

Balancing the Body with Qigong

By Caryn Boyd Diel

For thousands of years humans have explored the deeper meaning of balance. The beauty of a Zen painting is that the object is just a little out of balance and yet, the background is perfect. This is an apt metaphor for our lives. We constantly seek to rebalance the body, mind and spirit in a world that seems to be spinning off of it's axis. And all the time we do not notice that the background of human nature is perfection.

Taoist practitioners knew that the human body was a microcosm of the larger universe. The ebb and flow of energy in the bodies is similar to that of the ocean and river tides, the phases of the moon, the migration of animals, and the growth of plants. Becoming still enough to feel and see the flow of chi, or life force energy in the body gave them a powerful tool for affecting balance and health. Taoist masters unlocked the secrets of living a long and vital life in the human body, not for the sake of living forever, but in order to attain spiritual evolution in a healthy body.

Many of our beautiful flowing Qigong forms have been handed down from these masters and today we are discovering how to balance our lives with some very simple, yet powerful meditative movements.

Qigong is moving meditation. Lets take a look at the word; Qigong. It is made up of two Chinese characters; Qi or Chi, meaning air, or a universal energy that permeates and flows thru everything. The breath that we all breath. And Gong; which represents the effort or practice of learning to interact with chi and cultivate it for healing.

Qigong is a meditative practice of moving chi through and around the body to affect balance and better health.

There are thousands of Qigong forms, many developed specifically by individuals to heal certain ailments. There are *Martial* forms of Qigong like Bone Breathing and Tan Tien Qigong which come from the Iron Shirt Tradition. There are *Spiritual* forms of Qigong like Primordial Qigong and Dream practices. The *Alchemical* branch of Qigong includes meditations such as the Inner Smile and 6 Healings Sounds, Microcosmic Orbit, and Fusion of the 5 Elements. And there

are *Medical Qigong* forms, like the ones I learned at the Xi Yuan hospital in Beijing which balance the organs energy.

Many Qigong forms include slow meditative movements, yet the most advanced forms do not require movement, only the directing of the chi through the organs and meridians of the body, to affect balance of chi flow for optimum health.

Chi takes on many qualities. It can be vibrant and of high quality or stagnant and charged with low level energy. We individually live with chi that is either enlivening and in balance, in excess or deficient. With conscious practice, observation and quiet reflection we can learn to evaluate and work with our chi level and how it flows through our bodies.

We gather chi from the air, food, water and from sleeping. Our thoughts and emotions also affect the quality of chi. Qigong practice teaches us to purify, cultivate, circulate, store and project chi for healing. As we become still like the practitioners of the past we become more attuned to where we are out of flow, or out of balance.

As we move gently with Qigong, the breathing becomes deeper and the mind quiets. The blood shifts back into a more balanced pH which allows for deeper meditation. Life events and emotions become less intense as the body and its glands and organs find new balance and fill with the higher virtues that we were born with.