

QI AND BODY AWARENESS

By Har Har Singh Khalsa

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About this Book

The practice of *Qi and Body Awareness* will provide the reader with dozens, if not hundreds of tips and techniques for learning to sense Qi, gather Qi, and move Qi throughout the body. Even more advanced practitioners of Qigong may benefit from this information as well.

Much of this book is based on knowledge passed down from Qigong masters of the East. This knowledge provides the reader with numerous subtleties of Qigong practice, so that the inner language of Qi may be learned.

The premise of *Qi and Body Awareness* is that Qi is first discovered through awareness of the physical body. Using the concept of *Reverse Cultivation*, we identify the Qi through first recognizing our physicality. After recognizing the Qi, we can then recognize and grow the *Qi Body*. By first discovering what we can tangibly grasp in the physical, we can gain awareness of the esoteric or the intangible.

Qi and Body Awareness not only includes Qigong practices, but it also offers in-depth explanation of what is occurring in Qigong movements. These techniques supply clarification on how we can apply our internal awareness in synchronization with Qigong movement for maximum benefit. This book contains numerous illustrations and examples to explain the details needed for a successful Qigong practice.

The information compiled in *Qi and Body Awareness* serves as a valuable tool for reaching the deeper levels of awareness in Qigong practice. The goal of this book is to provide a simple and clear understanding of Qigong, so that the reader may learn to take the mystery out of mastery.

Disclaimer

This book on Qi and Body Awareness contains information that details the author's personal opinions regarding physical and mental health practices. This book is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice from a licensed physician. This book is also not intended to be a substitute for a licensed mental health practitioner. Before beginning any practices outlined in this book, it is recommended that you seek advice from your healthcare provider.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction To Qi & Body Awareness



Awareness of Qi necessitates awareness of the body. Through deep awareness of our body, we can recognize the Qi. The following chapters provide us with knowledge and techniques for heightening body awareness and for learning to sense and move Qi. These capabilities are actually our birthright, though they are rarely claimed and cultivated throughout one's life. Whatever path one may follow, consciously cultivating Qi and body awareness will greatly enhance one's health and well-being.

Understanding Qi

When developing awareness of our body in correlation to Qi, it is good to first have a general understanding of what Qi is and how the qualities of Qi impact our body. From an Eastern point of view, Qi is contained within everything, including our body, so becoming fully aware of Qi includes becoming aware of our body and being.

Cultivation of Qi within the body is common among many Eastern practices which use similar descriptions regarding the nature of Qi. The Taoist tradition, originating from China, typically illustrates Qi as a *life force*, or *cosmic energy* throughout the Universe. In addition to China, other cultures share this understanding of Qi under different names,

such as; *Gi* in Korea, *Ki* in Japan, and *Prana* in India. Many Asian cultures therefore maintain a collective concept of Qi as being an *energy* contained within all and interrelating with everything.

Qi is the major focus of Qigong practices. Qigong simply refers to the practice of cultivating the ability to use Qi. In Qigong practice, gathering and moving Qi is essential for health and well-being. It is a fundamental practice of Qigong to become aware of the various qualities of Qi.

Qi can blend with different elements of nature and take on different qualities, and consequently, have different effects on our body and being. We might consider this blending of Qi to be the intrinsic field of Qi combined with varieties of energy and matter, generating multitudes of Qi characteristics. For example, the electromagnetic energy and mass of the entire Earth blended with Qi creates a cosmic energy field with a specific quality of Qi. The air, sun, moon, celestial bodies, and the entire firmament combined with innate Qi, also produce a specific quality of Qi. Here we have two primary forces which Taoists call *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi*.



Earth Qi (Di Qi) and Heaven Qi (Tien Qi)

In Qigong practice we work with moving and blending *Earth Qi* (*Di Qi*) and *Heaven Qi* (*Tien Qi*). These qualities of Qi may correspond with elements of nature and matter; however, *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi* are not considered entirely synonymous with any scientific definitions of matter or energy. That being said, Qi is a measurable field that contains properties of matter and energy that carry information. From this, we might assume that *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi* contain different qualities of matter, energy, and information. This is why *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi* have different effects on the body and mind, as these two fields of energy carry different information.

Earth Qi (Di Qi)

- *Earth Qi* is drawn upward and gathered from the Earth, water, trees plants, mountains, etc.
- *Earth Qi* is a blending of Qi and the energy field of the Earth. Being that it is more of form and density, it is a *Yin** force.
- *Earth Qi* is typically drawn into the body from the Earth through the feet and legs, the perineum, the skin, and through the breath.
- *Earth Qi* nourishes the *Yin** channels of the body.

Heaven Qi (Tien Qi)

- *Heaven Qi* is drawn downward from celestial bodies, the sun, the moon, stars, space, wind or air, and even lightening.
- *Heaven Qi* is a blending of Qi and the energy field of the firmament.
- *Heaven Qi* is more of formlessness and expansion, making it a *Yang** force.
- *Heaven Qi* is typically drawn into the body through the top of head, the palms and arms, the skin, and through the breath.
- *Heaven Qi* nourishes the *Yang** channels.

***Yin:** *contracting, cooling, feminine, internal, etc.*

***Yang:** *expanding, warming, masculine, external, etc.*



Yin and Yang

Balancing and utilizing the opposite forces of Heaven and Earth is key in Qigong practice. Becoming aware of the Yin and Yang qualities is also a central purpose, as it is related to *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi*. In Qigong, we work with both forces in an effort to be *one force*. If an excessive Yin or an excessive Yang focus occurs in any aspect of life, either extreme will cause imbalance. The saying “moderation is key” was probably born from this concept. This is also why Taoists consider balance of Yin and Yang to be essential on the path of self-awareness, and some consider it to be the purpose of life.

It is important to clarify that neither the Yin nor the Yang force is considered superior or inferior to the other. The combination of Yin and Yang forces and the Qi blended throughout these polarities make up the human being. In fact, everything may be considered to be a unique combination of Yin and Yang forces, with infinite variations of Yin and Yang combinations. In other words, Yin and Yang qualities permeate everything in varied ratios, and Qi blends with these multiple varieties of Yin and Yang qualities. Knowing and understanding this concept clarifies our intention of what quality of forces we are working with during Qigong practice.

Understanding Qi and Body Awareness

If we want to experience Qigong, it becomes important to understand body awareness. Truly experiencing Qigong goes hand-in-hand with body awareness and it leads to self-awareness as well. We might stop to truly investigate what awareness means and how it actually applies to the cultivation of Qi. In terms of learning Qigong, we begin with the internal application of body awareness to become aware of Qi. One may practice numerous Qigong movements and meditations; however, by applying the internal work of concentrated awareness, the results will likely be enhanced.

An excellent approach for developing awareness of Qi is through recognizing it in the here and now. This involves going beyond imagination alone and gaining experiential knowledge of Qi through body awareness. The art of awareness in Qigong requires a practical approach to tangibly sense what appears to be intangible. Through awareness of our physicality, we can begin to sense that which seemed

to be mysterious. Then experiencing the intangible can become practical, rather than just an esoteric concept.

The most basic place to study awareness of Qi begins in the physical body. Becoming aware of the body is the bridge to awareness of Qi. The body represents what we can tangibly grasp. That being said, we are typically unaware of numerous aspects of our body and being. Much is occurring within our body that can profoundly transform us through the application of physical awareness. This is why awareness of our physicality is our initial step in Qigong practice. We therefore begin our training of Qi and body awareness through learning to sense our physical body in depth.

Awareness of the Body

Our initial study of body awareness starts with *interoception* practices. Interoception can be understood as how the brain interprets the internal state of the body. Using this concept, we learn to consciously communicate with our body and sense its subtleties. When we become acutely aware of our physicality, we may then also begin to sense the Qi within the body.

Related to interoception is *proprioception*, which partly refers to sensing the body's physical position. Proprioception includes becoming aware of our body alignment. When the body is physically aligned, Qi flow within the body occurs more naturally. Proper body alignment becomes highly significant since the body is an instrument of Qi circulation. A smooth flow of Qi is facilitated through proper musculoskeletal alignment. A balanced flow of Qi in turn invokes health and body awareness. Even though interoception and proper body alignment increase the flow of Qi, other tools and techniques are still needed for sensing, gathering, and moving Qi throughout the body.

Awareness of Qi

A Qigong tool used for gaining awareness of Qi is to recognize Qi sensations transpiring in the body. Awareness of Qi can be identified through several different physical sensations. This is one method for discovering when we are actually experiencing Qi flow within the body. When we can identify sensations occurring in our body through interoception, we can also recognize the Qi. Then we may recall our

cellular memory patterns in order to invoke Qi flow. Repetition of these bodily perceptions that we discover will also increase our flow of Qi. Through awareness of Qi sensations within the body, we can learn to *catch the feeling of the Qi* at will.

Part of sensing Qi requires that we discover awareness of Qi in our own unique way. It is important not to only imagine, but rather to actually sense the flow of Qi. Imagination alone indicates that we are seeking Qi from the mind only, and not from the mind and body together as one. The mind leads just ahead of the Qi, while we sense its pathway in the body. This way the mind and body work together.

Although concentration and focus are necessary in developing awareness of Qi, it is also important to understand not to push for awareness, or be in pursuit of Qi, which can result in contrary efforts. Awareness of Qi must arise naturally. For example, if we create a perception of how Qi *should* feel in a given area of the body, then we may be coercing the sensation of Qi, as opposed to experiencing how the Qi actually feels there. Also, we may be pursuing a goal-oriented ambition. We may feel that we *must* achieve or accomplish awareness of Qi, instead of actually being aware of it. In this case, we may be attempting to pressure the mind as if it must drag the Qi, instead of simply leading the Qi. The mind guides the Qi, and the Qi follows the mind, without forcing the flow of Qi. The mind basically draws a pathway for the Qi to follow.

Breath Awareness

Breath is another major tool used for sensing and moving Qi throughout the body. It is a primary technique used in Qigong for increasing health and self-awareness. Altering our breath alters the quality of our consciousness, as the breath directly impacts our state of being. It is commonly known that taking deeper breaths can relax us. If we also slow the breath, we additionally alter our mental activity and brainwaves. This allows for deeper concentration so that we can become aware of our body beyond a superficial level. If we can also soften the breath so that it is smooth and thin, we can discover that breath assists us with Qi and body awareness. With slow, relaxed, and softened breath, we can mentally penetrate the consciousness deep into the bodily tissue. The mental intention of the breath interconnected

with the Qi can then travel to where we place our focus. This method of self-awareness can bring about significant cellular healing. Monitoring the breath carefully allows the ability to command the direction of the breath in combination with the Qi. With command of our breathing, we can learn to consciously direct the Qi anywhere throughout the body.

We obviously cannot draw incoming breath into the body outside of the lungs and its related pathways; however, we can mentally direct our breath anywhere. In fact, where we direct the mind and breath within the body, we invoke blood, oxygen, and Qi flow to that physical location. Qi will therefore flow wherever the mind and breath focus in meditative unison. Breath combined with mental intent is thus an essential tool for gathering and moving Qi throughout the body.

Gathering and Moving Qi

Our hands and feet are other tools that we utilize for gathering and moving Qi throughout the body. Often breath and body movement work in combination with our hands and feet to optimize Qigong benefits. Although the body in general is a receptor for Qi, the hands and feet play specific roles for collecting Qi. The hands in Qigong typically interconnect with the Qi field in all directions around us. The hands are multipurpose receptors that can collect and move Qi through the body in numerous ways. They are also tools for clearing stagnant Qi in the body that can help produce an even flow of Qi.

In Qigong, the feet serve to connect us with the Earth and to draw Qi from Earth's field of energy. The feet are basically receptors for *Earth Qi*, as nature has stationed our feet in direct contact with the ground. On the contrary, our head is at the top of our body, and it is designed as a receptor for the energy field of the firmament, which is the *Heaven Qi*. The head draws this quality of Qi down into the body. These two opposite fields of *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi* then blend together, creating variations of Qi within our body and being. This balance of Qi impacts our health and well-being.

From this brief description, we can see that the body acts as a sophisticated receptor for Qi, using the limbs and head as key points for gathering Qi. Developing sensitivity to the field of Qi around us via

these bodily receptors is a major component for learning to draw and gather Qi. Part of learning this ability begins with developing the awareness of the physical sensations of key points, or *energy gates*, located on our hands, feet, and head.

Awareness of Energy Gates and Meridians

When we have gained awareness of the body and Qi, we can further refine our awareness to where we can pinpoint specific *power points* located throughout our body. These *power points* are known as our *energy gates* (key acupressure/acupuncture points) located along meridians or channels throughout the body. At this stage of awareness, we discover that Qi can be specifically directed to energize and activate *energy gates* in the body to produce beneficial impact upon our health and self-awareness.

Energy gates exist in our physical body, and they also correspond to ethereal aspects of our being. To identify these *energy gates*, we might first recognize subtle physical sensations that occur at these points. Thereafter, awareness and breath along with Qi guided toward the *energy gates* can clear blockages, promoting transformation of the body and being.

These *energy gates* are like power stations throughout the body, intersecting at our bodily meridians. If there are blockages in these *energy gates*, then Qi will not flow smoothly along the meridian(s) that correspond to a given *energy gate*.

Unlike *energy gates*, meridians (or channels) are not singular points or areas within the body. Meridians are pathways throughout the body along which Qi flows. These meridian lines also require a clearing of blockages for a healthy flow of Qi to circulate through them. By gaining a deeper awareness of the body, we can become conscious of these pathways or meridians running through us. In Qigong practice, we learn techniques to sense these pathways and to consciously clear blockages from these channels.

Movement Awareness

Movement of Qi is one of the most significant aspects of Qigong practice. Sometimes Qi flow is only slight, or it is moving slowly.

Sometimes Qi flow may be moving intensely in one area of the body and less in another. The ideal is to have a strong and balanced flow of Qi throughout the whole body for health and well-being. Consciously moving the Qi is therefore a means of creating a strong and even flow of Qi. This in turn reverses potential imbalances throughout the body.

Movement of Qi may occur through the mind's intent as well as through physically moving in a Qigong exercise. When we practice movement in Qigong, we are typically combining awareness of mind, breath, and motion in synchronization.

When practicing Qigong, it becomes important to be aware of the mechanics of each movement. Learning how to articulate movement of the limbs and joints while maintaining fluidity will yield the best results.

After understanding the mechanics of Qigong movement, it is also helpful to become aware of the purpose of each exercise. Qigong movements have specific purposes for generating Qi flow in meridians and *energy gates* throughout the body. When we are aware of the objective of a Qigong practice, we can place our mental attention and breath toward the intent of each movement. Through becoming mindfully aware of what we are doing in each motion, we will experience considerable benefit from our practices.

Awareness of Mental Patterns

Awareness of our mental patterns is also a part of Qigong *internal arts* practice. This includes methods for becoming aware of one's frame of mind, which directly impacts body awareness and Qi flow. In Qigong, we consider our mental and emotional state to be part of our body awareness, as they are interrelated. Our mental patterns ingrained in the subconscious mind impact our self-awareness and even our physicality. Many *energetic* blockages within our body and being are the result of unresolved psychological issues or patterns of thinking that we have adopted. Repetitive patterns of negative thinking create blockages that become ingrained in our *energy gates* and meridians.

Removing these blockages can transpire through Qigong practices. However, deeper issues may also require self-examination into the very

depth of such mental patterns to remove *energetic* blockages. We call these patterns of thinking *conditioned mental patterns*, because they are ways of reacting and interpreting reality based on our conditioning.

Deeply investigating destructive mental patterns brings *light* to them. An *energetic* opening to awareness can occur from shining a light upon that which is not illuminated. This in turn helps to resolve *conditioned mental patterns* that cause blockages in our Qi flow and awareness. Therefore, developing awareness of our *conditioned mental patterns* can be a significant aspect of Qigong *internal arts* practice.

Awareness of the Qi Body

Qigong practices begin with cultivating awareness of the body and recognizing Qi as a field of energy flowing through every aspect of ourselves. As we progress, we recognize this field of Qi throughout the body as being a body in itself. In a sense, it is like a *Qi body*, or an energy body. This *Qi body* literally grows like a child, emerging toward maturity. The *Qi body* is more ethereal than the physical body, and as it develops, it creates a bridge to what we call the *Universal Qi Field*. The *Universal Qi Field* is basically the entire field of *Heaven* and *Earth Qi*, which permeates everything. Development of the *Qi body* then serves as a conduit to the *Universal Qi Field*, as it is interconnected with it.

Awareness of the Universal Qi Field

When we begin to understand that our *Qi body* is simply a part of the *Universal Qi Field*, we can perceive that we are not separate from this field, which is pervading everywhere. Typically, we perceive ourselves as just the physical body. In reality, we do not end where our physical body ends, since we are one collective consciousness. The entire *Universal Qi Field* remains interwoven into one fabric that includes everyone and everything. Once we realize that we are the *Qi body* and that the *Qi body* is one with the *Universal Qi Field*, we are able to interconnect with anything at will. Just as we can sense our own internal body, we can also sense form and matter interacting with us outside of our physicality. We can then become aware that there is no distance or separation from anything. Our Qigong practices are designed to interact with the entire field of Qi around and within all

things. Such practices can promote experiential awareness of oneness with the physical universe.

Our introduction briefly touches upon basic steps for developing awareness from a Qigong perspective. In the following chapters, we will discuss practical methods for developing awareness of our body and for recognizing the Qi within and around our being. We will first begin with what we can tangibly grasp. This builds a solid foundation for developing self-awareness. Rather than gaining only intellectual comprehension of awareness, we want to also embody the experience.

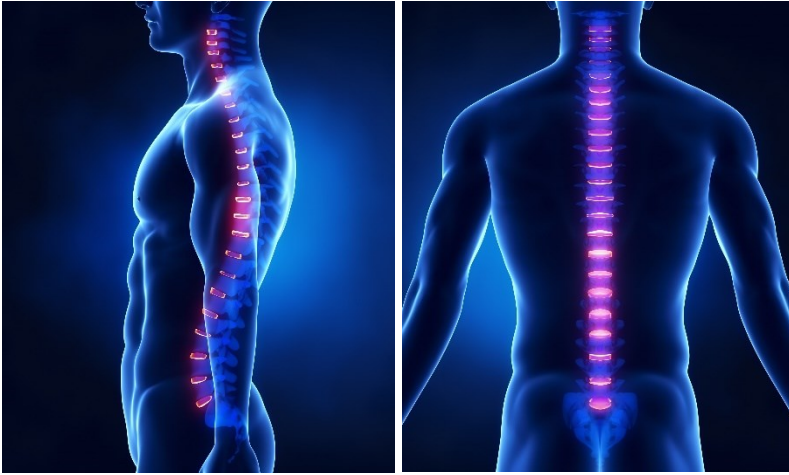
If there is a mountain before us to climb, let us be aware of the very footstep that we are on, instead of thinking only of the mountain ahead of us. Let us begin right where we are at this moment. This is how we commence training in Qi and body awareness, one step at a time, present in the here and now.

- ☯ Qi is a life force blended within all things
- ☯ Qi & body awareness go hand-in-hand
- ☯ First recognize the body to discover the Qi
- ☯ Use Qigong tools to sense and move the Qi

CHAPTER TWO

Body Awareness

The First Adjustment



Qigong practice offers a specific focus on *Neigong*, or internal awareness. The practices of *Neigong* are designed to develop our internal awareness in stages. We start by developing awareness on the gross physical level. Then we progress from there to recognize the Qi flow within our body. Our training with internal awareness begins by becoming acutely aware of our physicality. Intensive concentration into the physical is our doorway to awareness of the ethereal. A grounded focus in physicality allows us to grasp the ethereal awareness of Qi. Like a tree, we want to first establish our roots so the branches can grow. In the same way, we first establish awareness at a *root* level. Related to this analogy for the progression of self-awareness is a Qigong concept called the *Three Adjustments*. We apply the *Three Adjustments* methodology for developing Qi and body awareness by way of adjusting or regulating our physical body, breath, and mind.

The Three Adjustments

In Qigong tradition, it is considered necessary to first adjust our body, breath, and mind before we begin our practices. Many of us are taught to just begin Qigong practice without preparation. However, preparation prior to Qigong practice is considered extremely important in order to gain a deeper level of awareness. This preparation before Qigong practice is called the *Three Adjustments*.

When we regulate our body, breath, and mind before practicing Qigong, we impact our brainwaves more profoundly. Altering our brainwaves through the process of the *Three Adjustments* helps provide us with the capability to go into deeper awareness of our physical body. When our brainwaves are excessively active and external, awareness of our internal self is difficult to perceive. When our brainwaves become slower, we can more easily recognize our internal state of being. Therefore, we use the *Three Adjustments* to regulate our brainwaves prior to initiating Qigong practice. Performing the *Three Adjustments* assists us to move into combinations of brainwaves that bring deeper states of awareness while also remaining alert. When this occurs, we have greater results from our Qigong practice.

Though the *Three Adjustments* are particularly performed as preparation before Qigong practice, for our purposes we are applying this concept as a way of life. Truly learning Qigong means that we incorporate it into our lifestyle as well. We therefore suggest the application of these *Three Adjustments* as a way of being that can be integrated into our day-to-day routines.

In the context of the *Three Adjustments*, we will now discuss how they can be applied throughout our daily life for developing greater body awareness. It is important to remember that the *Three Adjustments* must work concurrently with each other in order for them to truly impact our self-awareness. Although the *Three Adjustments* are interdependent, we will illustrate them individually for the purpose of understanding each element of each adjustment in depth.

The Three Adjustments include:

1. Adjusting the body
2. Adjusting the breath
3. Adjusting the mind (Concentrating the mind)

In this chapter, we will discuss the *First Adjustment* of Qigong, which typically refers to adjusting the posture and consciously relaxing the body. Later we will explore how to relax the body on a deep cellular level. First, we will begin with developing awareness of the basic sense of the body, beyond superficial awareness.

Awareness of our Body

Adjusting our posture and monitoring our body to relax, are the basis of the *First Adjustment*. The *First Adjustment* instructs us to become aware of our physical body and to make adjustments to it so that it deeply relaxes. In order for us to truly relax the physical body, we first need to sense how we are carrying ourselves and where we are holding tension. Many of us may be unaware of tension that we are carrying in our body and posture. We may have carried this level of tension for years without being consciously aware of this stress. Even if we know that tension exists, we may still disregard our bodily messages. Instead of paying close attention to our internal body, we begin our day focusing on the events ahead.

Our first instinct upon arising may draw us toward intensive cerebral activity, or we may simply concern ourselves with the day ahead. If we take a moment to pay attention to what the body reveals in its own language upon awakening, we may realize that we have ignored a great deal of sensory data. Little by little, we become disconnected from the body, as we no longer converse with it. This in turn causes imbalances and blockages which become increasingly buried within the body. Such deep-seated tensions, traumas, or fears stored in the body may take more time to become aware of and release. With regular practice, we may begin to become aware of what we did not realize existed within us. We can then begin to place specific attention to a given place in the body in order to release whatever may be stored there.

Alternatively, we can choose to start our day with an internal focus on our body. Upon awakening in the morning, we can become aware of the entire body and consciously relax it (without falling back to sleep). We can take a moment to go beyond the immediate surface awareness of the body and delve deeper into the depths of physical awareness. At this time, we may allow the body to speak for a moment and reveal any tension or pain that is occurring, without searching for a particular sensation. Basically, we allow the sensations to arise from the body, as opposed to defining and predetermining sensations through the mind. We may not be able to exactly label what is revealed; therefore, we just experience the feeling.

We can start our day by consciously relaxing the body on a deep level. When the body is deeply relaxed, we can reestablish lines of communication with it. When the pathways of dialogue with our body reopen, we spontaneously dispel tension or tightness, and even fatigue. This sensing of the physiological condition of the body is called *interoception*. By using *interoception*, we can affect the functions of the body by placing our mental attention there.

Additionally, where the mind places its intent, Qi will follow there. The Qi follows the lead of the mind, and wherever the Qi is directed in the body, biological action will occur. This in turn brings blood and oxygen to where it is needed in the body. Thus, mental awareness of our physicality stimulates Qi flow, while increasing our health and well-being. We simply must apply our awareness and intent to invoke changes within our body.

Systematic Body Awareness

In addition to becoming aware of generalized physical information as we arise, we can also systematically scan each part of our body. This is done by focusing on one aspect of the body at a time, since a broad spectrum of information received from the entire body may be difficult to process. Therefore, we can perform systematic body awareness.

Perceiving one area of body at a time is one approach for applying systematic body awareness. We can begin this process by placing our awareness on our entire layer of skin. Upon arising, we can become conscious of all aspects of our skin from head to toe. This practice will

also help to develop deeper sensitivity to the Qi field around our body. We can then penetrate our awareness deeper into our body to the point where we become aware of our entire musculature. Going further, we can also begin to sense our internal organs. By feeling the heartbeat, we can easily sense our physical heart. With more practice, we can also sense other internal organs throughout the body. Finally, we can delve into the depths of our bones and marrow, sensing our entire skeletal structure. If there is a part of the body needing particular attention, we can spend more time becoming aware of that area. This added time will allow for the release of what is held in a specific region of the body.

Body awareness is the missing link needed for learning to sense the subtleties of the Qi field interwoven throughout our body and being. These simple practices bring a great deal of physical sensitivity, which forms the basis for sensing Qi throughout the entire body.

Awareness of Gravity

At the start of each day, we can further apply body awareness through the use of gravity. This happens through learning to sense the physical pull on our body as it draws toward the Earth. We allow the feeling of gravity as it weighs down toward the feet, while becoming aware of the bottom of the feet sinking toward the Earth. The physical awareness of the Earth's gravitational pull will help us to sense the magnetic field of the Earth and our connection with the Earth. It is a way of becoming aware of *Di Qi* or *Earth Qi*. This is the field of energy that comes in through our feet, drawing upward through the legs, and into the body.

When we become aware of the sense of gravity, we virtually feel the weight of our body drawing toward the earth. This in turn can be *grounding*, in that we become present in the sensation of our body. *Grounding* assists us in awareness of the physical aspect of our being, as opposed to being occupied with only a mental or intellectual focus.

Awareness of Upward Rising

While we experience the Earth's gravity, we can simultaneously feel a rising draw from the top of the head. This balances the sense of sinking into the earth with a rising sensation toward the sky. We can feel as though an imaginary thread is gently suspending the body from the top of the head, drawing the head straight and the chin inward. This subtle

rising of the upper body helps us develop awareness of *Tien Qi* or *Heaven Qi*, which primarily connects with the top of the head. The imaginary thread thus gently and naturally lifts the head, so it connects us with the *Heaven Qi*.

The sensation of an upward pull from the head is a key element of Qigong, and it assists with aligning our spine, neck, and head. With practice, this will also help us to sense the point on top of the head known as the *Bai Hui energy gate*. Sensing the pull from the imaginary thread is one technique for physically locating and sensing the *Bai Hui* point. This in turn will create a greater capacity within us for drawing and gathering *Heaven Qi*.

Awareness of the Central Channel (Zhong Mai)

In relation to the rising and sinking sensations, we may now establish the central pathway between our base and our head. First, we will identify the location of the opposite poles of energy in the body where *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi* enter. We already discussed how *Earth Qi* enters through the feet, yet the base of the physical south pole of our body is actually located at the perineum. *Earth Qi* enters our body from the feet and condenses into the perineum, and it can also enter directly into the perineum itself. At the perineum is an *energy gate* known as the *Hui Yin* point (located between the sex organs and the anus). From the point of *Hui Yin*, we draw a line through the center of the spinal column to the top of the head, ending at the *Bai Hui* point. This is a meridian line called the *Central Channel* or the *Zhong Mai* (roughly pronounced as *Jzhong Maē*) channel. The *Zhong Mai* channel represents a major meridian that impacts our entire body.

By sensing the *Hui Yin*, the most Yin point of our body, and also sensing the most Yang point at the top of head (*Bai Hui*), we activate the pathway of the *Zhong Mai* channel. Bringing the *Zhong Mai* channel into our awareness creates a powerful flow of *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi*. The dual Qi flow through the *Zhong Mai* blends the influx of Yin and Yang energies within our body and being. Becoming aware of the *Zhong Mai* channel is a primary step in developing awareness of Yin and Yang forces flowing through our body.

In our basic Qigong practices, we do not specifically meditate on the entire *Zhong Mai* channel; however, we maintain an awareness of this meridian through *interoception* of our spine and also through Qi flowing along this pathway. Thus, for now, we are primarily focusing on the physical aspect of the *Zhong Mai* channel, including its opposite poles. Later we can learn to guide Qi through this pathway in accordance with specific Qigong practices.

<p>The Zhong Mai Channel Runs through the center of the spinal column Begins from the <i>Hui Yin</i> (perineum) Ends at the <i>Bai Hui</i> (top posterior of the head)</p>

Heaven Qi



Earth Qi

When sensing the physical aspect of the *Zhong Mai* channel, we can also sense the weighted pelvis sinking down to the perineum by way of gravity. Simultaneously, we can feel the imaginary thread subtlety drawing our head and posture upward. This creates opposite physical forces that gently draw our body in two directions. This sensation also helps to align our body posture, which corresponds to the awareness of the spinal column. It is important to note that no tightness or tension should occur from this practice.

Basically, this dual directional pull brings awareness of the spinal column which then activates the *Zhong Mai* channel. Additionally, the dual directional pull stimulates physical awareness of the two

connecting poles (*energy gates*) of this meridian, situated at the perineum and the top of the head.

This dual physical pull within our body actually draws the Yin-Yang forces together in balance. The downward sinking into the perineum and feet pulls the Yang-like *Heaven Qi* down, while the upward rising from our head draws the Yin-like *Earth Qi* up. Therefore, planting the base of our body firmly to the Earth and subtlety raising our head to the Heavens, draws these opposite forces through our channels in the appropriate directions and combinations.

Through the physical sensation of the spine, we can learn to sense the *energetic* force flowing through *Zhong Mai* channel. Invoking the movement of Qi in the *Zhong Mai* channel will clear blockages along this pathway, profoundly impacting our body and being. Practicing awareness of the *Zhong Mai* channel can allow sensitivity to this meridian to be second nature. This can occur through a concerted effort to align our posture correctly and in a natural way. Therefore, proper body alignment plays an important role in impacting the *Zhong Mai* channel.

Body Alignment Awareness

The same body awareness that we apply upon rising in the morning can also be applied during the day. We begin the first stage of sensory awareness development by becoming conscious of what is occurring in our body from morning to night.

During the entire day, it is also important to become aware of our body alignment, as it is integrally related with Qi flow. Misalignment of the body causes blockages and tension to occur. When the body is properly aligned, the muscles do not struggle to compensate for imbalances. Also, if the skeletal system is properly aligned, the joints will be less strained. This will allow Qi to easily flow through the connective tissue.

On a daily basis, we can apply awareness of how we carry our body by being conscious of our posture. If we think of our body as a generator of energy, then an unbroken or unhindered conduit is required for a current of energy to travel through it. Using this concept, we want to align our body so that we may maximize the flow of energy. A

conscious intent each day combined with repeated readjustments to our body are required to train ourselves to carry our body in a straight, balanced, and relaxed manner.

During Qigong practice, we perform the *First Adjustment*, which includes aligning the body. Adjusting the posture may also require repeated efforts throughout the day to create a new physical pattern. This is especially true if we have formed muscular habits over the years that caused misalignment to our posture and limbs. Application of body alignment techniques may have immediate effects, as the body may suddenly gain a natural flow of Qi that had been stifled. At the very least, proper body alignment will likely invoke positive changes. We have thus provided techniques for aligning the body according to Qigong methodology. The following is a description of body alignment concepts, starting at the feet and going up to the head.

Aligning the Feet

In Qigong practice, our feet are classically placed in a parallel position. The feet are the base of our structure, comparable to the foundation stones of a building. When the stones are stacked in alignment, they are equilaterally balanced without excessive stress upon one stone or another. Then the support of the stone structure is solid. When our tailbone is tucked in, the hips align with the legs down to the feet, provided that the feet are parallel. If the feet angle inward or outward, then when we bend our knees, a distortion in the joints occurs, because the knee does not trace over the foot. Thus, when we align ourselves from hip to toe, the feet are kept parallel. This method prevents Qi blockages in the feet and legs, which maximizes Qi flow. The habit of placing our feet parallel can also be applied throughout the day, outside of Qigong practice.

Once our feet are positioned properly, we can then interconnect with *Earth Qi* more easily. In our general stance, we can train ourselves to gently shift our weight slightly toward the balls of our feet, yet with the heels firmly on the ground. Shifting weight to the balls of the feet activates the *Yongquan* or *Bubbling Springs energy gate*. This is the point on both feet where *Earth Qi* primarily enters. The *Bubbling Springs* point on the ball of the foot is the beginning of the kidney meridian related to health and vitality. *Earth Qi* flowing in through the

Bubbling Springs point tonifies the kidneys and is vital for connecting with Earth, or *rooting*.

After we have the alignment of our feet, the toes also press downward to grip the Earth for deeper *rooting*. Gripping with the toes may require a retraining of the muscles of the feet. This is a physical practice that we can develop which is comparable to how many animals *root* their feet into the Earth.

Aligning the Knees

It is also important to remember that when we bend our knees, they should align over the toes. This is so that excessive stress is not placed upon them. If the knees veer left or right in relation to the foot, strain on the tendons or ligaments occurs. When we set our feet parallel, it becomes important for the knees to properly align with the feet to avoid injury. As with other limbs and joints, we also avoid fully locking the knees while standing or walking. Locking the limbs excessively can block Qi flow. It is good to practice keeping a slight bend in the knees while standing so that they remain loose, and energy can flow through them.

Pelvic Alignment

The pelvis is a powerful conduit for Qi flow, as it is the bridge of the upper and lower half of the body. *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi* must therefore flow up and down through this gateway without blockages. Proper pelvic alignment is central to health and well-being and it is essential for correct posture. If the knees are to trace over the toes with parallel feet, the pelvis must also be set in the proper position. The pelvis is like the keystone of a structure, with the legs and feet aligned uniformly to support it. The pelvis must rest upon the support of the legs and feet evenly. When the pelvis is properly aligned, we can stand more naturally with less stress occurring in the muscles and joints.

For proper pelvic alignment to occur, it becomes extremely important for the hips to remain tilted or tucked forward so that the placement of the legs, feet, and joints correspond appropriately. To align the pelvis in accordance with Qigong technology, we tilt it forward so that the tailbone points downward (Note: The pelvis is not overly thrust forward). When this occurs, the thighs shift forward, firmly supporting the pelvis. The pelvis and body weight are then distributed solidly onto

both legs, allowing the feet to deeply *root*. When the hips are properly aligned forward with the tailbone pointed down, the weight automatically shifts forward to the balls of the feet and toes, activating the *Bubbling Springs* points. This assists in helping the spinal column to align as well. Proper alignment of the hips in turn impacts the *Zhong Mai* channel, stimulating Qi flow throughout the body.



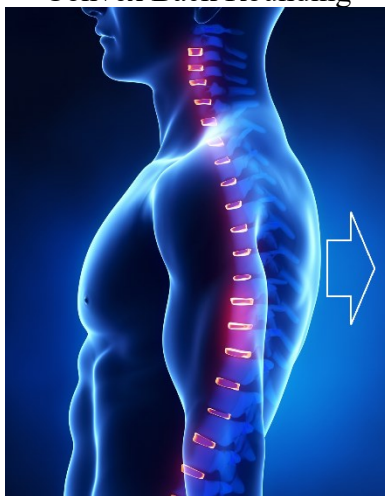
When we bring our feet, legs, and pelvis into alignment, the lower half of our body becomes like one unit. We can then consider that these limbs and joints act as one multilateral component of the body. By developing the habit of maintaining proper alignment from our feet to our hips, we can create an unbroken conduit of Qi flow throughout the lower half of our body.

Aligning the Chest, Abdomen, Back, & Arms

Regarding alignment of the chest, we only create a gentle lifting of the trunk to avoid unnecessary muscular stress on our back. Some of us may apply a rigid posture to our stance, where we protrude our chest upward and outward. However, with this stance, a forward flexing of the spine may occur, which is not the natural position of the back. Also, this type of posture causes tightening in the body which blocks Qi flow and imbalances the torso from properly resting on the positioned hips and legs.

Alternatively, we may rather adopt a slight rounding of the upper back. The chest may still gently lift, without fully thrusting outward. We only draw the chest up enough so that the diaphragm opens, while still maintaining a rounding of the back. This convex position of the back appropriately counters our weight if the hips are forward and the weight is on the balls of our feet.

Convex Back Rounding



This *rounding* of the back in turn causes the shoulders to move slightly forward, which shifts the arms as well. From this position, the arms can gently *bow* outward. This outward bow of the arms situates them so that they are not compressed against the sides of the armpits where many lymph glands exist. Allowing space between the armpits can permit drainage of the lymph glands to occur. When the arms bow outward, it also means that the elbows remain slightly bent. This prevents excessive locking of the elbow joints, which otherwise could block Qi flow. With relaxed arms and loose elbows, we allow for increased Qi flow through the numerous meridians of the arms.

Next, the abdomen is to draw inward. This naturally occurs through rounding the lower back in the same manner as described for the upper back. Also, for this to occur, the hips must be shifted forward with a light sinking of the lower torso and bending at the knees, as previously narrated. Therefore, we are not sucking in our abdomen; rather, we are collapsing the abdomen inward through the adjustment of our posture. With this outward bow of the lower back, it is important to note that our entire posture remains erect. In other words, we do not bend our head forward or collapse our diaphragm to accomplish this. When drawing the abdomen in, ensure that no tension or tightness occurs from this position. The rounding of the lower back and collapsing of the abdomen is the final adjustment to align the body from feet to torso.

When this is performed, we stack the body precisely so that each portion of the body counterbalances the other.

When the proper application of this posture is attained, it is actually comfortable, and it can be easily sustained. From a Qigong perspective, this is the body's most natural and relaxed position, even though we may have deviated from this over our lifetime. This is because the body will rest with minimal tension when there is balanced musculoskeletal alignment. Through proper alignment, the body then works as one interconnected unit.

In Qigong, the *Five Bows* concept is used to attain this balanced and relaxed posture. The *Five Bows* refers to the outward bow of our entire back and the slight bend in the four limbs, creating five bodily bows. The bow in the limbs is the minor bend in both arms and knees. In Qigong stance, the legs and arms are generally never locked. For that matter, neither is the entire posture rigidly locked. As specified, continuous locking of the body's limbs and joints may cause blockages in the flow of Qi. Keeping the joints and limbs open and loose while aligned, is a most beneficial posture to maintain in Qigong and life in general.

Aligning the Shoulders, Neck, & Head

In coordination with aligning the torso, we also check to see that our shoulders are not tightly held. If so, we can consciously allow them to drop and be loosened. A great deal of emotional issues and beliefs can be held in our shoulders. Sometimes people may be bracing their shoulders upward as if preparing for a difficulty of some sort. "Carrying the weight of the world" can translate as physically holding the tension or stress in our shoulders. Our shoulders must be loose and relaxed so that no blockages occur. Qi flow from the shoulders branches into the arms and neck, affecting multiple pathways. This is why relaxing the shoulders can invoke so many changes in us. Tensing the shoulders is comparable to tightening a water hose. When the hose is crimped, the flow of water will be restricted. In the same way, where tightness is occurring in general, Qi flow is restricted. Therefore, we drop the shoulders and allow them to relax downward.

Next, we move upward to align the neck and head. As discussed, alignment of the neck and head require a conscious sensation of an imaginary thread lightly pulling the head up while straightening the neck. The imaginary thread is set slightly back from the center of the top of the head to align with the tops of the ears. This causes the chin to draw in slightly, allowing the neck to gently align as well. Otherwise, the chin and neck may tend to shift forward. We may press the point on the upper lip toward the gum line as a method for lightly tucking in the chin and neck into alignment. This is a gentle pressure applied to the upper lip that we use to identify misalignment. We must ensure that we are not creating any tension in the neck or jaw with this light push. There is a fine line between aligning ourselves properly and creating unwanted tension. The key is to align ourselves in a relaxed manner.

Another factor to consider is that many of us allow our head to tilt to either side or to hang forward. If we consider the flow of Qi to maximize through a straightened spine, then it also becomes important for the neck and head to align symmetrically with the body. Keeping the head straight impacts the Qi flow along the *Zhong Mai* channel, as it represents the end point of this meridian.

Our face also has meridians and significant amounts of energy passing through it. Facial tension will block Qi flow to its meridian points. Keeping our face relaxed is important because it affects our body and mind. When the face is relaxed, a natural smile will occur without effort. Our smile is known to produce physical and emotional health benefits, and it brings about increased physiological and psychological relaxation. We therefore consider smiling and a relaxed face as part of the *First Adjustment*.

Now combining these adjustments, we align our shoulders, neck, face, and head with the rest of our body, together as one unit. With this basic alignment in place, we can maximize Qi flow throughout the entire body.

Body Symmetry

As much as possible when standing or sitting, we can further be aware to generally keep the balance of our weight evenly distributed. Too much weight on one side of the body or another creates a Yin or Yang

imbalance through shifting the muscles and bones in an uneven distribution. We may have a tendency to repeatedly lean our weight to one side of the body or the other while standing or sitting. If there is no compensation for this tendency, it will impact our bodily channels. The meridians in our body will not work as powerfully as an energy generator if our structural alignment lacks symmetry. Regular uneven weight distribution can perpetuate body imbalances that affect our well-being on many levels. Keeping the body in relative symmetry will also reduce muscular stress or tightness. This in turn invokes an unhindered passageway for the Qi to flow from the ground and sky.

Awareness of Bodily Tension

As we investigate awareness of our physical body, we can further become conscious of when tightness is occurring. We can observe precise changes happening in the physical body throughout the day, particularly through examining how our physical body reacts in various situations. If we can sense how our body feels when it is relaxed, we may then apply that sensation toward situations that provoke tension. To do this, we must become aware of our cellular memory while maintaining a relaxed state. Then we also train ourselves to invoke that relaxed state within our body. Through regular practice of consciously relaxing, we can more easily recall the neurological and neuromuscular pathways of relaxation that have previously occurred in our body. By learning these pathways of physical relaxation, we can create increased Qi flow wherever we place our awareness.

Throughout the day, we may experience numerous micro-tensions occurring in our body in reaction to various events. Learning to be conscious of these tensions is an exceptional practice in developing body awareness. With further attention, we can even become aware of more subtle tensions that are transpiring. We can then dive deeper into self-investigation to also become conscious of and in control of our physical reactions.

When a slight tightening occurs in our body, we can learn to release that tension. Once we can identify micro-tensions arising, we can discover how to relax that area of the body before tension accumulates there. Some tensions may have become so ingrained to the point that our body has physically formed itself accordingly. For our sense of protection, we may have learned to build a body armor of tension. This

tension can be most awkward if the body armor does not release when there is no danger or threat, especially in a casual and relaxed setting. Such body armor would mean that we are perpetually holding tension in our body in some way to brace for impact. From continuous tension held in this manner, body armor will form, and it may generally remain. Through allowing the body to speak to us in its language, we can listen and learn why the body is building this armor of tension. Then we can identify where the body has created the tension and ask our body to release it.

As we become more aware of what is occurring in our body and how our body is reacting physically to different environments, we can start to exercise a conscious release of tensions that are held. We can even choose how we want our body to physically react to a given circumstance, so it is not subject to that circumstance. As we become aware of physical patterns of tension that occur, we can learn to identify the exact physical feelings that arise before they become overly encompassing. Then we can learn to control ourselves, not by suppressing tension, but by neutralizing tension before it arises in consciousness and transfers to our body. In a sense, we can re-write a program of how we physically react to a given circumstance. Our new program can overwrite the old patterns of tension and fear, replacing them with a relaxed, warm, and gentle character.

It is vital to be extremely honest with ourselves when consciously alleviating tension. If we overlay a false sense of peace and tranquility onto fear and tension, we may deny the existing stress, pushing it deeper into our body tissue. The idea is not to *become relaxed* but to *be relaxed*. If we want to be relaxed, first we must honestly deal with our current state of mind and mitigate tension without critiquing how relaxed we believe we *should* feel. If how we want to physically feel denies how we actually feel, then we cannot deal with any tension or stress at hand. Therefore, it becomes important to be present with what is occurring in the body. Learning these deeper levels of relaxation and awareness is the way of Qigong.

Auto-Pilot Awareness

By now, we have already provided a great deal to become aware of throughout the body. The question is, how can we be aware of all these

adjustments to our body? The answer is to learn to automatically be aware of all that is happening at once. This means that we do not have to constantly apply a focused intent on our body; rather, we can maintain a general awareness of it through habit.

We can set aside time throughout the day to apply awareness specifically to our body and posture. Over time, awareness of our body can then begin to occur on *autopilot*. A general sense of body awareness can be developed without requiring a constant focus on multiple aspects of ourselves.

For example, when we drive a car, there is a lot to focus on at first. We are watching for cars in front of us and to the side of us. We are checking the rearview mirror and watching the speed limit. We are watching traffic lights and looking for pedestrians and other anomalies. We are aware of the direction we are going, along with the temperature and music playing. Additionally, we may also be carrying on a focused conversation, while doing all these things at once. Basically, it is a lot to be aware of, yet we are effortlessly multitasking *outwardly* while driving. In the same way, we can multi-task *inwardly*, where we maintain awareness of many facets of our body. Practicing focused awareness in periodic intervals helps to develop this *auto-pilot* awareness of our body.

During Qigong practice, we can perform focused body awareness, training ourselves so that it becomes second nature. Eventually, we can perform the many aspects of the *First Adjustment* (adjusting the body) automatically, outside of Qigong practice. Our retrained cellular memory will then spontaneously assist us to alter our physical body. From practicing the *First Adjustment* regularly, we will discover and experience Qi in a greater capacity, while also enhancing health and self-awareness.

These are some basic concepts of the *First Adjustment* practices. As illustrated, these methods can also be applied as a way of life, in addition to applying the *First Adjustment* during Qigong practice. Learning body awareness empowers us to gain control of our physical and mental state, which in turn positively impacts our quality of life.

We will now provide two highly effective Qigong practices that will specifically impact the physical body and Qi flow. These two Qigong techniques will greatly benefit and accelerate our progress of the *First Adjustment*.

Qigong Practice: “Fang Song Meditation”

Our Qigong practice of *Fang Song* roughly translates as *putting to relax*. The *Fang Song* practice may be performed at any time, provided that a relaxed and peaceful environment exists. Its purpose is to consciously relax one segment of the body at a time, starting from the head and going down to the feet. The idea is to go beyond superficial relaxation so that we may sense and change our cellular health through conscious awareness of the body. Conscious relaxation into the deeper layers of our tissue increases Qi flow, invoking health and well-being.

We can add the benefit of sound current to this practice by chanting *Fang Song* as we apply our focus to each part of the body. *Fang Song* not only carries the meaning, but also the sound *frequency* (a specific *energetic* field) of relaxation. The sound current of *Fang Song* can reverberate into the deeper tissues of the body. *Fang Song* is approximately chanted as: *Faonng Sōnnng*. We hold the note about ½ a second when chanting *Fang* and about two seconds when chanting *Song*. This sound, combined with mental focus, will deeply penetrate each area of the body. Placing the intent of putting the body to relax along with this sound, optimizes our awareness and transformation of the physical body.

In preparation for the *Fang Song* meditation, adjust the posture to be relaxed. Sit on a chair, keeping the spine straight and the head erect without any tension. The forehead and brow are relaxed with a natural smile on the face. Keep the shoulders and elbows relaxed and place the hands on the knees. The feet remain flat on the floor. Breathe long, slow, thin, and deep, keeping the breath soft. Next, concentrate on one part of the body at a time, starting from the head and moving down to the feet. Place the intent of deeply relaxing one area of the body at a time, followed by chanting *Fang Song*. Feel the sound penetrating each part of the body that you are focusing on.

Fang Song meditation list:

1. Relax the top of the head; “Faonng Souunnnng”
2. Relax the face; “Faonng Souunnnng”
3. Relax the whole head; “Faonng Souunnnng”
4. Relax the neck; “Faonng Souunnnng”
5. Relax the shoulders; “Faonng Souunnnng”
6. Relax the arms; “Faonng Souunnnng”
7. Relax the elbows; “Faonng Souunnnng”
8. Relax the hands; “Faonng Souunnnng”
9. Relax the chest & back; “Faonng Souunnnng”
10. Relax the waist & abdomen; “Faonng Souunnnng”
11. Relax the buttocks; “Faonng Souunnnng”
12. Relax the thighs; “Faonng Souunnnng”
13. Relax the knees; “Faonng Souunnnng”
14. Relax the lower legs; “Faonng Souunnnng”
15. Relax the ankles; “Faonng Souunnnng”
16. Relax the feet; “Faonng Souunnnng”
17. Relax the whole body; “Faonng Souunnnng”
18. Repeat steps 1-17

After at least two repetitions of the *Fong Song* meditation have been completed, conclude by placing your awareness at the lower abdomen for a few minutes. Keep the mind continually present in the lower abdomen, feeling the sensations occurring there for five to ten minutes. Then perform the *Meditation Closing Form* to finish the practice. Please refer to the *Meditation Closing Form* practices described in chapter seven.

The *Fang Song* chanting may also be performed mentally, or with a recording of the chanting played while meditating. Below is a link to a recording of our *Fang Song* chant: <https://soundcloud.com/har-har-khalsa/fang-song-body-relaxation-chant>

Shaking for Relaxation and Qi Flow

Often, we may require more than our mental intent and will power to invoke physical relaxation and Qi flow throughout the body. The tensions and trauma held in our cells may also require physical stimuli to release what is stored. A Qigong method of shaking the entire body may also be used in combination with mental intent to consciously

remove tightness and to loosen the body tissue and joints, promoting increased Qi flow.

Movement is considered life, while stagnation in the body is the way of decline. Here, *stagnation* refers to a lack of smooth Qi flow. Such stagnation causes many health issues. Using the metaphor of water, we know that fresh, moving water is the healthiest. Even when still, water remains fresh so long as there is at least a mild undercurrent of movement in it. In the same way, moving and shaking the body is a method for removing *stagnation* from within ourselves.

If movement of our tissue and muscles, internal organs, or skeletal structure is lacking, there can be a *stagnation* of Qi. Shaking enlivens the whole body, creating movement of Qi, blood, and oxygen. The joints, muscles, and tendons throughout the body also loosen and relax with shaking. Additionally, internal organs that rarely move within our body are vibrating while shaking. This stimulates activity in those internal organs, affecting Qi flow throughout our vital systems. Shaking the body also strengthens the skeletal structure and spine, while aiding the lymphatic system to clear toxins.

Our Qigong method for shaking the body requires raising the heels slightly off the floor. We begin by oscillating the body while keeping the heels off the ground. We start shaking from our feet and work our way upward to our head. The following information outlines our technique for shaking the whole body to generate radiant health and Qi flow.

Qigong Practice: “Weeping Willow Quivers in the Breeze”

1. Stand with the weight on the balls of the feet. The feet are shoulder width apart with the knees relaxed and bent. Oscillate the feet with the heels rising up and down, without touching the floor.

Note: If necessary, the heels may occasionally touch the floor for rest.

2. Begin vibrating from the feet, working upward. Vibrate the legs, buttocks, pelvic area, and hips. Feel each joint opening, shaking both the bones and tissue.
3. Vibrate upward, along each vertebrae of the spine to the base to the skull. Feel each vertebra opening as it expands with the shaking.
4. Shake out the shoulders, chest, arms, hands, fingers, rib cage, back, and neck, shaking into the bones and tissue.
5. Shake the liver and gall bladder, heart, spleen and pancreas, lungs, small and large intestines, abdominal cavity, prostate & testes (men), ovaries (women), kidneys and adrenals, and other internal organs.
6. Shake the throat, head and face, brain, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.
7. Be sure to cover every area of the body, spending additional time where needed. Continue three to twenty minutes.
8. As you increase your stamina, you may add small jumps off the ground at the end of your practice. You may perform a maximum of 64 jumps in addition to shaking the entire body.

☯ Learn to listen to the language of the body

☯ Tightness in joints and muscles causes blockages

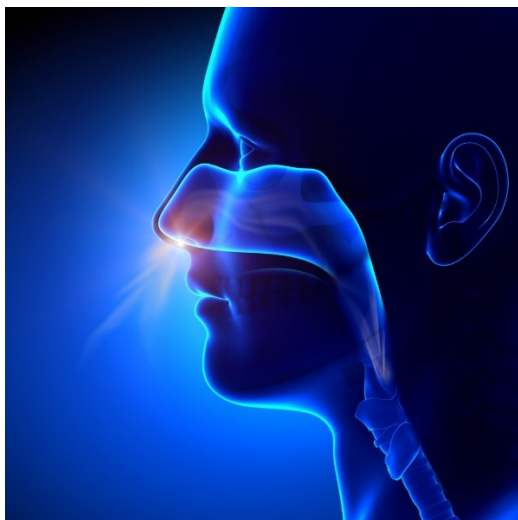
☯ Consciously direct the body to relax

☯ Body alignment & relaxation bring healthy Qi flow

CHAPTER THREE

Breath Regulation

The Second Adjustment



After understanding the *First Adjustment*, which details aspects of body awareness, we continue our studies of the *Second Adjustment*. The *Second Adjustment* in Qigong practice refers to regulating or adjusting the breath. Again, for our purposes, we are applying the *Second Adjustment* not only in Qigong practice, but also in daily life. This means that adjusting our breath can be applied at any time. Once we develop skill in regulating the breath, we can learn to direct Qi to any part of the body at will. Altering our breath will also bring about a more relaxed state, invoking slower brainwaves to occur. Slower brain wavelengths equate to more time between thoughts. When the *Alpha* brain waves (8-13 oscillations per second) are produced, we start to decrease excessive thinking. If *Theta* brainwaves (4-7 oscillations per second) are experienced while we are awake and alert, we can reach even deeper levels of awareness. Regulating our breath is therefore a tool for generating slower brainwaves. Through adjusting the way we breathe, we can positively alter our mind, profoundly impacting our physical body and its flow of Qi.

In the same way that we have learned to regulate the body in the *First Adjustment*, we will now learn what regulating the breath means in the *Second Adjustment*. As we study further, we will also understand that all three adjustments are integrally related. This is because the body, breath, and mind are used in a unified combination to gather and move the Qi. In order to proceed with creating this harmonization of all three adjustments, we must understand how to adjust or regulate our breath.

Regulating the Breath

A major element of sensing and moving Qi involves the application of our mind and breath together. In developing the capacity to sense and move Qi, we need a relatively calm and focused mind. Regulating the breath is essential for a tranquil and concentrated mind. Once we draw our mind into this state through breath regulation, we can then use breath as a tool for guiding Qi throughout the body.

In essence, regulating our breath gives us the ability to manage our thoughts and emotions, which provides us with the capacity to have clear mental intent. This in turn allows us to recognize and guide the Qi, because our mind is not perturbed. If we are disturbed by life events, it becomes more difficult to tune in to our body and to direct the Qi. Regulating our breath can help us to choose how we want to respond to circumstances in life. This is because adjusting our breath gives us the aptitude to govern our mind and body in a conscious manner. Once this occurs, we have command of ourselves, which also translates into command over our body and Qi flow. With this skill, we can powerfully guide the flow of Qi during Qigong practice and throughout our own lives in general.

During Qigong practice, we may specifically concentrate on developing our breath regulation skills so that we may later apply them to everyday life. We can set aside time to focus on specific techniques of breath regulation. Our Qigong breath regulation practices include altering the breath in numerous ways. Combining these various breath regulation methods allows us to modify our mental *frequency* and discover the Qi within our body.

All of us have probably heard of some type of basic breathing techniques to benefit our mind and body. Most of us have been taught

to breathe more deeply to gain self-control. Deeper breaths can help change our consciousness and assist us with being calm; however, this is only one aspect of regulating our breath. If we also refine our breathing to become slow, thin, even, and smooth, as well as deep, major changes in our Qi and body awareness will occur. Through such breath regulation, we will discover that our capacity for altered brainwave activity and Qi flow significantly amplifies. Additionally, our mind will gain a greater ability to focus and direct Qi.

Through our breathing, we automatically draw in Qi, which sustains us, yet regulating our breath alters the way it impacts us. Regulating our breath will influence us physiologically and psychologically. For example, if we regulate our breath to become *slow*, it will act as a tool to relax the body and mind. Slowing the breath will provide the mental ability to identify and eliminate tension or tightness. In terms of the mind, slowing the breath will alleviate fears or anxieties that invoke tension within the body. As we work to slow our breath, the mind will also begin to stop racing, with its numerous thoughts. At this point we can begin to perceive the “mind behind the mind”. The external mind is always “chattering”, and we may not be able to stop this mental dialogue without first slowing the breath. With slower breath, we can perceive a mental layer underneath the external mind that we were not aware of. Then as we make the breath slower for a longer period of time, we may perceive more about our body and mind that we did not know existed. In this relaxed state, we can guide the Qi by employing our breath to travel through the body. Through this calm and focused disposition, we can initiate constructive changes within ourselves.

While practicing regulation of our breath, we might discover challenges in making the breath slow. If we are tight, the breath may become heavier and labored so that it is difficult to slow the breathing down. The need for heavier breathing in general signals that we need to relax internally so that our breath may become *thin* or light. Here we may find that making the breath thin coincides with making the breath slow. Also, we may realize that deep bodily relaxation is interrelated with our breathing, along with our mental state of being. Therefore, application of a slow and thin breath requires our body and mind to be relaxed as well. Then the incoming and outgoing breaths will feel thin and light.

For further benefit, the breath may be regulated to remain *even* so that the intake and outflow of breath are closer to the same length. Our physical body requires a proper balance of intake and elimination throughout our system for health and well-being. In the same way, it is best if our inhale and exhale are closer to an equal length of time for the benefit our body's health. Having relatively even breaths is also necessary for maintaining a balanced consciousness. A balanced consciousness has numerous implications; however, it primarily means that we are not too much of one extreme or another. Perfect balance is expressed in the Yin and Yang symbol. The Yin and Yang balancing is also the theme for health and well-being in our practices. Our practice of having a relatively equal in-breath and an equal out-breath is a component for evenly balancing the Yin and Yang forces within us.

Additionally, if we can regulate our inhale and exhale to be *smooth*, our breathing can be consistent. Smooth breathing refers to regulating the breath so that the same qualities of breathing are maintained with every inhale and exhale. In this way, we constantly maintain a slow, thin, and deep quality of breathing at all times during practice. With smooth breathing, we focus on sustaining identical qualities of breathing on both the inhale and the exhale. This in turn invokes relaxed breathing, which additionally permits us to take long and *deep* breaths. Deep breaths bring increased oxygen while also dispelling more carbon dioxide. This means that we are breathing in deeply to generate an abundance of life force, while also exhaling deeply to clear out stagnant energy.

While performing all these methods of breath practice, we simultaneously regulate our breath to be *silent*. Making the breath silent helps facilitate the other methods of breathing. By the same token, if we are performing the other breath regulations, it becomes easier to make the breath silent. Therefore, silent breathing and the other types of breath control, go hand-in-hand. When we practice all the combinations of breath techniques in unison, the breath becomes silky and smooth like a newborn baby's breathing. Breathing in this way can bring about deeper body awareness and an increased flow of Qi. The *Second Adjustment* is thus a procedure for fine tuning our breathing to create greater benefits in our Qigong practice and in our lives in general. The following six breathing techniques reiterate and identify

the different attributes of regulated breathing that we have touched upon in this chapter.

Six Breathing Techniques

1. Make the Breath “Slow”

Breathing slowly is a hallmark technique for *mindfulness*. Slowing the breath can slow down mental activity so that we can remain extremely present in our practice. Benefits of slow and deep breathing include improved blood oxygenation, tolerance, calmness, and well-being. Remaining tranquil enough to be present is essential for developing Qi and body awareness.

2. Make the Breath “Thin”

Thin breath is not heavy, but rather light. If we are tight, thin breathing is difficult to perform. If we are straining to pull in more air, it will perpetuate heavy breathing. This can be overcome through deep mental relaxation combined with physical relaxation of the muscles associated with breathing. If we can relax, we can breathe slowly, which in turn, will help us to breathe thin and softly.

3. Make the Breath “Even”

When the length of the inhale is equal to (or closer to) the exhale, we properly balance the Yin and Yang, which also balances the body and mind. Imbalanced breath can create too much Yang or too much Yin, depending on which breath exceeds the other. This can also relate to a variety of physical and mental manifestations. For example, if the body has an overabundance of Yang, excessive thinking and over-activity may occur. If the body has an overabundance of Yin, then energy for concentration and motivation may be lacking. Either extreme in excess is unhealthy physically or mentally. Taking relatively *even* lengths of breath will help to impact and balance these opposites. Balancing the Yin and Yang of breath is therefore an integral aspect of Qi and body awareness. *Note: The inhale and exhale will inevitably be unequal. Do not stress to perform exactly equal breaths, or this will cause unnecessary tension, creating the opposite of what we are seeking to achieve.*

4. Make the Breath “Smooth”

Smooth breathing indicates that it is consistent in its tempo and force. We may actually breathe in and out evenly in terms of length, yet the inhale may have pressure and intensity, while the exhale may be soft and thin. This also applies to keeping the breath at a constant uniformity in general. Thus, we maintain the same regulation of breathing at all times during practice, sustaining regularity of speed and intensity.

5. Make the Breath “Deep”

Deep breathing promotes better blood flow and release of toxins from the body. It also releases tension and relaxes and clears the mind. Taking in at least a 70% full inhale and at least a 70% full exhale helps in oxygenating the body, and it brings an *energetic* change to our awareness. Slow and thin breathing will help to promote deep breaths, as each technique enhances the other. Every breathing quality therefore interacts collectively, effectively activating the other breath regulations.

6. Make the Breath “Silent”

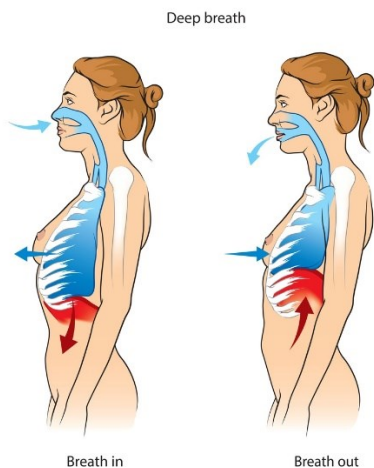
Silent breath will help with softening and thinning the breath. Removing the sound may at first be difficult; however, when the tension is gone, then it is easily done. Practicing silent breathing also perpetuates smooth breathing, and it induces the breath to slow down, as faster breaths are indicative of breath that is not silent. Again, each of these regulations of breath affects the other, as all six techniques are interdependent and interrelated.

Softening the Breath

After we have incorporated these six aspects of breathing, gaining further awareness of the breath can be experienced through sensing the feeling of the breath. We want to refine our sensitivity to the breath itself in order to make our breath soft. Our aim is to make our breath soft like a newborn’s way of breathing, which is effortless and without strain. This in turn impacts our mind and our self-awareness.

Perhaps the best way to understand this is through discovery of the *silky* feeling within the breath along with deeply relaxing our respiratory

system. The easiest way to experience this is to perceive the bodily impact of the breath as it comes in through our nose. We may first become acutely aware of how the breath feels against the nostrils while using the six techniques of breathing. Then we can proceed to sense the breath as it comes in through the throat and down the trachea. Finally, we may sense the breath as it passes through the bronchial tubes, filling and expanding to the base of the lungs. This includes the sensation of the air fully filling up the trachea, throat, and nose as we breathe in deeper. Then as we exhale, we feel the breath leaving in the reverse process, beginning with the lungs, and moving back up and out the nose. This is done slowly and gently so that we can feel the softness in our breath.



Mostly we remain unconscious of the breath *itself* as it enters and exits our body. The breath is therefore taken for granted, and we do not apply consciousness toward our breath. When we consciously sense the breath, we identify with it differently. We can then experience the softness in the breath which in turn gives us the ability to use our breathing as an *energetic* force for health and healing.

Directing Qi with Our Breathing

After regulating and developing sensitivity to our breath, we can use breathing as a tool for directing Qi to wherever we place our mental intent. We can then use the breath to guide Qi into various parts of our body in order to affect those given areas.

In Qigong practice, we are typically directed to breathe into numerous parts of the body. Obviously, breath does not actually travel to any of these body parts outside of the respiratory system. So how can we direct breath into bodily areas where it does not actually enter? The answer is that the intent of the mind combined with the breath is a tool to direct Qi throughout the body. If we place our mind on a given area of the body, and we breathe in as if we are moving the breath to that area, then that region of the body will be impacted. As we breathe in, we are drawing in Qi, and from there the Qi can move anywhere in the body with the mind's intent. At one point, it may seem that the incoming breath is like the Qi itself (yet it is not), so it may feel like we are actually breathing into the body where breath does not actually travel.

When we place our intention and attention to a given part of the bodily, it begins to change. Biofeedback methods have confirmed that we can affect our body with the intent of our mind. When we focus and direct the breath to a given area of the body, we can more effectively impact that area. Using the breath and intention toward a given part of the body will increase blood flow and oxygen there. In Qigong theory, where the Qi travels in the body, blood and oxygen will also flow there. Also, Qigong science teaches us that Qi will go where the breath and mind direct it. Thus, directing Qi is what causes a given bodily area to change. So, if mentally breathing into a bodily area draws blood and oxygen there, it becomes like breathing where breath does not actually enter. Through such breath practices, we can develop the ability to literally breathe into any part of our body that we choose. This process is how we use the breath for moving the Qi within our body.

We can therefore move Qi with our mind and breath within the body and also from outside of the body. From outside of our body, we are drawing in *Heaven Qi* or *Earth Qi*, or any combination thereof (*Universe Qi*). This action can occur like a vacuum of Qi being drawn into the body through mind and breath together. The incoming breath serves as a tool to collect Qi through a given bodily point or area, and then we can direct it to anywhere within the body. In this way, we gather Qi from outside our physical self to use it for our body's health and well-being. As with all practices, we must actually become aware of Qi flow without using only imagination. When we become aware of the field of Qi around us, we can then use the breath to draw in that

field of energy. This can transpire through developing an *inflow of Qi sensation*, guided by the mind and breath together. Drawing Qi in this way does not necessitate the use of breath, but it is a tool for gathering Qi.

Ultimately, Qi can be directed with the mind alone without using the breath. However, even highly advanced Qigong practitioners continue to use breath as a tool to enhance their capacity of gathering and moving Qi. Breath is therefore an instrument to amplify our ability to draw, gather, and move Qi throughout our body.

Another very important point about the breath is that it is also a tool for expelling stagnant Qi, or unwanted *energetic* information from the body. This is typically done on the exhale. The exhale naturally eliminates stagnant energy, and the inhale naturally gathers life force. If we are consciously exhaling out stagnant Qi, we also are deliberately expelling negative emotions, tensions, fatigue, etc. If we are consciously drawing in fresh Qi, we are consciously gathering positive emotions, vibrant energy, etc. We therefore enhance the effects of our breathing by applying intent and awareness of what we are drawing in and expelling out. This is because *energetic* information is stored in the Qi, and it is gathered and moved by our intention.

Qi has been measured as an electromagnetic field that carries information transmitted by the practitioner. From this we might conclude that breathing in Qi along with intent, also means that we are drawing in a field of energy that we are programming with information. Thus, the mere intent of what we are taking in and expelling with our breath can impact our health and well-being.

Most of us have likely sighed at some point while breathing out, releasing a stressful emotion. We may also have breathed in for the specific purpose of gathering strength and patience during a challenging moment. So, in a sense, we all intrinsically know how breath can be used to release and take in emotions. However, we may not consciously be aware of the power and transformational effects that breath can have when combined with a positive intent. Being conscious of what we mentally draw in on our incoming breath and what we expel

on the outgoing breath can bring rapid benefits to the Qigong practitioner.

(Note: it is important to know that air and Qi are not the same when used in reference to Qigong).

Qigong Breath Meditations

We have discussed breathing regulation techniques, and we will now share information specific to Qigong breathing meditations that relate to the *Second Adjustment*. We will use the six breath regulation techniques in coordination with Qigong breathing meditations for full benefit. Additionally, when we perform these breathing meditations, we will use the breath to guide the direction of Qi flow in our body. The following three Qigong breathing meditations may also be used for meditation preparation, and they may be practiced at any time throughout the day.

Qigong Practice: “Breath Expansion”

This Qigong practice combines the breath with a subtle expansion of bodily areas. In this application, we physically expand from the abdomen to the chest through a gentle pressure of the breath. It becomes a way of sensing the breath and Qi as they physically impact and move through the body. In moving the breath in synchronization with the muscles and the expanding rib cage, we also direct the Qi through the trunk of our body. The breath and the movement expanding through the abdomen and torso will cause the mind to travel to these areas. The mind may then easily lead the Qi along this pathway in harmonization with the breath and movement. When performing this practice, we breathe in as if we are filling the torso from the lower abdomen. When we exhale, we deflate the trunk downward, as if the air exits at the lower abdomen.

1. Begin by inhaling and feeling the breath expand into the lower abdomen, slightly pressurizing the air downward and also toward the lower back.
2. As the breath comes in further, feel the inhale expand to the sides of the body, while also filling the diaphragm.
3. As the breath draws further, feel it expand the chest and the back, opposite the chest.

4. As the breath reaches its fullest, feel it gently *compacting* into the shoulders, the shoulder blades, and the upper trunk.
5. Now on the exhale, feel the collapsing occur in reverse as the breath goes out. Slowly deflate from the top of the trunk back down to the abdomen, in the identical reverse order.
6. A slightly downward compression into the lower abdomen occurs on the full exhale, *compacting* the breath and Qi. Repeat 1- 6.

Note: *Do not over-pressurize or tense the body during this practice. Only a very subtle expansion and contraction of the torso occurs.*

Qigong Practice: “Qi Chen Xia Dantien”

Another excellent breath meditation for increasing Qi flow and storing Qi in the lower abdomen is called *Qi Chen Xia Dantien*. This Chinese sentence literally translates as; “*Qi, go down to my lower abdomen*”. The lower abdomen, or *Xia Dantien*, is considered a bio-battery that stores Qi and powers the flow of Qi throughout the body. Therefore, breath practices that *compact* Qi into *Xia Dantien* are considered paramount (See Chapter 7: *Xia Dantien – Abdominal Energy Gate*).

We begin this practice by simply breathing in and then mentally moving the breath down to *Xia Dantien* (lower abdomen) on the exhale. As we breathe in, we are consciously drawing in Qi. When we exhale, we are mentally *compacting* Qi downward into *Xia Dantien*. We may use the added technique of gently compressing the lower abdomen downward as we exhale to sense the Qi *compacting* there.

During *Qi Chen Xia Dantien* practice, we may also experiment with feeling the breath entering our diaphragm and lungs as we inhale. As we exhale, we *compact* the Qi downward from the chest to *Xia Dantien*. The breath naturally moves air and Qi into the chest area. From the chest, we can then guide the Qi down the central meridians to *Xia Dantien* through the power of our breath. We may also incorporate the six breathing techniques into *Qi Chen Xia Dantien*. With this practice, we train ourselves to draw in Qi and to store Qi in *Xia Dantien*. The downward *compacting* of the Qi between the chest and the abdomen also clears meridian pathways, potentially eliminating blockages. Furthermore, if we *compact* the Qi down our front channels through the

stomach, it will draw Qi nutrients to our digestive tract, which corresponds to the *Xia Dantien* area. This is to bring about additional health benefits, as we normally do not absorb all the Qi from our food.

Learning to practice *Qi Chen Xia Dantien* will bring great benefit. However, greater benefit may occur if we incorporate this practice periodically into our way of breathing. This way we will continually gather and store Qi into our body through the power of our breath.

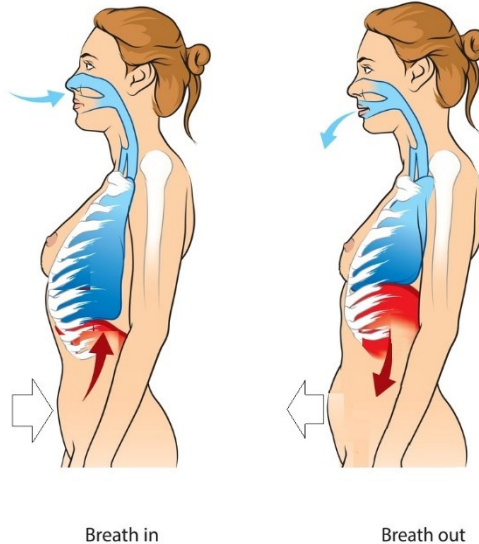
Qigong Practice: “Reverse Abdominal Breathing”

Another practice for directing Qi flow through muscle movement and breath is known as *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*. The *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* technique increases body awareness in the abdominal and diaphragm region while generating more blood flow, oxygen, and Qi in these areas. This practice is called *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* because our lower abdomen draws inward on the inhale and expands outward on the exhale, which is the reverse of typical breathing. When this practice is done correctly, the ribcage will slightly elevate, impacting the lower lungs and increasing our oxygen levels. Typically, we do not impact the lower part of the lungs, and we do not absorb sufficient oxygen. When we perform *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*, we move the lower lung cavity and increase our oxygen intake and Qi flow throughout the body.

In *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*, we then draw in the lower abdomen on the inhale, using a subtle inward and upward contraction. On the exhale, the abdomen will lightly expand outward and downward. While exhaling, we compact or compress the Qi down into the lower abdomen where it can be stored in *Xia Dantien*, in the same way as with *Qi Chen Xia Dantien*. Through *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*, we gain greater awareness of the powerful *energy gate*, *Xia Dantien*. The inward and outward movement of the lower abdomen combined with the breath, assists us in recognizing and experiencing this *energy gate*. Regular practice of *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* will build the Qi in *Xia Dantien* so that it can feed the body’s meridians and *energy gates*.

Reverse Abdominal Breathing Summary

Deep breath



1. On the inhale, the abdomen draws inward, with a subtle lifting of the diaphragm and lower ribs.
2. On the exhale, the abdomen and diaphragm gently expand outward and downward.
3. On the exhale, you also *compact* the breath and Qi down into the lower abdomen, or *Xia Dantien*.

Again, it is important to avoid excessive contraction or pressurization of muscles on the inhale or exhale. *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* is done in a relaxed and smooth manner using the six breathing techniques mentioned. There should be a natural feel and rhythm to it.

Closing Form Practice

If practicing *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* for an extended period in a sitting posture, or after Qigong meditation in general, it is necessary to perform the *Closing Form*. The *Closing Form* essentially grounds the body after meditation and ensures that Qi is not diverted or overly concentrated in one area of the body. An imbalance of Qi can cause health issues, and at the very least it can cause headaches or light-headedness in the practitioner. The *Closing Form* assists in evenly

distributing the Qi throughout the body, internally and externally. In the science and philosophy of Qigong, when we exert one force, we balance it with an opposite force to prevent mental and physical imbalances. Qigong meditation is a very internal practice, and thus, an external compliment is needed after meditation to balance ourselves properly. To create this balance after meditation, we perform the *Closing Form* (See the *Meditation Closing Form* practice outlined in Chapter 7).

We have now provided a basic understanding of moving the Qi through the power of our breath. In the proceeding chapters, we will explore how to direct the Qi with our breath in more detail. These breathing techniques which are a part of the *Second Adjustment*, train us to alter our breath so that we can sense and direct the Qi throughout our body.

Using the breathing techniques that we have studied will now prepare us for the *Third Adjustment*, which entails focusing the mind. The mind must be regulated so that it may focus deeply in order to direct the Qi. Our breath regulation training will help us to focus the mind, as breath and mind work together in unison. This synchronized effort in turn will give us the ability to direct our mind and breath together, anywhere throughout the body.

- ☯ Our state of mind is reflective of how we breathe
- ☯ Regulating breath transforms our mind and body
- ☯ Breath is the link between the body and the Qi
- ☯ Breath is the instrument for gathering and moving Qi

CHAPTER FOUR

Focusing The Mind

The Third Adjustment



After understanding the *First Adjustment* and *Second Adjustment*, we combine our awareness of body and breath in coordination with mental focus. The focused attention of the mind upon the body is the fundamental concept of the *Third Adjustment*. By applying the *Three Adjustments* of body awareness (1st), breath regulation (2nd), and mental concentration (3rd) as one, we create the ability to gather and direct the flow of Qi. This trinity of tools (*The Three Adjustments*) used for drawing and guiding Qi, might be considered a prerequisite for learning the art of Qigong.

It is understandable that when the first two adjustments of body and breath are combined, we actually invoke mental focus automatically. Therefore, the *Third Adjustment* happens spontaneously, except that we choose specific pathways of mental concentration. Our mental focus combined with the breath then moves and directs Qi within the body where our mind leads it. When this occurs, all three adjustments are acting as if they are one adjustment, working together in unison. With this combination, we can now penetrate our awareness deep into the body.

Qigong Practice: “Body Breathing Meditation”

In chapter two, we briefly discussed how to mentally direct our breath into the various layers of the body by drawing our awareness through our skin and internal organs. Now we will also include a concentrated mental focus (*Third Adjustment*) combined with breath in this practice, which we are calling the *Body Breathing Meditation*. In essence, we will apply all *Three Adjustments* in the *Body Breathing Meditation* practice, using the body, breath, and mind together as one. Combining the technology of the *Three Adjustments* allows us to mentally penetrate our awareness into the body more substantially. Also, drawing and moving Qi simultaneously is the final ingredient that will make this practice effective. The combination of these techniques is what comprises the *Body Breathing Meditation*.

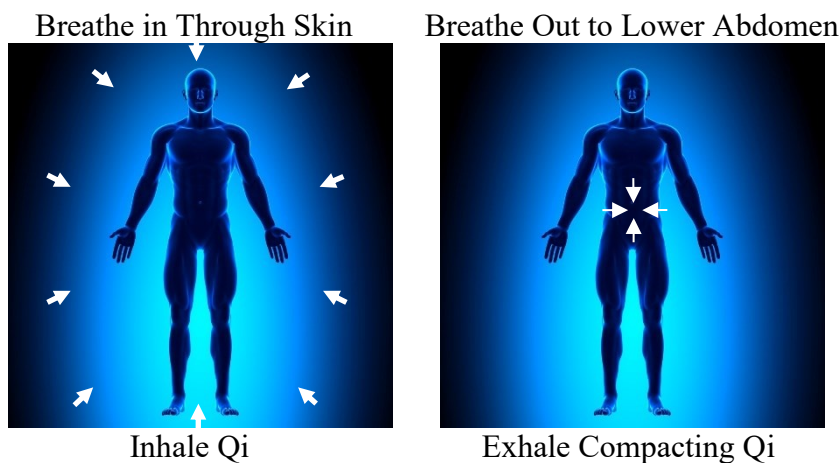
In the *Body Breathing Meditation*, we apply a focused intent of mental awareness going through the skin and to the inner depths of the body. Here we impact every cell of the body through mentally directing the breath. This process includes consciously breathing in vibrant Qi. Then on the exhale, we *compact* the breath and Qi into the lower abdomen, or *Xia Dantien*. When we *compact* the Qi into *Xia Dantien* on the exhale, we also cause the stagnant energy to clear from the body, while retaining the vibrant Qi we drew in.

In the *Body Breathing Meditation*, we are mentally using the mind and the breath together to draw Qi through the skin, as if air enters from our entire epidermis. To accomplish this, we need to discover the *inflow sensation* of Qi drawing through the skin from the Qi field around us. This may take time to recognize. Once we discover the feeling of the Qi drawing into our body through the skin, we can then learn to consciously guide it inward, and then *compact* it down (into *Xia Dantien*) on the exhale. The *Body Breathing Meditation* is best performed in conjunction with the *Six Breathing Techniques* in order to develop the sensitivity of breath and Qi in relationship to the skin. (See Chapter 3: *Six Breathing Techniques*).

During *Body Breathing Meditation*, we mentally breathe into our entire epidermis in all directions simultaneously. Through the use of breath and mental focus, we saturate the layers of our skin with Qi as we inhale. The cells of our skin are bathed in Qi with the mental intention of health and rejuvenation. As we breathe in through the skin, we may

also inhale the sensation of relaxation. We can mentally draw in Qi, guiding it to relax and rejuvenate the body (the epidermis portion) as we inhale. Then as we exhale, we can consciously release any stress or *energetic* stagnation stored in the epidermis. On the exhale, we mentally push the Qi we drew in down to *Xia Dantien* (Comparable to the *Qi Chen Xia Dantien* meditation discussed in Chapter 3). This is *compacting* or storing the gathered Qi into the abdomen. *Compacting* the Qi down into the lower abdomen will also automatically eliminate stagnant energy that may be released from the skin.

In the *Body Breathing Meditation* process, we are literally breathing through our skin, bathing Qi and oxygen into the cells of our outermost layer. Then we expel the stagnant energy from our skin as we exhale into the abdomen. The exhale breath goes down to the lower abdomen as if the air departs from there, storing vibrant Qi, while eliminating stagnant energy. In this way, breathing through our skin and down to the abdomen works similarly to regular breathing, where we take in what we need on the inhale, and expel what must be eliminated on the exhale.



To truly make the *Body Breathing Meditation* effective, it may be helpful to contemplate on the layers of our skin. We can first practice sensing the entire epidermis around our body, asking ourselves what it feels like. When we become aware of our entire epidermis at once, we can then include the mind and breath. Through the mind and the breath, we can then mentally penetrate our awareness into the skin, after we have identified its physical sensation. When we are able to draw the

mind and breath into the skin, then we draw Qi into our body as well. Finally, we must also learn the sensation of the exhale breath *compacting* the Qi down to *Xia Dantien* after it enters the skin. This becomes equally as important as drawing in Qi because intake and elimination must remain in balance.

Going Deeper into Body Breathing

Performing the same *Body Breathing Meditation*, we now move our mind and breath deeper into the body. In this next stage of practice, we continue breathing into our skin, while also mentally penetrating deeper into the body tissue, one layer at a time. It is important to focus our awareness and breath further without using imagination only. We must also use actual sensation to become aware of the inner layers of the body. As the breath and Qi continue to draw into deeper layers of body tissue, we gradually begin to perceive our entire muscular structure. Here we maintain the same breathing techniques to assist the mind in sensing the muscle tissue surrounding the entire body. As with the epidermis, the mind must develop a sensation of the entire musculature at once. We thus focus our mind and the incoming breath to move Qi through all layers of the skin and muscle of the body. This is then followed by exhaling out stagnant energy stored in the muscles, as we *compact* the Qi downward to *Xia Dantien*.

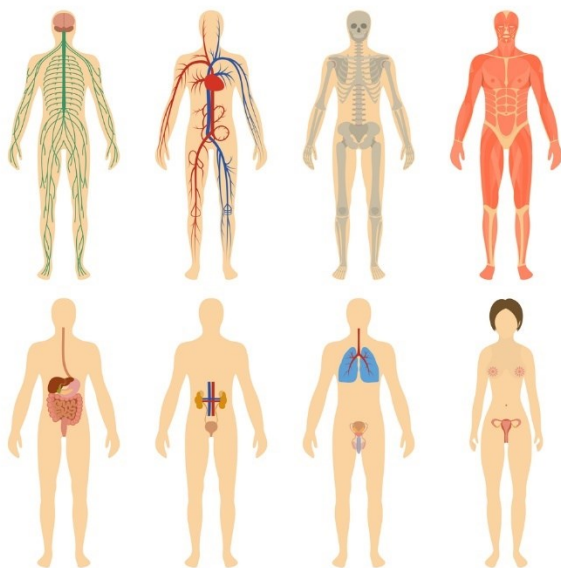
Next, we proceed to mentally breathe into to all of the internal organs throughout the body. For our purposes, this refers to everything beyond the muscle layer, excluding the skeletal structure. As we progress beyond the muscular structure, physically perceiving some of these areas may become more challenging. By adding the *Six Breathing Techniques* to the *Body Breathing Meditation*, we can perceive the Qi penetrating into the internal organs more easily. Also, it is important to sense the internal organs collectively, rather than attempt to contemplate each internal body part individually. The sensation of *bathing* Qi amongst an entire area may assist with collectively feeling the internal organs. *Bathing* refers to allowing the mind to dwell in an area of the body so that we can sense it better and draw increased Qi there as well. After we *bathe* our internal organs collectively, we may then release stress or stored negativity when we breathe out.

We continue the *Body Breathing Meditation* along the same pathway, entering from the skin to the muscles, and to the internal organs. On

the exhale, the breath is directed outward in the same manner, *compacting* down to *Xia Dantien*. We repetitively breathe in and out along the same pathway, *bathing* this route several times as we penetrate layer by layer.

Next, the *Body Breathing Meditation* proceeds in directing the mind and breath into the skeletal structure, using the same method as previously described. The breath and mind will now move the Qi through our skin, muscles, internal organs, and all the way to our bones. Once we are able to actually become aware of our entire skeletal structure, then we can also mentally breathe and draw Qi into it. Using our mind and breath to guide the Qi into our skeletal structure can be quite a feat.

Breathe into the Skin
Breathe into the Muscles

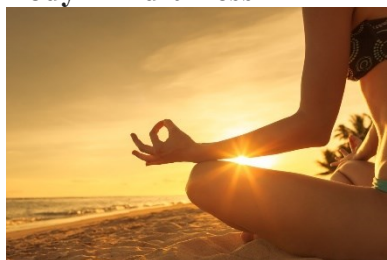


Breathe into the Internal Organs
Breathe into the Bones & Marrow

One of the greatest practices for longevity comes not only from drawing Qi into the body and bones, but also drawing Qi into the bone marrow itself. Drawing Qi into the bone marrow will affect our cellular health by reprogramming our cells through the intention that we place

into the Qi. The field of Qi carries information based on the intent of the mind as illustrated in various scientific studies. Thus, with the objective of stimulating the stem cells in the bone marrow, we can use our breath and intent to reprogram our body with vibrant and healthy cells. Once this ability is realized, we can use this awareness for generating radiant health. As with other aspects the *Body Breathing Meditation*, we may need to spend time *bathing* upon the skeletal structure and marrow as a whole. This way we can sense the Qi actually penetrating and affecting this portion of the body. We recommend spending a minimum of fifteen minutes on the entire *Body Breathing Meditation* practice followed by the *Closing Form* outlined in Chapter 7.

Body Mindfulness



A significant tool in learning to focus our awareness is based on the practice of *body mindfulness*. *Mindfulness* has recently become a popular concept; yet genuine *body mindfulness* has long been considered a part of Qigong practice. The *Three Adjustments* in Qigong are, in fact, characteristics of *body mindfulness*. By utilizing the *Three Adjustments*, we can mindfully observe and impact our physicality. The challenge, of course, is in remaining entirely present in regard to the awareness of our body and mind. The mind typically resists and wanders into the past, the future, or into imagination, instead of being stationed upon internal awareness in the present. When the mind resides *only* in highly active *Beta* brainwaves (oscillating fast, at 12.5 to 30 cycles per second), it becomes difficult to become internally present. The active mind then becomes restless, constantly conceptualizing and intellectualizing, as opposed to actually being present. We need to minimally move into *Alpha* (slower) brain wavelengths in order to begin developing *mindful* awareness of our body. If we can go into even deeper levels of brain wavelengths while

also remaining alert, our concentration can effortlessly increase. Then we may remain mindful enough to direct the Qi where we desire to guide it.

When attempting practice of *body mindfulness*, we may at first use imagination of where we are placing our focus, without using actual body awareness. When this occurs, we are only mentally projecting the concept of awareness without applying *mindfulness* to the body. Here we want to remember to combine the mind, breath, and body together in unison. If we do find ourselves practicing only imagination without applying *interoception*, we can simply return the mind and breath back to being present within the body.

Body mindfulness can be performed whether in meditation or while in motion as a way of developing this skill. It can also be applied at any time throughout the day. We can be physically present in each and every movement of our body, even while performing a variety of activities. In this way, we remain *mindfully* aware of the body in whatever we may be doing.

"There is the story concerning the Buddha which relates how he taught a village woman to develop such mindfulness in the act of drawing water from a well. He taught her to be aware of the precise movement of her hands and arms as she drew up the water....."

Chogyam Trungpa

This anecdote suggests how we can remain mindfully meditative, even if we perform tasks that are not considered to be meditation. Chogyam Trungpa further expressed that this practice brought about "*nowness*", or *body mindfulness* in action which created qualities of "*ingenuousness and peace*". Many will agree that in the "*nowness*", we discover the Qi, and that this experience can bring about peace, while drawing us closer to our genuine self.

Lucid Hypnotic State

Previously we have touched upon the importance of achieving deeper levels of brainwaves while also remaining alert. Creating altered brainwaves is considered a key factor in focusing our mental

awareness. When we go deeper into Qigong meditation practices, we can experience a blend of these different brainwaves in varied combinations. When this occurs, we can invoke a *lucid hypnotic state*.



In Qigong meditation practices, our objective is to attain this *lucid hypnotic state* while also applying the adjustments of mental focus, breath, and body awareness. Then we can experience undistracted concentration in guiding Qi flow throughout our body. Combining mental focus while also in a *lucid hypnotic state* is probably one the most potent techniques. This meditative state is not to be confused with lucid dreaming since we are mentally contemplating ourselves in a wakeful, yet hypnotic state. In a *lucid hypnotic state*, we are consciously present within our body, directing our mind and breath to guide the Qi.

The *Fang Song* relaxation meditation (in Chapter 2) and the *Six Breathing Techniques* (in Chapter 3) can assist in preparation for developing a *lucid hypnotic state*. Being deeply relaxed is a necessary step in altering our brainwaves. Once we have arrived at a highly relaxed state, then we also want to remain awake and present in our practice.

We may choose to develop a *lucid hypnotic state* while we are sitting or lying down. It is best not to practice this when we are too sleepy, as we will not be able to resist falling asleep. We can learn to resist the urge to sleep in a hypnotic state through awareness of the *edge* of the dream state. Here the mind can easily go off toward dreamlike sensations if we pass this *edge*. Instead, we remain mindful of that *edge* while remaining in a *lucid hypnotic state* so that we may focus our mind in deep awareness.

Identifying Qi Sensations

We have now clarified that being deeply relaxed and applying *body mindfulness* and breath are key ingredients for sensing and directing Qi. Still, there may be times when it is difficult to identify when we are actually sensing and drawing Qi throughout the body. Sometimes we can run into obstacles during practice where it appears that we cannot perceive the Qi, or the Qi flow. If this occurs, we can use basic methods for learning to recognize the Qi. These methods are based on categories of generalized physical sensations that we might experience when we are gathering or moving Qi throughout our body. These categories of sensations may not exactly translate into our personal perceptions of Qi; however, they provide a steppingstone for identifying Qi. It is important to remember that dwelling upon these Qi sensations is not the goal of Qigong. Rather, these Qi sensations are used as a bridge for discovering the Qi within the body.

Below are *Eight Qi Sensations* for identifying the Qi within our body. Also included are four key concepts that are excellent guidelines for experiencing and guiding the Qi. The following *Eight Qi Sensations* include brief descriptions of the types of physical feelings that we *may* experience when Qi flow occurs.

Eight Qi Sensations:

1. Qi Sensation: Distension

The Qi sensation of distension could be recognized as a gentle swelling that occurs when Qi is circulating. Distention typically occurs in the palms and it is sometimes seen as red and white spots appearing there. At the same time, we may feel as if the hands and fingers have been filled, feeling slightly puffy. Distension can also occur in any other part of the body that Qi is expanding into. This swelling corresponds with additional blood flow in a particular area of the body where the Qi flow is active. The sensation of distention could also manifest in many other ways. For example, it may be recognized as a subtle pressure at some place in the body. A subtle pressure is not exactly distention, yet we have included this illustration with the understanding that Qi sensations within this category can be varied, depending upon each practitioner.

2. Qi Sensation: Heaviness

Heaviness, in terms of Qi sensations, may be manifest as a sense of gravity. This could also refer to a particular area of the body as opposed to the entire body, depending on where the Qi is flowing. The sensations within this category as with other categories can be numerous.

Previously, we mentioned the need to discover the *inflow sensation* of Qi. We might consider this *inflow sensation* to fall into the Qi sensation of heaviness, because there may be a feeling of an inward pull or a funneling of Qi occurring. In this case, the inward pull or the funneling sensation is not necessarily a feeling of downward gravity. It may rather be a feeling of a force towing inward in any given direction where we direct the Qi. These illustrations only represent possible descriptions of Qi sensations of heaviness. We still must discover our own sensations of Qi as we perceive them, outside of any expectations or descriptions provided.

3. Qi Sensation: Itch

A desire to scratch may likely occur on the meridian where Qi is activated. Since there are numerous sub-channels of the body meridians, an itching sensation could occur anywhere that we are activating Qi flow. An itching sensation can vary from a simple tickle, to an intense desire to scratch an area where Qi travels through the body. If possible, permit the Qi sensation to occur without scratching it, allowing the Qi to flow. An itching sensation may also appear as an ultra-light sensation along a part of the body, such as if tiny insects were crawling along the skin. This, along with any number of other related variations, would be categorized as a Qi itching sensation.

4. Qi Sensation: Pain

Pain typically represents a blockage in our channels of some sort. If we concentrate on moving Qi into a particular area of the body, it may produce pain if there is blockage there. Pain, of course, is alerting us to where attention is needed. In any case, a sensation of pain during Qigong practice indicates Qi flow is occurring and attempting to move beyond a blockage. When the Qi fully flows through such blockages, such pain may vanish. It is also possible that an area of the body lacking in Qi flow will experience pain when the Qi flow fully opens in that

area. This would occur because the Qi replenishing the health of our cells and tissue in that area is invoking the sensation of pain.

5. Qi Sensation: Running About & Jumping

Some of us may have experienced a sudden shuddering sensation particularly running along a bodily meridian during an acupuncture treatment. At this time, our body may have jerked when the Qi began to flow through a meridian pathway that had awakened after a blockage was suddenly cleared. When experiencing Qi flow in general, this same sensation may also occur in varying degrees in different parts of the body. We may consider this to be a *running about* Qi sensation, like a ripple of Qi running through the body. In the case of a *jumping* Qi sensation, a sudden pulsation or spasm may occur only in the vicinity of where Qi flow is suddenly opening. This becomes more like *jumping* as opposed to *running about*.

We may also consider an electrical sensation to be placed in the *running about* or *jumping* category. Since the body is a bio-electrical system, it can experience electrical sensations comparable to this Qi sensation. Qi travels in conjunction with the bio-electrical flow, and when it is directed through the body and meridians, electrical sensations can occur. Again, these are only examples of numerous variations of this Qi sensation.

6. Qi Sensation: Hot

The blood flow follows the movement of the Qi, so naturally this will heat the body when Qi flow increases. Excessive heating occurring within the body could also represent where Qi is excessively gathering, indicating the body's attempt to clear a blockage. This is similar to how the body draws blood and heat to an area of injury. It is also possible that the Qi which we are drawing is more Yang in nature, causing the body to become warm.

7. Qi Sensation: Cool

In the same manner as heating, a cooling sensation flowing through the body can occur through Qi movement. This could be similar to how our body heats and cools itself to regulate balance. When Qi flow balances excessive Yang (warming) in the body, we may experience a cooling sensation. If the Qi which we are drawing is more Yin (cooling) in

nature, it may also cause the body to become cool. There may be many other reasons that invoke a hot or cool sensation within the body, but during Qigong practice, a *cooling* sensation can indicate Qi flow.

8. Qi Sensation: Numbness or Soreness

Areas in the body that are tight or tense may block off the flow of Qi. Similar to a pain sensation, Qi flow that is attempting to penetrate through blockages may manifest as numbness or soreness. We may also experience numbness or soreness when tight or blocked areas of the body relax and open, and the Qi begins to flow there. Bodily areas which we previously were unaware of may become numb or sore when Qi flow opens there. We may simply have been unconscious of the numbness or soreness that transpired from neglect or unawareness of that bodily area.

The Four Qi Guidelines

We have explained methods of identifying Qi sensations through our mental and physical perception. Now we must also understand how we use our mental abilities to invite the Qi to flow through us. Therefore, we are sharing four excellent guidelines to follow. Applying the following four Qi guidelines will accelerate our experience of Qigong practice.

1. The Mind Leads the Qi and the Qi Follows the Mind
2. Catch the Feeling of Qi
3. Do Not Rely on Imagination Alone
4. Do Not Be in Pursuit of the Qi

1. The Mind Leads the Qi and the Qi Follows the Mind

Standard to Qigong practice, it is taught that *the mind leads the Qi, and the Qi follows the mind*. Where our intent is placed, the Qi follows there. The mind outlines the pathway just ahead of the Qi. Our mind actually guides the movement of Qi throughout our daily lives, though we are not conscious of this. If we desire to walk across the room, we may think that our mind sends the impulse to our nerves and muscles to walk. From the Qigong perspective, the mind first leads the Qi, and the Qi initiates the actual movement of the body. This is because Qi is the life force that animates us, and the mind only directs this force within ourselves. This illustrates how the mind is an intermediary

which is designed to naturally lead the Qi. Thus, guiding the Qi is not a superhuman ability, but it is rather an innate ability that has not been consciously exercised. The difference in Qigong practice is that we learn to consciously lead the Qi. Learning to consciously guide the Qi, gives us the ability to clear blockages and improve our health and well-being through the power of our mind.

It is important to understand that when we guide Qi with our mind, our mental focus remains just ahead of the Qi flow. The mind and the Qi therefore are not concentrated together in one place. The difference in the mental lead could be that of a minute fraction, yet the mind still remains ahead of the Qi. Therefore, the speed of the mind guiding the Qi flow can vary. If the mind and Qi become stationed with a singular focus on the body, the Qi can stagnate there. That being said, there are ways to safely hold our focus at a single place within the body, in the event that we desire to open awareness there. This is performed by circulating the Qi very slowly, within a bodily focal point. In this case, movement continues to occur as long as the mind is still leading the Qi. Another way to lead the Qi upon a singular area within the body is by mentally breathing in and out of a given physical point of focus, comparable to drawing in Qi and expelling stagnant energy. In this way, the mind and breath together can guide the Qi in and out of one place repetitively. Then Qi movement will continue, even though our focus remains constant on one area of the body.

The bottom line is that the mind must lead just ahead of the Qi at all times while allowing Qi to freely flow. If we think of drawing a line in the sand to guide water from a puddle, we are only making a pathway for the water to flow along. In the same way, we are creating a pathway just ahead of the Qi, to keep a constant flow. Thus, the mind is guiding, and not coercing the flow of Qi.

2. Catch the Feeling of Qi

When practicing Qigong, we must *catch the feeling of the Qi* and move the Qi using our own unique approach. We may have many ideas or concepts about how we are *supposed* to perceive the Qi. We must learn our unique inner language within ourselves, so that we discover Qi in our own way. Although we have outlined numerous sensations to assist with perceiving Qi flow, we still need our own internal investigation.

Through *interoception*, we can hear what is being spoken by our body. The language of Qi within us may not exactly fit any labels or definitions that we have. Our own internal research is then the best way to *catch the feeling of the Qi*.

3. Do Not Rely on Imagination Alone

When we practice Qigong, it is essential that Qi is sensed and not only imagined. Since we are combining the body and the mind's intent to recognize the Qi, we require both body and mind as one, to sense the Qi. If we are only imagining how the Qi is moving, then it is merely a mental projection occurring without body awareness.

We use awareness of physical sensations of Qi for creating tangible awareness that is not based on imagination alone. Whenever Qi flow occurs, there will be some sort of physiological changes happening, however subtle. Thus, a skilled Qigong practitioner knows when Qi flow is occurring. The Qigong practitioner is alerted in some way to Qi flow (*Eight Qi Sensations*), beyond imagination.

Recognizing what we experience in the body during Qi flow provides a mental pathway that is identifiable. From our cellular memory, we can then recall and repeat our experience of Qi flow, which could not have been done through imagination alone.

4. Do not be in Pursuit of the Qi

When we are *in pursuit of the Qi*, we are attempting to grasp the flow of Qi. Rather, Qi flow must arise naturally. Therefore, being *in pursuit of the Qi* is the same as attempting to coerce the flow of Qi. To begin with, a *space* must be given for the Qi to arise, as it cannot be forced to manifest. Giving a *space* simply means we surrender the idea of forcing the Qi to move; instead, we allow the Qi to arise. In a sense, we shift our frame of mind into a receptive place of awareness where we can receive the Qi. Since Qi is more ethereal than the body, we alter our mental *frequency* so that we are not attempting to grasp the Qi from a base consciousness. In other words, we soften ourselves to invite the flow of Qi, as opposed to demanding it with mental intensity.

If we cannot invoke the flow of Qi, we may need to relax the body and the mind more deeply, so the Qi arises naturally. We may spend time on *interoception* practices until the Qi activates and begins to flow,

rather than trying to push it to where we want it to go. Then instead of pursuing the Qi, we learn to attract the Qi, using the mind and breath to assist in guiding its direction.

Internal Organ Cleansing

Qigong practices for focusing the mind and breath on the internal organs are designed to clear health-related issues. Additionally, these practices help remove undesirable emotional information that has accumulated in our internal organs. From a Qigong perspective, it is considered that our major bodily organs hold specific qualities of emotions. Accordingly, when destructive bodily emotions are cleared from an internal organ, then the organ's constructive emotional polarity can enter.

This concept is similar to that of breathing out stagnation and inhaling the vibrant force of Qi. In the same manner, mental focus upon the internal organs can be purified through our intention placed on the exhale and inhale breath. On the exhale, we expel destructive emotions, and on the inhale, we draw in positive emotions. This practice generates physical as well as emotional health through the purification of our internal organs.

Our key internal organs hold a great deal of emotional pain and trauma from the course of our life. Painful or stressful emotions typically gather in specific organs causing emotional and physiological problems. This is especially true if emotional content within our internal organs accumulates without an *energetic* release. It is likely that we have not been fully aware of the emotional content we hold inside our internal organs. We also may not have understood how to consciously release what is held there. Therefore, a method for clearing our internal organs is needed, similar to taking a daily bath.

Previously we described breathing techniques for directing breath and Qi into our internal organs. The following Qigong techniques will now provide us with methods to release unwanted *energetic* information held in specific bodily organs. This also includes how to replenish each internal organ after they have been cleared. The difference here is that a positive intention along with a singular focus will now be used to clear each major organ of the body. This occurs through using mental

intent combined with breath, sound, and color, projected into various bodily organs. Additionally, we may apply an optional massage, shaking, or patting of the area on the body that corresponds to the given bodily organ. This provides further impact and release of stored emotions.

Developing awareness of the major internal organs may require effort to mentally sense their presence. We have likely experienced the natural sensations of our internal organs such as the heart beating and the breath entering the lungs. However, developing sensitivity to other internal organs may require a more focused effort. In this practice, we will apply all *Three Adjustments* of body awareness, breath, and mental focus. This will also include drawing Qi on the incoming breath accompanied by mental-emotional intentions. We suggest that attentiveness be given to the feelings and sensations in relation to each organ. It is important to be aware of the emotional release and the emotional gain that we are applying on the inhale and exhale. Finally, it is also helpful to actually sense specific colors and sounds and to be conscious of how they impact the body.

Mental Focus on Color

It should be noted that every color is a wavelength with a different *frequency* (a specific *energetic* field). Color is then only the visual manifestation of a particular wavelength. From our perspective, Qi is intermingled within the wavelength of each color, and thus each *frequency* of color impacts our mind and body differently. Our mental intent intertwined within the Qi that we project can also manifest at the same *frequency* of a given color through mere intent. Therefore, we are not only imagining color in this practice; we are actually drawing in the wavelength of a particular color, and that given color is also blended with the Qi. Finally, we are to combine a positive emotional intent into the given bodily organ along with the *frequency* of the corresponding color in coordination with the incoming breath.

Mental Focus on Sound

Like color, sound also has various wavelengths. From a Qigong perspective, various frequencies of sound impact the internal organs and our emotional state differently. Sound is then more than just what

we hear, but rather something that actually impacts our being. In this *Internal Organ Cleansing* practice, the specific sounds correspond to vibrating and clearing emotional blockages from specific organs. Similar to the application of color, the mental focus combined with sound and the outgoing breath impact the cells and release what is stored in the internal organs. Using sound along with breath, color, and mental intent can thus reprogram the cellular information of our internal organs, which will revitalize our physical and emotional well-being.

Internal Organ Cleansing Practice:

1. The Liver and Gall Bladder Area

Replace Anger with Kindness

Color: Green - **Sound:** Shhhh

Gently massage the right side of the body all around the lower rib cage while circling, patting, and vibrating this area with the hands. Consciously exhale out any anger that is held in the liver and gall bladder. Make a “shhhh” sound on the exhale to release the emotions. Then breathe into the liver and gall bladder area while sensing and drawing in the color green. Consciously inhale the *frequency* of kindness into these organs. Repeat three to ten times.



**Liver &
Gall Bladder Area**

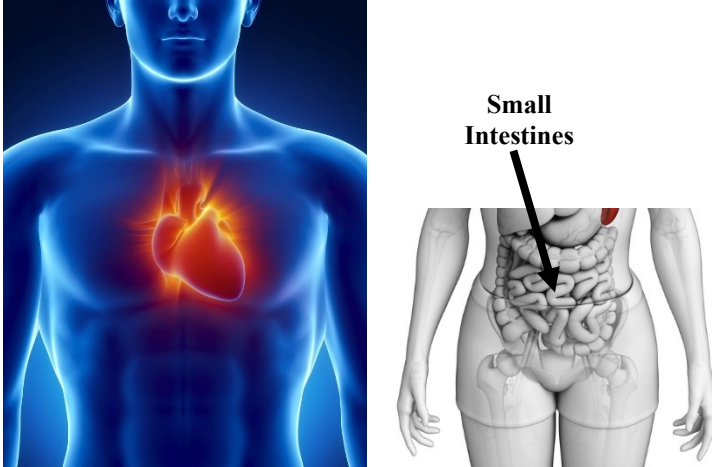
2. Heart and Small Intestines

Replace Cruelty & Sorrow with Joy & Happiness

Color: Red **Sound:** Haaaa

Massage all around the center of the chest and also the small intestines while circling, patting, and vibrating these areas with the hands. Consciously exhale out any cruelty or sorrow that is held in the physical heart and small intestines. Make a “haaaa” sound on the exhale to release these emotions. Then breathe into the physical heart and small intestines, while sensing and drawing in the color red. Consciously inhale the *frequency* of joy and happiness into these organs. Repeat three to ten times.

Heart and Small Intestines

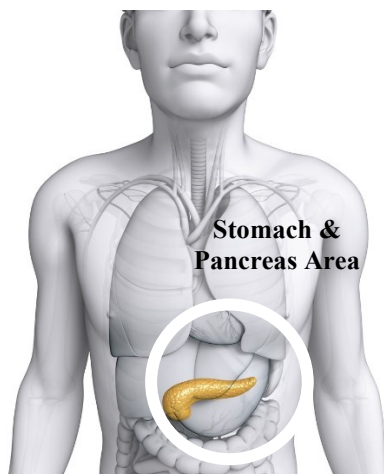
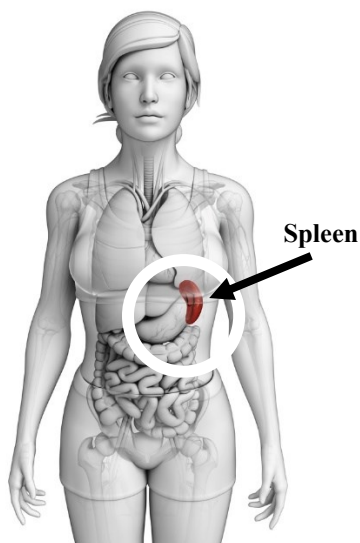


3. Spleen & Pancreas & Stomach Area

Replace Worry & Anxiety with Compassion

Color: Yellow - **Sound:** Whoooo

Gently massage the left side of the body all around the lower rib cage while circling, patting, and vibrating this area with the hands. Consciously exhale out any worry or anxiety that is held in the spleen, pancreas, or stomach area. Make a “whoooo” sound (*like an owl*) on the exhale to release these emotions. Then breathe into the spleen, pancreas, and stomach area while sensing and drawing in the color yellow. Consciously inhale the *frequency* of compassion into these organs. Repeat three to ten times.



4. Lungs and Large Intestines

Replace Sadness with Courage

Color: White - **Sound:** Sssss

Massage all around the upper chest and also the large intestines while circling, patting, and vibrating these areas with the hands. Consciously exhale out any sadness or grief that is held in the lungs and large intestines. Make a “sssss” sound on the exhale to release these emotions. Then breathe into the lungs and large intestines while sensing and drawing in the color white. Consciously inhale the *frequency* of courage into these organs. Repeat three to ten times.

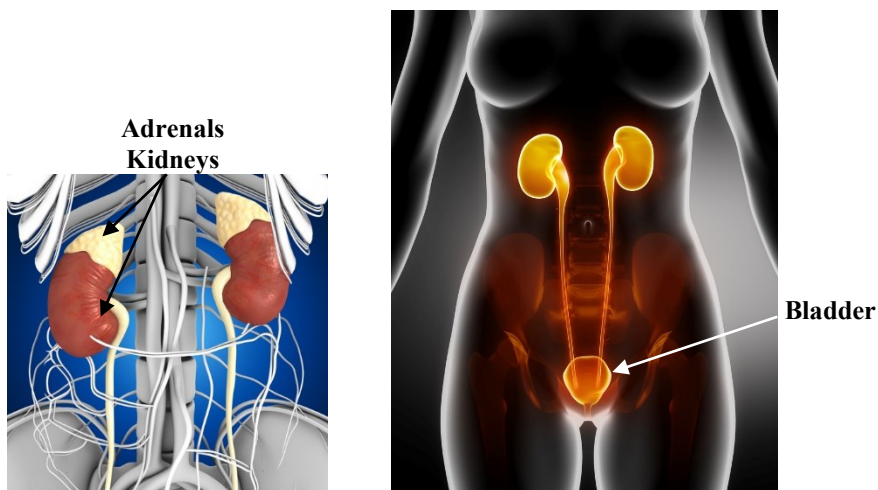


5. Kidneys and Bladder

Replace Fear with Gentleness

Color: Deep Blue - **Sound:** Pheww

Massage the lower back at the base of the rib cage on both sides while rubbing, patting, and vibrating this area with the hands. Consciously exhale out any fear that is held in the kidneys (and adrenals) and bladder area. Make a “Pheww” sound (*like blowing out a candle*) on the exhale to release these emotions. Then breathe into the kidneys and bladder while sensing and drawing in a dark blue color. Consciously inhale the *frequency* of gentleness into these organs. Repeat three to ten times.



- ☯ Focus mind and breath in unison to guide the Qi
- ☯ Body mindfulness assists us in recognizing the Qi
- ☯ Use physical sensations to identify Qi flow
- ☯ Catch the feeling of the Qi in your own way

CHAPTER FIVE

Movement For Awareness



We have narrated how to combine the *Three Adjustments* of body awareness, breath regulation, and mental focus together in unison. We now understand that this represents the groundwork for directing and moving Qi throughout the body. Next, we are adding a fourth element, which is that of *movement*. Here we will learn to coordinate movement along with body awareness, breath regulation, and mental focus in synchronization with one another.

When practicing Qigong movement, some may consider that Qi travels automatically without the necessity of adding mental focus and breath awareness to the motion. Some Qigong training methods may not place emphasis on physical *mindfulness* in combination with the movements. However, we suggest that without applied consciousness behind Qigong movement, it is likely that one would have limited results. This is because the very nature of Qigong practice requires *body*

mindfulness, whether it is to create internal or external movement. When we practice physical movements in Qigong, we want to do more than just an exercise; we also want to apply awareness to our motion. Invariably, Qi may automatically move along the meridians and throughout the body according to a Qigong exercise. Yet, if we also consciously direct Qi in coordination with the movement, it will amplify our Qi flow and create greater awareness.

To achieve maximum results with Qigong, it is helpful to first understand what is occurring in each and every movement. We recommend gaining a clear understanding of how Qi is gathered and guided in any given Qigong exercise. In this way, the intention of our breath and mind are in conscious alignment with what a Qigong movement is intended to accomplish. Through such awareness, the Qi flow is properly guided in synchronization with a given movement.

Moving Qi

Qi is known to cause movement of blood, nutrients, and fluids throughout the body. A healthy flow of Qi consequently activates the body to provide sustenance and remove toxins. From this, we may infer that a balanced and healthy flow of blood indicates that a healthy flow of Qi is also occurring. Since Qi moves the blood, which brings nutrients and oxygen to all cells in the body, we can consider movement of Qi to be healthy or *fresh* Qi.

(Note: A healthy flow of Qi is not synonymous with healthy blood flow since Qi impacts more than just blood flow).

Clearing *stagnant* Qi would then mean that we are circulating *fresh* Qi to where Qi flow has become slowed. This may be similar to an immobile pocket along a river which flowing water would bypass. The water collecting in that motionless pocket will stagnate until fresh water moves there and clears that area. Likewise, Qigong movement of the internal or external body invokes the flow of fresh Qi and clears stagnation. With this understanding, we may consider immobility to be the way of decay, and movement to be associated with life force. Stagnant Qi thus corresponds to where there is lessened physical or *energetic* movement, or where Qi is flowing improperly. Therefore, moving and properly circulating Qi is as important as gathering Qi.

Balanced Qi Flow

A lack of healthy Qi flow is not necessarily equated with Qi stagnation. Qi may still be circulating, though it may only be moving meagerly throughout the body. In this case, gathering, drawing, and moving Qi still becomes an important objective for widening Qi flow within the bodily channels.

Comparable to having a lack of Qi flow, excessive Qi accumulating in a given part of the body can also create physical, mental, or emotional issues. It thus becomes important to have a proper balance of Qi flowing through the whole body. Specific Qigong movements are designed to develop an equilibrated flow of Qi throughout our body and being. Qigong movements are intended to provide a balanced flow of Qi in the Yin and Yang meridians. Therefore, in Qigong practice we strive to affect every limb and every tendon so that we experience a completely balanced body through the process of movement. This creates awareness that is not particular to only a portion of the body, but rather the whole body.

Similarly, any exercise that overly focuses on one type of muscle movement excluding other types of cross movements may bring about an imbalance. Such imbalances not only affect the physical body, but also the mind and emotions. Choosing a Qigong form that involves movement throughout the entire body, will bring Qi and body awareness to all facets of our being. It is probable that any place in our body that we are not conscious of will likely have imbalance there. It often requires movement, as well as breath and mental focus, to bring Qi flow and awareness to an area where there is an imbalance. We therefore recommend practicing movement techniques that move Qi throughout the whole body so that balanced awareness of our entire being transpires.

Understanding “Threading the Nine Holed Pearls” Practice

Movement, Awareness, & Breath in Synchronicity



Threading the Nine Holed Pearls Qigong practice is a technique to move Qi through the entire body. This practice develops the ability to focus our breath, concentration, and Qi in synchronicity with physical movement. By applying this technique, we discover awareness of Qi flow through our skeletal system and joints. Basically, the *Nine Pearls* references seven major sets of joints in the body, including the spine and the entire pelvic area. The *threading* refers to the Qi passing through the connecting limbs and joints, linking them together as one strand, comparable to threading a necklace of pearls. The joints between bones are highly significant because they represent transitioning conduits where Qi can become blocked or stagnant. This may occur if the muscles, tendons, and ligaments are overly compressed or tightened, or simply if they are lacking blood flow. The meditative movement of *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* expands and opens the joints, pumping blood and Qi flow through the connective strands of tissue.

In this method of *threading*, we move Qi and breath through the body and joints upward and downward. The movement of the body coordinates with the breath as each limb expands and contracts systematically. Our skeletal structure virtually unfurls and retracts one unit at a time, in an unbroken motion. The gentle *rising* and *sinking* motion in *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls*, along with the inhale and exhale, propels the Qi through the body. When the joints and limbs become loosened, this movement becomes spontaneous and flowing. Once this fluidity of motion is experienced, Qi flow will naturally increase. In the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* technique, we draw in Qi through the body on the inhale, and on the exhale, we *compact* the Qi back down in reverse. The exhale *compacts* the Qi, while also pushing out stagnation from the joints and limbs.

Understanding the Rising Motion

It is important that we first understand the *rising* and *sinking* movements in the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls*. In the rising motion of this practice, we draw the Qi upward through the body. As we ascend from the sinking position (see Figure 1), the Qi is guided from the toes to our fingertips. The rising motion transpires through pressing the feet and toes downward, while straightening the legs. At the same time, we add the sensation of an imaginary thread lifting us from the head as we rise. This helps provide the feeling of the Qi expanding upward. The sense of the head drawing upward can align and elongate the spine, as the entire skeletal structure expands. As we rise, we shift our weight to the balls of our feet and toes, without bending forward. This is done without tightening or locking muscles. Drawing upward in this movement gently elongates our body, like an accordion, lengthening to its open position. After an accordion is pressed to its closing position, it then practically unfolds to open on its own. This same unfurling occurs somewhat in the body when we allow the joints to open and expand one segment at a time.

A similar motion also occurs with the arms. In this practice, the arms rise and unfurl, lifting upward to a parallel extension. The arms rise by the power of the shoulder blades, followed by the extension of the elbows, wrists, and fingers. This is sequenced by the fingers straightening out to complete the motion (see Figure 3).

As we guide the Qi upward, we keep the mind and breath present with the movement, expanding upward one *Pearl* at a time. This means that we start from the 1st *Pearl* of the toes, and consciously progress one *Pearl* at a time, ending at the 9th *Pearl*, or the fingers.

Rising Motion: Drawing the Qi Upward

1st Pearl-Toes:	Draw Qi from toes to ankles
2nd Pearl-Ankles:	Draw Qi from ankles to knees
3rd Pearl-Knees:	Draw Qi from knees to hip region
4th Pearl-Hip Region:	Draw Qi from hip region to spine
5th Pearl-Spine:	Draw Qi from spine to shoulders
6th Pearl-Shoulders:	Draw Qi from shoulders to elbows
7th Pearl-Elbows:	Draw Qi from elbows to wrists
8th Pearl-Wrists:	Draw Qi from wrists to hands
9th Pearl-Fingers:	Draw Qi from hands to fingers

Understanding the Sinking Motion

When we initiate the sinking motion of *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls*, we then *compact* the Qi downward through the body. After we have expanded upward, we exhale in the reverse order, *rooting* down to the sinking position. As we exhale, the Qi is compressed through the bones and joints, starting from our fingertips, down to the toes. We start by drawing the parallel extended arms and fingers inward as we exhale (see Figure 4), shifting our weight to the heels. After the arms retract, the palms then slightly flex, facing downward to compress the Qi through the body. Here we *compact* the Qi back through the *Nine Pearls* as we exhale. This happens by pressing the palms straight down from the shoulders, in coordination with the sinking motion (see Figure 5). Even though the palms are in front of the body, their downward pressing motion *compacts* the Qi through the body to the feet. In the fully retracted position, the downward facing palms also interconnect with the *Earth Qi* (see Figure 4). Here the hands gather from the field of Earth energy in preparation to draw it upward in the successive rising motion.

As we *compact* downward, we consciously keep the mind and breath present while guiding the Qi. It is important to retract backward one *Pearl* at time, as we *sink* down. This means that we start from the 9th *Pearl* of the fingers and consciously reverse one *Pearl* at a time, until we return to the 1st *Pearl* (the toes). We therefore *thread* all nine *Pearls* in reverse while we exhale and *sink* downward. The mind and the exhaling breath guide the Qi through the joints and limbs as we retract back to the starting position.

Sinking Motion: Compacting the Qi Downward:

9 th Pearl-Fingers:	Compact Qi from fingers to wrists
8 th Pearl-Wrists:	Compact Qi from wrists to elbows
7 th Pearl-Elbows:	Compact Qi from elbows to shoulders
6 th Pearl-Shoulders:	Compact Qi from shoulders to spine
5 th Pearl-Spine:	Compact Qi from spine to hip region
4 th Pearl-Hip Region:	Compact Qi from hip region to knees
3 rd Pearl-Knees:	Compact Qi from knees to ankles
2 nd Pearl-Ankles:	Compact Qi from ankles to feet
1 st Pearl-Toes:	Compact Qi to from feet to toes

The Rising and Sinking of Birds

The movement of birds can provide an excellent representation of the rising and sinking motions. This can be witnessed from studying the stages of a bird landing and taking off. If we observe a bird landing in ultra-slow motion, we might catch numerous subtleties that would not normally be seen. When a bird lands, first the wings come down, then the wing bones drop, and then the bird's entire frame sinks systematically to its feet. The dropping of the bird's body happens one stage at a time until it fully sinks down. When the bird prepares for flight, it then *roots* its feet, with a forward weight shift, in preparation to rise. Then the bird springs off in perfect alignment, moving from its toes up to the wings, expanding incrementally prior to flight.

If we are to rise and sink systematically, joint by joint, then we follow this same principle. Technically, this means that we apply equilateral and successive movements of our joints throughout our muscular and skeletal structure. Then we might experience how *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* practice is comparable to the way birds prepare for flight and landing.

“Threading the Nine Holed Pearls” Preparation

It is important to align the body correctly prior to beginning the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* practice. We start with the arms and shoulders relaxed at the sides. The tailbone is pointing downward so that the abdomen collapses inward. Knees are slightly bent and aligned with parallel feet. The spine is erect, with an imaginary thread suspending the head and lifting the posture. The imaginary thread connects the head to the *Heavenly Qi*. The sense of a thread pulling is particularly applied during the rising motion to sense the upward draw from the *Bai Hui*. On the sinking motion, we also want to make our feet connect deeply with the Earth as well. We maintain this polarized pull of the head and feet, whether rising or sinking. When this is achieved, *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi* can circulate more powerfully throughout the body during practice.

Rooting Preparation



When beginning the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* practice, it is important to align our hips, legs, and feet so that they firmly *root* into the Earth. The toes lightly grip the ground, and the contact points of the feet hug the Earth. This comprises an elementary part of the practice known as *rooting*. *Rooting* the feet down on the sinking motion will catalyze the *Earth Qi* to ascend on the rising movement. For this to occur, we need to articulate our downward contraction to the ground, so that the expanding movement may then gather and draw up the *Earth Qi*.

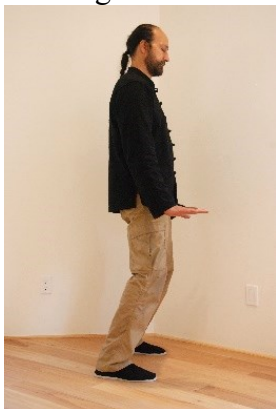
There is a technique that can be practiced to assist with *rooting*. We start by taking a moment to breathe in, filling and expanding the lower abdomen. Then we mentally *compact* the Qi from the abdomen down through the pelvis (and perineum) and legs, to the feet, as we exhale the breath. Next, as we breathe in, we mentally draw the breath back from the feet to the abdomen. When we *compact* the Qi down on the exhale in this practice, we might sense the Qi *rooting* beyond our feet, deep into the ground. When we breathe in, we may also sense the *Earth Qi* drawing up from our feet to our abdomen.

A slight physical pressure from the abdomen to the feet can be added to increase awareness of the *rooting*. The muscles can *lightly* push down from the abdomen into the pelvic region during the exhale. This is followed by the muscles of the legs and feet *lightly* pressurizing downward as well. Then on the inhale, we relax the pressurization as the Qi is drawn up from the feet, back to the abdomen. With this added muscular compression, we can physically feel our feet *rooting* into the Earth. Then with the release of this compression, we can also experience the sensation of Qi pumping upward. From this, we may become aware of a heavy, densification feeling while *compacting* Qi, and a light and floating sensation, while drawing the Qi.

Qigong Practice: “Threading the Nine Holed Pearls” (Rising)

(Note: Please find a link to a video clip of the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* practice at: <https://youtu.be/aohUWr3Xji4>)

Figure 1



Threading the First Pearl: The Toes and Feet

1. Start in the sinking position, with the weight shifted to the heels. The knees are bent, the abdomen is collapsed inward, and the hips are tucked forward (see Figure 1).
2. Have both palms facing the ground and slightly flexed, yet loose and relaxed. Feel a connection of the palms to the Earth, as if lightly pressing a large ball to the ground. Keep the arms slightly bent, and ensure the joints are not tightly locked.
3. Gently roll the weight forward from the heels to the balls of the feet, while keeping the heels on the ground. Have the toes slightly grip the ground, holding the weight forward. Also allow the knees and hips to shift forward in coordination with this movement.
4. As the weight shifts to the toes, begin breathing into the toes and feet, *threading* the Qi through their connective joints.
5. Simultaneously begin the rising motion. The mental focus and breath move through the toes and feet in synchronicity with the ascension.
6. As you rise, allow the palms and fingers to relax and gently roll forward, shifting the fingers downward. The backs of the palms

thus face forward. The downward relaxed fingers will draw the *Earth Qi* we have gathered as we rise with the movement.

Threading the Second & Third Pearls: The Ankles and Knees

1. Continue the upward rising motion, gently expanding from the toes to the ankles, and then to the knees. This motion occurs by pressing the toes and feet downward while drawing the transitioning pelvis and tailbone forward and upward. This invokes a rolling motion to occur from the feet, up the legs, and to the hips, one joint at a time.
2. As you rise, the weight shifts forward. This occurs without bending forward and while keeping the tailbone inward. The balls of the feet and toes thus bear more weight, with the heels remaining on the ground.
3. Continue with awareness of the limbs and their connective joints in synchronicity with the breath and the upward movement.
4. Also continue to allow the arms to rise simultaneously as the body rises, as if they are floating upward. Use the shoulder blades and shoulders to lift the arms.

Threading the Fourth & Fifth Pearls: The Pelvis and Spine

1. Continue the upward rising motion, *threading* from the thighs into the entire hip and pelvic region.
2. Consciously become aware of all the bones, muscles, and joints related to the hip and pelvis area as you *thread* this entire *pearl*. As you rise, maintain the hips, pelvic region, and abdomen expanding upward, while keeping the tailbone tucked in (hips shifted forward). This isolates movement in the tailbone, sacrum, and hip joints, invoking awareness and Qi flow in this entire area.
3. After completing the *threading* of the hip region, the arms will have risen to approximately one half of the way up before they have fully lifted to a horizontal position (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



4. As you continue to rise, the spine also expands, opening like an accordion. Consciously lengthen one vertebra at a time, while *threading* the spine and entire torso. This elongating occurs from the tailbone to the base of the skull. As with the rest of the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* practice, expanding the spine must not create excessive tension or tightness. Feel the lengthening in the vertebrae gently drawn upward from the top of the head. (At the same time, keep the feet rooted into the ground). The chin drawing slightly inward accompanies the final expansion of the vertebrae from the neck upward. (Note: Qi will automatically rise into the head, and we need not concentrate Qi there in this practice; otherwise, excessive Qi may travel to the head & skull).
5. While expanding the spine and torso, the shoulder blades, rib cage, sternum, and collar bones automatically open, additionally impacting these bones and muscles. These areas are not specifically named as the *Nine Pearls*, yet *threading* through the trunk affects these areas as well.

Threading the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Pearls:
The Shoulders, Elbows, Wrists, & Fingers

1. As you are *threading* the entire spine, simultaneously allow the arms to continue rising upward. Coordinate the arms to rise just below the horizontal level. When the arms finally reach a horizontal level, the spine must have fully expanded into the completed rising position.

2. While the spine expands and the arms approach the horizontal position, simultaneously move the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th *pearls* in synchronization. This means that we expand from the shoulders, to the elbows, to the wrists, and to the fingers, extending the arms while guiding the Qi with the movement.
3. Upon completion of the fully risen posture, extend the arms, and straighten the fingers (9th Pearl) to a position parallel to the ground. This occurs without tightly locking the arms or fingers. At this point, the Qi is fully *threaded* through the *nine pearls*, from the toes to the fingers (see Figure 3).

Note: The fully risen position is not locked in any part of the body. Locking joints can block the flow of Qi. Movement occurs in a relaxed fashion, without tension, in a steady and unbroken stream of motion.

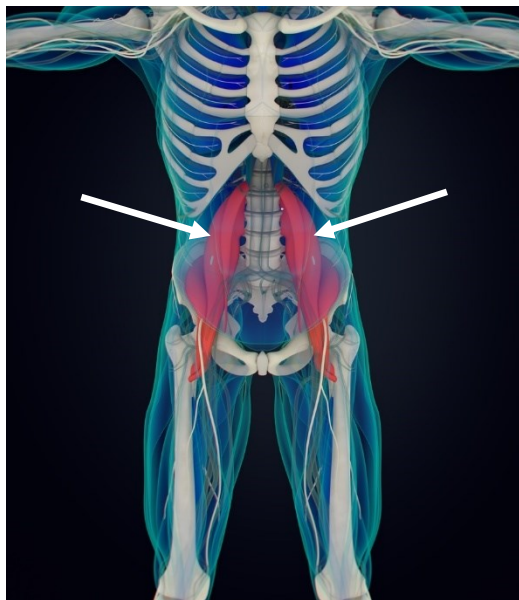
Figure 3



Note: Threading the hip and pelvic region also refers to moving Qi and awareness through the connective muscles, tendons, and ligaments associated with this area. For our purpose, we are considering the related areas associated with the hip and pelvis area as one pearl. This also includes the threading of the psoas as a part of this pearl. The psoas muscle is not a joint between bones; however, it is like a joint, since it connects the lower and upper half of the body. The psoas muscle has also been termed as the Muscle of the Soul, possibly because it is the deepest muscle in the body, and it is our core stabilization. An open

and relaxed psoas muscle assists in drawing Qi from the lower body to the upper body. Essentially, the psoas muscle expands and lengthens as the hips, pelvis, and spine open in the rising motion. Consciously leading the Qi through the psoas muscle is another layer of awareness that we may add to Threading the Nine Holed Pearls practice.

Psoas Muscle
The Muscle of the Soul



Qigong Practice: “Threading the Nine Holed Pearls” (*Sinking*)
Compacting the Qi Down

1. From the outward extended arms and fingers position, draw the arms straight back as you exhale (see Figure 4).
2. While beginning the exhale and drawing the arms in, shift the weight to the back heels and begin lightly bending the knees while lowering the body.
3. You are now also *compacting* the Qi downward, gently pressing the flattened palms. This *compacting* occurs in reverse, drawing the Qi back through the same pathway as you *sink* down and exhale.

Figure 4



4. *Compact* the Qi through all the *nine pearls* in reverse until you have fully completed the sinking motion. At this point, your awareness and breath will have returned to the 1st *pearl*, the toes (see Figure 5).
5. As you *sink*, the hips remain forward with the tailbone pointing down. Minimally, you *sink* to where the toes and the knees are in line. As a precaution, we recommend *sinking* only to a maximum of three inches beyond the knees, provided that the knees are aligned over the toes.
6. After you *sink* down to the starting position, you may then prepare for another repetition.

Figure 5



Compacting Qi

We have briefly discussed what it means to *compact* Qi through the body. To further clarify, *compacting* Qi literally means to compress and move the Qi downward or inward. We *compact* Qi so that we can condense it into the meridians, bones, *energy gates*, and other areas of the body. By condensing the Qi, we can clear blockages and increase our life force. Qi *compacting* movements are typically performed alternately with movements that gather or draw Qi. Once Qi is collected, we typically *compact* it by applying an *energetic* pushing or squeezing. *Compacting* Qi is not specifically done muscularly, yet a deliberate and subtle muscular pressurization may occur in some movements. This can help move and compress fresh Qi into the body while pushing out stagnant Qi. *Compacting* Qi often follows a rising Yang movement, and it coordinates with a contracting Yin movement. Therefore, on the Yin movements, we typically condense the Qi downward into the body. In much of Qigong practice, we specifically utilize our hands and arms as tools for *compacting* Qi through the body.

Moving Heaven and Earth Qi

As described in chapter one, *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi* represent Yin and Yang qualities; however, they are not synonymous with Yin and Yang. *Earth Qi* is primarily Yin, and *Heaven Qi* is primarily Yang in nature, and neither force is superior or inferior to the other. These two fields of energy blend with Qi to create opposite qualities of Qi. The opposite qualities of Qi are consistent with the contrasting forces within our body, and they are also reflected throughout the universe, both physically and *energetically*. *Earth Qi* emanates from the magnetic field of the Earth, (including water, rocks, trees, and plants) which also moves through our body. The field of energy from *Heaven Qi* transmits a positive radiation from the firmament and celestial bodies, which is absorbed into the bio-electric field of our body. Our body is basically an antenna for drawing in these two fields of Yin and Yang energy. An aim of Qigong practice is to become aware of and utilize these two powerful forces.

Although *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi* automatically sustain us, blockages in our meridians or *energy gates* affect the natural influx of *Earth Qi* or *Heaven Qi*. Applying breath and focus, along with Qigong movement, gives us the ability to consciously gather more *Earth Qi* and *Heaven*

Qi. This in turn increases our *Qi* flow and clears blockages. The movements in Qigong are designed to draw *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi*, which in turn may be directed toward *energy gates* and channels. Learning to sense and move *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi* in coordination with Qigong movement is a vital ingredient for developing a more advanced stage of awareness in Qigong practice.

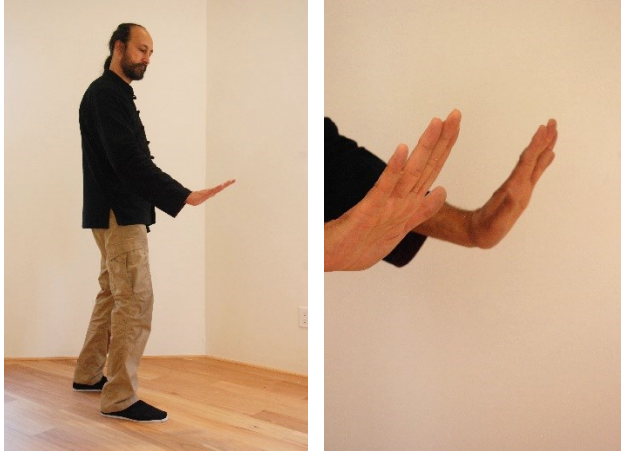
Hand Movements for Moving Qi

We may consider our hands as tools for gathering and moving *Heaven* and *Earth Qi* through our body. Qigong hand movements are also utilized to clear blockages from *energy gates* and meridians. These hand movements may pass alongside specific areas of the body to move and increase the flow of *Qi*. Also, the hands may come in direct contact with, and specifically impact, given areas of the body.

Our hands act as powerful receptors for gathering the blend of *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi* from the field of energy that is all around us. The blend of *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi* also exists within our being, creating our personal *Qi field*. This *Qi field* is the energy that radiates around our body, comparable to the *aura*. Our *Qi field* is a unique blend of *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi*, intertwined with the essence of our being. We may also regard our *Qi field* as a bio-electric energy surrounding the body. Like the body itself, our *Qi field* also requires that we gather and move *Qi* to clear this field. Clearing and revitalizing our *Qi field* is vital to our health and well-being. Our physical body and *Qi field* are thus integrally related. Many Qigong hand movements are designed to clear our *Qi field*, which simultaneously impacts the body. We therefore use Qigong hand movements as tools for gathering and clearing *Qi* from the entire body and its *Qi field* as well.

There are basic hand movements in Qigong practice that are somewhat universal in application for gathering and moving *Qi* through the physical body and its *Qi field*. We will now narrate basic hand positions and guidelines that may be useful in learning to sense, move, *compact*, and gather *Qi* throughout the body.

Techniques for Moving Qi



Flexed Palm for Moving & Compacting Qi

Some Qigong hand movements require a slight flexing of the palm in a manner where we:

1. Compact *Heaven Qi* downward.
2. Move Qi through the body, *energy gates*, and meridians.
3. Clear the *Qi Field* around our body.
4. Gather *Heaven Qi* or *Earth Qi*.

Typically, flexed palm positions are employed in Qigong for gathering, *compacting*, or moving Qi. We slightly flex our palms at an angle according to where we are moving the Qi. The flexing transpires from the palm, not from the fingers, and it is done without tension or rigidity. The sensation that occurs in the movement of the hand may intensify our awareness of the palm. The slight flexing of the palm also draws attention and concentration of Qi in the hand(s). This sensation corresponds to a key point on the palm called the *Buddha Palm* or *Laogong Point*. The *Buddha Palm* is a significant point on the hand where Qi can be drawn in or expelled. The slight flexing of the palm assists us to sense and activate the *Buddha Palm* point.

A flexed palm is often used for compressing or clearing Qi through our body or our *Qi field*. At other times, the hands may be positioned in various directions for the purpose of guiding or gathering Qi. When the flexed palm is facing downward toward the ground, it can also be for the purpose of gathering and connecting with the *Earth Qi*.

It is important to note that the wrists, hands, and fingers do not over-tighten in the flexed palm position. The flexing motion is firm, yet it is not locked. In this hand position, we may sense an actual force that we are pressing or pushing. This sensation may be comparable to pressing our hands through water. Even though this technique uses muscular flexing of our palms to direct the Qi, we are actually applying mental guidance to *compact* or move the Qi.

Relaxed Downward Palms for Drawing Qi



Some Qigong hand movements require relaxed finger positions (with hanging or straightened wrists) where we:

1. Draw *Earth Qi* upward.
2. Move Qi through our *Qi field*, *energy gates*, meridians, etc.
3. Gather *Heaven Qi* or *Earth Qi*

In the relaxed palm movement, we are typically gathering Qi when the hands and arms are moving in an upward or lateral motion. Often this hand position is combined with an opposite motion where the hands alternate from relaxed fingers for gathering Qi, to flexed palms for *compacting* Qi. We can then witness how these hand movements follow the Yin and Yang principle of contraction and expansion. The contracting and expanding through the flexed and relaxed palm, pumps the *Earth* and *Heaven Qi*.

When drawing Qi with relaxed fingers, we allow the hands to naturally suspend from the support of the wrists whether they are angled downward or straight (according to a given practice). We may experience awareness of the blood flowing into the hands and fingertips as they relax. This can provide us with the ability to sense the Qi being magnetized to our hands and fingers. The relaxed hands create an antenna that draws from the *Universal Field* of Qi (the blend of *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi*) around us.

Applying relaxed fingers while moving the back of the hand forward may also be used to sweep and gather Qi. This is achieved by turning the back of the hand to face forward while propelling the arms from the back to front of the body. This motion is similar to how we gather Qi with relaxed hands and fingers, except that we are gathering Qi laterally.

Upward Palms for Gathering Qi



Some Qigong practices have upward facing palms for gathering Qi. In this movement, we are typically holding our palms upward in a relaxed position with the fingers lightly touching each other. It is as if the palms are subtly curved to collect a downpour of water. The palms and fingers relax to the point that a slight curvature naturally occurs. When the upward palms soften and relax, we may experience some type of Qi sensation, such as a weight or subtle pressure on the palms. Our sensitivity and awareness in the upward palm position thus invokes Qi to be gathered. Then we may direct the gathered Qi to wherever the hands and arms move the Qi. In Qigong practice, we often move our hands to guide the collected Qi toward our *energy gates* and bodily meridians

Supple Hand Transitions

Hand movements in Qigong often switch from one direction to another, transitioning from a relaxed palm to a flexed palm position. When hands change directions, the angle of the wrists may sometimes shift as well. In most cases, we gently transition the wrists from one direction to another in a rolling motion. We perform graceful transitions as opposed to changing angles abruptly, regardless of the speed. Qi can actually be thrown and lost, and rounded movements are designed to retain and even gather the Qi. During transitional movements in Qigong, we thus articulate the micro-movements that occur in between the primary actions.

Supple hand transitions occur by unfurling the wrists, the palms, and the fingers to the fingertips, one joint at a time. Also, movement in the hands typically remains continuous and unbroken. At most, there is usually only a split second of a pause during Qigong hand transitions, unless otherwise specified. To keep this continuity of movement, a rolling and unfurling motion must occur in the wrists and fingers.

A good practice for becoming aware of the transitions occurring in the hands can be done by waving the wrist and palm while moving the arm up and down. In this practice, we transition from a flexed palm (compacting Qi) as we press downward, to a relaxed palm and fingers position (drawing Qi) as we raise the arm. We allow the wrist and hand to flex and relax, opening the flow of Qi through the joints. At the same time, we roll the wrists on each transition while unfurling from the wrists to the fingertips and the fingertips to wrists, one joint at time. This training helps to activate the Qi flow through the wrists and fingers so that we may learn to gather and move Qi. Note: You may think of this motion like bouncing a ball down with a flexed palm and allowing the ball to draw up into the relaxed rising palm.

Unfurling the Limbs

Like our wrists and fingers, our limbs must also transition and unfold one joint at a time during Qigong practice. We basically unfurl each joint in a systematic order as we expand our limbs. This motion has been illustrated in the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* practice, and it can also be applied toward Qigong movement in general. Systematically unfurling the limbs allows successive movement and awareness of Qi as it unfolds through the body, one segment at time. When movement occurs in this fashion, a smooth and rolling motion transpires, like a wave flowing through each joint and limb. This promotes Qi flow in the direction of the movement. As with the hands and wrists, abrupt transitions from one limb to the next are to be avoided. This way the Qi flow is not interrupted while it follows along with the motion.

When unfurling and lifting the arm, a key point to remember is to begin raising it from the wing bone (or scapula) first, before unfurling the rest of the arm. We want to open Qi flow in our wing bone and shoulder first so that it can fully flow to our arms, wrists, hands, and fingers.

Isolating the motion of the arms to begin from the wing bones and shoulders can also clear blockages that occur in these areas, impacting our health and bodily meridians. Lifting the arms from the shoulders and wing bones is also far more energy efficient and less fatiguing. If we thought of our arms to end at the point of the shoulders, we would just raise the arms from our shoulders and wing bones only. Typically, we use the muscles of our arms to lift, with lessened usage of the shoulders and wing bones. In Qigong practices, the correct movement is to use the shoulders and wing bones to raise the arms, creating proper alignment and Qi flow. Then the elbows, wrists, and fingers may unfurl from the shoulders in a rolling motion. Once this is mastered, it may feel effortless to lift the arms, with a sensation as if the arms are simply floating upward.

Feet and Legs as Qi Receptors

We have described how the hands and arms draw and move Qi. It is also important to know that our legs and feet work as receptors for drawing Qi as well. Beginning from our feet and toes, we draw *Earth Qi* upward as illustrated in the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* practice. The center of the ball of the foot constitutes the *Yongquan* point, also known as the *Bubbling Springs* point on the feet. Like the *Buddha Palm* point on the hands, this point on the feet is the receptor for drawing *Earth Qi* up through the legs and into the body. Similar to flexing and relaxing our palm for drawing and *compacting* Qi, the *Bubbling Springs* point is stimulated by the movement of our feet. As we move into the sinking motion, we typically shift our weight back to our heels. As we rise, we shift our weight forward to the balls of our feet, activating the *Bubbling Springs* point. This movement awakens the receptivity of our feet to the *Earth Qi*. The meridians stemming from the feet and toes are then activated so that *Earth Qi* can easily enter and flow up through the receptors of our feet and legs.

Relaxed Movement

Tightness in limbs or joints will block the flow of Qi. Even though we occasionally apply gentle flexing movements to activate Qi, the whole body is never fully locked in any limb or joint. In classic exercise routines, we may be inclined to stiffen our body and use excessive muscular tension, because we feel it is necessary to achieve an appropriate work out. Typically, the opposite of this is true with Qigong

movements, in terms of maximizing our health benefits. In Qigong, we generally move without prolonged constriction of our muscles, yet we still move with definitive skeletal motion. An aerobic workout in Qigong is therefore achieved without overly tensing and tightening the body. Nevertheless, health benefits and Qi flow are maximized in Qigong through a relaxed body and relaxed movement.

Aligned Movement

What might be observed in Qigong is that movement remains relaxed while also definitive in form. The skeletal frame remains evenly aligned; however, the muscular force is minimized and not overstrained. This combination helps us to develop sensitivity through the combination of relaxed musculature along with the skeletal frame moving in balanced alignment. As discussed, proper body alignment and deep internal relaxation are major contributing factors for our awareness and for Qi flow. Additionally, a body moving in correct alignment allows the flow of Qi to travel according to the direction of a given Qigong motion.

Even Tempo

In Qigong practice, generating Qi flow also transpires through maintaining steady and unbroken movements. As motion and concentration can move Qi, stopping partially though a continuous movement can halt or interrupt the flow of Qi. Similarly, momentum of Qi flow can be interrupted if the tempo of movement is erratic or inconsistent in speed.

Keeping a steady, unbroken rhythm in Qigong movement makes it a meditation, where the mind, body, and breath remain continuous. This rhythmic movement can also bring about altered brainwaves where our awareness, breath, and Qi penetrate deeper when synchronized with the cycle of our movement. Rhythmic, unbroken movement not only appears more aesthetic, but it is also another ingredient for opening the flow of Qi and clearing *energetic* blockages. We might consider that the Universal flow of Qi naturally perpetuates in an unbroken and rhythmic cycle. Harmonizing with this continuous and rhythmic flow may therefore occur when Qigong is performed in a flowing and unbroken manner.

Techniques for Learning to Move Qi

With every Qigong hand movement, we want to become aware of using our hands to move the Qi. As described in some of the basic hand positions, characteristically one of the following actions occurs:

1. Gathering Qi
2. Moving Qi
3. Compacting Qi

When applying Qigong hand movements, we are minimally learning to sense one of the above actions in relation to a given motion. This allows us to apply conscious intent toward a given Qigong movement. Developing the sensation of the *energetic* application involved in gathering, moving, or *compacting* Qi increases the benefits of our Qigong practice.

Moving Qi Technique #1

A technique for developing the sensation of moving Qi with our hands can be done while in water. In this practice, we recognize the sensation of our hands pressing against the force of the water. If we raise the downward facing (relaxed) palms up through water, it can feel similar to gathering Qi. If we press our flexed palms down through water, we can experience the physical force of *compacting* or pressing Qi. Alternatively, we may sweep our palms laterally through the water to feel the sensation of gathering Qi. Then we might equate these sensations as being similar to moving our hands through the air during Qigong practice.

Moving Qi Technique #2

We can also develop the sensation of Qi between both hands by feeling the interaction between the palms. If we hold our palms facing each other and sense the space between the hands, we form a relationship between the two palms. Here the two *Buddha Palm* points interact between the hands. We can then take a moment to feel the Qi between the palms, expanding and contracting as we move the hands closer together and then further apart. We use the flexing palm to *compact* the Qi together and apply the relaxed palm when expanding the hands apart. The hands move about two feet apart and then come together about six inches apart. This practice develops a relationship with the movement our hands in connection to the *Universal Field* of Qi.

- ☯ Qi must move smoothly to clear blockages
- ☯ Mindfulness in movement is key to moving Qi
- ☯ Thread each joint to move the flow of Qi
- ☯ Use limbs as receptors for moving & drawing Qi
- ☯ Articulate movements in a relaxed, steady tempo

CHAPTER SIX

Qigong for Self-Awareness



In this chapter we will provide technical details of basic, yet powerful Qigong practices. We will also describe many of the subtleties of Qigong movement which are typically discovered through repeated practice. To understand Qigong in depth, it may require a comprehensive explanation of each exercise. A great deal of Qigong theory is interwoven into the *energetic* mechanics of even the simplest of movements. Without a full understanding of Qigong practice and theory, much could be misunderstood, thereby reducing the benefits. Our purpose here is to provide unique perspectives and guidelines that can enhance Qigong exercises, so that they become more effective.

Part of our discussion regarding Qigong movement will include techniques for drawing and guiding Qi, as illustrated in prior chapters. Integrating these methods that we have discussed will increase the benefits of our Qigong exercises.

Body Alignment Review

Prior to beginning Qigong practice, it is good to take a moment to ensure that the basic rules of proper body alignment are in place for physical protection and also for optimum results. With practice, realigning the body will become automatic, and the need to continually readjust the posture decreases. Below is a summary of six body alignment methods that we perform prior to Qigong practice.

1. Tuck in the Tailbone

We begin by ensuring that the tailbone is pointing downward. This will tilt the pelvis forward and shift the weight to the balls of the feet. The pelvis is not overly thrust forward, yet the buttocks and tailbone are tucked in without tightening. A properly tilted pelvis aligns and connects the hips to the feet. The Qi can then flow better from the earth to the feet and up to the pelvis and hips.

2. Feet Parallel

When the hips and pelvis move forward, it becomes important that the feet are pointing straight as well. We keep the feet parallel to each other so that the knees bend in line with the feet. If the tailbone is tucked in, then the knees will easily track in line with the feet when they bend. This way, we can prevent injury to the knee, especially if the hips are shifted forward. If the feet are turned inward or outward, the knees may not move in line with the feet, causing strain around the knees. With Qigong movements that contain frequent bending of the knee(s), an injury or pain may occur if we align the hips without also aligning our feet in a parallel manner.

3. Head Held by an Imaginary Thread

When the head gently draws upward as if an imaginary thread is lifting it, the neck, chest, and spine automatically align with it. The chest is relaxed and not thrust outward; however, it is not caved inward either. The gentle lifting from the top of the head should be enough to lightly lift the chest as the chin also draws inward. If we draw a mental line from the top of our ears to meet at the top of our head, we find the fontanel point, the point on the head known as the *Bai Hui*. We use the imagery thread for the purpose of evoking a sensation of drawing our head upward. This gentle lifting occurs without tensing or contracting the neck or jaw muscles.

4. The Five Bows

In order to prevent blockages in the Qi flow, we never lock the joints tightly in Qigong practice. Even when we fully extend our arms or legs outward, the limbs are not fully locked. While in a Qigong resting position, we also maintain a slight *bowed* posture along with *bowed* arms and legs. This slight bending in our stance is known as the *Five Bows*. Basically, this consists of a gentle bowing of the torso with the abdomen inward and the upper back concaved outward. Additionally, the legs and arms remain slightly bent. The arms also roll slightly forward creating a small space between the armpits. This allows for blood and Qi to flow to this area, and it permits the lymph nodes around the armpits (Axillary Lymph Nodes) to drain as well. The *Five Bows* need not be dramatic; a subtle bending is sufficient to keep the Qi flowing.

5. Relax

Excessive tightening of the muscles in general can block the flow of Qi in the body. In Qigong, we want to be relaxed and loose, yet keep our frame sturdy. We can utilize our body awareness and breath to consciously release any tension prior to practice so that we can experience an amplified flow of Qi.

6. Tongue Touches the Upper Palate

In general, we touch the tongue to the upper palate of the mouth throughout Qigong practice because two major meridians connect at this point. Touching the tongue to the upper palate allows the Qi to circulate powerfully in these two meridians. These two major meridians can become highly activated and feed Qi throughout the connecting channels in the body as well.

“Threading the Nine Holed Pearls” Warm Up

After we have properly aligned our body, it is suggested that we practice the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* (discussed in Chapter 5) to loosen the joints and open the Qi flow throughout the body. *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* can also be applied to other Qigong practices, because we can learn to *thread* our joints and limbs whenever we perform any Qigong movement.

Threading in Qigong Practice

When doing Qigong exercises that involve *rising* and *sinking* motions, it is a good idea to apply the *threading* concept in general, even if we are not performing the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* practice. The *rising* and *sinking* motion is a common theme in many Qigong practices. Therefore, whenever we *rise* and *sink* in Qigong movement, we want to consciously *thread* the Qi through each limb of the body (the *Nine Pearls*),

The *rising* and *sinking* motion of the legs in much of Qigong can display an identical, or similar theme, as that of *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls*. In a great deal of Qigong movement, the legs typically *sink* and *rise* in one consistent manner, where the knees bend and straighten, up and down, unfurling one joint at a time. As we *rise*, we can mentally *thread* our joints and limbs through the feet, ankles, knees, hips, and spine, and in reverse as we *sink*. Also, as we *sink* into the contracted posture, we can position our weight on the back heels, and as we *rise*, our weight can shift to the balls of the feet, as illustrated in the *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* practice.

In other Qigong exercises, the arms and hands may rise upward and downward in numerous ways that differ from that of *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls* practice. Though the arm and hand movements may differ, we still *thread* the arms and hands in the same manner when they move into an expanded or contracted motion, as clarified in *Threading the Nine Holed Pearls*. In review, threading the arms and hands means to unfurl the limbs and move awareness from the shoulders, to the elbows, to the wrists, and to the fingers on expanding movements, and in reverse on the contracting movements.

The coordinated contracting and expanding motions, combined with *threading*, cause the body to operate like a generator, drawing Qi through the legs, arms, and head. The *threaded rising* and *sinking* movement draws Yin and Yang energy, where the body works as one integrated unit. Thus, *rising* and *sinking* in rhythm with arm movements makes the body an instrument for blending *Heaven* and *Earth Qi*, generating balance, health, and well-being.

(Note: Please find a link to a video clip of the following Qigong practices at: <https://youtu.be/U6ItmJUewdY>)

Qigong Practice: “Twist the Body Left & Right”

Prior to performing Qigong, we may also choose to loosen the joints and tendons further using a crosswise motion warmup practice, that we call *Twist the Body Left & Right*. This can be done in addition to the *Threading of the Nine Holed Pearls*. To further loosen the joints and tendons, we suggest twisting left and right to open the spine and body laterally. This can be extremely beneficial in opening the meridians, joints, tendons, spine, hips, and shoulders, and in moving the Qi in general. When performing this motion, we attempt to consciously open the joints and tendons using *mindful* breathing, as opposed to practicing as if it were simply a callisthenic exercise. Below we have outlined guidelines for the practice of *Twist the Body Left & Right*:

- a. Begin by allowing the arms to naturally swing left and right from the force of the waist twisting. Continue for a minute or two. Allow the arms to swing to the height of the waist. The arms are not to propel the motion; they are to move by the force of the waist twisting left and right while the arms remain equidistant to each other, like a propeller. Perform this left and right twisting from the waist without overstraining. Also, keep the hips facing forward while twisting at the waist only. The entire lower back and abdomen loosen and open with this motion.
- b. Next, raise the arms up to the level of the diaphragm and continue the same motion, using the waist to propel the turning. This opens the mid-spine and diaphragm, while also twisting and opening the ribcage.
- c. Finally, raise the arms at approximately the level of the shoulders and continue swinging left and right. As you swing to the left, lift the right heel upward and turn back to look at the heel of the right foot. As you swing to the right, perform the opposite motion (raising the left heel) to receive a full stretch of the shoulders, chest, arms, pelvic area, and feet. In this third segment of the practice, the hips will *now* twist in order to turn and look back at the raised heel.



Turn and Look at Raised Heel

The twisting, while simultaneously looking at the raised back heel, brings a full pivot of the hips that opens the sacrum and activates the *energy gates* of the feet. The full twist also stimulates the body meridians while providing life-generating movement to the internal organs of the body.

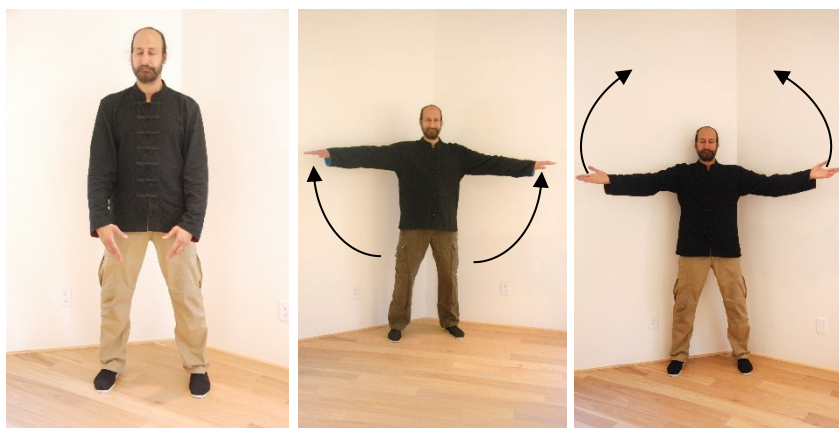
Qigong Practice #1: “Gathering Earth & Heaven”

As described in the previous chapter, the hands are often utilized in specific positions for gathering and *compacting* Qi. We will now apply these hand positions to gather and *compact* Qi in a practice we call *Gathering Earth & Heaven*.

Gathering Earth & Heaven is typically performed at the conclusion of a Qigong practice. *Gathering Earth & Heaven* may also be performed as a general Qigong exercise, not only upon completion of practice, but at any time.

In this movement, we want to draw *Earth Qi*, gather *Heaven Qi*, and then *compact* the Qi we have gathered down through the top of the head. The hands then *compact* the Qi straight down through the *Central Channel* or the *Zhong Mai*, and then down to *Xia Dantien*, located in the lower abdomen.

Gathering Earth & Heaven



- a. To begin, raise the arms upward, using the relaxed downward hand for drawing Qi from the Earth. Use the shoulders to allow the arms to rise instead of lifting with the arms. The palms and fingers remain relaxed, yet not limp at the wrists. A conscious intent is applied in gathering the *Earth Qi* with the palms and fingers. Allow a gentle sense of the arms floating upward while breathing in as the arms rise.
- b. Gently rotate your arms when they arise to mid-level so that the palms turn to face upward. At this horizontal position, use your forearms and shoulders to turn the palms facing upward (as opposed to turning at the wrist). Feel the sensation in the palms and fingers receiving the *Heaven Qi*. Continue breathing in, gathering *Heaven Qi* while the arms rise upward.
- c. On the fully risen posture, the arms will be held straight up, maintaining a slight bend in the elbows. The palms and fingers arch inward toward each other, as if resting upon an elliptical object. Here the *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi* that was gathered combine between both palms overhead. The bowed arms and palms concentrate the Qi downward to the head. Maintain the sense of energy between both palms, with the collected Qi combining between the hands. This ball of Qi gathered between the palms is a force that can be directed anywhere throughout our body to positively impact ourselves.

*Gathering Qi Overhead
Compact Qi through the Head*



- d. Both of the hands now *compact* the collected Qi downward, pushing through the top of the head (through the *Bai Hui* point) as you breathe out. As your arms lower, the fingers begin pointing toward each other with palms facing downward. The Qi is then compressed down through the head, throat, chest, and down through the diaphragm and internal organs. The hands then continue *compacting* the Qi down to the lower abdomen, or to *Xia Dantien*.

When we push our hands down from the top of the head (*Bai Hui*) and in front of our body, we use our intent to draw Qi down the *Zhong Mai* channel. Though this central meridian is actually located inside the body, the hand movement alongside it will impact it. Additionally, we use this motion to *compact* the Qi down through the entire inside and outside of our body, generating health within the skeletal system, internal organs, muscle tissue, and skin.

Compact Qi Down the Central Channel
Compact Qi Down to the Lower Abdomen



- e. After you have performed one cycle of *Gathering Earth and Heaven*, you may repeat this practice again instead of stopping at *Xia Dantien*. When repeating the cycle, allow your hands to continue pushing downward below the abdomen and toward the base of the *Zhong Mai* channel. Then gracefully move the arms to return to the starting position to begin another repetition of this practice. On the final repetition, you *compact* the Qi down to the lower abdomen, or *Xia Dantien*, and stop there. This is done by drawing the hands inward toward the lower abdomen. Place the right palm over the left (women reverse the hands) and circle the hands clockwise to store the gathered Qi into your bio-battery, located at *Xia Dantien*.

Perform 3 to 10 repetitions of the entire cycle.

- The rising motion, moving the arms from the ground to the horizontal level, is gathering ***Di Qi*** or *Earth Qi*.
- The rising motion, moving the arms from the horizontal level upward, is gathering ***Tien Qi*** or *Heaven Qi*.
- The *compacting* of Qi downward through the top of the head (*Bai Hui*) is called ***Qi Bai Hui***, which means: “Qi, go through the top of my head”.

- The *compacting* of Qi downward from the head through the middle of the body is called **Qi Zhong Mai**, which means: “Qi, go down my *Central Channel*”.
- The *compacting* of Qi down into *Xia Dantien* is called **Qi Chen Xia Dantien**, which means: “Qi, go down to my lower abdomen”.

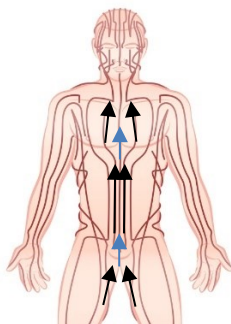
Note: It is most beneficial to intentionally sense the Qi that is collected during this practice. Also, we can learn to consciously feel the force of the Qi being pressed downward through our head and body. Feeling the sensation of the Qi gathered between the hands increases the impact on our cells and tissue as our hands move across the body. Using *interoception* of our entire body also clears the channels as our hands pass downward in this practice.

Qigong Practice #2: “Rowing the Boat across the Ocean”

We have included another simple yet powerful Qigong movement that will assist us in learning to draw and *compact* Qi called *Rowing the Boat across the Ocean*. In this practice, we pull the *Earth Qi* upward with closed fists. The fists come together in close proximity, drawing the Qi up along either side of the *Central Channel* or the *Zhong Mai*. Then with a slightly flexed palm, we push or *compact* the *Heaven Qi* downward along the same pathway. As we pull the Qi upward with the fistful palms, we draw them up along either side of the middle of the body to the level of the collar bone.

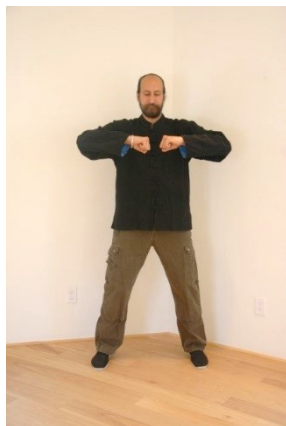
Curiously, the fistful hands travel along the kidney meridians, impacting these channels and others as the arms rise. Then as the hands press downward on either side of the torso, we also *compact* the Qi down these meridians as well. In this practice we develop a physical and *energetic* sense of pulling and pushing Qi through the meridians. Similar to the concept in *Qigong Practice #1: Gathering Earth & Heaven*, we are using the movement of our arms and hands to move Qi throughout the body.

Pull Qi Upward Along Torso Meridians



- a. Begin this practice in a *sinking* position. Start by making two fists with thumbs placed over the knuckles (not overly tightened) and with palms facing toward the body. Arms are downward with fists just inside the inner leg below the perineum. Start in the downward position, initiating the practice by rolling the fingers into a fist, as if grabbing and pulling Qi upward from the ground. This grabbing movement causes the *Earth Qi* to be drawn upward into the body.

Typically, we think a fist is used primarily for martial arts purposes; however, the fist also focuses every finger inward toward the *Buddha Palm* or *Laogong* point, thus concentrating the Qi. In this case, we are not using the fist to concentrate the Qi for striking. Rather, we are using the fist to collect and pull Qi upward.



- b. Next begin pulling the fists upward along either side of the center of the body, with the sensation of drawing *Earth Qi*. As you pull your fists upward, breathe in. When the fists reach the level of the collar bone, they naturally turn to face each other, approximately corresponding to the last point along the kidney meridian. For this to occur, the elbows point outward. As you pull the fists upwards, also coordinate the movement with the *rising* motion.
- c. Next, shift to an open palm, unfolding and opening the fingers. This requires a basic transition to a *flexed palm* position which is used to *compact* Qi downward. The fingers unroll systematically, starting from the wrists to the fingertips. The palms now face flat with fingers turning to point forward as you begin to press the Qi down through the body. *Compact* the Qi down to the starting position below the perineum. As you *compact* the Qi downward, coordinate the movement with the *sinking* motion while exhaling. When you return to the starting position, gently roll the hands back into a fist to prepare for another repetition.

Perform 15 to 20 repetitions of the entire cycle.

Note: Remember to utilize a rolling motion during the transitioning points where we change directions. This movement could be considered comparable to pumping a bike tire or rowing a boat.



Qigong Practice #3: “Swimming like a Butterfly”

From the previous Qigong practices that we have described, we gain a sense of drawing, gathering, and *compacting* Qi upward and downward. An upward and downward collection of Qi typically refers to gathering *Heaven Qi* or *Earth Qi*. In the *Swimming like a Butterfly* Qigong exercise, we are not specifically drawing Qi upward or downward. *Swimming like a Butterfly* involves the arms and hands moving horizontally, instead of up and down. In this practice we are thus gathering Qi from the *Universal Qi Field* around us, which contains a blend of both *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi*. After gathering from the *Universal Qi Field* in *Swimming like a Butterfly*, we then guide that Qi through the *energy gates* of our body.

Another important aspect of *Swimming like a Butterfly* is the maximized muscle and *tendon changing* that takes place. This occurs when we turn our arms and hands in one direction and then rotate them in a reverse direction. Our muscles and tendons in our arms rarely shift in such an extensive yet relaxed movement. Being that our arms, hands, and fingers contain the wiring of six meridians, it may require a full spectrum of muscle and tendon movements to specifically stimulate each of these meridians. The muscle and tendon changing movements of *Swimming like a Butterfly* will stimulate the arm meridians, which in turn will correlate to health and awakened Qi flow.

It is likely that many bodily ailments among highly athletic individuals occur because specific tendons and muscles are not appropriately opened and loosened. Even though many muscle groups may be utilized in standard athletic practice, rarely is there such extraordinary movement occurring where the tendons and muscles reverse in unique ways. The non-typical movements of *Swimming like a Butterfly* open and loosen the tendons and muscles, thereby clearing blockages in meridians and preventing stress and injury. The key to receiving the benefits of this Qigong practice is to ensure that proper reversal of the tendons is occurring along with the applied awareness of gathering and moving Qi.

“Swimming like a Butterfly” Part A:

- a. To begin, hold your arms just below shoulder height, extended straight forward. Rotate the back of your hands to face each other through the movement of your forearms, without wrist motion. The arms then begin a backward motion. Move your arms in a half circle backwards, keeping the shoulders down and relaxed. As you sweep backward, initiate a *sinking* motion in coordination with the movement.
- b. Continue in an unbroken movement, sweeping the Qi field with the hands, using the force of the shoulders and scapula to propel the arms backward. Sense the pressing of a force through a slight flexing of the palms. Make sure that you minimize muscular tension during this practice.

Sweep the Qi Field Backward



- c. When this half circular motion is completed, you will have ideally reversed your arms and hands to an almost opposite direction, with the palms facing toward each other behind the back. As much as possible, this is to occur without overly straining or tightening. At this point, a horizontal level of the arms cannot be fully maintained, and the arms will naturally angle downward. Therefore, do not attempt to force the tendons and muscles beyond their natural capacity. This being said, continue to keep the arms upward as much as comfortably possible, as they move backward.



- d. As soon as your arms have reached the reversed extended position, rotate the wrists inward, while continuously keeping the palms facing upward as they turn in. A scooping-like motion occurs where you rotate the wrists, palms, and fingers from pointing backward to pointing forward. Then the palms and fingers prepare to move forward as close toward your armpits as possible. At this point you will have synchronized the *sinking* motion to its conclusion. You thus uniformly time the *sinking* motion to completion just before the hands move alongside the body.

The upward palms moving alongside the body will carry the Qi that was gathered in the half circular movement. Then, this gathered Qi is moved through the lower torso, opening and stimulating the lower *energy gates*. This clears the pathway between the lower back (*Ming Men*) and the lower abdomen (*Xia Dantien*).

*Rotate Wrists Keeping Palms Upward
Move Hands Forward*



- e. As the upward facing palms advance forward alongside the torso, promptly begin the *rising* motion. Continue rising in synchronization with the hands moving straight forward toward the starting position. At the completion of the fully extended arms, the *rising* motion is concluded. After returning to the starting position, gently transition the movement by turning the palms to face outward again (by way of the forearms rotating) to begin another repetition.

Perform 5 to 10 repetitions of *a.* through *e.* in one fluid motion.

*Promptly Rise As
Arms Move Forward*



Although the hands may not specifically cross alongside the lower abdomen and lower back in this motion, we are still moving Qi through this general area. Additionally, we are also moving Qi through both sides of the diaphragm (*energy gate*) area as well. Depending on our flexibility, we will create the scooping motion as close to the armpits as possible to maximize our tendon changing impact. This may cause the hands to move across the body at a higher level than the abdomen and lower back. Even so, the entire lower half of the body can still be impacted from this movement.

Remember to hold the sensation of Qi gathered in the hands as we circle the arms. Then when we pass alongside or even near our *energy gates*, we actually move energy through them. By collecting Qi in the hands and pulling it alongside the *energy gates*, we can clear stagnant Qi as well as emotional and physical blockages. As stated, the hands and arms are tools that we have been given for health and self-awareness.

“Swimming like a Butterfly” Part B:

The second part of *Swimming like a Butterfly* is a reversed motion of this Qigong movement. Practicing in reverse creates an equal and opposite force on the muscles, while again, impacting the *energy gates*. In this portion of *Swimming like a Butterfly*, we gather Qi with our arms and hands laterally, in the opposite direction as shown in Part A, which will be from back to front. Then we pull the gathered Qi through the body, drawing the hands along the sides of the lower abdomen, and then toward the lower back (*Ming Men*).

- a. Begin with the parallel arms forward and the palms facing up. Then pull the hands straight back, drawing them inward toward the diaphragm. As you pull the arms inward, simultaneously transition into the *sinking* position. Here the hands repeat the passage alongside the torso in reverse, with the palms facing upward (as close to the armpits as possible without raising the shoulders). The fully contracted *sinking* position occurs after the arms have moved alongside the torso.
- b. The elbows, wrists, and hands now make a reversed rotating motion as they cross the body. This causes the fingers to point backward while the palms continuously face upward. The arms then transition straight behind the back, with the palms still facing upward.

Sink as Hands Draw In - Begin Rising as Arms Draw Behind



- c. After your arms have extended backward, transition them with the back side of the hands and arms moving forward. Continue the *rising* motion as the arms circle to the front. This occurs without a pause. Use this sweeping motion with the back hand moving forward to magnetize the Qi. Again, use the shoulders to propel the motion of the arms. The *rising* motion will fully complete when the arms return to the parallel position with the back of the palms facing each other.

Sweep Arms Forward



- d. When the back of your palms reach the parallel position in front of the body, gently rotate your hands from the forearms until the palms face upward. Then repeat, maintaining a smooth transition of motion.

Perform 5 to 10 repetitions of *a.* through *d.* in one fluid motion.

Qigong Practice #4: “Wind Blows the Lotus Blossom”

The practice of this classic Qigong movement named *Wind Blows the Lotus Blossom* is excellent for developing Qi sensitivity. This movement helps us sense the Qi between the hands and we can feel the two hands working together as one. In *Wind Blows the Lotus Blossom practice*, we can also sense the *Buddha Palm* or *Laogong* points connecting to each other. Further, we learn to develop supple movement, as the wrists and hands sway together in synchronicity.

- a. Begin by turning your palms to face each other at about waist height. Keep your palms about eighteen inches apart. Relax the fingers and feel the connection between the palms.

- b. Angle one of your palms approximately 60 degrees downward and the other about 60 degrees upward in proportion to each other. The palms will slightly face each other. The leading hand facing upward, is held slightly higher than the trailing hand, which faces downward. In this practice, the upper hand pulls the lower hand, while the lower hand pushes the upper hand. This is not a physical pushing and pulling of the hands, but rather an *energetic* application. This means that we are mentally pressing and pulling the force occurring between the two hands in coordination with movement.
- c. Next, begin gliding your forearms and palms to and fro from left to right, keeping the shoulders relaxed. When the hands move toward either side, they rotate positions with each other simultaneously. To further clarify, the downward palm gently turns to face upward, while the upward palm gently turns to face downward. This transition occurs at the point of the fully extended left or right direction. The shifting of the palms happens smoothly with a steady tempo. During the transitioning point, your hands must reverse positions by way of a gentle rotation of the forearms (not at the wrists) before proceeding to the opposite direction. The hands maintain an equidistant space with one another, keeping the leading palm above the trailing palm. Continue the *energetic* connection between the two hands even though the palms do not square directly with each other.
- d. Sense the pressure of your two palms connecting with each other. At the same time, you may feel the force of your leading hand (*Yang*) receiving *Heaven Qi*, while your downward hand (*Yin*) is receiving *Earth Qi*. This *energetic* pushing and pulling occurring with each hand creates a Yin-Yang *alchemicalization*. The pushing and pulling is to be of equal *energetic* force so that balance is achieved. To amplify this sensation, you may also apply a subtle flexing to the lower palm that is the pushing and use a relaxed palm to the upper hand that is pulling. This also helps to activate the *Buddha Palm energy gates* between the palms.

While the pushing and pulling is occurring, we can also apply a sensation of a subtle upward and downward pressing of each

hand. If we were to hold a small board between both hands in this Qigong position, we could feel the lower hand pressing the top of the board downward and the upper hand pressing the bottom of the board upward (held at a slight angle). Understanding this illustration may help us to sense these opposite forces at play between the hands. When we reverse the direction of the hands, the reverse sensation of holding a board would then also occur.



Wind Blows the Lotus Blossom
(Shift the Waist to Turn)

- e. As a final note to this practice, primarily use the waist and shoulders to turn the arms left and right, while keeping the hips facing forward. The movement of the waist thus propels the arms left and right. Except for some motion in the shoulders, the arm and hands remain relatively stationary, other than at the point of transitioning.

We have provided a great deal of detailed information for a simple Qigong movement only because numerous subtleties of this practice can be overlooked. Understanding the subtleties of practice is key to experiencing Qigong. Becoming aware of the movement of the Qi is learned through experiencing it, yet it is important to know what to look for during practice. We may be able to mimic beautiful Qigong movements and appear to have grasped an understanding of Qigong.

However, until we practice *Neigong* or the internal awareness aspect, we have not truly learned Qigong.

We understand that awareness of Qi may arise simply through the practice of external Qigong movements. This being said, understanding both the internal and the external elements of Qigong may enhance our experience of Qi and body awareness.

Qigong Practice #5: “Clouds Peirce Through”

Clouds Peirce Through was adapted from a style of Tai Chi. The structure of this movement has a basis in concrete Qigong principle, as Tai Chi and Qigong share related theory. Since *Clouds Peirce Through* is such a powerful Tai Chi movement, we have converted it into a symmetrical and repetitious Qigong practice. Other forms of Qigong may contain similar or identical movements to what we are calling *Clouds Peirce Through*.

In *Clouds Peirce Through*, we are essentially gathering *Earth Qi* and moving it up through the *Zhong Mai* or the *Central Channel*. We thus move the gathered Qi through the base of our body up toward the top of the head as both hands come together and concentrate the Qi. Our hands become a pointed tool by crossing over each other and then moving upward together. As we have described, our hands are used as tools for moving Qi and clearing our channels by guiding them alongside the body.

- a. Begin in a *risen* position with arms extended straight up and palms facing outward. Keep your arms straight, but not locked. The fingers point upward. Sweep your hands and arms downward in a half circle motion below the perineum. You are virtually sweeping and drawing Qi from the field around the body, gathering from both Heaven and Earth.
- b. As the arms go downward to gather the *Earth Qi*, coordinate moving into a *sinking* position. At the fully completed *sinking* position, the arms will have circled down below the perineum with the palms facing about six to twelve inches apart. It is as if you have *compacted* a ball of *Heaven & Earth Qi* together, below the perineum.



*Arms Sweep a Half-Circle Down from Heaven to Earth
Sink as the Arms Lower*

- c. After the hands have descended to the downward point, continue with an upward scooping motion of the palms. This is done by turning the palms to face up as if gathering water with both palms and lifting it upward. The only difference is that as the palms come together, they cross over each other in an “X”-like position. This will likely begin to occur at about the level of the abdomen. Place the right palm under the left hand bringing the center of the palms aligned so that both *Buddha Palm* points connect. The arms and hands then continue rising straight upward. The “X”-like position of the hands fully forms in proper position approximately at the level of the chest.

As you begin this entire upward motion of the arms and hands, also begin the *rising* motion of the body. The hands simultaneously move up the center of the body in synchronicity. Be conscious of guiding Qi through the internal body while this upward movement of the hands occurs. Use the crossed palms to move the Qi through the perineum, abdomen, diaphragm, chest, throat, forehead, and out the top of the head, as the hands rise upward. Placing the hands together, with one palm over the back of the hand, directly aligns the *Buddha Palm* or *Laogong* points with each other. This concentrates and amplifies the Qi for the purpose of clearing and revitalizing the *Zhong Mai* and *energy gates* of the body.



Cross Palms Moving Upward - Roll & Push Palms Up

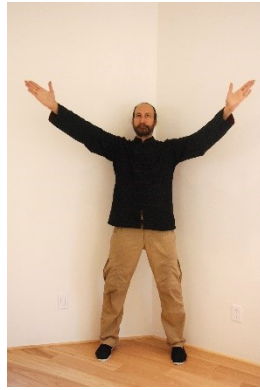
- d. The crossed hands continue to pierce upward above the head. As soon as the hands pass just above the head, the hands rotate while remaining in contact, hand over hand. The hands first turn together so both palms face down, and then they rotate so both palms face up. During the rotation, the palms remain in contact. Perform this in an unbroken, rolling movement while your arms move up above the head. As you continue pushing the palms upward, the palms begin to separate to prepare for another repetition.

Note: Use your elbows and forearms to accomplish the rotational movement of the hands turning together, from face down to face up as they extend. At the fully extended position of the arms (not locked), you will have also reached the fully *risen* position. Perform 5 to 15 repetitions of *a.* through *d.*

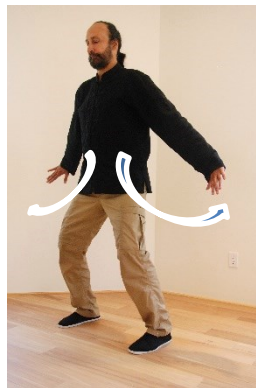
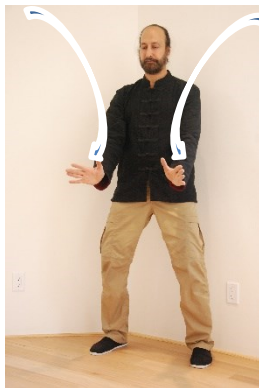
Qigong Practice #6: “Eagle Opens Its Wings”

Eagle Opens Its Wings Qigong practice represents the expanding motion of the arms and chest opening wide during this exercise. During the risen posture of this practice, our arms separate with the chest and ribcage expanded apart, like an eagle spreading its wings. The *Eagle Opens Its Wings* movement exemplifies joy and expansiveness.

- a. Begin by holding your arms upward and wide apart, gathering in *Heaven Qi*. Feel the sensation of holding up a ball of Qi between your two hands. At the same time, open the chest wide as you breathe in. Fully breathe into the upper chest area. The wide-open arms activate the lung meridians, and the expanded breath in the chest will stimulate the lungs.

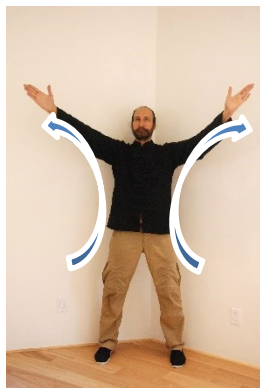


- b. Then move your arms and hands downward and inward, and then backward and outward while exhaling. As you move the arms and hands downward, coordinate this with the *sinking* motion. Compress the Qi inward between the hands as the arms move downward, which occurs at the center of this half circle motion (palms come together about one foot apart at this point). Continue moving in this half circle motion with the arms and hands then opening and expanding backward. This occurs in a U-shaped swinging motion where the arms swing from front to back. As you complete the *sinking* posture, your hands will have opened behind you to collect the *Earth Qi* and the palms will angle downward.



- c. In this movement, you can experience holding the expanded Qi between the hands while the arms are extended apart, both above and behind you. Then you may also experience the sense of compressing the Qi as the hands move toward each other.

- d. Now in the opposite motion, swing the arms forward and inward and then upward and outward while inhaling. At the center point of the half circle, the palms again briefly face each other about one foot apart. At the completion of this half circle, the arms move to the upward and outward starting position. The *rising* motion synchronizes with the upward rising of the arms. The upswing and downswing motions are performed in one swift and fluid motion.



Perform 5 to 15 repetitions of *a.* through *d.*

As with all Qigong practices, we suggest consciously gathering and moving the Qi in the *Eagle Opens Its Wings* practice. There can be a sensation of grasping the Qi like a large ball that we *compact* smaller and expand larger. When we swing the arms upward, we consciously gather the *Heaven Qi*, rather than throwing it. Also, when we swing the arms backward, we must be conscious not to throw the Qi. Instead, we consciously gather the *Earth Qi* in this position.

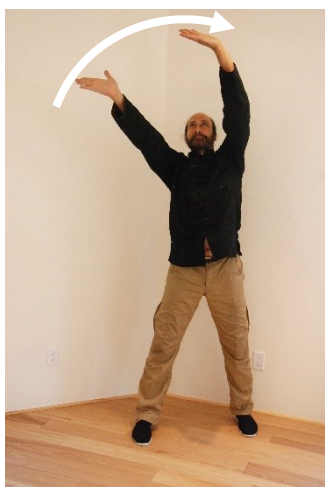
Qigong Practice #7: “Turning Heaven & Earth”

In the *Turning Heaven & Earth* practice, we again are working with *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi*. This is the common theme applied throughout Qigong movement, so that we may balance the opposite forces within ourselves. In this exercise, we use the hands to interact with *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi* while rotating our body.

In practicing *Turning Heaven & Earth*, a great deal of movement occurs in the trunk of the body and ribcage, which impacts numerous

channels. The torso twisting in untypical angles can be highly beneficial. Also, in this practice, the entire back stretches downward and upward, which opens the spine and *energy gates* associated with this pathway.

- a. In the starting position of *Turning Heaven & Earth*, your arms are held straight upward on either side of the ears, without fully locking the arms. Begin by slightly rotating both hands so that your fingers are pointing to the right. The palms will then gently angle upward, receiving the *Heaven Qi*.
- b. Begin bending the torso downward to your left, causing both arms and hands to rotate in a circular, sweeping motion. Perform this action by bending at the waist while turning in a half circle toward the ground. You may slightly flex the palms to create the sense of sweeping or gathering from the Qi field. The hands and arms rotate downward, maintaining an equidistant separation as you fully bend to the left. The legs and arms remain straight but not locked throughout the practice. The arms remain positioned on either side of the head as much as comfortably possible. As you rotate downward, the hands continue to gather the Qi in a sweeping motion while exhaling.





At the left downward position, you will have fully bent your waist. Your palms and fingers will now naturally angle, pointing to your left.

- c. Continue rotating to the center while bent forward with the arms hanging straight down. The palms fully face downward with the fingers pointing forward during the brief pass over the center position. Now gather the *Earth Qi*, sweeping upward to the opposite side. Both hands will naturally rotate with the fingers pointing in the opposite direction as you begin your ascent in an upward semi-circle. Inhale on the upward motion and continue to sense the palm's connection with the Qi field. As you approach the fully risen position, the palms naturally rotate to face upward and then return to the right again just before the transition into another repetition.



Starting Position



- d. Now perform the same movement in reverse, rotating downward to the right, moving in an identical manner in the opposite direction.

Perform 3 to 8 repetitions of *a.* through *d.* in each direction.

Completing a Qigong Practice

Now we have shared seven excellent Qigong practices for developing Qi and body awareness. After each Qigong practice is completed, we suggest spending a moment holding one hand over the other, on the lower abdomen. Then consciously breathe into the abdomen area and sense the *Xia Dantien*. This added step at the conclusion of each Qigong practice consolidates and stores the gathered Qi in *Xia Dantien*.

Four Gems for Improving Qigong Practice

We would like to share four tips that can greatly benefit Qigong practice. Whenever learning a new Qigong exercise, we can apply these four tips to each movement that we perform. This can bring about increased awareness to the practices and greatly enhance our Qi flow.

1. Know the Body Mechanics

Of course, knowing the body mechanics of each movement is the first step in Qigong. The body mechanics refer to the physical positions and directions of each movement. When the physical directions are known, we understand how the form must appear. To begin with, watching our Qigong movement in a mirror is an excellent way to view our body mechanics. A clear understanding of how the form is to appear when done

correctly allows us to make necessary corrections to our movements.

2. Know the Purpose

Understanding the purpose of a Qigong practice and what is occurring in each movement is also quite beneficial to the practitioner. Knowing how the body is gathering and moving Qi allows us to place our intent in that direction. Also, becoming aware of where the body is impacted during a movement may allow us to focus breath and attention to that area to maximize the benefits.

3. Eyes Follow the Hands

When performing Qigong movement, we direct the eyes to follow where the hands are moving. In general, our mind and Qi will be directed to where our eyes place their focus. Therefore, we increase the Qi flow to our hands when our eyes follow the hands. If the hands move apart, we still focus upon the hands peripherally, and then we return to a singular focus when/if the hands come together. If Qigong hand and arm movements are asymmetrical, the focus is on the leading hand. If one hand is acting as the leading hand, it is usually stationed higher than the other. In this case, our eyes focus singularly on the leading hand performing a Yang movement. Often the hands will alternate positions, where the lower hand changes to the leading hand. In this case, we shift our focus to the opposite hand.

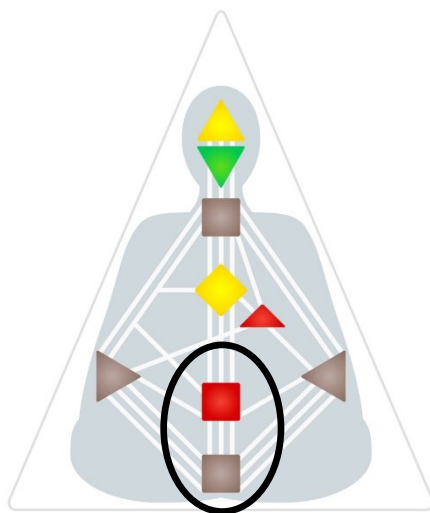
4. Focus the Mind and Breath

Using the mind and breath as a tool for moving or gathering Qi in combination with a movement, amplifies the Qi flow. The mind and breath together will then guide the Qi according to the movement. After we understand the mechanics and purpose of a given Qigong practice, we then combine our breath and mental intent in synchronicity with the motion.

- ☯ Ensure proper body alignment during practice
- ☯ Warm up and loosen before practice
- ☯ Understand the Qigong movements & their purpose
- ☯ Apply eyes, breath, and intent to each practice

CHAPTER SEVEN

Small Circle Practice & Energy Gate Awareness



We have discussed various methods to sense and develop awareness of Qi, and we have touched upon techniques to focus Qi throughout the body. Focusing Qi intensely at key places within the body becomes more like concentrating the Qi. Once we have learned to sense and direct Qi, we can begin to concentrate Qi in the same way as a magnifying glass, which focuses light intensely on one area. We can then direct this concentrated focus of Qi upon specific *energy gates* and pathways throughout the body.

Energy gates, vortices, or chakras in the body are described similarly in numerous Eastern and Western traditions. The simplest illustration of *energy gates* could be described as key locations in the body that act as power stations along major bodily currents. As we know, electrical stations power whole cities, and they need a sufficient source of energy

to distribute power along lengthy electrical lines. In the same way, each major *energy gate* within the body also requires sufficient input and flow of Qi to operate efficiently. Empowering these *energy gates* activates Qi flow along our bodily pathways or meridians.

Each *energy gate* corresponds to specific areas of the body, feeding and nourishing us, physically and *energetically*. Therefore, our *energy gates* impact our being in manifold ways and on multiple levels. There are many esoteric interpretations of how our *energy gates* affect us on a *spiritual* level; however, for our purposes we will concentrate on how *energy gates* affect us on the physical, mental, and emotional levels. In any case, we might consider our physical, mental, and emotional wellness as part of being *spiritual* since the balance of this trinity is our foundation. This being said, the *energy gates* located throughout the body do correspond to ethereal realms. Our methodology here is to first grasp what we can tangibly comprehend and use it as a pathway to the ethereal, or to the subtler wavelengths of energy.

A tangible way to begin this process is by identifying the location of our *energy gates* and physically sensing the information stored there. We can concentrate on the physical location of our *energy gates* using our mind, breath, and intention while consciously moving Qi through these points within the body. Using our focus and breath, we can direct Qi to charge or activate *energy gates*. With practice of directing Qi into our *energy gates*, we can learn to sense their subtler aspects and clear any blockages that occur within them.

Blockages in *energy gates* can occur from all types of emotional and physical trauma that have transpired throughout life. Blockages can also happen from lack of sensitivity or lack of awareness of our *energy gates*. As with the internal organs, years of psychological clutter that has built-up since childhood can collect in these *energy gates* causing physical, mental, or emotional issues. This will also correspond to an imbalance in Qi flow occurring in the given *energy gate(s)*.

Similar to brushing our teeth regularly to prevent build-up, we also need to clean and clear our *energy gates* routinely. Certain life events, physical activity, or emotional and mental activity may naturally cause our *energy gates* to clear. However, sometimes mental concentration is necessary to open Qi flow within them. By concentrating and moving

Qi, we can consciously clear and revitalize our *energy gates*, increasing self-fulfillment and awareness.

Our *energy gates* reflect the nature of our being and also what we attract to ourselves. When major blockages in *energy gates* begin to clear, a person will likely experience dramatic changes occurring in their life. Qigong and body awareness can help us clear blockages and energize our *energy gates*.

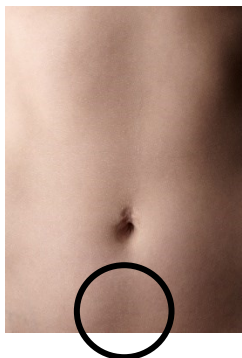
To reiterate, the first stage in clearing blockages in *energy gates* is to become attuned to them. We draw our mental focus to bring physical and even emotional awareness of the sensations existing within our *energy gate(s)*. For example, there is a common expression “open your heart”. The heart corresponds to the *energy gate* inside the center of the chest which is known for joy and happiness. The mere folding of our hands over the center of the chest brings a focused intent at the heart center, traditionally intended for prayer, blessing, or healing. Such prayer postures are designed to specifically draw our focus and Qi to the heart center, clearing the heart so that universal energy can be called in through love and compassion. From this example, we might understand that there is a correlation between the physical and *spiritual* areas of the energy centers and that we can concentrate our focus and Qi toward a given *energy gate* in the body.

Each *energy gate* will have a different orientation and purpose within the body, so concentration and clearing at different *energy gates* produces different effects. *Energy gates* will also be aligned along bodily channels carrying varying degrees of Yin or Yang qualities which govern different aspects of our physical and mental body. Specifically concentrating at key *energy gates* can open the flow of Qi along these meridians. This allows a powerful current of *Earth Qi* or *Heaven Qi* to travel in balance throughout the body. Bringing these polarized forces into balance is a part of experiencing physical, mental, and emotional well-being. For this to occur, any blockages within *energy gates* must be cleared. Thus, our experience of awareness can directly correspond to how well we activate our *energy gates* and bring about a balanced flow of Qi throughout the body.

Four Key Energy Gates

We will now describe in detail, four key *energy gates* located in the body. These four *energy gates* reside along an elliptical of meridians (pathways throughout the body where Qi flows). These meridians in the lower half of the body constitute what is known as the *Small Circle*. The *Small Circle* is basically a meditation practice focusing on these four *energy gates* and the meridians where they reside. Meditation on these four *energy gates* can activate the flow of Qi along the *Small Circle* meridians and clear many physical and emotional blockages. Before we meditate on these *energy gates*, we must become aware of their location. Below is an outline of the four *energy gates* of the *Small Circle*.

1. Xia Dantien – Abdominal Energy Gate



The *Xia Dantien* (roughly pronounced *Shi-ah Don-Tēē-Ehn*), is the lower abdominal *energy gate*, translated as the *Lower Elixir Field*. It is located about 1.7 inches below the navel and about 2/5 of the way toward the spine. Therefore, it is located inside the lower abdomen. *Xia Dantien* is an elusive energy center, as it is not located at a specific acupuncture point like most other *energy gates* in the body. Attempting to become aware of *Xia Dantien* at first may result in awareness of our small intestines. This alone is an accomplishment; however, we can delve deeper into our awareness of this *energy gate* with practice. As we gain greater awareness of *Xia Dantien*, we may sense the interconnectedness of this *energy gate* with our entire body. Since *Xia Dantien* nourishes its adjacent *energy gates* and also the body meridians, it is an *energy gate* that is interconnected with our whole body.

Xia Dantien physically corresponds to our inner abdomen, which is often referred to as our *gut*. Scientists have declared the *gut* to be the second brain with its own intelligence. In a sense, we can become aware of a new intelligence within our body by bringing the lower abdomen into our consciousness. There are also many studies of how our mental and emotional health is affected by our *gut*. In the organ cleansing meditations previously discussed (Chapter 4), we conveyed how the abdominal organs store emotions and require clearing. Considering *Xia Dantien's* location in the abdominal area, we can begin to understand the importance of concentrating our awareness on this *energy gate*.

As far as the *Xia Dantien* exact location and size, it is up to the Qigong practitioner to specifically sense this within his or her own body. The *Xia Dantien* is typically illustrated as an oval-like invisible shape within the lower abdomen. With consistent concentration at *Xia Dantien*, a greater awareness of this energy center emerges. In locating *Xia Dantien*, we may use the previously discussed sensations of Qi to help us identify this *energy gate*. Cultivating concentration and awareness of the lower abdomen for several months is akin to nurturing the growth of an embryo within the womb, except we are cultivating the growth of Qi in *Xia Dantien*. As a child develops in the womb over months, awareness of *Xia Dantien* can similarly develop with the concentration of the breath and Qi *compacted* into the lower abdomen. This continuous gathering and storing of Qi into *Xia Dantien* can then create what is referred to as the *Spiritual Embryo*.

Growing the Spiritual Embryo in Xia Dantien:

One Hundred Days to Build the Qi Foundation

In the older Taoist traditions, it is said to take 100 days to build the Qi foundation. This means that we first gather and build a foundation of Qi in *Xia Dantien* as preparation for developing the *Spiritual Embryo*. “Foundation” consequently refers to having gathered and accumulated sufficient Qi in *Xia Dantien* to the point that we can circulate it within our body.

Ten months to Engender the Spiritual Embryo

In Taoist tradition, after ten months of Qi cultivation in *Xia Dantien* and the body in general, it is said that we then produce a *Spiritual*

Embryo. This embryo represents a formation of a new being or a new form created from our own being. In this case, this new form is the body of Qi developing within ourselves. The *Spiritual Embryo* therefore represents the creation of a *Qi body* that has not yet given birth. Giving birth to the *Spiritual Embryo* occurs when we begin to recognize this *energetic* body contained within our own body. With recognition of this *energetic* body, we can then move and circulate the Qi, within our physical body at will.

Three Years Nurturing the Qi Child

The final metaphor represents the nurturing and care of the child that has grown from the embryo through the cultivation of Qi at *Xia Dantien*. The child analogy is referring to the *Qi body* that has expanded and grown within our being. Once we have developed and become aware of our *Qi body* or *Spiritual Embryo*, from here it can be “born” as a living child, or rather an *energetic* aspect of ourselves that we care for and nurture. Like a child, this new *energetic* body requires cultivation and nurturing for it to survive and grow. After this *Qi body* has been “born”, we must then provide ongoing cultivation for it to mature and stabilize within our being. This process traditionally occurs after three years of dedicated cultivation of Qi. Cultivation at *Xia Dantien* is the key component for growth of the *Spiritual Embryo*.

- ☯ *Cultivation of Qi roughly refers to developing our awareness of Qi flow and growing our Qi flow throughout our being, similar to cultivating a seed so it will grow.*

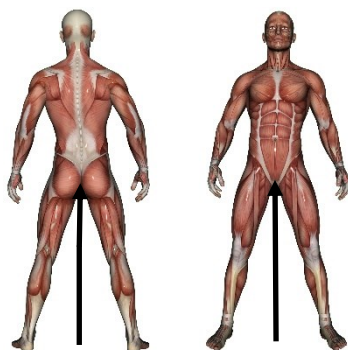
The Importance of Xia Dantien

As we can see, a considerable amount of Qigong theory is dedicated to the *Xia Dantien energy gate*. This is because *Xia Dantien* feeds other *energy gates* and meridians, and also the body and being in general. Therefore, the cultivation of *Xia Dantien* is of supreme significance.

It is essential to understand that the *Xia Dantien energy gate* requires regular replenishment of Qi, as we naturally expend our inborn energy throughout life. We are born with “X” amount of intrinsic energy that naturally diminishes with age or through excessive usage of our Qi reservoir. We can, however, replenish our energy through gathering Qi into the *Xia Dantien* to help counteract the depletion of this life force. The *Xia Dantien energy gate* can store an abundance of Qi in the body, unlike other *energy gates*. With other *energy gates*, excessive mental

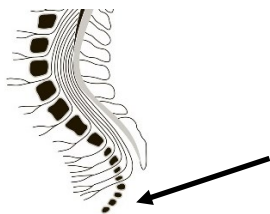
concentration and accumulation of Qi can actually cause imbalances. However, the *Xia Dantien energy gate* can be concentrated upon indefinitely without causing imbalance to an individual. Further, *Xia Dantien* will feed other meridians and *energy gates* automatically as it fills with Qi, although, intentionally leading Qi through our channels is more effective. When *Xia Dantien* has sufficiently stored significant amounts of Qi, it then becomes easy to draw upon this reservoir to move Qi throughout the body. Developing a greater force of Qi in *Xia Dantien* allows for greater momentum in clearing blockages in our *energy gates* and bodily channels. It is similar to a strong current moving through a river, clearing the pathway of stagnating waters after a reservoir releases its dam. When awareness and cultivation of *Xia Dantien* are well developed, directing the flow of this reservoir becomes effortless. We can then easily guide this abundance of Qi flow throughout our *energy gates* and meridians.

2. Hui Yin - Perineum Energy Gate



The *energy gate* located at the perineum is known as *Hui Yin* (roughly pronounced *Whuāy Yin*). The *Hui Yin energy gate* is the beginning point of the *Central Channel* or *Zhong Mai*, where Qi can enter into the body from the Earth's field. *Hui Yin* also happens to be the meeting point of two other major meridians in the body called the *Ren Mai* and the *Du Mai* channels. *Hui Yin* is the most Yin *energy gate* of the body, directly connecting with *Earth Qi*, which is primarily Yin in nature. The *Hui Yin energy gate* is thus of great importance for connection with the Earth and for the flow of Qi along major meridians. Additionally, a healthy flow of Qi in the *Hui Yin* carries numerous physical, mental, and emotional health benefits. This makes the *Hui Yin energy gate* of significant importance in the *Small Circle* meditation.

3. Wei Lu – Tailbone Energy Gate



The *Wei Lu* (roughly pronounced as *Whuāy Lioo*) *energy gate* is located at the tailbone. This *energy gate* is also of great significance as it is the base of the spine, where a major meridian called the *Du Mai* channel runs. It is important to activate the base of our spine for the flow of Qi to rise upward, specifically when we practice the *Small Circle* meditation. Both the perineum and the tailbone constitute our base *energy gates*, which must first be opened and free of blockages to activate an upward flow of Qi.

4. Ming Men - Lower Back Energy Gate



The mid-lower back *energy gate* is known as *Ming Men*. The *Ming Men* point is located opposite and above *Xia Dantien* between the 2nd and 3rd lumbar vertebra. An easy way to locate *Ming Men* is to sense the spine on the lower back approximately opposite the navel point. The *Ming Men* gate is known as the *Door of Life*, as it is the point directly affecting the inflow of Qi into the kidneys which impacts our health and longevity. Each of the key *energy gates* are paired with an opposite *energy gate*, and *Ming Men* is the counterpart of *Xia Dantien*. *Xia Dantien* and *Ming Men* are thus uniquely interactive with each other. Concentration of Qi in *Xia Dantien* or in *Ming Men* may then provide a direct and immediate conduit of energy to their counterpart.

Understanding the Small Circle Meditation

Now that we have understood the four *energy gates* located along the *Small Circle*, let us explore the *Small Circle* itself in more detail. The *Small Circle* is basically an elliptical of meridians situated around the lower half of the torso. Its pathway traces the external center of the body from the perineum up to the mid-lower back. Then this path crosses through the body and goes down the external abdomen, and back to the perineum. The *Xia Dantien energy gate* sits at the front and center of this elliptical, interconnecting with and nourishing the Qi flow, guided along the *Small Circle* meridians.

Using *mindful* attentiveness, we can learn to sense and empower the *energy gates* located along the *Small Circle*, propelling Qi flow. In the *Small Circle* meditation practice, we subsequently concentrate attention specifically on the four key *energy gates* described above, as well as on the elliptical pathway itself.

In the *Small Circle* meditation practice, our objective is not to simply build Qi in the *energy gates* along the elliptical, but also to stimulate movement of Qi on the *Small Circle* pathway. Stimulating movement along the *Small Circle* path can occur through *bathing* at each *energy gate* around this elliptical. *Bathing* refers to focusing on the *energy gates* long enough to sense and activate them. Opening these *energy gates* will impel the Qi to proceed to the following *energy gate*. This, of course, occurs by the mind guiding and leading the Qi along the *Small Circle* elliptical.

The *Small Circle* elliptical could be compared to the analogy of a waterwheel. If we were to think of the lower torso as a waterwheel, we can then visualize *energy gates* located around this wheel, with *Xia Dantien* near the center. The exterior point and *energy gate* just in front of *Xia Dantien*, about 1.7 inches below the navel, is the *Qihai* point. This point is sometimes referred to as the *False Dantien*. When we meditate at *Xia Dantien*, it expands outward and extends to the exterior *Qihai* point adjacent to *Xia Dantien*. The *Qihai* is typically not discussed in the *Small Circle* meditation; however, it exists along the *Small Circle* pathway. The *Qihai* point is consequently touched upon in the *Small Circle* meditation, and Qi extends out to this point from *Xia Dantien*. This being said, it should be noted that *Xia Dantien* is considered the key *energy gate* located along the *Small Circle*. We then

concentrate at the *Xia Dantien* point when learning to circulate Qi in the *Small Circle*, without specific focus at *Qihai*. We clarify this point because *Xia Dantien* is not specifically located upon the *Small Circle* elliptical like the other *energy gates*. *Xia Dantien* is inset within the *Small Circle* elliptical, and it radiates outward, interconnecting with the *Small Circle* pathway. *Xia Dantien* therefore connects with and activates the meridians in the *Small Circle* meditation.



*Similar to a Waterwheel,
We Draw & Circulate Qi*

Xia Dantien to Hui Yin (Abdomen to Perineum)

Returning to the *waterwheel* analogy, we again think of the *Small Circle* elliptical in the same manner. As the *waterwheel* rotates, it turns to the next *energy gate* along the *Small Circle* pathway. We begin our focus on the *Xia Dantien energy gate*, turning downward. We thus consciously guide the Qi down the *Small Circle* pathway, starting from *Xia Dantien*. This symbolic waterwheel will then turn downward toward the pelvic floor. Like a waterwheel, the downward turning blades penetrate the water in a scooping motion. In the same way, we scoop downward to gather the *Earth Qi*. We then turn the waterwheel down to the next *energy gate* that we described as *Hui Yin*, located at the perineum.

Hui Yin to Wei Lu (Perineum to Tailbone)

From the *Hui Yin*, we then begin drawing the Qi upward. Circulating the Qi from the *Hui Yin energy gate*, we draw the Qi toward the tailbone. Instead of drawing the Qi straight up through the *Central Channel*, we guide the Qi to circulate backward. We thus mentally trace a pathway along the meridian toward the *Wei Lu energy gate*, located at the tailbone. In moving from the *Hui Yin energy gate* toward the tailbone, we shift into another major meridian as we move upward. This meridian is called the *Du Mai* channel.

Applying the waterwheel concept, we can understand how drawing *Earth Qi* from *Hui Yin* to *Wei Lu* (the perineum to the tailbone) can be likened to scooping and moving water upward along this wheel. The waterwheel first rotates downward toward its base position (*Hui Yin*), catching the deep water, and then draws it upward (to *Wei Lu*), as the wheel turns.

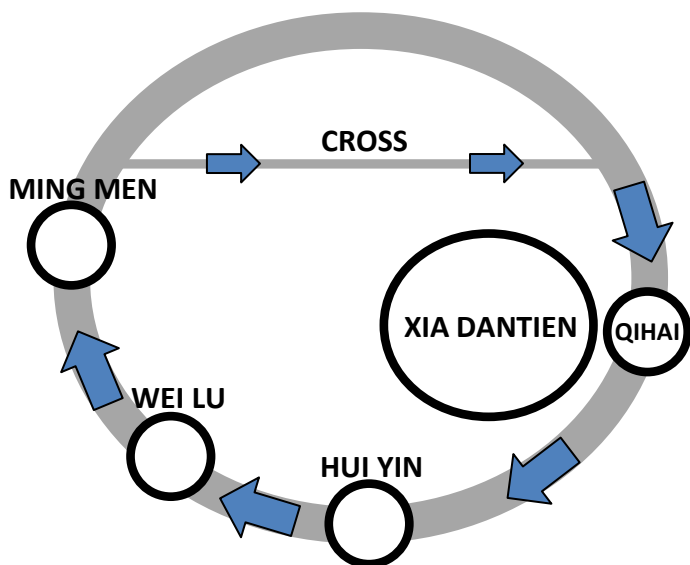
Wei Lu to Ming Men (Tailbone to Mid-Lower Back)

Moving upward from the tailbone in this pathway, we now connect with the final key *energy gate* of the *Small Circle*. The figurative waterwheel will now draw the Qi upward toward the mid-lower back *energy gate*, known as *Ming Men*. After gathering Qi from *Xia Dantien*, *Hui Yin*, and *Wei Lu*, we then circulate this Qi into the *Ming Men energy gate*. Since *Ming Men* interconnects with our kidneys, it is a power center for our life force. Drawing Qi along the *Small Circle* into *Ming Men* can therefore energize and rejuvenate us.

Ming Men to Crossover Point

After we guide the Qi into the *Ming Men energy gate*, we crossover from this point on the lower back. We mentally cross through the body and circle downward, back to *Xia Dantien*.

Waterwheel of Qi Circulation



The waterwheel example which demonstrates the movement of Qi in the *Small Circle* may not be a precise analogy; however, it establishes a way to conceptualize the process of circulating the Qi. With this diagram, we can understand how *Xia Dantien* feeds and distributes Qi within the *Small Circle*. *Xia Dantien* expands outward to the *energy gates* in the *Small Circle*, enriching and activating Qi flow along the elliptical pathway.

Preparation for Small Circle Meditation

Now that we have gained an understanding of the *Small Circle* meditation, we must also learn preparation techniques before beginning this practice. In Qigong, preparation for meditation can be considered as important as meditation itself. With better preparation, deeper and more concentrated meditation can occur. Using the *Three Adjustments* prior to meditating helps us to alter our brainwaves so that we can be deeply relaxed and focused. In chapters two, three, and four, we discussed incorporating the *Three Adjustments* as a way of life. Here we are performing the *Three Adjustments* specifically to prepare for meditation as outlined below.

Performing the Three Adjustments:

1. First Adjustment - Adjust the body

- Adjust to a comfortable sitting posture.
- Keep the posture straight yet relaxed.
- Deeply relax the body.
- Keep the head straight as if suspended by a thread.
- Keep eyes level and only slightly open, looking downward.
- Apply the Taoist Hand Mudra (see below).
- Touch the tongue to the upper palate (see below).

2. Second Adjustment - Regulate the breath

- Perform *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*.
- Make the breath long, deep, and thin.
- Keep the in and out breaths smooth and soft.
- Make the breath slow.
- Make the breath silent.

3. Third Adjustment - Focus the mind

- Focus the mind at *Xia Dantien*.

It is necessary to first build a sufficient reservoir of Qi in *Xia Dantien* by focusing the mind and breath there. In this way, the *Small Circle* practice becomes enhanced.

The Three Adjustments & Small Circle Practice

Basically, we are performing the *Three Adjustments* to become relaxed and focused prior to meditating. All three adjustments typically occur concurrently in this process, as the *Three Adjustments* are interdependent.

If time permits, we suggest spending ten minutes of preparation on the *Three Adjustments* prior to the *Small Circle* practice, so that the meditation becomes highly focused and concentrated. At a minimum, we may practice the *Three Adjustments* for two to three minutes.

Through the application of the *Three Adjustments*, we can penetrate the deeper layers of our conscious mind. This is because we go into a meditative state before we even meditate, gradually shifting away from trivial thought waves of the surface mind. It often takes time to transition into deeper awareness; therefore, this period of preparation is typically necessary.

Explanation of Two Aspects of the First Adjustment

Two other important aspects of the *First Adjustment* (Adjusting the Body) also occur prior to *Small Circle* practice. These two adjustments involve, placing the hands in a *mudra* or hand position, and touching the tongue to the upper palate.

1. The Taoist Hand Mudra

As an aspect of the *First Adjustment*, we can choose to use a Taoist hand position or *mudra* during meditation to assist with our concentration on *Xia Dantien*. In this hand position, the two *Laogong* or *Buddha Palm* points align with each other to some degree. We then place this double alignment of our palms over the *Xia Dantien energy gate*. Through this hand position, we are drawing our attention and our Qi from the *Buddha Palm* points into *Xia Dantien*. Simply touching

and slightly pressing the lower abdomen will also bring our focus there. Adding the doubly aligned *Buddha Palms* over the lower abdomen then increases our concentration and energy at *Xia Dantien*.

Note: Alternatively, we may place our hands on our thighs or knees during meditation practice.

Forming the Taoist Hand Mudra

- a. For men, the right-hand grasps over the entire left hand.
- b. The two hands interlock flush with each other at the web of each thumb.
- c. The right thumb is tucked in the palm of the left hand.
- d. The left-hand fingers hold the right thumb.
- e. Place the two hands in the lap.
- f. Gently press into *Xia Dantien*.
- g. For women, this hand position is performed by placing the hands in the opposite position (left hand over right).



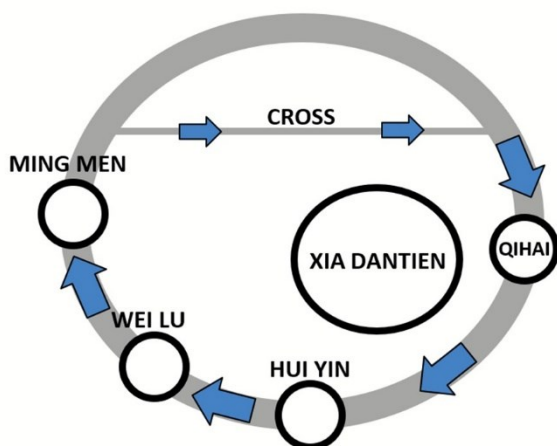
2. Tongue Touching the Upper Palate

The final aspect of the *First Adjustment* is to touch the tongue to the upper palate (*Magpie Bridge*). This practice connects the two major meridians (the *Du Mai* and the *Ren Mai* channels) in the body at the point where they are separated by the mouth. Connecting these two meridians bridges the Yin and Yang currents of the body, creating a circuit for Qi flow. Therefore, with the *Small Circle* meditation as well as with most Qigong meditations, the tongue is placed on the upper palate.

Small Circle Meditation Practice

After performing the *Three Adjustments*, we are ready to begin the *Small Circle* practice. The first step is to spend time focusing on the key *energy gates* of the *Small Circle*. We describe this process as *bathing* at the *energy gates*. Next, we become aware of the elliptical pathway, which outlines the external center line of our body. We *bathe* at each *energy gate* while simultaneously sensing the meridians that we move along in the *Small Circle*.

Small Circle Meditation



1. **Mentally bathe at Xia Dantien** (lower abdomen)
Then mentally circulate down the pathway to *Hui Yin*
2. **Mentally bathe at Hui Yin** (perineum)
Then mentally circulate up the pathway to *Wei Lu*
3. **Mentally bathe at Wei Lu** (tailbone)
Then mentally circulate up the pathway to *Ming Men*
4. **Mentally bathe at Ming Men** (mid-lower back)
Then mentally crossover the body
5. **Crossover**
Then mentally circulate down the pathway to *Xia Dantien*
6. **Repeat this cycle eight times or more.**

Bathing at Energy Gates

We use the term *bathing* to describe a prolonged awareness held at a given area within our body. We only want to *bathe* our concentration at each *energy gate* long enough to activate the Qi flow along the *Small Circle*. Therefore, we do not concentrate excessively at the *energy gates* themselves. We want to experience continuous circulation along the *Small Circle* elliptical, with only a paused focus at each *energy gate*. If an *energy gate* along the *Small Circle* elliptical is subject to a lack of awareness, it means that we need to spend additional attention or *bathing* in that area. *Bathing* our awareness can also apply to any given segment of the meridians along the *Small Circle* pathway. Developing genuine awareness of the *Small Circle* meridians and *energy gates* may require regular practice without imagination alone, using actual sensory awareness. In order to accomplish this, we may need to dwell longer at specific *energy gates* or specific meridian sections along the *Small Circle* elliptical. When our sensory awareness of an *energy gate* arises, it will in turn assist to propel Qi circulation along the *Small Circle* pathway. When *bathing* at an *energy gate*, it's significant to note that we need not be concerned as to whether or not we are experiencing a Qi sensation there, otherwise it can distract from our practice. Merely placing our mind upon the *energy gates* and meridians will draw Qi flow there.

Excessive *bathing* at an *energy gate* in the body, other than *Xia Dantien*, may cause imbalances. Extreme concentration at some *energy gates* could also cause the Qi to dam up and create blockages, as Qi stagnates when it is static. It is therefore important to note that even though we want to spend adequate time and become aware of each *energy gate*, we also want to ensure that Qi circulation is continuing along the *Small Circle* pathway.

Each *energy gate* can overload its capacity, much like an electrical system. Therefore, excessive *bathing* in a given *energy gate* can overload it. This means that too much Qi has become fixed at an *energy gate* without circulating to the following *energy gate* in the body along the meridian circuitry.

This being said, we still need to spend time to become aware of and to activate the *energy gates*. Until we have experienced awareness and

activation of an *energy gate*, we can safely *bathe* there. If we experience a sensation of Qi awakening in a given *energy gate*, we can then promptly circulate the Qi from there. More often than not, *energy gates* may lack Qi flow or have blockages, thus requiring sufficient *bathing* time in order for them to be activated.

Small Circle Meditation Closing Form

After we have completed the *Small Circle* meditation, we perform what we call the *Closing Form*. Just as we perform preparation (the *Three Adjustments*) before meditating, we also perform the *Closing Form* after each Qigong meditation. The *Closing Form* is equally important, as it allows us to return from an altered state and become grounded. In ending the *Small Circle* meditation practice, we first want to bring our focus back to *Xia Dantien*. We start by breathing into *Xia Dantien*, using the *Qi Chen Xia Dantien* practice described in chapter three. This focuses the Qi into *Xia Dantien*, as opposed to leaving the Qi dispersed. We can then follow by circling our palms clockwise around the *Xia Dantien* with palms crossed over each other. This concentrates and stores the Qi generated in our palms into *Xia Dantien*.

Next, we want to ensure that the Qi does not get stuck or stagnant anywhere in our body, especially in *energy gates* and meridians. Also, we want to bring our awareness back to the whole body so we can return to an alert state. Part of this process involves moving the Qi flow from the internal organs toward the external body. Rubbing and patting ourselves draws the Qi from the inside to the outside of the body. This process clears Qi that is not flowing properly, and it also assists us to become alert and energized.

Meditation Closing Form Practice:

1. First rub the palms together, rub between the fingers, and rub the back of the palms for a few seconds. This brings sensation to the hands and fingers, and the rubbing draws Qi to the palms.
2. Then use the palms to massage the forehead and face in one stroke. Rub inward to out, toward the scalp and ears. This brings Qi flow to the face.
3. Firmly pinch the sides of the ears and then pinch the lobes and pull them down. Then place both palms on the ears and vibrate them for a few seconds. This stimulates numerous meridians in the ears that also relate to the body.

4. Run the fingers of both hands through the scalp from the hairline backwards. Start on top, and then continue to the sides of the head. Perform one repetition. Next, tap the fingers from the front to back of the head. Start on the top, and then proceed to the sides of the head. Perform one repetition. This clears Qi stuck in the head and clears the *energy gates* and meridians located on the head.
5. Firmly rub the *Da Zhui* point, which is the big bone located on the back of the neck, for a few seconds. This point corresponds to C-7 on the spine. The *Da Zhui* is the crossing point of Yang meridians in the body. Being that this is a great intersection of numerous meridians, rubbing this point can open the Qi flow to our channels.
6. Begin patting each outer arm downward, starting from the shoulder wells to the back of the palm, one arm at a time. Then reverse with an upward patting of each inner arm, starting from the palms to the armpits. Perform one to three repetitions. This opens the Qi flow along the Yin and Yang meridians of the arms.
7. Pat down both sides of the chest, esophagus, rib cage, abdomen, and groin area. Perform one to three repetitions. This brings Qi to the torso and vibrates the internal organs, invoking movement and flow.
8. Gently pat the lower back at the base of the ribcage, corresponding to where the kidneys are located. Perform this for about 30 seconds. This brings movement and Qi flow into the kidneys.
9. Begin patting the outer side of both legs downward from the sides of the buttocks to the feet. Then reverse, patting the inner legs upward from the feet towards the groin. Perform one to three repetitions. This opens the Qi flow along the Yin and Yang meridians of the legs.
10. While seated, rotate ankles in both directions. Perform one to three repetitions. Use the hands to rotate the ankles for maximum rotation. This opens Qi flow to the feet.
11. Slowly and meditatively perform three repetitions of the closing Qigong Practice #1: *Gathering Earth & Heaven*.

Adding Mental Chanting to the Small Circle Practice

To further enhance our *Small Circle* practice, we can listen to a chant of the name of each *energy gate* in coordination with our concentration. We suggest mentally vibrating the sound of these *energy gates* by listening to a recording while *bathing* at each center. We are then adding a new component of sound, in combination with mental intent, to the practice. The sound waves of this chant synch with the *frequency* of each *energy gate*. This helps to activate Qi flow and awareness in each *energy gate* and to move Qi along the *Small Circle* pathway as well. This is not a requirement for *Small Circle* practice; however, it will provide a rhythmic beat to induce a state for deeper concentration. Meditating on the *Small Circle* with the chanting also measures how long we spend *bathing* at each *energy gate* in a consistent fashion.

Below is a link to audio recordings of the Small Circle meditation practice, which includes a chant of the name of each energy gate sung by Master Tianyou Hao. It begins with fifteen minutes of meditation preparation practices, including Fang Song relaxation and Qi Chen Xia Dantien. <https://soundcloud.com/har-har-khalsa/dr-hao-small-circle/s-YqmIy>

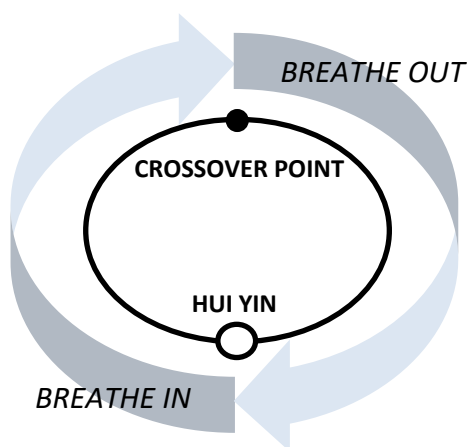
Continuous Small Circle Circulation with Breath



A second stage of the *Small Circle* meditation can be practiced after we have successfully learned to *bathe* at the key *energy gates* around the *Small Circle*. We can now begin applying the breath to move the Qi in a continuous motion along the *Small Circle* pathway. In this method, we move our concentration across the elliptical of meridians in a single, unbroken stream. We still continue our awareness of the four *energy gates* along the *Small Circle*. The only difference is that we do not stop to *bathe* at each *energy gate*. Instead, we sense the *energy gates* and the *Small Circle* pathway as one.

We begin this second stage of practice by guiding the Qi from the perineum (*Hui Yin*) to the center of the crossover point. Then we guide the Qi from the crossover point back down to the perineum. This is accomplished by inhaling as we circulate upward from the perineum to the center of the crossover point and then exhaling as we circulate down from the crossover point to the perineum again.

Guide the Qi from Hui Yin to the Crossover Point
Guide the Qi from the Crossover Point to Hui Yin



As we exhale down to the perineum (*Hui Yin*), the breath is held out for a split second, bringing attention to the base of the body. This pause at the pelvic floor creates a *Qi pump*. A *Qi pump* is an action that occurs by *compacting* the Qi down so that it pressurizes and then it springs upward. Stopping the Qi and breath for a split second at *Hui Yin* thus invokes the Qi to circulate along the *Small Circle* pathway when it is followed by an inhale, which guides the Qi upward.

During this method of the *Small Circle* practice, it is important that we still mentally touch upon the key *energy gates* as we cross over them. Therefore, we breathe upward in one inhale from *Hui Yin*, to *Wei Lu*, to *Ming Men*, and then to the crossover point. Then we exhale down from the crossover point to *Xia Dantien*, and back down to *Hui Yin*.

Concentration on the meridian lines and the *energy gates* need not be *pinpointed*. In other words, our concentration may sense the general area of the *energy gates* and meridians instead of targeting the exact point. Since our meridians and *energy gates* can vary in size, and since they may extend slightly inward or even slightly beyond the physical body, attempting to pinpoint their location may limit our perception of them. We therefore want to avoid perceiving *energy gates* and meridians as we believe they *should* be, as opposed to how they actually are.

Continuous Circulation without Breath

The final stage of *Small Circle* practice instructs us to circulate Qi along *Small Circle* pathway *without* the specific use of breath. Here we circulate with the intent of the mind alone. The purpose for developing this skill is so that we are able to circulate energy and raise our awareness outside of meditation practice at any time during our daily lives.

The final stage of *Small Circle* practice occurs from the cellular memory we have developed of this *energetic* pathway. At first, the breath was used as a tool to move circulation along the *Small Circle*. Later, simply recalling the cellular memory of the Qi flow along this pathway can cause circulation to occur without the use of breath to move the Qi. This practice is performed in the same way as the continuous *Small Circle* circulation, except it is done without the use of any specific breathing.

Over-Thinking Small Circle Practice

When performing *Small Circle*, avoid excessively thinking about the details of the practice. Although we want to study and fully understand it, we also want to free our mind from having to intensely perceive the *energy gates* and pathways of the *Small Circle*. Ironically, pushing hard to perceive the *energy gates* and meridians of the body will create an

intensity which will bring mental tension that will negate the results of our practices. Therefore, when performing *Small Circle* or other Qigong movements and meditations, allow the mental pathways of Qi flow to naturally evolve. Carving out the direction of Qi flow may at first require an approximation of the practice, and it may take time to fully sense the entire *Small Circle* pathway and *energy gates*. Our method is to use the mind to guide the Qi and disregard thinking about whether or not we are experiencing any results during practice. Regular practice will then gather results.

Abandoning Achievement of Small Circle Practice

We have touched upon the importance of achieving awareness of the *energy gates* and learning to sense the *Small Circle* pathway. Our natural tendency to attain this awareness is through a goal-oriented approach. Typically, we choose to develop a regiment for our practices. This is considered a standard approach for achieving something in life. Creating goals can be effective, as long as we abandon a compulsive approach toward our practices.

Similar to *Not Being in Pursuit of the Qi*, we also perform practices without being in pursuit of achieving and accomplishing a goal. If we are concentrating on our goal, we are not present with our practice.

In abandoning Qigong achievement, we are also abandoning our imagination of what we may become through Qigong practice. We might be attempting to become a projected ideal of ourselves as a result of our Qigong practices. Or we may be imagining what our experience of awareness will be like. Such expectations will probably remove us from being present in where we actually are with our practice. When we perform Qigong, it is best done from a desire to experience the practice itself as opposed to a desire to achieve something. Therefore, Qigong exercises and meditations can be scheduled while still surrendering external motives and beliefs we may have about our practice. It is of course OK to want many positive things as a result of our efforts. The only difference here is that we are not dwelling upon our goal(s) during Qigong movements or meditation. In other words, instead of meditating upon a potential we can achieve, we are meditating on the actual practice itself.

Another factor that could occur is that we may compare or measure our Qigong capability. Again, this interweaves external beliefs into our Qigong practice, impacting our efforts. Our mindset can powerfully influence our awareness and Qi flow. Since the mind leads the Qi and the Qi follows the mind, thoughts and feelings from the mind can also detrimentally impact the flow of Qi. During Qigong practice, we can easily begin to judge the quality of our skill or even over-evaluate our expertise. We may become overly occupied with categorizing our Qigong proficiency. We may applaud or condemn our practices, drawing our mind and Qi away from being present in our awareness. In this case, we would be dwelling on the perception of our efforts, instead of actually embracing the internal art of Qigong. Alternatively, we can keep the mind neutral in order to draw our focus to be present in our practice. In terms of *Small Circle*, practice, learning to be present is essential for obtaining positive results.

If we set up a routine for practice and we are not particularly inspired on a given day, we need not push to feel how we think we *should* feel about Qigong. We can instead allow ourselves to be as we are and relax into a routine without any expectation. Through abandonment of what we perceive as the path to accomplishment, we can enjoy and naturally grow in awareness of the *Small Circle* and other Qigong practices.

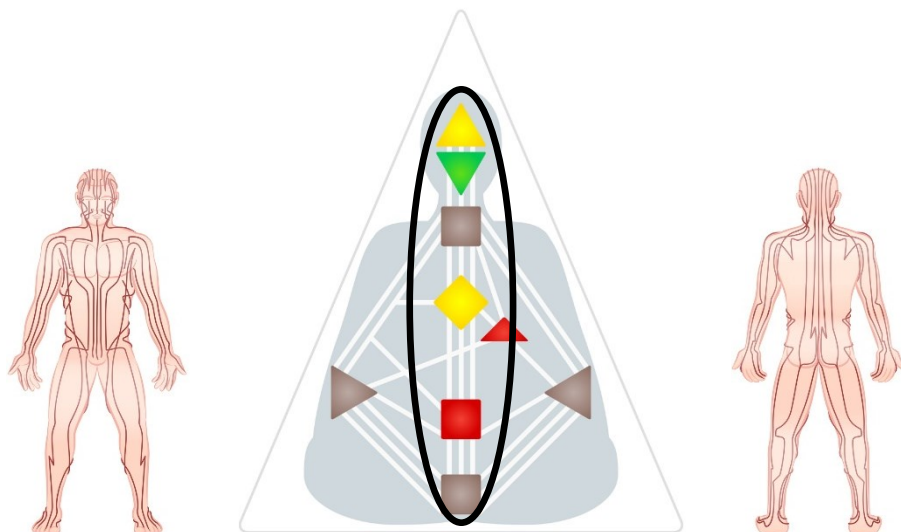
- ☯ Energy gates are specific points or centers along meridians pathways
- ☯ Learn to guide Qi along the Small Circle's energy gates and meridians
- ☯ Circulating Qi along the Small Circle pathway clears energy blockages and increases Qi flow
- ☯ Abandon a goal-oriented approach to Qigong

CHAPTER EIGHT

Small Heaven Practice

&

The Eight Extraordinary Meridians



In chapter seven, we described the lower *energy gates* and meridians of the *Small Circle* and how to meditate on its elliptical pathway. We further continue our discussion of *energy gates* and meridians that can be activated through the *Small Heaven* practice. The *Small Heaven* practice is similar to the *Small Circle*, except that its elliptical pathway encompasses the entire length of the torso. We will now explain the pathway of the *Small Heaven* loop, including its additional *energy gates*. Learning and mastering the *Small Heaven* practice will give us the ability to impact the meridians and *energy gates* of the entire body, tremendously enhancing our health and well-being.

Small Circle to Small Heaven Progression

After developing an abundance of Qi flow from the *Small Circle* practice, we can then progress to perform *Small Heaven*. In essence, the *Small Heaven* practice is circulation of Qi around an expanded

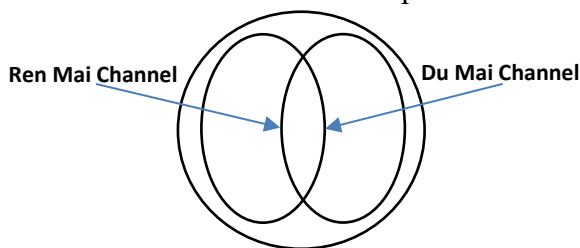
elliptical pathway of the entire torso. Along this elliptical pathway, we also meditate on additional *energy gates*. Some practitioners may want to bypass the progression from *Small Circle* and proceed directly to the *Small Heaven* practice. It is also possible that *Small Heaven* practitioners have not been taught the *Small Circle* practice. We highly recommend performing the *Small Circle* prior to proceeding to the *Small Heaven* meditation. The reason is that we want to accumulate a concentrated force of Qi in our lower *energy gates* before we attempt larger circulation. Empowering the lower *energy gates* in the *Small Circle* practice allows for a sufficient force of Qi to propel along the *Small Heaven* elliptical. If we have not gathered ample Qi at our base, we may be unable to move the Qi along the *Small Heaven* pathway. Therefore, we recommend one to three months of the *Small Circle* prior to beginning the *Small Heaven* practice.

Since the *Small Circle* includes about half of the *energy gates* of *Small Heaven* practice, we have already learned approximately half of the *Small Heaven* meditation. First learning to sense the *energy gates* of the *Small Circle* is central to the success of the *Small Heaven* meditation. Gradual progressing from *Small Circle* to *Small Heaven* will greatly assist in our experience of circulating Qi around the *Small Heaven* meridians.

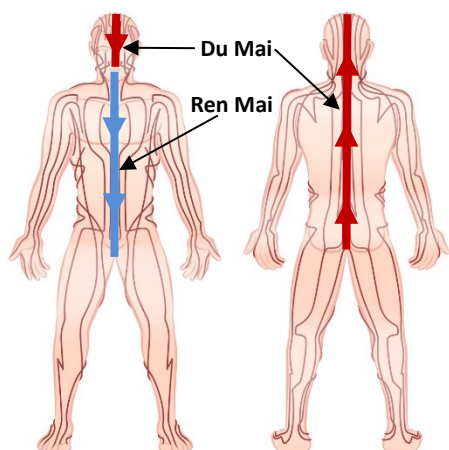
Meridians in the Small Heaven Meditation Practice

The *Conception Vessel* (*Ren Mai* channel) and the *Governing Vessel* (*Du Mai* channel) are two major Yin and Yang meridians within the body. These channels run counterclockwise, circulating on the exterior centerline of the body. They basically run up the front of the body and down the back of the body. At the time of the first cell division in the growth of a human being, it is said that these two meridians are formed. These two meridians make up the entire elliptical in the *Small Heaven* practice. Reversing circulation of Qi upon these two channels is thought to impact our primordial and prenatal nature, since they are the initial meridians formed at conception. This in turns affects our innate being. In addition, reverse circulation along these meridians stimulates Qi flow throughout the entire body.

Cell Division at Conception



Of all the meridians in the body, the *Ren Mai* and *Du Mai* channels are considered among the most significant in Qigong meditation. The *Du Mai* channel, or *Governing Vessel*, is the Yang channel running from the upper lip, over the head and down the spine. It is said to govern all the Yang channels in the body. In the *Small Heaven* practice, Qi is circulated in reverse, up the *Du Mai* channel from the perineum to the crown, and then downward to the point above the upper lip. The *Ren Mai* channel, or *Conception Vessel*, is the Yin meridian that runs from the perineum to the lower lip. The *Ren Mai* channel monitors and directs all the Yin meridians of the body. In the *Small Heaven* practice, Qi is circulated in reverse, down the *Ren Mai* channel, from the point below the lower lip and down to the perineum.



Small Heaven Practice

Du Mai Circulation

In Small Heaven practice, Qi is circulated up the Du Mai Channel from the perineum, up the spine, around the head, and then down to the upper lip.

Ren Mai Circulation

Qi is then circulated down the Ren Mai Channel, from the lower lip, down to the perineum.

The *Small Heaven* meditation encompasses the entire *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* channels, impacting major bodily organs and numerous adjacent channels connecting to these meridians. These two key meridians combined together in the *Small Heaven* meditation create a complete

elliptical circle running around the exterior torso. The only separation between the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* meridians occurs at the mouth. In *Small Heaven*, *Small Circle*, and in most Qigong meditations, we touch our tongue to the upper palate to connect these two meridians. This creates a continuous elliptical circuit of energy around the body.

Qi naturally circulates counterclockwise in the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* channels. However, in the *Small Heaven* and *Small Circle* practices, we circulate Qi in the opposite direction, moving clockwise. We reverse the direction of Qi flow in order to achieve longevity and increased awareness, while connecting the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* meridians together as one. Since Qi flow in the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* meridians slows as we age, reversing the flow of Qi in these two channels restores a healthy flow, bringing about youthfulness.

Drawing the Yin energy up the *Du Mai* Yang meridian and drawing the Yang energy down the *Ren Mai* Yin meridian, hypothetically creates an *alchemical* reaction. This combination of opposing forces within these meridians safely decongests stagnation and invigorates Qi flow along these channels. Invigorating the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* channels in this way may function comparable to a tornado. A tornado forms from polarities of updrafts and downdrafts of the lower and upper atmosphere with warm and cold air. This is like the opposing forces of Yin and Yang, which combine in unison to create a power within the *Small Heaven* meridians through reversed circulation. *Small Heaven* circulation may then be deemed as a brilliant *alchemical* design, created with purposeful intent to promote health, well-being, and transformation.

Explanation of Small Heaven Practice

Prior to starting *Small Heaven* practice, we perform the meditation preparation techniques of the *Three Adjustments*, (See Chapter 7: *Performing the Three Adjustments*).

Then to begin *Small Heaven*, we place our focus at *Xia Dantien* and circulate down the same pathway as in the *Small Circle* practice, as illustrated in chapter seven. We continue in the identical manner along the elliptical pathway up to the *Ming Men* point, located at the lower back. After we reach the *Ming Men energy gate*, we continue upward. The difference now is that we do not cross over the body at the *Ming Men* point as we do in *Small Circle* practice. We instead guide a mental

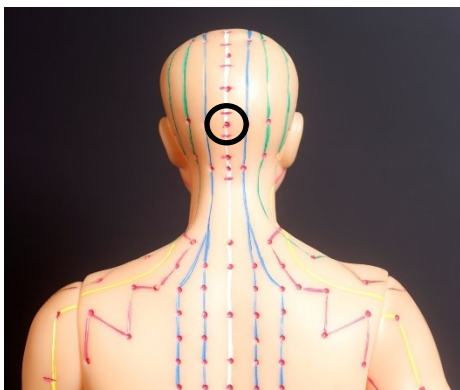
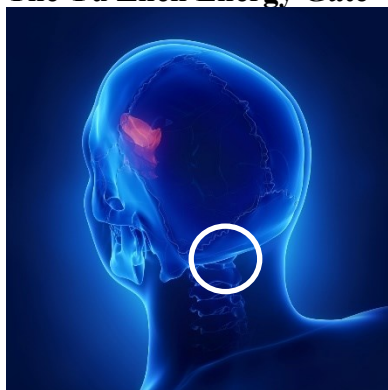
line of Qi up to the base of the neck. This pathway of Qi on the *Small Heaven* elliptical thus moves upward from the *Ming Men* along the outside of the spine to the neck bone.

The Da Zhui Energy Gate



The neck bone, or *Da Zhui* (roughly pronounced *Da-Zhweāy*), refers to the big bone on the back of the neck located at C-7. Several Yang channels meet at the *Da Zhui*, so we can begin to understand the significance of this *energy gate*. Activation and concentration at *Da Zhui* can impact a large portion of the body, toning the Yang force and flow of Qi in the spine and neck. A good way to begin sensing the *Da Zhui energy gate* is to simply massage the big neck bone where it is located, as we do in *Closing Form*. Note: It is also important to circulate Qi on the meridian section between *Ming Men* and *Da Zhui*.

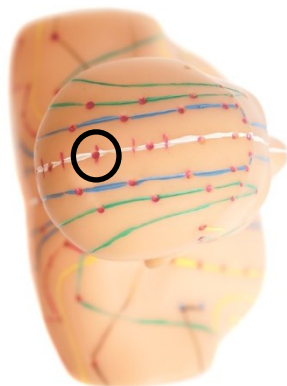
The Yu Zhen Energy Gate



The next *energy gate* in the *Small Heaven* elliptical is called the *Yu Zhen* (roughly pronounced *Yū -Jzhean*). From the *Da Zhui* point, we

lead the Qi up the neck to *Yu Zhen*. The *Yu Zhen energy gate* is located just below the base of the skull, in the center. *Yu Zhen* is significant, being that it is opposite the forehead *energy gate*, known as *Shang Dantien*. *Yu Zhen* is also known as the *Jade Pillow* because ancient Chinese narrow pillows made of jade were once placed under the neck, corresponding to this area at the base of the skull.

The Bai Hui Energy Gate

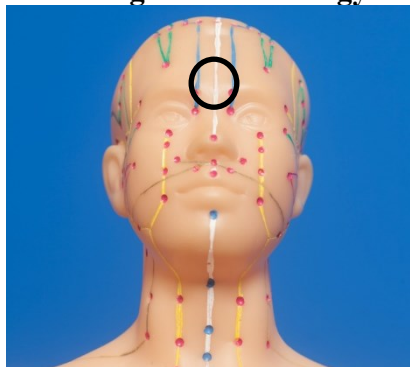


From *Yu Zhen*, we lead the Qi up the back of the skull to the *Bai Hui* (roughly pronounced *Bī -Whāy*) *energy gate*. The *Bai Hui* is located at the top of the head, specifically situated at the fontanel that is set slightly to the rear of the skull. If we draw a line straight upward from the highest point of each ear, the line will meet at the *Bai Hui energy gate*. Again, for our purposes, pinpointed concentration of an *energy gate* is not necessary in our circulation practices.

The *Bai Hui* is highly significant, as it represents the bodily north pole of the *Central Channel (Zhong Mai)*. It is the primary gateway for the incoming *Heaven Qi*, where a powerful influx of energy enters into our head and body. It is thus the most Yang point in the body, opposite *Hui Yin*, which is the most Yin point.

When we practice the *Small Heaven* meditation, we can induce a subtle, *energetic pull* upon the *Bai Hui* by using the sensation of an imaginary thread drawing our head upward. The awareness of this *upward pull* can invoke a sensation of the *Bai Hui* point as well as movement along the *Small Heaven* pathway. This is why the sensation of a thread pulling from the top of the head is considered a significant aspect of Qigong practice.

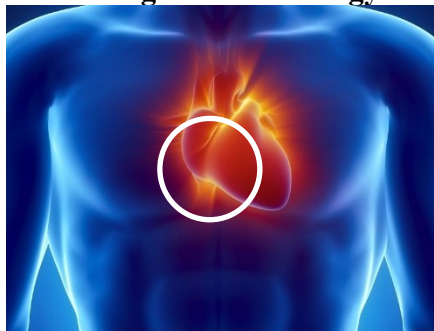
The Shang Dantien Energy Gate



After crossing the *Bai Hui*, we lead the Qi over the head and downward in the *Small Heaven* elliptical, to the *Shang Dantien* (roughly pronounced *Shaong Don-Tēē-Ehn*) energy gate. *Shang Dantien* corresponds with the forehead, and it is the energy gate opposite the *Yu Zhen* point. Since *Shang Dantien* is also a *Dantien*, we consider it an energy gate with a wide physical and energetic field. The *Dantiens* are considered a larger field of energy as opposed to a point of energy within the body. Thus, *Dantiens* encompass a wider physical area and are situated more internally.

The word *Dantien* is loosely translated as *Elixir Field*. Since not all energy gates are specifically referred to as *Dantiens*, we can be assured that the *Upper Dantien*, or *Shang Dantien*, is a major energy gate in the *Small Heaven* practice. Much like *Xia Dantien*, *Shang Dantien* is a bodily field that stores significant amounts of energy. This massive field of stored Qi thus becomes an elixir, which implies that medicinal or curative benefits occur by meditating at the *Shang Dantien* energy gate.

The Zhong Dantien Energy Gate



From *Shang Dantien*, we move the Qi down from the forehead to the *Zhong Dantien* (roughly pronounced *Jhzhong Don-Tēē-Ehn*) *energy gate*, located at the center of the chest between the nipples. Again, we are connecting to a *Dantien*, so the *Zhong Dantien* or the *Middle Dantien*, is also a field of energy that expands out from the chest. It is considered the center of love and compassion in many traditions, and it is often thought to house our spirit. Being that *Zhong Dantien* is the *Middle Dantien*, we can surmise that it is a blend of the refined spirit of the *Upper Dantien* and the more embodied spirit of the *Lower Dantien*, or *Xia Dantien*.

Guiding Qi Down the Small Heaven

The *energetic* pathway from the forehead down to *Zhong Dantien* is a long stretch in the *Small Heaven* elliptical. Here we are passing over key *energy gates* that are not specified in the *Small Heaven* practice between *Shang Dantien* and *Zhong Dantien*. From the forehead downward, we cross over the mouth. Between the upper lip and lower lip, we move from a major Yang meridian (the *Du Mai* channel) to a major Yin meridian (the *Ren Mai* channel). This is a highly significant crossing on our pathway from *Shang Dantien* to *Zhong Dantien*. We bridge this divide between the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* meridians by placing our tongue on the upper palate. This connection of the two meridians at the mouth is known as the *Magpie Bridge*. Our mouth is a highly significant gateway, and that is why mantra repetition and the words we speak activate our meridians and profoundly affect us. Also, a major shift in the Qi current occurs at the *Magpie Bridge* as we move downward from a Yang to a Yin meridian. In the *Small Heaven* practice, we do not specifically focus on the *Magpie Bridge*, though we remain aware of it.

Circulating further down the *Ren Mai* channel, we cross over the *Tian Tu energy gate* located in the niche between the collar bones. This is the *energy gate* opposite the *Da Zhui* point located on the neck bone. As with the *Magpie Bridge*, we do not specifically meditate upon the *Tian Tu energy gate* in the *Small Heaven* elliptical. In any case, we still activate these *energy gates* on the downward path from the forehead to the chest through guiding the Qi along these meridians.

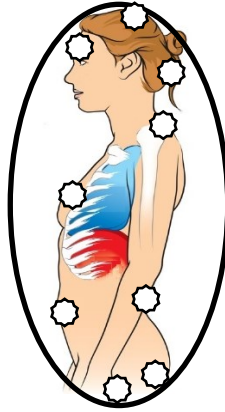
From the *Zhong Dantien* located at the chest, we then go down the meridian line to *Xia Dantien* at the lower abdomen. Here again we cross a key *energy gate* located at the diaphragm as we descend to *Xia Dantien*. Unspecified *energy gates* along the *Small Heaven* pathway are thus activated, since the entire elliptical crosses over them. This occurs, provided that we consciously lead the Qi along the entire meridians of the *Small Heaven* meditation.

After we have returned to *Xia Dantien*, we have completed one cycle of the *Small Heaven* circulation. In summary, we concentrate at each of these nine key *energy gates* and meditate on the entire *Small Heaven* pathway as well. Similar to the *Small Circle* practice, we also *bathe* (See Chapter 7: *bathing*) at each *energy gate* along the *Small Heaven* elliptical.

We suggest performing this meditation using the recording below. This will assist in mentally chanting the sound current of each *energy gate* while also *bathing* our awareness there.

The following link to the audio recording of the Small Heaven meditation practice includes a chant of the name of each energy gate provided by Master Tianyou Hao. <https://soundcloud.com/har-har-khalsa/dr-hao-small-heaven-meditation/s-bOjDI>

Small Heaven Meditation



1. **Mentally bathe at Xia Dantien** (abdomen)
Then mentally circulate down the pathway to *Hui Yin*
2. **Mentally bathe at Hui Yin** (perineum)
Then mentally circulate up the pathway to *Wei Lu*
3. **Mentally bathe at Wei Lu** (tailbone)
Then mentally circulate up the pathway to *Ming Men*
4. **Mentally bathe at Ming Men** (mid-lower back)
Then mentally circulate up the pathway to *Da Zhui*
5. **Mentally bathe at Da Zhui** (neck bone)
Then mentally circulate up the pathway to *Yu Zhen*
6. **Mentally bathe at Yu Zhen** (base of the skull)
Then mentally circulate up the pathway to *Bai Hui*
7. **Mentally bathe at Bai Hui** (top rear of the head)
Then mentally circulate down the pathway to *Shang Dantien*
8. **Mentally bathe at Shang Dantien** (forehead)
Then mentally circulate down the pathway to *Zhong Dantien*
9. **Mentally bathe at Zhong Dantien** (chest)
Then mentally circulate down the pathway to *Xia Dantien*

Advanced Small Heaven Practice

As with the *Small Circle* meditation, we can perform an advanced method of *Small Heaven* circulation using breath. Once we have gained sensitivity to the meridians and *energy gates* along the *Small Heaven* pathway, we can then circulate the Qi by means of our inhale and exhale.

This advanced technique of *Small Heaven* meditation is performed by inhaling as we draw the Qi upward from the *Hui Yin* (perineum) to the *Bai Hui* (top of head) in one breath. Then we exhale in one breath as we lead the Qi downward from the *Bai Hui* to the *Hui Yin*. While breathing in and out, we also sense the meridian pathways and *energy gates* along the *Small Heaven* elliptical. As with the *Small Circle* practice, we pause briefly at the *Hui Yin* on the completed exhale. (See Chapter 7: *Continuous Small Circle Circulation with Breath*).

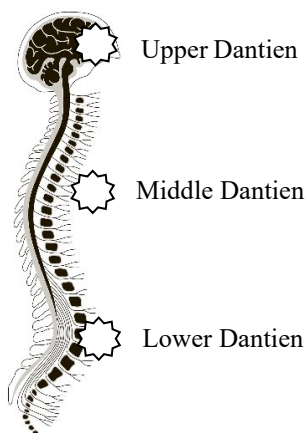
As our sensitivity to the *Small Heaven* pathway increases, we can also learn to circulate Qi along the *Ren Mai* and *Du Mai* channels without the use of breath. Circulating along the *Small Heaven* elliptical without the breath requires the mind alone to guide the Qi. (See Chapter 7: *Continuous Small Circle Circulation without Breath*).

The Three Dantiens

The three *Dantien energy gates* are highly significant in the *Small Heaven* circulation practice. In regard to the three *Dantiens*, it is important to know that they all emanate outward from the internal body to the external surface of the body, unlike other *energy gates*. This means that the three *Dantiens* are not specifically pinpointed along the *Small Heaven* elliptical, yet they still connect to its pathway.

The three *Dantiens* in fact reside internally, in front of the *Central Channel*. They can therefore connect with and draw from the incoming Qi along the *Central Channel*, making the three *Dantiens* quite powerful *energy gates*. As previously clarified, *Xia Dantien* resides within the abdomen and is set back about 3/5 of the way from the spine toward the exterior abdomen (See Chapter 7: *Xia Dantien*). As with *Xia Dantien*, the *Middle Dantien* and *Upper Dantien* also reside within the body. Since the three *Dantien*'s are set within, and they are considered *energy gates* of the *Small Heaven* elliptical, we can conclude that they

radiate outward, connecting with the *Small Heaven* pathway. Furthermore, the three *Dantiens* powerfully impact our consciousness. Our connection and awareness of the three *Dantiens* is thus central to numerous Qigong exercises and meditations.



Energy Gates & Meridian Meditations

We have fully illustrated meditation on *energy gates* and meridians in the *Small Heaven* practice. Next, we want to share additional meditations which focus on other *energy gates* and meridians within our body, along with methods for sensing and activating them.

Understanding the Five Point Breathing Meditation

Now, we will share a different type of Qigong practice that requires simultaneous concentration upon five key *energy gates*. It is called the *Five Point Breathing* meditation.

It is essential to become aware of five key *energy gates* used in the *Five Point Breathing* meditation for rapid development in Qigong practice. We frequently focus on these five *energy gates* and activate them through Qigong. With additional attention and awareness placed on these five *energy gates*, we greatly enhance our sensitivity and Qi flow throughout the body. In this practice, we use the breath as a tool to assist with drawing in Qi through these five key points. To fully understand the *Five Point Breathing* meditation, we will first review the five *energy gates* focused upon in this technique.

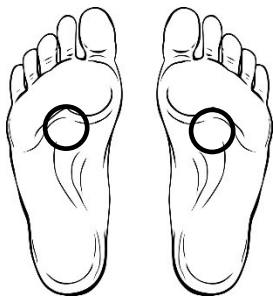
Laogong Energy Gates



To learn the *Five Point Breathing* meditation, we revisit discussion of the *Laogong* points located on the palm of the hands, also known as the *Buddha Palms*. In this practice, we are mentally breathing into our body through the two *Laogong* points on our hands, along with three other *energy gates*. This is done by using our breath and concentration together. As discussed, the breath is not actually entering the points on the palms, but rather Qi is drawn in through these points by mentally directing our breath there.

We can locate the *Laogong* point on the palm by bending the middle finger over the center of the palm. After locating its position, we can then learn to sense and draw Qi through the *Laogong* points. As we breathe in, we draw the Qi into both *Laogong* points, up through the arms, filling the entire body with Qi, like a balloon. On the exhale, we *compact* the Qi by mentally pressing down to *Xia Dantien*. A gentle pressurization of the abdomen pushing downward can accompany the *compacting* of the Qi into *Xia Dantien* as well. During this practice, the palms are held facing upward to receive the Qi, invoking a sensation at the *Laogong energy gates*.

Yongquan Energy Gates



In the *Five Point Breathing* meditation, we also simultaneously draw in Qi through the *Yongquan* (or *Bubbling Springs*) points located at the bottom of the feet. The *Yongquan* point is situated on the center depression of the ball of the foot. It is the beginning of the Kidney meridian. From the *Yongquan energy gates*, we draw in *Earth Qi* from the Earth's field of energy.

Much like the *Laogong* points, we fill our body with Qi through the *Yongquan* points as we inhale. The difference now is that we draw in Qi through the feet, legs, and into the body. Then on the exhale, we *compact* the Qi down into *Xia Dantien*.

Bai Hui Energy Gate

The fifth *energy gate* in the *Five Point Breathing* meditation is the *Bai Hui* (described in the *Small Heaven* practice). From the *Bai Hui energy gate* at the top of the head, we also breathe in and draw Qi down through the head, filling the entire body. Then on the exhale, we *compact* the Qi down to *Xia Dantien*.

In the *Five Point Breathing* meditation, we simultaneously draw Qi into the entire body through all five *energy gates*. On the exhale, we *compact* the Qi that was gathered into one focal point at *Xia Dantien*. Drawing Qi in through these five *energy gates* requires development of the *inflow sensation* of Qi. In other words, we must identify and *cultivate* the ability to draw in Qi through these *energy gates*.

Five Point Breathing Meditation Practice:

1. Perform the three adjustments.
2. Keep the palms facing upward.
3. Begin drawing Qi into the *Five Points* on the inhale.
4. Exhale, *compacting* the Qi down into *Xia Dantien*.
5. End by placing the hands over the lower abdomen, with breath and concentration at *Xia Dantien*.
6. Perform the *Closing Form*.

The suggested time for this practice is 10 minutes or more in a sitting or standing posture.

The best seasons to practice *Five Point Breathing* are typically fall, winter, and spring, because this practice is Yang-producing, or heating. The summer is already excessively Yang, and creating an overabundance of Yang can cause imbalances.

We also recommend not to practice the *Five Point Breathing* meditation if the mental and emotional environments are *energetically toxic*. Since we are drawing in the surrounding Qi, and since Qi blends with the mental and emotional environmental information, we could potentially draw in unwanted *energetic* frequencies in an unsuitable environment. The *Five Point Breathing* practice is ideally performed in an environment that has an appropriate meditative atmosphere.

Finally, it is recommended that the *Five Point Breathing* meditation is not practiced during a lightning storm. Though unlikely, we could technically draw the lightning to ourselves should we develop a strong inflow through these gates. Even if we are safe from the lightning itself, the *Five Point Breathing* draws excessive heat or Yang energy. It is possible that we could over-stimulate our meridians and *energy gates* while drawing in *Heaven Qi* during a lightning storm.

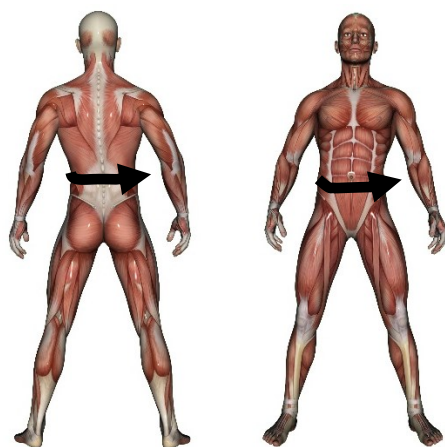
The Eight Extraordinary Meridians (8 Mai)

In the final portion of this chapter, we will discuss the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians* (also known as the 8 Mai) and how they can be activated in the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* practice. The *Eight Extraordinary Meridians* play a significant role in regulating the flow of Qi and blood in the twelve standard meridians. The standard meridians refer to the twelve channels in Traditional Chinese Medicine. In Qigong, we specifically place our attention on the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians*, as they impact our other twelve channels. It is not necessary to gain extensive knowledge of all the meridians in the body in order to activate them. Moving Qi along the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians* can activate all the channels, clearing blockages throughout the entire body.

Before we discuss how to meditate on the *Extraordinary Meridians*, we must first understand where these meridians are generally located. Of the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians*, we have already discussed three of them, which are the *Du Mai* channel (#1), the *Ren Mai* channel (#2), and the *Zhong Mai* or *Central Channel* (#3). We will now proceed to describe the remaining five *Extraordinary Meridians*.

The Dai Mai Meridian (#4)

One of the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians* is called the *Dai Mai* meridian. The *Dai Mai* meridian is also known as the *Belt Route*, as it wraps around the body like a belt. It is the only meridian that runs horizontally around the entire body. It runs around the front of the waist just below the navel at the level of the *Qihai* point in line with *Xia Dantien*. It then wraps around the entire waist, extending slightly upward on the lower back, at the level of the *Ming Men* point. The *Dai Mai* therefore connects with two primary *energy gates* of the body. This meridian is said to have the capability of expanding upward or downward, lengthening from the waist in either direction while encircling the body horizontally.



The Dai Mai meridian is located about 1.7 inches below the navel around the waist, circling up to the Ming Men point on the lower back

Meridians #5, #6, #7, & #8 Overview

Now we will discuss the location of the four remaining *Eight Extraordinary Meridians*. To keep it simple, we will only discuss where these four *Extraordinary Meridians* run through our legs, torso, and arms. These meridians also extend into the neck and head; however, concentration on certain portions of these channels is sufficient to activate the entire pathway. We can also presume that the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* practice purposefully eliminated concentration on these meridians where they extend into the head, to prevent excessive Qi from diverting there. Therefore, we are only discussing a portion of these *Extraordinary Meridians* in accordance with the areas that we will meditate on in the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation*.

Yang Extraordinary Meridians (Meridians #5 & #6)

We are combining two *Yang Extraordinary Meridians* (the *Yang Heel Vessel* and the *Yang Linking Vessel*) and simply referring to them as the *Yang Extraordinary Meridians* of the legs, arms, and back. In basic terms, these are channels that run along both outer legs and both outer arms as well as on both sides of the back. For our purposes, this is the only portion of these two *Extraordinary Meridians* that we will be focusing on. We are also presenting the *Yang Extraordinary Meridians* as encompassing a massive pathway along the outer legs and arms, and along either side of the back. This is because we are taught to stimulate wide meridian pathways, both physically and mentally in our Qigong practices. Presenting our material on the *Extraordinary Meridians* in this manner will assist in developing a fundamental understanding of these channels that can be applied to the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* practice.

(Note: For our purposes we are presenting the Yin & Yang Heel Vessel and the Yin & Yang Linking Vessel Extraordinary Meridians in terms of very wide pathways according to our teachings. Also, we are only discussing the segments of the Eight Extraordinary Meridians that we focus on in the 10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation. For information on full meridian descriptions and where they are located, please consult Traditional Chinese Medicine documents or websites).

Yang Extraordinary Leg Meridians

Now we will break down the *Yang Extraordinary Meridians* into three segments of legs, back, and arms for the purpose of our meridian activation and meditation practices. Let us begin with understanding the portion of these meridians that run on the outer legs.

If we pat *down* the sides of the buttocks and the outside of both legs to the outer part of the top of the feet, we will have basically covered the leg portions of the *Yang Extraordinary Meridians*. This corresponds to the same pathway that we pat down as a part of the *Closing Form* done after meditation.

Yang Extraordinary Back-Suspender Routes

The upper portion of these *Yang Extraordinary Meridians* that run along our back can be referred to as the *Back-Suspender Routes*. The *Back-Suspender Routes* run up the back to the shoulders, on either side.

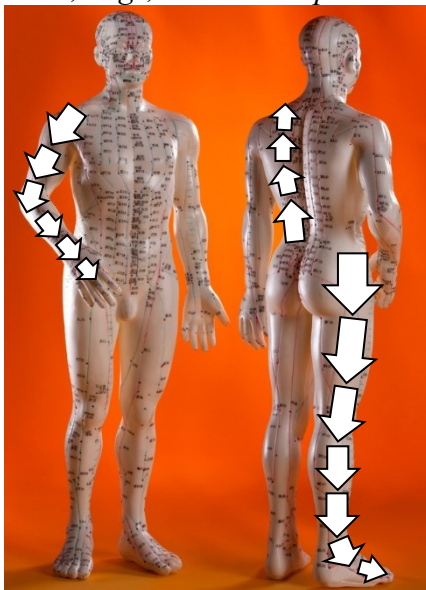
They are approximately located where actual suspenders would lie along our back. Unlike actual suspenders, we consider these meridian pathways to be wide.

The difference with this portion of the *Yang Extraordinary Meridian* is that we do not guide the Qi downward. We instead guide the Qi up the *Back-Suspender Routes* when meditating or activating them. Although it is a Yang meridian, and it naturally runs downward, this meridian is stimulated and concentrated upon in a reverse, upward direction. In the same way that we guide Qi in reverse along the *Du Mai* meridian in *Small Heaven* practice, we also circulate Qi in reverse on the *Back-Suspender Routes* for the purpose of clearing these channels.

Yang Extraordinary Arm Meridians

If we pat *down* our outer arms from the shoulders down to the back of the palm, we will have basically covered the arm portion of the *Yang Extraordinary Meridians*. This also corresponds to the same pathway and same direction that we pat down as a part of the *Closing Form*.

Yang Arms, Legs, & Back-Suspender Routes



Like the *Back-Suspender Routes*, the Yang arm meridians are also activated and concentrated upon in a reverse direction. A reverse direction refers to circulating the Qi from the shoulders to the outer arms and to the back of the palms and fingers.

Two Yin Extraordinary Meridians (#7 & #8)

As we had described the Yang *vessels* together as one, we are now combining two Yin *Extraordinary Meridians* (the *Yin Heel Vessel* and the *Yin Linking Vessel*), and simply referring to them as the *Yin Extraordinary Meridians* of the legs, arms, and torso. In basic terms, these are channels running on both inner legs, both inner arms, and on both sides of the chest and abdomen. For our purposes, this is the only portion of these two *Extraordinary Meridians* that we will be focusing on. We are also presenting the *Yin Extraordinary Meridians* as encompassing a massive pathway along the inner legs and inner arms, and along either side of the front of our torso. Again, in our practices, we stimulate wide meridian pathways, both physically and mentally.

Yin Extraordinary Leg Meridians

Now we will break down these *Yin Extraordinary Meridians* into three segments of legs, torso, and arms for the purpose of our meridian activation and meditation practices. Let us begin with understanding the portion of these meridians that run along the inner legs.

If we pat our inner legs upward from the bottom of the feet to the inner thighs, and to the peak of either side of the groin, we will have basically covered the leg portion of these *Yin Extraordinary Meridians*. This again corresponds to the same pathway that we pat upward as a part of the *Closing Form* done after meditation.

Yin Extraordinary Front-Suspender Routes

The upper portion of these *Yin Extraordinary Meridians* can be referred to as the *Front-Suspender Routes*. They are approximately located where front suspenders would be situated. The *Front-Suspender Routes* run from below the waist to the shoulders on either side of the torso. Unlike actual suspenders, these meridian pathways also cover a wide area. The difference with this part of the *Yin Extraordinary Meridians* is that we do not circulate the Qi upward along this pathway; instead, we circulate it downward. Although it is a Yin meridian and it naturally runs upward, this meridian is stimulated and concentrated upon in a reverse downward direction. In the same that we guide Qi in reverse along the *Ren Mai* meridian in *Small Heaven* practice, we also circulate Qi in reverse on the *Front-Suspender Routes* for the purpose of clearing these channels.

Extraordinary Yin Arm Meridians

If we pat down our inner arms from the palms up to the armpits, we will have basically covered the arm portion of *Yin Extraordinary Meridians*. This also corresponds to the same pathway and same direction that we pat down as a part of the *Closing Form* done after meditation.

As with the *Front-Suspender Routes*, the inner arm meridians are also concentrated upon in reverse. A reverse direction in this case refers to circulating the Qi from the palms and inner arms to the armpits.

Arms, Legs, & Front-Suspender Routes Yin Extraordinary Meridians



Introduction to the 10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation

After clarifying the basic pathways of the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians*, we are ready to meditate on these eight meridians in a practice called the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation*. Before we begin the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* practice, we want to understand how to meditate on each meridian so that we may receive maximum benefit. We also want to understand the sequence in which we move Qi along the channels of the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation*.

It is important to remember that activating the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians* occurs by the mind leading the Qi along each pathway, in combination with the breath. This is comparable to how we lead the Qi along the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* channels in the *Small Heaven* practice.

Directed awareness and focused breathing will draw Qi to flow along the meridians, creating movement and circulation. Circulating Qi through the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians* will expand and widen these pathways, generating radiant health and increased body awareness. The movement of Qi through these channels is therefore the key element in activating the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians*.

To assist in activating the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians*, it is useful to spend some time reflecting on each of these channels prior to performing the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation*. An excellent method is to practice *bathing* at each of the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians*, in the same way that we *bathe* at each *energy gate*. *Bathing* helps develop sufficient sensitivity to the eight meridians that we sequentially breathe through in the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation*.

Next, we will review the sequence of each segment of the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* in order to understand how to guide the Qi and *bathe* at each meridian. Then when performing the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation*, we will have experience in sensing and moving Qi along the *Eight Extraordinary Meridian* pathways.

Understanding the 10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation

Breath #1: Inhale up the Du Mai Meridian

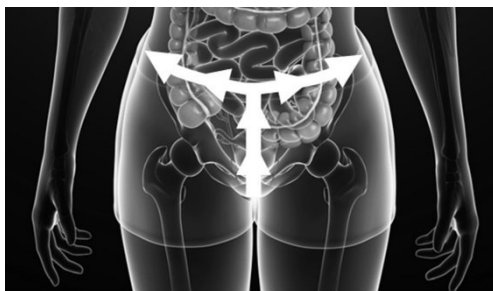
We begin the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* by drawing our attention to the *Hui Yin energy gate*. We then inhale and guide the Qi up the *Du Mai* channel to the *Bai Hui energy gate*.

Breath #2: Exhale down the Ren Mai Meridian

Next, we exhale while guiding the Qi from *Bai Hui* down the *Ren Mai* channel. Completion of this will return us to the *Hui Yin energy gate*. The circulation along the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* channels essentially completes one repetition of the *Small Heaven* circle.

Breath #3: Inhale along Zhong Mai & Dai Mai Meridians

After returning to the *Hui Yin energy gate*, we inhale and guide the Qi up the *Zhong Mai* meridian, to *Xia Dantien*. As we continue to inhale, we guide the Qi around the *Dai Mai* meridian. At the point of the lower abdomen, the mind leads the Qi in two opposite directions around the *Dai Mai* belt. Here we circle the Qi around the waist to meet at the *Back-Suspender Routes*.



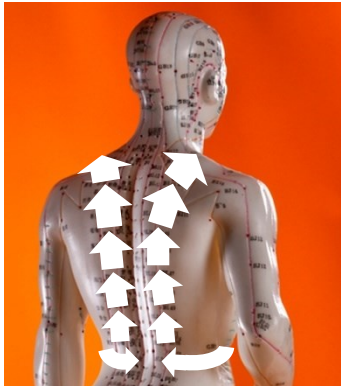
Draw Qi up Zhong Mai & around Dai Mai

Note: In the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* practice along the *Zhong Mai* channel, we only breathe and concentrate on a portion of the meridian. It is likely that this ancient meditation was designed as such so that the *Zhong Mai* channel is not overly stimulated. An excessive surplus of Qi may divert into the head if circulation is directed fully upward along the *Zhong Mai* channel, which could cause imbalances. Additionally, the *Zhong Mai* channel already receives activation when we run Qi along the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* channels (two of the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians*). The *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* channels cross over the *Bai Hui* and *Hui Yin energy gates*, activating the two poles of the *Zhong Mai* channel. Further, the three *Dantiens* (located on the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* channels) interconnect with the *Zhong Mai* channel, which impacts Qi flow along the whole meridian. Therefore, the entire *Zhong Mai* channel is activated indirectly during the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* practice. Thus, for our purposes, we practice Qi circulation in the *Zhong Mai* channel only between the *Hui Yin* and the *Xia Dantien* segment.

Continue Inhaling up the Back-Suspender Routes

After breathing around the *Dai Mai* meridian, we continue inhaling up the *Back-Suspender Route* pathways (Note: *breath #3 is one continuous breath from the Hui Yin, Dai Mai, and up the Back-Suspender Routes*). The Qi is led up these two vertical pathways on either side of the back.

The rear portion of the *Dai Mai* channel naturally meets the *Back-Suspender Routes* at the lower back. From this point, we lead the Qi up the *Back-Suspender Routes* to the shoulders. It is important to keep the mental pathway broad in order to encompass all the meridians on the back.



*Continue Inhaling
Up the (Yang)
Back Suspender Routes*

Breath #4: Exhale along the Yang Arm Meridians

Next, we exhale as we lead the Qi along the Yang arm meridians, mentally guiding the Qi flow from the shoulders, down the outside of arms, to the backside of the hands. This encompasses the entire outer half of the arms.

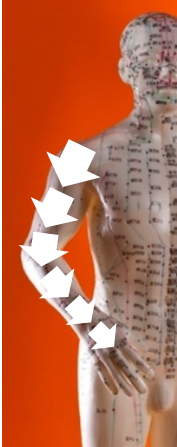
Breath #5: Inhale along the Yin Arm Meridians

Then we guide the Qi along the Yin arm meridians. From here, we inhale, guiding the Qi from the palms to the inner arms and to the top of the shoulders. This encompasses the entire inner portion of the arms.

Yang (Outer) Yin (Inner)

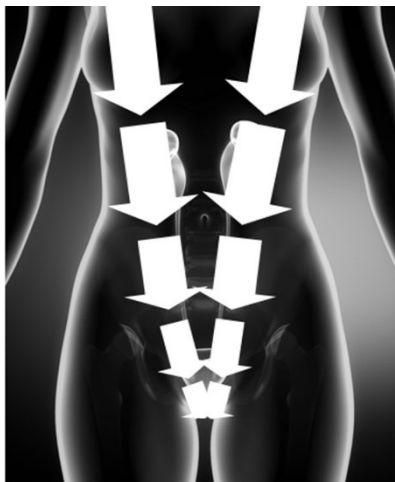
*Exhale Along
The Outer Arms*

*Inhale Along
The Inner Arms*



Breath #6: Exhale down the Front-Suspender Routes

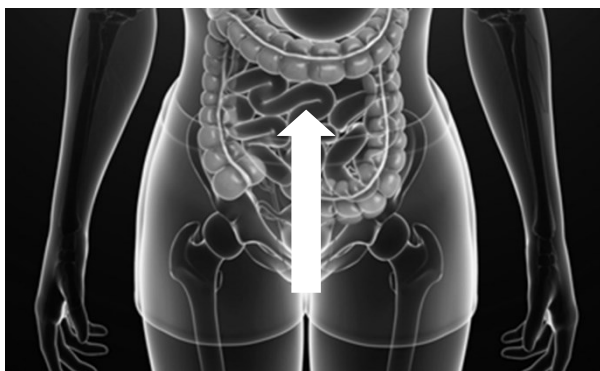
Next, we exhale, guiding the Qi from the shoulders down the *Front-Suspender Routes*, which run over the nipples and down either side of the torso. We consider this pathway to be wide, encompassing several meridians. After guiding the Qi down the *Front-Suspender Routes*, we angle both pathways inward to merge into one, as we mentally move along either side of the groin area. When we reach the *Hui Yin energy gate*, the two pathways will meet.



*Exhale Down the
Front Suspender Routes
Converging at
Hui Yin*

Breath #7: Inhale up the Zhong Mai Meridian

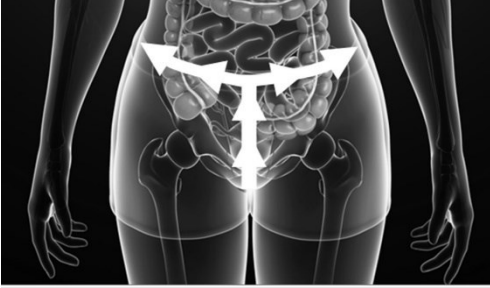
Again, we inhale and lead the Qi up the lower portion of the *Zhong Mai* channel, from *Hui Yin* to *Xia Dantien*.



Inhale from Hui Yin to Xia Dantien

Breath #8: Exhale around the Dai Mai Meridian

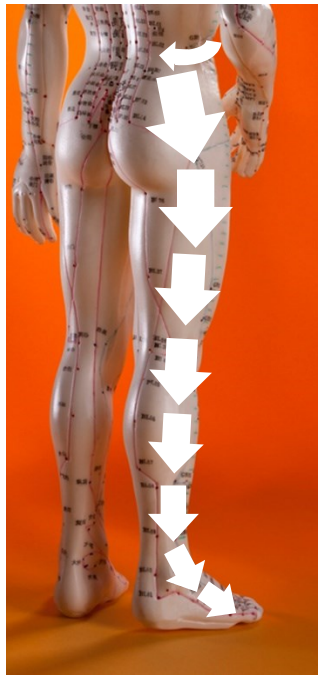
From *Xia Dantien*, we again move the Qi in opposite directions along the *Dai Mai* or *Belt Route* meridian. This time, it occurs while exhaling. We exhale around the *Dai Mia* meridian until we reach either side of the upper hip.



Continue Exhaling Down the Yang Leg Meridians

From the upper hips, we continue directing our focus and breath down the outer sides of the buttocks and thighs. We maintain our exhale down the Yang leg meridians, encompassing the entire outer half of the legs and feet.

Exhale Down Both Outer Legs



Breath #9: Inhale up the Yin Leg Meridians

Next, inhale from the balls of the feet upward, along the inner Yin leg meridians, encompassing the entire inner portion of the legs, up to the perineum (*Hui Yin*). On the same inhale, continue leading the Qi up the *Zhong Mai* channel to return to *Xia Dantien*.

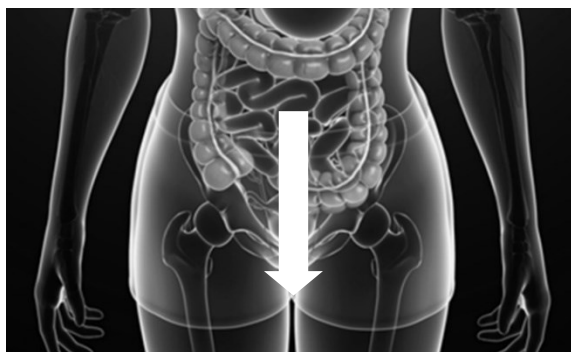


*Inhale up both
Inner legs to
Hui Yin*

*Continue Up the
Zhong Mai to
Xia Dantien*

Breath #10: Exhale down to Hui Yin

On the final breath, we exhale back down from *Xia Dantien* to *Hui Yin* through the *Zhong Mai* meridian. This completes one repetition of the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* practice.



Exhale from Xia Dantien to Hui Yin

The 10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation

Now we may perform the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* in a continuous motion as outlined in the following steps.

1. Perform the *Three Adjustments* for meditation preparation.
2. Bring the mind present in *Xia Dantien*.
3. Perform *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* for two to ten minutes.
4. **Breath #1:** Breathe in from *Hui Yin* to *Bai Hui* up the *Du Mai* channel.
5. **Breath #2:** Exhale down the *Ren Mai* channel from *Bai Hui* to *Hui Yin*.
6. **Breath #3:** Inhale from *Hui Yin* to *Xia Dantien*, through the *Zhong Mai* channel, around the *Dai Mai* meridian, and up the *Back-Suspender Routes*.
7. **Breath #4:** Exhale along the outer Yang arm meridians.
8. **Breath #5:** Inhale along the inner Yin arm meridians.
9. **Breath #6:** Exhale down the *Front-Suspender Routes* to *Hui Yin*.
10. **Breath #7:** Inhale from *Hui Yin* to *Xia Dantien*, through the *Zhong Mai* channel.
11. **Breath #8:** Exhale around the *Dai Mai* channel and down the outer Yang leg meridians.
12. **Breath #9:** Inhale up the inner Yin leg meridians to *Hui Yin* and continue breathing up the *Zhong Mai* channel to *Xia Dantien*.
13. **Breath #10:** Exhale from *Xia Dantien* down the *Zhong Mai* channel to *Hui Yin*.

Repeat the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation* nine times or more. Complete the meditation by performing the *Closing Form* at the end of the entire practice.

The following is a link to a video containing audio and visual guidance of the *10 Breath 8 Mai Meditation*. <https://youtu.be/sBTR0Ueax3E>

Physically Stimulating the Meridians

In order to activate the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians*, we may need to physically stimulate them in addition to using our mind and breath. Specific physical movements or vibration of the meridians can open the

Qi flow in a given channel. Additionally, this can assist with becoming aware of and sensing the meridians in our body.

Dai Mai Activation

A way of activating and becoming physically aware of the *Dai Mai* or meridian can occur through a waist rotation technique. In the following practice, we will also interconnect the opposite *energy gates* of *Xia Dantien* and *Ming Men* through the use of our hands. This further stimulates the *Dai Mai* because these *energy gates* are located along this meridian.

Dai Mai Rotation Technique:

1. Begin by standing in the correct Qigong posture. Place the right palm facing *Xia Dantien* (the lower abdomen) and the left palm facing the *Ming Men* (the lower back). Keep the palms a few inches away from the body. The fingers are facing downward at all times. Feel the two connecting hands through the body on either side of the *Dai Mai*.
2. Now rotate the palms to the right so that the left palm is facing *Xia Dantien* and the right palm is now facing *Ming Men*.
3. Next, rotate the hands in the opposite direction returning back to the original position.
4. Repeat this motion several times.

Practice Tips:

- Perform the motion in a swift half turn without turning the hips.
- The palms always remain 180 degrees distance from each other. As one palm moves, the other palm moves directly opposite.
- The movement is like holding a wheel and turning it with a force that twists the waist but not the hips.



Meridian Tapping

Another technique to activate Qi flow in the meridians is through physical contact. We have briefly discussed how a simple yet firm patting or *tapping* of the arms, legs, and torso draws Qi to the meridians. Additionally, this can clear blockages while drawing out stagnation in the fasciae. *Tapping* the meridians is the technique used to draw the Qi from the internal to the external body. For the same purpose, we also utilize *Tapping* in our *Closing Form*.

Tapping is performed by firmly slapping our meridians with the flat palm in an upward or downward motion. It is important to make sure to pat as hard as reasonably possible without causing pain, yet strong enough to vibrate deeply into the tissue.

Tap the Yang Arm Meridians

Begin this practice by *tapping* the *Yang Extraordinary* arm meridians, with a downward slapping of the outer arm. Start from the shoulder-well, descending the outer arm to the back of the palm and fingers. Then repeat on the opposite arm.

Tap the Yin Arm Meridians

On the *Yin Extraordinary* arm meridians, we begin by *tapping* the inner arm upward. Start from the palm and pat up the inner arm to the base of the armpit where it meets the side of the breast. Perform this action on both arms.

Tap down the Front-Suspender Routes

Continue patting downward on both sides of the *Front-Suspender Routes*, from the shoulders to below the waist, and on either side of groin area.

Tap up the Back-Suspender Routes

As far as the *Back-Suspender Routes* are concerned, we recommend using a hitting stick with thin bamboo reeds, also known as a *Qigong Brush*. With a *Qigong Brush* we can reach and tap these meridian pathways on our back. A *Qigong Brush* may also be used on the other meridian areas as well. The other option is to gain assistance from another person who can pat our meridian pathways from the base of the *Back-Suspender Routes* up to the shoulders. An additional option is to purchase *Gum Rubber Tubing* that has a one-inch outer diameter and a ¼ inch side wall (½ inch inner diameter) cut into one-foot sections. Use of these *Gum Rubber Tubes* for *tapping* the meridians must be performed very gently, as they create a reverberation and a powerful impact upon the fasciae. Very rapid snapping or swinging of the *Gum Rubber Tubes* could cause injury.

To order an online video of *Shao-Lin Stick Tapping* techniques, visit: <https://qihealingpower.com/instructional-videos/>

Tap the Yang Leg Meridians

We then proceed to *tap* down the entire portion of the *Yang Extraordinary* leg meridians. This is done by patting the legs on both sides simultaneously, beginning from the buttocks and down to the outer feet and toes.

Tap the Yin Leg Meridians

On the inner legs of the *Yin Extraordinary* meridians, we begin patting upward from the inside of the feet, up the inner legs, and into the groin area.

Once we can sense the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians* through physical and mental awareness, we begin to *energetically* widen these channels. This transpires through increased Qi circulation along these pathways that we have activated. The Qi flow along the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians* then connects with the other twelve meridians, which have thousands or millions of sub-channels running throughout the whole body. When Qi is flowing with a healthy and strong current throughout the *Eight Extraordinary Meridians*, we essentially activate our entire *Qi body*, that we can nurture and grow.

- ☯ The Ren Mai & Du Mai channels are among the most significant meridians
- ☯ The Small Heaven circulates along the Ren Mai & Du Mai channels
- ☯ Circulating along meridian pathways and energy gates develops health & well-being
- ☯ The Eight Extraordinary Meridians interact with and impact all other bodily meridians and energy gates

CHAPTER NINE

Awareness Of The Mind



In addition to body awareness, we consider awareness of our mind and its patterns to be an integral part of Qigong. Mental patterns play an important role in Qigong practice, as our thinking impacts Qi and body awareness. Psychological patterns of belief can block the flow of Qi or amplify it. We thus include investigation of our thought patterns in our awareness training, as we consider the mind to be part of the body as well. Often the mind and body are considered separate; however, we know they operate together. The mind profoundly affects the body, and the body significantly affects the mind as well. Therefore, we consider the mind and body as one, and we practice the examination of our mind as a part of our Qigong training.

Through self-examination, we can consciously clear destructive mental and emotional patterns that negatively affect our mind and body, so that we can experience improved health and well-being. The first step is to become aware of unwanted mental and emotional patterns that we may be holding. We have already demonstrated how our bodily organs and tissue can store destructive emotional information. By placing

awareness on releasing stored negativity and detrimental emotions, we can clear our bodily organs. In a similar way, we will now learn to clear destructive mental patterns through the process of self-investigation.

Our Original Nature

An aspect of our self-investigation deals with the concept of returning to our natural and original state of being, or *Original Nature*. Our most natural way of being naturally opens our bodily channels, *energy gates*, and Qi flow. Thus, the more we live in our *Original Nature*, the more we awaken our inner power and awareness.

Our *Original Nature* is as we existed before being born. Prior to birth, we had not identified ourselves as being different from our *Original Nature*. After birth, we claimed patterns of thinking and ways of being as our identity, which diminished our perception of our *Original Nature*. As we grew, many beliefs began to arise, and we constructed numerous patterns of thought to interpret our reality. This process is how we created *conditioned mental patterns*.

Conditioned Mental Patterns

Conditioned mental patterns that we have adopted program how we react and perceive ourselves and our reality. They constitute our false self, overlaid upon our true self or *Original Nature*. We often accept many conditioned patterns of thinking without question, simply because they seem to represent apparent reality. Over time, this causes us to grow further away from our natural self, as we continue to layer artificial concepts of who we are onto our being. If we begin to question and examine concepts and beliefs that we have about ourselves and our environments, we may draw closer to discovering our *Original Nature*. We also might find that we have adopted many *conditioned mental patterns* that cause us pain and suffering, which in turn hinder our progress of evolution.

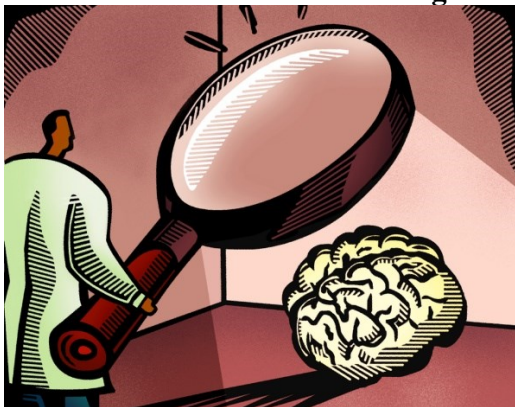
As a newborn baby, we were free from *conditioned mental patterns* that we later adopted through our families, society, and circumstances in life. Being a newborn, we were closer to our original and natural state of being. Therefore, we seek to become closer to this child-like nature in terms of purity. Purity in this case refers to being free of destructive or limiting *conditioned mental patterns* that we have adopted.

Throughout life, we form many beliefs about ourselves and our apparent reality. We may want to justify these beliefs so that they fit neatly into a construct that supports our perceived identity. These concepts and ways of thinking, tied in with emotional sentiments or even repressed emotions, form *energetic* pathways in our body and being. Some of these pathways are deeply ingrained, and they can cause a variety of physical and *energetic* blockages.

One aspect of returning to our *Original Nature* is through releasing these ingrained mental pathways that we have adopted and overlaid upon our authentic self. As we clear away these overlays, we may discover that many perceptions of ourselves, others, and our environments are not actually based on inherent truth.

The first step in becoming aware of these *conditioned mental patterns* is through truly investigating ourselves. As we investigate deeply, we may find that we have not examined many aspects of ourselves because we did not want to face destructive patterns. The simple, yet courageous act of self-examination of *conditioned mental patterns* can clear deep blockages and bring about transformational changes in all aspects of our self.

Ko-Wu: The Art of Self-Investigation



In Richard Leirer's book, *From Wu Chi to Tai Chi*, he describes a simple yet powerful practice of examining *conditioned mental patterns* of the mind and the emotions of the heart to discover our *Original Nature*. This practice is the art of self-investigation, which we refer to

as *Ko-Wu*. *Ko-Wu* has its roots in Confucianism with references to it from a 13th century philosopher named Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi described *Ko-Wu* as being the investigation into things, both externally and within oneself, along with quiet stillness and reflection to collect one's thoughts and to discover one's innate nature.

The concept of *Ko-Wu* may thus include investigating and becoming aware of *conditioned mental patterns* within ourselves. *Ko-Wu* involves a process of resolving these patterns through specific methodology. In this section, we will explore *Ko-Wu* principles in our self-investigation process. The following are step-by-step procedures for examining our *conditioned mental patterns*, based on the practice of *Ko-Wu*.

Ko-Wu Step #1: Remain Calm

When becoming aware of our *conditioned mental patterns*, the first step in *Ko-Wu* is to calmly and neutrally identify emotional responses that occur within us. Whenever anything occurs that triggers an emotional response, it becomes an opportunity for *Ko-Wu* practice or self-investigation. In order to investigate ourselves from a broad perspective, a relative amount of composure is needed to evaluate what is really going on.

Whenever a disturbing feeling or intense situation arises, it becomes important for us to meditatively investigate the reality of the issue. Remaining calm is thus a prerequisite for neutrally investigating mental and emotional patterns so that we can be free from conditioned impulses. Remaining calm does not mean that we deny or suppress our emotions. We simply want to maintain enough composure in any given situation so that we may understand the true rationale that is occurring beyond what our conditioned beliefs may be telling us.

The Heart Mind and the Wisdom Mind

Remaining calm may be understood using the Taoist concepts of the *Heart Mind* (*Xin*) and the *Wisdom Mind* (*Xi*). The *Heart Mind* provides emotional input, and the *Wisdom Mind* tempers the feelings that arise through assessing the reality of a situation. Between the *Heart Mind* and the *Wisdom Mind*, we form patterns of belief and ways of reacting based on how we process input from these two minds.

The *Heart Mind* and the *Wisdom Mind* can work together mutually in a Yin and Yang fashion, balancing mental, emotional, and environmental information that we receive. Calmly processing thoughts and emotions from the *Heart Mind* with the *Wisdom Mind* brings us balanced judgment regarding beliefs about our self and reality in general.

The *Wisdom Mind* may be understood as a neutral mind that processes the information from the *Heart Mind*. The *Heart Mind* can supply positive or negative information, based on powerful emotional energy. The calm directive from the *Wisdom Mind* guides this dynamic emotional energy from the *Heart Mind*, creating a meditative force for positive manifestation. To guide the *Heart Mind*, the *Wisdom Mind* can apply a calm and rational approach to circumstances based on the reality of a situation or an experience. Although the *Wisdom Mind* provides logic and neutrality, is not divorced from the *Heart Mind*, as the two minds work together in balance.

The *Heart Mind* could potentially play a negative role in perceiving a false and bleak view of a particular situation. If we remain calm, the *Wisdom Mind* can prevail over such input from the *Heart Mind*. The *Heart Mind* can then be directed to perceive reality through the filter of the *Wisdom Mind*. For this to occur, one requires a relatively calm frame of mind.

The *Heart Mind* is not inferior to the *Wisdom Mind*. The two minds working in equilibrium is what provides the most balanced assessment of reality. The *Heart Mind* can provide a positive equivalent to the *Wisdom Mind*, supplementing kindness, gentleness, compassion, love, courage, or any other positive emotion to face a given circumstance. These emotions from the *Heart Mind* are needed as a human being for growth and triumph in our environments and circumstances.

If the *Heart Mind* cannot relay positive emotional qualities in a given circumstance, at the very least, the *Wisdom Mind* can direct the *Heart Mind* to remain relatively calm. This guidance could occur through breathing or through some other physical action that helps subdue the *Heart Mind* from presiding and eclipsing the input of the *Wisdom Mind*. Destructive emotional reactions to environments or circumstances are

detrimental to our physical and *energetic* body. Repeated reactions of such emotions will create destructive *conditioned mental patterns*. Repetition of stressful emotions will then engrave mental patterns deeper and deeper into our physical and *energetic* body. This is another reason why remaining calm is highly important.

By applying the *Wisdom Mind*, we can calmly assess the dialogue provided from the *Heart Mind*. Through being calm, we can gain awareness of *conditioned mental patterns* and learn to release these patterns. Through assessing things neutrally, we can then liberate ourselves from patterns that cause *energetic* and physical blockages. For these reasons, remaining calm is considered a key step in the *Ko-Wu* process.

The following is an example of Ko-Wu at work, outlining how we can remain calm and investigate conditioned mental patterns that may be occurring.

Ko-Wu Investigation Example #1:

“I’m upset because I lost the basketball game”

Low Level Self-Investigation:

1. *“Why does this make me upset?”*
2. *“Because we didn’t win the game.”*

This person has a *conditioned mental pattern* to feel upset whenever they lose a ball game. They did not investigate beyond a surface level as to why this event triggered them to be upset.

Deeper Self-Investigation:

1. *“If I win the game, I’m happy, therefore if I lose, I believe I’m sad”.*
2. *“I have a conditioned belief that my happiness depends on winning the ball game.”*

This person now is looking at a *conditioned mental pattern* that they have regarding a program that predetermines how they will react if they lose the ball game. It required a degree of internal calm to even observe this belief that they held.

Realization Through Even Deeper Self-Investigation:

1. *“I can remain happy even if the game is not won, by remembering not to play out this role.”*
2. *“Maybe I can also feel happy even when other circumstances in my life do not work out as I want!”*

This person now has deeply reflected on how and why they play out a *conditioned mental pattern* of being upset whenever the ball game is lost. Perhaps they realized that their peers and family acted this same way, and they also witnessed society acting in this manner in reaction to losing a ball game. They discovered that their happiness is not dependent on the outcome of the game. For this discovery to occur, they needed calm introspection. If their *Heart Mind* were highly restless, it would have continued to broadcast its pain and upset over the loss of the game without the *Wisdom Mind*'s input. “Calm” in this case, simply means stilling the impulsive waves of emotional information so that the situation could be clearly examined.

Note: These examples do not necessarily apply to everyone's method of self-investigation. Each person must discover their own process of Ko-Wu.

Ko-Wu Step #2: Do Not Take Anything Personally

Many of our *conditioned mental patterns* may be formed and triggered by taking the opinions of others personally. Our sense of self-worth and how we perceive who we are might be based on another's reaction toward us. Depending on the response we receive from someone, we may have an emotional reaction that causes us to feel disempowered. We become disempowered because we allow another to affect how we act or react. For this reason, taking something personally can create destructive *conditioned mental patterns*.

Another's Perception of Us

Whatever another person says is only based on their perception of us. Their assessments may or may not be true. Instead, we can listen to another with our *Wisdom Mind* and neutrally evaluate what is relayed to us. Then we can remain calm and be at peace, despite opinions or criticism from others. From our neutral core, we can steady emotional

reactions stirred by the words of another, whether their statements are true or false.

Neutrally Receiving True Assessments

If another's words or actions that criticize or assess our character are in fact true, we can still remain at peace. We can review the truth of such words neutrally and process our character assessments in our own place and time. Here we can be free from self-condemnation, and we can review criticism from a loving and non-judgmental place within ourselves.

We also do not need to take true assessments of ourselves personally. We all have something to work on while on Earth, and we need not feel shame. From a mature point of view, we can assess judgmental or disapproving words directed to us as tools for our growth, and not as an assault to our sense of self and well-being. We may even understand that the other person who is presenting critical or hurtful words is locked in their own process of condemnation and judgment. We do not need to participate in their manner of thinking and how they may relate to the world around them.

Misinterpreting Another

We may also have misinterpreted the meaning of what another person has said to us. If we are not calm and we are not thinking from a neutral place, it may be difficult to assess their words accurately. In such a case, we may respond from *conditioned mental patterns*, interpreting the words of others as a threat to our self. If we go back and analyze their actual words, we may find that they are in fact not threatening. Our misinterpretation of another's words would then likely have been caused by our *conditioned mental patterns*.

Empowering Thyself

Being detached is not self-abnegation; rather, it is an empowering of ourselves. When we empower ourselves, we do not have to defend our sense of self or identity. We become free from conditioned reactions of how others may or may not perceive us. This brings freedom from a basic mental pattern that causes one's self-worth to be subject to external factors. When we are self-empowered, we have a healthy sense of who we are and a fearless ability to accept needed changes or self-improvements.

Ko-Wu Investigation Example #2:

“A stranger made me angry”.

Low Level Self-Investigation:

1. *“Why did this stranger make me angry?”*
2. *“Because he insulted me with rude behavior.”*

Here, this person realized that he took this issue personally, yet he did not deeply investigate the circumstance and his reactions.

Deeper Self-Investigation:

1. *“It hurt to experience someone being judgmental and uncaring; my response to this was anger.”*
2. *“That person had power over me in that they could make me angry, and now they still have power over me because I am still angry at them.”*

Here this person realized that they react whenever they perceive someone as judgmental, uncaring, or rude, and their *conditioned mental pattern* is anger. This person felt that they were at the mercy of anyone who displayed such qualities toward them.

Realization Through Even Deeper Self-Investigation:

1. *“This anger is carried in my heart, and I don’t want to hold onto it”.*
2. *“Since I am unable to engage with that person, I will express or release my pain of the situation to caring friends or family so that I no longer carry this anger”*
3. *“I’ll find a way to become free from a conditioned response to people who behave in hurtful ways, so that I do not allow such circumstances to have power over my emotions”.*

After finding a way to release the pain of reaction to the situation, this person realized they could learn to be free of a conditioned response. If confronted with a similar situation again, this person can avoid being becoming subject to another’s opinions or words by not taking them personally.

Note: Vocally asserting yourself from a relatively calm disposition, whenever it is safe and possible to do so, can clear destructive emotions and patterns.

Note: These examples do not necessarily apply to everyone's method of self-investigation. Each person must discover their own process of Ko-Wu.

Ko-Wu Step #3: Become Aware of Self-Esteem Issues

After we have learned to calmly investigate a given event, we can also become aware of what beliefs and conditional thinking are occurring that impact our sense of self-esteem.

Whenever a challenging situation arises that appears to be a threat to our sense of self-worth, we can neutrally evaluate our mental patterns. Our ingrained patterns may play a mental recording that criticizes, condemns, shames, or rejects. During a challenging situation, we can investigate the reality of our self-beliefs by assessing why we feel inadequate. Truly probing to discover the root of a self-belief may take long and hard work. If we reflect only on a surface level, we may arrive at false conclusions about ourselves. With a shallow amount of self-reflection, we may continue in denial of actual character flaws which maybe be the root of self-esteem issues. It is good to question the cause of self-esteem issues without fear or judgment, in order to truly resolve them. Even if we need to reevaluate our character, we can still maintain our self-worth by assessing ourselves from a neutral perspective.

By looking inward, we can analyze beliefs that we have created about who we are. Without examining self-beliefs, destructive internal dialogue regarding self-worth may automatically occur. If we are consciously aware of self-esteem issues, then we can release these patterns. First, we must recognize what is really going on and what we are telling ourselves inside when something occurs.



Ko-Wu Investigation Example #3:

“My job makes me feel like a failure”.

Minimal Self-Investigation:

1. *“Why does my job make me like a failure?”*
2. *“Because the tasks I’m asked to do are demeaning.”*
3. *“My boss treats me very poorly.”*

Here, this person realized reasons why they were they felt unsuccessful in their job. However, they externalized the issue by making their job the cause of low self-worth.

Deeper Self-Investigation:

1. *“I do not feel valued when I’m asked to do demeaning tasks”*
2. *“I feel low and unworthy when I’m treated poorly by my boss.”*

Here, this person realized that they want to feel valued, and when they are treated poorly, their self-worth diminishes. They are beginning to understand that their self-worth is caused by internal reactions as opposed to external circumstances.

Realization Through Even Deeper Self-Investigation:

1. *“Events at my job trigger a low sense of self-worth.”*
2. *“I must learn that my self-worth is not equated with my tasks on this job, nor how I’m treated.”*
3. *“I must express to my boss how I have been treated.”*
4. *“Or maybe I must find another job. Yet still, I realize that I am responsible for my self-worth, and it is not based on what occurs at work.”*

A tremendous realization has occurred with this person where they take full responsibility for feelings of low self-worth, and they no longer externalize these feelings onto someone or something else. Still, the work is highly challenging, and the person needs to find the courage to discuss their dissatisfaction with their employer about how they are treated. Or they may simply need to find another job if their work environments remain emotionally toxic.

Note: These examples do not necessarily apply to everyone’s method of self-investigation. Each person must discover their own process of Ko-Wu.

Ko-Wu Step #4: Forgiveness of Self & Others

It is especially important in the process of *Ko-Wu* to surrender judgment and condemnation so that we can begin without the hindrance of pain and guilt. Then whenever we may err, we can forgive ourselves with the understanding that to err is human. We can then make corrections and we can forgive ourselves for our mistakes. An error in life can be painful enough in itself, and self-condemnation brings added guilt that does not serve a purpose. Therefore, we should forgive ourselves and move on.

The pain of a transgression can be remembered so that it is not repeated. However, to carry self-condemnation in our hearts will only harm ourselves and create guilt, which may lead to repetition of destructive patterns. Even if some behaviors discontinue due to guilt, a person may still not heal because the actual work of self-investigation did not occur. Mental patterns repressed from guilt may later reappear or express themselves in some other destructive form, including health issues and

energy blockages. Therefore, true forgiveness of self is of supreme importance in terms of clearing any guilt that is held.

If we can forgive others as well, we can also avoid clinging to pain and suffering which will *harden* our heart. With a *hardened* heart, we cannot look into our own heart and investigate the truth. If we carry the faults of others, then they become our faults as well, because they resound within us. Holding onto pain directed at ourselves or others only hurts us, and it provides no benefit.

In Qigong practice, it is understood that we hold emotions in our bodily organs. Cleansing these destructive emotions held within our body is a common practice, and it requires an element of love and forgiveness toward our self to release them. In the same way, forgiving our self and others is also necessary for releasing and healing *conditioned mental patterns*.

Ko-Wu Step #5: Daily Review

A. Recognition of Emotional Discomfort

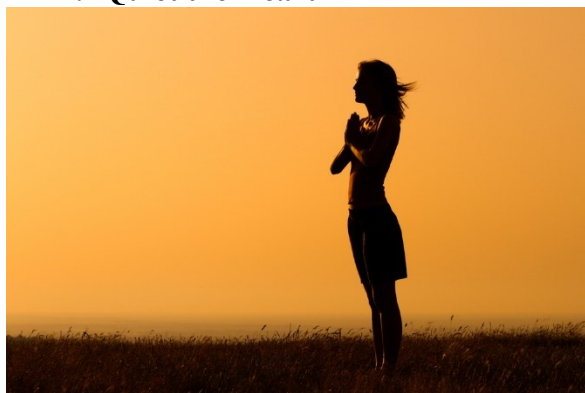
At the core of our heart, we may feel uncomfortable about various events, actions, or thoughts that have occurred. Discomfort from experiences of the day may be denied and buried in the subconscious, causing *energetic* blocks based on unresolved issues. However, if we consciously become aware of feelings from experiences that have occurred, then we can address where the heart is troubled. Our true, inner self will always know what is troubling us. If we are in touch with our true self, then we will have the sensitivity and awareness of what is happening within our heart and mind.

The process of becoming aware of inner discomfort requires a *Daily Review* of our personal issues, preferably at night before going to sleep. Emotional concerns can then be processed consciously, rather than played out in the subconscious while sleeping. This *Daily Review* is also done every night to prevent unresolved issues from collecting in the subconscious mind. Destructive emotions from multiple experiences can accumulate day-after-day, creating blockages in our body and being. With a buildup of unresolved issues, our behavior and actions may become biased, due to underlying emotions clouding our

judgment. This in turn may result in destructive emotional responses to various circumstances.

If we do not shower daily, we might be ok for a day or two, but then the body begins to smell. Like the body, the mind also requires regular cleaning. Our thinking becomes convoluted when a vast amount of emotional information has not been resolved. We all have subconscious build-up occurring to one degree or another, and there is no shame in this. We just need to begin somewhere and at some time if want to begin clearing our heart and mind. Therefore, we suggest performing a *Daily Review* of any emotional discomfort that may be held. As we release inner turmoil, our heart becomes light, and we feel joy and tranquility.

B. Quiet the Heart



The *Heart Mind* carries tremendous power. If the heart is disturbed, the mind cannot calmly resolve pain and fear. To be truly calm, the heart must be at peace, so that the intelligence of the *Wisdom Mind* can function. There needs to be a simultaneous balance of the *Heart Mind* and *Wisdom Mind*, blending into one. For this to occur, it is necessary for the heart to become quiet and still, and to find a place of calm amidst emotions. We may begin by developing an inner language of self-love and warmth toward ourselves before practicing the *Daily Review*. We can then speak to our heart and ask ourselves; “*What is it that upsets my heart today?*”

- **Spend a Few Minutes Listening**

When asked, the heart will share what it is that upsets it. Simply listening to the heart for a few minutes alone may resolve many issues. While deeply listening to our heart, we may realize that some emotional issues were assumptions that we made about the reality of an event. For other issues, we may require further investigation to clear something from our heart. It is important to truly listen to what our heart is saying.

- **Ask the Heart to Become Calm**

After listening to what our heart says, we then simply request our heart to remain calm in the face of what is revealed. The heart may recall numerous emotions, yet we stay in a lovingly calm because we want to learn from our experiences and not react to them.

An event may have happened during the day that was uncomfortable at the very least. It may be something we would rather not recall to our mind or look at closely. We need to understand that reviewing an event is a learning experience and not a punishment. It is necessary to calm the heart so it can feel and learn from each experience. The heart will likely want to return to particular events of the day and express the pain of these events. We can allow the heart to do so without criticizing or judging the heart's pain.

C. Develop a Gentle Understanding

Once we are aware of what upsets the heart, we can then receive its pain or discomfort with *gentle understanding*. We listen to our heart as if caring for a child we genuinely love. This gentle and caring quality overrides the harsh critic that may criticize what our heart is expressing. *Gentle understanding* therefore allows a safe place where we can be free of fear and where we can face what we are feeling. *Gentle understanding* also provides a space for learning and growing, free from punitive responses which are often prevalent beliefs in our way of processing feelings.

One approach for developing *gentle understanding* toward ourselves can be through the discovery of our *Inner Nurturer*. Our *Inner Nurturer* could be thought of as a wise and elderly person who has lived a life full of wisdom and grace. This person is soft, loving, and caring, and we can talk to this person without fear or condemnation. This wise

Inner Nurturer might be considered our inner sage who gently guides us during our *Daily Review* or at any other time as well.

D. Make Amends toward Ourselves and Others

During our *Daily Review* we may realize that we have caused pain or harm to another or to our own self. After such realizations, we may then make amends toward ourselves or others in a way that offers a positive change. Even a sincere apology may not be sufficient to heal deeper wounds in the short term. However, honestly making amends can clear the heart and bring an opportunity to end destructive patterns.

Suppose we have hurt or harmed another in some way. After first quieting our heart with *gentle understanding*, we may then realize that corrective actions are required to heal the pain that we created. We become sensitive to how we have affected another and feel what we have inflicted. This awareness can lead to a sincere desire and commitment for change.

The following are three suggestions that may help bring about amends toward our self or others and make a positive change for the future.

- I. Make a plan of conscious, constructive actions to heal the situation. Call on your wise *Inner Nurturer* for this process.
- II. Put your heartfelt plan into action. Expect natural consequences for your actions.
- III. Remember this experience for changing future behaviors and patterns. Understand that healing may be a long process for yourself or others.

Ko-Wu Step #6: Bring our Original Nature into Daily Life



As previously explained, our *Original Nature* is who we truly are outside of what we overlay upon ourselves. All facets of the *Ko-Wu* process relate to finding our true or *Original Nature*, beyond our *conditioned mental patterns*. The *Ko-Wu* process instructs us to be relaxed, calm, and peaceful. This temperament is essential for investigating our *Original Nature*. Also, with *Ko-Wu*, we make an effort to change *conditioned mental patterns* that we have overlaid upon our *Original Nature*.

In the practice of *Ko-Wu*, we make a conscious choice to strive toward our *Original Nature*. This final step in the *Ko-Wu* process requires a commitment to bring our *Original Nature* into our daily lives. Our *Original Nature* is not something that is lost; it is just a primary aspect of our being that we are not fully aware of. Therefore, we consciously ask our *Original Nature* to manifest in ourselves.

A conscious intent to integrate our *Original Nature* into our daily lives can help override our *conditioned mental patterns*. Discovering our *Original Nature* and becoming aware of how it manifests in our body and mind is a way of creating positive new patterns. With a clear intention to allow our *Original Nature* to come through, we can learn to live and act joyfully through this higher aspect of ourselves.

“Who is a master of Qigong? A Qigong master is he/she who has the ability to relieve their inner trouble in a short period of time through adjusting their body and mind to relax and to also maintain that internal relaxation”.

Master Hao Tianyou

Awareness of Thought



According to scientific studies of Qi conducted by Gu Hansen of the Shanghai Institute of Atomic Research, Qi has been determined to be a measurable substance of electromagnetic waves that carry information. Other studies by Dr. Yan Xin, conducted at a research institute in Chongqing, China, concluded that Qigong practitioners can influence the DNA and RNA of others up to 1200 miles away.

If we consider these studies that exhibit how Qi can be transmitted and how it can affect ourselves and others, we can also apply this concept to thought waves in general. Considering that a Qigong practitioner can affect (heal) another through their mental intent, we can presume that our thought waves carry an actual force. Based on this concept, we may also conclude that thought waves transmit specific information that can impact ourselves or others based on our mental intent.

Although skilled Qigong practitioners can effectively transmit Qi to influence the body, less concentrated thought waves may also create an impact on ourselves or others. Therefore, we might consider how important it is to be aware of the thoughts that we transmit either consciously or unconsciously.

In Qigong practice, we know that our thought waves penetrate and impact the body either negatively or positively. What we think and what we feel has profound effect on us and on matter in general. In the same way that Dr. Masaru Emoto's research displays how our consciousness impacts the molecular structure of water, we can also affect ourselves and others physically through the projection of thought. If water can be dramatically altered and even become purified with positive thoughts, then our thoughts can also affect ourselves and others similarly. With this understanding, we can realize the profound importance of maintaining awareness of our own thoughts.

Awareness of Judgmental Patterns

Now that we understand how our thought waves can impact ourselves and others, we may consider how judgment can be harmful, whether projected consciously or unconsciously. Just as a Qigong practitioner can positively influence a person through their focused intent, we can also negatively impact another through judgmental thought waves. Additionally, resonating destructive thought waves toward someone

means that we also retain the *frequency* of those wavelengths within ourselves. This relates to Qigong practice, because our state of mind directly corresponds to our body and Qi flow, which profoundly impacts our channels and *energy gates*. With a clear understanding of judgmental patterns that occur within us, we can greatly change the impact of our thought waves that might be affecting others. Releasing these destructive wavelengths through awareness will also create greater harmony and fulfillment within ourselves.

We might consider how societal beliefs have influenced our judgment of people or groups. It is true that we often assess people or groups we meet in order to know how they will impact our lives if we are to associate with them. Consequently, discernment, not judgment, is necessary to some degree. However, when judgment occurs on a more primitive level, we make assumptions and determinations about people or groups without actual investigation, or through only shallow analysis and hearsay. Sometimes we are unaware of societal beliefs that cause us to paste labels on another individual or group without much deliberation. Many people will hear only a little information about an individual or group and promptly make a judgment. When it is no longer in vogue to think a certain way, previous ways of thinking and believing are suddenly dropped, and new ways of thinking are adopted according to what is collectively popular. The population involved in mass conditional thinking may begin to collectively find a new target, toward which they turn their judgmental patterns.

We may realize that these waves of collective thought are harming people or groups of people based on our shared attitudes that carry destructive emotions. As these emotionally charged thought waves collectively focus on one theme, they become amplified. Therefore, a large group projecting the same thought wave becomes one stream of concentrated thought.

People may fall under the belief that it is their right to project negativity toward an individual or group that is socially unacceptable. With judgment, we condemn or accept others based on the parameters of our beliefs. By becoming aware of such conditioned judgmental patterns, we can break free of blindly idealizing or condemning others, which

will ultimately contribute to harmony, empathy, and unity with humanity.

It is also important to become aware of unconscious judgmental patterns that we have developed. Unconscious judgmental patterns are beliefs that we are not aware we project on to others. We may believe that we are not a judgmental person, yet the wavelengths of our mind may *vibrate* otherwise. This is something that can easily occur, and to gain awareness of it requires deeper self-investigation.

For example, we may think of an individual or a group sympathetically; however, we may actually project destructive thought waves upon them unknowingly. If we are thinking, “oh, that poor wretched homeless person, let me give them some money”. We may think and even feel that we are caring for and loving this individual, yet we are actually projecting *poor* and *wretched* qualities upon them. The homeless individual may also believe these same qualities about themselves, which will further magnify this mental wavelength.

We often hear the saying, "hold them in a good light". This means that we have a mental wavelength associated with our positive thoughts in reference toward another. These wavelengths from our being are the language of the universe, so the *frequency* of such wavelengths is what actually reverberates and creates cause and effect. Even if we perceive our intent to be noble, it is our actual thought waves that we transmit that produce an impact. We have all been subjected to these unconscious judgmental patterns, which are conditioned ways of thinking. Breaking free of these patterns may require a concerted effort. We must first become aware of what we are *vibrating* and then consciously choose to emit our highest *frequency* of thought toward ourselves and others. This in turn will impact our Qi flow throughout the channels of the body.

Awareness of our Word

We have considered how mental wavelengths affect us and others. Now let us also reflect on how our spoken words impact ourselves and others. Words carry information in terms of tones and sounds, but they also carry *energetic* wavelengths based on our intent. Just as projected Qi can carry *energetic* information that can affect us and others, our

words can also have the same impact. This is likely why the *power of the word* is so revered in multiple traditions.

It is not just the sounds that we make, but the combination of the mental *frequency* behind the sound that causes impact. The *frequency* behind the word determines the power of that word that is spoken. Like sending Qi with specific intent, words will also have a particular effect depending on the concentrated focus behind the words.

It is interesting that our mouth resides at the connecting point of two major meridians, which also intersect with the other channels throughout the body. Stimulation at the mouth therefore impacts our *energy gates* and channels. From this, we may conclude that whatever is *vibrated* on the palate will powerfully impact our being. This is why mantras are repeated meditatively. Studies show that repetition of mantras can positively alter brain waves. Additionally, brain waves are further impacted if the practitioner resonates with the *frequency* of the mantra, which enhances its power.

As with mantras, impacting words spoken in synchronicity with the wavelength of their meaning have power. In other words, if what is said matches what the mind is feeling and *vibrating*, then those words will create an effect upon ourselves and others.

In the same way, destructive words that are spoken can carry force that may cause pain and separation. Words spoken can also create harmony, unification, and inspiration. Inspirational words may even express positive themes; however, without a matching *frequency*, their power is limited, and they may only penetrate the intellect at best. Therefore, if our mental *frequency* synchronizes with our words, we can powerfully impact ourselves and others.

Slander and Gossip

When we understand how words and thoughts together carry power, we may realize the damage that slander or gossip can cause to others and to ourselves. We discussed how projected destructive thoughts can impact others negatively as well as cause blockages in our own channels and *energy gates*. In the same way, slander and gossip can also cause *energetic* harm.

It may be easy to understand how slander or gossip can hurt another; however, it may be more difficult to comprehend how slandering another can hurt ourselves. Remember, what we say stimulates and resonates in the two channels that are connected by the palate at the *Magpie Bridge*. The resonance of our words thus travels through the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai* channels of the body, which interrelates with all the body's meridians and *energy gates*. Therefore, the mind, body, and consciousness are all affected by the words that are spoken, particularly in regard to the *frequency* behind them. Thus, learning to be conscious of our words will profoundly impact us physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Lesson in Awareness of Verbalization

If we were to listen to what we say throughout the whole day, many of us may be surprised to realize what is behind our words. If we become very aware of the intent and emotional tone of our words and what we are conveying, we may find that many of our words are less than positive. Such ways of speaking can, in turn, create many problems for us in life since the *frequency* of our words profoundly impacts our Qi field. Simply vibrating destructive words creates blockages, as they reverberate within ourselves. We are an *energetic* instrument that must be sensitively tuned, and changing the way we communicate is one facet of tuning our Qi field.

One approach of changing speaking patterns is through evaluating the emotion and intent behind our words. We can witness the spectrum of constructive and destructive usage of our words by applying mindfulness to how we speak. Carefully listening to our own conversations during a given day can bring an awareness of the *frequency* from which we are speaking. We may be astonished to realize that many times we do not communicate constructively. Even if we are not specifically directing our words toward anyone or anything, our words may still carry generalized negativity.

If we make it a practice to listen to how we are speaking and from what place we are speaking, our physical, mental and emotional states can change dramatically. We may not always be able speak from a platform of sincere positivity; however, we can learn to monitor the emotional tone of what we are conveying. When witnessing our conversations, it is also important to recognize constructive and honest ways of

speaking. We can then recall the impact and outcome that occurred from speaking positively and use that as a format for future communications.

One suggestion is to make a self-recording during a given day to later evaluate the words we spoke. Then we can carefully listen to the intent and *frequency* behind the way in which we communicate.

Suggested Evaluations of our Words

- Do our words express depressing tones and petty complaints?
- Do our words transmit irritation and anger?
- Do our words carry trepidation?
- Do our words vibrate truthfully what we are conveying?
- Do our words convey only false niceties?
- Do we use our words to gain something or to influence somebody (outside of serving a positive purpose)?
- Do our words connect with our heart and mind together?
- Do our words uplift and inspire?

These are just a handful of suggested self-evaluations regarding the way we speak. These examples are not meant to invoke shame or guilt; they are only recommended guidelines for evaluating our words and the intent we carry behind them. When we realize how powerful the spoken word is, we understand that the tongue and mind together work as an *energetic* instrument that greatly impacts ourselves and others.

Speaking in Balance

In the *Ko-Wu* section of this chapter, we examined the *Wisdom Mind* and the *Heart Mind*. We discussed finding the Yin and Yang balance between these two minds when assessing thoughts and circumstances. Now we suggest applying this concept to our words as well. After we have evaluated our ways of speaking, we can also apply the *Wisdom Mind* and the *Heart Mind* in balance to the way we communicate. The *Heart Mind* will need to express our *spirit* or essence. The *Wisdom Mind* will temper it with calm logic and reason, directing the force of our words. Words transmitted by the *Heart Mind* that are unrealistically positive, or overly negative, are balanced with the reality of the *Wisdom Mind*. Speaking in balance is then an aspect of creating Yin and Yang equilibrium, which is a fundamental concept of Qigong practice.

Awareness of Yin-Yang Qualities



Creating Yin-Yang balance requires discovering where we are imbalanced toward one extreme or another. This is like the saying “moderation is the key”. Each extreme or opposite characteristic in ourselves may be described as a tendency toward either a Yin or a Yang quality.

Yin and Yang represent two opposite forces; neither force is superior or inferior to the other, as they are of the *One* force. Yin and Yang qualities can both contain either positive or negative characteristics. *Yin* typically indicates internal, cooling, retracted, and feminine, while *Yang* typically indicates external, warming, expanding, and masculine attributes. These represent just a few of numerous qualities of Yin and Yang.

The Yin-Yang symbol representing these two forces is also known as *Taiji* or *Tai Chi*. When these two forces of Yin and Yang are in perfect balance, they become the *One* force. With this understanding, finding the balance of Yin and Yang is what draws us closer to our *Original Nature*, which is the *One* force.

We are all a mixture of infinite varieties and combinations of ever-changing Yin and Yang forces. Every quality in existence is a unique blend of these forces. When we have an imbalance in any area of our life, it means that we have an excessive tendency toward either Yin or Yang qualities, which manifest in our body and mind. Such Yin or Yang qualities appear in a full spectrum of characteristics that make up our being. An extreme of any Yin or Yang quality can cause *energetic*

blockages. This is because when one force is excessive, it reduces the other force which is also needed.

Self-investigation is required for discovering and balancing the Yin and Yang qualities within ourselves. A major purpose of Qigong is, in fact, balancing the Yin and Yang within us. Outside of Qigong movement and meditation practices, it becomes important to also ascertain where we require balance in our lives.

The balanced Yin-Yang symbol represents our natural state of being. Imbalance of Yin and Yang partially occurs from our *conditioned mental patterns*, which shift us away from our *Original Nature*. In creating balance of our Yin and Yang characteristics, we first want to investigate what tendencies we have toward one extreme or another.

For example, we might ask ourselves if we have a tendency toward extremes in any respect, such as:

- a) Introverted or extraverted
- b) Excessive sleep or lack of sleep
- c) Overeating or eating too little
- d) Talking too much or being too silent
- e) Inactivity or overworking

These are just a handful of an infinite number of Yin and Yang examples. Also, it is likely that we have a combination of these opposite characteristics in varying degrees. Still, we need to determine what aspects of our life require balance. Shifting back and forth from one extreme of characteristics to another is not actually creating balance; but rather it is a process for seeking balance. If we tend to one extreme or another, then extreme circumstances may begin to present themselves to counter a given imbalance. When we are balanced, we stay steady and moderate in our characteristics of Yin and Yang, creating stability in our lives.

Awareness of Yin and Yang Ego Imbalances

We can also investigate the qualities of our ego for creating Yin and Yang balance. Becoming balanced requires an even opinion of our self-conceptualization. The ego has been defined as one's self-concept or collection of beliefs about oneself. Those self-beliefs that are overly

expanded (Yang) and those self-beliefs that are overly contracted (Yin) are what we call *Yin* or *Yang Ego Imbalances*.

Inflated Ego (Yang Imbalance):

The art of Yin and Yang ego balance is not to inflate or deflate our self-worth. We all know that an inflated ego is an exaggeration of our self-worth, and that a person with a deflated ego or low self-esteem undervalues themselves. For our purposes, we are labeling an inflated ego as a Yang imbalance because it is the expanding force, and it likely includes qualities of an expanded ego in many circumstances.

In Qigong, we attempt to balance the expanding force with the contracting force in an equilibrated fashion. In the same way, we can balance our ego. An inflated ego will likely claim an excessive sense of self-worth from any number of attributes, including but not limited to skills, characteristics, status, materials, associations, etc. There is nothing wrong with feeling good about positive attributes. However, the moment one's self-concept has developed a sense of superiority based on such attributes, then one has created an exaggerated sense of self-worth.

It is true that people possess attributes that are superior to those of others. However, possessing these qualities does not make one intrinsically superior to another. If you consider all to be of *One* (Yin-Yang), then everything is an aspect of the same source, which has neither inferior nor superior parts. The concept of inferiority and superiority is only based on our conditioned beliefs. Outside of the conditioned beliefs of what is superior and what is inferior, we all remain inherently equal.

If an expanded sense of self-worth exists primarily from an external attribute, it can be easily jeopardized. When such an overly expanded sense of self-worth is challenged, it may require a constant need to protect and defend its status. A person with this external type of self-worth is insecure because this status can be potentially threatened or lost.

Alternatively, a person may not necessarily have a sense of superiority to others, yet they still base their self-worth on attributes they possess.

This could still be considered an overly expanded Yang ego because this person is gaining self-worth through an external source. In this case, it is possible that a person has low self-esteem, and they are attempting to create self-worth through achievement of something external (Yang).

There is nothing wrong with wanting to increase self-esteem through a positive outlet. However, if we examine the need for self-esteem more closely, there may be other issues involved if one is seeking to gain self-worth through external sources. In this case, such deep-rooted self-esteem issues would not necessarily dissolve through an outward achievement or attribute alone. Internal work of self-examination would be required to discover the source of low self-esteem which produced an inflated ego to compensate for insecurities. Once we become aware of excessive Yang ego characteristics, we can then investigate why we have these qualities. We can use *Ko-Wu* practices to find a way to balance an expanded sense of self-worth.

Deflated Ego (Yin Imbalance):

Here we are calling the deflated ego a Yin imbalance because Yin is a contracting force as seen in a low sense of self-worth.

A deflated ego is similar to an inflated ego, though it is the *other side of the same coin*. In the same way the inflated ego expands from assessing its self-worth positively, the deflated ego contracts by assessing its self-worth negatively. We can witness that there are similarities with the inflated and the deflated egos, except that the deflated ego's belief has concluded that it is inferior.

The deflated ego may attempt to gain status through some attribute that brings self-esteem in order to overcome its situation, or it may remain in the belief that it is inferior. Again, there is nothing wrong with developing a positive sense of self-worth. Developing positive self-esteem is clearly healthier than living in the belief that we are inferior, as lack of self-esteem invokes energy blockages in our body and being.

Creating healthier self-esteem means that our self-worth would not easily crumble from threats to our sense of who we are. For example, if our ego is dependent on the approval of others, then a disapproving

opinion could collapse our sense of self-worth. If our self-worth is derived from internal attributes or virtues, then it cannot be easily shattered.

Developing Inner Virtues for Self-Worth

In Chinese philosophy, *De* (Duh / 德) is the intrinsic nature of good qualities and virtues, which is equated to internal power. Developing inner virtues or *De* brings a healthy Yin and Yang balance of self-esteem. Some examples of inner virtues include tranquility, inner awareness and sensitivity, deeper connection with others, and inner joy, not based on external circumstance or stimuli. These are a few examples of virtues that generally provide a more stable sense of self-worth that are not easily threatened. Such internal attributes are generally continuous and stable depending on how well-developed they are. Well-developed inner virtues can provide a strong foundation for self-worth. However, there may be days or times when even stable inner virtues are more difficult for us to perceive. At those times, we may fall subject to low self-esteem and revert to external or fleeting forms of self-worth. We may become overly influenced by others' beliefs about us, or we may lose self-worth based on our own perceived faults or shortcomings. This would be a good time to apply *Ko-Wu* techniques, whereby we regroup and rediscover our inner virtues, free from self-judgment and condemnation.

If we feel that we are lacking in stable inner virtues, it is recommended to examine this feeling so that we can be fulfilled regardless of circumstances. Building a solid sense of self-esteem may not occur overnight, but with clarity, this can transpire one step at a time until we have cultivated a strong sense of self-worth based on positive inner qualities.

A solid sense of self-esteem is built on *De*, our intrinsic nature of good qualities and virtues, rather than projected virtues. For example, if someone performed an act of kindness, they would do so for the joy of it, as opposed to feeling they *should* do it or because it is *good*. The first example of kindness is in our natural flow, and the latter is not of our *Original Nature*. Intrinsic virtues born of our *Original Nature* bring a lasting sense of self-worth that cannot be taken away. These natural

virtues reflect a balanced ego, and they also invoke balanced Qi flow throughout our physical and *energetic* body.

What we are illustrating is that a balanced ego can come from a solid base of genuine virtues as opposed to transient qualities that have little or no foundation. A solid foundation is built on positive ego qualities that cannot crumble or be threatened. That strength comes from a Yin and Yang balance of the ego.

Using the Yang manifestation of ego in a positive fashion helps us to achieve a greater sense of self-worth. Using the Yin manifestation of the ego balances our sense of self-worth by contracting and reviewing overly expanded notions of ourselves. In this manner, we balance the Yin and Yang qualities of the ego for a positive and solid sense of self-worth. Ultimately, our self-worth can be permanent and not dependent upon anything, as our *Original Nature* is constant, and it is not in need of worthiness.

- ☯ Conditioned mental patterns can create energy blockages in the body
- ☯ By investigating our mental patterns through Ko-Wu, we can change them
- ☯ Freedom from conditioned mental patterns brings us closer to our Original Self
- ☯ Our thought waves and words impact ourselves and others
- ☯ Investigating our Yin and Yang qualities brings us closer toward balance

Chapter 10

Recognizing The Universal Qi Field



Awareness of the Universal Qi Field

So far, we have narrated techniques for awareness of body and mind, with an understanding that we exist simultaneously as a physical body as well as a *Qi body*. When we learn to identify ourselves as a *Qi body*, then we begin to perceive ourselves as part of the entire Qi field within and around us. We call this entire collective of Qi which pervades all creation, the *Universal Qi Field*.

Identifying ourselves as being one with the *Universal Qi Field* may first require a change in our self-perception. Our view of ourselves typically consists of an individual who exists separately from all other beings and forms. Our mind considers the body to end where we can visibly

see it. We normally perceive matter and space between us as where our body ends and where something else begins. Alternatively, through changing this perception, we can identify ourselves as being connected with everything.

Our concept of being connected with everything is based on the premise that one infinite field of Qi permeates all matter and empty space. This expanse of Qi is not separate from anything, yet everything comprises it. This *Universal Qi Field* also blends with infinite diversities of matter, creating specific qualities of Qi throughout the universe. The numerous qualities of Qi may bring apparent differentiation, yet Qi is still intrinsic in everything, despite its countless variations. If the *Universal Qi Field* interacts with everything, then it is not apart from anything. When this vast field of energy surrounding everything is understood to be us, then we realize we are not separate from anything or anyone. We are actually one being. This could be considered a pragmatic understanding of *Oneness* from the perspective of Qi throughout the universe.

Understanding Oneness

Being in harmony or united with the *Universal Qi Field* is what we are calling *Oneness*. Many of us do not truly understand *Oneness*, even from an intellectual standpoint. The idea of *Oneness* may sound like a lofty ideal, but how do we truly understand and experience it? We might begin by understanding how we create separateness within ourselves and separateness from everything else. If the *Universal Qi Field* is *One*, and it is in everything, then all parts are aspects of it, and there is not another. If we perceive any aspect of the *Universal Qi Field* as being apart, then we fall into the illusion that there exists separateness, and that there is more than just *Oneness*.

At birth, we begin to adopt the shared beliefs that we are an entity separate from everything else. We learn to identify ourselves as an individual body, instead of being a part of the one *Universal Qi Field*. Such adopted beliefs can change, if we truly realize that we are not merely this form, but rather part of one infinite and interwoven collective of energy.

Experiencing Oneness in Reverse

Experiencing and realizing *Oneness* may be challenging to grasp beyond an intellectual understanding. If we try to comprehend that we are part of the one *Universal Qi Field*, we may understand this in imagination alone, without experiential comprehension.

In Qigong, we use *Reverse Cultivation* techniques where we begin to experience *Oneness* through what we can tangibly grasp. In review, we begin by developing oneness between the mind and body. Separation of the mind and body will invoke a basic sense of division, whereas unity of the mind and body are reflective of *Oneness*. Through the techniques that we have discussed, we develop the interactive connection between mind and body, so that they work in unison.

Through the unison of mind and body, we can then recognize the Qi in the body. After experiencing the body as a collective force of Qi, we see that it is intertwined throughout our being. Then we may experience the body, mind, and Qi as one.

Portals to the Universal Qi Field

In *Reverse Cultivation*, we first recognize the Qi in our body, and then we further identify key *energy gates* and channels. In this method, we discover *oneness* in the intermingling of our physical and *energetic* body. The energy centers and meridians located throughout the physical body make up the *Qi body*, and they act as portals to the *Universal Qi Field*. Therefore, blockages in these *energy gates* and meridians correspond to a lack of Qi flow from the *Universal Qi Field*. By sensing and generating the flow of Qi in our physical body, we harmonize with the *Universal Qi Field* by recognizing that we exist as a *Qi body*, which is part of the whole.

Harmonizing with the Universal Qi Field

Once we have recognized and developed the *Qi body*, it then becomes a bridge to harmonization with the *Universal Qi Field*. Here we unite a *more* tangible form (the *Qi body*) with intangible formlessness (*Universal Qi Field*), as our *Qi body* exists as an intermediary between the physical and ethereal. In this stage, we are automatically aware of our *Qi body's* interconnection and interaction with the *Universal Qi*

Field. This is a grand phase in *Reverse Cultivation* where we begin to experience ourselves as existing beyond our physical body alone.

When we expand our awareness beyond the physical form, we can sense the harmonization of our body's Qi field with the *Universal Qi Field*. This can occur through awareness of the ocean of Qi interspersed within and around us in all directions. If we sense our own Qi field and consciously expand it outside our body, we may also find that it can blend or merge with other specific fields of energy within our awareness. In this way, we can learn to interact and harmonize with the *Universal Field of Qi*.

For example, if we were to stand before a tree, we could intermingle with its Qi field and our own energy field, so that we blend with the essence of that tree. Being that there really is no separation between our Qi field and the Qi field of anything else, we can interact with whatever we place our intention on. Using the example of the tree, we can actually merge with the tree's field and receive an exchange of information on an *energetic* level.

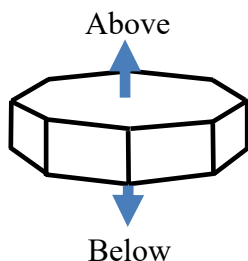
This same circulation of energy can also occur with the Earth and Heaven energies, where we interact with these vast fields of Qi, that basically make up the *Universal Qi Field*. In Qigong practices, we interact with this unified field of energy; however, we offer a specific Qigong practice designed for experiencing interchange and harmonization with the *Universal Qi Field*.

Understanding Harmony Qigong (Hō Qigong)

To develop awareness and interact with the *Universal Qi Field* extending around us, we can perform an advanced form of Qigong called *Hō Qigong*, or *Harmony Qigong*. We call it advanced because this technique helps us to sense beyond our physical form, into the surrounding field of Qi. With *Hō Qigong*, we can perceive ourselves as being interconnected and interacting with a vast field of energy. This practice therefore helps to physically give us a sense of *Oneness*, by interacting with the Qi field in the eight directions around us, as well as above and below us.

Hō Qigong or *Harmony Qigong* is a fitting name for experiencing harmony or *Oneness* with the *Universal Qi Field*. Harmonizing our body and mind with the Qi field around us is a method of *Reverse Cultivation* toward *Oneness*.

To begin this practice, we first suggest becoming aware of ten directions around our body. Basically, if we think of each side of an octagon, we will have encompassed eight of those directions. If we perceive the octagon three dimensionally, the entire top and bottom (above and below) surfaces of the octagon would be the remaining two directions, making ten directions.



With this clarification, we can now become aware of the location of each direction from the perspective of standing within the center of an octagon. We can then become mentally aware of the field of energy in each of these ten directions surrounding us. Next, we extend our awareness into the distance of each direction, using our mind to sense the field of all eight directions around us. We also include the awareness of the remaining two directions that are above and below us, which are called *Heaven* and *Earth*.

We start this practice by feeling as if we are standing in the center of the entire Universe, conceptualizing whatever helps us to feel this sensation. Next, we mentally project elliptical circles into each of the eight directions. This is done by first going downward deep into the ground with our mind. Then we mentally rotate in an elliptical manner, upward toward the horizon. We continue circling toward the sky, until the mental elliptical has expanded above our head. Then we circle down from the sky into our head, through our body, and down to our feet. This completes one cycle of *gathering* in one direction. We will then continue gathering in this manner in all eight directions.

In *Harmony Qigong*, we use our mind to gather Qi in a circular fashion from each of the eight directions surrounding us. This also includes gathering Qi from above and below us, making ten directions. To accompany this mental projection, we may also use physical movement in the direction from which we are gathering. We can use our hands and arms to make elliptical circles in each of these eight directions. The mental penetration with our mind and the movement of both arms and hands are used to help us gather Qi from the field around us. Through our mind, accompanied by our body, we can sense both of our hands reaching and gathering into the Earth. Though the hands do not physically reach into the ground, we use their movement to assist us in mentally reaching beyond the physical limits of the hands. As we project our mental awareness downward, along with the hands figuratively reaching into the ground, we gather the *Earth Qi*.

After this, we continue circling our hands upward in an elliptical rotation, using them to gather from the Qi field into the horizon. The elliptical motion of our arms then progresses toward the sky, gathering *Heaven Qi* by bringing the hands straight up over the head. We then draw the gathered Qi down the elliptical by moving the two hands alongside our head and body, straight to our feet. Note: It is important to remember to always perform this circulation in the direction described; otherwise, it can create high blood pressure, tension, or even cause us to pass out. Also, we must complete the elliptical circle by moving down from the head and ending into the ground.

After we have completed our elliptical motion of gathering in one direction, we then perform the same movement in the remaining seven directions of the octagon. This is done in a specific order and also using a specific amount of repetitions as follows. Basically, we will gather in an elliptical circle seven times in each direction. On each elliptical circulation, we *mentally* expand its depth further and further into the distance. For example, the first elliptical circulation will mentally be smaller and closer to us. The second circulation will mentally expand further outward. The third circulation will mentally expand even further outward, and each circulation thereafter will continue to spiral into larger and larger elliptical circles. This way we expand each gathering further into the distance, with the seventh rotation expanding the farthest. This expansion is, of course, only a mental expansion, as

the physical extension of our arms will remain at the same distance on each rotation.

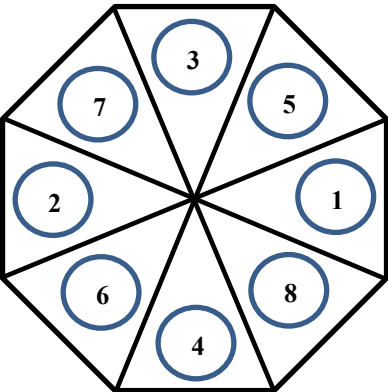
After we have gathered seven rotations in each of the eight directions, we then repeat the same practice again. We perform the seven elliptical rotations in exactly the same way, moving our arms in the same direction. The only difference is that now we are mentally gathering backward from the largest elliptical first, to the smallest elliptical last. We are thus spiraling each elliptical smaller and smaller. This time, the first elliptical is the most expanded, and the last one will be the smallest. Again, this contraction of circling is only mental, as each rotation of the arms extends out to the same distance. Basically, this is considered contracting our Qi inward, after expanding it outward. Note: It is best to rehearse the specifics of this practice before beginning so that our mental focus can go toward the sensation of the practice instead of thinking about the details. The following description outlines the step-by-step method of this practice, known as *Hō Qigong*.

Harmony Qigong (Hō Qigong) Practice

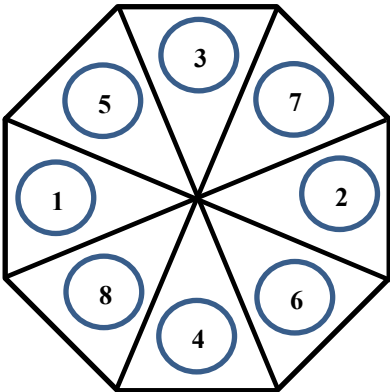
*Gather into the Earth, Gather out to the Horizon,
Gather from the Heavens, Gather from Head to Feet,
Gather in each of the Eight Directions, Seven Times.
Perform in an Elliptical Fashion.*

Order of Directions to Gather

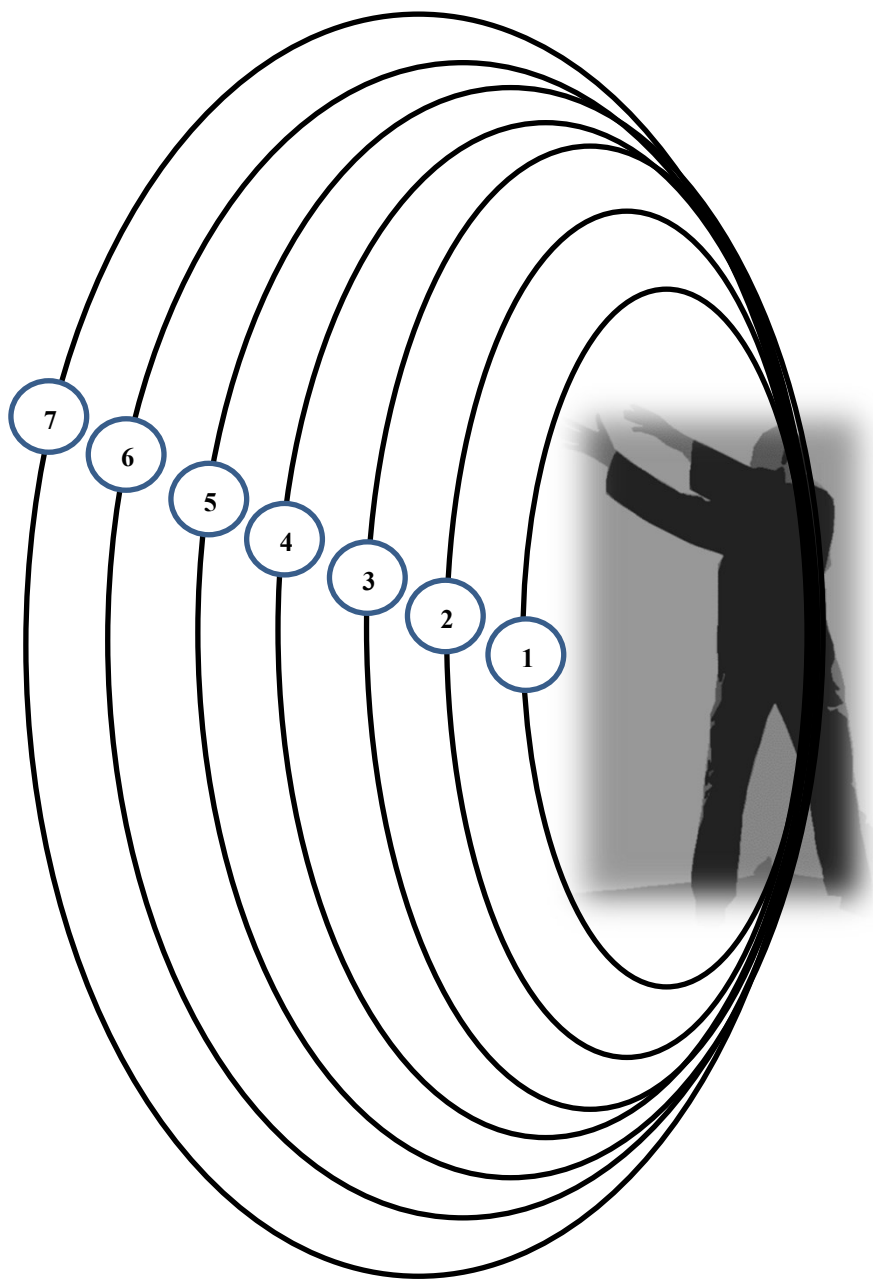
Women Gathering Directions



Men Gathering Directions



Facing Position #3



- A. First, position your stance wider than shoulder width apart with the knees slightly bent (face Direction #3). Begin by gathering from Direction #1 in an elliptical motion. Women start by gathering from their right, and men start by gathering from their left. Gather seven times.
- B. Then gather from the opposite side (Direction #2) in the same manner as step “A” above, seven times.

Step A: Gather Left (Men)
Step B: Gather Right (Men)

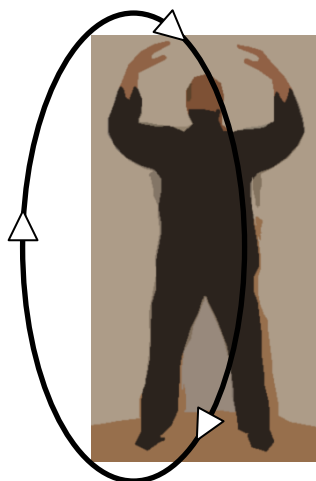


Step A: Gather Right (Women)
Step B: Gather Left (Women)

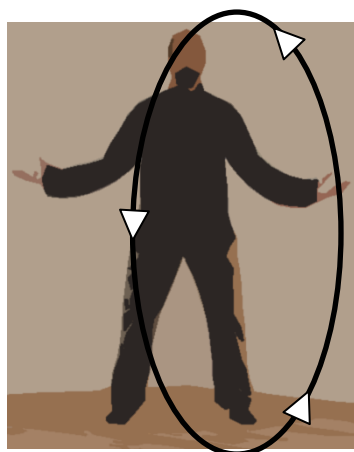


- C. Next, both women and men gather in an elliptical from the front seven times (Direction #3). Then both women and men draw the arms up behind the back to gather in an elliptical from the rear seven times (Direction #4).

Step C: Gather in Front

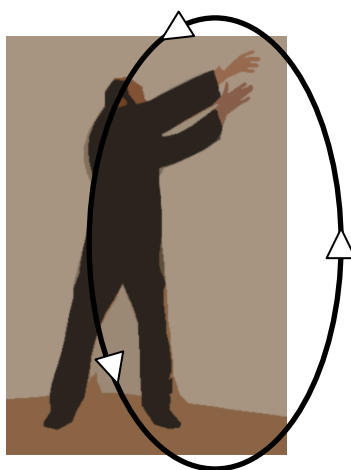
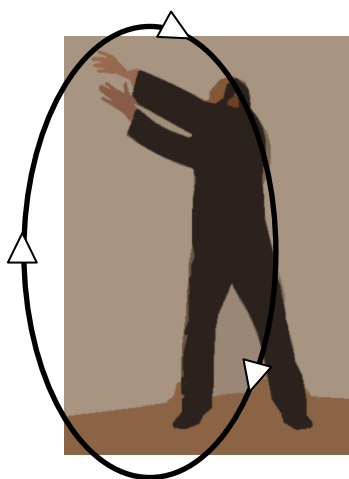


Step C: Gather Behind



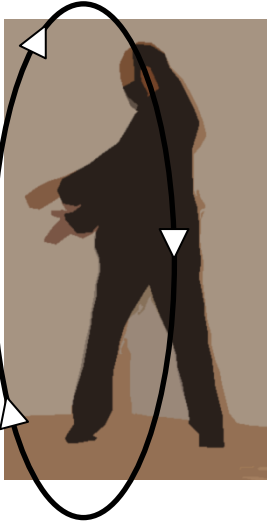
- D. Then women gather in an elliptical from the right-front at 45 degrees, and men gather in an elliptical from the left-front at 45 degrees (Direction #5). Gather seven times.

Step D: Gather Right-Front (Women) Step D: Gather Left-Front (Men)

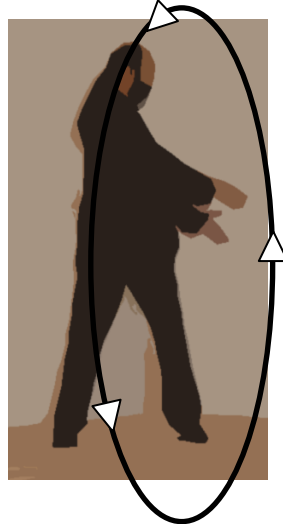


- E. Then men gather in an elliptical from the right-rear at 45 degrees, and women gather in an elliptical from the left-rear at 45 degrees (Direction #6). Gather seven times.

Step E: Gather Right-Rear (Men)



Step E: Gather Left-Rear (Women)



F. Next, women gather in an elliptical from the left-front at 45 degrees, and men gather in an elliptical from the right-front at 45 degrees. (Direction #7). Note: *This is the reversed direction for women and men, as described in Step “D” above.*

G. Next, women gather in an elliptical from the right-rear at 45 degrees, and men gather in an elliptical from the left-rear at 45 degrees. (Direction #8). Note: *This is the reversed direction for women and men, as described in Step “E” above.*

After gathering seven times in eight directions, repeat the process again exactly as before, gathering seven times in each direction, except the 2nd set of repetitions is *gathering back*. As previously described, *gathering back* refers to mentally gathering from the most expanded elliptical to the most contracted elliptical. This means that we start with the outer circle, number 7, and mentally circulate the elliptical into smaller loops until we reach number 1.

Upon completion of the last elliptical, conclude by moving the arms and hand downwards from the head, through the body, and into the ground. Then complete the practice by performing *Closing Form* (See Chapter 7: *Closing Form*).

The first cycle of 56 gatherings is expanding out into the Qi field. The second cycle of 56 gatherings is a means of contracting back from the Qi field. In *Hō Qigong* practice, we gather *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi* in a similar manner as with other Qigong exercises. The difference in *Hō Qigong* is that we are attempting to expand our intent further into these fields of energy, including the field of Qi that expands out to the horizon of each direction. Through this practice, our perception can expand deep into each direction, allowing us to experience the interconnectedness with the *Universal Qi Field*. This leads to the realization that there is no distance or disconnection between anything and anyone, as our reach extends infinitely beyond the physical body.



Our book has narrated a pathway for expanding awareness through self-knowledge of our body and mind. By applying the technology outlined in *Qi and Body Awareness*, we discover the Qi through interoception of the physical body. After recognizing the Qi, we can develop and grow our *Qi Body* through daily cultivation. Consequently, we discover consciousness in what we can tangibly grasp, and then we gain awareness of the esoteric or the intangible. Through these techniques offered in *Qi and Body Awareness*, we discover our vast potential by experiencing the life force of Qi, which interconnects everything and everyone. We wish practitioners of *Qi and Body Awareness* the best on their journey to self-discovery!

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Glossary

Acupoints Acupuncture or acupressure points, energy gates.

Alchemicalization A modern term used in Qigong to illustrate the blending of Qi to produce transformation.

Alpha Waves Brainwaves oscillating at 8-13 cycles per second.

Back-Suspender Routes The extraordinary meridians running along either side of the back.

Bai Hui The energy gate located at the rear upper crown (GV 20 acupuncture point).

Bathing (at energy gates) Keeping the mind and Qi present upon an energy gate.

Belt Route The extraordinary meridian running around the waist, also known as the Dai Mai.

Beta Waves Brainwaves oscillating at 12.5 to 30 cycles per second.

Body Mindfulness Being internally present at a given area in the body.

Bubbling Springs The energy gates on the balls of the feet, also known as the Yongquan point.

Buddha Palm The energy gate on the center of the palms, also known as the Laogong point.

Central Channel The meridian that extends from Hui Yin through the center of the spinal column to the Bai Hui, also known as the Zhong Mai channel.

Channel(s) Meridians or vessels, pathways of Qi flow through the body.

Compacting Qi To mentally compress and move the Qi downward and/or inward.

Conception Vessel The meridian that extends from the perineum to the lower lip, also known as the Ren Mai channel.

Cultivation Developing awareness of and growth of Qi flow throughout our being.

Da Zhui The energy gate at the neckbone, corresponding to C-7 on the spine.

Dai Mai The meridian running around the waist, also known as the Belt Route.

Dantien The Elixir Fields located within the body at the lower abdomen, chest, and forehead.

Di Qi The Qi field of the Earth, which is primarily Yin in quality.

De Inherent virtue, moral power.

Door of Life The Ming Men point on the lower back.

Du Mai The meridian that extends from the upper lip, over the head, and down the spine to the perineum, also known as the Governing Vessel.

Earth Qi The Qi field of the Earth, also known as Di Qi.

Eight Extraordinary Meridians Eight major meridians in the body that impact the other twelve standard meridians.

Elixir Field(s) The three Dantiens.

Energetic (Metaphysical) An unmeasurable force, energy, effect, experience, or phenomenon that impacts a person, place, or thing.

Energy Gates Acupoints, acupressure points, acupuncture points, or the Dantiens.

Fang Song To put the body to relax.

First Adjustment To adjust the posture and the body to relax.

Five Bows A slight bend in the knees and elbows and a rounding of the back.

Five Point Breathing Drawing Qi through the Bai Hui, the Yongquan points, and the Laogong points simultaneously.

Frequency (Metaphysical) The *energetic* oscillation of a person, place, or thing which reflects one's 'state of mind', the *energetic* atmosphere, or an *energetic* field emitted.

Front-Suspender Routes The extraordinary meridians running along either side of the chest.

Gathering Collecting Qi into the body.

Governing Vessel The meridian that extends from the upper lip, over the head, down the spine to the perineum, also known as the Du Mai.

Grounding Mentally sinking the feet to connect with the Earth Qi.

Heart Mind The feelings and emotions that impact our perception of ourselves and our reality, also known as Xin.

Heaven Qi The Qi field of the sky, firmament, sun, moon, heavens, etc., also known as Tien Qi.

Hui Yin The energy gate located at the perineum.

Inflow Sensation Awareness of the Qi entering the body.

Internal Arts The practice of being aware of Qi and the internal self, also known as Neigong.

Interoception How the brain interprets the internal state of the body.

Laogong The energy gate on the center of the palm, also known as the Buddha Palm point.

Magpie Bridge The point where the tongue touches the upper palate to connect the Ren Mai and Du Mai meridians.

Meridians Pathways of Qi flow through the body channels.

Middle Dantien The energy gate located at the center of the chest, also known as Zhong Dantien.

Ming Men The energy gate located at the mid-lower back (GV4 acupuncture point).

Neigong The practice of being aware of the internal self, Qi, energy gates, meridians, etc.

Original Nature Our inherent self beyond all perceptions.

Proprioception Sensing the body's physical position and movement.

Qi Life force, a Universal Field of energy.

Qi Body The field of energy that is a body beyond the physical body.

Qi Chen Xia Dantien Guiding the Qi down to the lower abdomen.

Qi Field The field of Qi all around us and in everything. Also, the Qi radiating from a given form of life or from matter in general.

Qihai An acupoint just below the navel corresponding to Xia Dantien's internal location.

Qi Pump Stimulating Qi flow through various physical and mental techniques.

Qi Stagnation A lack of smooth Qi flow.

Qigong Cultivation of skill or ability with Qi.

Ren Mai The meridian that extends from the lower lip to the perineum, also known as the Conception Vessel.

Reverse Cultivation Cultivating Qi and awareness of the physical body prior to cultivating awareness of the more ethereal.

Rising Motion Moving upward from a “knees-bent” position, to a straightened position.

Rooting The feet and body weight firmly planted into the ground.

Second Adjustment To regulate the breath to be soft and relaxed.

Shang Dantien The Upper Dantien located at the forehead.

Sinking Motion Lowering from a straightened position to a “knees-bent” position.

Small Circle Concentration around a small elliptical of the meridians around the lower torso.

Small Heaven Concentration around an elliptical of the meridians around the entire body.

Spiritual Embryo A Qi Body grown within our being.

Stagnant Qi Lack of strong or smooth flow of Qi in a given area.

Taiji or Tai Chi The Yin-Yang Symbol, or the martial arts practice of Tai Chi.

Taoism A Chinese philosophy based on the writings of Lao-tzu that is also associated with Chinese Traditional Medicine and Qigong.

Tapping A practice of tapping, patting, or slapping the body, meridians and energy gates for health and vitality.

Theta Waves Brainwaves oscillating at 4-7 cycles per second.

Third Adjustment Adjusting or focusing the mind to concentration.

Threading Moving the mind through each joint and limb in coordination with physical movement.

Three Adjustments Adjusting the posture and body to relax, regulating the breath, and concentrating the mind.

Tien Qi Heaven Qi.

Traditional Chinese Medicine Ancient Chinese medical practices that include acupuncture, herbal medicine, Qigong, breathing practices, and other techniques for health and balance.

Universal Qi The entire field of Qi around us and in everything.

Upper Dantien The energy gate located at the forehead, also known as Shang Dantien.

Wei Lu The energy gate located at the tailbone.

Wisdom Mind The aspect of the mind that governs emotions and feelings to bring about a neutral perception of ourselves and reality through wisdom and discernment, also known as Xi.

Xia Dantien The energy gate located inside the lower abdomen.

Xi The aspect of the mind that governs emotions and feelings to bring about a neutral perception of ourselves and reality through wisdom and discernment, also known as Xi.

Xin The feelings and emotions that impact our perception of ourselves and our reality, also known as Xin.

Yang Expanding, warming, masculine, external, etc.

Yin Contracting, cooling, feminine, internal, etc.

Yongquan The energy gate on the balls of the feet, also known as the Bubbling Springs points.

Yu Zhen The energy gate located at the base of the skull.

Zhong Dantien The energy gate located at the chest.

Zhong Mai The meridian that extends along the center of the body from the perineum, through spine, and to the top of the head.

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