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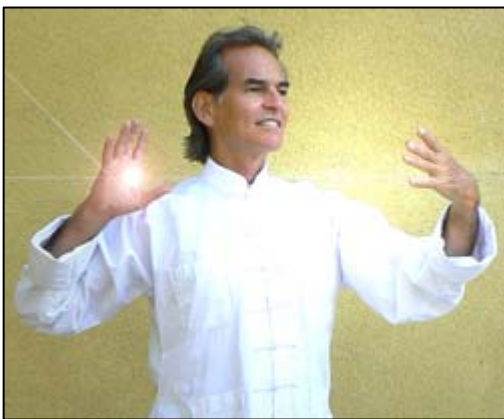
## QIGONG—THE ART OF SELF-HEALING

by Dashi Chu Kocica, AP & Miguel Sarria, Qigong Instructor

An ancient and wonderful art called Qigong (pronounced Chi-Gong), is now being reborn in the USA. Dating back 5,000 years Qigong is a human biological science that studies the flow of Qi, the Life Force, in our energetic body. This bio-electric energy is the foundation of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), including acupuncture, acupressure, Shiatsu, martial arts and many other healing practices. Qigong science pervades all aspects of our physical, mental and emotional health, as well as our connection to the Universe.

### THE ASIAN CONCEPT OF HEALTH

In Asia the concept of health is based on maintaining an abundant supply of Qi that smoothly circulates to all organs and parts of the body. Whereas Western medical science has been derived from the study of disease or pathology, Asian healing arts and longevity practices have always been based on the study of wellness: how to maintain an abundant supply of Qi and keep its flow balanced and free of impediments so that the body can function as a self-healing organism. In ancient China it is said that the doctor was paid so long as one stayed healthy, and when one got sick, the doctor would stop getting paid. Imagine how this would work in our modern healthcare system!



Thousands of years ago, Qigong masters were able to go into a state of meditation and map out the 22 major energetic pathways (meridians) that connect the internal organs with over 600 acupuncture points on the surface of the body. They also developed Qigong forms for daily practice, a series of movements that utilize slow, graceful movements, deep breathing, and a calm mind to activate and circulate Qi within the body for powerful self-healing. Some Qigong practices are also static and rely on deep relaxation and visualizations to move the Qi.

Qi is produced in the human body through the metabolism of food and air (oxygen). In the same way gas is needed for a car to run, Qi is needed to promote the normal function of the organs and body systems. If Qi is deficient or its circulation becomes imbalanced, stagnant or obstructed, the basic bodily functions will be impaired, affecting the circulation of blood, lymph and body fluids, digestion, elimination, hormone production, and so on. Unless the body can maintain and repair itself on a daily basis, symptoms or disease may follow.

### BENEFITS OF PRACTICING QIGONG

Health maintenance is the major benefit of practicing Qigong. Qigong strengthens your immune system and helps to prevent illness. It will improve your energy, vitality, fitness and stamina and relieve joint pain. It improves the quality of your sleep, so you may not need to sleep as many hours. Digestion, elimination, circulation and all bodily functions may be improved. It slows down the aging process while improving memory, concentration and psychic abilities. In China many studies

conducted on students practicing Qigong daily, demonstrate a significant improvement in their intelligence and performance. Qigong also plays a major role the body's ability to recuperate from illness, regardless of whether one chooses to use it as the primary self-healing modality, or an adjunct to conventional treatment.

Since our emotional and mental states are directly linked to the circulation of Qi, Qigong is also highly effective for stress reduction and a balanced emotional state. In Chinese medicine, one of the functions of the liver is "spreading" Qi to the other organs. That is why Liver Qi stagnation is associated with negative emotional states such as anger, depression, stress and irritability, and it can adversely affect digestion, sleep and other functions. One of the most immediate benefits of Qigong is a feeling of calmness and well-being. Once the energy starts flowing smoothly, stress disappears and one experiences a state of inner peace. Many people report that Qigong naturally leads into meditative or spiritual states, and contemplation of existential questions about "who we are" and "why we are here."

### THE QIGONG STATE FOR OPTIMUM HEALING

Through the deep relaxation of body, mind and breath, with the attention turned inwards, one enters into a state of homeostasis, or inner balance, where the body is in its optimum state of healing and repair:

1. Relaxation of body, mind and breath: Patterns of stagnation and blockages in the muscles, joints, organs and channels are released, breath is slow and deep;
2. Body directs Qi: The movements of the form send Qi down particular pathways or meridians and into the organs;
3. Mind directs Qi: The calm and focused mind spontaneously moves Qi to where needed or directs Qi to a target area via visualization.

In this manner Qi circulation is activated and balanced in the meridians, promoting harmonious function of all the organs and body systems, so that the underlying conditions of disease can be corrected.

### HOW IS QIGONG DIFFERENT FROM PHYSICAL EXERCISE?

The beneficial effect of exercise on one's overall health, as well as one's mental and emotional health is well documented. However, what distinguishes Qigong exercise from other forms of therapeutic exercise is the principle of "*the 3 regulations*," the integration of body-mind with the breath. Qigong exercise consists of slow, gentle, range of motion movements, practiced with slow, deep breathing in a state of deep mind-body relaxation. The requirement for practicing Qigong in "*the Qigong state*" is critical if one is to receive all 3 healing aspects: movement (body directing Qi), mental focus (mind directing Qi), and deep-slow breathing (deep oxygenation of the body). Additionally, since all movements are very slow, the practitioner is conserving and building Qi at the same time the Qi is promoting healing.

By contrast, the practice of working out on the *treadmill* while watching TV or talking to a friend, which divides body from the mind, which is standard practice in health clubs, illustrates how western exercise differs from Qigong.

Last, since Qigong exercise is based on the organ-meridian system, exercise forms have been scientifically designed to move Qi along specific meridians, with a specific destination or target area in mind. Hence, a particular form may be practiced to stimulate and revitalize the kidneys; another form may focus on the vertebral column and be beneficial for regenerating the intervertebral discs—there is no blood in the *articular cartilage, only energy*— within the cervical, thoracic and lumbar vertebrae, improving range of motion and increasing blood circulation to the head. In this way, Qigong forms can be selected for overall healing benefits, or for a specific therapeutic effect.

### THE DAILY PRACTICE OF QIGONG

The “*gong*” in Qigong means skill (mastering), the skill that comes from daily practice. Practicing Qigong daily is like pumping a well. In the beginning, you need to pump the handle many times before any water comes out. Then suddenly, just before the water comes, the handle becomes very hard to push down. This is a sign that the water is already being pulled up. With a couple more pumps, the water begins to gush out with such force that you can stop pumping for a while. This is how we can get our Qi flowing abundantly and smoothly, and then our body can create the inner conditions necessary for self-healing.

The practice of Qigong becomes more important as we grow older, since our supply of Qi naturally declines with age. That is why Qigong is revered in China as the ultimate longevity practice.

### GRADUAL HEALING vs SPONTANEOUS HEALING

Gradual healing, or the day by day improvements that one can experience with the daily practice of Qigong exercise, is verified by numerous testimonies as well as double blind studies on the medical applications of Qigong. Using clinical measurement techniques such as thermography, blood pressure, ultrasound, electroencephalogram, electrocardiogram, and laboratory tests of blood and urine, Qigong has been shown to statistically outperform conventional drug treatment in studies on hypertension, stroke and mortality, sex hormone levels, bone density, and cancer, as well as enhance healing results when combined with conventional treatment.<sup>(1)</sup>

The second type of healing, spontaneous healing, describes the sudden, “*miraculous*” remission of a clinical disease or condition, such as a tumor, that cannot be explained scientifically. Modern medical science has no explanation for the numerous case histories that have been documented from Qigong and many other healing modalities ranging from prayer and faith to food healing.

These two types of healing are not necessarily exclusive. For example, gradual healing can lead to complete remission, or gradual healing can precede a spontaneous healing.

In 1991, the Recovery Center near Beijing (the world’s largest Qigong “hospital”) published their study of 7,935 cases, using modern diagnostic tests before and after the 24-day sessions to verify the

healing results of Qigong. The results were impressive: a 95% overall effective healing rate in treating over 180 diseases, including heart disease, hypertension, cancer, and diabetes, all without medicines or special diets, just with plenty of exercise, love and Qi. Fifteen percent of the 95% were reported as completely cured of terminal diseases, verifiable with diagnostic tests.<sup>(2)</sup>

### TAKE A QI SHOWER EVERY DAY

We all have been educated that brushing our teeth every day prevents tooth decay. We all take a shower every day, but do we also take time to cleanse ourselves energetically? Stress has been shown to be the single most detrimental factor in one's overall health. Are you taking time every day to wash away all stress and negativity to restore your body to its optimum healing state? The length of one's daily practice will depend on each person's goals, with 20-30 minutes recommended for daily health maintenance, and more if one faces serious health challenges.

### QIGONG AND INTEGRATIVE HEALTHCARE

Since the early 1970's, China has successfully integrated western medicine with Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and herbology. Patients can choose among hospitals that specialize in Western medicine, or Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), or a combination of the two. Hospital kitchens prepare Chinese herbal decoctions and their self-healing methods are taught to patients in conjunction with their medical treatment.

The future of America's healthcare system is in a state of financial crisis. Surely this could be remedied by shifting the focus to low-cost prevention and public healthcare, with education in these proven methods of self-healing. The daily practice of Qigong can empower you to overcome stress, pain, and illness, and enrich your life by promoting life-long health, inner peace and spiritual growth.

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1. "Medical Applications of Qigong," by Kenneth M Sancier, Ph.D. *Alternative Therapies*, January 1996, Vol. 2, No. 1.
  2. Results were as follows: 38% symptoms almost disappeared or greatly improved, 42% noticeable improvement in eating, sleeping and feeling good, 15% cured with symptoms disappearing and all diagnostic tests normal; 5% no change or worse. From *101 Miracles of Natural Healing* by Luke Chan. 1996: Benefactor Press.