

Health Qigong What Should I Learn?

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THE AUTHOR



Qigong Master Tianyou Hao began meditation practices as a small boy in 1944. He practiced alongside his mother, following her example. As he grew, he never forgot this experience and her influence. As a young man, he began traditional Qigong training with Martial Arts Master Zhu Guo Zhen, and later refined techniques with Buddha Master Li Yuan. As a Professor of Engineering at Beijing University of Science and Technology, he learned from and supported a young man who exhibited great Qigong abilities. Now, Master Hao is privileged to be guided by a woman centenarian, Grand Master Huang, who lives as a recluse in China.

In 1988, Master Hao arrived in America where he began the task of spreading Qigong knowledge to Americans. His educational programs display a dedicated approach to all aspects of Qigong. Master Hao has successfully adapted the best of Chinese Qigong to the Western culture. His students discovered and quickly learned to feel *Qi*, gather *Qi*, and use *Qi* for their personal healing and health and also for the benefit of others.

Since Master Hao's arrival in America:

- He has developed the Inner Dan Arts Qigong and the Eastern Healing Arts systems especially for Americans.
- He has taught Qigong and Qi Healing to over 3000 students.
- He has taught elective courses in Qigong/Qi Healing at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine (1991-2001).
- He has also trained and certified over 50 Qigong Instructors nationwide and worldwide.
- To keep Chinese Qigong open to the world, Master Hao established the Eastern Healing Arts Center, home of the Qigong and Human Life Research Foundation and Tian Enterprises, Inc. The purpose of the Eastern Healing Arts Center is to provide complementary health education for all through certification of instructors and healers and to also promote opportunities for learning.

Health Qigong

What Should I Learn?

Tianyou Hao

I have been spreading Chinese Qigong in the United States for 25 years and have offered Qigong elective courses for nine years at Case University Medical School.

Chinese Qigong is an excellent preventive medicine and rehabilitation medicine. It also has a very good medical effect on certain chronic diseases. From my decades of experience, I found the list of medical effects to be numerous.

I discovered in the spread of traditional Chinese Qigong that many people don't know what to learn? There are so many Qigong exercises and martial arts that many don't know where to start. For beginners, it is a matter of following a basic course. According to my personal experience, I believe that Qigong should be studied based on the following three aspects.

1. Qigong is the Ability to Relax, Regulate, & Maintain

The principle of Qigong can be summarized in three words: loose, static, and fixed. It can be seen that *Song (to relax)* is the first foundation, and there is no Qigong without relaxation. Someone once said that if you can keep your body and mind relaxed, then you'll be healthy and you will have a basic understanding of Qigong, even if

you haven't learned Qigong. Of course, most people still have to learn the ability to relax, which occurs through the practice of Qigong. The relaxation I am talking about is not only the relaxation of the body, but more importantly, the principles of what I call *Heart* relaxation. People live in a complex society with all kinds of emotions and desires, and many situations lead to a state of extreme tension. Through the practice of Qigong, we learn to self-regulate and maintain our ability to relax. Who is a master of Qigong? A Qigong master is he/she who has the ability to relieve their inner trouble (such as tension, anger, emotion-----) in a short period of time through adjusting their body and mind to relax and to also maintain that internal relaxation.

2. Keep the Best Blood Circulation in the Body

TCM Qigong theory suggests that pain represents deficiency or blockages in the Qi and blood flow. The blocked Qi and blood flow lead to various diseases. By learning Qigong, we learn how to improve Qi and blood flow through the practice of specific exercises. The principle of Qigong is that Qi must move smoothly or blood flow will be blocked; therefore, it is very important to move Qi evenly throughout the body. The key to letting the Qi move smoothly is through learning the ability to control Qi by the power of thought.

3. Use the Power of Mind

Qigong has a very well known principle that states, “We must consciously lead the Qi, and the Qi will follow the mind”. In Qigong we learn to lead and control the Qi with our intention which will also insure a smooth flow of blood. This is done through the power of our mind.

I believe that the power of the mind is based on three concepts; the first is the ability to concentrate, the second is the ability to think and judge the future, and the third is the ability to clear the mind, using what is termed as meditation. For maintaining vitality and awareness of Qi, we need the ability to concentrate. We understand the books we read, because we concentrate when reading them. Once we understand the book, then we can master the contents of the book. Similar to how we concentrate on reading a book; in Qigong we concentrate our attention on the body. Qigong mindfulness is to learn to focus our attention on the body, with a conscious intention to lead the Qi and to make the blood flow smoothly.

Basic Physical Fitness

Physical fitness and internal health are two different things. Having internal or visceral health of the body does not necessarily mean we have high a level of physical strength and a strong body. For example, a child of eight or nine years of age is inherently healthy and disease free, but their body is not necessarily strong. In Qigong, we learn to develop our internal body as well as our physical strength through exercise and basic physical fitness.

Some examples of Qigong practices for physical fitness include: *Standing Like A Tree*, *Surging Qigong*, *Ba Duan Jin*, *Wu Qin Xi*, or *Yi Jin Jing*, etc., and of course, we can also practice *Tai Chi*. It must be understood that Qigong movement is different from general physical exercise. In Qigong we only need to utilize a very small amount of bodily energy in order to achieve positive—physical results. Additionally, Qigong practice minimizes stress upon the joints.

Intense sports require a lot of physical energy to gain physical benefit. For young people, it is not a problem. For middle-aged and elderly people, excessive exercise is not only bad for physical health, but it can also damage joints and cause an unnecessary loss of Qi.

Learn Three Basic Qigong Exercises



Because there are so many Qigong exercises, where do we start? There are three basic skills that must be learned and mastered. The three basic skills are standing, breathing and sitting quietly.

1. Standing Form

Among the many Qigong exercises, my recommendation is to practice *Standing Like a Tree*. The *Standing Like a Tree* practice is simple and easy to perform and it is highly effective, bringing about rapid benefits. It is my primary choice for Qigong practice.

Standing Like a Tree practice can be divided into two types; *Formless* or *Empty Standing Like a Tree*, and *Form*, or *Definitive Standing Like a Tree*.

The *Empty (Wuji) Standing Like a Tree* posture is easy to perform. It is suitable for the elderly or for those who need to build physical strength. Additionally, *Standing Like a Tree* can help you recover from chronic diseases. *Empty Standing Like a Tree* is a basic standing form that is done holding the arms or body in an easy and relaxed posture.

STANDING FORMS



EMPTY

(Wuji)



DEFINITIVE

(Holding a Ball)



DEFINITIVE

(Sword Fingers)

There are many types of specific positions for *Definitive Standing Like a Tree* postures that can be divided into open and closed positions. All of the standing forms we teach require synchronized breathing. One of the keys to the success of the *Standing Like a Tree* is the amount of time that is spent practicing. How effective the results of *Standing Like a Tree* will be are proportionate to the time

spent on this practice. If you want to achieve positive results, you can slowly build up your time on the *Standing Like a Tree* practice. Also you can begin to practice *Standing Like a Tree* using a *Definitive* form for even greater health benefits. A *Definitive* form of *Standing Like a Tree* may be practiced up to a half an hour, though it is not necessary to stand longer than that.

There may be many questions about *Standing Like a Tree* because there are many details and subtleties to this practice. Feel free to ask. As you perform *Standing Like a Tree* you may begin to discover many insights into this practice. When performing *Standing Like a Tree*, the most important thing is to always keep the body relaxed. There are four requirements for body relaxation: 1) smooth out your forehead and eyebrows so your face is relaxed, 2) smile, 3) relax your shoulders, and 4) relax your waist. When you meet these four requirements, you will feel naturally relaxed. Through a well performed practice of *Standing Like a Tree*, you will achieve greater benefit than you would through other exercises with only half the effort.

2. Breathing Form

The oldest form of Qigong is called as “吐(TU), 呐(NA)”. “吐(TU)” means breathing out. “呐(NA)” roughly translates as *Sucking in Air*.

Breathing is therefore the core method of Qigong. Qigong breathing methods can be divided into: Natural breathing (the way of breathing when we were a newborn), abdominal breathing, and controlled breathing with the abdomen, (used by people who learn vocal music). When we practice *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*, the breath is controlled by the abdomen and the direction of abdominal motion is reversed. For raising our vitals, strengthening the body, learning *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* is sufficient. In this practice, as we inhale, we *Suck in Air* while drawing the abdomen in and up. Then as we exhale, we push out stagnant air as we extend the abdomen out and down.

The use of breathing in Qigong is also applied for cancer and disease prevention and also and weight loss. Special exercises are performed including *Guo Lin Qigong (Walking Qigong)*. This form of Qigong uses two breaths. Other Qigong methods for prevention of cancer are done through uniform breathing techniques. Qigong weight loss exercises utilize techniques that require one long and one short breath.

Also having a good grasp of the five essential breathing techniques is the secret to successful Qigong. The five breathing techniques include making the breath fine, soft, slow, even, and long. To keep your body relaxed and to perform these techniques, it helps to breathe through your nose and to breathe silently. The idea is that we do not make

sound when inhaling or exhaling. Also while practicing breathing, the mind must remain present in *Xia Dan Tien* (the lower abdomen). What is the *Xia Dan Tien*? It can be understood as the inside of the lower abdomen. A Qi sensation in *Xia Dan Tien* can sometimes be experienced when we are drinking hot water. When we drink hot water, we feel it going down from our chest to the stomach, slowly sinking into the lower abdomen. In a similar way, clearing Qi stagnation (Qi not flowing smoothly) is done through exhaling and mentally guiding the Qi to sink down from *Zenzhong* (the middle of the chest) to *Xia Dan Tien* (the lower abdomen). It is not important to be concerned whether there is any sensation of Qi, the principle of Qigong is to have a clear intention to guide the movement of Qi. Using the breath to guide the Qi is how we direct it to travel from the chest down to *Xia Dan Tien*.

3. Meditation



In the West, the word “meditation” is now commonly used. Many people don't really know what it is and how to practice meditation.

Many people simply think that meditation means sitting still with their eyes closed.

Meditation is very important in Qigong and it is a major aspect of this art and science. Many Qigong forms that create mind-power and open the bodily channels (meridians) for self-healing are done while sitting and practicing meditation. These forms of Qigong meditation typically include breathing techniques as well and they are implemented for self-healing.

When practicing meditation, you must first perform the three adjustments: The first thing is to adjust your posture and to sit comfortably. The second thing is to adjust the breathing so that it is smooth. This is done by applying the five breathing techniques. Third, we must adjust our mind. Sit in a peaceful environment, and concentrate on calmness. You may place your focus at *Xia Dan Tien* (lower abdomen).

Stages of Meditation

There are four stages in Meditation. The first is to **Relax**, the second is **Self-Healing**, the third is **Being Without Thought**, and the fourth is the **Final** stage. For health and fitness Qigong, the first three steps are enough.

These three stages are outlined as follows:

1. **Relax.** We can *Relax* according to the four key parts previously mentioned: smooth out the eyebrows and forehead, keep the face with a relaxed smile, relax the shoulders, and relax the waist. Then, the practitioner can use the mind to guide the whole body in relaxation from their head to their toes. Repeat this one to two times.

2. **Self-Healing.** Then we can enter to the second step, the *Self-Healing* stage. To go into this stage of meditation, we exercise the five techniques 前面 of breathing; fine, soft, slow, even, long, and also breathing silently.

3. **Being Without Thought.** The third step of *Being Without Thought* is the most important, and is also the longest meditation phase relative to the first two steps. However, for beginners, it may be impossible to stop thinking of anything. There is a method called "One Mind and One Million Thoughts" used in Qigong meditation practice. This method requires us to keep our mental focus at *Xia Dan Tien*. Use the mind to think inside the lower abdomen and imagine that there is warm air or fire swirling and circulating inside. Feel this warm fire as being very

relaxing and comfortable. In this way, keeping the mind present at *Xia Dan Tien* replaces the interference of *Wan Nian*, or the "One Mind and One Million Thoughts". After prolonged practice, the mind gradually calms down and we learn to relatively *Be Without Thought*. When practicing meditation, there is another very important issue for developing mental focus; the eyes must be at a 45 degree angle downward and open only a slit. Some practitioners turn the eyes to look up, which causes dizziness, headache and nausea. Make sure to look downward at a 45 degree angle. This principle can be applied to all or many Qigong meditations and practices.

This is a brief introduction to the three basic meditation skills. Mastering these three basic exercises will benefit you for life, and thereafter you may choose to learn more high-level Qigong exercises through this foundation. To learn these three basic exercises, it is best to find skilled Qigong teachers who can guide and instruct you. Without the teacher's supervision and correction, it is possible that wrong meditation can result. Qi deviations may then occur, causing imbalances in our flow of Qi, affecting us physically and mentally.

Small Heaven Meditation Practice



According to the principle of Chinese Medical Qigong, the human body has 12 Luo (meridians); these channels are divided into 6 Yin and 6 Yang meridians. Among these, 6 of the Yin channels interconnect with the *Ren Mai* meridian (which runs along the front side and middle line of the body). The other 6 Yang channels interconnect and *Du Mai* meridian (which runs along middle line of the backside of the body including part of the head). Therefore, when the mind is circulating Qi along these two meridian lines (the *Du Mai* and the *Ren Mai* channel), it will activate all 12 meridians (Luo) at the same time. Qi will then also pass through the 12 meridians (Luo) smoothly. This circulation of Qi will in turn invoke a smooth flow of blood. This process of circulating the Qi around these meridians is called the *Small Heaven Mediation*. Please see the following illustration of the *Small Heaven Mediation* circulation practice diagramming how the mind leads the Qi along the *Du Mai* meridian and the *Ren Mai* meridian in a clockwise circle around the body.

Small Heaven Mediation





Keep Practicing 24 Hours:

The purpose of practicing and nurturing Qi flow is to clear blockages (Shū tōng) in the meridians and to maintain a healthy flow of blood. Keeping the meridians and blood flow clear of blockages for 24 hours is needed to truly become healthy and to have longevity. How is this done? Below are the following elements of this practice:

First of all, it is still necessary to adjust and maintain a relaxed state of mind. If a person is in tension, worry, fear, sorrow, or anger all day long, it is likely that their body will not be healthy. Modern medical research has shown that cancer is caused caused by emotional factors. So how can we achieve this kind of relaxation? Deep, internal relaxation is one of the first of the three abilities I previously discussed. I can adjust myself and my body and mind to relax at any time. Of course, to do this, I needed to continue to cultivate and master Qigong.

Developing philosophical thinking for the purpose of facing the strain and impact that our complex society has upon us is also an important aspect of learning to relax. We must learn to find ways to deal with this while also in pursuit of material enjoyment. (There are ten philosophies that I use for this purpose, and I will introduce them one by one in future articles).

Second, we must arrange our own life rhythm so that the body will always be in a state of relaxation during stressful situations, and during work. We need to find a balance in life for activity and rest. At any possible time, perform the *Small Heaven Mediation (Zhou Tiangong)*, running the Qi in an elliptical around the body with the mind and breath to clear the meridians and open a healthy flow of Qi and circulation.

Third, arrange to live a good life; sex life is also everyone's need. Make it a happy and healthy part of your life. This is also one of the contents of the 24 hour practice. There are many discourses and exercises on sexual life in Qigong, such as, *Gemini Xiao Zhoutian*, *Sexual Post-Aspiration Balance Method*, etc. which we will not discuss here. But on the whole, living a good life requires not only coordination and happiness, but also a balance between Yin and Yang.

Complementing both forces in balance so we are not too much of one extreme or another is the key. If you are unhealthy or unhappy, it becomes necessary to find the imbalance toward too much Yin or Yang and then moderate it, so you may have a happy and healthy life.

Fourth, diet and living habits must be applied daily, so special attention and proper arrangements are required. If you don't smoke, don't drink alcohol, don't stay up late, arrange normal working hours and so on, it will help in preventing blockages in your channels. In particular, eat healthy. There is a great deal of information now on how to eat healthy. It is a very important principle in Qigong to know how to eat it. You can only have seven or eight full meals per week. This along with Qigong exercise and breathing will help you to lose weight. Proper diet will allow digestion of your food and the balance between your bodily organs. In this regard, I will make further elaboration when there is a chance in the future.

Fifth, the last point is to arrange a certain amount of time to concentrate on doing the three basic Qigong exercises. For people who are not physically ill, they can perform Qigong practice three to five times a week for one ½ to two hours. For people with chronic diseases or post-operative recovery, it is ideal to perform these Qigong exercise for at least 2 hours or more per day.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that we should not easily believe in the false propaganda of some Qigong teachers. Some Qigong teachers strongly exaggerate the role of the individual, misleading the students to respect them as gods and so on by various means, which is incorrect. It should be recognized that Qigong is recognized as a science in China and in the United States and it is also a part of Chinese medicine; defined as *Alternative Medicine*. The practitioners can only achieve unexpected and excellent results if they study the exercises carefully and work hard and adhere to them.



Case Medical School Qigong Elective Course