

Silver Dragon T'ai Chi and Qigong School

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“Qi” means “energy” and “gong” means “practice,” thus the term “qigong” literally means “energy practice.” The exercises that we will be doing in this session promote the circulation of this vital energy throughout the body. Traditionally these are exercises for improving and maintaining one’s good health. The exercises we will do all serve as vehicles for relaxation. They fall into three categories: some cleanse the body and internal organs of stale; stagnant or toxic energy; others generate “fresh qi” and still others regulate the flow of “qi;” that already exists in the body.

Breathing

Deep breathing or abdominal breathing helps to slow your metabolic rate and produces a measurable physiologically and psychologically calming effect.

Taoist Breathing

This Taoist breathing exercise cultivates qi. Stand with feet parallel and shoulder width apart. Place hands in the triangle mudra so that the Laogong points in the center of the palms face the t’an t’ien. As you inhale and the belly expands the hands moving away from the body, gently follow the breath. As you exhale the belly flattens and the hands moving toward the belly, gently follow the breath.

Harmonize the Breath

This breathing exercise cleanses the toxins and stagnation from the body. On the inhale arms rise up from your sides until they are above your head; then feel the connection between the center of your palms and the crown of the head. On the exhale, arms lower on the center-line of the torso; feel the "stale chi" (toxins or stagnation) leave the body though the centers of the soles of the feet. This is replaced on the inhale by pure heavenly energy or fresh chi. Repeat this sequence nine times.

The Elephant Raises its Trunk

This exercise helps to maintain the body’s hormonal balance. It is also said to help keep the brain active and alert.

Standing shoulder width with feet parallel, focus on your deep breathing. As the right hand forms a hooked shape, lift it up the center-line of the torso. Your eyes follow the movement of the hand until it is above your head; then your gaze follows the hand as it drops slowly down. Do the same thing with the left hand. On the third time both hands float up above the head and when at their highest point, hold the breath for three seconds. During this time, focus on energy, “qi,” traveling up the spine into the brain. Close by returning to the starting position.

Basic Qigong Warm-Up Outline

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1. Turn the waist and pummel the torso to activate the energy centers in the torso.
2. Gall bladder meridians: start pummeling under your arm working your way down the torso, go along the waist line and up the center of the chest, down to the inside of the arm, up the outside of the arm to the shoulder and neck. Then collect excess qi with your hand and sweep it off down the arm.
3. Kidney/Bladder meridians: Pummel the lower back at least 36 times. Then continue down the buttocks and the outside of the legs, then up the inside of the legs.
4. Liver meridians: with loose fists pummel the kwa sinking your weight down and then up.
5. Circling to allow the major joints in the body to relax so that qi can flow: the neck, the hips, the knees, and the ankles.
6. Shake out the wrists to energize the brain.
7. Swing arms to facilitate qi to the heart meridian and activate the immune system.
8. Bounce--to get qi flowing and to free blocked qi.
9. Harmonize the breath: to cleanse toxins and stagnation from the body.

**These warm-ups have been adapted from Linda Modaro's video
Discovering Chi Energy Exercises for the Beginner

Key Acupressure and Energy Points

Laogong (PC8) is in the center of the palm and is an energy receptor in the body

Hoku (LI4) also called “Joining the Valley” is in the intersecting point between the thumb and index finger. This point relieves frontal headaches, constipation, and depression.

Neikuan (P6), the “Inner Gate,” is three finger widths up from the wrist between the tendons. Pressing here relieves wrist pain, nausea and insomnia. It balances the internal organs and calms the spirit.

Quchi (LI11) is found at the end of the crease in the elbow. The “Crooked Pond” stimulates the intestines and benefits the immune system.

Zusanli (ST36) is found four finger widths down from the “knee eye” on the outside of the leg. The “Three Mile Point” drains excess energy from the stomach and in doing so relieves fatigue and stomach disorders. It also restores the immune system.

Sanyinjiao (SP6) is found four finger widths up from the anklebone on the inside of the leg. The “Three Yin Crossings” relieve water retention, diarrhea, menstrual cramps and diabetes.

Please note:

There are some points which are known as "forbidden points" for use with women who are pregnant or who are trying to become pregnant, as use could prevent fertilization or cause a fetus to abort. They include LI 4 and SP 6 and also ST 36. These of course are otherwise very useful points, for the reasons you list. But perhaps you could include a cautionary statement, as well.

Self-Massage and Acupressure Routine

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1. **Palming Eyes, Face, Head and Shoulder Massage:** Rub hands together until warm. Then cup palms over eyes, to absorb the soothing heat from the palms. Using fingers, massage the head from the top of the forehead down to the neck. Let hands slide down the neck gently pulling on the shoulders. Repeat 3 times.
2. **Eye Massage:** Rest index fingers above the eyebrows. Use the thumb joint to massage around the eyes just below the eyebrows going in, down and around under the eye. Repeat 36 times.
3. **Ear Massage:** Reach overhead to opposite ear. Massage ear by pulling up. Beating the Heavenly Drum: Palms cover ears, fingers tap back of neck 36 times.
4. **Arm and Hand Massage:** Rub hands together until warm. Go up the inside of the arm-- palm to shoulder and down the outside to the arm to the back of hand continue up the inside of the other arm and down the outside. Do either 12 or 24 times.
For the hands massage fingers 21 times each. Start from the wrist and go to the fingertip with the thumb, index and middle finger. Start at the fingertip and go to the wrist with the ring and little finger. Use the opposite hand to do massage thumb on one side and middle, ring, and little finger on the other side (do not massage with your index finger)
5. **Torso Massage:**
 - a) Stimulate the thymus gland (the youth gland) by forming a hook hand and gently thumping it with the tips of the fingers.
 - b) Make a fist with one hand resting it above the navel then roll it in circles 49 times. Repeat with other hand in opposite direction. Should be done while walking.
6. **Lower Back Massage:** Have the back of the hands come down either side of the spine and up the outside of the back from the buttocks to the mid-back. Repeat 49 times.
7. **Leg Massage:** Both hands start at the hips and go down on either side to the left leg to feet. Repeat three times, then gently pound down the leg, also three times. Repeat sequence on right leg.
8. **Knee Massage:** Both hands massage knee area in a circular motion down the inside of the knees and out. This should be repeated 49 times. Gently massage the "knee eyes" acupressure with the index fingers, first the left knee and then the right for knee and lower legs.
9. **Foot Massage:** Massage in a circular motion from toe to heel down the arch side and up outside of each foot, 49 circles on each foot.

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Compiled by Donna Silver

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Videos

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- "Power Up" Your Body and Relax Your Mind with Qigong and Taoist Meditations. As presented by Paul Gallagher. Deer Mountain T'ai Chi Health Academy, RD3 #109A, Guilford, VT 05301.
- The Swimming Dragon. Instructor T.K. Shih companion to book of same title listed above.
- The Swimming Dragon Chi Kung. Written and Narrated by Joi Eden. Stillness in Motion, Inc., Hicksville, NY, 1993. (Running time 105 min.)
- T'ai Chi For Seniors. As presented by Mark Johnson. Publishers Choice Video 1-800-668-0529 <http://www.pubchoicevideo.com>

Catalogs for Additional Resources

- Dragon Door Publications 1-800-899-5111 <http://dragondoor.com>
- Qi: The Journal of Traditional Eastern Health & Fitness. 1-800-787-2600 <http://www.qi-journal.com>
- Wayfarer Catalog 1-800- 888-9119 <http://www.tai-chi.com>