

Cultivate Qi for Body, Mind & Spirit

Yang-Sheng

Nurturing Life

養生

IN THIS ISSUE:

- First Yang Sheng World Assembly
- Scientific Qi Exploration
- Meditation Training Tips
- Yin-Yang Transformation inside the Body
- Listening to Your Inner Rhythms
- New Hope for 2012 and Beyond!
- Seasonal Harmony...and more!



Volume 2, No. 1
January, 2012
www.Yang-Sheng.com

Cultivate Qi for Body, Mind & Spirit



Yang-Sheng
(Nurturing Life)

養生

A network for health, happiness & harmony

www.Yang-Sheng.com



Happy Chinese New Year

Year of the Black Water Dragon

恭贺新禧！ 龙年吉祥！



**To all of the readers
and friends of Yang-Sheng**

From the Yang-Sheng Editorial Team!

Yang-Sheng (養生 Nurturing Life) is a FREE e-magazine and a network for health care professionals - complementary medical practitioners, Qigong, Tai Chi, Yoga, Reiki and other mind-body and spirit cultivators. It promotes methods of self-healing, positive mindfulness and health preservation. Yang-Sheng merges traditional knowledge with modern scientific research and clinical evidence and combines ancient wisdom with modern experience to support health and well-being.

Your participation, contribution, sharing and feedback are truly appreciated.



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From the Editor



Welcome to the January issue of Yang Sheng! Our theme this month is “Transformation and Renewal.” Every second of our lives, with every breath we take, with every meal we eat, every refreshing drink of water, every physical movement or going deeper, with every session of mind-body energy practices we engage in; we are in a constant process of transformation. Cell by cell - mindfully or not, we are renewing, rebuilding, reinventing ourselves continuously, constantly. How exciting, now to know that we can add Yang-Sheng practices to that! To know that the information is available and we can use these “tools” to mindfully, intentionally orchestrate and guide our own transformation - to wellness, to wholeness, to heal, to evolve in all the ways and on all the levels, physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual that we may long for. To make it more exciting the Chinese year of the Black Water Dragon begins soon. It ushers in the energetic patterns that naturally initiate and support both transformation and change in a gentle and reasonable manner, as the Water element of this year calms Dragon energy.

There are many articles in this issue that offer insight on the process of transformation and renewal including "Training Tips for the New Year: On Meditation" by Dr. Yang Yang. Practicing meditation offers numerous benefits, but for many people, learning "how" to meditate may seem confusing. Dr. Yang offers excellent tips and insights on ways to develop an enjoyable meditation practice. In "The Line between Ordinary and Extraordinary" Reena Reese, tells us that it is naturally part of our nature to be extraordinary, just like a tiny acorn, we are each packed with the potential for astounding greatness. In "A New Hope for Parkinson's Disease Patients: Tai Chi" Violet Li shares the story of Jerry Wild which brings hope for people with this tragic disease. In "The Natural “Yin-Yang” Transformation inside the Body" Li-Jun Ma, MD tells us that although body weight is important; it is not just body weight or “fat” that matters.

Ancient yet timely advice from Daoist master Li Dong Yuan (1180-1251 CE) is featured in "Distancing Desires - The Daoist way to Longevity" by Neil Kingham. And in "Listening to Your Inner Rhythms" Dan Kleiman tells us that harmonizing movement, breath, and intention creates internal space. "Daoism and the Origins of Qigong", by Livia Kohn, Ph.D. presents insights about Qigong and the main distinction between the health and longevity practices and advanced spiritual or immortality practices.

In "Seasonal Harmony: Let Flavor Be Your Guide" Ellasara Kling explains that when we gravitate to particular flavors on a regular basis that knowledge can be used along with information from the principles of TCM and Five Element Theory to learn how our bodies try to create balance and harmony. In "From the Doctor: Joyeux Noel! Out of Ashes come Flowers" Nadia Linda Hole, MD comments on current times and asks: "What now? Where do we go from here? How do we help those who come to us and ourselves?" Niraj Naik, M.Pharm. shares "A New Hope for 2012 and Beyond" as he relates his experience of having an incurable illness, his own personal mission to find a natural solution and his path of transformation and return to health and well-being.

This issue also includes a special report by Kevin W Chen, Ph.D. MPH on the first World Assembly of Experts on Yang Sheng. Dr. Chen was one of the VIP presenters at this landmark event held in Hangzhou, China in December 2011.

Wishing each of you a peaceful, joyous, renewing & transforming Year of the Black Water Dragon,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Kali". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rebecca Kali, Editor-in-Chief



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Yang Sheng World Experts Meet in “Heaven on Earth,” Hangzhou City

by Kevin W Chen, Ph.D. MPH

I was quite surprised when the organizers of the World Assembly of Yang Sheng informed me that they would like to extend an invitation to me, as one of the VIPs and a representative from the scientific community, to attend the first Yang-Sheng international gathering. Not only was it a mere three weeks from the date it was to be held, but they asked me to give a talk on my choice of subjects related to Yang Sheng. I briefly discussed this with my family, and decided to cancel the vacation trip to a ski resort that we had planned and attend this unique conference on the subject to which I have devoted my life and research career.

The first World Assembly of Yang Sheng was held at the International Conference Center, Orient Culture Park in Hangzhou, China, from December 28 to 30, 2011. Hangzhou is known as “Heaven on Earth” in China, due to its beautiful scenery and the comfortable lifestyle of the people who live there. The Assembly was approved by a number of Chinese government agencies and directly supported by seven government and non-government organizations, such as



Chinese Advancement for Scientific Creativity and Development, China Society of Chinese Medicine, CCTV Chinese Channel, Health Guidance newspaper, *World Integrative Medicine* Journal, and Chinese Branding Society. More than 700 participants attended this historical assembly. The majority were entrepreneurs who sell Yang Sheng products or provide services related to Yang Sheng. There were about two dozens participants from countries outside China including the U.S.A., Australia, Canada, Netherlands, Germany, Korea, and Japan. Most of the foreign participants were invited to be seated on the presiding stage as VIPs.



First World Assembly of Yang Sheng, Hangzhou, China, December 28 to 30, 2011



Kevin Chen, Ph.D. editor/publisher of Yang-Sheng was one of the V.I.P. presenters at the First World Assembly of Yang Sheng

Let me share some highlights and the most impressive elements of this international assembly with our readers:

The Assembly Theme Song.

It is usual to have a special logo for an international conference, but it is unusual to see a theme song for a conference. Here are the lyrics of the theme song of the Yang Sheng Assembly

*Different skin colors under the same sky,
Different languages with the same faith.*

*Together here,
We have the same wish,
To feel happy and healthy.
May life be full of joy and sunshine.*

*Different personalities with the same smile,
Different countries with the same dream.*

*Together here,
We have the same wish,
Flowers and songs on our earth.
May the world be filled with peace and harmony.*

The Tasks of the Assembly

With the mission of “advancing the essence of Chinese medicine, promoting the course of Chinese Yang Sheng, and bringing health and balance to mankind,” the Assembly attempted to accomplish the following tasks:

- Explain and understand the state policies on the development of Chinese medicine
- Analyze the state policies on helping producers and companies related to Chinese Yang Sheng
- Update on the current situation and the developing trends in the Chinese Yang Sheng community
- Clarify the procedure of application and approval of Yang Sheng related medical products and techniques
- Outline the future of the health project for treating future diseases with Chinese Yang Sheng
- Standardization and regulation of national Yang Sheng and health maintenance products, and integrating them into national development plans.
- Discussion and exploration of the possible standardization and regulation of Yang Sheng products around the world
- Establish the international commission on health maintenance and Yang Sheng standards
- Present the successful experience of international and domestic Yang Sheng brands and organizations
- Promote the new advanced economic model, the 052525 commercial model.

A Gathering for the New Movement

In my opinion, the World Yang Sheng Assembly was not an academic conference, nor an assembly for experience exchange among practitioners. It had a high profile in the media and press with strong government support. It was more like a special show to declare Yang Sheng as a unique field in health and medicine, and/or as an independent industry in economic development. The participants spent more time attending special events than listening to the conference presentations; these events included the colorful welcome dinner, the high-quality talent show, Yang Sheng product demonstration, multiple awards ceremonies, and the collective prayer for peace and harmony on Earth from the Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist leaders.

For most participants, it was also a unique opportunity to network with other Yang Sheng practitioners, scholars and entrepreneurs.

At the same time, many major presses and media in China reported the Assembly and related events. Even among people who did not attend the assembly, there was an awareness that the government might do something to regulate the Yang Sheng industry, and to promote a nationwide Yang-Sheng movement.

Focus of the Assembly

Although a few scholars attended and presented at the assembly, the focus of the Assembly was specifically on beauty (specifically beautifying of faces) and the anti-aging process. With the sponsorship of multiple Yang Sheng related companies, promotion of the Yang Sheng products by these companies took a large part of this gathering. The participants were surrounded by different Yang Sheng liquids, teas, and other products, from the welcome dinner, to the exhibition hall, to the actual assembly programs. I was told that this is a very popular model for organizing a conference in China -- give the sponsoring organizations a lot exposure and opportunities during the conference, in return, the conference can collect enough financial support.

Needless to say, there were few products there related to nurturing mind and spirit. The methods of focusing on mind cultivation or nurturing spirit and organizations devoted to doing that can hardly make enough money to sponsor a conference. However, my invited presentation, titled "*Nurturing Mind is the Core of Nurturing Life*," was well received by the participants, and I got a lot of inquiries and written comments after my presentation. I believe that most participants agree with me on the importance of nurturing the mind, but it is the reality now that currently most Yang Sheng products are related to nurturing the body.

In general, the assembly was very successful as the beginning of a healthy movement, and as a messenger to the world. However, most participants really wanted to actually get more information on Yang Sheng itself. It is interesting to notice that our Yang-Sheng magazine might actually add new light and hope to the community of Yang Sheng in China – more and more people around the world are interested in Yang Sheng theories, methods and techniques in Chinese medicine.



Kevin Chen, Ph.D., MPH is an associate professor at the Center for Integrative Medicine and Department of Psychiatry, University of Maryland School of Medicine (USA). Dr. Chen was educated in the universities of both China and the United States, and has years of experience and training in blending eastern and western perspectives, and in the practice of life-nurturing methods. As a long-time practitioner of Qigong Yang Sheng, he is one of the few scientists in the U.S. to have both hands-on knowledge of mind-body practice, and an active research career in mind-body medicine, which is funded through grants by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and various foundations. Dr. Chen devotes his career and life to the practice of Yang Sheng, and promotion of self-healing and mind-body-spirit integration through the non-profit organization, World Institute for Self Healing (WISH) (<http://www.wishus.org>).

A Training Tip for the New Year: On Meditation

by Yang Yang, Ph.D.

A few weeks ago I taught my last workshop of 2011 at Kripalu Yoga Center. In the past few days, I have been contemplating some questions from this workshop and others of the past year focusing on what is most pertinent to people's daily practice. One question stands out: how to meditate?

Meditation can generate so many health benefits:

- kindness toward ourselves and the rest of the world
- enhancement of mental and physical agility
- better sleep, digestion, bowel function, and sexual function
- cultivation of tranquility, joy, and resilience in daily life
- awareness of our mind, body, and spirit
- awareness of reality
- acceptance of differences between ourselves and others

continued on page 10



However, people often say, "I know the benefits and I tried, but I just could not do it. My mind would not calm down. The more I tried to empty my mind, the wilder my mind became. Maybe meditation is just not for me."

Everyone is the same: Our mind wanders and often has negative emotions. Ironically, this is why we really need to meditate, and why meditation can help us in our daily lives to cultivate tranquility, joy, and resilience.

The approach that works best for me is to contemplate a specific and tangible situation. I look at it in two ways as I meditate. I consider how it can make me more aware of truth or reality. In addition, I consider how it reinforces enduring principles that contribute to quality human life.



Dr. Yang in Santi Standing Posture

To cultivate awareness, I meditate on one or another of these maxims, choosing the one that best applies to the situation:

1. The world is yin and yang; we are all different .
2. Everyone is seeking his or her best interests or happiness, including ourselves.
3. Nothing is personal.
4. The meaning and purpose of life

As for principles, I work on the following:

1. Gratitude
2. Kindness and love
3. Acceptance of differences between self and the rest of the world, and acceptance of imperfection in life.
4. Forgiveness
5. The golden rule

There are no fixed ways to apply these maxims and principles: You can apply one maxim and one principle on one day, and apply another on the following day until you apply all of them. Or, you can apply more than one maxim and principle to the same situation. However, one maxim and one principle may be easier for beginners.

Here is the routine I went through this morning: I started with gratitude, still immersed in the rewarding feeling of reading the warm and encouraging comments on evaluations from participants at Kripalu. Contemplating those comments, I felt grateful for all of my generous and kind teachers: Grandmasters Yuan Shiming, Wu Xiubao, Zhang Xitang, Gu Liuxin, Chen Zhaokui, and Feng Zhiqiang, Drs. Karl Rosengren, Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko and other professors at the University of Illinois.

I then thought about how questions from participants in my classes and seminars and discussions with them have improved my understanding of Taiji and Qigong, which has led me to develop as a teacher. I felt grateful for that, and for the support I receive from family and friends, which sustains my resilience in pursuing my dream.

Then I switched to the practice of awareness, asking myself whether there were any negative emotions in my mind? I often focus on the most painful situation I'm facing because such situations can drain significant amounts of energy. I believe that when something or someone is causing negative emotions in you, it is you who needs to improve. Sometimes negative emotions can be so dramatic that they lead to acute anxiety, insomnia, or loss of appetite.

Compared to that, today was an easy one. I had to admit to myself that I was bothered a little bit by a gentleman wearing earphones singing loudly next to me in the subway while on my way to teach at the New York Open Center last week. He was a special person; in addition to the singing, he would suddenly hit the pole in front of him in an excited way which startled a few passengers. Some of them were annoyed and their facial expression further

energized the singer and led to louder noises.

Several things came to my mind. First, how can we become more aware of the impact that our behaviors have upon other people near us? How can we cultivate a gentle, quiet, and kind environment for other people, or avoid bothering other people with our unconscious behaviors? These are aspects of the golden rule.

Next, can we accept difference? In this case, this singer and I are different. We can view this difference in our practice as something that makes the world real, interesting, and perhaps offers an opportunity to learn, rather than something to feel annoyed or upset about. It is an opportunity to practice acceptance.

Furthermore, a situation like this can be an opportunity to practice the notion that "nothing is personal." The man did not act in those ways with any specific person in mind. He did not know the name of anyone around him. He was not doing this specifically toward anyone next to him.

The situation also provided a chance to understand the notion that everyone is seeking his or her best interest or happiness, including ourselves. And, it offered an opportunity to practice kindness. He might have just gotten off from a long, hard shift at work and wanted to give himself a break and enjoy the music.

Finally, this encounter offered me an opportunity to learn something about life. The man freely expressed his feelings and joy through his singing. He did not care that some of his notes were way out of tune. I sensed his feeling of being free. It was reminiscent of Gene Kelly's Singing in the Rain. Of course, Mr. Kelly's singing was much more enjoyable.

Another thing I often meditate on is the dream I am pursuing: to study, distill, and disseminate Taiji and Qigong to contribute to the well-being of the general public. Knowing that I have helped people is fulfilling, and knowing that Taiji and Qigong could potentially help many more gives me energy and momentum to overcome the hurdles we all face. With that sense of challenge, urgency, and excitement, I think about one or two major tasks to accomplish on this specific day.

After I have meditated through several of these notions, I feel energized, peaceful, joyful and ready to start out a new day to do something for myself, my family, and my community.

I find this method of categorized meditation leads me easily into quiet. It does this not only by improving my ability to manage my daily stress, but also-and more importantly-by reducing the stressors. Meditation helps me realize that I have created stressors through my rumination, and that those stressors should never have been stressors at all.

New stressors can arise every day. The good news is that we can develop a habitual mental pattern to neutralize them. In this way, we can make some stressors less stressful, and eliminate others entirely. We can reduce the stress of our daily lives. And we can make positive thinking our way of life.

This article was previously published in the Center for Taiji and Qigong Studies' newsletter.

To receive training tips from Master Yang as they are published, you may [sign up for this free newsletter](#).



Yang Yang, Ph.D.- is one of the few individuals who are recognized within the traditional Taiji and Qigong community as a master practitioner and instructor, as well as an academic researcher who's using western science to explore evidence-based Eastern philosophy and healing arts. He is author of the highly acclaimed book *Taijiquan: The Art of Nurturing, The Science of Power*, and in 2006 was honored as the "Qigong Master of the Year" at the 9th World Congress on Qigong and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Yang trained in China under several of the 18th generation grandmasters of the Chen style – Chen Zhaokui, Gu Liuxin, and Feng Zhiqiang. He was a three-time Taiji champion at the Shanghai collegiate tournament and former instructor at the Shanghai Chen Style Taiji research association.

To understand the power and mechanics of Taiji and Qigong beyond traditional explanatory frameworks, Master Yang completed a doctorate degree in kinesiology at the University of Illinois, where his research focused on the mechanisms and benefits of taiji and qigong practice. Dr. Yang is currently the Director of the Center for Taiji and Qigong Studies (www.centerfortaiji.com) in New York City, and is teaching staff and patients at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

The Line Between Ordinary and Extraordinary

by Rena M. Reese



It is in our nature to be extraordinary. Just like a tiny acorn, we are packed with the potential for astounding greatness at the start of our lives. With the proper conditions, the acorn becomes the mighty oak and with appropriate nurturing, we too grow, thrive and burst forth to create an extraordinary life.

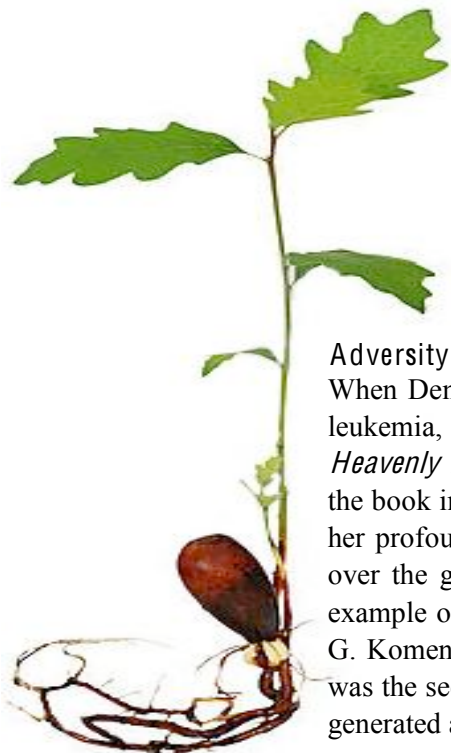
Every human being, like every seed, takes form with a built-in divine code of instruction. The corn kernel and acorn, for example, each allow their divine programming to effortlessly unfold in perfect time. The spiritual equivalents of a seed's need for "water, soil and light" are your *life-experiences*, *natural-born talents* and *intuition*. Each of these helps to illuminate your life path and life purpose. Now more than ever it seems people are tapping into this inborn wisdom in their quest to create an extraordinary life.

So what make a person extraordinary?

From the moment you took your first breath, you were extraordinary. You had not yet gone to school, earned any letters after your name or earned a single cent. You had not yet provided any service and had not achieved any great accomplishment other than making your way into this world. You were born into this life extraordinary. The great spiritual teacher Deepak Chopra says, "By knowing something, you become it". So today, please know that you are and have always been extraordinary, regardless of your present-day assessment of your life.

Building an Extraordinary Mindset:

You create extraordinary results; extraordinary results do not create an extraordinary you.



What truly makes us extraordinary are not our degrees, titles, bank accounts or the beauty of our physical bodies. Each of these is simply an outlet for your extraordinary nature to be expressed and take form. Additionally it reveals where you have placed your precious attention. If you give undue credit to your dollars and degrees as a measure of what makes you extraordinary, then you cease to be extraordinary when the status of one of these things changes. The truth is your extraordinary nature is fixed and unchangeable, regardless of the events that take place in your life.

Adversity often provides the opportunity for you to reveal your extraordinary nature. When Denise Taylor courageously supported her daughter, Jonnae, through her battle with leukemia, she did not yet know how the eventual loss would re-route her life. Jonnae's *Heavenly Birth*, not only revealed Denise's calling in life, it would also become the title of the book in which she would write about her experience. Denise mined for the gift hidden in her profound loss and infused it into the dynamic inspirational speeches she now gives all over the globe as the founder of the We Get To Organization (WeGetTo.com). Another example of this premise is in the promise Nancy G. Brinker made to her dying sister Susan G. Komen that she would do all she could to help end breast cancer forever. That promise was the seed from which the Susan G. Komen for the Cure (komen.org) grew. To date it has generated an estimated one billion dollars for research and support. *(continued on page 14)*



Ordinary people achieve extraordinary results with extraordinary effort.

When you hear stories about people achieving remarkable things, what you are really hearing are stories of people displaying extraordinary *courage*, extraordinary *dedication*, extraordinary *desire*, and extraordinary *vision*. Whether we are referring to Jerry Rice, recently named the number one player in the NFL's top 100 players or inventors like Louis Pasteur and Ben Franklin this rule absolutely holds true.

Three Spiritual Truths to help reveal your extraordinary nature:

As within, as without: Author Caroline Myss said it succinctly when she explained "Your biography becomes your biology." Scientists are now proving that your inner world creates your physical world. Examining your "story" in addition to your relationships and habits, are some spiritually responsible ways to "prepare the soil" so that your "extraordinary seeds" have a healthy place to grow.

You become like what you are around: It has been said that you are the sum total of the five people you spend the most time with. Make a list of your five people and decide if you are thrilled by the list-- or need to make a change. Unhappy friends, unhealthy family members or friends with addictions will not throw a party for you when you decide to focus your efforts on your extraordinary vision. Because this is true, advocate for your personal the environment; the choices and relationships that will best support what you want to create.

Taking care of you is selfless: You can only give as good as you've got. When you are your healthiest, most energetic, creative and vibrant-self, you can more effectively support others and do extraordinary things. To quote Dr. Wayne Dyer, "You can not get sick enough to heal one person, your cannot be poor enough to make one man wealthy—and no amount of your feeling bad will ever make anyone feeling good." When you honor this truth in your life, you are also giving those who share your life permission to do the same.

Perhaps you have already utilized everything in your metaphorical acorn to achieve results that are fully congruent with your full *extraordinary-ness*. If this is the case, celebrate! But, perhaps just now - you are beginning to be ready to commit to the new consciousness you'll need to reveal your extraordinary-self. If this is the case, consider the story of the archeologists who first uncovered the ancient tomb of King Tut. These scientists found more than just the sarcophagus of the boy king; they found jewels, pottery, clothing and food. This food was in the form of corn that was thousands of years old. Just as you might pack a moving van to relocate to a new city, the Egyptians filled the tombs of their rulers with what they believed would be needed in the after-life. This ancient corn was like a cooler packed with sandwiches for the trip.

So the scientists used this ancient corn to do what scientists do. They planted some kernels to see if they could yield a viable corn plant and tried to pop some kernels too. Thousands of years of lying dormant in a dark tomb did not diminish the potential that was packed into each tiny corn kernel. This ancient corn could not only be popped, but when it was planted, it also yielded healthy cornstalks, surprising and delighting the scientists!

Whether your extraordinary nature has been sealed up tightly in the dark or has been otherwise resting dormant waiting for the right conditions in order to grow-- know that there is resilience in your inborn seeds of greatness. Plant them and reveal the extraordinary nature already in you just waiting to manifest!



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Rena M. Reese is the founder of Soul Salon International, an inspirational multimedia company. She is the author of several inspirational titles, a professional speaker and coach as well as the host of a weekly radio program, The Soul Salon. For more inspiration and information, please visit The Soul Salon and connect with her on Twitter @TheSoulSalon

Daoism and the Origins of Qigong, Part 2

(道家与气功的起源)

by Livia Kohn, Ph.D.

Levels of Practice

The three levels of healing, longevity, and immortality can be seen as three different dimensions of practice within the same greater universe of the Dao. The Dao can be described as “organic order”— organic in the sense that it is not willful and order in that it is clearly manifested in the rhythmic changes and patterned processes of the natural world. Not a conscious, active creator or personal entity, but an organic process that just moves along, the Dao is mysterious in its depth and unfathomable in its essence. But beyond this, as order the Dao is also predictable in its developments and can be discerned and described in ordered patterns. These patterns, the Chinese call “self-so” or “nature” (*ziran*), the spontaneous and observable way things are naturally. Yet while Dao is very much nature, it is also more than nature. It is also the essence of nature, the inner quality that makes things what they are. It is governed by laws of nature, yet it is also these laws itself.

In other words, it is possible to explain the nature of the Dao in terms of a twofold structure. The “Dao that can be told” and the “eternal Dao.” One is the mysterious, ineffable Dao at the center of the cosmos; the other the Dao at the periphery, visible and tangible in the natural cycles. *(continued on next page)*



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About the eternal Dao, the *Book of the Dao and Its Virtue* says:

Look at it and do not see it: we call it invisible.

Listen to it and do not hear it: we call it inaudible.

Touch it and do not feel it: we call it subtle. . . .

Infinite and boundless, it cannot be named;

It belongs to where there are no beings.

It may be called the shape of no-shape,

It may be called the form of no-form.

Call it vague and obscure.

Meet it, yet you cannot see its head,

Follow it, yet you cannot see its back. (ch. 14)

This Dao, although the ground and inherent power of the human being, is entirely beyond ordinary perception. It is so vague and obscure, so subtle and so potent, that it is beyond all knowing and analysis; we cannot grasp it however hard we try. The human body, senses, and intellect are simply not equipped to deal with this Dao. The only way a person can ever get in touch with it is by forgetting and transcending ordinary human faculties, by becoming subtler, finer, and more potent, more like the Dao itself.

The Dao at the periphery, on the other hand, is characterized as the give and take of various pairs of complementary opposites, as the natural ebb and flow of things as they rise and fall, come and go, grow and decline, emerge and die.

The *Book of the Dao and Its Virtue* says:

To contract, there must first be expansion.

To weaken, there must first be strengthening.

To destroy, there must first be promotion.

To grasp, there must first be giving.

This is called the subtle pattern. (ch. 36)

Things develop in alternating movements as long as they live. It is the nature of life to be in constant motion. It is the nature of things to always move in one direction or the other, up or down, toward lightness or heaviness, brightness or darkness. Nature is a continuous flow of becoming, whether latent or manifest, described as the alternation of complementary characteristics and directions that cannot exist without each other. This becoming can be rhythmic and circular or it can move back toward the source of life in the ineffable Dao, which at the same time is a forward movement toward a new level of cosmic oneness.

In this larger cosmic vision, healing and longevity involve either the recovery or the maintenance of harmony with the visible and tangible patterns of the Dao, while spiritual attainments of enlightenment and immortality mean the overcoming of the natural cycles and the ultimate return to the Dao at the center of creation, the uncreated void at the base of all. The practice of Qigong and gymnastics can serve all three, supplementing, enhancing, or transforming the *Qi* that makes up both the body and the universe.

Seen in terms of the body's *Qi*, the three levels of practice involve different scenarios and trajectories of *Qi* management. As is well known, the body consists of two forms of *Qi*: a basic primordial or prenatal *Qi* that connects it to the cosmos and the Dao; and a secondary, earthly or postnatal *Qi* that is replenished by breath, food, and interaction with objects and people and helps the body survive in everyday life. Both forms of *Qi* are necessary and interact constantly with each other, so that primordial *Qi* is lost as and when earthly *Qi* is insufficient, and earthly *Qi* becomes superfluous as and when primordial *Qi* is complete (as in the case of the embryo in the womb). People, once born, start this interchange of the two dimensions of *Qi* and soon begin to lose their primordial *Qi*, especially through interaction with the world on the basis of passions and desires, sensory exchanges, and intellectual distinctions—the very same features considered most harmful for cosmic interaction in the classical texts.

When people have lost a certain amount of primordial *Qi*, they get sick and eventually die. Healing, then, is the replenishing of *Qi* with medical means such as drugs, herbs, acupuncture, rest, gymnastics, and so on. Longevity or health enhancement, next, comes in as and when people have become aware of their situation and decide to improve their quality and enjoyment of life. Attaining a basic state of good health, they proceed to increase their primordial *Qi* to and even above the level they had at birth. To do so, they apply various longevity techniques, including diets, breathing exercises, gymnastics, massages, sexual practices, and meditations. These ensure not only the realization of the natural life expectancy but may even result in increased old age and vigor.

Immortality, third, raises the practices to a yet higher level. To attain it, people transform all their *Qi* into primordial *Qi* and proceed to increasingly refine it to ever-subtler levels. This finer *Qi* will eventually turn into pure spirit, with which practitioners increasingly identify to become spirit-people and transcendents. The practice that leads there involves intensive meditation and trance training as well as more radical forms of diet and other longevity practices. Unlike healing and longevity, where the natural tendencies of the body are supported and enhanced, immortality demands the complete overcoming of these natural tendencies and the body's transformation into a different kind of energy constellation. The result is a bypassing of death, the attainment of magical powers, and residence in cosmic realms, such the immortals' paradises.

Difference in Application

Daoyin exercises as much as the other longevity techniques, therefore, can be used equally for medical, health enhancing, and spiritual purposes. When done for therapy, the specific direction toward which they are aimed does not seem to matter. When used to enhance overall health, there are some instructions on geographical orientation and astronomical constellations, with the east being the most common, as it corresponds to spring and rising *Qi*. Done as a preparation for higher spiritual attainments, the exercises are often combined with formal purifications and with rituals to the gods. However, their basic patterns remain the same on all three levels, so that similar sequences of gymnastic exercises are used in all cases.



Still, the exercises are not entirely the same. Certain practices that are useful in healing may be superfluous in the attainment of longevity, while some applicable for immortality may even be harmful when healing is the main focus. Take breathing as an example. When healing or extending life, natural deep breathing is emphasized, with the diaphragm expanding on the inhalation. When moving on to immortality, however, reverted breathing is advised, which means that the diaphragm contracts on the in-breath. Undertaking this kind of reverted breathing too early or at the wrong stage in one's practice can cause complications, from dizziness to disorientation or worse.

Again, the point is made clear in the case of sexual practices. In healing, sexual activity with a partner is encouraged in moderation and measured ways, with both partners reaching regular orgasms. In longevity practice, sexual activity

may still be undertaken with a partner, but ejaculation and other loss of essence and *Qi* is avoided and the sexual stimulation is used to raise the awareness of the positive flow of *Qi* in the body, which is then redirected to relieve stress and increase vitality. Through the practice, as Mantak Chia and Michael Winn state, people “become more aware that all living things are one” (1984, 171).

In immortality, finally, sexual practices are undertaken entirely within one’s own body and without a partner. They serve the creation of an immortal embryo through the refinement of the sexual energy *jing* first into *Qi*, then into cosmic spirit *shen*. Ni Hua-ching emphasizes accordingly that in advanced attainment sexual energy should not be used to have fun or beget children, but must be sublimated into spiritual energy, which will then give birth to the spiritual embryo and help people to attain the immortal state (1992, 110). He says:

It is hard for people to establish the correct goal of life. Typically, people are looking for emotional happiness in the form of lots of pleasure, fun, stimulation or excitement. For spiritual people, it is necessary to avoid pleasure, excitement, stimulation and fun. Actually, those four things have a healthy and unhealthy level. In other words, some fun is all right, because it does not harm your life being. However, even on a healthy level, if fun is overextended, it can become negative and damage your energy being. (Ni 1992, 111)]

Immortality is thus the creation of an inner spirit being and means the avoidance of ordinary joys and excitements. Practices associated with it are not only unsuitable (and probably impossible) for people on the levels of healing and longevity, but may even be harmful if attempted improperly.

The same point, that practices of a similar nature vary significantly among the three levels, can equally be made for diets and fasting. Thus diets on the medical and health levels involve abstention from heavy foods such as meat and fat, as well as from strong substances such as alcohol, garlic, and onions. Instead, practitioners are encouraged to eat lightly and in small portions. As their *Qi* increases, they will need ever less food, until—in immortality practice—all main staples can be cut out and food is replaced by the conscious intake of *Qi* through breath in a technique known as *bigu* or “avoiding grain.”

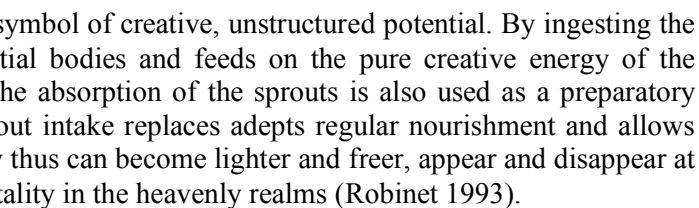
In all cases, longevity practices and thus Qigong and gymnastics serve to guide people from a wasteful and neglecting attitude toward their bodies and minds toward a more wholesome, healing, and caring way of dealing with themselves. Allowing the conscious bodily experience of the cooperation among all body and mind energies, the practice increases the mental awareness of oneself as part of the Dao, manifested as a flow of energy that rises and ebbs, comes and goes, moves and halts. As one reaches a state of mental quietude and greater stability in one’s health, the practice leads on towards a more encompassing understanding of self and world, which also includes a sense of wonder, of gratitude towards the natural world and the greater universe. The tense, ego-bound self loosens and a sense of open *Qi*-flow takes its place. Healing moves on to longevity, and as cosmic awareness increases, even to immortality.

Historically, organized Daoists changed their attitude toward the application of longevity techniques after unification around the seventh century. Around the very same time when the medical tradition began to systematize and organize long life methods in their classics, Daoists integrated the practices of the immortals of old more actively and acknowledged their value. Looking at the Daoist origins of Qigong, there is, therefore, both a distinction and a continuity among the organized religion with its foremost focus on divinity and otherworldly powers and the tradition of life-enhancing practices that can be used on all different levels. It is thus not surprising that long life methods should be transmitted among Daoist texts and that Qigong to the present day serves as a key part of Daoist practice.

Daoist Techniques

So far, we have looked at *daoyin* as the key forerunner of Qigong—a practice that uses to a large extent the same techniques and shares the same worldview, that similarly reaches from health enhancement to spiritual dimensions. However, *daoyin* alone is not Qigong, and there are a number of practices commonly undertaken today that have a different origin, that in fact go back to more religious Daoist practices. In the last section of this presentation, I would like to point out a few of those, focusing mainly on the transformation of the body into a cosmic energy system, the visualization of animal nature and cosmic flow, and the impact of inner alchemy. One of these practices is the cosmicization of the body through the ingestion of the so-called five sprouts, also known as the “method of mist absorption,” which involves partaking of the pure energies of the five directions. Part of medieval Daoist cultivation and described especially in the texts of Highest Clarity (Robinet 1989, 165-66), the practice begins with swallowing the

Another Daoist practice that has made its way into modern Qigong is inner observation or *neiguan*, the active, conscious introspection of one's body and mind. As documented in texts since the Tang dynasty, and in particular in the



Scripture of Inner Observation (*Neiguan jing*; see Kohn 1989), practitioners are guided to turn their perception inside and realize the realities of body energies and consciousness movements within. Soon they begin to understand how they function and react both physically and psychologically. With prolonged practice, they become aware of the subtler energies of life and see themselves increasingly in terms of *Qi*-patterns than ego-centered actions. As the *Scripture of Inner Observation* says, adepts come to see the body as part of Heaven and Earth, raised through yang and nourished by yin, helped and guarded by the spirit and material souls, organized in accordance with the five phases and the six musical tones, radiating with the power of the seven stars and the eight luminaries.

They learn that beyond their tangible *Qi*, they consist to a large extent of spirit (*shen*), the primordial, formless, and ever-changing force, which in connection with the physical body causes human beings to be alive. Manifested in the human mind, where it is often distorted to serve egoistic and one-sided needs, spirit is brought back to a state of rest as the mind is concentrated and relaxed. Adepts come to see that just as the Dao pervades the universe in utmost perfection, so spirit working through their mind can govern their life perfectly—that is, as long as it is observed and cultivated and not wasted on sensual amusements and the exertions of the senses. From confusion and defilement, adepts recover the primordial state.

Doing so, they come to realize the impermanent nature of the ego-based vision of self and body and replace this identity with one that consists of an assemblance of energy, essence, and spirit. They realize in their own lives the dictum of Zhuangzi that “human life is a coming-together of *Qi*. If it comes together there is life. If it scatters there is death” (Watson 1968, 235). Human life is only one part of the continuous natural transformations of *Qi*; it is merely borrowed from heaven and earth but since it resembles them closely in its structuring and undergoes the same transformations as all creation, it can be made just as perfect, just as flowing, just as eternal. Realizing this inherent nature of life and themselves, adepts see that there is no true master of body and mind and acknowledge how little conscious control they have over life’s transformations. Increasingly able to let life and the body go on changing as they please, they can forget themselves and dissolve into the higher patterns of the Dao.

This Dao, in the Daoist context, however, is not just a flow of energies, but populated by gods, spirits, and other supernatural entities. As the practitioner becomes more attuned to his life and body as the universe, he or she also comes to actively perceive the gods and spirits as inhabitants of the human body. The body and thus the self becomes increasingly a microcosmic replica of the starry heavens above, full of palaces and chambers, towers and terraces, gods and immortals. The deities who reside in the paradises of the otherworld are as much at home in the adept’s body, and again—as through the ingestion of the five sprouts—the adept comes to cosmicize his or her self, expanding identity into a larger sphere.

Along the same lines, the Daoist transformation of the self in the process of inner alchemy, reaching from essence through energy to spirit and the emptiness of the Dao, has become part of modern Qigong discourse and many techniques of inner alchemy are actively applied in practice. Not only perceiving of the body as an entity of *Qi*-flow and a replica of the universe, adepts of inner alchemy take active control of the energies and, through the systematic circulation and collection of *Qi*, transmute the body into a cauldron for the growth of an inner elixir. Starting from a tiny seed, it blossoms forth and gives rise to the immortal embryo, which then, over ten months of intense meditation, grows to completion. A primordial light begins to shine through the entire body, and adepts enter a state of deep absorption, allowing the tenuously growing spirit embryo to grow to fullness and take on a life of its own—moving about the heavenly realms in a new variation of the ecstatic soul journeys of Daoists of old.

Conclusion

To conclude, Qigong as practiced today has a long and varied history in Chinese culture. Strongly rooted in the medical tradition, it has continuously over the past two millennia been used for healing, curing, and health enhancement. By extension, it has helped people extend their lives and improve their capacity for enjoyment and vivacity. Beyond its clearly visible medical roots, however, Qigong has also been linked in various ways with the Daoist tradition—notably through the *Qi*-controlling practices of the ancient immortals and a number of exercises adopted into the modern repertoire from religious Daoist cultivation and ritual.

The main distinction between health and longevity on the one hand, and advanced spiritual or immortality practice, on the other, within the overall system of Qigong is the degree to which the body is aligned with the flow of yin and yang or the Dao on the periphery versus being transformed, transfigured, and energetically reorganized to a higher

level—the ineffable Dao of creation at the center of all. Are we practicing to enhance nature or to overcome it? Is the goal of our efforts to become stronger, more vibrant, and more successful in this life or is it to transform ourselves completely into a mystical dimension of existence that reaches far beyond this body and this world? Whenever the goal of Qigong is transcendence, the practice has passed into the realm of the Daoist religion—a passage, however, that cannot be undertaken without first completing the medical curriculum and enhancing health to the utmost.

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Dr. Livia Kohn is Professor Emerita of Religion and East Asian Studies at Boston University. A graduate of Bonn University, Germany, she has spent many years pursuing research on medieval Daoism and Chinese long life practices. She has written and edited over 25 books, taught many classes on Asian religions, and worked on a large variety of related projects. In addition, she has practiced taiji quan, qigong, meditation, yoga, and other cultivation methods for many years. These days, she lives on the Gulf Coast of Florida, and is a Daoist freelancer. She teaches workshops all over the world, runs international conferences on Daoist studies, and is executive editor at Three Pines Press and of the Journal of Daoist Studies. She has lived in Japan for a total of ten years and traveled widely in Asia, especially in China, Korea, and Thailand. Aside from her native German, she is fluent in Chinese and Japanese.

To contact Professor Kohn, please e-mail liviakohn@gmail.com

A New Hope for 2012 and Beyond!

by Narij Naik, M.Pharm.

This time last year, I was still suffering from the horrible symptoms of an illness known as ulcerative colitis. My consultant doctor told me that I would be on medication for the rest of my life and there was no cure. To hear those words as you can imagine was pretty heartbreaking to say the least, but I didn't listen. Instead, I went on my own personal mission to find a natural solution.

Fast forward one year... and I have been symptom free without needing medication for over 10 months. Many of the methods that you will read about in Yang Sheng such as energy healing and meditation are a core part of the solution I found, but an initial shift in my mindset is what sparked my discovery of all these amazing alternative healing techniques.

Here are some amazing facts that helped me to make that shift.

"Whatever your age, your body is many years younger. In fact, even if you're middle aged, most of you, of your body, may be just 10 years old or less. This heartening truth, which arises from the fact that most of the body's tissues are under constant renewal, has been underlined by a novel method of estimating the age of human cells. Its inventor, Jonas Frisen, believes the average age of all the cells in an adult's body may turn out to be as young as 7 to 10 years." New York Times, 2005

Did you know every 7 - 10 years every single cell of your body is replaced aside from a few brain and heart cells? I know, pretty amazing right?!... Your skin is replaced every 2 weeks, your liver is replaced every 300 - 500 days, your bones are replaced every 10 years and the surface of your gut has a life of only 5 days!

The quality of how your body regenerates is related to the quality of fuel you feed both your mind and your body. This shows you have the power to change at any time in your life, if you really want to.

So, if you want to grow strong, vital and happy cells that help you get all the things you really want in life, then you need to feed your mind information and fuel that provides constructive, self-empowering thoughts!

"Researchers at Duke Medical Center tracked 2,800 patients who had been hospitalized with heart disease. Patients were asked to fill out a survey to determine how they felt about their medical diagnosis, treatment, and recovery. Ten years later, the group who answered the questions with a negative attitude saw 46 deaths per 100 people. But those with the most positive approach had 32 deaths per 100 subjects, when adjusted for factors like age and previous heart problems."

"Our research shows better physical recovery and a higher likelihood of survival is linked to attitude—personal beliefs about their illness," John C. Barefoot, the study's lead author and professor emeritus in the department of psychiatry at Duke

When I first came across the research that confirms that nearly every cell in our body can be replaced with new healthier cells, that we are not the victims of our genes, and our genes can even be changed, it gave me an overwhelming new sense of hope.

Many people live in fear when facing chronic disease, holding the belief that this day could be their last, just because a doctor has told them they will never get better and may have only six months left to live.

Others facing similar circumstances choose to live a life of full of love and gratitude and overcome their illness, or are at least at peace with their illness and are enjoying every moment of life.

I was actually told by my gastro-intestinal consultant I would have this disease for life and my symptoms were so bad I would probably need fairly high doses of medication every single day!

As you can imagine, this horrified me! The fact I had also been reading various horror stories on the ulcerative colitis forums of many sufferers complaining of being housebound for years made me feel even worse.

The thought of never leaving my house and being stuck to the toilet seat for the rest of my life was incredibly depressing, as I'm sure you can imagine!

For a long time, I began to believe what the doctor told me was true and I remained sick and house-bound.

But then, something quite miraculous happened...

Deep down inside I knew this could not really be true; I still had so much to give in the world and a burning passion for music and helping others.

I remember coming across a few stories on the forums of people who had recovered successfully from chronic illness.

I wanted to know more about *their* story and exactly how they did it.

I started to focus more on the *positive* stories of recovery, rather than the negative. Suddenly, I began receiving *positive* information in the form of books, people I attracted and communities of likeminded souls.

This new information gave me the belief and strength I could get well again and my PERCEPTION and BELIEF of my disease changed.

"Quantum healing is healing the body-mind from a quantum level. That means from a level, which is not manifest at a sensory level. Our bodies ultimately are fields of information, intelligence and energy.

Quantum healing involves a shift in the fields of energy information, so as to bring about a correction in an idea that has gone wrong. So quantum healing involves healing one mode of consciousness, mind, to bring about changes in another mode of consciousness, body." Deepak Chopra, Quantum Healing

Therefore, by changing your MIND in 2012 you can change your LIFE!

Niraj Naik, M.Pharm., is a pharmacist and health and wellness consultant to several businesses based in the UK. Having a musical background he has focused his attention on using sound and music as a "side effect" free tool for relieving stress, depression and tension, that he believes are the main culprits for chronic disease. Niraj Naik also runs two successful websites and produces music



and sounds with consultant psychiatrist Dr. Mrigank Mishra, under the alias amAya, some of which is infused with their novel Trypnaural Brainwave Entrainment Technology designed to increase the natural production of tryptamines, DMT, serotonin and melatonin that can lead to deeper sleep, relaxation and better health. Niraj Naik is also an author, speaker, musician and founder of the groundbreaking meditation program The Alpha Mind System. To find out about the full Alpha Mind System and to download a full 79 page eBook based on the self healing experience of the Alpha Mind System founder, Niraj Naik please visit this site: <http://www.AlphaMindSystem.com>

From the Master

Daoist Internal Alchemy:

*A Deep Language for Communicating
with Nature's Intelligence, Part 2*

Alchemy Formulas, Qi Field & Language Theory

by Michael Winn

道家内丹修炼术

一种与自然智慧沟通的深层语言



Computer Language vs. Alchemical Language

How does the language of alchemical patterns, structured as a series of formulas or evolutionary stages, allow one to communicate with Nature's intelligence? It might be useful to first consider a more familiar artificial language, that of software programming. You sit at your computer; your fingers nimbly type commands and send emails in English, your native surface language. Your typed commands in English trigger a layer of formal language installed by the software programmer, which "talks" to the silicon chip. The chip itself speaks an even simpler deep language -- one of "on-off" binary code impulses. The intermediary software language captures these yin-yang impulse patterns and projects it onto your monitor screen, where it forms a visual virtual reality. (9)

Each of One Cloud's alchemical formulas is a kind of symbolic programming in a "Daoist software language". The alchemical symbols are not fixed words or pictures within the adept's mind, but rather are always moving. Their movements define a kind of living geometry that creates its own time, space and intelligence. The alchemical meditator shapes his internal Qi field, and it is instantaneously uploaded into the greater Qi field of Nature, which in turn responds. The alchemist's Qi language can be described as pulsing (yin-yang-yuan)

energy pathways on which felt qualities or values move in dynamic patterns that are in resonance with larger patterns in nature.

The patterns of this symbolic language may be experienced internally as yin-yang Qi flow in the micro-cosmic orbit up the spine and down the chest or in the other eight extraordinary vessels; as cycling movement of the 5 phases (elements) Qi through the vital organs, or as all pervading spiritual qualities (de). These energetic pathways help the adept's ordinary mind translate its mind intent (yi) into the impulses of his/her vital organ spirits (jingshen). The Daoist name each of these five body-mind spirits: yi, shen, zhi, hun, and po. They are considered the intelligences that regulate the spleen, heart, kidney, liver and lung functions. These spirits are the deepest personal inner voices. The seven formulas train these body-mind intelligences to speak to and activate a response from the vast multitude of planetary and stellar intelligences shaping the impersonal cosmic Qi field.

The response from the cosmic Qi field to the adept's communication appears to be at core a very simple binary code of yin-yang pulsations. Like a computer chip, these cosmic impulses can instantly transmit a huge quantity of "living information" from a more universal field of awareness than the adept's ordinary senses can perceive.

This information is transmitted back to the adept, who interprets this "message" as specific energy patterns or qualities of spirit that are felt. The filter for the incoming information from the universal Qi field are the adepts own vital organ spirits, which Daoists believe also shape (together with other bodily spirits) one's worldly personality and behavior. These spirits govern our body's biological intelligence, and collectively transmute the incoming yin-yang impulses into the human powers of discrimination, feeling, sensation, speech, and movement. This information is not filtered by the biological senses or by conscious thinking, but rather by the "subtle senses" that the adept develops, called the subtle or Qi body.

The alchemical meditations activate progressively more subtle energetic fields that allow the adept to communicate instantly across vast distances. Take for example the pattern of the Five Elements/Phases. The five phase intelligences within the human body can be trained to resonate with the five great spirits (North, South, East, West, and Center) within the Earth, which in turn can talk to the vast intelligences of the five phases within Heaven (sun, moon, planets, or stars). All three levels of intelligence - man, earth, and heaven - are "of the same blood", i.e. are born and function in the same Qi field of Nature. Once you learn to listen to one pattern within the body, it is only a matter of training to "listen" to the same pattern in other parts of the Qi field, even if it is physically far away. Qi patterns are not limited by physical time/space. These impulses travel at the speed of consciousness, which is much faster than the speed of light. This is because the Qi patterns do not need to travel across space, the living Qi field IS the matrix of space/time. (10)

What are differences between the artificial software language used to speak to the computer and the deep resonant patterns chosen by the alchemist to speak with nature? The level of human will involved and the energetic engagement of the speaker of the language are central. The keyboard operator is usually unconscious of the formal software language, and is also separated from both the deep language of the computer chip and the electrical power source needed to run it. The computer screen, hardware and software are commanded by the "outer" will of the keyboard operator, meaning the person must direct his energy into an activity or thing seen as separate from himself, which eventually tires him out.

Daoist alchemical language is an embodied experience, a merging of the adept's intelligence (shen), energy (Qi), and body essence (jing) with no intermediate object. It's possible to view the alchemical language speaker (shen), the language/words being silently spoken (Qi), the recorded form of the speech (jing), and the total field of possible expression (wu) as all contained within the alchemist and communicated by resonance to the macrocosm of Nature, which mirrors the same jing-Qi-shen-wu components in another dimension..

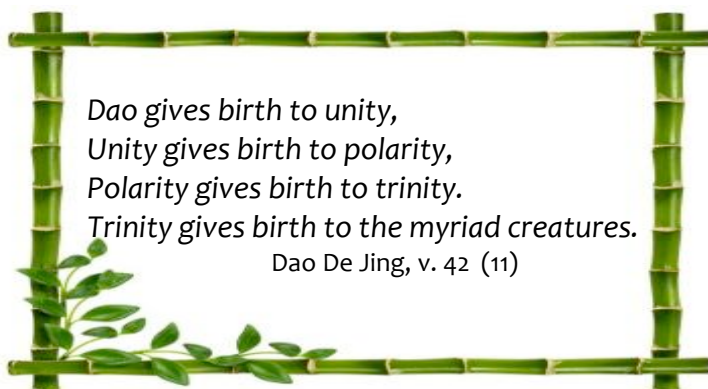
This continuum of jing-Qi-shen-wu is focused into a single intent (yi) in order to authentically "speak" to other beings or deeper energy patterns within Nature. The adept's own physical body (jing) functions like the hardware, his/her Qi channels like the software, the five inner spirits fuse into an inner vision-computer screen whose subtle senses create an internally perceived virtual reality. The power source is the Dao or its manifestation as the Qi flowing in Nature, which is alive and inexhaustible. The Qi field flows through Nature's "wires" whether or not the adept plugs into it. Communicating with the mind of the Dao through alchemical meditation recharges and heals the adept. The adept's "inner" will must be active and focused inwardly on a pattern of resonance within Nature, such as yin-yang-yuan, five elements, eight forces to speak silently to other humans or natural entities such as the sun, moon, stars used in One Cloud's formulas.

Computer software language could conceivably be memorized from a book. To learn Daoist alchemical language requires a live transmission from skilled alchemist to activate one's energy body/Qi flow. This is the traditional function of lineage. Lineage is just a communication pathway with Nature that is taught to someone to make it easier for them to communicate beyond the dark clouds of ego resistance that seem to deter most people from talking with the cosmic aspects of their self. All lineages originated at some point with someone who spontaneously developed a deep way to speak with Nature, and decided to share it. One can also receive initiation into alchemical process by an inner plane guide or by simply deeply observing Nature.

However, why reinvent the wheel? Few people will learn alchemy without a teacher. It is faster and easier to tune into someone who introduces you to the alchemical language patterns embedded in your own energy field. The transmission is simple; your Qi field simply

resonates and re-shapes itself to match your teacher. You instantly experience the energy pattern which allows you to talk directly to Nature's mind. This normally opens a deeper ability to communicate with other human minds. Sometimes a book or object whose Qi field has been intentionally imprinted can act as the initiator. Like any language, the more you hear it spoken, the easier it is to speak it. Some teachers who initiate claim that they somehow "own" the Qi or spirits being transmitted. According to deep language theory, this is untrue. The Qi field belongs to the Dao. We could say that ultimately there is only one lineage, the direct lineage to the original teacher, Nature's Qi field.

Daoist Cosmology as Nature's Deep Grammar



If alchemical meditation is the actual practice of speaking a deep cosmic language, Daoist cosmology should reveal the foundational grammar of that language. All religions have a deep language structure buried within their cosmologies, but the priesthood may keep it secret, and teach out only the surface language to the religious followers as beliefs, sacred images and statues, or holy writings of some deity. This level of language can be acquired by anyone, i.e. a Buddhist can convert to Catholicism and immerse themselves in the Catholic religious language/imagery/belief. The surface religious language may spontaneously trigger a "mystical" communication with Nature, as it arises from a deep language structure. The experience is likely to be shaped by the surface language of the believer as that religion has patterned it (a Christian will see Jesus, a Buddhist will receive proof of Buddhist doctrine, etc.).

Daoist teachings typically have no dogma or theology; aligning with the cosmological cycles of nature

is its salvational process. In One Cloud's alchemy formulas, there are no deities named. Instead you are given a map of personal "deity hood" (immortality) and the energetic language skills that allow one to converse intelligently with all deities/entities, whether invisible or in natural form as humans, planets, stars, etc. The alchemy adept is not asked to believe anything other than to accept the possibility of re-growing their Original Self in the physical plane by deep communication with the Dao. The assumption is that all deities must communicate through the same Qi field of Nature; if you merge with that Qi field, you know what those deities know. What follows is my interpretation of Daoist cosmology, shaped by study with many teachers and texts, but mostly clarified by practice of the first six of One Cloud's seven alchemical formulas for immortality.

The Dao is the indefinable, unknowable organic wholeness of everything. It embraces non-being and all dimensions of space, time, & intelligence. From its womb, the Supreme Unknown (wuji), three heavens are birthed. The first to birth is chaos (hun dun), the Heaven of Primordial Origin. There is no need for communication in the dark ocean inside this cosmic egg, as there are no separate aspects to communicate with each other. The cosmic egg is also depicted as a gourd filled with yin-yang elixir in Daoist art and myth (12). The cosmic egg hatches, a kind of spiritual big bang marked by thunder, and the wheels of creation begin turning. As order crystallizes out of the unbounded chaos of oneness, the Dao communicates with itself through a field of Original Energy (yuan Qi). This infinite ocean of life force holds three potential charges: negative, positive, and neutral Qi (yin, yang, and yuan). This triune stream is the core grammar of the deep language of Nature.

In the unborn primordial ocean of Qi, the triune stream of the Dao is shaped and evolved by the three-fold intelligence latent within it. As Original Spirit (yuan shen) shapes Original Energy (yuan Qi), the patterns formed are encoded in a matrix of Original Essence (yuan jing). The continuum of this original inseparable trinity -- yuan jing, Qi and shen -- is the cosmic seed or potential state of all form, all energy, and all imagination (yi), will/virtue (de). In Primordial Heaven these three remain as one.

With the hatching of the cosmic egg/gourd, the unified ocean of awareness holding this trinity

increasingly polarizes itself into yin and yang forces as it steps its universal qualities down into the second heaven, an intermediate dimension called Early Heaven (xian tian). This act of original trinity-in-one dividing itself while maintaining unity requires a deep level of self-communication. In Early Heaven vectors of yin - yang polarity exist, but they communicate a pattern of perfect harmony and balance by virtue of the yuan Qi in the center of its spherical container. (Yuan Qi is invisible, thus is not symbolized in the I Ching's eight trigrams of Early Heaven). Yuan Qi sits silently in the middle of the bagua and in the space between the yin-yang pulses of the eight polar forces. Original Qi holds the presence of the Origin as the 9th and central mediating force within creation.

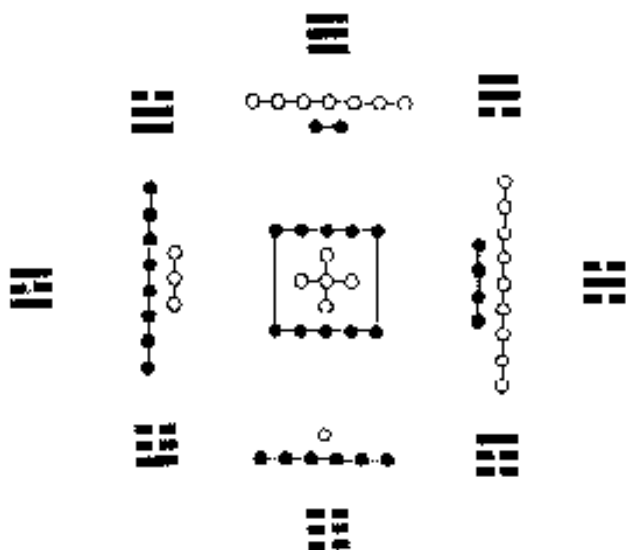
Early Heaven acts as a cosmic pre-natal womb, where the seed virtues/creative powers of yuan shen are gestated before being shaped in the human realm into more defined spiritual qualities of kindness, trust, love, etc. Since yuan Qi is the "unconditioned energy" of the universe, all "unconditional virtues" of the Original Spirit such as unconditional love, unconditional truth, unconditional acceptance, etc. are communicated through yuan Qi. Early Heaven divides the triune unity of yuan Qi into the five phases/elements (wu xing) of cosmic time. This five phase intelligence shapes the matrix of cosmic space as it unfolds rhythmically on a web of eight yin-yang forces. These sacred directions and time cycles, imbued with their "de" (inner powers or spiritual qualities) are symbolically mapped on the ancient Ho Tu and Lo Shu diagrams, the precursors to the I Ching and

cornerstones of Chinese spiritual culture. However, even the symbolic relationships of the Ho Tu and Lo Shu can be seen as deep language communications from the Qi field, as simple numeric expression of the eight channels and 5 elemental cycles through which Nature communicates with itself.

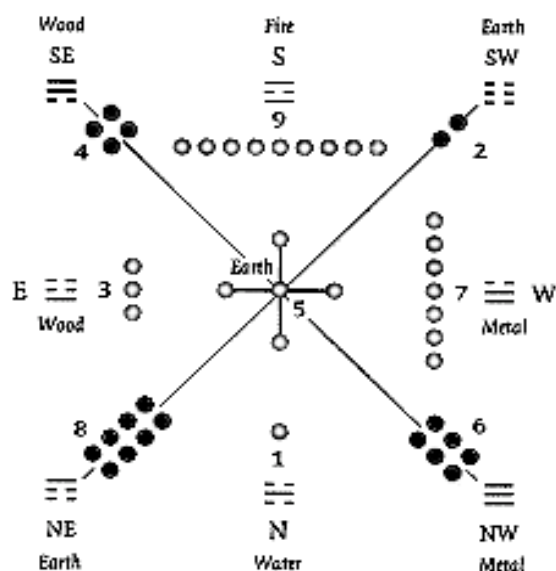
Yuan Qi and the Problem of Communication with Later Heaven

The process of stepping down of Early Heaven Qi into the third heaven, Later Heaven (hou tian), is described by Lao Tzu as giving birth to "the ten thousand things". Later Heaven includes the planet Earth where humans live. This stepping down is where communication problems within the Dao seems to first arise. The Qi field of the physical realm has evolved to embody great extremes of polarity. Hatred, suffering, disease, and death co-exist with love, pleasure, health, and creative life. In humans, the jing manifests itself as the reproductive power (gene code, in modern terms) within the sperm/ovum, the Qi as breath, and spirit degenerates into ordinary mind/imagination. (13)

Humans struggle with life and feel separated from their Early Heaven aspect because they lack enough yuan Qi to communicate with it. This makes it difficult to harmonize the yin-yang polarities facing them, so they get shaped into rigid dualities, conditioned patterns of belief and behavior in worldly life. This energetic rigidity is the underlying cause of most physical realm death. Without clear communication with the yuan Qi, the cellular, sexual, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of a human being cannot easily rejuvenate or rebirth themselves.



Ho Tu Diagram



Lo Shu Diagram

To get a clear picture of humanity's spiritual crisis relative to yuan Qi, I shall assign numbers. Primordial Heaven is 100% yuan Qi, a clear light and silence so pure they disappear as if into a void or invisible space. Early Heaven is 50% yuan Qi, making the yin and yang Qi luminous in their harmony. Later Heaven has 10% yuan Qi, thus its physical plane is very dense with a 90% yin-yang polarized Qi field.



But Humans, who in Early Heaven are androgynous or internally bi-sexed etheric beings, at physical birth are split into male and female sexes, causing them an unforeseen and severe loss of yuan Qi. Mythically, this is a "fall" into physicality. Humans have further exhausted their parentally inherited yuan jing (original essence that becomes sexual power) over eons of procreation and division into 6 billion people. So humans today might be born with only 1% original Qi, and 99% yin-yang Qi. This dwindling middle ground accounts for the battle of the sexes. Lack of yuan Qi may explain why so many humans feel cut off from "God", the jing-Qi-shen trinity of their own original nature. They feel alienated from nature and each other, and easily believe their limited, dense physical body (from lack of yuan Qi) is all that exists of their self. Lack of yuan Qi is synonymous with the experience of life as struggle.

This weakness of natal yuan Qi is further compounded by social conditions. The acceleration of technology has created physical and psychic pollution in the planet's Qi field far more severe than existed at the time ancient or medieval Daoists taught and wrote. Global wars and mass killings with weaponry have multiplied the field of hungry ghosts many fold. These fragmented spirits cannot escape Later Heaven, even by death, and driven by fear of slow dissolution they band together to form large powerful half-entities. Lacking any yuan Qi with its regenerative powers, these "demons"

survive as low astral plane parasites, stuck between Heaven and Earth.

Functionally, these clustered hungry ghosts become negative thought forms that encircle the planet like a dark cloud, sustaining their existence by feeding on human ignorance, greed, violence, etc. that they incite or encourage through their ability to resonate with the fragmented mind of humans. Invisible, they infiltrate humanity by resonating with the unconscious aspects of their mind. They manifest themselves in business as greed, sexually and emotionally as violence, in government as the hunger for power, in religion as guilt and fear of death, in science as the need to control through external technology. In general, these negative thought forms foster paradigms that separate matter from spirit and deny the aliveness of Nature.

Human addiction to technology has grown so powerfully that "Technos" has begun to function globally as a kind of semi-conscious deity, feeding on that desire. The question is -- what is that deity's intent? Is it communicating with the organic wholeness of the Dao? An excessive reliance on technology seems to have the unfortunate effect of separating humans from the core rhythms of natural life: artificial weather in homes, processed food with no Qi in it, overuse of cars weakening our legs, genetic engineering disturbing the personal essence (jing) in our DNA, splitting of atoms ripping the matrix of cosmic jing and leaving toxic radiation. Perhaps the worst is electronic pollution. Currents of AC electricity wrap the globe with a polarized electrical field. AC electricity has positive/negative flow with no neutral ground, disturbing and weakening the DC current flowing through the liquid crystalline cells and tissues of humans. (14) This electronic pollution is amplified by TV, radio and microwaves that constantly bombard living creatures and further polarize the planetary Qi field, disturbing human ability to communicate with the universal Qi field.

This lack of coherence in both the human and planetary Qi field makes communication between Origin and Later Heaven (Earth) even more difficult, igniting a spiritual crisis for humanity. Fortunately, the original Qi field of Nature is a unified continuum and so by definition never loses its overall balance. The very severity of false yin-yang Qi imbalance on Earth is triggering a spontaneous awakening to counterbalance it, both within humans and within the collective planetary consciousness of the Earth's spirit (in Chinese myth, Pangu).

This may trigger severe climate changes as Earth purges itself of the psychic and physical pollutants

choking it. The need to maintain harmony between humanity and the earth's Qi field was emphasized in the oldest Daoist alchemical text, the second century Triplex Unity (Cantong Qi). It warns that lack of human virtue may cause disturbances: heat in winter and cold in summer, sheep running madly about, followed by floods, droughts, and earthquakes. (15) Coming one of the world's oldest traditions that advocates a deep earth ecology, modern Daoists face a daunting challenge to integrate the global worship of technology into the harmonious flow of life. Does internal alchemy, as a deep language for communicating with nature, have a role to play in this? I will examine the broader process of alchemical communication with the Qi field, and then show how nei dan restores yuan Qi within human nature by offering a practical process of balancing yin and yang Qi at a deep level.



How the Alchemist Shapes the Qi Field

My thesis on alchemy as a deep language relies on the premise that the very act of shaping any aspect of the Qi field, in any dimension/heaven, by human or non-human intelligence, is best understood as a spontaneous yet recognizable expression of language. The patterns of Qi flow or "wave forms" vibrating between the continuum of shen and jing (intelligence-matter) constitute the deep grammar of this universal language. This Qi wave language is how the infinite field of spirit/intelligence talks to the finite bodies/particles formed by essence (jing).

The deep structure of these Qi language patterns are embedded in One Cloud's nei dan formulas as the empty force of wuji, Original unity (jing-Qi-shen) and the three primordial forces (yin-yang-yuan). All other "numbers"

are generated by the interaction of the original trinity, including the often used yin-yang patterns of the micro-cosmic orbit, the five phases or eight manifesting forces. The Qi field is how the universe both expresses its many functions and remembers its countless experiences. In traditional Daoist cosmology, the Qi field defines every possible relationship within both the form and formless worlds. Its coherence allows the movement between chaos and order without losing balance and harmony. (16)

Qigong is the language process of using ritual body movement, breath, and mind intent to shape the Qi in order to communicate mostly with the "horizontal" (as humans see it looking forward) or exterior manifest Qi field of Earth. Nei dan deals more with the "vertical" (as one looks up to sky and down to earth) and interior communications between Primordial, Early, and Later Heavens. One doesn't practice Qigong or alchemy to GET Qi. Rather one already IS part of nature's infinite Qi field, and is just learning to recognize the unconscious communication patterns that are always flowing between one's micro-cosmic (personal) Qi field and the impersonal macrocosmic Qi field.

At its simplest level, all human sensing, thought, speech, feeling, body movement, breathing rhythm, and visualized image are attempts to "speak to" or shape this Qi field. Whether you scratch your nose or do higher math, both elicit a response from the Qi field. The totality of these shapes, the sum of the conversation between Heaven and Earth that is passing through us, is one's experience of physical reality. Our personalities, our bodies, and even our environment are the moment to moment shape of the fluctuations in this super intelligent Qi field.

Within the natural physical world, the movement of the Qi field is the hidden language by which the intelligence within atoms, molecules, cells, rocks, plants, animals, young children, mountains, oceans, sun, moon, planets and stars communicate and maintain their rhythm and harmony. Everything, without exception, is alive and communicating something by virtue of the physical and energetic shape given to it by Nature's intelligence. The internal alchemist eavesdrops on this conversation within the Qi field, and then from a human perspective performs alchemical operations to shape the Qi field in order to accelerate the unfolding of life's inherent simplicity, wholeness, and aliveness.

All paranormal abilities in humans - esp, channeling, clairvoyance, etc are also communications by human body-spirits (jingshen) shaping the Qi field, but most are unconscious faculties and thus differ from nei dan. Alchemy is not the unconscious channeling of Nature's

intelligence. Rather the alchemist attempts to accelerate the CONSCIOUS unfoldment of Nature's macro-cosmic intelligence through resonance with the adept's personal micro-cosmos.

How does the nei dan adept communicate between heavens, i.e. between Heaven and Earth? It depends on what level of heaven they are communicating with, and the skill level/formula they have achieved in resonating with the Qi field. There are many different practices, but all may be categorized as yang practice, yin practice, or wu wei practice. All three practices require the adept interiorize the outer universe within the adept's body. In yang practice the adept uses his yi "mind intent" or "creative imagination", the Later Heaven shen ruling the earth element/spleen/center direction, to actively communicate with or "speak to" the Qi field in cooperation with the other four elements/body spirits. This effectively involves the use of projection, guiding or shaping the Qi field according to the adept's inner will.

The yang methods work by cultivating an ability to move Qi in the eight extraordinary channels or by opening a relationship between the yi and the other internal body spirits (jing shen) through the five phases of the creation or control cycles in the body. The guidance of Qi should not be confused with western concepts of mental visualization, although there is some overlap. In shaping the Qi field the five colors, five tones, internalized bagua shapes (as symbol of eight original forces) or spinning vortices are activated within the adept's personal Qi field, or "energy body". The term "actualization" is more accurate than "visualization". Without the adept first activating the movement of Qi in her Qi channels or dan tien (elixir fields), the alchemical operation will not produce the desired results. Visualization of this type will simply produce an empty picture in the practitioner's mind, and little Qi.

In yin practice, the adept "listens" to the Qi field, and concentrates on receiving energy patterns or absorbing spiritual qualities from the Qi field. This is akin to one's ego will surrendering to one's higher will or a more collective level of the self. In this case, the five body spirits or eight extraordinary channels act as internal antennae for decoding the Qi wave patterns being communicated from the outer Qi field to the adept. Any given alchemical meditative operation may involve both yin and yang practices, the choice depending on the season, time of day, the situation in the individual life of the adept. The type of alchemical method may reflect the cycle of events in the life of the greater cosmos, its geomantic and astrological forces.

The wu wei practice involves the adept cultivating a shift from outer will to inner will, from the struggle

amongst the desires of various body spirits (jing shen) to the unity of the original spirit (yuan shen). Wu wei is translated variously as "spontaneous action" or "effortless non-action", but the practical accomplishment of this requires the cultivation of yuan Qi, which is the superconductive non-resistant energy of Primordial Heaven. Essentially wu wei is the fruit of mastering yin and yang practices; the adept evolves to a level of conscious and simultaneous sending and receiving Qi, i.e. two way communication between the adept and the mind of nature. Wu wei requires a state of total trust between the adept and the Dao; their yi, or will, is gradually aligned as the adept develops trust in the life-force and his ability to manage it. The adept grows to receive the full power of the Dao needed in any given moment, and the Dao trusts the adept to create or express its reality in harmony with the life force.

This cooperation is possible because the communications network of Qi channels and spirit relations inside a human being are essentially the same patterns as those inside a planetary being or galactic being, the main difference being in scale and specific qualities embodied. This ancient Daoist idea is expressed in modern theory by fractals repeating themselves on vastly different scales, i.e. from star-scape to mountain shape to internal landscape. The adept is not giving up all individual will to an outside agency that is more spiritually powerful and more intelligent. Rather the adept learns from the macro-cosm of Nature how the life-force behaves, and internalizes that within their personal process. Likewise, human babies learn from their parents how to navigate this reality, but then ideally use that learning to create a life according to their own nature.

All communications between shen, Qi, and jing are ultimately dissolved into the adept's interior cauldron of pre-natal emptiness. Thus, the details of the often elaborate alchemical process are frequently abbreviated to simply "jing-Qi-shen-wu". The more one practices nei dan, the greater one's facility with the Qi field becomes, and the more the Qi field of Nature recognizes one as a sensitive and available location within the physical plane for expressing itself. The ultimate act of communication with the mind of the Dao is to crystallize the yuan Qi into conscious form on earth, known as the Immortal body, discussed next.

Continued next month with Daoist Internal Alchemy:
A Deep Language for Communicating with Nature's Intelligence Part 3 in the February, 2012 issue

FOOTNOTES:

(9) By odd synchronicity the 16th cen. mathematician Leibnitz developed the binary number theory at the same time he was exposed to the I Ching's yin-yang patterns, undoubtedly brought back by Jesuit priests.

(10) Disputers of the Tao, A.C. Graham (open Court, 1989), p. 350 notes that correlative thinking in resonant patterns is much faster than analytical systems of psychology, politics, sociology, and thus approximates more closely the "pure" science of physics.

(11) Adepted from Tao Te Ching, Victor Mair (Bantam, 1990), pg. 9.

(12) Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism, Norman Girardot (UC Press, 1983)

(13) "yuan" terms are found in much nei dan literature, here referenced in Joseph Needham's Science and Civilization, vol. V:5 on physiological alchemy, pg. 26.

(14) Organism and Psyche in a Participatory Universe, by Mae-Won Ho. www.i-sis.org/organism.htm

(15) Secret of Everlasting Life, R. Bertschinger (Element Books, 1994), pg. 38 .

(16) The division of Song dynasty dao canon texts into "Three Open Channels" of Reality, Peace, and Spirits reflect a traditional Daoist emphasis on clarity of subtle field communication. These channels, also translated as "caverns" or "vaults" within the adept, have a vast inner sky and connect the adept to different inner heavens. cf. Book of Balance and Harmony, pg xix.)



Michael Winn is the founder of Healing Tao University with 30 Tao summer retreats in Asheville, N.C. and is the past President of the National Qigong Association. Michael has over 30 years experience in Taoist arts and leads an annual China Dream Trip. He has co-authored 7 books with Mantak Chia, and is also the author of 10 Qigong and

Inner Alchemy home study courses, as well as a free e-book, Way of the Inner Smile.

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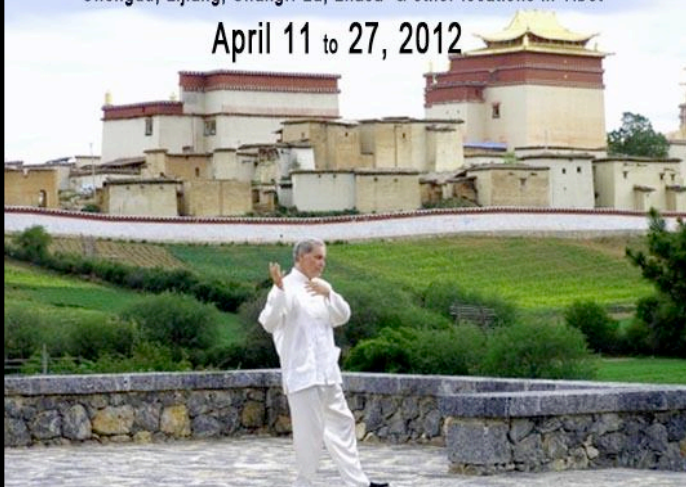
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Mind-Body Medicine Research Update

身心医学科研动态



Tai chi exercise for treatment of pain and disability in people with persistent low back pain: a randomized controlled trial. *Arthritis Care Res.* 2011 Nov;63 (11):1576-83.; by Hall AM, Maher CG, Lam P, Ferreira M, Latimer J. from The George Institute for Global Health and University of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. amandahall@georgeinstitute.org.au

OBJECTIVE: To determine the effect of tai chi exercise on persistent low back pain. **METHODS:** We performed a randomized controlled trial in a general community setting in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. Participants consisted of 160 volunteers between ages 18 and 70 years with persistent nonspecific low back pain. The tai chi group (n = 80) consisted of 18 40-minute sessions over a 10-week period delivered in a group format by a qualified instructor. The waitlist control group continued with their usual health care. **Bothersome-ness of back symptoms** was the primary outcome. Secondary outcomes included pain intensity and pain-related disability. Data were collected at pre- and post intervention and analyzed by intent-to-treat. **RESULTS:** Tai chi exercise reduced levels of back symptoms by 1.7 points on a 0-10 scale, reduced pain intensity by 1.3 points on a 0-10 scale, and improved self

-report disability by 2.6 points on the 0-24 Roland-Morris Disability Questionnaire scale. The follow up rate was >90% for all outcomes. These results were considered a worthwhile treatment effect by researchers and participants.

CONCLUSION: This is the first pragmatic randomized controlled trial of tai chi exercise for people with low back pain. It showed that a 10-week tai chi program improved pain and disability outcomes and can be considered a safe and effective intervention for those experiencing long-term low back pain symptoms.

Yoga for persistent fatigue in breast cancer survivors: A randomized controlled trial. *Cancer.* 2011 Dec 16.

Bower JE, Garet D, Sternlieb B, Ganz PA, Irwin MR, Olmstead R, Greendale G.. from Department of Psychology, University of California-Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California; jbower@ucla.edu.

BACKGROUND: Cancer-related fatigue afflicts up to 33% of breast cancer survivors, yet there are no empirically validated treatments for this symptom.

METHODS: The authors conducted a 2-group randomized controlled trial to determine the feasibility and efficacy of an Iyengar yoga intervention for breast cancer survivors with persistent post-treatment fatigue. Participants were breast cancer survivors who had completed cancer treatments (other than endocrine therapy) at least 6 months before enrollment, reported significant cancer-related fatigue, and had no other medical conditions that would account for fatigue symptoms or interfere with yoga practice. Block randomization was used to assign participants to a 12-week, Iyengar-based yoga intervention or to 12 weeks of health education (control). The primary outcome was change in fatigue measured at baseline, immediately post-treatment, and 3 months after treatment completion. Additional outcomes included changes in vigor,

depressive symptoms, sleep, perceived stress, and physical performance. Intent-to-treat analyses were conducted with all randomized participants using linear mixed models. **RESULTS:** Thirty-one women were randomly assigned to yoga ($n = 16$) or health education ($n = 15$). Fatigue severity declined significantly from baseline to post-treatment and over a 3-month follow-up in the yoga group relative to controls ($P = .032$). In addition, the yoga group had significant increases in vigor relative to controls ($P = .011$). Both groups had positive changes in depressive symptoms and perceived stress ($P < .05$). No significant changes in sleep or physical performance were observed. **CONCLUSIONS:** A targeted yoga intervention led to significant improvements in fatigue and vigor among breast cancer survivors with persistent fatigue symptoms.

External Qi of Yan Xin Qigong induces cell death and gene expression alterations promoting apoptosis and inhibiting proliferation, migration and glucose metabolism in small-cell lung cancer cells. Mol Cell Biochem. 2011 Dec 10. by Yan X, Li F, Dozmorov I, Frank MB, Dao M, Centola M, Cao W, Hu D. from the Institute of Chongqing Traditional Chinese Medicine, Chongqing, China.

Abstract: Small-cell lung cancer (SCLC) is a highly malignant carcinoma with poor long-term survival. Effective treatment remains highly demanded. In the present study, we demonstrated that External Qi of Yan Xin Qigong (YXQ-EQ) exerted potent cytotoxic effect towards SCLC cell line NCI-H82 via induction of apoptosis. Global gene expression profiling identified 39 genes whose expression was altered by YXQ-EQ in NCI-H82 cells. Among them, semi-quantitative RT-PCR and real-time qPCR analyses confirmed that the gene expression levels of apoptotic proteins death-associated protein kinase 2 and cell death-inducing DFFA-like effector b were upregulated, whereas that of oncoproteins DEK and MYCL1, cell migration-promoting proteins CD24 and integrin-alpha 9, and glycolytic enzyme aldolase A were downregulated. These findings suggest that YXQ-EQ may exert anticancer effect through modulating gene expression in a way that facilitates cancer cell apoptosis while represses proliferation, metastasis, and glucose metabolism.



Effects of yoga interventions on pain and pain-associated disability: a meta-analysis. J Pain. 2012 Jan;13(1):1-9. By Büssing A, Ostermann T, Lütke R, Michalsen A. from Center for Integrative Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Witten/Herdecke, Herdecke, Germany.

We searched databases for controlled clinical studies, and performed a meta-analysis on the effectiveness of yoga interventions on pain and associated disability. Five randomized studies reported single-blinding and had a higher methodological quality; 7 studies were randomized but not blinded and had moderate quality; and 4 nonrandomized studies had low quality. In 6 studies, yoga was used to treat patients with back pain; in 2 studies to treat rheumatoid arthritis; in 2 studies to treat patients with headache/migraine; and 6 studies enrolled individuals for other indications. All studies reported positive effects in favor of the yoga interventions. With respect to pain, a random effect meta-analysis estimated the overall treatment effect at $SMD = -.74$ (CI: $-.97; -.52$, $P < .0001$), and an overall treatment effect at $SMD = -.79$ (CI: $-1.02; -.56$, $P < .0001$) for pain-related disability. Despite some limitations, there is evidence that yoga may be useful for several pain-associated disorders. Moreover, there are hints that even short-term interventions might be effective. Nevertheless, large-scale further studies have to identify which patients may benefit from the respective interventions. **PERSPECTIVE:** This meta-analysis suggests that yoga is a useful supplementary approach with moderate effect sizes on pain and associated disability.

Positive Effect of Abdominal Breathing Exercise on Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease: A Randomized, Controlled Study. Am J Gastroenterol. 2011 Dec 6. By Eherer AJ, Netolitzky F, Högenauer C, Puschnig G, Hinterleitner TA, Scheidl S, Kraxner W, Krejs GJ, Hoffmann KM. from

Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, Department of Internal Medicine, Medical University Graz, Graz, Austria.

OBJECTIVES: The lower esophageal sphincter (LES), surrounded by diaphragmatic muscle, prevents gastroesophageal reflux. When these structures become incompetent, gastric contents may cause gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). For treatment, lifestyle interventions are always recommended. We hypothesized that by actively training the crura of the diaphragm as part of the LES using breathing training exercises, GERD can be positively influenced. **METHODS:** A prospective randomized controlled study was performed. Patients with non-erosive GERD or healed esophagitis without large hernia and/or previous surgery were included. Patients were randomized and allocated either to an active breathing training program or to a control group. Quality of life (QoL), pH-metry, and on-demand proton pump inhibitor (PPI) usage were assessed at baseline and after 4 weeks of training. For long-term follow-up, all patients were invited to continue active breathing training and were further assessed regarding QoL and PPI usage after 9 months. Paired and unpaired t-test was used for statistical analysis. **RESULTS:** Nineteen patients with non-erosive GERD or healed esophagitis were randomized into two groups (10 training group and 9 control group). There was no difference in baseline patient characteristics between the groups and all patients finished the study. There was a significant decrease in time with a pH<4.0 in the training group (9.1 ± 1.3 vs. $4.7 \pm 0.9\%$; $P < 0.05$), but there was no change in the control group. QoL scores improved significantly in the training group (13.4 ± 1.98 before and 10.8 ± 1.86 after training; $P < 0.01$), but no changes in QoL were seen in the control group. At long-term follow-up at 9 months, patients who continued breathing exercise (11/19) showed a significant decrease in QoL scores and PPI usage (15.1 ± 2.2 vs. 9.7 ± 1.6 ; 98 ± 34 vs. 25 ± 12 mg/week, respectively; $P < 0.05$), whereas patients who did not train had no long-term effect. **CONCLUSIONS:** We show that actively training the diaphragm by breathing exercise can improve GERD as assessed by pH-metry, QoL scores and PPI usage. This non-pharmacological lifestyle intervention could help to reduce the disease burden of GERD.



Reducing Stress in School-age Girls through Mindful Yoga. J Pediatr Health Care. 2012 Jan;26(1):45-56. By White LS.

INTRODUCTION: School-age children report much stress in their daily lives, which may lead to psychological and physical problems. Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction is a program of awareness-based practices effective with adults. The purpose of this study was to investigate the efficacy of mindfulness training through yoga with school-age girls to reduce perceived stress, enhance coping abilities, self-esteem, and self-regulation, and explore the relationship between the dose of the intervention and outcomes. **METHOD:** Fourth- and fifth-grade girls were recruited from two public schools and randomly assigned to intervention and wait-list control groups. The intervention group met 1 hour a week for 8 weeks and completed 10 minutes of daily homework. **RESULTS:** Self-esteem and self-regulation increased in both groups. The intervention group was more likely to report greater appraisal of stress ($p < .01$) and greater frequency of coping ($p < .05$). Homework accounted for 7% of the variance in reported stress. **DISCUSSION:** Consistent with reports of mindfulness training, greater awareness of the feelings associated with stress may enhance coping abilities. However, it is possible that the increasing awareness of stressors in itself increased stress, possibly as part of the process of developing mindfulness or related to cognitive, emotional, or social development. Mindfulness in children may differ from mindfulness in adults and warrants further investigation.



Effectiveness of yoga therapy as a complementary treatment for major psychiatric disorders: a meta-analysis. *Prim Care Companion CNS Disord.* 2011;13(4). By Cabral P, Meyer HB, Ames D. from Department of Psychology, California State University, Northridge

Objective: To examine the efficacy of yoga therapy as a complementary treatment for psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). **Data Sources:** Eligible trials were identified by a literature search of PubMed/MEDLINE, Cochrane Control Trials Register, Google Scholar, and EBSCO on the basis of criteria of acceptable quality and relevance. The search was performed using the following terms: yoga for schizophrenia, yoga for depression, yoga for anxiety, yoga for PTSD, yoga therapy, yoga for psychiatric disorders, complementary treatment, and efficacy of yoga therapy. Trials both unpublished and published with no limitation placed on year of publication were included; however, the oldest article included in the final meta-analysis was published in 2000. **Study Selection:** All available randomized, controlled trials of yoga for the treatment of mental illness were reviewed, and 10 studies were eligible for inclusion. As very few randomized, controlled studies have examined yoga for mental illness, this meta-analysis includes studies with participants who were diagnosed with mental illness, as well as studies with participants who were not diagnosed with mental illness but reported symptoms of mental illness. Trials were excluded due to the following: (1) insufficient information, (2) inadequate statistical analysis, (3) yoga was not the central component of the intervention, (4) subjects were not diagnosed with or did not report experiencing symptoms of one of the psychiatric

disorders of interest (ie, schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and PTSD), (5) study was not reported in English, and (6) study did not include a control group. **Data Extraction:** Data were extracted on participant diagnosis, inclusion criteria, treatment and control groups, duration of intervention, and results (pre-post mean and standard deviations, t values, and f values). Number, age, and sex ratio of participants were also obtained when available. **Data Synthesis:** The combined analysis of all 10 studies provided a pooled effect size of -3.25 (95% CI, -5.36 to -1.14; $P = .002$), indicating that yoga-based interventions have a statistically significant effect as an adjunct treatment for major psychiatric disorders. Findings in support of alternative and complementary interventions may especially be an aid in the treatment of disorders for which current treatments are found to be inadequate or to carry severe liabilities. **Conclusions:** As current psychopharmacologic interventions for severe mental illness are associated with increased risk of weight gain as well as other metabolic side effects that increase patients' risk for cardiovascular disease, yoga may be an effective, far less toxic adjunct treatment option for severe mental illness.

Effect of a single-session meditation training to reduce stress and improve quality of life among health care professionals: a "dose-ranging" feasibility study. *Altern Ther Health Med.* 2011 May-Jun;17(3):46-9. By Prasad K, Wahner-Roedler DL, Cha SS, Sood A. from Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Rochester, Minnesota, USA.

OBJECTIVE: The primary aim of the study was to

assess the feasibility of incorporating a single-session meditation-training program into the daily activities of healthy employees of a tertiary-care academic medical center. The study also assessed the most preferred duration of meditation and the effect of the meditation program on perceived stress, anxiety, and overall quality of life (QOL). **POPULATION:** Seventeen healthy clinic employees were recruited for this study. **INTERVENTION:** After an initial group instruction session covering basic information about meditation, Paced Breathing Meditation (PBM) was taught to the participants. Participants were instructed to self-practice meditation with the help of a DVD daily for a total of 4 weeks. The DVD had three different programs of 5, 15, and 30 minutes with a menu option to choose one of the programs. **OUTCOME MEASURES:** (1) Patient diary, (2) Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), (3) Linear Analogue Self-Assessment (LASA), (4) Smith Anxiety Scale (SAS). Primary outcome measures were compared using the paired t-test. **RESULTS:** All participants were female; median age was 48 years (range 33-60 y). The 5-minute meditation session was practiced by 14 participants a total of 137 times during the 4-week trial period, the 15-minute session by 16 participants a total of 223 times, and the 30-minute session by 13 participants 71 times. The median number of days practiced was 25 (range 10-28 d); the average total time practiced was 394 minutes (range 55-850 min). After 4 weeks of practice, the scores of the following instruments improved significantly from baseline: PSS ($P < .0001$), SAS ($P = .0005$), LASA ($P = .0005$). No relationship was noted between the length of time practiced and improvement of PSS, SAS, and LASA scores. **CONCLUSION:** This pilot study indicates the feasibility of teaching meditation in a single training session to health care employees. The study shows that 15 minutes once or twice a day is the most feasible duration of meditation practice. The study also provides promising preliminary efficacy data of this program for improving stress, anxiety, and QOL.

Meditation experience is associated with differences in default mode network activity and connectivity. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A.* 2011 Dec 13;108(50):20254-9. By Brewer JA, Worhunsky PD, Gray JR, Tang YY, Weber J, Kober H. from Department of Psychiatry, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT 06511.

Many philosophical and contemplative traditions teach that "living in the moment" increases happiness.

However, the default mode of humans appears to be that of mind-wandering, which correlates with unhappiness, and with activation in a network of brain areas associated with self-referential processing. We investigated brain activity in experienced meditators and matched meditation-naïve controls as they performed several different meditations (Concentration, Loving-Kindness, Choice-less Awareness). We found that the main nodes of the default-mode network (medial prefrontal and posterior cingulate cortices) were relatively deactivated in experienced meditators across all meditation types. Furthermore, functional connectivity analysis revealed stronger coupling in experienced meditators between the posterior cingulate, dorsal anterior cingulate, and dorsolateral prefrontal cortices (regions previously implicated in self-monitoring and cognitive control), both at baseline and during meditation. Our findings demonstrate differences in the default-mode network that are consistent with decreased mind-wandering. As such, these provide a unique understanding of possible neural mechanisms of meditation.

(Compiled by Kevin W Chen)



Kevin Chen, Ph.D., MPH is an associate professor at the Center for Integrative Medicine and Department of Psychiatry, University of Maryland School of Medicine (USA). Dr. Chen was educated in the universities of both China

and the United States, and has years of experience and training in blending eastern and western perspectives, and in the practice of life-nurturing methods. As a long-time practitioner of Qigong Yang Sheng, he is one of the few scientists in the U.S. to have both hands-on knowledge of mind-body practice, and an active research career in mind-body medicine, which is funded through grants by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and various foundations. Dr. Chen devotes his career and life to the practice of Yang Sheng, and promotion of self-healing and mind-body-spirit integration through the non-profit organization, World Institute for Self Healing (WISH) (<http://www.wishus.org>).

The Natural “Yin-Yang” Transformation inside the Body

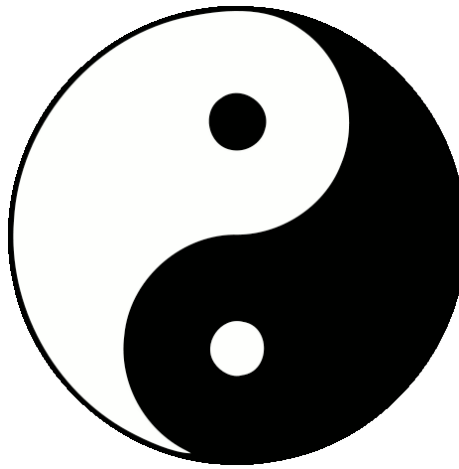
Li-Jun Ma, M.D.

Obesity is increasing worldwide, with 66% of adults in the US overweight, and 33% obese (1). The prevalence of childhood obesity in the United States has also increased substantially. Approximately 17 percent (or 12.5 million) of children and adolescents from 2 to 19 years of age are obese. Obesity is an important risk factor for development of diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, and even cancer. Body weight is a big deal to us. Some people spend a lot of money on diet pills. However, it is not just body weight or “fat” that matters. “What is inside the fat” matters the most.

In 2003, scientists reported that in response to obesity, macrophages, the key cell component in the immune system, migrated and accumulated in the fat. These fat tissue infiltrated macrophages play an important role in adipose tissue inflammation and systemic insulin resistance (when your body responds poorly to insulin signaling, and therefore, the organs like skeletal muscles and liver can not use glucose to generate energy, therefore, your blood glucose levels rise up). Thus, obesity is not only a metabolic disease, it is also recognized as a state of low-grade inflammation.

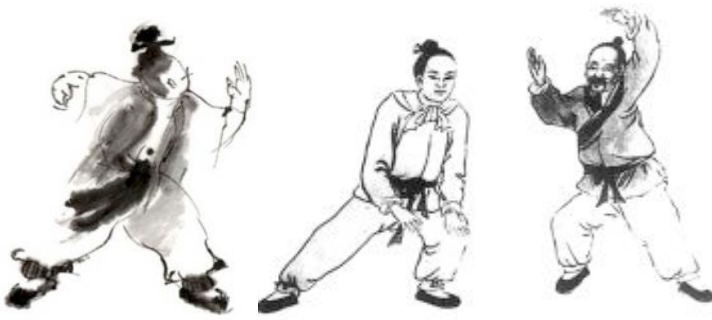
Scientists recently discovered that there are, in general, two populations of macrophages: one is “bad” (*yin*), and the other one is “good” (*yang*). Those macrophages that migrate into the fat from the blood in response to the obesity state or the high-fat diet are “bad” (or pro-inflammatory) macrophages. However, those macrophages, which reside inside the fat when we are lean, are “good” (or anti-inflammatory) macrophages. These good macrophages generate anti-inflammatory molecules, including interleukin 10, and act to counteract the effects induced by bad macrophages. Interestingly, at certain conditions, some of the bad macrophages can be transformed and changed to good macrophages (2).

Therefore, it is not just the amount of fat that influences one’s health, it is what’s inside the fat, the balance of a pro-inflammatory versus an anti-inflammatory state (or the balance of *Yin* versus *Yang*), determines the local or systemic impacts by obesity.



The macrophages transforming from one state to another state during obesity is just one example of how natural *Yin* and *Yang* inside the body works, how the existing inner healing power in the body plays its protective role. I have been working in the fields of healthcare and medical research for over 25 years. In our long-term battle with many diseases including kidney diseases, cancers, diabetes and obesity, scientists have been developing medicines that can inhibit

or reduce the fibrosis and/or inflammation, in order to slow down the progression of the underlying diseases. In the last decade, especially the last few years, it is very inspiring and exciting to witness that scientists are starting to uncover the robust intrinsic regenerative capacity of the human body. New terms such as “reparative macrophages”, “myocyte death and renewal”, “coordinated signaling pathways”.... appeared frequently in scientific articles and news papers. This indicates that many “secret” inner healing molecules, cells or pathways, which already exist in the body, are being increasingly recognized and identified by scientists, researchers and clinicians. This new development in medical research reinforces the critical importance of the “Yin-Yang” theory of balance which was developed in China thousands of years ago. According to the principals of Chinese medicine, when we treat a disease, we should not only try to eliminate or suppress the “xie” (or *Yin*), but also need to enhance or cultivate the “Zheng” (or *Yang*), and induce the transformation occurring through the inner healing system.



However, the process through which damaged cells are renewed and macrophages are transformed in the body are still largely unknown. Regular exercise reduces the risk of chronic metabolic and cardiovascular diseases. Very interestingly, recent research data reveals that regular exercise training inhibits inflammation in the fat via both suppressing the bad macrophage infiltration and also helping and facilitating bad macrophage “transformation” into good, anti-inflammatory macrophages in obese state (3). Postulated mechanisms of how regular exercise exerts its anti-inflammatory effects via both a reduction in fat mass (with a subsequent decreased release of adipokines) and the induction of an anti-inflammatory environment have been elegantly reviewed in Nature Review Immunology recently (4).

Tai Chi and Qigong have been shown to be beneficial in the treatment of many chronic conditions, including type 2 diabetes (5, 6). It will be intriguing to examine the effects of Tai Chi and/or Qigong on these two different macrophage functions in obesity, diabetes or other chronic diseases, to uncover the secrets of the inner “*Yin-Yang*” system in our body modulated by Tai Chi and Qigong, the ancient pathway to health transformation and the process of healing.

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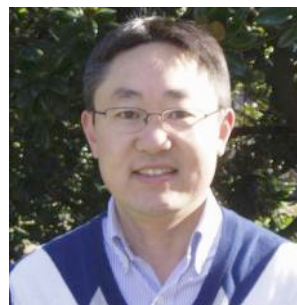
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Li-Jun Ma, M.D. was a nephrologist in China before coming to America in 1995. Dr. Ma is a Research Associate Professor in the Department of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Dr. Ma's researches are focused on studying the profibrotic and

proinflammatory mechanisms of renal fibrosis and kidney complications caused by diabetes and obesity. In 1971, Li-Jun Ma started studying Tai Chi Chuan at the age of seven with Master XiFang Chen (who was from Chen village) in Luohe, Henan province of China. In 1999, Dr. Ma won one gold medal and one silver medal for his competition performance of 24-form Tai Chi Chuan and 32-form Tai Chi Sword in Chicago Wushu Tournament. Since 1999, Dr. Ma has been actively teaching and promoting Tai Chi in the Nashville area (including The Nashville Chinese School, YMCA, MTSU, and at Fannie Mae Dees Park). From 2009 to present, due to his medical background and extensive Tai Chi experience, he is selected as an instructor for teaching “Therapeutic Tai Chi” classes at Vanderbilt Center for Integrative Health (VCIH). The overall goals of the Tai Chi classes Dr. Ma is teaching at VCIH are these: (1) Teach people to learn this ancient Chinese approach to achieve mind and body relaxation and to reduce stress. (2) Instruct patients who have chronic medical conditions how to use Tai Chi and Qigong, mind-body exercise tools of complementary and alternative medicine, to facilitate the healing process of their chronic illnesses and diseases. The class schedule can be found in the website of VCIH at Vanderbilt (<http://www.vanderbilthealth.com/integrativehealth/>).

Listening to Your Inner Rhythms

by Dan Kleiman

One of my earliest memories of really getting hooked on Tai Chi took place in a class where we were practicing the form as a big group. In one very fleeting moment, I felt three interlaced rhythms all at once: my heartbeat, the rhythm of my breath, and the cadence of the form as we all moved through it together. Each one was distinct, but layered on top of the others.

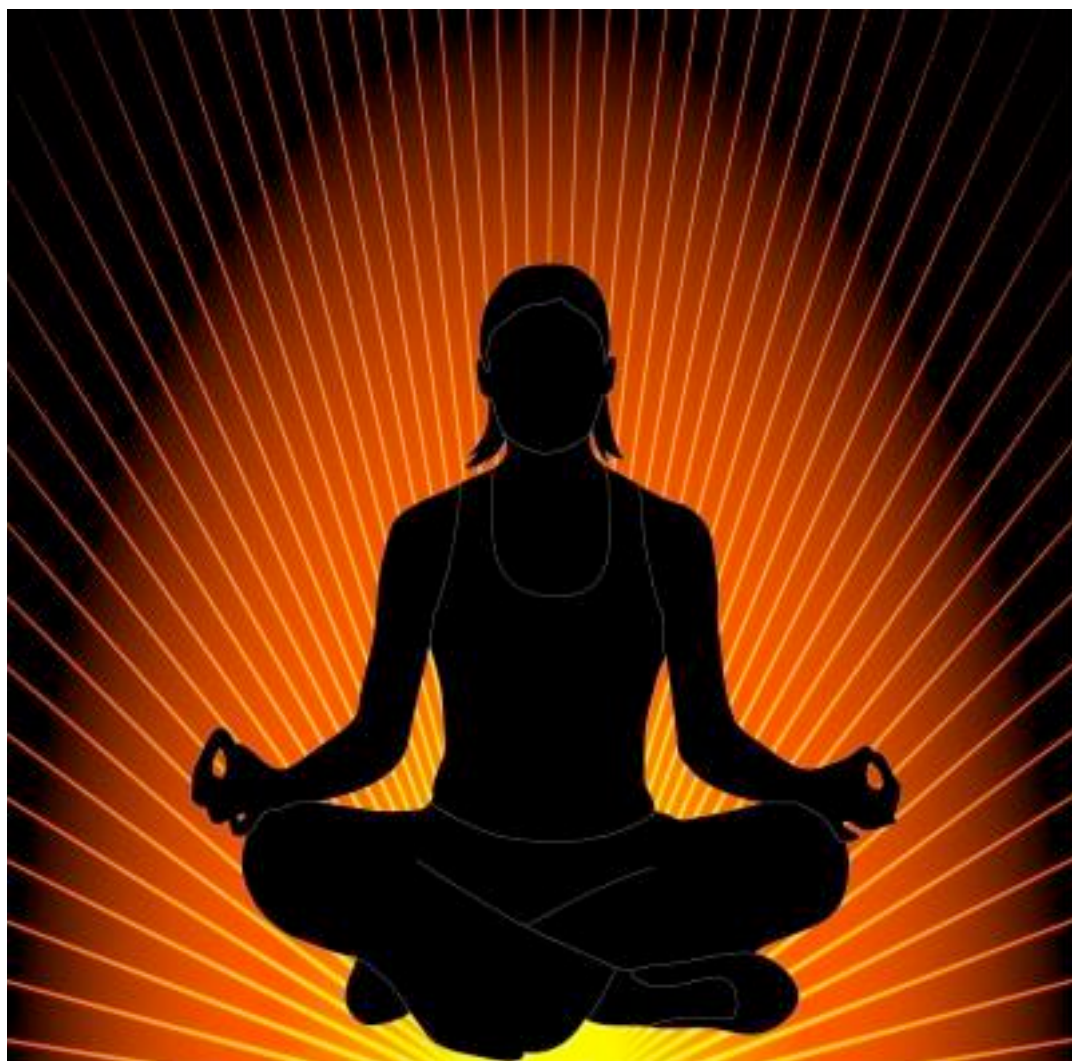
It was one of those experiences where, as soon as you stop and realize you're having it, it vanishes, but the effects of that brief moment of the integrated harmony of breath, heartbeat and movement lingered. Now I had a touchstone to come back to in my practice.

I didn't really understand how this experience worked. Later, I was surprised to see how harmonizing movement, breath, and intention created internal space that filled up other areas of my life too.

Let me see if I can explain it. When you see people practicing the flowing movements of Tai Chi in the park, on some level you understand that the way they are moving on the outside resonates on the inside. Intuitively, you know that calming your body may lead to a calmer mind, but until I started learning Tai Chi, I couldn't get into that state in a reliable, reproduceable way.

Essentially, the stillness you find inside the graceful movements of Tai Chi comes from an inward listening -- referred to in Tai Chi as "ting jin" or "listening energy". By harmonizing the rhythm of your form and the rhythm of your natural internal processes, you reach a still point.

Finding the still point is different every time you practice. Think of it like going to the ocean. Are the waves smooth or angry today? Is it windy? What about the deeper currents in the water?



Doing the form is like going to the same spot on the beach every day. By returning to the same frame of reference over and over again, you notice more subtle shifts and changes in all these intertwined layers.

First, you notice your breathing. Learning to slow down and smooth out your breathing is incredibly powerful because you see immediate carryover into everyday activities. You sit at your desk and find yourself holding your breathing and shrinking into your chair. Breathing becomes a regular cue for restoring your posture.

Later in the process, other internal rhythms become apparent.

Did you know that all of your joints have a natural compress and release rhythm as the fluids inside them move around? It's the difference between stiff joints and having a spring in your step. The cadence of the Tai Chi form teaches you how to pay attention on a joint-by-joint level and prime the pump of springy movement.

The spine, the soft tissue, and even your blood flow can all be listened to as well. As you do more Tai Chi, you create a quiet container that allows you to hear all of them.

Now, I know this all might sound like a weird science experiment where you put yourself under the microscope out of some kind of twisted curiosity. What's the point of all of this "listening?"

Over the years, I've come to believe that the act of listening to your inner rhythms and waiting for the still point to reveal itself is what is so powerfully restorative about Tai Chi practice. Beyond the physical benefits – relaxed muscles, stable joints, and springy ligaments – having an internal reference point as you move through your day creates some extra space between you and the chaos of the world around you.

The practice of inward listening is very different from the normal powers of concentration we are taught to develop. Inward listening is about creating a contained space where something can unfold on its own, as opposed to "thinking through" something, which is more like trying to blast it apart to discover what it is.

Wrapped up in the act of containing something with your mind is a profound lesson that moves out of your Tai Chi practice and into your daily life.

Think of the last tense interaction you had with someone. Feel, as you remember it, the way you can literally be pulled into the conflict. You can feel the pull in your muscles, throughout your body. When that happens, there's no containment. There's no space between you and the energy of what's unfolding.

Now, instead, think of a snow globe. When you shake it up and everything inside it swirls around, that's the same conflict. But this time, you're the globe. You're containing it, still experiencing it, but you've created some space to let it unfold, without getting sucked in.

This experience repeats over and over again, in every different corner of your life.

By having a daily Tai Chi practice where inward listening is a major focus, I've found that this quality of mind becomes my default and that it is relaxing, rewarding, and completely refreshing as I move throughout my day.



Dan Kleiman is the Program Director at Brookline Tai Chi in Brookline, MA, near Boston. Brookline Tai Chi is one of the largest health-oriented Tai Chi schools in the country and has been a center for teaching the Chinese movement arts of Wu Style Tai Chi, Qigong, Ba Gua and Taoist Breathing since 1992. <http://www.brooklinetaichi.org>. Dan teaches weekly classes and workshops on Tai Chi and Qigong for adults seeking a calmer mind and more vibrant health. For more advice on developing a movement practice focused on relaxation and pain relief, visit www.DanKleiman.com/get-moving

Let Flavor Be Your Guide

by Ellasara Kling

photo © R. Kali

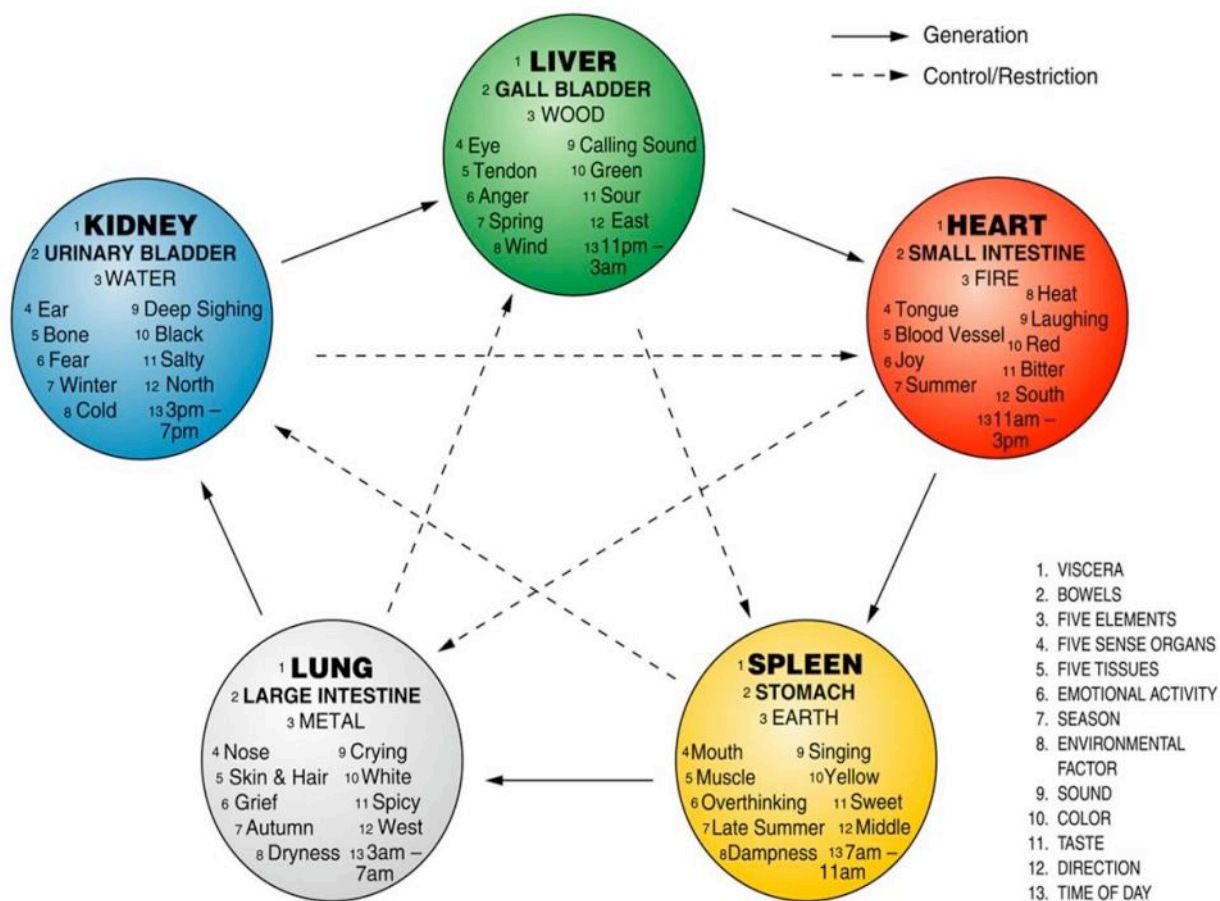
Generally, whether we plan a meal or one dish, we think of the flavor of the foods we are going to use to create a particular taste. We choose seasonings and food combinations that harmonize with each other so that the end result will be pleasant to eat. We don't combine foods that are going to "fight" with each other or usually don't even think of combinations such as a sour dill pickle with poached pears. It's not a natural combination and we don't think of them as belonging together. The astringent quality (contracting) of the pickle doesn't "work with" the moisturizing, sweet property (expanding) of the pear. Each food wants to move your energy (Qi) in a different direction and while there are combinations for sweet and sour that work very well together, the pear and pickle combination is one we intuitively know does not work.

Often we find that we gravitate to particular flavors on a regular basis. By utilizing information from the principles of TCM and Five Element Theory, this draw to certain tastes can give us a lot of knowledge about the level of balance in the functioning of our organ systems and how our bodies are trying to create greater balance and harmony. Balance and Harmony are always the ultimate goal of everything in the Universe; even when that may not seem to be so on the surface.

Most people favor one or two tastes and look for them when deciding on what to eat. Please remember each of these flavors (taste sensations) are just fine, none is better than the other. What is important is balance in flavors and choosing foods that support your health at a particular time and in a particular manner. There is much "health information" that says eating sweets is a negative thing. However, the sweet taste is part of the majority of available, natural (unprocessed) foods. Often we are so accustomed to sweetening our foods with extra honey, maple syrup and/or sugar that we may not realize how sweet a simple carrot is on its own. Many foods, such as tomatoes, for example, are both sweet and tart. Foods such as cucumbers are sweet and "light" in flavor or neutral, which is another TCM taste category. Unfortunately, the bitter taste is not in high regard these days; nonetheless, it is an important and necessary ingredient in our healthful eating.

According to TCM principles there are five flavors: Sour, Bitter, Sweet, Pungent (sometimes called Spicy) and Salty. Referring to the chart below the flavor relationship to each season is readily discernible and its relationship to the other flavors is equally available. If you cook, you have probably learned "cooking tips" such as: to reduce the bitter flavor of a food, you can add something a little salty to tone down the bitterness just as the water element of the Winter Season can help balance (restrain/control) the Fire element of the Early Summer.

CLASSIFICATION OF THINGS ACCORDING TO THE THEORY OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS



Sour: Liver/Gall Bladder; Bitter, Heart/Small Intestine; Sweet, Stomach/Spleen; Pungent (aka spicy), Lung/Large Intestine; Salty, Kidney/Urinary Bladder

What does flavor information tell us that we can use on a daily basis? Let's imagine for a moment that you are someone who always wants spicy food. What does pungent food do? It creates internal heat and disperses the Qi. It can cool a person off by creating perspiration from the expanding heat – the effect of which causes cooling as the perspiration evaporates. A small amount or a mild spice can just create warmth. Both ways, spicy foods also help to “dry out” internal dampness and can, for example, help disperse phlegm from the lungs. Spicy foods are also usually quite fragrant. Its message is then warmth, dispersion, fragrance, and opening. Some pungent flavored foods are onion, ginger, scallion, peppermint, cilantro, pepper, rosemary, and star anise.

Sour foods are contracting in nature and therefore gather energy and have a drying effect. While some sour foods can aid in certain digestive problems, too much sour in the diet will cause the retention of water. Some sour flavored foods are citrus fruits, apples, tomato, vinegar, cheese, olives, and pickles.

The Bitter flavor has a couple of effects. One is cooling and the other is to dry dampness in the body. A familiar example is that a little coffee can be pleasantly stimulating whereas a large amount can cause “the jitters” and have a strong diuretic effect. Some Bitter foods are ginseng, pumpkin, asparagus, eggplant, celery, coffee, rhubarb, and dandelion leaf.

Sweet foods comprise the largest group of foods and many foods are combinations of sweet and sour, or sweet and bitter (coffee) and so on. There are two different groups of sweet foods. There are sweet foods that are warming such as legumes and nuts and sweet foods that are cooling such as fruits, sugar and honey. Some other sweet foods are potatoes, rice, tomato, carrot, coffee, honey, beet roots, licorice, longan, barley, and cheese. Sweet foods can have the effect of being calming, moisturizing the body and strengthening the muscles.

Salty foods have the ability to hold fluids in the body. They are more cooling in nature and their energy goes inward and downward. They can soften hardness and help to retain heat in the core of the body. Some common salty foods are seafoods, barley, duck, celery, seaweed, and salt.

There is also another flavor that is not tied to any particular Season or System and that is the Neutral/Bland flavor. Usually this flavor is in combination with another taste such as a cucumber which is sweet and neutral.

The above information is just a beginning for understanding how important a role flavor has in our diet. It's not just there to taste good, but also to help us bring greater harmony and balance to our internal systems. Flavors do this through their affects upon the functions of each system. While your TCM practitioner can assist you in finding specific diet recommendations, generally speaking, adding all the flavors into your diet is part of the basis for healthful eating. In addition, you can apply some of the ideas found here to your daily routine. For example, pay attention to the flavors you gravitate to and see if you can identify what message that holds for you. Or, after discerning what flavors are dominate on your plate, try adding in other flavors and discover how that feels. Remember that moderation is best and a bright, beautiful plate carefully prepared with a variety of color and flavor will aid you in your pursuit of optimum health.



Anytime self-massage, especially in Winter: Ear Rub:

Using your thumb and index finger, grip the outside fold of your ears where they join to your head. (left hand to left ear, right hand to right ear) (You can do one ear at a time or both ears together) Firmly, slowly, "inch" your way around your ear until you reach your ear lobe. Rub the lobe a few times and then give it a little tug -- gently, but firmly. Start again at the beginning and repeat as many times as you want being certain to massage both ears. When you are done, your ears should feel nice and warm and tingly. This simple massage connects to our entire body, organ systems and /meridians as TCM teaches us that the ear is a microcosm of our entire body.

~ RECIPES ~

Here are a few simple recipes, meant to be repeated often because of their usefulness for self- healing.

To relieve head congestion from a cold or sinus infection:

Ginger Tea:

Ingredients:

2 inches of fresh ginger – chopped

5-6 scallion whites only (more if they are really skinny)

Peel of 2 dried tangerines

4 cups of water

Rock sugar to taste

Directions:

Put all the ingredients in a pot and bring to a boil.

Immediately turn down the heat and simmer for about 5 minutes – not longer – too much causes an unpleasant bitterness

Remove the solid ingredients, sweeten to taste and drink hot.



For constipation:

Mix together about 2 TB toasted black sesame seeds and a teaspoon of honey. Chew very well.

For additional energy and especially good for elderly people:

Mix together about 2 TB black sesame seeds with 2 TB of ground walnuts and 1 TB of honey. Eat 1 tsp. whenever you need a little “boost”.



Or try this energy boosting cereal:

Ingredients:

½ cup uncooked rice

1-1/2 TB ea ground black sesame seeds and ground walnuts

3 cups of water

1 TB wolfberries (goji berries)

Honey to sweeten

Directions:

Cook the rice with the seeds and the nuts (as you would normally cook rice) and about five minutes before it is done, add the wolfberries. When cooked, sweeten with a little honey.

Soup is one of the best foods we can eat. Here is a recipe for a quick warming soup for the person on the go:

Ginger Sweet Potato Soup

Ingredients:

2 medium sweet potatoes
2 quarts of water (or 1 qt vegetable broth and 1 qt water)
½ tsp salt
1/8 tsp ground white pepper
¼ cup rice wine or dry sherry
2 TB chopped fresh ginger (or 6 thin 1" diameter slices)
chopped cilantro

Directions:

Peel the sweet potatoes and cut into 1-1/2" rounds, then cut in half again.

Place with all the other ingredients (except the cilantro) in a soup pot and simmer until the potatoes are soft but not mushy. Sprinkle with a little bit of chopped cilantro and red bell pepper before serving. Note: some people like to add a bit of honey or brown sugar to this soup.

Yield: serves 6-8 people


Wishing you good health!

Remember to smile at all things.



Following the threads of her personal tapestry, Ellasara, a long-time student of Master Nan Lu, weaves her life around the exploration and sharing of self-healing through a variety of modalities, primarily focusing

on food, common herbal plants, Qigong Meridian Therapy and Qigong for Women's Health. For comments, questions, consultations, ellasarao@gmail.com




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“Distancing Desires”

The Daoist Way to Longevity

by Neil Kingham

“Relish oblivion and obscurity, think less, have little desire and practice economy of speech in order to nourish the Qi.” – Li Dong Yuan (translation by Bob Flaws)

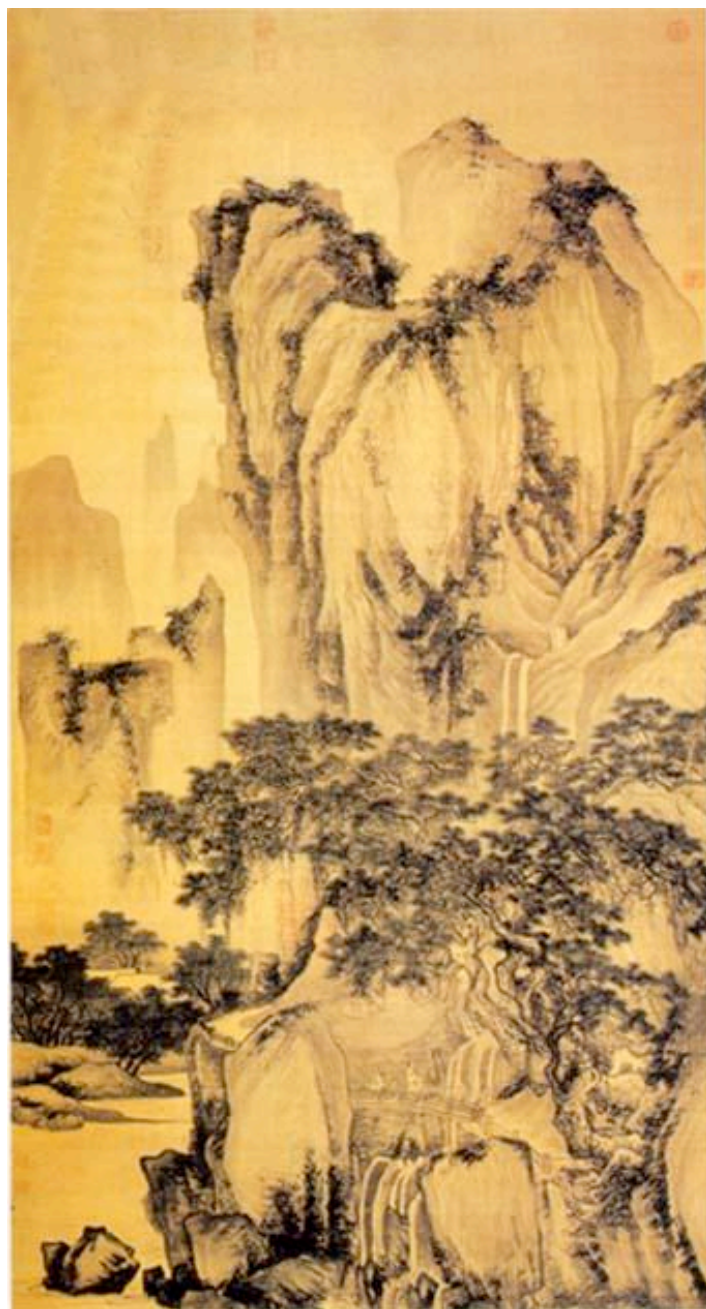
This quote is from a short chapter in a book by Li Dong Yuan (1180-1251 CE), an influential figure in the development of Chinese Medicine. The book is the *Pi Wei Lun* which is quite a technical medical text, aimed mainly at Chinese herbalists. Yet in among the detailed descriptions of herbal formulas and the discussion of the finer points of the working of Qi in the body, Li thinks it important to have a chapter entitled ‘distancing desires.’



Li Dong Yuan (1180-1251 CE)

Li is expressing Daoist thought – the importance of being calm and ‘going with the flow’ in order to maintain health and vitality. According to Li, not following this philosophy will lead to degeneration of the body and mind.

In my opinion, Li is emphasizing the importance of calm and withdrawal, the yin qualities of life. These days we’re all so busy. We have so much to do and so little time. We do what we need to for our work and our families but have little time left over for ourselves. Put simply, we are stressed and overworked! No wonder



then that most people feel tired all the time, and suffer from a variety of ongoing ailments and ‘niggles’.

Li says “when I respond or attend to human affairs, all my symptoms of disease get worse.” This says to me that the problem is giving out too much energy, being too involved in external affairs. This could mean too much emotional involvement, too much mental involvement or simply doing too much physically.

In the terms of Chinese medicine, over-activity depletes the Qi and Blood, leading the way for various health issues. In the long term, burning the candle at both ends

causes depletion of our Jing, the deepest and most vital of our energies. In fact, in traditional Chinese Yang Sheng practice, the conservation and development of Qi, Blood and Jing is considered one of the main aims.

The answer is to find time to withdraw, to nourish yourself, to have 'me time'. Be less Yang and more Yin. Don't give importance to things that don't deserve your emotional energy.

Practice of deep breathing, relaxation techniques, yoga, Qigong, tai chi or meditation can help to develop this skill. In addition, as we all know, to attain physical and mental relaxation really is a skill, and it takes practice! Reading Daoist books, either classical or modern, can also help you to find ways to 'think less and have little desire.'

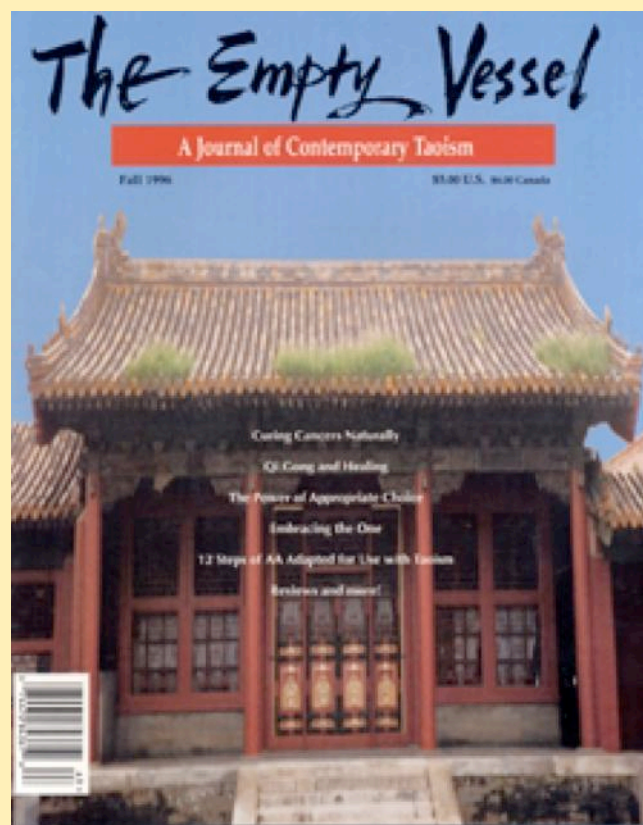
I'll leave Li to say the rest....

"Refrain from unnecessary taxation in order to nourish the form, and empty the heart to protect the spirit. Take longevity or death, obtaining or losing without attachment, being at peace with their number, and take bereavement lightly. Then Blood and Qi will naturally be in accord and harmonious, evils will find no place to lodge, and disease will quiet and not increase. If one keeps to all this, one follows the *Dao*, and one can obtain the true purpose and delight of life."



Neil Kingham has been involved in the Chinese healing arts for over 14 years. His interest in the area began with Taiji and Qigong, and these disciplines remain an important part of his own practice today. He has trained in the UK and China, and runs a busy practice in the UK in Bristol and South Wales. He is a great believer in using the Chinese

health arts to prevent illness and disease, and maintain optimum health. Neil is a respected writer and teacher in the field of Chinese medicine. He is also an experienced practitioner, and course/workshop leader, and has worked in diverse settings with corporate groups, young sports-people, children with learning difficulties, and various health organizations. For more information about Neil and his blog, go to <http://neilkingham.com>



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Joyeux Noel! *Out of ashes come flowers ...*

by Nadia Linda Hole, MD

photo © R. Kali

Happy 2012! With all that's happening, seen & unseen, geo-physical, social-political, financial, psycho-spiritual – How's this inescapable Shift for you?

In our practice, we see folks, admittedly including myself, whose worlds are transforming in ways no logic could have foreseen. Poof! Old 3D rules no longer apply. What's true one moment, may evaporate the next. New map in process, not yet available.

What Now?! Amidst ever changing whirlwinds of our times, blowing all to the winds - How do we as practitioners, help folks Shift?

Thank heaven for our map of the Five Elements! Rather than New Year resolutions, perhaps it's time to ask questions. What 2012 messages may the Five Elements have for us?



FIRE: Remember lighting a camp fire? What sparks is it time to breathe new Life into, to light your Fire? Like the warmth of a camp fire circle, may the healing Fire of Love bless & make new, ALL your relationships. What, in Joy, *light-ens* life, & *nourishes* You?



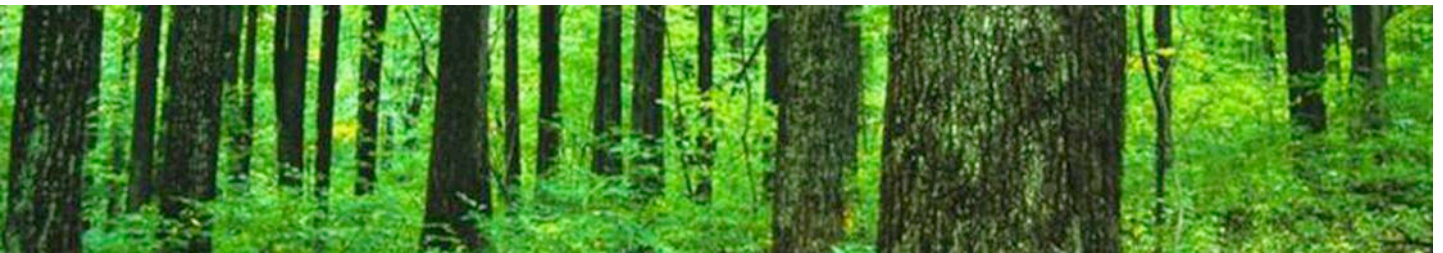
EARTH: In the groundedness of Mother Earth, how about burying the past, releasing all worries, & letting go burdens? How serve in new ways? – that bring Sweetness & ease?



METAL: What toxic emotions, regrets, shame, blame, resentment, guilt, are you ready to surrender? – Energies that probably aren't even yours! Embryonically, lungs, large intestines, & skin, are *boundaries* that delineate “You” vs what's not You. Breathe out toxic (k)nots, to make room for life renewing, life transforming Qi. Nourish & cultivate the Essence that's uniquely Yours. You're so Worth it!



WATER: Fear vs Love? Waves of the ocean can smash you, or open whole new worlds for you. Water is the element of both your sexual organs & your brain. Rather than bowing to reptilian brain of fear – What'd be fun & exciting for you to Birth? Create? What gives you *Passion*? Time to dive in! How make your life more like... *surfing*!?



WOOD: Frustrated? Angry? Disappointed? What if anger is just a backwards expression of Love? Breathe out effort, & *all* that's bilious! Say No More! How's each moment, each challenge, possibly a Blessing in disguise? a new Springtime?

Happy Shift! Ask “right” “virtuous” (De) questions. In stillness, listen for answers. The time has come. Our time is Now. Warning: Five Elements may change your life... *Out of ashes come flowers.*

Many Blessings & Joyeux Noel!



Nadia Linda Hole MD, is a long time Qi practitioner, teacher, & pioneer; with degrees from Princeton, Duke, & Oneness Universities; & author of chapters on QiGong & KHT for medical textbooks. Besides motherhood, Dolphin pilgrimages, & Dance of life - One of her passions is bringing a more heart centered, Qi approach to medicine.

New Hope for Parkinson's Disease Patients: Tai Chi

by Violet Li

The story of [Jerry Wild](#) of St. Louis, Missouri was published in *Young Parkinson's Newsletter*, by [American Parkinson Disease Association](#) (APDA). It certainly brings hope for this tragic degenerative disease.

Parkinson Disease (PD) represents four groups of symptoms relating to motor system disorders: 1. Tremor, or trembling in hands, arms, legs, jaw, and face; rigidity; 2. Stiffness of the limbs and trunk; 3. Bradykinesia, or slowness of movement; and 4. Postural instability, or impaired balance and coordination. As these symptoms become more pronounced, patients may have difficulty walking, talking, or completing other simple tasks, i.e. swallowing. In general, PD affects people over the age of 50. Early symptoms of PD are subtle and extremely difficult to identify. For some people the disease progresses faster than others. As the disease progresses, PD symptoms intensify and may begin to interfere with a patient's daily activities. Other symptoms may include depression and emotional changes. More severely, patients can experience difficulty swallowing, chewing, and speaking. Some patients report problems of urination, constipation, and sleep disruptions. Currently no blood or laboratory tests can help with diagnosing sporadic PD. The diagnosis is based on medical history and a neurological examination. The disease can be difficult to diagnose accurately.

In Jerry's case, he started to feel rigidity, soreness, and sleep difficulty in his early 30's. Since he had perfect postural balance, his doctors never suspected that he had PD. But after 20 years, his problems were more persistent and his left leg felt numbness. The doctors decided to prescribe a PD medicine for him and see how his body would respond to it. The medicine did in fact have an effect on him and validated that he had PD -- the medicine also had side-effects. Then, doctors went back to his medical history and confirmed that he had lived with PD for 20 years. At the same time, they were amazed by his ability to maintain his balance.

PD is the result of the loss of dopamine-producing brain cells. However, there is little explanation why dopamine-producing cells decrease. Researchers believe that genetics sometimes plays a role in the cellular breakdown. Fifteen to twenty percent of Parkinson's patients have a close relative who has experienced PD symptoms (such as a tremor). According to Jerry, his PD problem is hereditary.

Jerry is an active individual with many talents. He is a career architect. He studied martial arts early in his life,



but was fascinated by Tai Chi movements and switched to Tai Chi in his early 20's. He studied Yang Style Tai Chi as well as Chen Man-Ch'ing Style Tai Chi. He also shared his love of Tai Chi with others by teaching at St. Louis Community College and Gold's Gym in Maryland Heights, MO. Jerry taught Tai Chi for PD at the European PD Association Convention in Croatia in 2007.

According to Jerry, his doctors were surprised by the delayed deterioration of his PD symptoms. They attributed it to the possibility of Tai Chi practice. They think that he could have been confined to a wheel-chair ten years ago if he had not been actively practicing Tai Chi. After the diagnose, Jerry joined the local APDA and learned first-hand that many PD patients experience falling frequently due to PD. He became a PD activist and joined the famous Hollywood Star Michael J Fox in PD research fundraising in New York. He also tries to help them through teaching Tai Chi. As a PD patient, Jerry fully understands the challenges that the PD patients encounter. He modified Tai Chi into a 19-movement form to be more suitable for PD patients and their caretakers to learn.

Through the local APDA, Jerry learned that Washington University in St. Louis, MO is doing research on PD. He contacted them and volunteered to teach PD patients Tai Chi for scientific research. This resulted in a study called Tai Chi improves balance and mobility in people with Parkinson disease in 2008. The study was conducted by Dr. Hackney and Dr. Earhart at Washington University. It examined the effects of Tai Chi on balance, gait, and mobility in people with PD. Thirty-three people with PD were randomly assigned to either a Tai Chi group or a control group. The Tai Chi group participated in 20 one-hour long training sessions completed within 10-13 weeks; whereas, the control group had two testing sessions between 10 and 13 weeks apart without interposed training. The Tai Chi group improved more than the control group on the Berg Balance Scale, UPDRS, Timed Up and Go, tandem stance test, six-minute walk, and backward walking. Neither group improved in forward walking or the one leg stance test.

All Tai Chi participants reported satisfaction with the program and improvements in well-being.

"Tai Chi appears to be an appropriate, safe and effective form of exercise for some individuals with mild-moderately severe PD," states the study.

The European PD Association was very interested in Jerry's work. They invited him to teach a workshop during their annual convention hosted in Croatia in 2007. Jerry has also been invited to do workshops for seniors and PD patients in the U.S.

According to Jerry, with more Tai Chi practice, other PD symptoms might be mitigated. Hopefully more funding will be available to conduct further research on the Tai Chi's impact as a long-term PD intervention method.

Resources:

Angels Fly for a Cure by Jerry Wild <http://www.angelsflyforacure.com/>

American Parkinson Disease Association <http://www.apdaparkinson.org>



Violet Li – an award winning journalist, certified Tai Chi instructor, and certified Heart Zone Trainer, has studied Tai Chi, Qigong, and heart fitness with many grandmasters and experts, and has taught Tai Chi, Qigong, and other fitness programs to various groups. Her passion for Tai Chi, Qigong, and fitness motivates her to write articles on the related events, people, theories, techniques, practices, and health benefits for individuals. NBC of St. Louis featured one of her classes in “100 Year Old Tai Chi Artist”. Ms. Li writes regularly for the St. Louis Tai Chi Examiner and the National Tai Chi Examiner, and has readership from over 18 different countries. Do you have a story or comment to share? Please contact her at violet.li@tadi.com.

Traditional Chinese Medicine - Food Therapy: Cardiomyopathy & Congestive Heart Failure

by Helen Hu, OMD

Dilated (congestive) cardiomyopathy is a group of heart muscle disorders in which the ventricles enlarge but are not able to pump enough blood for the body's needs, resulting in heart failure. In North America, the most common identifiable cause of dilated cardiomyopathy is extensive coronary artery disease. Coxsackie B virus infection and other causes include certain chronic hormonal disorders such as long-standing, poorly controlled diabetes, morbid obesity, a persistently rapid heart rate, or thyroid disease. Dilated cardiomyopathy can also be caused by use of certain substances, especially alcohol, cocaine, antidepressants, and a few chemotherapy drugs. Rare causes of dilated cardiomyopathy include pregnancy and connective tissue disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis. As in coronary artery disease, the weakened heart stretches in an attempt to compensate, resulting in dilated cardiomyopathy and often heart failure. About 70% of people die within 5 years of the first onset of their symptoms. If possible, doctors treat the underlying cause. General treatment measures include avoiding stress, limiting salt in the diet, and having periods of rest, which help reduce strain on the heart, particularly when the cardiomyopathy is acute or severe.

In TCM, cardiomyopathy can be classified into different categories such as, heart Qi deficiency, and heart blood deficiency. Since the spleen and kidney organs normally support and balance with the heart, some cases of cardiomyopathy will be related to the spleen and kidneys.

1. Heart Qi deficiency type:

The principle treatment for this type is to strengthen the body's energy and to calm the spirit: with this type of pattern, patient tends to have frequent shortness of breath, heart palpitations, pressure feeling on the chest with spontaneous sweating. Feelings of fatigue most of the time, feeling sleepy, not motivated to participate and some are not even willing to talk due to lack of vitality.

a. Wild Yam and Beef Soup

- Organic beef: 250g cut into small pieces
- Wild Chinese yam: (山药, *Dioscorea opposita*): 120g cut into pieces

Cooking instruction: Boil the two ingredients in 16oz of water (472ml).

Intake: Drink it slowly as and warm tea, once a day.



Shan Yao, Wild Chinese Yam, 山药 *Dioscorea opposita*

b. American Ginseng and Date Congee

- American Ginseng: 10 g (cut into thin slices)
- Chinese red date: 5 pieces
- Cinnamon bar: 6 g
- Dried Ginger: 6 g
- Spring rice: 50g
- Organic milk 4 oz.
- Dark brown sugar

Cooking instruction: Cook all herbs in water. First boil at a lower temperature for 20min and then use the herbal juice to cook rice to make rice congee (porridge). When the congee is done, add the organic milk and dark brown sugar in the congee and bring it to boil again for 1-2 min.

Intake: This is one serving. Take once a day. 7 days as course of treatment.

b. Cordyceps and Sweet Rice Congee

- Sweet rice: 50g
- Rock sugar 30g
- Cordyceps powder: (冬虫夏草Cordyceps sinensis) 1g

Cooking instruction: Make rice soup with water, sweet rice and rock sugar and cook until it's done. Then add Cordyceps powder in the congee, boiling for 15 minutes. After it's all done, cover the congee for 5 minutes before serving.

Intake: One serving, once a day. 7 days is a course of treatment.

2. Heart Yin deficiency type:

In this pattern of heart condition, patient tends to feel a warm sensation on the chest, palms and bottoms of the feet, heart palpitations, low spirits, forgetfulness, insomnia, dry lips and mouth. They may also have constipation and only a small quantity of urine that is dark in color, regardless of whether or not the patient drinks a lot of water or not.

a. Lotus seed dessert

- Lotus seed: 120g (soak to soften then steam it till tender)
- Fresh pineapple: 80g (cut into pieces)
- Longan (龙眼肉Euphoria longan fruit) dried: 15 g
- Green Soy beans (青豆) cooked or canned
- Rock sugar: 20g (冰糖)

Cooking instruction: In a pot with water, cook green soy beans and longan fruit.

Cook lotus seeds rock sugar together and bring to a boil. Then add fresh pineapple to the soup and serve.

Intake: Can be served alone or along with meals.



Cordyceps



Lotus Seed

3. Heart and Spleen deficiency type:

The main symptom in this pattern of heart condition is low appetite, abdominal bloating, pale complexion, easily becoming dizzy, shortness of breath and heart palpitations. Most of the patients with this pattern of diagnosis tend to eat less and sleep less during the night and experience extreme fatigue and low spirits.



a. Dang Gui Lamb Soup; 当归羊肉汤

- Dang Gui: (当归Angelica sinensis) 25g
- Huang qi ;(黄芪Astragalus) 25g
- Dang shen: (党参Codonopsis) 25g
- Lamb meat: 500g (cut into small pieces)
- Green onion: 6g
- Ginger: 6 g
- Sea salt (easy on the salt)
- Cooking wine

Cooking instruction: Put all the herbs in a gauze cloth and tie off the bag. Put lamb in a clay pot or glassware, with ginger, green onion, salt and cooking wine with the herbal bag together to make soup till the lamb is very tender.

Intake: Along with meal, once a day. Drink the soup and eat the meat.

b. Ginseng and Shou Wu Congee

- American Ginseng: 3 g
- Cordyceps powder: 2 g
- He shou wu: 何首乌Polygonum 15A
- Bai he : (百合Lilium bulbs)12 g
- Spring rice: 60g

Cooking instruction: Soak the Polygonum and Lilium bulbs in 500ml water for one hour then bring it to boil for 20 minutes until water is reduced to about 200ml. Then only use the liquid part, the herbal juice, to make congee with spring rice. When the rice congee is done, add American ginseng and Cordyceps powder to the congee and mix well before serving.

Intake: Take it warm as breakfast or dinner, 1-2 times per day



Traditional Chinese Herb Market in Chengdu, where Cordyceps sinenses are being prepared for sale. They are strung on a string and then arranged in flower-like shapes.

Cordyceps sinensis, known commonly in English as caterpillar fungus, is wild-collected by herb gatherers in the mountains of SW China. Cordyceps are endoparasitoids, mainly on insects and other arthropods and are considered a medicinal mushroom in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

4. Heart and Kidney Yang deficiency type:

The characteristic of this type of heart condition is a feeling of cold on all four limbs with loose stool or/and watery diarrhea and very pale complexion. Most of this type of patient tends to be in a chronic condition and in the elderly manifests with being in very low spirits and exhaustion without enough strength to talk.

a. Ba Ji Beef Soup


- Organic Beef: 250 gr, cut into small pieces
- Ba Ji Tian 巴戟天 *Morinda officinalis* 30 g
- Ginger, green onion, Sichuan pepper, salt and cooking wine

Cooking instruction: In a clay pot or glassware, put all ingredient together and appropriate amount of water to cook it at lower temperature until meat is tender and falls apart. Serve as a side dish along with meal.

b. Wild Yam Tea

- Chinese wild yam: 山药, *Dioscorea opposita* 60g
- Du Zhong : 杜仲 *Eucommia ulmoides* 30g


Cooking instruction: Wash the two herbs until clean and soak for one hour, then boil at medium temperature for 20-30 minutes. Discard the herb, only drink the juice. Serve: As tea.



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Dr. Helen Hu, originally from Beijing China, has studied Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) since the age of 12. A Cardiologist and practitioner of integrated medicine for nine years before immigrating to the United States, Dr. Hu passed the "U.S. Licensing Medical Exam" (USLME) in 1997 while simultaneously

obtaining her Oriental Medical Degree (OMD) in the US. Dr. Hu currently directs and manages a successful TCM practice in San Diego. She lectures locally on Acupuncture and the benefits of combining Eastern / Western styles of Medicine. Dr. Hu has been practicing Tai Ji and Qi Gong over 25 years, and she teaches these ancient Chinese arts Saturday mornings on Shelter Island in San Diego as a gift to the community and to help promote well being and longevity.
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Meridians and Organs: Yin Organs

气的科学探索(17a): 经络与脏腑器官

by Marty Eisen Ph.D.

The Kidneys (Shen)

The Kidneys are the foundation of Yin and Yang of all the other Organs. Kidney Yin provides the material foundation of Kidney Yang and Kidney Yang provides the Heat necessary for all Kidney functions. Deficiency of one of these implies the deficiency of the other, because they rely on each other for their existence.

The following are the main functions of the Kidneys.

a) Store Essence (Jing)

The Kidneys store both Pre-Heaven and Post-Heaven Essence.

(i) Pre-Heaven (Congenital, Original) Essence

This is the inherited Essence, which before birth nourishes the fetus. After birth, it controls growth and

development. Insufficient Essence may cause physical or mental underdevelopment in children, retarded growth and premature senility. Chapter 1 of Simple Questions describes the maturation stages of life, which occur every 7 years for women and every 8 years for men. It also controls sexuality and is the material basis for producing ova in women and sperm in men. Insufficient Essence can lead to infertility and impotence.

(ii) Post-Heaven (Acquired) Essence

This is the refined essence extracted from food through the transforming function of the internal Organs. After birth, it is very difficult to replace the Original Essence using the Acquired Essence. There are forms of Qigong, which are helpful.

b) Kidney Yin and Yang

Kidney Yin has the function of nourishing and moistening the body, while Kidney Yang supplies heat to the body. They are the root and also maintain the relative balance of Yin and Yang in every organ. Conversely, an imbalance of Yin and Yang in other Organs can cause an imbalance of Yin and Yang in the Kidneys. A Chinese medical saying is that “Prolonged diseases disturb the Kidneys.”

Kidney Yin and Yang both rely upon Kidney Essence. In fact, both Kidney Yin deficiency and Kidney Yang deficiency result from Kidney Essence deficiency.



If Kidney Yin reaches a certain level of deficiency, then a Kidney Yang deficiency occurs and this process is known as “Yin injury disturbing Yang.” Analogously, the process called “Yang injury disturbing Yin” occurs when Kidney Yang is relatively deficient and also results in both Kidney Yin and Yang becoming deficient.

Kidney Yin deficiency presents with such symptoms as: fever, dizziness, tinnitus, weakness or soreness of the lower back or knees, spermatorrhea and a red tongue body with a scanty coating.

Kidney Yang deficiency presents with such symptoms as: chills, cold limbs, cold pain and weakness of the lower back or knees, lassitude, clear and profuse urination or enuresis, urinary incontinence, sexual dysfunction, edema and a pale, flabby tongue body, with a thin, white coat.

An imbalance of Kidney Yin or Yang can cause a Ying or Yang imbalance in other Organs. For example, if Kidney Yin doesn't nourish the Lungs, then there is both a Kidney Yin and Lung Yin deficiency. There will be symptoms such as sore throat, tidal fever, dry cough and feverish sensations.

c) Produces Marrow

Marrow does not correspond to bone marrow of Western Medicine. Marrow is produced by the Kidney Essence. Marrow is the common substance of the bones, bone marrow, spinal cord and brain.

The Marrow is said to “fill up” the brain. Hence, in Chinese Medicine the brain is physiologically related to the Kidney and it states that “the Kidneys are the origin of intelligence and skill”. Strong Kidney Essence nourishes the brain and if it is strong, concentration, memory, thinking and sight will be sharp. These faculties may be dull if the brain is inadequately nourished by the Kidney Essence. The spinal cord and brain are designated as the “Sea of Marrow”.

The Kidneys also govern the bone marrow and bones, since the Marrow forms bone marrow, which nourishes the bones. The bones will be strong and the teeth firm if the Kidney Essence is strong; otherwise, the bones will be brittle and the teeth loose. In children, a weak Kidney Essence will cause the fontanels to remain open, poor bone development and other developmental problems.

Chapter 8 in Simple Questions states that the Kidneys are the strong official from whom ingenuity is derived. This can be interpreted as the Kidneys determine one's physical and mental strength. They also determine will power, as explained next.

d) House Will Power (Zhi)

The Kidneys determine will power as stated in Chapter 23 of Simple Questions, “The Kidneys house will power.” If the Kidneys are weak, then will power will be weak and one will be easily discouraged and swayed from one's goals. Will power and motivation are often important factors in mental depressions. Tonifying the Kidneys can often improve depression.

e) Control Strength and Skill

The Kidneys control the capacity for purposeful, hard work for long periods of time. A Kidney disharmony can sometimes drive a person to become a “workaholic”. The Kidneys also influence the capacity for skilled and delicate activities. The Kidneys are responsible for short-term memory.

f) Participate in Blood Production

Blood is produced in two ways: by the Post-Heaven Cycle, as discussed above in Heart Blood, and by the Pre-Heaven Cycle governed by the Kidneys. The Kidneys produce Marrow, which forms bone marrow. Original (Yuan) or Pre-Heaven Qi acts on the Kidneys and Marrow causing the bone marrow to produce Blood. Original Qi also aids in the Post-Heaven Cycle.

It is interesting to note that the Chinese account of the bone marrow forming blood was formulated before the introduction of Western Medicine in China. During the Qing dynasty, Dr. Lin Pei Qin postulated that the Liver and Kidneys have the same source and that Blood is formed from the Kidney Essence.

g) Govern Water

The Kidneys govern the transformation and transportation of Body Fluids in the following ways.

- (i) The Kidneys are like a “gate”, which opens and closes to control the flow of Body Fluids. Normally, Kidney Yin and Yang are balanced and correctly regulate the opening and closing of the “gate” and urination will be normal in quantity and color. If there is a deficiency of Kidney Yang, this gate will be too open resulting in pale and profuse urine flow. A deficiency in Kidney Yin causes dark and scanty urination.
- (ii) The Kidneys provide Qi to the Bladder for storing, transformation of Fluids and excretion of urine.
- (iii) The Lower Burner, containing the Small and Large Intestines, participates in separating clean from dirty Fluids. This function is controlled by Kidney Yang.
- (iv) The Kidneys receive Fluids from the Lungs. Some of the parts of these Fluids are excreted and some are vaporized and returned to the Lungs to moisten them.
- (v) Kidney Yang provides the required Heat to the Spleen for transformation and transportation of Fluids.

h) Control Opening and Closing

The Kidneys function as a “gate”, controlling urination, as described above in g (i). The Kidneys also influence the anus and defecation. A Kidney Yang deficiency can produce diarrhea. Hence, the Kidneys influence the opening and closing of both Yin lower orifices – namely, the urethra and anus.

i) Are the Gate of the Stomach

The Stomach receives Fluids, if the Kidneys don’t excrete Fluids properly, they will stagnate in the Stomach. On the other hand, a lack of Stomach fluids can result in a Kidney Yin deficiency.

j) Control the Reception of Qi

The Kidneys receive the clear Qi inhaled by the Lungs. The Lungs descend the Qi to the Kidneys and the Kidneys respond by “holding” the Qi down.

If the Kidneys cannot hold the Qi, it “rebels” upward. This decreases the Lungs depth of respiration and shallow breathing will occur with more exhaling than inhaling. In more severe situations breathlessness and asthma can occur. Chronic asthma is often caused by the failure of the Kidneys to receive Qi.

k) Open into the Ears

The proper functioning of the Ears depends on nourishment by Essence and so the Ears are related to the Kidneys. Weak Kidneys can result in poor hearing or tinnitus.

l) Manifest in the Hair

The growth of the hair depends on the Kidney Essence for nourishment. If the Kidney essence is weak, the hair will become brittle, lusterless, thin or all fallout.

The color and quality of the head hair also relate to the state of the Kidney Essence. If it becomes weak, the hair will become gray and thin.

m) The Kidneys are the Root of Pre-Heaven or Original Qi

The above statement follows from the fact that the Kidneys store Essence, inherited from the parents. Pre- Heaven Qi is just the Pre-Heaven Essence transformed into Qi.

n) Fluid is Urine

The Kidneys participate in the process of urination.

o) Dreams

Chapter 80 of Simple Questions states that if the Kidneys are weak, one dreams of swimming after a shipwreck and in the wintertime, one dreams of plunging into water and being scared.

Chapter 43 of the Spiritual axis states that if the Kidneys are in excess, one dreams that the spine is detached from the body and if weak, one dreams of being immersed in water.

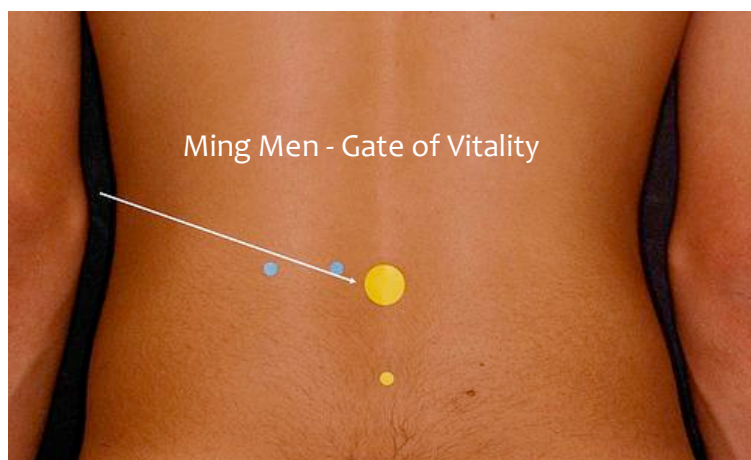
p) Loathe Dryness

Internal dryness or dry weather can injure Kidney Yin. Internal dryness can occur if there is profuse fluid loss from sweating, vomiting or diarrhea. Smoking or the use of tobacco dries the Blood and Essence and so can injure Kidney Yin, according to Chinese medical thought.

Note on the Gate of Vitality (Ming Men)

Chinese Medicine asserts that the Ming Men provides Heat for all bodily functions and for the Kidney Essence. Before the Ming dynasty, the Ming Men was considered to be the right Kidney and the left Kidney was considered as the Kidney proper. With the beginning of the Ming dynasty research on the theory of the Gate of Vitality increased tremendously. The Ming Men was placed between the two Kidneys. A brief history appears in (2).

The Kidneys are regarded as the origin of Fire and Water of the body, the Primary Yin and Yang. The Ming Men is the embodiment of the Fire within the Kidneys.



According to the 5-element theory, Fire is derived from the Heart and not from the Ming Men. The two theories developed from different perspectives and clinical experience and both are reasonable. However, regarding the origin of Fire to the Ming Men and hence the Kidneys has wider clinical applications.

The following summarizes the main functions of the Ming Men

(i) It is the Root of Original Qi

Original Qi requires Heat, which is supplied by Ming Men Fire, in order to act. One of its functions is to aid in the production of Blood in both the Pre- and Post-Heaven Cycles - see (f). If the Ming Men Fire is deficient, then Original Qi will become deficient, which will lead to a deficiency of Qi and Blood.

(ii) It is the Source of Fire for all the Internal Organs

Decline of the Ming Men Fire will impair the activity of all organs. This produces lack of vitality, tiredness, negativity, mental depression and cold feeling.

(iii) It Warms the Lower Burner and Bladder

The Ming Men Fire's Heat is required to transform and excrete Fluids in the Lower Burner aided by its included Organ, the Bladder. Otherwise, these Fluids will accumulate leading to dampness and edema.

(iv) Warms the Spleen and Stomach to Aid Digestion

Heat supplied by the Ming men fire is required by the Spleen and Stomach for transformation and transportation. Otherwise, food cannot be digested properly leading to tiredness, feeling of cold and cold limbs, and diarrhea.

(v) Harmonizes the Sexual Function and Warms the Uterus and Essence

Puberty, menstruation, fertility and sexual performance all depend on Heat from the Ming Men Fire. If the Ming Men Fire weakens men's Essence will turn cold causing impotence and infertility and women's uterus will become

cold causing infertility and leucorrhea.

(vi) **Assists the Kidney Function of Qi Reception**

Reception of Qi requires Kidney Yang, which depends on Ming Men Fire for its action. The proper functioning of Kidney Yang requires the communication between the Gathering Qi of the chest and the lower abdominal Original Qi, which needs Heat from the Ming Men Fire to function. If Qi reception is sufficiently impaired because of a deficiency of Ming Men Fire, there will be breathlessness, chest stuffiness, asthma or cold hands.

(vii) **Assists the Heart in Housing the Mind**

Ming Men Fire must ascend from the Kidneys and communicate with Heart, to provide the necessary Heat for its functions, in particular, of Housing the Mind. Thus, the Ming men fire has a strong influence on people's mental state. Deficiency of Ming Men Fire can result in unhappiness, depression or lack of vitality.

Western Functions of the Kidneys

The kidneys are bean-shaped organs, each about the size of a fist. They are symmetrically located near the middle of the back, just below the rib cage, one on each side of the spine. The kidneys process about 200 quarts of blood to filter out about 2 quarts of waste products and extra water every day. The wastes and extra water become urine, which flows to the bladder through tubes called ureters.

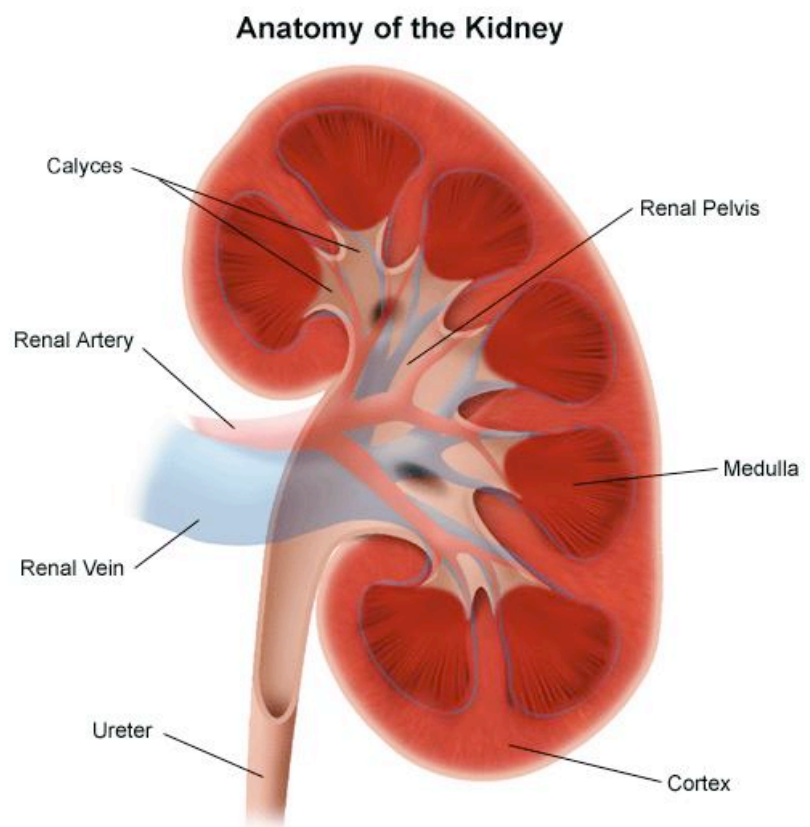
Waste products in the blood come from the normal breakdown of active tissues, such as muscles, and from food. If the kidneys didn't remove these wastes, they would build up in the blood and damage the body.

The actual removal of wastes occurs in tiny units inside the kidneys called nephrons. Each kidney has about a million nephrons. The nephron consists of glomerulus, which has tiny afferent, intertwined capillaries and an efferent tiny urine-collecting tube, called a tubule. The glomerulus acts as a filtering unit, retaining normal proteins and cells in the bloodstream, but allowing extra fluid and wastes to pass through.

The tubules receive a combination of waste materials and chemicals the body can still use. The kidneys measure out chemicals like sodium, phosphorus, and potassium and by a series of chemical reactions release these back into the blood to return to the body. In this way, the kidneys regulate the body's level of these substances.

The kidneys also release three important hormones:

- (i) erythropoietin (EPO), which stimulates the bone marrow to make red blood cells,
- (ii) renin, which regulates blood pressure;
- (iii) calcitriol, the active form of vitamin D, which helps maintain calcium for bones and for normal chemical balance in the body.



The Liver (Gan)

Two of the most important of the functions of the Liver are storing Blood and moving Qi smoothly through the body. These two functions contribute to the body's energy and resistance to External Pathogenic Factors. In chapter 8 of the Simple Questions it is stated that the Liver is like an army general from whom strategy is derived. This can be interpreted as the Liver influences the capacity of planning our life.

The following gives more details about the Liver's functions.

a) Stores Blood

(i) Regulates the Blood's Volume

According to Physical Activity

During activity, Blood is sent to the muscles and during rest, the extra Blood volume returns to the Liver. This regulation of Blood volume has an important effect on the body's energy. The Blood returning to the Liver, when at rest, contribute to restoring one's energy and when it flows to the muscles during activity, it nourishes and moistens the muscles to enable them to work. If this Liver function is normal, the muscles and skin will be well nourished and so help contribute to the resistance of attacks by External Pathogenic Factors. However, Defensive and Lung Qi are the major defensive factors. If the Liver is abnormal, it can affect the Blood's quality, leading to skin diseases, such as psoriasis or eczema. Conversely, if the Blood is abnormal (hot or deficient) it can affect the Liver's function. The Liver Blood also moistens the eyes and tendons as discussed below in (e) and (c).

(ii) Regulates Menstruation

Menstruation will be normal if the Liver stores Blood normally. Liver Blood deficiency causes oligomenorrhea or amenorrhea. Liver Blood and Qi play important roles in the physiology and pathology of women. Stagnant Liver Qi can lead to stagnant liver Blood causing premenstrual tension, painful periods with dark, clotted blood. The storage of Blood by the Liver also affects the Penetrating or Thrusting Vessel (Chong Mai) and the Directing or Conception Vessel (Ren Mai). These two Extraordinary Vessels originate from the Uterus and provide Blood to it. A Liver problem can cause imbalances in these Vessels which can affect menstruation, conception and pregnancy.



b) Ensures Smooth Qi Flow

The Liver ensures the smooth flow of Qi to the whole body, in all organs and in every direction. Each Organ has a normal direction of flow – for example, the Qi of the Lung and Stomach flow downward and the Spleen's Qi flows upwards. Liver Qi flows upwards and outwards in all directions to ensure smooth, unimpeded Qi flow everywhere. This

is the most important function of the Liver, since it can affect all Organs and parts of the body as well as the mental state. Its effects on the emotions, digestion and bile secretion are discussed below.

(i) Emotions

If Qi flows normally there will be a content emotional life. If the smooth flow of Qi is impaired, it will lead to repressed anger, frustration or depressions with accompanying physical symptoms (feeling of a lump in the throat, chest oppression, hypochondriac pain or abdominal distention). Women may also suffer from pre-menstrual tension, irritability and distention of the breasts.

Conversely, an emotional life filled with anger or repressed frustrations will impair the smooth flow of Liver Qi.

(ii) Digestion

The smooth flow of Liver Qi aids the Stomach's digestive function of "ripening" and "rotting" food, the Spleen to extract Food Qi and that their Qi moves in the proper direction. If there is stagnation of Liver Qi, it may invade the Stomach and prevent the downward movement of Stomach Qi causing nausea, belching, sour regurgitation or vomiting. If it invades the Spleen, it hinders transportation and transformation of food and also the upward movement of Spleen Qi, causing diarrhea.

(iii) Bile Flow

The smooth flow of Liver Qi aids bile flow. Liver Qi stagnation can lead to obstruction of bile flow resulting in belching, a bitter taste or jaundice.

c) Controls the Sinews or Tendons

The Chinese character for Jin is frequently translated as Tendons, but also refers to tendons, ligaments and muscles of Western Medicine. Here tendons will refer to the contractile aspects of muscles, while Muscles associated with the Spleen refers more to their bulk and strength.

Abundant Liver Blood nourishes and moistens both the muscles and Sinews, which include the tendons. This ensures smooth muscle action and movement of the joints. Chapter 1 of Simple Questions states that if Liver Qi declines, the sinews cannot move. Deficient Liver Blood can cause lack of limb strength, impaired flexion or extension, muscle cramps, numb limbs, contractions or spasms, tremors or tetany.

There is also a neurological effect of the Liver on the Sinews. A high fever can cause Heat, which stirs Liver Wind. The interior wind of the Liver causes contraction and tremors of the Sinews leading to convulsions.

d) Manifests in the Nails

The nails are considered as extensions of the Sinews in Chinese Medicine and so are influenced by Liver Blood. If Liver Blood is deficient the nails will become dry, dark, indented and cracked.

e) Opens into the Eyes

The Liver Blood nourishes and moistens the eyes providing the capacity for good vision. Deficiency of Liver Blood can result in dry eyes, floaters, blurred vision, color blindness or myopia.

Internal Liver Wind can turn the eyeballs upwards and cause nystagmus. Liver Heat can result in bloodshot, painful and burning eyes.

Other Organs also affect the eyes. Chapter 80 of the Spiritual Axis states that the Essence from the 5 Yin and 6 Yang Organs flows upwards to nourish the eyes. The Kidney has an important relation to the eyes. The decline of Kidney Essence is the cause many chronic eye diseases. Kidney Yin deficiency can promote dryness and failing eyesight.

Chapter 81 of Simple questions states that the Heart concentrates the essence of the 5 Yin organs and manifests in the eyes. Heart Fire can cause dry eyes and poor eyesight. Chapter 80 of the Spiritual axis says that the eyes mirror the state of the Heart, which houses the Mind. Thus, the eyes reflect the state of the Mind.

f) Fluid is Tears

This follows from e).

g) Houses the Ethereal Soul (Po)

Chapter 9 in Simple Questions states that the Liver is the residence of Po. Recall that the Corporeal Soul (Hun) is firmly attached to the body and upon death returns to the earth with the body. At death, the Po survives, leaves the body and returns to the world of subtle, non-material energies.

Po influences planning and finding a sense of direction in life. Mental confusion and a lack of a sense of direction in life is said to be wandering of Po. This can occur if Liver Blood is weak and so Po will not be rooted. Po may also temporarily leave the body before going to sleep or during sleep if Liver Blood or Yin is very weak. People who have a severe Yin deficiency may feel as if they were floating before falling asleep. This is termed the “floating” of Po not rooted in Blood and Yin. The Discussion on Blood Diseases says that if Liver Blood is deficient, Fire disturbs Po resulting in nocturnal emissions with dreams. This also illustrates that Po can become uprooted at night by a Liver Blood or Yin deficiency.

Being determined or unwavering is also related to Po. A feeling of fright before falling asleep is said to occur because of a lack of rooting of Po.

(h) Is a Resolute Organ

Liver Yang flares up easily, causing anger or irritability and Liver Qi easily becomes excessive and stagnant in a diseased state. In health, the same type of Liver energy can make one very creative and resolute.

(i) Influences Rising and Growth

The correspondence of the Liver to Wood is used to symbolize that, energetically, the Liver promotes rising and growth. Recall that Liver Qi rises upwards and in all directions to smooth the flow of Qi to all parts of the body promoting growth and repair.

Loss of control of the rising of Liver Qi can occur in disease. This results in the excessive rising of Liver Yang or Fire, which causes a red face, irritability, outbursts of anger, tinnitus, dizziness and anger.

(j) Arises from the Left Side

The Liver is related to the left side of the body in several ways, even though the liver is located on the right side.

Sometimes left-sided headaches are related to the Liver, while those on the right relate to the Gall Bladder.

The right side of the tongue reflects more of the Gall Bladder’s state, while the left side reflects the Liver’s state.

The Liver’s energy is felt on the left side in Pulse diagnosis.

(k) Loathes Wind

This property is related to both Interior and exterior Wind. Patients suffering from a Liver disharmony frequently complain about headaches and a stiff neck appearing after exposure to windy weather.

(l) Can Cause Convulsions

A convulsion is a defining symptom of Interior Wind, which is always related to the Liver.

m) Controls Planning

This was discussed in g). A lack of direction and an inability to plan life can be a consequence of a diseased Liver.

n) Harmonizes and Regulates

These properties refer to the Liver’s regulation of Blood, discussed in a) (i). If the Liver’s Blood is deficient one cannot recover energy by resting or have enough energy to move efficiently.

o) Dreams

Chapter 17 in Simple questions states that if the Liver is in Excess, dreams of being angry will occur. Chapter 80 states that if the Liver is Deficient, dreams of fragrant mushrooms will occur; if the dreams occur in the spring, they will be about lying under a tree without being able to rise.

Chapter 43 of the Spiritual Axis states that if the Liver is Deficient dreams of forests in the mountains will occur.

Western Functions of the Liver

The liver performs hundreds of functions, but only a brief discussion of some of these will be presented.

One of its most important functions is the conversion of food into substances and energy required by the body. It has several roles in carbohydrate metabolism. The liver synthesizes glucose from certain amino acids, lactate or glycerol (gluconeogenesis). It forms glycogen from glucose (glycogenesis) and stores it. Muscle tissues can also do this. When energy is required it breaks down the stored glycogen into glucose (glycogenolysis) and releases it into the blood. People with liver damage may sometimes lose the ability to control glucose concentration in the blood and need a regular supply of sugar.

The liver plays a significant role in protein metabolism, synthesis as well as degradation into amino acids. It produces albumin, the major osmolar component of blood serum.

Lipid metabolism, such as: cholesterol synthesis, the production of (fats) triglycerides (lipogenesis,) and the synthesis of many lipoproteins.

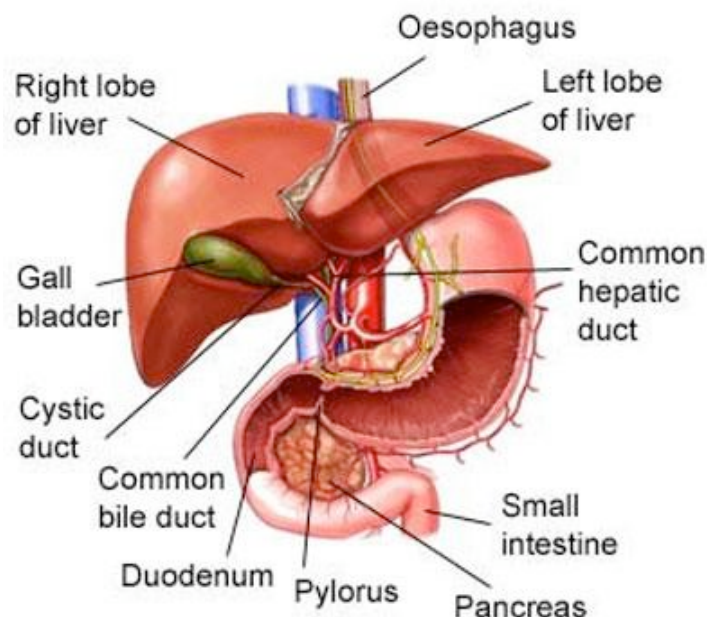
It plays an important role in fighting infections, particularly those arising in the intestines. The liver contains more than 50% of the body's supply of macrophages, called Kupffer cells.

The liver makes enzymes and proteins which are responsible for many biochemical reactions in the body - for example, those involved in blood clotting and repair of damaged tissues.

It produces red blood cells production up to the 32nd week of gestation; then the bone marrow almost completely takes over. The liver is a major producer of thrombopoietin, a glycoprotein hormone that regulates the production of platelets by bone marrow.

It produces and excretes bile for emulsifying fats. Some of the bile is secreted into the duodenum and some is stored in the gallbladder.

The liver also produces an insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1), a polypeptide protein hormone that plays an important role in childhood growth and continues to have anabolic effects in adults.



It breaks down and regulating numerous hormones such as, sex hormones and insulin. It synthesizes others, such as angiotensinogen, responsible for raising the blood pressure when activated by renin, an enzyme that is released if the kidney senses low blood pressure.

The liver neutralizes and destroys drugs and toxins and helps the body to get rid of waste products. Waste products, which are not excreted by the kidneys, are removed from the blood by the liver.

It stores iron, vitamins and other essential chemicals.

The liver converts ammonia to urea via the urea cycle.

It is clear upon comparing the western understanding of the functions of these organs and the “corresponding” Chinese Organs that they are different. An interesting research project would be to get western physiological and anatomical functions in terms of hormones, the parts of the brain and nervous system, etc., that would correspond to each Organ and mimic its functions.

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Dr. Eisen is a retired scientist, who constructed mathematical models in medicine. He has studied and taught Judo, Shotokan Karate, Aikido, Qigong, Praying Mantis Kung Fu, and Tai Chi in different places. He took correspondence courses in Chinese herbology and studied other branches of Chinese medicine with a traditional Chinese medical doctor. He was the Director of Education of the Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture Institute in Upper Darby, P.A.

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A Comedy Moment 开心一刻

"Studies show that mirthful laughter, the kind that stems from real joy, relieves stress, lightens mood and confers health benefits." CNN

Always remember you're unique. Just like everyone else.

Never test the depth of the water with both feet.

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.

If you believe in telekinesis, please raise my hand.

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.



Duct tape is like the Force. It has a light side and a dark side, and it holds the universe together.

The most wasted day of all is one in which we have not laughed.

Don't be irreplaceable. If you can't be replaced, you can't be promoted.

Q: How many contemplative monks does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Three. One to *change* the light bulb. One to *not change* the light bulb. One to *neither change nor not change* the light bulb.

Q: How many yogis does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Into what?

When two psychic friends met, one asked the other: "You are fine. How am I?"

Breathe in. Breathe out.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

Forget this and attaining Enlightenment will be the least of your problems.

Drink tea and nourish life.

With the first sip... joy.

With the second... satisfaction.

With the third, peace.

With the fourth, a Danish.



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