

A taste of an Eastern Tradition, QI GONG

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Qi Gong is a systematic set of slow movements, coordinated with the breath, usually done in standing position, designed to improve energy. Chinese word for energy is Qi, pronounced as chee.

For more information on this practice, check out:

<https://www.nqa.org/what-is-qigong->

<https://www.consciouslifestylemag.com/qigong-exercises-healing-energy/>

<https://www.nqa.org/what-is-qigong->

Personal background – I studied Qi Gong and T'ai Chi at the T'ai Chi Center in Madison with Tricia Yu; she learned this in Taiwan. T'ai Chi is a systematic set of slow movements, coordinated with the breath, typically done in a series of fluid movements moving across the floor. Designed to improve energy and, in some versions, as a martial art. I learned the long version of the Yang style T'ai chi over 18 months of classes, group and individual practice.

The outcomes of Qi Gong and T'ai Chi are similar; they can be seen as different gateways to similar goals. Looked at through a health lens, these movements improve the range of motion of our joints and muscles, challenge balance, as well as improve circulation of oxygen to our cells and tissues. When one can focus on the breath in the present moment, one can experience mindfulness or meditation in motion. Qi Gong can be learned more readily than T'ai Chi.

Preparation

Starting position -preferably standing, feet shoulder width apart, hands at side; sit if desired.

Hands flat on belly, fingers towards pubic bone, thumbs above navel.

Exhale deeply to empty lungs.

Slow inhale to count of 3-4; slow exhale count of 6-8. Principle – exhale twice as long as inhale.

Notice rise and fall of belly with diaphragm.

Notice being; how heavy or light, how tired or energetic, how calm or nervous; without judgement or responses. Just notice. If you want, rate your overall energy on a 1-10 scale, 10 being great, 1 being little to none.

Open chest -- Preferably standing, feet shoulder width apart. Raise arms to midline & shoulder, moving straight arms, to side, at shoulder height. Principle –coordinate with breath; focus on repeating 5 times.

Give self hug - Coordinating with breath, repeat 3-5 times.

Open hips - Preferably standing, feet shoulder width apart, toes pointing out about 45 degrees. Bring hands to midline. Inhale, lowering hands to pelvic area and squatting a little, as in a ballet move a plie. Exhaling, Raise arms, hips to standing position. Coordinating with breath, repeat 5 times.

Open spine – From starting position, inhale & raise arms to shoulders, then slowly, slowly exhale as you lower head to chest, lean over belly, aiming to lower one vertebrae at a time, gently, until all vertebrae /spine are bent forward. Hang there for an inhale & exhale, without pulling, pushing, trying. Just hang. Then inhale as you rise up, moving one vertebrae at a time, exhaling as needed on rising to standing. Repeat 3-5 times.

Movements – Connecting with Sky & Earth, Learning from Nature

Rising with the Sun

Preferably standing, feet shoulder width apart, toes pointing out about 45 degrees. Inhale, bring arms to midline, as if holding a big ball. Exhale, lowering ball /sun to ground. Inhale, slowly raising ball about 1/3 of way up, then exhaling about 2/3rds of way up over head so ball /sun is over head. Repeat 3-5 times.

Moving with Moon

Preferably standing, feet shoulder width apart, toes pointing out about 45 degrees. Inhale, bring both arms together at one side/left at shoulder level. Exhale, opening arms as if to hold a small to medium ball /moon and moving arms over head. Pause when arms over head, Inhale. Exhale, moving arms with small to medium ball /moon towards opposite side /right. Go back to standing position for one breath. Then repeat 5 times.

Touching the stars

Preferably standing, feet shoulder width apart, toes pointing out about 45 degrees. Inhale, bring both arms together at one side/left at shoulder level. Exhale, opening & extending arms with hands and fingers open and slowly wiggling, as if to touch the stars and sky. Pause when arms over head, Inhale. Exhale, moving arms with small to medium ball /moon towards opposite side /right. Go back to standing position for one breath. Then repeat 5 times.

Standing as a Crane

Preferably standing, feet shoulder width apart. Inhale, slowly raise one leg/left, either off floor or so toe touches; raise arm/wing on same side over shoulder, simultaneously lowering arm /wing on other side/right. Hold position as exhale. Switch sides, repeat 4-6 times.

Flying as a Bird.

If with group, get in circle, move slowly in clockwise motion. Coordinate inhale with slowly stepping forward on one side/left, opening arms /wings, raising torso to partial upright position. Then coordinate exhale with slowly stepping forward on other side/right, bringing arms /wings towards torso, & lowering torso closer to ground. Repeat several times around the circle, at own paces.

Lumbering as a Bear

If with group, get in circle, move slowly in clockwise motion. Starting with inhale at starting position, Coordinate exhale with stepping forward & down, towards one side/left, & brushing arm from same side/left across thigh from center to left. Repeat on opposite side/right (as if in a mirror). Repeat several times around the circle, at own paces.

Standing position for massaging.

Coordinating breath with slow gentle movements, inhale and exhale while massaging neck muscles on each side for ~4 breaths.

Coordinating breath with slow gentle movements, inhale and exhale while using pads of fingers, massage scalp in several spots, over 5 breaths.

Taking base of hands to eye sockets, gently massage here simultaneously, in circles for 3-5 breaths.

Taking finger pads, massage in circular motion around eyeballs, simultaneously.

Raise arms over shoulders so hands can massage ears. Work slowly, massaging ear from top to tip in btw fingers and thumbs, repositioning after a breath. Repeat ~3 times.

Placing hands flat on belly, inhale. As one starts to exhale, massage abdomen from one's own lower R to upper R quadrant, moving across to upper L, and then moving down to lower L quadrant. Stop, pause, standing position. Repeat 3-5 times.

Standing, closing mindfulness poem.

Hands out, compassion.

Arms down, in V, wellness.

Arms over head, peacefulness & ease.

Arms at sides, palms up –catching rainbow ends -- happy