang says, “Herbs give everlasting strength, whereas regular foods give only temporary strength.”<sup>4</sup> These herbs got me out of bed and strong enough to begin a qigong program, which further improved my condition.

During my convalescence I began studying the works of Ni Hua Ching, a contemporary Daoist master. One passage that really spoke to me was the following:

People have different natural cycles, which can be organized according to the five different phases of energy. Sometimes you do better in life and other times you do poorly. When your cycle is high, you enjoy your life more than when you are having difficulties in a low cycle. To harmonize the flow of your life, don't become excited by the high points or depressed by the low. Always remember the high is built by the low. You should respect the time when you are in a low cycle, the times when you are nobody. Don't struggle to be somebody, become you will only be a somebody when other people say you are a somebody. “Somebody” is built on the moments when you are a nobody. This guidance is not the same as ordinary teachings that only look for high respect and exaltation and don't value the low. When you look up to the high, spiritually and emotionally you are low. When you respect the low, spiritually and emotionally you are high.

When people have a low cycle, they think of it in an emotional way and feel terrible. They want to die or kill themselves. They feel boring, unattractive and uninteresting. They receive no attention or respect from anyone, and they don't love themselves either. They don't realize that their low cycle can make them wise. Life is built up by each uninteresting moment, not just by excitement.

The more I read Master Ni's works, as well as the other Daoist classics such as *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* and began my own practices of meditation, taiji and qigong, the more I realized that these Daoist practices held a key to health, happiness and deep spiritual experiences.

Then again, I have never been a joiner and I was not about to start now. The idea of joining the Daoist religion never entered my mind. Indeed, many of the people I have met in the West who do Daoist practices are also “non-joiners,” highly individualistic people who value their personal freedom very highly.

As Abbot Liu said: “American people love freedom, freedom of the individual. Develop Daoism in America according to the reality of America.” Of course, even in China this type of belief has had a long history. There have always been “wandering Daoists” or what some people refer to as “mountain Daoists” who have wandered freely, studying with various teachers in different parts of the country. These people have a long tradition of being healers, ritualists, alchemists (both internal and external), poets, and when the situation warranted it, priests. (See *Opening the Dragon Gate*, translated by Thomas Cleary for a good example of a modern Mountain Daoist).<sup>5</sup>

There has always been room for both lay Daoists and ordained Daoists in China. This is even more the case in modern times because much of religious Daoism was destroyed by the Communists. Yet the temple-style Daoism is alive and thriving in modern China, according to one of the few Western priests to have been ordained in the Longmen tradition in modern China, Alan Redman (Shi Jing).<sup>6</sup>

In a recent conversation with him, I was told of many temples being rebuilt and tucked away in mountainous regions. His own ordination, which was foretold in a dream to one of his lineage teachers, is a sign of how open the Chinese Daoists are to sharing their tradition with the West.

“There's no separation in China between the teachings of Laozi, the philosophy, if you like, and



the temple practices,” he said. “They are all interconnected.”

This means that the cultivation practices, which are often thought of as the more spiritual practices, as well as the *yang sheng* practices cannot, in reality, be separated from their Daoist roots. While it is true that the emphasis in the Chinese temple tradition is not as much on the qigong type of practices popular in the West, qigong practices are done by priests there along with their regular meditation and chanting practices.

One of the reasons Daoism is so little understood in the West is that its source materials, the *Daoist Canon*, is such a massive collection of seemingly diverse and even contradictory materials, including texts on meditation, internal alchemy, mythical geography, religious liturgy, health practices, Chinese medicine, folk stories, hagiography and more.

Certainly not all modern Daoists are ordained priests, and never have been. But the teachings of the ancient sages can be learned on many different levels and used in many different ways—from simple attitudes towards life and working with change



and flexibility (the Watercourse Way), to deep internal alchemical practices designed to help the practitioner achieve immortality or “attaining the Dao,” to energetic practices such as taiji or qigong, which are designed to help the practitioner live a long and

healthy life (ostensibly so that they can better practice the deep spiritual cultivation).

### Tranquil Sitting

As previously mentioned, the practices of *yang sheng* include such things as qigong and meditation. Indeed the *Yangsheng Yaoji (Compendium of Essentials on Nourishing Life*, a collection of materials dating from the Han to the Jin, 2nd century B.C. to 4th century B.C.E.) says:

In order to cultivate the arts of nourishing life one must first of all practice meditation. During all everyday activities such as walking, standing, eating, drinking, sleeping, and resting, one must continuously meditate. It makes no difference whether it is night or day. One always preserves one’s essence and breath in their entirety, thus one always prevents the divinities of the body from leaving. Thereby long life is attained.<sup>7</sup>

And from a Han dynasty work, the *Wenzi*, we find these words:

It is most important to nourish the spirit, it is of secondary importance to nourish the body, The spirit should be pure and tranquil, the bones should be stable. This is the foundation of long life.<sup>8</sup>

So we see that the practice of internal stillness or what is sometimes referred to as Tranquil Sitting is seen as a foundation to all the nourishing life practices.

Much of what we know of today as qigong practices were developed as aids to meditation. The earliest form of qigong that we know of is *dao-in*, based on the Five Animal Movements, which were, in turn, based on actual animal movements. Daoists have always been greatly involved with observing and learning from nature.

These *dao-in* practices, which date back to the Han Dynasty, were created in order to lead the qi into its proper channels by utilizing various stretching, twisting, and self-massage movements. This was done in order to help the practitioner be as healthy as possible in order to practice deep meditation.

In the *Zhuangzi* we find the following passage:

To pant and puff, to breath our the old breath and draw in the new one, practicing bear walking and bird stretching, longevity as his goal — such is the life of the scholar who practices yang sheng, who nourishes his body and who hopes to live as long as Pengzu, who lived for more than eight hundred years!



While *dao-yin* was an important part of Daoist and Chinese health and longevity practices, it was all done in service to the meditation practice, which was itself considered an "immortal practice."

Various methods of meditation were used at different times and by different Daoist sects. Some involved visualizing and meditation on the various divinities who were thought to dwell in each organ of the body. By clearly imagining each divinity, complete with the proper color, clothing, and energetic aspect, the practitioner was able to sanctify and re-energize each organ.<sup>9</sup>

Other meditation practices involved guiding qi through various pathways in the body, including the well-known Smaller Heavenly Orbit, or what is often referred to as the Microcosmic Orbit. The *chong mo* or central channel was also used to clear and strengthen the energy body. All of these practices were aimed at preparing the practitioner for the higher immortality or spiritual practices.

While energy and spirit have always been linked together in Daoism the so-called internal alchemy practices were designed to transmute or transform the energy or qi state to a spiritual or *shen* state. Then, to take the alchemical process a step further, the spiritual or *shen* state is then transformed into Dao, or universal consciousness.

Then again, Daoists were also very practical about all of this. If one is sick, unbalanced, ungrounded or emotionally confused it is very difficult

to enter the deep spiritual realms of the immortality practices. Thus, they developed their health practices to help the student of the Way stay as strong, healthy and clear as possible. In this way they were better able to keep up with life's demands as well as delve deeply into the meditation practices that were necessary for the Daoist adept.



But if one is interested in spiritually evolving or "attaining Dao," one must pay attention to the internal cultivation practices as well as the movement forms. We must remember that the qigong or movement forms are there to support our spiritual practice, much of which consists of stillness or meditation practice.

An ancient Daoist text, the *Daoshu*, says: "First one must concentrate one's mind, then illuminating wisdom will radiate within, the myriad projections

appear empty and are utterly forgotten, the mind is serene and tranquil."<sup>10</sup> It is in this serene and tranquil mind that we can discover the Dao, our source as well as our destination.

The other Daoist terms for meditation are found in the *Tianyinzi*, translated by Livia Kohn as, first, *cun*, "concentra-

tion of the mind by which one can see one's own mind" and secondly, *xiang*, "closing one's eyes to see one's eyes."<sup>11</sup> Lastly, the *Neiguan Jing* tells us that if we can keep our mind empty and abide in non-action (*wu wei*), even if we do not wish for Dao, yet Dao will come to us, naturally.<sup>12</sup>

The ancient Daoist sages described the body as the storehouse of our inner nature. They taught that we must take care of the body in order for us to have a place for our spirit to dwell. In this way, our qigong practice provides a foundation for our spiritual cultivation. It is important not to neglect our stillness practice if we are to fully enjoy the benefits of our movement practice. Like yin and yang, both movement and stillness are important to our overall cultivation.

Daoists believe that it is important to keep a balance between movement and stillness. Too much movement will exhaust one's qi, while excessive sitting will cause stagnation in the body. The key here is to not abandon one for the other and to experiment



and see what is the proper balance for your own cultivation.

Like yin within yang, or stillness within movement, that place of serene stillness within our movement gives birth to that subtle and mysterious movement within the stillness of our meditation. That movement brings us into greater harmony, greater awareness, and greater experience of the eternal and ever-evolving Dao.

### Where Do We Go From Here?

For the many people in the West who practice *yang sheng* longevity practices that have their roots in traditional Daoism, the fact that they are living longer, healthier and more productive lives is enough.

In the West the emphasis has been on methods and techniques, while traditional Daoism places much more emphasis on cultivation. *Zhouwang* (a meditation practice called “sitting and forgetting”) is much more familiar to Chinese Daoists than the Microcosmic Orbit and other qi-moving techniques used in the West. This practice, the progenitor of Zen, is considered a beginning practice as well as an advanced one. (For more background on the connection between Zen and Daoism see *The Tao of Zen* by Ray Grigg).<sup>11</sup>

How then are we in the West to connect with deeper levels of cultivation? For most Western practitioners the idea of doing immortality practices seems vague and mystical. The fact that many of these teachings are passed on in an oral fashion in China makes them even more obscure. Similarly, many modern translations that are being published in the West contain errors and can be misleading to the uninitiated.


Fortunately, more and more people are traveling to China and making contact with traditional Daoists there. Also there are organizations such as the British Daoist Association, which are bringing Daoist priests to the West to teach and create some dialogue between East and West.

Any time a type of cultivation or practice is taken out of one culture and transplanted into another there is the opportunity for errors and misunderstandings. However, as we in the West become more educated about these traditional teachings we can, perhaps, begin to deepen our own cultivation.

At the very least, we will be able to live long and happy lives, with the energy to pursue our goals and dreams, as well as emotional and spiritual well-being. The ancient Daoist goal of becoming one with

Dao may seem like a very lofty one, but each of us, in every moment, are given the opportunity to connect with the oneness of Dao or become splintered into fragments of personality that our modern culture is so good at supporting.

By pursuing these spiritual/health practices we can live richer, fuller lives and, in the process, be able to help others attain their own goals of health, wholeness and a balanced life.



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[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) ]

I begin by facing East, the direction of the sunrise, new beginnings, the element Wood (new growth), Spring, the Green Dragon. By beginning my form facing East, I acknowledge and invoke the energetics of this direction to begin my cosmic dance through the Wuji form. Grounding myself into the earth, opening my bai hui center to receive from the heavens, I begin by sinking the bottom half of my body down as the top half rises by raising my arms in front of me like the opening moves of taijiquan. Then, after separating the ball off to two sides, I gather a ball of energy towards my heart and, after raising it to tian mu (third eye/upper tan tien) level, rotate the ball outwards, sharing my heart energy with the world around me and then bringing it back.

I then rotate the ball, up at tien mu level, from one side to another in a move called Dragon Polishes the Pearl. The ball is then dropped to lower dan tien level and rotated towards me. Then, pivoting on my left heel, I turn to the left, turning the ball onto its side and rotate it away from me. Then I pivot, turn, rotate the ball towards me and then turn one more time and rotate it away from me. After turning to the left, I begin “washing” the qi down the front of my body, moving my weight from one foot to the other, balancing the yin and yang of my body. Turning four times, I come to rest facing the direction south. South is the heart, the element Fire (the heat of summer), the Red Phoenix and the energy of expansion, joy and creativity. Then, after another round, I begin again facing West. West is the element Gold, autumn, the lungs, the White Tiger and energy of contraction or of gathering in the harvest. Then, after one more round, I begin one last time, facing north. North is the direction of Water, the kidneys, winter, the Black Turtle and the energy of “returning to the root.”

At the end, as in the beginning I am facing east, the direction of new beginnings. During the whole form I have been mindful of myself moving from the center of the circle, the Yellow Dragon, the element of Earth, the energy of groundedness. It is here I feel my connection to both the Earth and to all living beings, “all my relations.”

I have then brought myself through all four directions (while maintaining the center of the circle), four phases, four opportunities to invoke the energies of each direction, giving my movements a new meaning each time. By constantly moving in a circle, I am connected to the great Circle of Life, the unmanifest Dao or Wuji.

**Happy New Year!**

**Year of the Rabbit/Hare 2011**

恭喜發財 新年快樂



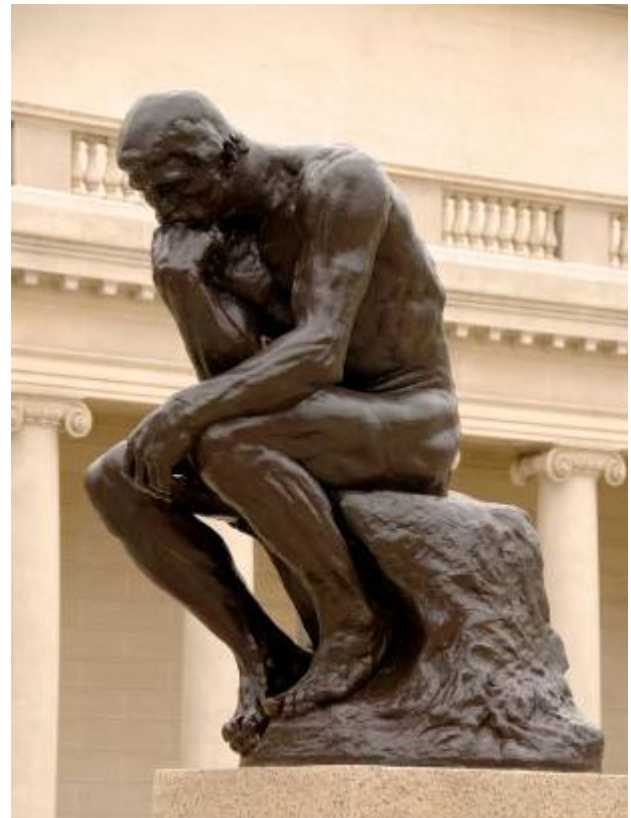
**[Mind-body Research Update]**

**Qigong versus Exercise versus no Therapy for Patients with Chronic Neck Pain - a Randomized Controlled Trial.** *Spine.* 2010 Dec 20; by [Rendant D](#), [Pach D](#), [Lüdtke R](#), [Reisshauer A](#), [Willich S](#), [Witt CM](#). from Institute of Social Medicine, Epidemiology, and Health Economics, Charité University Medical Center, Berlin, Germany.

**ABSTRACT:** Study Design: Randomized controlled trial Objective: To evaluate whether qigong is more effective than no treatment and not inferior to exercise therapy. Summary of Background Data: Life time prevalence of chronic neck pain is close to 50%. Qigong is often used by patients, although the evidence is still unclear. Methods: Patients (age 20-60 years) with chronic neck pain (VAS  $\geq 40$  mm) were randomized to 1) qigong or 2) exercise therapy (18 sessions over six months) or 3) waiting list (no treatment). At baseline and after three and six months, patients completed standardized questionnaires assessing neck pain (VAS), neck pain and disability (NPAD), and quality of life (SF-36). The primary endpoint was average pain in the last seven days on VAS at six month follow-up. Statistical analysis included GEE models adjusted for baseline values and patient expectation. Results: A total of 123 patients (age  $46 \pm 11$  years, 88% women) suffering from chronic neck pain for 3.2 (SD  $\pm 1.6$ ) years were included. After six months a significant difference was seen between the qigong and waiting list control groups (VAS mean difference: -14 mm [95% CI, -23.1;-5.4],  $P= 0.002$ ). Mean improvements in the exercise group were comparable to those in the qigong group (difference between groups -0.7 mm [CI: -9.1; 7.7]) but failed to show statistical significance ( $p=0.092$ ). NPAD and SF-36 results also yielded superiority of qigong over no treatment and similar results in the qigong and exercise therapy groups. Conclusion: Qigong was more effective than no treatment in patients with chronic neck pain. Further studies could be designed without waiting list control and should use a larger sample to clarify the value of qigong compared to exercise therapy.

**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](#). Hacettepe University Health Sciences Faculty, Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Department, Samanpazarı, 06100 Ankara, Turkey.

**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.

**The role of breathing training in asthma management.** *Curr Opin Allergy Clin Immunol.* 2011 Feb;



11(1): 53-7. by [Bruton A](#), [Thomas M](#). Faculty of Health Sciences, Highfield Campus, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK.

**PURPOSE OF REVIEW:** There is considerable public interest in the use of breathing modification techniques in the treatment of asthma. Surveys suggest many people with asthma use them, often without the knowledge of their medical attendants. Extravagant claims have been made about the effectiveness of some techniques, resulting in scepticism from orthodox clinicians. The evidence supporting breathing training for asthma was previously weak, and limited by the small size and methodological limitations of published research.

**RECENT FINDINGS:** The evidence base for the effectiveness of breathing training has recently improved, with reports from several larger and more methodologically robust controlled trials. These trials are reviewed in this study, and the findings placed in context. Trials have investigated a variety of breathing training programmes delivered by different therapists in different ways. All incorporate some instruction in breathing pattern, usually focusing on slow, regular, nasal, abdominal breathing and reduced ventilation, with patients instructed to practise exercises at home and when symptomatic. **SUMMARY:** Current evidence suggests that breathing training programmes can be effective in improving patient-reported outcomes such as symptoms, quality of life and psychological impact; and may reduce the use of rescue bronchodilator medication. There is little evidence that airways physiology, hyper-responsiveness or inflammation is affected by such training. The optimal way of providing breathing training within the context of routine asthma care is still uncertain.

### **Does mindfulness training improve cognitive abilities? A systematic review of neuropsychological findings.**

[Clin Psychol Rev](#). 2010 Dec 1. by [Chiesa A](#), [Calati R](#), [Serretti A](#).

Mindfulness meditation practices (MMPs) are a subgroup of meditation practices which are receiving growing attention. The present paper reviews current evidence about the effects of MMPs on objective measures of cognitive functions. Five databases were searched. Twenty three studies providing measures of attention, memory, executive functions and further miscellaneous measures of cognition were included. Fifteen were controlled or randomized controlled studies and 8 were case-control studies. Overall, reviewed studies suggested that early phases of mindfulness training, which are more concerned with the development of focused attention, could be associated with

significant improvements in selective and executive attention whereas the following phases, which are characterized by an open monitoring of internal and external stimuli, could be mainly associated with improved unfocused sustained attention abilities. Additionally, MMPs could enhance working memory capacity and some executive functions. However, many of the included studies show methodological limitations and negative results have been reported as well, plausibly reflecting differences in study design, study duration and patients' populations. Accordingly, even though findings here reviewed provided preliminary evidence suggesting that MMPs could enhance cognitive functions, available evidence should be considered with caution and further high quality studies investigating more standardized mindfulness meditation programs are needed.

**Treating fibromyalgia with mindfulness-based stress reduction: Results from a 3-armed randomized controlled trial.** [Pain](#). 2010 Dec 10. by [Schmidt S](#), [Grossman P](#), [Schwarzer B](#), [Jena S](#), [Naumann J](#), [Walach H](#). From Department of Environmental Health Sciences, University Medical Center, Freiburg, Germany; Institute for Transcultural Health Studies, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany.

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is a structured 8-week group program teaching mindfulness meditation and mindful yoga exercises. MBSR aims to help participants develop nonjudgmental awareness of moment-to-moment experience. Fibromyalgia is a clinical syndrome with chronic pain, fatigue, and insomnia as major symptoms. Efficacy of MBSR for enhanced well-being of fibromyalgia patients was investigated in a 3-armed trial, which was a follow-up to an earlier quasi-randomized investigation. A total of 177 female patients were randomized to one of the following: (1) MBSR, (2) an active control procedure controlling for nonspecific effects of MBSR, or (3) a wait list. The major outcome was health-related quality of life (HRQoL) 2 months post-treatment. Secondary outcomes were disorder-specific quality of life, depression, pain, anxiety, somatic complaints, and a proposed index of mindfulness. Of the patients, 82% completed the study. There were no significant differences between groups on primary outcome, but patients overall improved in HRQoL at short-term follow-up ( $P=0.004$ ). Post hoc analyses showed that only MBSR manifested a significant pre-to-post-intervention improvement in HRQoL ( $P=0.02$ ). Furthermore, multivariate analysis of secondary measures indicated modest benefits for MBSR patients. MBSR yielded significant pre-to-post-intervention improvements in 6 of 8 secondary outcome variables, the active

control in 3, and the wait list in 2. In conclusion, primary outcome analyses did not support the efficacy of MBSR in fibromyalgia, although patients in the MBSR arm appeared to benefit most. Effect sizes were small compared to the earlier, quasi-randomized investigation. Several methodological aspects are discussed, e.g., patient burden, treatment preference and motivation, that may provide explanations for differences. In a 3-armed randomized controlled trial in female patients suffering from fibromyalgia, patients benefited modestly from a mindfulness-based stress reduction intervention.

**Green tea polyphenols supplementation and Tai Chi exercise for postmenopausal osteopenic women: safety and quality of life report.** [BMC Complement Altern Med.](#) 2010 Dec 9;10(1):76. [Epub ahead of print] By Shen CL, Chyu MC, Pence BC, Yeh JK, Zhang Y, Felton CK, Doctolero S, Wang JS.

**BACKGROUND:** Evidence suggests that both green tea polyphenols (GTP) and Tai Chi (TC) exercise may benefit bone health in osteopenic women. However, their safety in this population has never been systematically investigated. In particular, there have been hepatotoxicity concerns related to green tea extract. This study was to evaluate the safety of 24 weeks of GTP supplementation combined with TC exercise in postmenopausal osteopenic women, along with effects on quality of life in this population. **METHODS:** 171 postmenopausal women with osteopenia were randomly assigned to 4 treatment arms for 24 weeks: (1) Placebo (500 mg starch/day), (2) GTP (500 mg GTP/day), (3) Placebo + TC (placebo plus TC training at 60 min/session, 3 sessions/week), and (4) GTP + TC (GTP plus TC training). Safety was examined by assessing liver enzymes (aspartate aminotransferase, alanine aminotransferase), alkaline phosphatase, and total bilirubin at baseline and every 4 weeks. Kidney function (urea nitrogen and creatinine), calcium, and inorganic phosphorus were also assessed at the same times. Quality of life using SF-36 questionnaire was evaluated at baseline, 12, and 24 weeks. A mixed model of repeated measures ANOVA was applied for analysis. **RESULTS:** 150 subjects completed the study (12% attrition rate). The compliance rates for study agents and TC exercise were 89% and 83%, respectively. Neither GTP supplementation nor TC exercise affected liver or kidney function parameters throughout the study. No adverse event due to study treatment was reported by the participants. TC exercise significantly improved the scores for role-emotional and mental health of subjects, while no effect on quality of life was observed due to GTP supplementation. **CONCLUSIONS:** GTP at a dose of 500 mg/day and/or TC exer-

cise at 3 hr/week for 24 weeks appear to be safe in postmenopausal osteopenic women, particularly in terms of liver and kidney functions. TC exercise for 24 weeks (3 hr/wk) significantly improved quality of life in terms of role-emotional and mental health in these subjects. ClinicalTrials.gov identifier: NCT00625391.

**Role of naturopathy and yoga treatment in the management of hypertension.** [Complement Ther Clin Pract.](#) 2011 Feb; 17(1):9-12. by Murthy SN, Rao NS, Nandkumar B, Kadam A. from NYS Medical Research Society, Jindal Naturecure Institute, Jindal Nagar, Bangalore 560073, India.

**AIM:** The primary aim was to study the effect of naturopathy and yoga interventions in treatment of mild to moderate hypertension. **DESIGN:** The variables of interest were measured at the beginning and end of the intervention using a pre-post design. **SETTING:** The study was conducted by INYS medical research society in Jindal Nature Cure Institute, Bangalore. **SUBJECTS:** A total of 104 subjects, already diagnosed with mild to moderate hypertension and on treatment with antihypertensive medicines were included in study. **INTERVENTIONS:** The intervention consisted of various inpatient administration of different naturopathy treatments, yoga therapies, low calorie and low sodium diet for 21 days. Antihypertensive medicines were withdrawn for some patients in one week based upon response to the treatment. **OUTCOME MEASURES:** The outcome measures were values of diastolic and systolic blood pressure and body weight. Subjects were followed for a period of one year after every 3 months. **RESULTS:** After starting nonpharmacological approach of naturopathy and yoga, Systolic blood pressure came down from mean of 139.6 to 129.6 where as it came down from 91.2 to 86.1 for diastolic blood pressure. At the same time favorable effect was also seen in other variables like lipid profile and body weight. At the end of one year out of 57 patients who came for follow-up, 14 cases were found to have blood pressure within normal ranges without any medication over the previous 12 months. **CONCLUSION:** Naturopathy and yoga therapy can be considered as a valuable nonpharmacological approach in treatment of hypertension.

**Tai chi exercise for patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: a pilot study.** [Respir Care.](#) 2010 Nov;55(11):1475-82. by Yeh GY, Roberts DH, Wayne PM, Davis RB, Quilty MT, Phillips RS. From Division for Research and Education in Complementary and Integrative Medical Therapies, Osher Research Center, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA 02215, USA. [gneh@hms.harvard.edu](mailto:gneh@hms.harvard.edu)

**OBJECTIVE:** To determine the feasibility of a randomized controlled trial of the effect of a tai chi program on quality of life and exercise capacity in patients with COPD. **METHODS:** We randomized 10 patients with moderate to severe COPD to 12 weeks of tai chi plus usual care (n = 5) or usual care alone (n = 5). The tai chi training consisted of a 1-hour class, twice weekly, that emphasized gentle movement, relaxation, meditation, and breathing techniques. Exploratory outcomes included disease-specific symptoms and quality-of-life, exercise capacity, pulmonary function tests, mood, and self-efficacy. We also conducted qualitative interviews to capture patient narratives regarding their experience with tai chi. **RESULTS:** The patients were willing to be randomized. Among 4 of the 5 patients in the intervention group, adherence to the study protocol was excellent. The cohort's baseline mean  $\pm$  SD age, percent-of-predicted FEV<sub>1</sub>, and ratio

of FEV<sub>1</sub> to forced vital capacity were  $66 \pm 6$  y,  $50 \pm 12\%$ , and  $0.63 \pm 0.14$ , respectively. At 12 weeks there was significant improvement in Chronic Respiratory Questionnaire score among the tai chi participants ( $1.4 \pm 1.1$ ), compared to the usual-care group ( $-0.1 \pm 0.4$ ) ( $P = .03$ ). There were nonsignificant trends toward improvement in 6-min walk distance ( $55 \pm 47$  vs  $-13 \pm 64$  m,  $P = .09$ ), Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale ( $-9.0 \pm 9.1$  vs  $-2.8 \pm 4.3$ ,  $P = .20$ ), and University of California, San Diego Shortness of Breath score ( $-7.8 \pm 3.5$  vs  $-1.2 \pm 11$ ,  $P = .40$ ). There were no significant changes in either group's peak oxygen uptake. **CONCLUSIONS:** A randomized controlled trial of tai chi is feasible in patients with moderate to severe COPD. Tai chi exercise as an adjunct to standard care warrants further investigation.

[Compiled by Kevin Chen ]

### [Quote of the Month]

The following comes from a translation of the *Nei Jing*, the ancient classic of Chinese medicine: (parentheses added by Dr. Richter)

The three months of winter (from early-Nov. to mid/late-Feb.) are called the period of closing and storing. Water freezes and the Earth cracks open. One should not disturb one's Yang (active energy). People should retire early at night and rise late in the morning and they should wait for the rising of the sun. They should suppress and conceal their wishes, as though they had no internal purpose, as though they had been fulfilled. People should try to escape the cold and they should seek warmth; they should not perspire upon the skin (sweat), they should let themselves be deprived of breath of the cold (stay inside when possible). All this is in harmony with the atmosphere of Winter and all this is the method for the protection of one's storing. Those who disobey [the laws of Winter] will suffer an injury of the kidneys (sexual organs and adrenals); for them Spring will bring impotence, and they will produce little.

**Lauren B. Richter D.O., M. Ac.**  
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[From the Master]

## Practice Gong, Not Only Quan

Yang Yang, Ph.D.

Rabbit. In China, the holiday season is the time to be grateful to all of our teachers. This gratitude and a comment from a workshop participant at a recent workshop prompted me to share a story with you.

I went to Kripalu Yoga Center the day after Thanksgiving and had a wonderful workshop with an intellectual, open, and fun group. Toward the end of the workshop, a participant asked me, "Where is the Taiji routine I was supposed to learn in this workshop?" I told her that I did not teach the group any routine. Instead, I taught the foundation for doing any type of Taiji or Qigong, as well as movement in daily activities. We spent the whole weekend on standing, sitting, and lying-down meditations (static, and dynamic). These fundamental training methods work effectively on our gong: our energy, posture alignment, agility, flexibility, power, autonomic nervous system, immune function, sleep, tranquility of our minds, positive outlook, and other essential components of our wellbeing. Then I went further, telling the group the following story:

In the summer of 1983, a year after I'd met Grandmaster Feng in Shanghai, I went to Beijing to study with him and further my training. One day I asked him how important it was to learn forms and techniques to improve my push-hands. He did not answer this question directly, instead, he pointed to his two year old grandson. "I am crazy about this boy and I would teach him all the martial arts forms and techniques I know. But you could send him flying without much technique or form training. Does that make sense?" I nodded my head and understood his message. It is the gong, no matter the number of forms and techniques you learn, that counts in pushhands and the rest of taiji.

Forms and techniques are significantly more efficient at building martial arts skill and nourishing health when they're practiced in conjunction with static and dynamic qigong practice. We are all busy; we are all trying to make our practice as effective as possible, and we are all wanting to walk a straight path. I am passionate about telling the grandson-story whenever I see people mistakenly equating taiji practice to form, qinna (joint locking) or push-hand techniques. If they would add qigong meditation to their practice, they would profit far more from the time they invest in their practice.

[Yang Yang was born in 1961 in Henan province near the Chen Village in China. At the age of 12, he began studying Taiji because of a congenital heart defect. He credits his practice of Chen Style Taiji with curing his heart condition and allowing him to pass the physical exam required in China to enter the universities. Master Yang's Taiji studies now span 30 years. With both Law and Engineering degrees earned in China, Master Yang practiced business law for several years before coming to the United States to study for a Master's Degree in Economics at Illinois State University. He is currently the Director of the Center for Taiji Studies in Champaign, Illinois, and has recently completed a Doctorate Degree in Kinesiology at the University of Illinois. His [research](#) focuses on the benefits and mechanisms of Taiji practice.]



## [Spirituality of the Dao]

*Down the Rabbit Hole – A Visit with the Dark Feminine*

Christina J Barea, DP, MMQ

Throughout the year Daoists celebrate various spiritual and natural occasions marked by the phases of the moon and other celestial events of great significance, such as the equinoxes and solstices. The ceremonies can be simply taking just a few moments to perform, while others are quite complex, requiring multiple days, even weeks. Ceremonies are performed on special days when communication between the two worlds is facilitated, interaction between spirit and man is consciously and deliberately initiated and the energy of Heaven & Earth supports the occasion. As a Daoist Priestess, this year, for the Winter Solstice, I decided to perform a Daoist practice known as a “dark retreat”- for 3 days I remained in total darkness.

Dark retreats have been practiced by Buddhists, Christians, Daoists and other spiritual cultivators for millennia. The purpose of dark retreats is to quiet the senses in order to facilitate internal viewing and a deeper state of consciousness. This important practice can be appreciated in Ancestor Lü’s *100 Character Tablet* which clearly speaks of practicing non-doing and of quieting the mind. Ancestor Lü’s *Classic of Yin Convergence* warns practitioners about “the five robbers,” pointing out the need to break the dependency on the senses. Further writings, such as those included in *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, speak of “turning the light around” to produce the “true elixir.”

The Winter Solstice is the perfect time for a dark retreat. This “shortest day of the year” is synonymous for the “maximum of Yin energy,” since it is the day when our hemisphere spends the longest time in the dark. Yin energy is related to and is often defined as darkness, quiet, receiving, calming, yielding, feminine energies and many more correlations. Yin energy is more introspective and internal when compared to her counterpart, Yang energy. In Daoist alchemical texts, she is called “The Dark Feminine.”

I’ve been reading Daoist classics for many years now and as my experience with meditation, cultivation and ritual grows, so does my understanding of these valuable scriptures. The changes these practices have made in all areas of my life have occurred naturally and what began with something simple, like becoming a vegetarian, has now grown to affect many more areas of my life. Little by little, I have been eliminating as many distractions as possible from my daily activities, choosing carefully those things which I want to have as part of my being. Taking the next step, into total darkness, was an obvious choice. After all, to be truly free from the binding grip of the senses, all connections must be cut. Or to paraphrase the immortal words of Morpheus from the Matrix “How far down the rabbit hole do you want to go?” And so like *Alice in Wonderland*, I took the red pill and retired into total darkness for 3 days.

On Monday December 20, 2010, after some preparations, I literally descended (the stairs) into what would be my “cave” for the next 3 days. No light entered the room, it was totally black. Normally, I have some hesitation about being alone in the dark, probably left over fear from growing up in a high-crime city, but this day, after 2 years of hard work and little rest, I gladly watched the door close. I was tired and ready to relax.

In darkness I performed an opening ceremony, prayers and incense were offered to Heaven and I prepared a sacred space to allow this meditative journey to unfold. I somewhat expected the first day to be spent on a lot of sleep. It wasn’t hard to figure out, given how tired I was. Several days before the retreat I could feel my body



slowly unwinding and letting go of all the tension I had been holding onto, I was already going into retreat. Now, in darkness, aches and pains surfaced and I felt as though I was an old woman, dying. In fact, I was dying. The old me, the person I had carried around for years, was leaving. Years of work, emotions and input were coming off my body like steam on a hot surface. I considered doing qigong to clear away some of the turbidity but decided that according to the true essence of yin and *wuwei*, the best option was to step out of the way and let the releasing happen naturally. Despite hours of sleep, more and more waves of turbid qi escaped my tissues and I could feel myself sinking. I was sinking into the darkness, sinking into myself.

The next 2 days were spent in alternating states of sleep, meditation, qigong, prayer or chanting. I questioned whether or not I would feel the moment of the solstice or anything special, different from the cold winter days already here. But the transformation was tangible and I began experiencing the esoteric changes expected during a dark retreat. There were flashes of light and increased light sensitivity, my thoughts slowly began to stabilize and meditation was more focused and clear, lucid dreaming became much more active. There was even a dream where I dreamed I was watching myself dream. In addition, my *weiqi* fields were expanding and it was hard to distinguish where my body stopped and the air began. My third eye began to expand and I could “see” outside the room very clearly. I was more in touch with my inner essence and my sensitivity was coming from deep within.

At the same time, my conscious and subconscious began to feed me stories that needed to be heard. Into my mind came history and memories of my life that had been packed away into the corners, forgotten or abandoned. So along with the light came the dark- so perfect for a Daoist, the balance and harmony so fervently sought. In the quiet solitude of my make-shift cave I battled the demons of my own darkness. Many of them were transmuted by the Light, others have only scattered, perhaps to return at a later time. For the most part though, it was a fruitful experience, leaving no scars and allowing a stronger, more focused me to emerge.

The whole experience was exquisite, when it was time to exit the room I did so just the same way I went in, gladly. It was time and I was ready. I came out at night to allow my eyes time to adjust to seeing light again. The next morning was the most beautiful sunrise I had ever seen. The sky was crisp and everything looked bright. The world had taken a bath while I was away and it was like witnessing the birth of life. My vision was clear, my head was clear and my spirit was the brightest it had been in a long time. I felt wonderful. Later on, I went back down into my “cave” to clear out the energy and felt like I was walking into a dirty pool. A lot of darkness had been released in the dark. For 3 days I fed my darkness to the dark and the room reeked of dark remains. The corpse of the old woman from the first day was lying on the floor.

Refining the internal elixir in the methods prescribed by the classics requires a lot of conscious work. One must constantly examine the images, thoughts and feelings that the senses and conscious mind continuously feed us to distinguish between “illusion” and reality. It’s a physical and psychological battle fought within each individual who wants to experience the ambrosia offered by the Immortals. There are many ways to understand our human nature, dark retreats are just one way to access the depths of one’s psyche and they should be practiced after extensive experience with meditation. Would I do it again? Absolutely! The next one is already being planned...



**[Christina J Barea** is a Daoist Priest of the Zheng Yi Pai (China) and a Medical Qigong Therapist. She dedicates her time to helping people find balance through Medical Qigong Therapy, Qigong & Tai Chi instruction and TCM related talks, workshops and courses. She is a member of the National Qigong Association and currently serves on the Board of Directors. Christina has just completed 2 books, the first a translation of Daoist Scripture and the second on qigong exercises. For more information about her please visit: <http://www.therisinglotus.com/> ]



[Illuminating the Dao 悟道]

## Merging Into Harmony

Michelle Wood

When you think of the word merging, I'll bet your first thought is of driving, turning onto the highway on ramp and adjusting your speed to allow yourself to smoothly join the flow of cars, trucks, and buses on the highway. It takes careful observation, a sense of timing, flexibility, and knowing just when to act and when to coast and when to surge forward. Ultimately you achieve your goal: you become One with the river of traffic. Success!

The concept of merging can be applied to achievement of Oneness with much more than just traffic as this writing by Deng Ming-Dao suggests:

*“Take the sun. Put it in your heart.  
Take the moon. Put in to your belly.  
Draw down the Big Dipper.  
Merge with the Northern Star.*

“Merging” from *365 Tao: Daily Meditations* by Deng Ming-Dao, Harper San Francisco, 1992.

“We have gone from distant views of gods to a more inner-oriented one. In the past, our relationship was viewed vertically. People were in a subordinate position and the gods were supreme. Without much effort, we can see that this point of view was a reflection of feudalistic definitions and childlike emotions.

“By contrast, those who follow Dao declare that gods do not exist.

“To think this blasphemous is to miss the point. Rather, those who follow Dao seek a relationship with the divine in which there is no division. They are seeking a state of oneness.

“If people are one with their god, then it stands to reason that there is no division between them. If there is no division between them, then they are god and god is them. This doesn't mean that a person can do all the things that gods are supposedly able to do. Instead, they attain a state of being and understanding where there are no distinctions, fears, or uncertainties about what is divine.

“That is why we sometimes contemplate bringing the stars into our very being. We want to merge with Tao. In essence, we become Tao and Tao becomes us.”

The opening verse can be considered in so many ways; symbolically, literally, energetically, spiritually, mundanely.

On a purely worldly level, these heavenly bodies contribute to your physical wellness. Absorbing sunlight allows your body to make the vital Vitamin D you require to be healthy, and those of us in the northern hemisphere at this time of year need all the sunlight we can get! Following moon cycles contributes to reproductive energies and determining when are the best days to become pregnant if you are trying to conceive a child. The Big Dipper is a seasonal indicator, the handle pointing in the evening toward the cardinal direction of the season (east in spring, south in summer, west in autumn, north in winter) and helps with knowing when to both plant and harvest foods. Fruits and vegetables grown locally and eaten fresh as they mature in their season have more and better nutrients



than processed foods, and foods that must travel a distance to your supermarket often leave their nutrients along the road as they travel.

Mentally and energetically, the sun represents yang energies, the moon represents yin energies, and the Big Dipper represents the cycles of change from yang to yin back to yang, etc. The Northern Star is the pivot point around which all else revolves. This knowledge may be applied to any and every aspect of life since every aspect has two points, is in constant change, and revolves around a central point. Try using this as a model for decision-making the next time you need to make an important choice in a matter. See if you don't just find yourself merging into harmony with all the other matters on your highway of life.

Spiritually, keep an eye on the handle of the Big Dipper in order to know when to practice seasonal breathing routines to help you eliminate disease. Consider this excerpt from the book *Qi Gong Therapy: The Chinese Art of Healing with Energy* by Tzu Kuo Shih, Station Hill Press, Barrytown NY, 1994, p. 14-15:

“In his *Song for Eliminating Diseases in the Four Seasons (Si Ji Qu Bing Ge)*, Dr. Sun wrote:

“Exhaling with mouth not open can improve the sight and soothe the liver in spring. Exhaling with the mouth open wide, in spring, can clear away the heart-fire. Exhaling with the mouth open but teeth clenched in autumn, can astringe the lung and relieve cough and asthma. Exhaling can reinforce the kidney. Producing the sound "shee—" can eliminate restlessness and fever of deficiency type of San-jiao [triple burner]. Rapid exhalation can reinforce the spleen and promote digestion.”

For more information on breathing techniques for wellness, see the article “Three Ancient Qigong practitioners on breathing” at <http://bewellqigong.blogspot.com/2008/04/three-ancient-qigong-practitioners-on.html>

Additionally, there are advanced spiritual breathing practices, and you may learn more about those in the article “Six Breathing Practices” at <http://bewellqigong.blogspot.com/2008/07/six-breathing-practices.html>

Contemplating and meditating upon *Daodejing* verse 34 (this translation by Steven Mitchell), you may gain further insight into how merging leads to harmony with universal energies and, ultimately, Oneness.

*The great Tao flows everywhere,  
All things are born from it,  
yet it doesn't create them.*

*It pours itself into its work,  
yet it makes no claim.*

*It nourishes infinite worlds,  
yet it doesn't hold on to them.*

*Since it is merged with all things  
and hidden in their hearts,  
it can be called humble.*

*Since all things vanish into it  
and it alone endures,  
it can be called great.*

*It isn't aware of its greatness;  
thus it is truly great.*

大道泛兮，其可左右。  
万物恃之以生而不辞，  
功成而不有。  
衣养万物而不为主，可  
名于小；万物归焉而不  
为主，可名为大。  
以其终不自为大，故能  
成其大。

No doubt you have some great ideas already. If you need a little nudge, here are some of my thoughts to get you started on the path to your own insights.

*The great Tao flows everywhere.*

Everything, from the smallest blade of grass emerging from the soil to the furthest star we cannot see even with the most advanced astronomical equipment, experiences cycles of change.

*All things are born from it,  
yet it doesn't create them.*

Just as Necessity is the Mother of Invention, Necessity does not give birth to the solution, the Invention itself fulfills that role. Change is like Necessity; the strongest dam won't contain the flow for long. The choices and decisions you make in light of Change are the Mother of your personal Inventions, and your solutions add to the flow of life-improving harmony.

*It pours itself into its work,  
yet it makes no claim.*

It makes no claim (i. e. does not take credit for its work) since it only indirectly affects the outcome. Think of it this way; meadows of wildflowers are nurtured into lush carpets of beauty and fragrance but the sun does not take credit for warming the earth, it was going to shine anyway; the rain does not take credit for watering the seeds, it was going to rain anyway.

Change cannot take credit for the things that come about as it happens along its way, it just follows its natural cycle.

*It nourishes infinite worlds,  
yet it doesn't hold on to them.*

Just as Change takes no credit for the things that are nurtured by it, it is also not invested in their longevity or survival. If the time has come for a volcano to erupt, it does not wait until the flowers in the meadows have completed their blossoming, it erupts and covers the meadow with ash because that is its cycle.

*Since it is merged with all things  
and hidden in their hearts,  
it can be called humble.*

Change is an element of the spirit of all things. In that context it does not attract any sort of notice, it does not garner fame nor reputation, it desires no notice nor mastery nor control. As an element of the spirit of all things, it is common and ordinary, like breathing. It nurtures life but is unassuming.

*Since all things vanish into it  
and it alone endures,  
it can be called great.*

This is a bit like the concept that nothing can outlast Time, and in a way it is the same thing. Time and Change march on; nothing can outlast them, and it is in their natures to be the never-ending but indirect source of harmony and expansion. When one thing vanishes, a new thing comes forth; when that thing vanishes, another new thing appears, in endless cycles of vanishing and appearing.

*It isn't aware of its greatness;*



*thus it is truly great.*

Change does not recognize its own nature, it simply flows endlessly onward. Being unaware, it never attempts to control or master anyone or anything, it simply follows its path. By following its path, it is in complete harmony and that is its greatness.

To follow the path, look into your heart, connect with spirit, and flow harmoniously with Change, you need only be observant of your surroundings and your own true Nature which is that you are part of the flow of universal energies and Consciousness.

Too many people struggle against Change, try to control everything that happens around them without being able to see or understand the flow of the universal picture and how they fit within it.

Instead, welcome Change and embrace the cycles of the days, months, and seasons, align yourself with the Sun, Moon, and the Big Dipper, revolve around the Northern Star as they do, and you will indeed merge into harmony.

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## [Sexuality and Health]

*Q & A on Healing Love*

Master Mantak Chia

**What is an orgasm?**

Taoists (or Daoists) regard the orgasm as the combined essences of all the body's vital organs. Each organ and gland participates in the orgasmic process as follows:

1. The five senses create an environment for an orgasm as we become aroused through particular sights, sounds, feelings, scents, and tastes. These external senses arouse our internal senses, which give rise to the essences that initiate an orgasm.

2. The brain receives the message of arousal from the outer senses and translates it, directing the body to create an orgasm from its best life-force energy.

3. The essences of all vital organs contribute to an orgasm. As each is supplied with Chi, more sexual energy is aroused.

(a) In women the liver supplies the necessary essence that creates the lubricating fluid. The essences of the heart and kidneys stimulate and maintain the erection of a woman's breasts, vagina, and clitoris.

(b) In men the heart and kidneys supply the essences that stimulate and maintain an erection. When these organs are weak, a full erection cannot be achieved, and the other organs are depleted as they must supply more energy for the sexual act.

4. The glands also supply essential energies to the orgasmic process, especially the pineal, pituitary, and adrenal glands.

5. Finally, the sexual organ itself becomes aroused, supplying the sexual essence that creates orgasmic energy. An orgasm, then, is comprised of major inner alchemy changes that reflect the best of the body's internal energies at any given moment.

Daoists believe that when a man and woman join together to make love, their orgasmic energy joins together as well as their the sperm and egg, combining the Universal, Cosmic Particle, and Earthly Forces. (Daoists refer to this process as the Reunion of Heaven

and Earth.) The process is so powerful that it can create a new human life, supplying enough of these forces to nourish the fetus in the womb through the nutrients supplied by its mother. Those who do not want children, but still waste their sexual energy through common sexual practices, should consider that such a waste of potential life-force is foolish and unnecessary. People unknowingly deplete themselves of energy in numerous ways, thereby destroying their health. By redirecting sexual energy into the internal organs and glands, they can have the best sex and the most energy to heal and rejuvenate their bodies.

**What is the difference between an internal orgasm and an outward orgasm?**

Generally, common orgasms are mere pulsations of the genitals which occur only in the genital region. (They are referred to as genital or outward orgasms.) For men, such orgasms are short in duration and cannot be repeated once the seminal fluid is gone. Although a woman's experience lasts longer, there is not much benefit to her body if her sexual energy is habitually left unattended, only to drain out during menstruation. The loss of Jing Qi (Ching Chi) can affect anyone's health and sexuality as the depletion of life-force becomes apparent even in one's external appearance.

An internal orgasm, which leads to a total body orgasm, occurs throughout the entire body (as well as in the genitals). It can be extended in its duration and repeated for hours. By moving the pulsation of the orgasm up to the higher centers of the body, Jing Qi can be retained and the orgasmic sensation increased ten-fold. (This also retains the



seminal fluid in men.) If one knows how to maintain orgasms for long periods of time, the Universal and Earthly Forces can be activated and combined into a higher bliss, which is a powerful healing energy.

The only reason one should ejaculate or allow the loss of Jing Qi to occur is for the purpose of having children. Unfortunately, people carelessly lose their health in their quest for genital orgasms. Ejaculation causes a brief sensation in which sexual energy is passed out of the body and lost. Women who lose energy are also deprived of true sexual pleasure and satisfaction. Internal orgasms are a healthier and longer lasting approach to sex with no loss of stimulation to the genitals. The sensations actually travel through all of the organs, glands, and nerves, thrilling and revitalizing them with sexual energy.



### **Why do some religions attack sex, creating a lot of taboos against it?**

Some religions attack sex, creating a lot of fear and reaffirming ancient taboos because sexual energy can be a very powerful tool for those who make use of it. Like fire, it can be controlled if used in a proper way. Fire can cook your food, warm your house, and help to provide a comfortable life. If it is misused, however, it can burn down your house and kill someone. Another example is water, which can quench our thirst or drown us. The same principle applies to sexual energy, which can benefit anyone's health. Unfortunately, some religions have condemned it while trying to prevent its misuse, thereby promoting confusion.

Through their practice of celibacy, masters, monks, nuns, and priests learn how to use sexual energy to enhance their virtues and connect with the highest force, or God. By focusing upon God as a means of raising sexual energy up to the higher centers of their bodies, they transform it into virtuous energy, which enhances

their spiritual growth (referred to as reunion with God, or the Higher Bliss). This can only occur when sexual energy is conserved and transferred up to the higher centers and the crown to attract the higher force.

Sexual energy is neutral. It should not be judged as good or bad, but it can multiply any positive or negative quality that exists within each us. This same sexual energy, which can create another human being, or enhance one's spiritual growth, can also increase our negative states if we neglect to recycle it. The purpose of celibacy is simply to avoid the loss of Jing Qi, but celibacy alone does not move Jing Qi up to the higher centers for transformation and reunion with the higher forces. Also, most people find celibacy to be impractical in daily life. Unfortunately, misconceptions about such practices deter them from learning how to properly control and use sexual energy.

### **Is there any way besides celibacy to conserve Jing Qi and transform it?**

In studying the nature of sex, Daoist masters found ways to control and use Jing Qi through Testicle or Ovarian Breathing, the Power Lock, and the Orgasmic Upward Draw. These are sexual practices which redirect Jing Qi upward into the body, rather than outward. These methods can be learned without having to go through the isolation of celibacy.

### **How does sexual energy relate to violence in our society?**

When people learn to conserve their sexual energy, they begin to love, conserve, and protect nature. When they lose too much Jing Qi through common sexual practices, or through drugs, alcohol, and smoking, humans can become progressively destructive. In their constant search for sensorial excitement through fast sex and addictive substances, some people become violent without reason or concern for their environment.

It is interesting to note that most businesses in the world try to appeal to us by overwhelming our senses with sexual information. They try to attract our attention by promoting interest in the common sexual orgasm. Unfortunately, society and the business world follow the common misconception that sex was intended to release pent up energies and emotions. The truth is that sex is a means of building up the energies that the body needs. Sexual desire is not really a search for release, but often it is a search for new sources of energy to replenish lost Jing Qi.



When too much sexual energy is lost, the brain and sensory organs become empty. Then people unconsciously seek other sources to fulfill their desires for stimulation. They desire more orgasmic pleasures because they are so used to passing Jing Qi out of their bodies that their need for internal energy becomes desperate. In searching to fulfill their internal needs, they actually drain themselves more by relying upon old sexual habits. Unfortunately, drugs and alcohol also offer the kinds of stimulation (like false orgasms) that further deplete the body of energy. These substances, therefore, become addictive as they weaken the body and mind. The more energy that is lost, the more the body must replace to achieve high levels of stimulation. When people smoke, drink, or take drugs, their desires for stimulation possess them more as their energies decrease.

The Daoists suggest that this state is like a little death, a self-destruction through over-stimulation of the senses, with vital energies pouring out. Destructive attitudes gradually increase as these people try to replace Jing Qi through means that further drain them. This is often the cause of violence, rape, and murder as the search for sexual energy becomes obsessive. Once the body is in this state, the subconscious mind carries the destruction further. Its tendency is to destroy itself and everything around it.

Besides the problems of lust, anger, and violence, there are other attitudes that are related to greed and obsession. Daoists say, You can own anything, but don't let anything own you. Money can stimulate you through the power it offers, but if you allow money to take up all your time and energy, it will also begin to take over your life. Such problems occur because we lose so much sexual energy in our daily lives that we have little or no control over our bodies and minds. For this reason many religions fear sex and warn their followers to beware of its potential destructiveness. The problem is that they do not give their followers some means of controlling this powerful energy. Many will suggest celibacy, suppression, or restrictions, and thereby promote confusion about the bad effects of sex. Such suppression often has a reverse effect. If you withhold emotions for too long, they eventually explode outward at some unexpected moment, causing a great disturbance. Similarly, a sexually deprived person may create a great disturbance when the hold is finally lost on his or her sexual energy.

Some religious taboos cannot protect society from misuses of sexual energy, but education can help society to protect itself. Daoism educates people about true

sexual health and how it can enhance the most pleasurable sensations without draining the body's vital energies. The Daoist methods do not promote any negativity and have been proven effective by centuries of testing. They are also an effective way to enhance the virtue energies. Although masters, monks, nuns, and priests store Jing Qi through celibacy, the same effects can be achieved with orgasms through sex as long as Jing Qi is not passed out of the body.

### What are the nine types of orgasms?

Taoists classify the Total Body Orgasm into nine different types. You can experience them with a partner or by yourself.

#### 1. The Orgasm of the Brain

During sex, when you or your sex partner feel close to the point of orgasm, relax long enough to regain control of your sexual energy. (Men should remember not to become stimulated beyond 90 percent of their capacity; otherwise they may lose the seminal fluid.) Maintain your control by using mental power and contractions of the sex organ. Mentally guide the orgasm up the spine to the brain, then spiral the energy in your brain using your mind and eyes. You will feel the orgasm within your head.

Turn your eyes upward to the North Star and the Big Dipper. When you are at the peak of the brain orgasm, the energy will automatically attract and combine the Universal and Earthly Forces into a Heavenly Bliss. Draw in and spiral this energy in your head.

Sometimes an orgasm of the brain is very difficult to explain with words. Some people feel like they are walking on air; the whole body flows, and the head seems open. Rest, and enjoy this higher orgasm with your partner or by yourself. After you and your partner have experienced brain orgasms, rest, coordinate your breathing, and circulate the energy in your respective Microcosmic Orbits together.

#### 2. The Orgasm of the Senses

Start the arousal process again. When you feel the orgasmic energy rise, bring it up into the sensory organs. You can emphasize any particular sense by focusing on its organ, such as the eyes. Enhance the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin by drawing orgasmic energy into them.

NOTE: Upon experiencing an orgasm of the senses, many people give up smoking, drinking, taking drugs, and other bad habits because foreign substances that drain the life force can no longer fulfill the senses.

**3. The Kidneys' Orgasm**

When the energy of the organs builds up in the sexual center, regain control, rest, and guide the orgasm up to the kidneys, using your mind to spiral the Jing Qi around them. Try to feel the kidney's emotional quality of gentleness as it becomes enriched by the orgasmic energy.

**4. The Liver's Orgasm**

After each draw, rest as you mentally guide the energy upward. (This can be the fourth draw). Bring the energy up into the liver, and feel the orgasm there. Concentrate on the feeling of kindness; otherwise, anger may be produced. Use your mind, relax, and spiral the energy around the liver. Feel the kindness energy expand.

**5. The Spleen's Orgasm**

Using your mind's eye, guide the orgasm to the spleen and allow it to enhance the feelings of openness and fairness. The negative feeling to avoid here is worry.

**6. The Lungs' Orgasm**

Use your mind, guide the energy upward, wrap it around your lungs, and allow it to nurture the feeling of courage; otherwise, sadness or depression may result.

**7. The Heart's Orgasm**

This orgasm constitutes what we know as making love. When two people love each other, their combined energies enhance the feeling. As love is produced within each of them, their exchange and circulation of this emotional energy causes it to accrue in the same manner as Jing Qi. The negative side of this is that someone who wants to hurt people can accumulate the emotions of hatred, anger, and frustration in a similar way. This is why it is said that sexual energy can enhance anything, including negativity, which is what our religions fear.

NOTE: Up to this point, all orgasms have been related to physical sex. When you experience all these orgasms and combine them together, the result is called a Total Body orgasm. The longer you practice, the longer this orgasm will last. All the organs, glands, senses, and every bodily cell feels the orgasmic energy

at this stage. This is different from the orgasms felt by the individual organs and more advanced. When you reach this point, just be aware of the orgasmic energy at the sexual center and let it flow up to where it needs to go.

**8. The Soul Orgasm (Out-of-Body Orgasm)**

As both partners develop their soul bodies, the orgasmic energy can eventually be transferred into them and circulated. Upon transferring this energy, both soul bodies should be projected out and merged. (One's partner should be at the same level of expertise to achieve this.) Both partners project the orgasm to each other through these bodies and exchange their energies in the space above them (the lower mid-plane). At this level, one feels an entirely different orgasm which lasts a very long time.

**9. The Spirit Orgasm**

At this point, both partners should have the ability to develop their spiritual bodies for the exchange of orgasmic energy to occur at the next level, which is the higher mid-plane. They will project their spirit bodies and the orgasm energy out and merge them together as they did with their soul bodies. The orgasmic spiritual energy has the power to absorb the Universal Force, and when it returns, it thereby increases the life-force tremendously.

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[Topics in Research]

## Qi in Chinese Medicine (Part 1 of 2)

Marty Eisen, Ph.D. and Kevin W Chen, Ph.D.

### 1. What Is Qi?

Before any scientific investigation of Qi, the concept of Qi and its properties in Chinese philosophy must be known, in order to judge how closely any modern scientific interpretation fits.



Qi is a fundamental concept or terminology in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) with multiple levels of meanings. If you read enough in TCM, you would find that TCM seems to use “qi” to describe almost all invisible forces that

affect human lives and health. More specifically, Qi can describe the invisible forces both outside and inside the human body in many different ways (1). We will introduce some of these uses here as we lay out some basic background of Qi in Chinese philosophy and culture.

Qi might have been first discussed by Chinese philosophers (2). *Huai Nan Zi*, a Daoist book around 122 B.C., states that the Dao originated from Emptiness and Emptiness produced the universe. The universe produced Qi. Here it was most likely referred to qi energy outside of body.

Zhang Zai (1020-1077) said that the Great Void consists of Qi. Qi condenses to become the myriad of things. He clearly understood the concept of the matter-energy continuum, in the sense of modern physics, even though these ideas were conceived centuries later. He also saw the indestructibility of matter-energy as revealed by his statement “Qi in dispersion is substance and so is it in condensation.” “Qi forms myriads of things” implies that Qi must also involve information, in modern terminology. He also said that every birth is a condensation and every death a dispersal of Qi. Thus, just as “Qi” is the energetic foundation of the universe, it is also the physical and

spiritual substratum of human life. Zhu Xi (1131-1200) confirmed that Qi condensing can form beings and the conservation of energy, when he stated: “When dispersing, Qi makes the Great Void, only regaining its original misty feature, but not perishing; when condensing it becomes the origin of all beings.”

From these classic discussions (and the recent research findings to be presented later), we should say that a modern scientific explanation of Qi must involve aspects of matter, energy, and information, which remind us of the new finding in modern physics, the “hidden dimensions.”

This universal Qi, postulated by Chinese philosophers, will be denoted by “Qi” to differentiate from its usage in Chinese medicine, which will be denoted by *Qi* (without quotation). TCM has been using concept of Qi primarily in two senses. The first use is in abbreviation of functions or conditions that nothing else can explain well. Qi is used to describe the complex of functional activities of any organ. For example, Heart-Qi is not a refined substance in the Heart, but indicates the complex of the Heart’s functional activities, such as governing the Blood, controlling the Blood vessels, etc. Thus, there is Liver-Qi, Heart-Qi, Lung-Qi, etc. In a sense, it is also used to indicate disorders of the organ’s function or body’s disorder – for example, “Qi Bi” (Qi



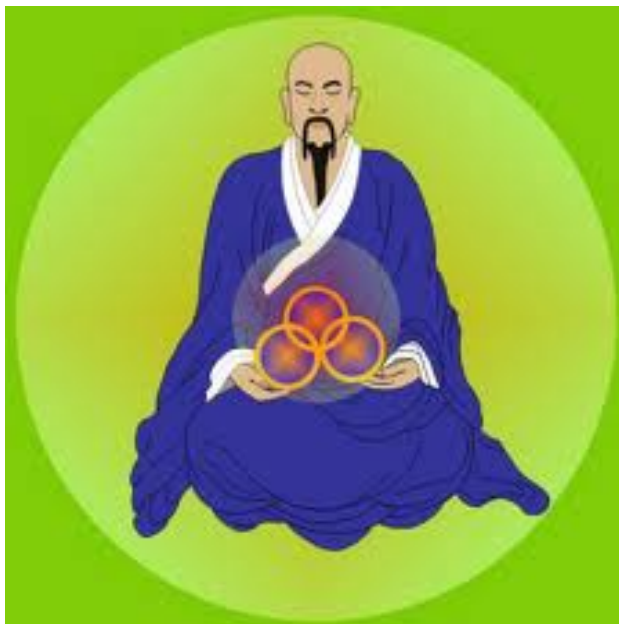


constipation) and “Qi Liu” (Qi tumor). These abbreviations will not be discussed in more details here, but Qi as an actual refined substance will.

The second use of Qi is vital energy, which stems from the Chinese character for Qi (氣). Qi can be decomposed into two radicals, which stand for “vapor, steam or gas” and (uncooked) “rice” or grain. In the second case, it is the energy or life-resource within the grain that is called “qi”, not the material or chemical part itself. This is evidence by the fact that rice could lose its taste and “gain qi” after being offered as oblation to the soul. This usage implies that Qi can be used as immaterial as vapor and as dense and material as rice. It also implies that Qi could be just subtle substance (vapor) produced from a coarse one (rice), just as cooking rice produces steam. Thus, sinologists generally agree that Qi is matter-energy in the sense of modern physics.

Natural energies, which are not tangible or visible are particular specializations of this use of “Qi” – for example, Seasonal Qi, Heavenly Qi, Earthly Qi and Food Qi. Other examples are environmental factors or forces that may affect human health, such as cold, dampness, dryness, etc.

Just as “Qi” is the energetic foundation of the universe, it is also the physical and spiritual substratum of human life. In Chinese medicine, the terminology employed depends on the state of the energy-matter. Energetic material, ranging from less dense to denser, is termed: Spirit (Shen 神), Energy (Qi 氣), Essence



(Jing 精), Blood (Xue 血), Body Fluids (Jin Ye 津液), Marrow (Sui 髓), and Bone (Gu 骨).

The three most important energetic substances for the function of the body are Jing, Qi and Shen, representing different stages or phases of life phenomenon. These are known as the “Three Treasures” or “San Bao” (三宝).

## 2. Jing

In order to understand the concept of Qi, we need briefly discuss another related TCM concept “Jing”. Jing is usually translated as “Essence”. The Chinese character implies that it is a refined substance derived from a coarser one. In many senses, Jing could be the internal sources or structure base of Qi. Jing itself can be divided into different types or be looked from different angles. If Qi is used in the sense of function, Jing would be understood as the physiological structure. If Qi is considered as vital energy, then Jing would be the physiological systems that support the energy. For example, endocrine system is frequently referred as “jing” in TCM. Keep it in mind that there are disagreements on what can be called Jing, what can not. Basically there are three different types of Jing discussed in TCM classic books.

### Prenatal Jing (Pre-Heaven Essence)

At conception, the Prenatal Jing passes from the parents to the embryo. This essence, together with nourishment derived from the Kidneys of the mother, nourishes the embryo and fetus during pregnancy. It is the only kind of essence present in the fetus.

Prenatal Jing determines basic constitution, strength, vitality, and so individual uniqueness. Since Prenatal Jing is inherited from the parents, it is very difficult to influence in later life. Some say the quality and quantity of Prenatal Jing cannot be altered. The way to conserve Prenatal Jing is by striving for balance in all life activities - moderation in diet, work/rest, and sexual activity. Irregularity or excess in these areas wastes Prenatal Jing. Certain exercises help conserve Prenatal Jing, such as Tai Chi and Qigong. Tortoise breathing may also positively influence it.

### Postnatal Jing (Post-Heaven Essence)

After birth, the infant starts to eat, drink, and breathe on its own. The Spleen and Stomach then extract and refine Qi from the food and drink and the Lung gets

Qi from the air. Postnatal Jing is the complex of essences thus refined and extracted. It is the material basis for the functional activity of the body's internal organs and metabolism. The Kidneys store any surplus Jing to be released when required.

Postnatal Jing is continually being used by the body and replenished by food and drink. The Prenatal Jing is enriched and functions optimally only through the action of the Postnatal Jing. Without the function of the Prenatal Jing, the Postnatal Jing cannot be transformed into Qi.

### **Kidney Jing**

Kidney Jing plays important role in physiology. It arises from both Prenatal and Postnatal Jing. It is hereditary, like Prenatal Jing and determines one's constitution. However, it is partly replenished by the Postnatal Jing. Kidney essence is stored in the Kidneys, but has fluid-like nature and circulates all over the body. Kidney Essence is said to have the following functions:

(i) It is the basis for growth, development, sexual maturation, and reproduction. — It moves in long, slow developmental cycles (men's Essence flows in 8-year cycles; women's in 7-years) and presides over the major phases of development in life. Kidney Jing declines naturally, producing the signs of aging, such as: hair/teeth loss, impairment of memory, etc.

(ii) It is the basis for Kidney Qi — Jing is fluid-like and therefore more Yin and so can be considered as an aspect of Kidney Yin. It forms the material basis for Kidney Yin to produce of Kidney Qi. Kidney Yin is warmed by Kidney Yang and the heat from the Ming Men to produce Kidney Qi.

(iii) Kidney Jing produces Marrow — Marrow produces bone marrow, the brain, and fills the spinal cord. (Marrow in Chinese medicine has no exact equivalent in Western Medicine). The Brain in TCM is called the "Sea of Marrow". Therefore if Kidney Jing is weak, the brain may be undernourished, leading to poor memory or concentration, dizziness, a feeling of emptiness in the head, etc.

(iv) It determines our Constitution — Protection from exterior pathogens depends largely on the strength the Defensive (Wei Qi), as discussed below.

(v) Jing and Qi are the material foundation for Shen (Mind) — this postulate is used in Chinese medicine because Jing, Qi and Shen represent three different states of the condensation of "Qi", from coarse, to rarified, to subtle and immaterial, respectively. If Jing and Qi are healthy and plentiful, the Mind will be happy. If both Jing and Qi are deficient, the Mind will suffer.

### **3. Different Types of Qi**

To help students of TCM to understand "Qi," modern TCM books started to define different "Qi" one way or another. These exploratory definitions discussed below may inspire us to think about the concept of Qi more carefully and comprehensively. They may also create new problems in understanding the true meaning of Qi and its applications in TCM, since "the Dao that can be told in words is not the eternal Dao". However, as long as we keep it in mind that Qi is more of a multi-meaning or multi-component concept than a specific matter, energy or function, we would be less likely to deviate from the original meaning of Qi.

Some TCM books have classified the life-force energy according to its location and function in the body (2, 3). Here are some examples of the definitions of various Qi for us to start thinking this abstract concept in a more concrete way:

#### **Prenatal Qi (Yuan Qi 元气)**

Yuan Qi is said to be Jing (Essence) in the form of Qi. Yuan Qi has its root in the Kidneys and spread throughout the body by the San Jiao (Triple Burner). It is the foundation of all the Yin and Yang energies of the body. Yuan Qi, like Prenatal Jing, is hereditary, fixed in quantity, but nourished by Postnatal Jing.

Yuan Qi is the dynamic force that motivates the functional activity of internal organs, and is the foundation of vitality. It circulates through the body in the channels, relying on the transporting system of the San Jiao (Triple Burner). It is the basis of Kidney Qi, and dwells between the two Kidneys, at the Gate of Vitality (Ming Men). It facilitates transformation of Qi described below, and participates in producing Blood. It emerges and stays at the 12 Source points.

#### **Center Qi (Zhong Qi 中气)**

Energy generated from the Spleen and Stomach, whose function is to transport the Qi from food into

the chest where it is combined with the Heart's and Lungs' Qi.

### Food Qi (Gu Qi 谷气)

Food entering the Stomach is first "rotted and ripened"; then transformed into a usable form by the Spleen. The energy derived from this food essence is divided into Pure Yang Qi and Impure Yin Qi by the Spleen. The Pure Yang Qi is sent upward to the chest by the Center Qi via the Middle Burner. First, it goes to the Lungs where it combines with the Heavenly Qi to form Gathering (Zong) Qi. Then, it is transported to the Heart, where it unites with the Yuan Qi from the Kidneys to produce Blood. The turbid Yin Qi of Gu Qi is sent down by the Spleen via the Middle Burner to the Lower Burner to be further refined and excreted.

### Clear Qi (Qing Qi 清气)

This is the pure energy from the Gu Qi sent by the Spleen to the Upper Burner and chest via the Middle Burner, also known as Yang Qi.

### Turbid Qi (Zhuo Qi 浊气)

This is the impure energetic essence of Gu Qi transported by the Spleen via the Middle Burner to the Lower Burner to be further refined and excreted.

### Gathering Qi (Zong Qi 宗气)

This is also called Chest Qi (Xiong Qi), Big Qi Da Qi) and "Big Qi of the Chest". The Spleen sends the pure energetic essence of Gu Qi up to the Lungs, where (with the help of Yuan Qi and Kidney Qi) it combines with air and transforms into Zong Qi.

Zong Qi nourishes the Heart and Lungs. It enhances and promotes the Lungs in controlling Qi and respiration and the Heart's function of governing the Blood and Blood Vessels. If Zong Qi (Gathering Qi) is weak, the extremities, especially the hands, will be weak or cold. Zong Qi gathers in the throat and influences speech (which is under control of the Heart) and the strength of voice (under control of Lungs). The strength of Zong Qi can also be determined from the voice – weak (strong) voice, weak (strong) Zong Qi. It is easily affected by emotional problems, such as grief and sadness, which disperse the energy in the chest and weaken the Lungs. The Lungs and Kidney mutually assist each other via Zong Qi and Yuan Qi. Zong Qi flows downward to aid the Kidneys while Yuan Qi flows upward to aid in respira-

tion (and the formation of Zong Qi). The chest area where Zong Qi collects is called the "Sea of Qi". Zong Qi and the Sea of Qi are controlled by Shanzhong (Ren-17). Gathering Qi is also treated by the Heart and Lung Channels and breathing exercises.

### True Qi (Zhen Qi 真气)

Zong Qi originates in the Lungs. It is transformed into Zhen Qi with the catalytic action of Yuan Qi. Zhen Qi is the last stage in the transformation and refinement of Qi. It is the Qi that circulates in the channels and also outside the body and nourishes the organs. Zhen Qi has two different forms, Ying Qi and Wei Qi.

### Ying Qi (Nutritive Qi 营气)

Ying Qi nourishes the internal organs and the whole body. It spends two hours in each channel, moving through all twelve channels in a twenty four hour period (termed the Horary Cycle). During these periods, the corresponding organs are nourished and maintained by the Ying Qi.

It is closely related to Blood, and flows with Blood in the vessels as well in the channels. Ying Qi is the Qi that is activated by insertion of an acupuncture needle. It is closely related to the emotions, since it can be directed by thought.

### Wei Qi (Protective Qi 卫气)

Wei Qi is fast moving, "slippery" and more Yang than Nutritive Qi. It flows primarily under the skin and in between the muscles, especially in the Tendo-Muscular meridians. Wei Qi protects the body from attack by exogenous pathogenic factors such as harsh weather conditions, microorganisms, harmful emotions, and evil spiritual forces. For example, a deficiency of Wei Qi can make someone prone to frequent colds.

There are three Wei Qi fields extending several feet from the body. All energetic forms of the body, including organs, blood vessels, nervous system, etc., can be accessed and treated through these fields.

- Wei Qi warms, moistens, and aids in nourishing skin and muscles. For example, a person with a deficiency of Defensive Qi will tend to feel easily cold.
- Wei Qi adjusts the opening and closing of pores; thus, regulating sweating and the body



temperature. It is controlled by the Lungs, which regulates its circulation.

- Deficient Wei Qi can lead to spontaneous sweating. When an exogenous pathogen (e.g., Wind-Cold) invades the exterior, the pathogen can block the pores, inhibiting the function of the Wei Qi, and blocking sweating.
- Defensive Qi has its root in the Lower Burner (Kidneys). It is nourished by the Middle Burner (Stomach and Spleen) and is spread outwards by the Upper Burner (Lungs).
- Wei Qi has a complex circulation pattern, of 50 cycles during a 24 hour period, 25 times in the day and 25 at night. In the daytime, Wei Qi circulates in the Exterior, but at night it goes into the Interior to protect the Yin Organs.
- It is said that sleeping under an open window at night gives exogenous pathogens a better chance for attack than during the daytime, since the Exterior of the body is less well protected. Hence, it is easier to catch a cold at night than in the daytime.
- Wei Qi can become thicker and extends farther out during Qigong practice. Therefore, it may take longer to move inward at night,

causing some Qigong practitioners to have difficulty falling asleep after evening practice.

**Upright Qi (Zheng Qi 正气)**

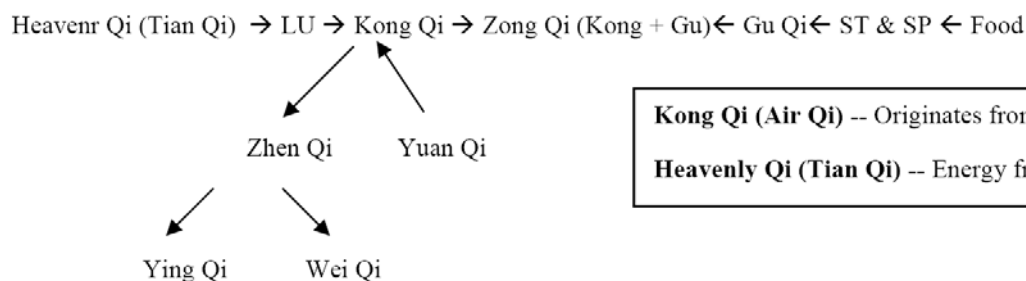
Upright Qi is also known as Righteous Qi. This is not another type of Qi but a general term to indicate the various Qi protecting the body from invasion by Xie Qi.

**Postnatal Qi (Hou Tian Zhi Qi 后天之气)**

Energy derived from food and drink (from Earth) and air (from Heaven) which are cultivated after birth. Postnatal Qi depends on Prenatal Qi for development. Both form the foundation for the body's vital energy.

**Organ Qi (Zang and Fu Qi 脏腑之气)**

This is the energy responsible for the functioning of the internal organs. The Yang-Fu, hollow bowels, produce Qi and Blood from food and drink. The Yin-Zang, solid viscera, store vital substances. Each organ has its own energy corresponding to one of the Five-Element energies, which respond to the universal and environmental energy fields. Thinking, feeling, metabolism and hormones can influence the Organ Qi.



**Kong Qi (Air Qi)** -- Originates from the air received by the Lungs  
**Heavenly Qi (Tian Qi)** -- Energy from the air, sun and stars.

**Figure 1. Illustration of the Production of Wei Qi and Ying Qi**

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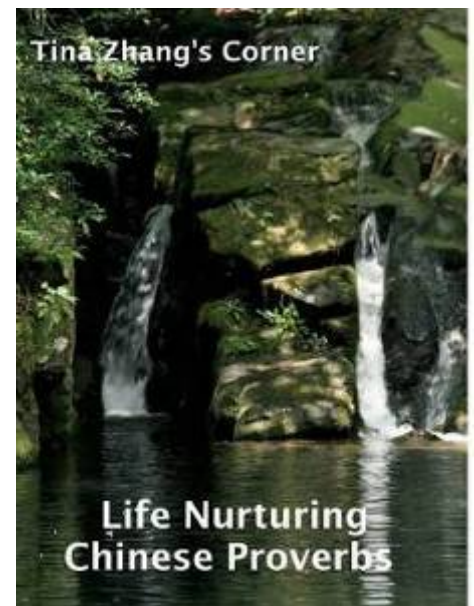
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[Dr. Eisen is a retired scientist, who constructed mathematical models in medicine. He has studied and taught Judo, Shotokan Karate, Aikido, Qigong, Praying Mantis Kung Fu, and Tai Chi in different places. He took correspondence courses in Chinese herology 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>]

## [Proverbs of Yang Sheng]

**Winter Health**

Tina Zhang



冬三月，此藏。水冰地坼，无扰乎阳；此冬气之应，养藏之道也。

We call Winter the season of restoration. Let the water freeze and let the ground crack, do not disturb the Yang Qi or expect to change the cold. This is the energy that winter should be, and the time to store Yang Qi inside.

Seasons are gifts that nature offers and humans receive and enjoy. Cold and warm make the yin and yang of nature. One of the important aspects in yang sheng is living with nature and harmony with the seasons, and do the best possible things for your health in each season.

Since winter is the opposite of summer, winter is the balance to summer. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine nurturing life theory, winter is the best season to restore Yang energy, and nourish the kidneys by gentle movement and warm food.

明代著名医家张景岳有句名言：“善补阳者，必于阴中求阳;善补阴者，必于阳中求阴。

"A famous Ming dynasty physician Zhang Jing Yue's said: " The best who know how to cultivate Yang energy will find it in Yin; the best yin energy balance will be dug out from Yang power." So the winter shouldn't be the most complained about season, instead it should be recognized that best Yang cultivation is in the most Yin season. What do we do about our winter cultivation?

**1. Food**

Winter food keeps the body warm. More "Yang" food has greater nutritional value to allow the body to process more Yang energy. Cooked vegetables are more beneficial to the body's yang energy and are more easily digested than cold salad. Generally, eating food in an environment where the temperature is close to the body's temperature is beneficial.

**2. Keep warm. Avoid getting worse chronic diseases.**

The winter is not the season for people who already have disease. The body takes a great amount of internal adjustment in the winter, especially the sudden change from indoor and outdoor temperatures. If one is not fully prepare enough to keep the body warm their health will be impaired.

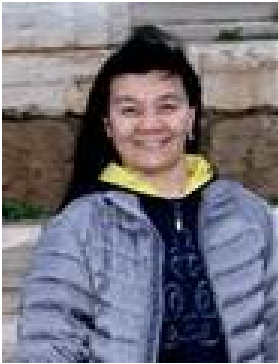
**3. Prepare for the spring.**

If winter is here, is spring far? Our body and mind need some rest. Winter is a good time to plan things for the spring by gathering the winter's solid energy to make something grow in springtime. Winter is also a great time to nurture the mind while we have more time to read and find peace — not only peace against war and violence, but peace based on pure thoughts and joy. That will make a miracle spring!

明代著名医家张景岳有句名言：“善补阳者，必于阴中求阳;善补阴者，必于阳中求阴。”对于肾之阴精渐衰的老人，冬天可配食乌龟、甲鱼、枸杞等护阴之

The famous Ming physician Jingyue a famous saying: "good yang who will find in the yin yang; good yin tonic who will in the sun and seek shade." Gradual decline for the kidney of the sex fluid elderly, winter can be equipped with fresh turtle, turtle, and wolfberry care

Greetings from Beijing, winter, 2010 -2011

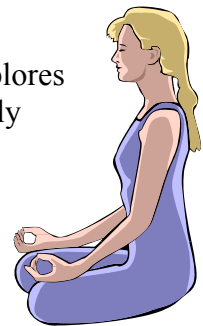


**[Tina Chunna Zhang** – studied with the most respected Martial Artists in China - Grandmaster Li Bing Ci and Grandmaster Liu Jing Ru - and currently practices as well as teaches traditional Northern Wu Style Taijiquan and Cheng Style Baguazhang. Ms. Zhang studied at Beijing University and was mentored by Dr. Kong Si, one of the most famous Traditional Chinese medical doctors in Beijing. Ms.Zhang is the author of “Earth Qi Gong for Women” and founded a program by the same name. A co-author of two books, “Classical Northern Wu Style Taijiquan”, and”The Whirling Circles of Gaguazhang”, she runs a successful clinic in New York City. She offers workshops and retreats throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe, and her unique teaching style greatly benefits practitioners of all levels. After many years of research, study, and practice, Ms. Zhang recently introduced the world to “The Three Treasures”, a practical medical Qigong set, and her book “Earth Qigong for Women”, is now available in Spanish. Welcome to visit her web site at [www.TinaZhang.com](http://www.TinaZhang.com) ]

### [Interesting links]:

- **“Can group meditation bring world peace?”** – Quantum physicist, John Hagelin explores this question with some experiential evidences – the group sizes of meditation are highly correlated with other’s perceived quality of life and number of violence on that day....

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVF6Wtuxu8>



- **Optimism, music and longevity:** At age of 107, Alice Herz-Sommer is the oldest living survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, which did not change her passion for music and life at all. Watch her inspirational story of music and optimism in this video...

[http://www.odemagazine.com/blogs/readers\\_blog/23347/a\\_salute\\_to\\_the\\_potency\\_of\\_optimism](http://www.odemagazine.com/blogs/readers_blog/23347/a_salute_to_the_potency_of_optimism)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGkUWrt2RFw>



**It is said that happy people live longer...** is it true? Find it out from the people in Okinawa, Japan, a short video from the documentary "Happy" -- Director Roko Belic tells us a little about the people of Okinawa and their secret to longevity!



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEFG\\_AxaDA4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEFG_AxaDA4)

**Epigenetics- How Does it Work?** Epigenetics findings support the mind-body connection and mind healing **in cancer research...** Beliefs and attitudes can control Epigenetics!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-Hh7b3Nxxc>



- **“Seeing Around without Eye vision”** – Talk about body-mind integration or positive mind power, Ben Underwood’s story shows us how a positive-minded person can live a normal life without eye vision....

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLziFMF4DHA>

<http://www.benunderwood.com/aboutme.html>

[Healing Through Pleasure]

## The Sexual Dynamic -- A TCM Perspective

Felice Dunas, Ph.D.

Michael was not the best looking guy my patient Heather had ever seen. The many women who flocked around him the night they met would agree. But there was something about him that ignited sparks. When he caught her eye from across the room, she could feel the chemistry instantly. As they walked toward one another, her breathing deepened and her heart rate sped up. By the time he introduced himself, there was so much going on between them, neither could muster the social graces to avoid stumbling through the first few sentences of conversation. Having been a patient of mine for several years, Heather had learned to view men a bit differently than the average single girl. So when she first heard his sexy and forcefully masculine voice, her knees went weak but her mind said *liver*.

Michael pursued Heather in the manner typical of a man on a sexual conquest. A screenwriter, he would stay up to all hours writing her love letters that would make Robert Browning jealous. He spoke words that had truth and depth of feeling in them. They would walk together on the beach at sunset, dine on fresh fish and fine wine. He wanted late night discussions about memories, art and theater. And while he dreamed of amour, she thought *kidneys*.



Attraction, courtship and romance, when viewed through the lens of our medicine, aren't nearly as confusing as or elusive as our psychoanalytic or sociological models would have us believe. We can analyze behavior through the psychological paradigm inherent in yin/yang, *zang fu* and five element theories, for example. Doing so helps us read our patients' love-related experiences differently. As a result we can support them more effectively.

We are attracted to others, certainly, for their looks, accomplishments and bank accounts. But the body responds to what I call a potential partner's energetic profile: the syndrome picture that makes up their health and personality traits.

There are many attraction patterns. The simplest are those that mirror or complement our own energetic profile. For example, a person whose kidney deficiency results in a full heat condition may yearn to cuddle with a cool, calm yang deficient type. The spleen easily becomes narcissistic and mentally oriented. This organ's tendencies are often behind the yearning for a like-minded partner. But Michael was the kind of guy many women are drawn to. His appeal had more to do with a syndrome that *just looks sexy*. *Stagnation!*

Women make changes in their bodies of a magnitude far greater than anything else in life. They turn an egg and a sperm into a baby. So it makes perfect sense that when meeting a man, a woman is sure she can change him. Fix him. This yin transformational quality is found in both genders. Energetic stagnation appears complex and mysterious. Its complexity is titillating and stimulating for the yin of both genders to fix.

When you have a patient who is continually attracting rotten relationships or another who is married to someone based upon an energetically pathological attraction, you can help them heal. By showing them the causative factors on an energetic level, you give them the option to change the pattern. As the body heals energetically, attrac-

tion and behavior patterns heal. Release qi, and your patient can stop seeking out partners to rescue and run from. Tonify, and your patient will no longer yearns for the empty heat of another unsatisfying affair.

Heather had promised herself that she wouldn't fall for Michael. He had that deep deficiency that results from coming through adolescence with a weak earth element and lousy diet. Because his spleen couldn't effectively support his kidneys he had that "just got out of bed" pallor. You know the "I've been doing IT all night and I am just pooped out in that special way" look. You can find many male models with that look. His deficiency left the liver undernourished by its mother organ (kidney) so his moodiness drew women for miles. This was a dangerous man to get close to.

After being pursued for several months Heather gave in. Passion inspired passion. One can only handle so many twilight sunsets before seeing stars. She figured she was just being arrogant to continue resisting. Perhaps she was wrong, she reasoned. Maybe all the TCM thinking was just her way of being self-protective.

Lo and behold the tone of the love letters suddenly changed. Within a matter of days, Heather was informed that she and Michael could not possibly be right for each other because of this and that. She was too upside down and inside out and who knows what else. He was tortured about the whole thing, of course, but his deep intuitive knowing made him recognize how wrong this all was.

Bottom line, once Heather stopped blocking Michael from getting close, his stagnant condition insured that she could not get close to him. Something had to block the intimacy to keep the dance between them going. Without blocks, the energetic imbalance in him was going to be contradicted. Michael couldn't open to being loved because his yin was too weak to receive. If Heather resisted him he could dramatize his hunger for her. But as soon as she became available he would have to pull away to continue reflecting his syndrome pattern in his behavior

Michael had to be able to have sex with other women. And he deeply needed one who was much more something or other than Heather was. His behavior became so obnoxious she had to end the relationship. This was, of course, all part of his plan. I do not mean to say he was not a victim to that plan himself. She found it fascinating and painful to watch him act it out.

So Heather learned that her knowledge wasn't arrogance and that our medicine was right. She should have listened to what TCM had told her because running into energetic stagnation hurts. It stops the flow of life, love, conversation, growth and honesty. It creates drama on one end of the emotional spectrum and a feeling of emptiness on the other. It results in what I call a beer foam condition: one that fills up the time but has no substance, just as beer foam fills up the glass but has no taste

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".]



[Experience Exchange]

## Sickening Sweet

Steffany Moonaz, Ph.D.

Most people are aware that obesity is a major problem in the developed world, especially in the US, and our awareness of it has not managed to slow the trend. The diseases that are associated with obesity are also growing in prevalence, and beginning earlier in life. Type II diabetes was once called “late-onset” because it was almost non-existent prior to middle-age. This condition is now becoming a pediatric disease.

In order to lose weight, many people turn to sugar substitutes, which are calorie-free and still offer the sweet taste of sugar- a guilt-free indulgence. And for those with diabetes, sugar-free alternatives are necessary to regulate blood sugar. Scientists are now discovering, however, that it is not a solution to the obesity epidemic and that these sweeteners are also associated with diabetes!

In a normal individual, the pancreas makes insulin in response to sugar intake, and blood sugar levels return to normal. For people with type II diabetes, the intake of sugar creates a spike in blood sugar and the pancreas is unable to adjust the blood sugar to normal levels. For those who are at-risk for diabetes, regular consumption of high levels of carbohydrate can “wear out” the system and cause it to function improperly. But when sugar substitutes are consumed, the brain still expects an increase in blood sugar, and sends a message to the pancreas to respond. This creates a low blood sugar and the body seeks out



alternative sources of calories to bring levels back to normal. In this way, the consumption of sugar substitutes does not decrease overall calorie consumption, nor does it alleviate the strain on the pancreas.

That is not to say that all sweeteners are bad, simply that they must be consumed knowledgeably, consciously, and ideally, *moderately*. But that is very challenging in a society where sugar is a way of life.

Children love sweets. They are hard-wired to consume sweet foods. In nature, sweet foods are often accompanied by loads of vitamins, minerals and fiber (ie. fresh fruit). And as individuals mature, they begin to expand their preferences to include a broader range of flavors, such as the bitterness of green vegetables or the spice of hot peppers. However, when the food supply is loaded with sweetness, palates fail to mature, and even fresh fruit is not sweet enough. Not only children, but mature adults require added sweeteners for foods to be palatable.

The good news is that food preferences can be intentionally changed. Research has shown that a low-salt diet will shift food preference so that salty foods become less desirable. In other words, people begin to appreciate more subtle flavors without the need for flavor enhancers, such as salt and sugar.

One approach is to gradually decrease the added sweetener in foods and beverages. This can be done by diluting fruit juices with water or sparkling water, cutting back on sweeteners in coffee or tea, and buying breakfast cereals with fewer grams of sugar per serving. When using sweeteners sparingly, try to choose those with some nutritional value (i.e. agave syrup, honey, or maple syrup) instead of refined sugar, high fructose corn syrup, or artificial alternatives. Foods like applesauce, peanut butter and even sliced bread often have sugar added, but un-

sweetened versions are also available. Moving from added sweeteners to naturally sweet foods is a way to increase nutrition while still satisfying a desire for sweet foods. Fresh fruits and even some vegetables (carrots, sweet potatoes) taste very sweet once reliance on added sugars is decreased.

I have specifically been asked by parents about how to transition their children from a diet of highly refined processed foods to a more natural, wholesome diet. Obviously, the easiest approach (though it takes commitment and diligence) is to start a more natural whole foods diet during pregnancy. Science shows that the neonate experiences flavors from the mother's diet even prior to birth, which influence food preference later in life. Additionally, breast milk flavor differs depending on the mother's diet. This has an evolutionary explanation, because it prepares infants for the diet in their culture and region. The problem arises when the diet in the mother's culture and region is setting the course for chronic disease!

After infancy, children continue to develop food preference based on exposure and familiarity. It often takes multiple exposures for a child to accept a new food, but modeling (eating such foods in front of the child on a regular basis) will also encourage liking. I recommend reducing exposure to unhealthy foods (in the kitchen, television commercials, etc) while increasing exposure to naturally sweet foods. Parents should be advised, however, that added sweeteners can be found in the most unexpected products. Learn the names for all types of sweeteners and read the labels of every product you purchase.

This takes time and patience, and is more difficult for older children who are influenced by many factors outside of the home. The good news is that parents are still the primary influence over their children, and the home is the place where healthy eating is most likely to take place, even if eating habits differ among peers.

Decreasing added dietary sweetness for both adults and children is a monumental task. It is the responsibility of individuals and parents, but it is made more challenging when the food supply is highly processed and sweetened. Making healthy choices isn't easy, but the payoff is huge and we serve as role models for a generation who is now positioned to have a shorter lifespan than their parents. I have once heard it said that we vote with our dollars and we vote with our forks. Supporting companies that offer low-sugar, whole grain products is one way to encourage a shift in the food supply. Support local farmer's markets and sellers of fresh produce to support the farmers who grow foods we need to live. Let policy makers know that families and communities want better choices for our own health and that of our children.



**[Steffay Moonaz PhD** - received her PhD in public health from Johns Hopkins University with a focus on health behavior and complementary and alternative medicine research. She is a Certified Movement Analyst and Registered Yoga Therapist with advanced training in the relationship between physical movement and psycho-emotional wellbeing. Dr. Moonaz earned a master's degree of Fine Arts from the University of Maryland in 2003, and founded a local dance company, with an emphasis on the role of embodiment in everyday life. She has worked with people from all backgrounds to foster greater wellness and has received numerous awards for her work as a researcher and writer on the benefits of lifestyle change to promote a better quality of life. ]

**Happy New Year!  
Year of the Rabbit/Hare 2011**

恭喜發財 新年快樂

[The Tai Chi Examiner]

## The Potentially Famous 2010 Laojia Training Experiment

By Violet Li

[Michael Chritton](#) of Swanee, Kansas, is a [Chen Village \(Chenjiajou\)](#) certified Taiji instructor. In mid October, he posted a status on Facebook (FB) and “whined” about his grueling training with his wife [Master Chen Huixian](#). Michael normally uses 20 minutes to complete one set of [Chen Style Old Frame Routine One \(Lao Jia Yi Lu\)](#). For a training experiment, Michael made his movements slow and completed it in 30 minutes. Right away, he got lots of feedback. Others posted similar experiences when they practiced a form very slowly. This gave [Kimberly Ivy](#), a 20<sup>th</sup> generation disciple of [Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang](#) and founder of [Embrace the Moon](#) in Seattle, Washington, a fun idea. She started a FB group named *The potentially famous 2010 Laojia Training Experiment* and invited some of her Facebook friends to join the experiment in which the participants will do Lao Jia Yi Lu at a slow pace for a week and at a fast pace for a week and compare the results.

Kim wanted to provide an open “safe” place for friends to exchange ideas and personal experience so she made the group private but group members can invite friends to join. The FB group was created in late October. The experiment started on Nov. 14 and ended on Nov. 28. At the highest, there were 77 members.

Chen Style Lao Jia Yi Lu is the foundation of all modern Taiji styles. Its extended form is practiced with a high/medium stance and some advanced practitioners prefer it to be low. According to Master Chen Huixian, for an advanced practitioner, a normal pace is about 12 to 18

minutes long. Anything beyond 18 minutes is considered slow and a fast pace practice is about 10 minutes or less, though some did it in 7 or 8 minutes. Of course, beginners find it hard to do the form longer than 10 minutes simply because their leg muscles are not strong enough to sustain a longer practice without missing too many details.

Most of the Experiment members are advanced Chen Style practitioners; many are Taiji instructors; a few also practice Yang Style Taiji, [Bagua](#) or external/internal martial arts. They are located in different parts of the U.S.; a few joined the group from Brazil: one person was from the Great Britain, Malaysia, and China. Over two dozen members shared their experimental results. Some brought the experiment to their own Taiji classes and tried it out. In general, the experiment turned out to be a success for many reasons.

Most practitioners noticed that practicing the form slowly allowed (or forced) them to care for more details. Lao Jia Yi Lu is extremely sophisticated. As the practice goes deeper, practitioners discover rich details, either in external movements (i.e. hand twining, Kao shifting, knee positioning), or internal exercise (i.e. breathing properly, Qi circulation, Dan Tian rotation), and also in spiritual enlightenment (Shen). The general consensus about practicing slow are:





- ❖ Strengthens leg muscle
- ❖ Improves stability
- ❖ Sits Kao properly
- ❖ Distinguishes Yin and Yang better
- ❖ Refines Silk Reeling
- ❖ Manifests Dan Tian Rotation
- ❖ Smooths out rough spots in transitioning
- ❖ Relaxes body more
- ❖ Breathe more properly and gently
- ❖ Sinks the Qi more easily
- ❖ Helps settling and rooting each movement at the end
- ❖ Reaches the Central Equilibrium (Zhong Ding) fully
- ❖ Improves focusing
- ❖ Enables one to listen to one's body better



One member wrote, “Going slower revealed even more to me about the deep connections not just with my body, but with the interrelationships with my (Taiji) partners, and increased my capacity to ‘hear’ what was going on.” One described that during the slow practice, Qi was moving very fast. Dan Tian continued to move like a gyration ball even after the form practice. The other attributed to the Qi flowing smoothly in her body during the practice and did not need her knee brace at all. Others commented that the slow experience not only helped them with Lao Jia Yi Lu practice, but also helped them with other styles or forms. One member utilized the slow approach with a Yang Style class (24 Movements in 24 minutes!) and the feedback was extremely favorable from the entire class regardless of their Taiji level.

Some reported negative results as well when doing the form slow such as burning legs. Some had to alter breathing pattern to accommodate the slowness, which felt unnatural. A couple members recalled that their mind started to wander, especially when they were tired. Master Chen Huixian comments that practicing slow has many benefits but it should be a gradual process. She urges practitioners not to intentionally draw out the breathing unnaturally or hold the breath too long. She suggests practitioners slowly increase their form time as they progress, i.e. increasing the form time by a 2-minute increment each week.

It became interesting when the experiment went from slow to fast. Kim’s suggestion was to do the training at the speed of 15 minutes. A few ventured to do it less than 10 minutes. In most part, there was an adjustment issue. After all, it is quite different to breathe fast than slow. Some expressed there was not enough time to move the Qi around the body or to sink it. Some discovered they could not properly shift the body weight to distinguish the Yin and Yang. The movement expression was getting “sloppy” and details were lost. One person said that he lost his place in the form when doing the form too fast. One member simply cried out that “things seem to fall apart and my form feels uncomfortable.”

Was it really the problem of doing it fast? Was it a natural outcome of changing pace drastically? Or was it simply because during the slow training, people learned the nuances of Lao Jia Yi Lu and now they realize what is missing when they speed up the practice? During the slow training, one member set [Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang’s](#) DVD to a slow pace of 40 minutes and watched it while practicing. All members who posted about slow training admitted that they learned a lot more about the form. “Working slowly makes mistakes visible, working fast makes them tragically obvious,” concluded one member.

Many stated that the slow training helped them with their faster practice. One person commented “moving fast through Lao Jia felt very connected even at the break-neck speed. It felt like mercury flowing.”

One member quoted a master’s saying that “if you can do it slow, you can do it fast” which sparked a little friendly debate. But there is one thing that most can agree on, is that “one cannot do it fast if he cannot do it

slow.” Some practice Taiji for health reasons while others for the martial arts thrill. People who enjoyed martial arts more expressed the preference for fast training.

This experiment was not conducted in a controlled environment. There were many factors that could impact the outcome of the results, such as weather. Due to an individual’s Taiji level, the result could be different. In general, it is hard to tell whether practicing a particular form fast or slow is better. However, the experiment was valuable and illustrated that the difficulties of doing a form either really slow or really fast. The discoveries from both paces can help people improve their form practice.

Aside from the benefits of the improving their understanding of Taiji principles, Lao Jia Yi Lu and their own practice, members built camaraderie among Taiji lovers beyond the geographic boundary. They encouraged and inspired others to practice. Many shared their thoughts and learning. Some quoted various master’s teaching. There were over 20,000 words posted in about six weeks. Some posted a photo of their practicing spot (some in snow and some in sun shine). They exchanged information of how to protect their knees as well self-taping (the practice) techniques. It was a virtual group. No wonder, after the experiment, 69 members still remain in the group and continue to exchange ideas.

One member described Taiji practice is like “a string of pearls”. This metaphor can be used for this group of people who are proficient at their practice and selflessly offer their experience and knowledge with other. Hopefully, similar FB groups will be inspired or a scientific research can be established to do a control study on practicing Taiji fast and slow.



[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 Taichi, 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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## [Healing Recipes of the Month]

**Food Recipes for Flu or Cold**

Flu, cold or influenza is a common infectious disease in the winter season. Each year about 20-30,000 people die of flu-related health complications in the U.S. Here we share two food recipes for prevention and treatment of flu-related symptoms. Hopefully you will benefit from the simple but powerful traditional Chinese medicine recipes.

**1. Scallion-Ginger Congee (Soup)****Ingredients:**

7 pieces white stems of scallion  
 6 grams raw ginger root  
 60 grams (1-1 1/4 cups) brown or sweet rice  
 1 gram (1 tsp) rice vinegar  
 3 grams (3 tsp) salt

**Method:** (a) Remove the skin of ginger root, wash thoroughly, slice into small pieces; (b) Clean the scallion stems with water, and chop into small pieces; (c) Wash sweet rice with water, mix with ginger root in a cook pot with appropriate amount of water (15-20 times the amount of rice), depending upon how thick you prefer), apply a mild fire to cook it into congee(soup); then add scallion stems, salt and rice vinegar to desired flavor, a few more minutes of cooking, the scallion-ginger congee is ready to serve.

**2. Walnut-Ginger-Scallion Tea****Ingredients:**

25 grams (1/2 cup) shelled walnuts  
 25 grams (1/2 cup) scallion stems  
 25 grams (1/2 cup) ginger root  
 15 grams (1/3 cup) tea leaves

**Methods:** (a) Clean scallion stems, ginger root and tea leaves separately with water; (b) grind walnuts, scallions and ginger root together into small pieces, put in ceramic pottery with tea, add water to boil with moderate fire for 10 to 15 minutes. Strain liquid into cup, it's ready to serve.



**Function:** Eliminate viruses and get rid of colds; develop sweat and reduce fever. If sleeping with thick blanket after drinking the tea, you could get more sweating, which will help relieve the symptoms, or even completely recover.

[Selected from Su Guanqun (ed.). *Food Therapies for Common Diseases*. Beijing: Ancient Works in Chinese Medicine Publisher. 2005. Translated by Kevin Chen]



[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.



[Well Connected]

## Well Connected: Becoming Whole Through the Cultivation of Connection

Elizabeth Mackenzie, PhD

This column is devoted to the concept of “connection” as it pertains to achieving and maintaining wholeness. What happens to us as individuals when we connect heart and mind, body and spirit? What happens to societies when individuals feel connected to one another in cohesive communities? What happens to entire cultures when there is sense of connection with all humanity? Although there is enormous value in freedom and independence, total alienation from self, society, and spirit inevitably leads to dysfunction.

Years ago, when I was still in graduate school, I became interested in the question, “what makes a society healthy?” I was already convinced of the link between mind and body, but it seemed to me that we also needed to explore the health implications of both the social context and the natural environment. My academic mentor, David J. Hufford, suggested that I explore the role of small-scale systems and the closeness they engender in the creation of health.

I began to study the differences between mainstream society and intentional communities of various kinds, and was struck at once by the sense of alienation that characterizes so much of contemporary life compared with the feeling of integration that one finds in smaller communities, particularly those with a close connection to the natural world.



Then I stumbled upon the theologian Martin Buber’s book *I and Thou*, in which he speaks of “three spheres of relation” that correspond to the individual’s relationship with nature, spirit, and society. “Eureka,” I thought, “that’s it.” Healthy people have close connections with nature, with the spiritual, and with others. Healthy societies nurture those connections, while unhealthy societies are characterized by rupture in these areas. Think about it. People alienated from nature. Communities fragmented. The sense of a living spirituality – immanent spirit – ruptured. These kinds of disconnections are at the heart of the chronic and pervasive psychological stress that takes such a large toll on our health, both as individuals and as a society.

In Bali, the Hindus express a similar concept, *tri hita krana* thus: “There are three ways to happiness and prosperity: harmony between individuals, harmony between the individual and the environment, and harmony between the individual and the Gods” (Skolnick 2005: 73).

### Holism and the health of populations:

*Material progress alone is not sufficient to achieve an ideal society. Even in countries where great external progress has been made, mental problems have increased, causing additional hardships. No amount of legislation or coercion can accomplish the well-being of society, for this depends upon the internal attitude of the people within it.*

-His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in *My Tibet* (Berkeley Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

When we are alienated from nature, from community and from spirit, we suffer. A society characterized by fragmentation in these areas cannot be a healthy society, despite great wealth, advanced technology, and scientific progress. Without authentic connection to the social environment (people), the sensate environment (nature), and the spiritual environment (soul), individuals fall into personal dysfunction which leads to societal disease. At the core of so many of our most pressing public health problems we can find rupture and alienation, the rending of the threads that make up the tapestry of life.

These three “spheres of communication,” as Martin Buber called them, can also be imagined visually with reference to the Vedic concept of chakras. Our connection to other people (the social environment) is symbolized by the heart chakra, our relationship to nature (the sensate environment) is symbolized by the root chakra, and our link spirit (the spiritual environment) is symbolized by the crown chakra. Using this visual image, we can imagine that a healthy person is energetically open and connected to his or her brothers and sisters (fellow humans), Mother Earth (nature) and Father Sky (spirit).

The health of an entire society is intimately bound with the health of its individual members and groups and vice versa. Societies characterized by individuals who lack connection with nature, with people, and with spirit are unhealthy societies. They are also societies that promote values that tend to cause rupture in these three areas, causing a vicious cycle of increasing fragmentation, disease and injury. Societies characterized by close connections in these three areas exhibit qualities of wholeness, integrity, and health. Creating a healthy society for ourselves and our families ultimately requires each of us to cultivate health within ourselves.

Because both our medical system and our public health system are the brainchildren of a technocratic dominant culture, they exhibit the same tendencies toward rupture, fragmentation and disease that every other cultural form manifests. Medicine is a cultural construct, and conventional biomedicine is as unsustainable as any of the creations of mainstream culture (e.g., architecture, energy systems, economics, etc.). It has relied on dazzling but expensive advances in medical technology to meet the healthcare needs of a materially wealthy but often dysfunctional society. Now, however, some of the most interesting research is taking place where mind meets body. It is no accident that the new medicine arising today is called *integrative* medicine ... an approach centered on the essential wholeness of each person and the cohesive interpenetration of mind, body and spirit. So much of integrative medicine is about reconnecting what had been previously viewed as disconnected: the mind and body, nature and spirit, consciousness and flesh, matter and energy, the individual and the environment, and even practitioner and patient.

These are the connections that will help us to stay and get well. The phrase “well connected” typically describes persons who have friends in high places, powerful allies who can open doors to opportunity. But “well connected” can also refer to the ability to connect with one’s own internal sources of resiliency, to connect with one’s own community, and to connect with all of nature, opening doors to greater health and well-being.

#### Future Topics:

- “Chronic Hearth Failure” - Community fragmentation & social support: “chronic hearth failure” is a most pressing public health problem: the disintegration of families, homes, and communities. It leads to a profound loneliness that eventually morphs into a myriad of dysfunctions and diseases.
- “The Healing Garden” - Horticultural therapy and community gardens: ecopsychology and therapeutic landscapes; green exercise; the healing power of nature.
- “Body Consciousness” - Connection to our own bodies: living with body awareness, body consciousness.
- “Spiritual Support” – Connection to the transcendent as potent as social support in mitigating the stress response and buffering stress.
- “Alienation Breeds Fear” – Why connection to community, nature and/or spirit promotes health and well-being; why fragmentation results in disease and dysfunction.
- “Connecting to Nature = Sustainable Society.”
- Concept of “connection” in yoga and mindfulness; why “connection” heals and “alienation” hurts.



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[The Sense of Touch]

## Ridding Yourself of (and Preventing) “Computer Pains” – Yang Sheng Style

by Beka Owens, LMT



Most of us know the aches and pains of sitting at a computer too long: sore neck, tight back, achy fingers. You have probably heard the advice to get up and walk around every 15-20 minutes to give your body a break. How many of you actually do that? It's hard when you get on a roll, get busy, or simply forget to do it. The results are those pains I mentioned. So then what? There are a few simple self-massages and stretches that can help alleviate those pains you feel.

First, close your eyes and roll your chair away from the computer, or close your laptop. Tip your head down as far as you can – feel that stretch in your upper back? Now, with your head still down, tip your head to the side as far as you can, holding the stretch for 10-20 seconds. Roll your head around and repeat with the other side, and hold for 10-20 seconds. For extra resistance and a little more stretch, pull gently with your hand on your head. Don't forget to breathe while you do this. For extra tight necks, rub your fingers, from bottom to top, along your neck while your head is tilted to the side. This will help to loosen the muscles even more.

Next, press your fingers into the fleshy area just below your skull, where your neck connects to your head, in the back. Rub around in small circles, starting at the top and working your way down the neck. Make sure you get the sides of your neck, too.

Sit up as straight as you can, drop your shoulders and push them back. Reach across the front of your body and grab the top of your shoulder (your upper trapezius muscles) and squeeze. Move your hand over to squeeze your deltoids (upper part of your should), then move down your arm and hand with a squeezing motion. Repeat on the other side.

Take your hands and interlace the fingers. Turn your palms outward and stretch away from you. Raise your arms up, with the goal of getting them above your head. Breathe out as you raise your arms. Hold for 20 seconds (remembering to breathe), and then open your arms outward and stretch as far as you can, all the way out through your fingertips. While keeping your arms straight, pull your arms back until you feel a good stretch in your biceps. Drop your arms slowly to your sides.

With your eyes closed, sit up as tall and straight as you can again. Push your shoulders back and down as far as they will go. Remember how this position feels and try to sit like this as often as you can and as long as you can throughout the day. Open your eyes slowly, take a deep breath and walk around for a few minutes to stretch your legs. Doing these simple stretches and massages will help prevent long term problems, especially if you can do them several times during the day.



**[Rebekah F. Owens LMT, NCTMB** - has been a massage therapist since 2004. In her practice, she integrates traditional massage healing techniques with a relaxing atmosphere to create a holistic and effective style sure to help almost any client. She works with all age groups and is a Certified Infant Massage Instructor. Ms. Owens works full-time as a coordinator for the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Center for Integrative Medicine, and is a part-time massage therapist in Severna Park, MD. Ms. Owens has a Bachelor's degree in Allied Health from Towson University, and is pursuing a master's degree in Applied Sociology at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.]

[A Comedy Moment]

Good humor is a philosophic state of mind; it seems to say to the Nature that we take her no more seriously than she takes us. – Please share your good ones with us.



### Spiritual Life

The 'Spiritual' 'Life' Is Not 'About' Words ... ..  
Though Without the "Verbum," Without "Brahma Vach," It Would Not 'Be.'

The 'Spiritual' 'Life' Is Not 'About' Books ... ..  
Though Without the "Book of Dzyan," It Would Not 'Be.'

The 'Spiritual' 'Life' Is Not 'About' Any 'Thing' At ALL ...  
... Though Without 'Beings' and 'Things' It Would Not ('Have to') 'Be.'

### Prayer

A man prayed: "O God, let me hear you."  
The thunder roared; but he didn't hear.

"O God, let me see you."  
A rose blossomed right in front of him. But he didn't see.

"O God, let me feel you."  
And he brushed away a butterfly that landed on his hand.

### SELECTED BUMPER STICKERS

Slow down, pay attention, question everything, start now

Only those who know when enough is enough, know when they have enough.

Don't mess with my Chi.

All generalizations are false, including this one.

No matter where you go, you're there.

Snowmen fall from heaven unassembled.

Every time I find the meaning of life, they change it.

The important thing is to question everything.

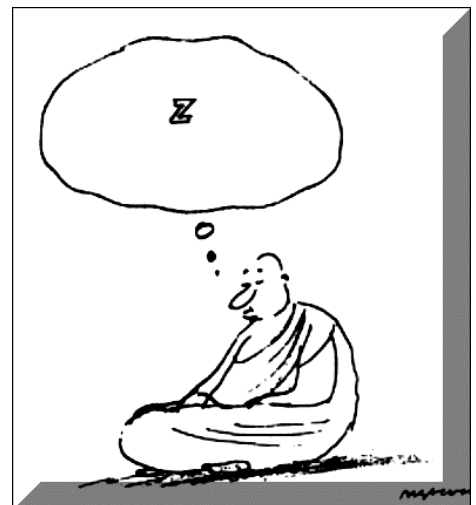
Things are not as they seem, nor are they otherwise.

I'm immortal... So far.

If reality wants to get in touch, it knows where I am.

If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.

### A Meditation No-No



A Joke a Day Keeps the Doctor Away

Studies have found that laughter releases “bad and distressful” emotions that cause harmful chemical effects on the body. They found that laughter activates the T cells, B cells, immunoglobulins, and NK cells; it helps to fight viruses, and regulate cell growth. This could be very important in the research for cancer since it also fights against tumorous cells.....

Read more at: <http://www.ayurvedahc.com/articlelive/articles/176/1/A-Joke-A-Day-Keeps-the-Doctor-Away>





[Food as Medicine]

## Seasonal Harmony

By Ellasara Kling

For most of us it is still Winter and we have all the snow, cold, and perhaps excessive rains that come with it. Generally, we consider Winter as a bleak, darkened time during which the Universe stores its energy and causes things (except modern humans and our unique lifestyles) to retire, rest, hibernate, or otherwise lie dormant until the earth has slanted sufficiently towards the sun to warm the world and cause life to regenerate and bring us that miraculous First Day of Spring. However, during this fallow time we find that most cultures celebrate various rites of renewal and light, many on the Winter Solstice and others somewhat before or shortly afterwards, in acknowledgment that within Yin, there is still Yang, the inherent understanding of the circularity and interconnectedness of Life is Universal.



During Winter, when it appears that little is happening in nature, nature is actually quite busy gathering its resources to display its renewal in a brilliant array. Asleep? Resting? Perhaps. But also gathering, storing and preparing. During the Winter months, the seeds of Spring are preparing for their birth. This time of rest is part of the developmental cycle and it requires energy to accomplish its purpose. Overlaying a year of seasonal changes onto a 24 hour period, (our nighttime is Winter) is a time of rest, rejuvenation, and storage so that the morning (Spring) can be fresh and filled with new life.

Make every day a healthy year starting with this season, this moment.

### RECIPES

#### Walnut, Figs and Tangerine Dessert

##### Ingredients

6-10 figs depending on size  
 3-4 TB honey  
 1 tsp cinnamon  
 1 cup walnut halves  
 3 tangerines – seeded

Soak the figs (if dried) in about 1 cup of hot water until soft (reserve ½ cup of water that is not absorbed) In a saucepan mix the honey, cinnamon and ¼ cup of “fig water.” Heat over medium heat and then add the walnuts thoroughly, coating them in the syrup. Heat, stirring occasionally until all of the syrup is absorbed. The walnuts will have a dark reddish color and since they are hot, they will be tacky. Quarter the figs and place them in a pyrex pie or small baking dish. Pour the remaining fig water over the figs and bake till slightly roasted. On a serving dish pleasantly arrange the sections of the tangerines, fig quarters with the honeyed walnuts. I like to put the walnuts in the center of the plate and lay the figs and tangerine sections over them. Sometimes, I also bake the

tangerine sections with the figs. Play around with this and find the variations that suit you.

### Wood Ear Mushrooms with Tomato

**¼ cup dried wood ear mushroom** (soak in hot water for a few minutes and when re-hydrated, slice into ¼” ribbons)

**1 tomato** cut in 8 wedges

¼ cup oil

mince **1/2 clove garlic, 3 green onions** (whites only), **1” ginger,**

**4-5 dried small red hot peppers**

**salt** to taste

**1 TB sugar**

**1 tsp. black vinegar** (balsamic vinegar may be used)

Heat a large heavy skillet or wok, add and heat the oil, then add the mushrooms. After a few minutes add the garlic, green onion, ginger, hot peppers, sugar, and salt individually tossing them in with each addition. Then add the tomatoes and cook until they have begun to sweat. Remove from the heat and serve. The vinegar may be sprinkled over the dish right before serving. It adds just a touch of “zest.”

### Salty Soy Soup

#### Ingredients

Plain, Unsweetened Organic Soybean Milk

Dried Shrimp – the little white ones

Szechuan pickled mustard greens (optional)

Rice Vinegar

Chili oil (optional)

Soy sauce

Sesame Oil (optional)

Sea Salt

#### Directions

Bring the soybean milk to a boil, add the shrimp and simmer for one minute; then pour over a bowl containing all the other ingredients. As for quantities, it’s intuitive and somewhat personal to your own taste. This is a wonderful, light winter soup that you easily lends itself to innovation.

### Easy Basic Black Bean Sauce

4 TB light oil, grapeseed or walnut are good for this

2 large cloves garlic, crushed

6 spring onions, chopped – whites only

2 TB finely chopped fresh ginger\*\* □ 1 TB cornstarch, □ 16 oz fermented black beans\* □ 3 TB sugar □ 3 TB soy sauce □ ¼ cup vinegar – balsamic adds a mellow flavor, □ 3 TB rice wine or dry sherry

\* If fermented black beans are not available, other cooked black beans (or turtle beans) may be substituted. Drain them well. Add 1 tsp each extra salt and vinegar

Heat oil in a wok or heavy skillet, add the garlic, ginger, and the chopped scallions and sauté for two minutes over medium heat. Rinse black beans in a strainer under running water, drain them well and mash them lightly – just so the skins break. Blend cornstarch and sugar with the beans. Turn into the wok or skillet and mix in with the ginger, garlic and scallions. Add soy sauce, vinegar, stock & wine and cook until it begins to thicken.

*This is a terrific simple item to keep in your refrigerator to use as an instant sauce on your veggies, shrimp, scallops, or other.*

### Seasonal Self massage: Increasing Energy

Known as “Kidney 1” or Yongquan (Bubbling Well), this point is located on the sole of the feet, in line with the web between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> toes about 1/3 down toward the heel where there is a depression. Massaging this point with your thumb can assist in increasing your Qi and can feel very calming at the same time. Massaging this point (or using moxibustion) can also aid in sleep.

#### Teas

***Astragalus (a/k/a Yellow Vetch) ginger and red date tea*** Time for an immune boost? Astragalus, is well-known in many cultures for its immune augmenting abilities. Enhanced by the addition of Ginger and Red Dates, it is not only a strengthening tea, it also tastes great — naturally sweet with a ginger zing!

Astragalus (Sweet Yellow Vetch) is a root that is usually sold in packages of root slices.

**3-4 slices Astragalus, 2 TB minced Ginger, 6-10 red dates (depending on size) and 3 quarts of water.** Put the Astragalus in cold water, bring to a boil and simmer for about 30-45 minutes. Tea will reduce down to about 1 quart. Then add the ginger and red dates. Cover and simmer for about 20 more minutes. Drink hot. Usual recommendations are 2-4 cups a day, but follow your own feeling.

#### Health Topic: Sleep

Every day we spend some time in sleep, but are we renewed by the sleep we are receiving? Most, if not all of us have had the experience of being so tired that we could not get a restful sleep, indicating that even sleeping well takes energy. Awakening refreshed from a good night’s sleep amplifies our sense of well-being. It is during sleep that our bodies have the opportunity to access our vital energy to recharge and rebuild without the interference of other “distractions.” This important life activity is not one we generally take into account when we think about cultivating our energy. We usually consider cultivating energy so that we can have access to and reserves of energy for our waking hours and do not put sleeping into the equation. However, it takes energy to sleep. Consider the cycle of the “meridian clock” during the hours that most people sleep: 9 p.m. -11 p.m. Triple Warmer; 11p.m. – 1 a.m. Gallbladder; 1 a.m. – 3 a.m. Liver; 3 a.m. -5 a.m. Lungs; and 5 a.m. – 7 a.m. Large Intestine. The energy of each system “changes over” in these two-hour cycles. If there is a particular time that you find yourself always awakening, for example, TCM theory says that it is possible that you do not have enough energy in that system to make that change or to continue through the entire cycle. It is also, according to TCM theory, a window into an imbalance in the organ system that is prominent at that time. (If you are reading this article and have the symptom of insomnia, I would suggest seeing a practitioner of Chinese medicine.)

Our practice is part of developing restful sleep. Consistently practicing whatever system we are using (qigong, taiji, meditation, long walks, yoga, or whatever other practice you have that brings a sense of harmony and balance and develops your energy) will contribute to regular nights of good sleep. Other factors that can help create great sleep are: going to bed early – 9-10 p.m., for example. Eating a lighter last meal of the day a little earlier to make a 9-10 p.m. bedtime more possible. Eating more for the season you are in and/or to support your weakened system. Not overindulging in stimulants such as coffee or alcohol. Handling stress. Using some self-massage perhaps as described above.

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



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



## [Book Reviews]

***The 12 Chinese Animals***

by Master Zhongxian Wu

Singing Dragon, 2010

Harcover, 187 pages, \$18.95

Most people think of Chinese astrology as only being concerned with what animal you are, as found on many Chinese restaurant menus. Of course, as with most of the traditional Chinese arts, there is a lot more to it than this to this ancient art than this.

As in Western astrology, the month, day and hour have significance. This book also tells us how to find our power animals and how to learn from their wisdom. It's one thing to say that you are a Tiger, it's another to actually draw on the power of the Tiger in your everyday life.

As a master of the Yijing, the author also tells us how these animal signs relate to the core hexagrams of this ancient book of divination and guidance.

I liked that not only was information and advice given for each animal—such as personality, health, relationships, career, finance, color and food—but there was also a special meditation for each one, including visualization and hand mudra.

The connection with a specific hexagram from the Yijing was also welcome. This is the first time I have seen this and it brings much deeper and richer meaning to understanding your animal sign and how it affects your life. I am glad that, despite the many challenges of living in this modern age, we are also gifted with such rich material as this at our fingertips!

(Reprinted from *The Empty Vessel*, Winter 2011)

***Managing Stress with Qigong***

by Gordon Faulkner

Singing Dragon, 2011

Softcover, 256 pages, \$24.95

Another book by the good folks at Singing Dragon, who are becoming quite an important source for excellent material on qigong and Chinese medicine. (The fact that they published my book, *Cha Dao*, last year does not unduly influence me. I would support them even if they didn't bring out my own work.)

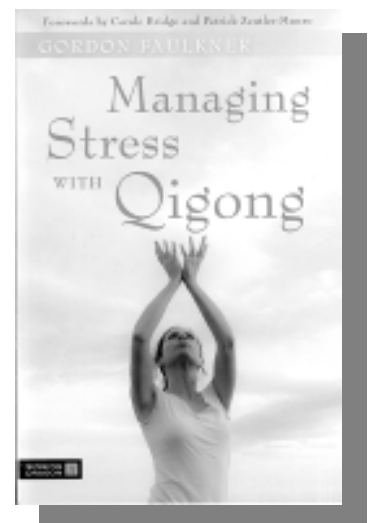
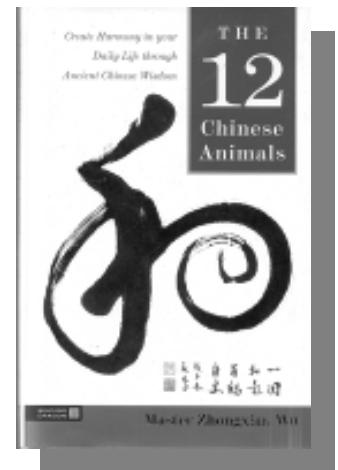
This book is a presentation of a form of Daoyin created in Beijing by professor Zhang Guangde. The author gives a nice concise definition of Daoyin as follows:

Daoyin is classified as part of both traditional medical knowledge and practices pertaining to Yangsheng, nourishing the vital principle or nourishing life. Throughout history there have been many types of Qigong, the name and emphasis varying according to the individual purpose. However, its oldest and most diverse type is Daoyin. Dao, to guide, refers to the fact that physical movements are guided by the focus of the mind which, in turn, stimulates the internal flow of Qi within the body. Yin, to pull, means that with the aid of physical movements, Qi can be pulled throughout the body to the appropriate area.

Daoyin is extremely old, probably the original form of what we today know as qigong. Drawings of people doing various Daoyin practices have been found from as early as the Han dynasty (220 BCE-221 CE) though the practice is probably much older than that.

What Professor Zhang has done is develop "a comprehensive system that follows the usual Daoyin actions of gentle exercise with breath control, the stimulation of key acupoints in the body, self massage and mental development but has now been updated by combining Traditional Chinese Medicine with modern knowledge of anatomy, physiology and medical theory."

The author, a long time student of Professor Zhang, tells that the form of qigong in this book was designed with a



very specific purpose in mind, to deal with chronic stress.

As we all know, there are different kinds of stress, some of it acute and short in duration and some of it chronic, or long lasting. This kind of stress can be insidious and very damaging to our health system, physically as well as mentally/emotionally.

While it is often possible to avoid, acute stress, since most of us don't have to worry about being attacked by tigers or don't have a job as a international spy, chronic stress, while often low key, can have major effects on our sense of well being. And sometimes we cannot avoid this type of stress—whether we are caring for a sick loved one, are sick ourselves, are in a difficult relationship or job situation—what we *can* do is learn ways to deal with the stress in healthy and creative ways. This can make a huge difference in our lives.

The practices in this book are just such a way to give our body and energy system what it needs to be able to deal with any level of stress and remain healthy and whole in the process. I liked that there are sections using seated postures as well as standing. In this way the material can be used for folks in any type of physical condition.

(Reprinted from *The Empty Vessel*, Winter 2011)

### ***Qigong Illustrated***

by Christina J. Barea

Human Kinetics, 2011

Softcover, 143 pages, 18.95

An excellent introduction to the ancient art of qigong, written by an ordained Daoist priest, with a master's degree in medical qigong. She is also a Westerner, which I think helps her do a good job of presenting this material to Western readers. There was a short yet very concise history of qigong practices at the end of the book, dating from the Shang dynasty, which I found very interesting. That and the introductory material were very well put together and very accessible. The use of many photos helps the reader to learn the practices taught here.

Instruction is given on postural alignment, breath and another aspect that is often left out, intention. There follow chapters on Structuring a Qigong Routine, Qigong for Internal Organ Strength (which includes five routines, one for each of the five major organ systems), Qigong for Optimal Health (the author's version of the Badua Jin or Eight Brocades), Qigong for Stress Relief and Qigong for Relaxation.

This book is very well done, with many clear photos to guide the reader/practitioner through the various exercises. Qigong, of course, is more than just physical exercises and this book does a good job of giving the proper background and theory to guide the reader to be able to practice at a very deep level. The author has clearly studied on a very deep level herself and it comes through in her writing and presentation of this ancient and wondrous practice. Qigong Illustrated would make a very good gift for anyone interested in beginning a qigong practice who needs some guidance in an easy-to-follow presentation.

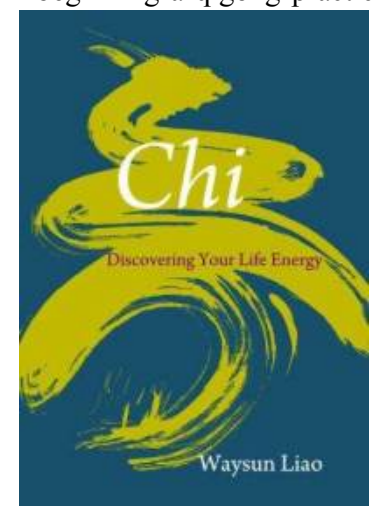
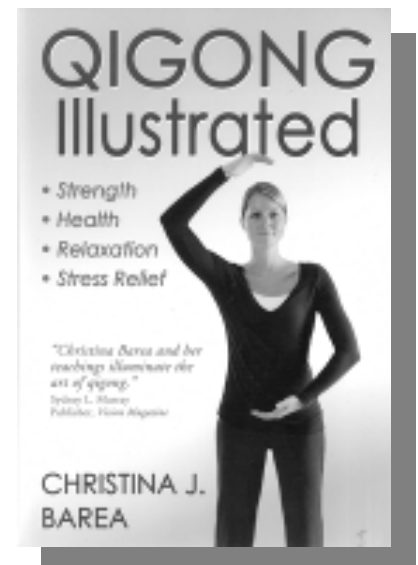
(Reprinted from *The Empty Vessel*, Winter 2011)

### ***Chi - Discovering Your Life Energy.***

Master Waysun Liao.

Shambhala Publications, Inc. 2009

Waysun Liao studied with a Taoist master and brings the wisdom he accumulated into this book. The focus of the book is to help the reader improve his or her awareness of qi and qi flow. The book is geared for students of all levels of qigong and taiji training. However, the principles set forth and the exercises provided in the book are suitable for all energy work modalities. The author discusses three ways of



restoring your awareness and feeling of qi flow. They are practicing motionless meditation( static qigong), moving meditation( taiji) and having your qi “charged up” by a master teacher. The author emphasizes the importance of a good teacher when learning energy techniques. To quote from the book, “chi starts with cultivating chi awareness, moves on to developing chi flow, and final culmination in the practice of chi application”(p.72). “Tao Gong” meditation teaches the practitioner to “push” that feeling and make it flow around your entire body. Master Liao describes with clear directions and photos of himself performing seven single movement meditations which are practiced individually and can flow from one to another.

There are some Daoist concepts in the book, however, the book does not go deeply into the nature of Daoism nor does it relate to Traditional Chinese Medicine concepts such as meridians, acupuncture or acupressure points. The author stresses the importance of learning to strengthen and protect your qi. “It is critical to know how dangerously easy it is for us to overcome our credit limit and fall in deep debt where chi is concerned. Our mind and our life energy are always vulnerable and at risk, primarily because we are seduced by temptations and habits of convenience that pull us too far into the negative and artificial world.”(p.26). These words are very appropriate for the times we live in today. It is by strengthening and protecting your chi that once can attain balance and harmony. According to Liao, “remember that Chi is spelled C-H-I: Center, Harmony and Infinity. (p.26). Nurturing your life energy (chi) is accomplished with proper posture, breathing, mind intent, and moving meditation (taiji) as well as qigong. The book does not delve into meditation exercises or techniques other than a standing qigong meditation. If one is interested in this area, other resource material is advised. In learning any internal energy art, oral transmission by a qualified teacher is best, but may be difficult to find. This book is not about taiji forms or various styles of taiji. If one is looking for that type of instruction, this book may not be for you. However, the strength of the book lies in the inherent concepts that are the basis of all internal energy modalities. Master Liao does have a website where one can purchase several books and taiji learning dvd’s and other educational materials. You may wish to explore his website at [www.taichitaocenter.com](http://www.taichitaocenter.com). In conclusion, I found the text clearly written, well suited for internal energy practitioners and very convenient to bring along in your travels due to its small paperback size.

Reviewed by Sal Casano, Ph.D, R.N ( Certified Taiji/Qigong Instructor)



**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”.

## Empty Vessel Daoist Study Tour 2011



May 10-25

Beijing • Hangzhou  
Wudang Mountains

Join us this spring as we travel to the sacred Daoist mountains of Wudang to study qigong and Daoist internal cultivation. We will drink tea in Hangzhou and study the Dao of Tea, we will eat great food, hear some great music and walk in the footsteps of the ancient masters!

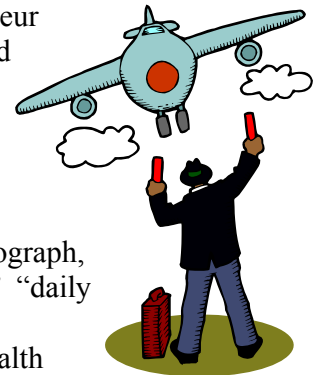
\$4,000 all-inclusive cost.  
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Trip leaders: Solala Towler  
and Richard Leirer



## 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 self-healing, self-empowerment, positive outlook, and their applications in everyday life. It is FREE to those who are interested in the subjects. 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.