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DR. YANG, JWING-MING

PAIN-FREE JOINTS

46 Simple Qigong Movements for
Arthritis Healing and Prevention

**REGAIN
YOUR
WELL BEING,
FAST**



Pain-free motion is the goal, and qigong movements will help you accomplish that goal.

“Master Yang is one of America’s most sought-after instructors of qigong.”

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“Emphasizes the importance of the what, how, and why of these methods, which serves to empower readers.”

—John Loupos, MS, HSE, author, owner of the Pain and Mobility Clinic

“Gives the knowledge necessary for taking wellness into your own hands.”

—Sally Whitaker, owner of Move Forward Pilates

“Offers hope for more than just pain management. Sufferers may see improvement, or even a reversal of their condition.”

—Foreword Reviews

According to the Centers for Disease Control, over fifty million Americans struggle with doctor-diagnosed arthritis. Obesity and inactivity are proven aggravating factors, limiting mobility and making everyday activities difficult and painful. For many, arthritis progresses to the point where they must manage pain for years to come. Some have little choice but to rely on prescription medication or even surgery.

But for the millions of others with joint pain, there is hope. By committing to a simple qigong practice, you can begin to take care of your own joints with less reliance on others. We can prevent and heal injuries to maintain loose, flexible, and healthy joints.

Motion is the key, and in this book Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming will get you moving. You will regain natural, pain-free motion and suppleness with qigong, a timeless Chinese art that promotes healing, flexibility, and balance. The gentle, meditative movements emphasize proper motion in coordination with breath, making qigong the right choice for preventing, treating, and even reversing arthritis.

This book presents 46 movements to help you loosen, stretch, strengthen, heal, and maintain comfortable, flexible joints for a lifetime.

You will learn

- What qigong is and why it is a good choice for healing and maintaining healthy joints
- 4 gentle torso-loosening movements
- 9 hand-massage movements and techniques
- 6 massage methods for immediate relief
- 3 qigong movements for neck, spine, and waist
- 7 qigong movements for fingers, hands, and wrists
- 8 qigong movements for elbows and shoulders
- 4 qigong movements for toes and ankles
- 5 qigong movements for hips and knees



Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD, is a world-renowned author, scholar, and teacher and a leading authority on qigong. He has been involved in Chinese martial arts since 1961 and maintains more than 55 schools in 18 countries. Dr. Yang’s writing and teaching include the subjects of qigong, kung fu, tai chi chuan, massage, and meditation. Dr. Yang is the author of more than 35 books and 80 videos.

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Praise for *Pain-Free Joints*

“*Pain-Free Joints* offers hope for more than just pain management. Sufferers may see improvement, or even a reversal of their condition.

“*Pain-Free Joints: 46 Simple Qigong Movements for Arthritis Health and Prevention* by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming offers information and exercises to help treat arthritis. The book acknowledges that both Western medicine and Eastern medicine can be helpful, and suggests practical, clear, symptom-relieving steps for anyone suffering from arthritis pain.

“The book is brief, well organized, and very clear, featuring exercises that almost anyone can do. Yang discusses massage, acupuncture, and cavity presses, and explains how each can be used to improve the flow of qi, the natural energy that circulates throughout the universe and also through the body. The book includes an informative and interesting comparison of Western and Eastern healing philosophy, focusing on treatment versus prevention. It does not assume that one is right while the other is wrong, but instead suggests that both can be used together to achieve overall good health.

“Though the concepts being explained are quite complex, the book is very easy to understand. Qigong, or the study of qi, is central to the lessons, as is learning to affect how qi moves through the body. The author explains that ‘traditional Chinese physicians believe that since the body’s cells are alive, as long as there is a proper supply of qi, the physical damage can be repaired or even completely rebuilt.’ The book emphasizes the importance of understanding the theory behind the suggested exercises and the need to make them part of a lifelong practice. There is just enough basic information

to get started exploring this path to healing. There are also references for further study, and the book concludes with a very helpful glossary of Chinese terms.

“Abundant photographs demonstrate the recommended exercises, depicting a model performing each one. Despite being still, black-and-white forms, these images do a remarkable job of illustrating how to move through each activity. The accompanying descriptions are clear and easy to follow, with instructions on how to move the body through the exercise, how to breathe with the movement, and recommendations for the number of repetitions needed to be effective.

“Those who suffer from arthritis know that it can feel like an endless cycle of pain with little hope for improvement. What is perhaps most remarkable about *Pain-Free Joints* is that it offers hope for more than just pain management. Though the author warns that these exercises will take diligence and patience, with continued practice sufferers may see improvement, or even a reversal of their condition.”

—Catherine Thureson, *Foreword Reviews*

“Dr. Yang’s various qigong methods and techniques for arthritis are as thorough, and presumably effective, as his dedicated readers have grown to expect. What I especially appreciate is Dr. Yang’s emphasis, and re-emphasis throughout this book, on the importance, not only of the *whats* and *hows* of his methods, but equally on the *whys*, which serve to empower his readers in a special way. In addition to providing meaning and understanding to the qigong healing techniques covered, the *whys* behind these methods serve to excite and motivate the practitioner’s cortical brain, which plays a critically significant role in the mobilization of qi for self-healing

purposes. This makes for a de facto blending of ancient qigong healing methods and modern neuroplasticity.”

—John Loupos, MS, HSE, author of *The Sustainable You: Somatics and the Myth of Aging* and *Tai Chi Connections: Advancing Your Tai Chi Experience*; owner of the Pain and Mobility Clinic, Cohasset, Massachusetts

“As a classical Pilates instructor who works with students with arthritis every day, I was very interested in learning Dr. Yang’s theories and techniques. That the book begins with explaining what arthritis is, the varying treatments of Chinese versus Western medicine, and how qigong specifically is effective in the maintenance of arthritis gives the reader the knowledge necessary for taking their wellness into their own hands. I can see this book being an invaluable tool that the reader will want to keep on hand to reference throughout their qigong practice.”

—Sally Whitaker, Peak Pilates comprehensive instructor; studio manager at Studio on Main Pilates & Yoga, Independence, Missouri; owner of Move Forward Pilates

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Foreword

Until the exceptional journey of Marco Polo in the thirteenth century, Europeans viewed scientific, religious, medical, and philosophical ideas in a very limited manner, perceiving themselves as the world's, if not the universe's, center.

Marco Polo brought to Western consciousness but a tiny fraction of long-accumulated Chinese wisdom, including knowledge of the invention of gun powder, the printing press, rocketry, and, of course, the shocking revelation of a huge civilization already thousands of years old.

Had leaders of thirteenth-century Western thought been sufficiently open to new ideas, Marco Polo could have prepared us for a workable medical system based on the Chinese concept of primary energy, a subtle bioelectric force pervading our every cell, common to us all, and capable of preventing illness, healing when ill, and extending life and its quality.

While a great deal of Chinese wisdom was still locked up in the archives of special teachers (masters) under the seal of secrecy, we would nonetheless have learned much about healing from the vast array of material already available in the thirteenth century: acupuncture, herbology, massage, beneficial breathing techniques, and, most importantly, the many ways to manipulate and to increase the flow of this subtle energy force called qi (pronounced *chee*).

Apparently, Western consciousness is at last prepared to receive this grand Chinese legacy, because qigong (energy work) knowledge and training have proliferated in Western society in the last few decades. Western medicine has begun to accept, or at least explore, the existence of qi and its circulation in the body.

Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD, is indeed a master when describing in numerous published volumes the extensive Chinese concept of qi, explaining not just well-known facets of the lore but also revealing long-hidden secret manuscripts previously unavailable to Western readers.

With the guidance of Dr. Yang, the reader will learn many simple exercises that condition the tissues and permit increased blood flow, and thus oxygen and other nourishment, to those parts of the body in need. More importantly, the reader is taught to “lead” the qi to direct the flow of this primary subtle energy. According to Dr. Yang, “In order to use qigong to maintain and improve your health you must know that there is qi in your body, and you must understand how it circulates and what you can do to ensure that the circulation is smooth and strong.” All this, and more, is presented in clear language that flows easily from a very patient teacher. Four thousand years of Chinese observation have resulted in many beneficial methods for preventing illness and achieving wellness, and none are more basic to the arthritic than those described in this book.

Perry A. Chapdelaine Sr. (1925–2015)

Author and past executive director, Arthritis Trust of America

Preface

Arthritis has afflicted humankind for as far back as we can trace. In all races, the young as well as the old have experienced the pain of arthritis. The condition can also have a disastrous effect on the sufferer's peace of mind. Despite the great advances made in many fields of science, Western medicine today is still unable to cure many forms of arthritis. Most treatment is limited to relieving pain and inflammation rather than curing the condition at its root.

In the nearly four thousand years that Chinese medicine has been developing, many approaches have emerged to stopping the pain or even curing arthritis, such as acupuncture, massage, qigong (pronounced *chee gong*) exercises, and herbal treatment.

In this book, I will focus on only the qigong practices commonly used by the Chinese to treat arthritis. Other methods, such as acupuncture and herbal treatments, will have to be introduced elsewhere by qualified Chinese physicians.

Naturally, some methods are more effective than others, depending on the condition of the specific individual. Qigong exercises have come to be considered as an excellent method not only of preventing arthritis, but also of curing many forms of arthritis and rebuilding the strength of the joints. Once the joint completely recovers its strength, it is well on its way to a complete healing.

It is clear that both Western and Eastern medicines have their advantages and disadvantages. If both cultures could share what they have discovered and learn to experience each other with open minds, then medicine would have a chance to begin a new era. Western medicine, for example, would be able to borrow the information that Chinese medicine has accumulated about qi (bioelectricity) and

combine it with the findings drawn from its own experience. Chinese medicine, on the other hand, could adapt modern Western medical technology to aid and improve the effectiveness of traditional Oriental medicine.

Arthritis serves as an excellent demonstration of how this combination of Eastern and Western medicine can work. Chinese doctors believe that the main causes of arthritis are weakness and injury of the joints. In order to rebuild the strength of the joints and repair the injury, qi must be led to these joints and be able to circulate smoothly there. Only by nourishing these joints with qi can the damage be repaired. Chinese doctors have researched ways of improving the qi circulation in the joints and have found that the majority of arthritis patients can be healed. In addition, they have found that once the joints are strong again, the arthritis will not readily return.

Since the first edition of this book was published, many people have contacted me about the benefits they have obtained from this book. Many of them could not believe that the serious problem of arthritis can be easily treated by simple exercises. Through acupuncture, massage, or herbal treatment, the relief from arthritis pain is not as long-lasting, yet is also drug-free and promotes a healthier lifestyle. It is also well understood that the long-term solution is through the correct methods of exercises. For example, when an episode is serious, any exercise that can cause tension in the joint area is not proper. This is because the tension of the joint locks the joint, making the qi and blood circulation more stagnant. The key to healing or repairing the joints is through adequate, smooth qi and blood circulation. Only then can the damaged physical areas be rebuilt.

I remember when I was teaching qigong in Andover, Massachusetts, about ten years ago, right after one of my classes there was a senior woman who came to see me for help. She showed me her swollen hands and wrists, caused by a serious arthritis problem. After I took a look, I asked her if she was able to move her fingers

and turn her wrists. She tried and showed some ability to move them with limited flexibility. I taught her some simple theory of the importance of circulating the qi and blood in the fingers and wrists. Then, I encouraged her to do the finger and wrist exercises everyday as many times as possible. I also told her it would probably take six months to see the effectiveness of the treatment.

Three months later, she came to see me although I had forgotten about our first meeting and conversation. She showed me her hands, and what I saw were mildly swollen index, middle, and ring fingers. I told her she should be careful, since there was a sign of arthritis development. She stared at me with big eyes and said, “You don’t remember me, Dr. Yang,” and she refreshed my memory of the first meeting. I could not believe it took only three months for her to have this significant progress. She told me she had stopped taking painkillers for nearly a month already. Whenever there was an episode of pain, she simply moved the area for a few minutes and the pain was alleviated.

From this experience, I saw how she had conquered herself in making these activities part of her lifestyle. I also believe that she had grasped the key to healing herself through simple qigong exercises.

Many people think qigong practice is hard and mysterious. In some ways, it is. However, in some other ways, it is simple and effective. Actually, the most difficult task is regulating yourself into practicing as part of your lifestyle. Remember, the most powerful way to maintain health and cure problems is to bring some proper daily exercises and diet into your life. Our physical body is evolved through use and movement. We must keep moving and exercising it. If we ignore this fact, we will degenerate rapidly and become sick easily.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

How to Use This Book

QIGONG IS A PRACTICE. As you practice the seemingly simple movements you will find the deeper feeling that comes only from practice, and it is this feeling that will lead you to a healthier body. The exercises and massage techniques in chapter 2 will be helpful in alleviating your existing pain and preparing you for the strengthening exercises in chapter 3.

But before you begin you must ask: what, why, and how. “What” means “What am I looking for?” “What do I expect?” and “What should I do?” Then you must ask, “Why do I need it?” “Why does it work?” “Why must I do it this way instead of that way?” Finally, you must ask, “How does it work?” “How much have I advanced toward my goal?” and “How will I be able to advance further?”

It is very important to understand what you are practicing, not just automatically to repeat what you have learned. Understanding is the root of any work. Through understanding you will be able to know your goal. Once you know your goal, your mind can be firm and steady. With this understanding, you will be able to see why something has happened, and what the principles and theories behind it are. Without all of this, your work will be done blindly, and it will be a long and painful process. Only when you are sure what your target is and why you need to reach it should you raise the question of how you are going to accomplish it. The answers to all of these questions form the root of your practice and will help you to avoid the bewilderment and confusion that uncertainty brings. If you keep this root, you will be able to apply the theory and make it grow—you will know how to create. Without this root, what you learn will be only branches and flowers, and in time they will wither.

In China there is a story about an old man who was able to change a piece of rock into gold. One day, a boy came to see him and asked for his help. The old man said, “Boy, what do you want? Gold? I can give you all of the gold you want.” The boy replied, “No, master, what I want is not your gold. What I want is the trick of how to change the rock into gold!” When you just have gold, you can spend it all and become poor again. If you have the knowledge of how to make gold, you will never be poor. For the same reason, when you practice, understanding theory and principle will not only shorten your time of pondering and practice but also enable you to practice most efficiently. One of the hardest parts of the training process is learning how actually to do the forms correctly. Every qigong movement has its special meaning and purpose.

What Is Arthritis?

1-1. Introduction

In this chapter, we will first describe arthritis from the point of view of both Western medicine and Chinese medicine. In the next section, we will briefly consider the possible causes of arthritis. Finally, we will review other means of preventing or curing arthritis.

Although both the Western and the Chinese systems of medicine describe arthritis in very similar ways, especially in regard to symptoms, there are a number of differences in how the two cultures approach the disease.

1-2. What Is Arthritis?

Western Viewpoints about Arthritis

Before discussing arthritis, we would first like to mention another popular, nonmedical term, *rheumatism*, which is commonly confused with arthritis. Rheumatism has come to mean so many things to so many people that it is almost impossible to give it a clear definition. The term *rheumatism* commonly refers to any of several pathological conditions of the muscles, tendons, joints, bones, or nerves, characterized by discomfort and disability. This includes variable, shifting, painful inflammation and stiffness of the muscles, joints, or other structures.

The term *arthritis* is also commonly misused to refer to any vague pain in the area of the joints. However, joints are complicated mechanisms made up of ligaments, tendons, muscles, cartilage, and *bursae*, and pain in them can have many different causes. Arthritis is

specifically an inflammation of the joints. The word *arthritis* is derived from the Greek words *arthron* (joint) and *itis* (inflammation). Therefore, if you have pain or swelling caused by injury to the ligaments or muscles, it is not necessarily classified as arthritis. You can see that while arthritis is (in a popular sense) a form of rheumatism, rheumatism is not necessarily arthritis.

The symptoms or characteristics of arthritis are pain, swelling, redness, heat, stiffness, and deformity in one or more joints. Arthritis may appear suddenly or gradually, and it may feel different to different people. Some patients feel a sharp, burning, or grinding pain, while others may feel a pain like a toothache. The same person may feel it sometimes as pain and other times as stiffness. If we look more closely at these signs, we can detect certain characteristic physiological changes. These changes include dilation of the blood vessels in the affected area and an increase of blood flow at the site of the inflammation. In addition, there is increased permeability in these vessels, as white blood cells that fight infection infiltrate the diseased tissue. Finally, fluid from the blood can also leak into the tissue and generate edema or swelling. For these reasons, arthritis may affect not only the joints but also other connective tissues of the body. These tissues include several supporting structures, such as muscles, tendons, and ligaments, and the protective coverings of some internal organs.

Chinese Viewpoints about Arthritis

Although the symptoms of arthritis remain the same everywhere, Chinese physicians consider them from a different point of view. Like all other cases of illness, Chinese physicians diagnose by evaluating the imbalance of qi (which the West now calls bioelectricity) in the body, as well as by considering the actual physical symptoms.

Chinese medicine has found that before a physical illness occurs, the qi becomes unbalanced. If this qi imbalance is not corrected, the physical body can be damaged, and the physical symptoms of sick-

ness will appear. The reason for this is very simple. Every cell in your body is alive, and in order to stay alive and functioning, each requires a constant supply of qi. Whenever the supply of qi to the cells becomes irregular (or the qi “loses its balance”), the cells start to malfunction. Chinese physicians try to intercept the problem before there is any actual physical damage and correct the situation with acupuncture, herbal treatments, or a number of other methods. In this way, they hope to prevent physical damage, which is considered the worst stage of an illness. Once the physical body—for example, an internal organ—has been damaged, it is almost impossible to make a complete recovery. This approach is the root of Chinese medicine. Chinese physicians try to diagnose arthritis in its earliest stages, before there is any physical damage. When the qi starts to become unbalanced, although there are no physical changes, the patient suffers from nerve pain. Because human qi is strongly affected by the natural qi present in clouds, moisture, and the sun (both day and night), the body’s qi is easily disturbed by changes in the weather, and arthritis patients will usually feel pain in the joints. When cloud cover is low and there is a lot of moisture in the air, the potential of the earth’s electromagnetic field is also increased, and your body’s qi balance can be significantly influenced. The other obvious symptom of this influence is emotional disturbance. In the West, as long as there is no symptom of physical damage, these feelings of physical and emotional pain are usually ignored, although sometimes drugs are prescribed to stop the pain. Even though Western physicians sometimes consider this an early stage of arthritis, Chinese physicians do not, and refer to it instead as “feng shi,” or “wind moisture.” This refers to the cause of the pain that the patients feel. Eastern medical dictionaries often translate “feng shi” as “rheumatism.”

Although countless arthritis patients regularly feel their pain worsen when the weather changes, scientists who conducted studies in an experimental climate chamber at the University of Pennsylvania

concluded that there is no evidence that the weather affects arthritis.¹ I believe that this is solely because Western medicine does not take qi/bioelectricity into account. When Western medicine starts to understand the relationship between environmental qi and human qi, then ample evidence of this association will emerge.

In China, when feng shi occurs, people will usually seek out a physician to correct the problem through acupuncture, massage, acupressure, herbal treatment, qigong exercises, or, most commonly, a combination of these methods. The specific treatment would, of course, depend on the symptoms of each individual case. For example, if the feng shi stems from an old joint injury, the treatment will be different than if it were caused by weak joints. The key to treatment is finding the root of the qi imbalance and correcting it. Only when this root cause is removed will the patient recover completely.

There are many possible causes of feng shi. The most common cause is a joint injury that never completely healed and caused a gradually increasing disturbance of the qi circulation. Fortunately, if the patient practices the correct qigong exercises, the joint can be healed completely and its strength rebuilt. Exercise stimulates the qi and increases its circulation, which removes stagnation and blockages and lets the body's natural healing mechanism operate. Smooth qi circulation is the root of health and the foundation of healing.

Feng shi will frequently also be found in patients who were born with weak joints or deformities, such as having one leg significantly longer than the other. Naturally, the most common and serious cases of feng shi are caused by aging. As we grow older, the muscles and tendons degenerate and start functioning less effectively around the joints, a process that places more pressure on the cartilage, synovium (joint surface), capsule, and the bones. This is the main cause of arthritis in older people.

If a person with feng shi does not seek to correct the problem, or the physician fails to correct it, the feng shi may develop into an

How Do the Chinese Treat Arthritis?

2-1. Introduction

In the first chapter, we said that the actual definition of qigong is the study of qi. This means that qigong covers a very wide field of research and includes the study of the three general types of qi (heaven qi, earth qi, and human qi) and their interrelationships. However, because the Chinese have traditionally paid more attention to the study of human qi, which is concerned with health and longevity, the term *qigong* has often been misunderstood and misused to mean only the study of human qi. Because so much attention has been given to human qi over thousands of years, the study of human qigong has reached a very high level. Today, it includes many fields such as acupuncture, herbal study, massage, cavity press, qigong exercises, and even martial arts.

In this chapter, I would like to summarize, according to my understanding, some of the methods commonly used in China to prevent arthritis, to ease its pain, and to cure it. I would then like to focus the discussion on how qigong uses massage (including cavity press) and exercises to prevent and cure arthritis. Finally, I would like to point out the differences in how Western and Chinese medicine use massage and exercise to treat arthritis.

2-2. General Chinese Treatments for Arthritis

The best way to treat arthritis is to prevent it from happening. However, if it has already occurred, then the appropriate course is to prevent it from getting any worse, and then to rebuild the strength of the joint so that it can resume functioning normally.

Generally speaking, if a case of arthritis has already reached the stage of serious physical damage, special treatment is needed before any rebuilding can proceed. During the treating and rebuilding process, alleviating pain is always the first concern. In this section, we will briefly discuss the theory behind several common methods for treating arthritis that have been developed in China.

Massage

When done properly, massage will improve the qi circulation in the joint area. Massage is commonly used when a patient suffers from feng shi before arthritis and physical damage have occurred. At this time, the qi circulation is unbalanced, which may affect the nerves around the joints and cause pain. As mentioned earlier, feng shi can occur when a joint is weak or injured, or when a joint has degenerated because of aging. The pain usually increases when rain is coming on, because clouds and moisture accumulate great masses of electric charges that affect the qi in our bodies. Pain can also occur when the joints are exposed to cold wind, which can significantly affect the qi of the joints.

If the feng shi is caused by a minor injury, massage can help to heal the injury and ease the pain. The massage can usually prevent the feng shi from developing into arthritis, which the Chinese call “joint infection” (guan jie yan). However, if the feng shi is caused by a weak joint or one degenerated because of aging, then once the pain is alleviated, qigong exercises are necessary to rebuild the

Qigong for Arthritis

3-1. Introduction

In this section, we will introduce some simple stretching techniques, exercises, and massage techniques that can be used to improve and even heal the condition of your joints. These are techniques I have found to be effective over many years of experience. We will first present exercises to strengthen and maintain the health of the internal organs, then consider massage and cavity press techniques, and finally exercises to rebuild the strength of the joints.

Before proceeding any further, we would like to discuss the attitude you need to adopt in your practice. Quite frequently, people who are ill are reluctant to become involved in the healing process. This is especially true for arthritis patients. Both Western and Chinese physicians have had difficulty persuading them to become involved in regular exercise or qigong. The main reason for this reluctance is that the patients are afraid of pain and therefore believe that these kinds of exercise are harmful. In order to conquer this obstacle to your healing, you must understand the theory of healing and the reason for practicing. Only then will you have the confidence necessary for continued practice. Remember, a physician may have an excellent prescription for your illness, but if you don't take the medicine, it won't do you any good.

Another factor that has caused the failure of many a potential cure is lack of persistence. Because the healing process is very slow, it is easy to become impatient and lazy. Often in life, we will know exactly what it is we need to do, but because we are controlled by

the emotional parts of our minds, we end up either not doing what we need to or not doing it correctly.

It seems that most of the time our “emotional mind” and “wisdom mind” are in opposition. In China there is a proverb: “You are your own biggest enemy.” This means that your emotional mind often wants to go in the opposite direction from what your wisdom mind knows is best. If your wisdom mind is able to overcome your emotional mind, then there is nothing that can stop you from doing anything you want. Usually, however, your emotional mind causes you to lose your willpower and perseverance. We always know that our clear-headed wisdom mind understands what needs to be done, but too often we surrender to our emotional mind and become slaves of our emotions.

The first step when you decide to practice qigong is to strengthen your wisdom mind and use it to govern your emotional mind. Only then will you have enough patience and perseverance to keep practicing. You can see that the first key to successful training is not the techniques themselves but rather your self-control. I sincerely believe that as long as you have a strong will, patience, and perseverance, there is nothing you can’t accomplish.

Forming the habit of practicing regularly actually represents changing your lifestyle. Once you have started regulating your life through qigong, not only can it cure your arthritis and restrengthen your joints, but it can also keep you healthy and make both your mental and physical lives much happier.

This chapter will focus on discussing the qigong practices I am familiar with, leaving other methods such as acupuncture and herbs to other references. Before we discuss the actual practices, we would first like to remind you of the keys to successful practice. Only if you follow these keys in your practice will you be able to see and feel how Chinese qigong is different from similar Western arthritis exercises.

Important Training Keys

1. Regulating the Body

Before you start your qigong exercises, you should first calm down your mind and use this mind to bring your body into a calm and relaxed state. Naturally, you should always be concerned with your mental and physical centers. Only then will you be able to find your balance. When you have achieved both mental and physical relaxation, centering, and balance, you will be both natural and comfortable. This is the key to regulating your body.

When you relax, you should learn to relax deeply into your internal organs, and especially the muscles that enclose the organs. In addition, you must also place your mind on the joints that are giving you trouble. The more you can bring your mind deep into the joint and relax it, the more qi will circulate smoothly and freely to repair the damage.

2. Regulating the Breathing

As mentioned before, breathing is the central strategy in qigong practice. According to qigong theory, when you inhale, you lead qi inward and when you exhale you lead qi outward. This is our natural instinct. For example, when you feel cold in the wintertime, in order to keep from letting the qi out of your body, you naturally inhale more than you exhale to lead the qi inward, which also closes the pores in the skin. However, in the summertime when you are too hot, you naturally exhale more than inhale in order to lead qi out of your body. When you do this you start to sweat and the pores open.

In qigong, you want to lead the qi to the internal organs and bone marrow, so you must learn how to use inhalation to lead the qi inward. When you use qigong to cure your arthritis, you must inhale and exhale deeply and calmly so that you can lead the qi deep

into the joint and also outward to dissipate the excess or stagnant qi that has accumulated in the joints. Therefore, in addition to relaxing when you practice, you should always remember to inhale and exhale deeply. When you inhale, place your mind deep in the joint, and when you exhale, lead the qi to the surface of the skin.

3. Regulating the Mind

In qigong, the mind is considered the general who directs the battle against sickness. After all, it is your mind that manages all of your thinking and activity. Therefore, a clear, calm mind is very important so that you can judge clearly and accurately. In addition, your attention must also be concentrated. Your mind can generate an EMF (electromotive force or “voltage”) that causes your qi to circulate. The more you concentrate, the more strongly you can lead the qi.

When you have a calm and concentrated mind, you will be able to feel and sense the problem correctly. Therefore, when you practice qigong for your arthritis, you must learn how to bring your mind inward so that you can understand the situation, and you must know how to use your concentrated attention to lead the qi.

4. Regulating the Qi

Once you have regulated your body, breathing, and mind, you will be in a good position to start regulating your qi and will be able to lead your qi anywhere in your body in order to make repairs.

5. Regulating the Spirit

The final key to qigong is raising your spirit of vitality. Good morale or fighting spirit is necessary to win the struggle against illness. When your spirit is high, your willpower is strong, your mind is firm, and your patience can last a long time. In addition, when your spirit is high your emotions are under control and your wis-

dom mind can stimulate the qi to circulate in the body more efficiently. This will significantly reduce the time of healing.

You should now have a clear idea of how to practice most efficiently. During the course of your practice, you should frequently remind yourself of these key requirements. If you would like to learn more about the keys to qigong practice, you may refer to the YMAA book *The Root of Chinese Qigong*.

3-2. Qigong for Strengthening the Internal Organs

Your internal organs are the foundation of your health. Most deaths are due to the malfunction or failure of the internal organs. In order to be healthy and avoid degeneration, your organs need to have the correct amount of qi circulating smoothly through them.

The internal organs manage the energy in our bodies and carry out a variety of physical processes. When any organ starts to malfunction, the qi circulation in the body will be disrupted, and the production of hormones will be affected. This state can result in a variety of disorders, including gouty arthritis.

In this section, we would like to introduce two types of qigong practices that are commonly used to improve qi circulation, especially around the internal organs. The first exercise is massaging the internal organs by moving the muscles inside the torso. If you would like to have more information on the theory behind this subject, please refer to my book *Simple Qigong Exercises for Health*.

The second type of qigong practice is improving the qi circulation around the internal organs by massaging either directly over the organs or on acupuncture cavities that are connected to the organs. If you are interested to know about massage, please refer to my book *Qigong Massage*.

Massaging the Internal Organs with Movement

All of the internal organs are surrounded by muscles. Except for some of the trunk muscles that we use constantly throughout the day, most of these muscles are ignored. According to qigong theory, if you can bring your yi (wisdom mind) to a muscle, you can lead qi to energize it and move it. For example, if you decide you want to be able to wiggle your ears and you keep trying, you will eventually be able to. It's the same with the internal muscles. When you practice becoming very calm and bringing your attention deeper and deeper into the center of your body, you will soon be able to feel and sense the structure and condition of the insides of your body. Once this happens, you can use your mind to move the internal muscles and massage the internal organs.

The way to reach this goal is to start by using your trunk muscles to make the muscles deeper inside your body move. After you have practiced for a while, your mind will be able to reach deeper and feel other muscles as well. Once you are able to feel these muscles, you will be able to move them. With a bit more practice you will be able to control them while keeping them relaxed, and the movements will become natural, easy, and comfortable. Remember that the muscles have to be relaxed before the organs can be relaxed and before the qi can circulate smoothly.

In this subsection, we will introduce the beginning steps of internal organ massage through trunk movement. After you are able to do these exercises easily and smoothly, you should continue to lead your mind deeper and deeper into your body and sense your organs.

It is a good idea to loosen up your trunk before starting these massaging movements. This will let you move more naturally and comfortably.

Loosening the Torso Muscles

The torso is the center of the whole body, and it contains the muscles that control the torso and also surround the internal organs. When the torso muscles are tense, the whole body will be tense and the internal organs will be compressed. This causes stagnation of the qi circulation in the body and especially in the organs. For this reason, the torso muscles should be stretched and loosened up before any moving qigong practice.

The torso is supported by the spine and the trunk muscles. Once you have stretched your trunk muscles, you can loosen up the torso. This also moves the muscles inside your body around, which moves and relaxes your internal organs. This, in turn, makes it possible for the qi to circulate smoothly inside your body.

- Interlock your fingers and lift your hands up over your head, rotating the palms to face upward, while imagining that you are pushing upward with your hands and pushing downward with your feet. Do not tense your muscles, because this will constrict your body and prevent you from stretching. If you do this stretch correctly, you will feel the muscles in your waist area tensing slightly because they are being pulled simultaneously from the top and the bottom. Next, use your mind to relax even more, and stretch out a little bit more. Stretch for about ten seconds.



- After you have stretched for about ten seconds, turn your upper body to one side to twist the trunk muscles. Stay to the side for three to five seconds, then turn your body to face forward and then turn to the other side. Stay there for three to five seconds. Repeat the upper body twisting three times to each side.



- Next, tilt your upper body to the side and stay there for about three seconds, then tilt to the other side. Tilt three times to each side.

- Next, bend forward and touch your hands to the floor and stay there for three to five seconds. If you have any back problems keep your knees slightly bent as you bend forward.





- Finally, squat down with your feet flat on the floor to stretch your ankles. If you cannot keep your feet flat on the floor, use a lift under your heels.

- Next, lift our heels up to stretch the toes. Repeat the entire process ten times. After you finish, the inside of your body should feel very comfortable and warm.



Massaging the Large Intestine, Small Intestine, Urinary Bladder, and Kidneys

This exercise helps you to regain conscious control of the muscles in your abdomen. There are four major benefits to this abdominal exercise. First, when your lower dan tian (xia dan tian) area is loose, the qi can flow in and out easily. The lower dan tian is the main residence of your original qi (yuan qi). The qi in your dan tian can be led easily only when your abdomen is loose and relaxed. Second, when the abdominal area is loose, the qi circulation in the large and small intestines will be smooth, and they will be able to absorb nutrients and eliminate waste more efficiently. If

your body does not eliminate effectively, the absorption of nutrients will be hindered, and you may become sick. Third, when the abdominal area is loose, the qi in the kidneys will circulate smoothly, and the original essence stored there can be converted more efficiently into qi. In addition, when the kidney area is loose, the kidney qi can be led downward and upward to nourish the entire body. Fourth, these exercises eliminate qi stagnation in the lower back, healing and preventing lower back pain.

- To practice this exercise, stand with your feet a comfortable distance apart and your knees slightly bent. As you get more used to this exercise and your legs become stronger, bend your knees a little bit more. Without moving your thighs or upper body, use the waist muscles to move the abdomen around in a horizontal circle. Circle in one direction about ten times and then in the other direction about ten times. If you hold one hand over your lower dan tian and the other on your sacrum, you may be able to focus your attention better on the area you want to control.



In the beginning, you may have difficulty making your body move the way you want it to, but if you keep practicing, you will quickly learn how to do it. Once you can do the movement comfortably, make the circles larger and larger. Naturally, this will cause the muscles to tense somewhat and inhibit the qi flow, but the more you practice, the sooner you will be able to relax again. After you have practiced for a while and can control your waist muscles easily, start

Qigong Exercises

4-1. The Trunk

Neck

The neck is the passageway to the brain for the qi and blood. The brain is the center of your whole being, so if the circulation of the qi and blood is stagnant or blocked, your brain will not receive the proper nourishment. This causes dizziness, headache, and, in the long term, memory loss and accelerated aging. Blockages of the circulation to the head are often caused by neck injuries or arthritis in the neck joints. You can see that in order to keep your brain functioning healthily, the first step is to remove any blockages of the circulation in the neck. The next two exercises are commonly used in China for this purpose.

Look Left and Right (Zuo Gu You Pan)

This exercise can be done with the eyes open or closed, as long as you are able to concentrate your mind on your neck. Keep your mind calm, concentrate on what you are doing, and feel the movement of the joints. The more you concentrate, the deeper you will lead the qi. The exercise is very simple.

- Turn your head slowly from one side to the other. You may sit or stand. As you turn your head to the side, exhale, and as you turn your head back to the front, inhale. Keep your neck as relaxed as possible. Keep turning your head until your neck starts getting warm, which may take twenty to fifty turns.



The Heaven Spins and the Earth Turns (Tian Xuan Di Zhuan)

After you have finished the head-turning exercise, continue by rotating your head. Remember, the circle should be small. Large circles may cause the neck vertebra to grind into each other, which will make the problem worse. Stay relaxed and concentrated.



- Rotate your head clockwise about twenty to fifty times and then counterclockwise another twenty to fifty times. Rotate your head the same number of times in both directions. When you have finished, close your eyes, keep your mind calm, and feel the qi flowing in your neck area for a few minutes.

4-2. Spine

According to Chinese medicine, there is a qi vessel called the governing vessel (du mai), which follows the spine upward to the back of your head. Any problem with the spine can cause muscle tension, which, in turn, can cause stagnation of the qi flow in the governing vessel. The governing vessel controls the six yang primary qi channels in the body (large intestine, small intestine, triple burner, urinary bladder, gallbladder, and stomach channels). When there is any problem with the qi circulation in the governing vessel, the six yang primary channels and their related organs will also be affected.

Because any problem with your spine directly affects your health, Chinese qigong pays much attention to strengthening the spine and maintaining the qi circulation in the back. The following movements are only some of the exercises that can be used to strengthen and maintain qi circulation in the spine and back.

Large Dragon Softens Its Body (Da Long Ruan Shen)

This exercise is a wavelike movement that starts at the legs and flows upward to the sacrum and finishes at the neck.

- The movement goes from side to side or forward and backward—or you can do both. You may interlock your hands and move them along with your body. Keep your attention on your spine, where the movement is. You may also do this exercise sitting down, in which case, you generate the movement in your abdomen and let it flow upward. The body remains as relaxed as possible. Practice from twenty to fifty times until the spine feels warm.



Large Dragon Turns Its Body (Da Long Zhuan Shen)

- Continue the wave movement described above, only now also start turning from side to side. The turning uses the trunk muscles to rotate the vertebrae, which increases the mobility of the spine.



Waist

Be very careful when you exercise your waist. Moving too vigorously can injure the lower back and spine, so proceed slowly and carefully. The following three qigong exercises can improve qi circulation around the waist.

Rotating the Waist (Niu Yao Xian Huo)

This is a very simple exercise.

- Keep your head and feet in place as you gently and smoothly move your waist in a circle. Circle ten to twenty times in one direction, and then repeat the same in the other direction. As you practice, pay attention to the waist area and try to feel the movement inside your body. When you can feel the movement of your spine, it means that you are leading qi to it and at the same time using the motion to circulate the qi.



About the Author

Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD (楊俊敏博士)

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming was born on August 11, 1946, in Xinzhu Xian, Taiwan, Republic of China. He started his wushu (gongfu or kung fu) training at the age of fifteen under Shaolin White Crane (Shaolin Bai He) Master Cheng, Gin-Gsao (曾金灶). Master Cheng originally learned taizuquan from his grandfather when he was a child. When Master Cheng was fifteen years old, he started learning White Crane from Master Jin, Shao-Feng (金紹峰) and followed him for twenty-three years until Master Jin's death.



In thirteen years of study (1961–1974) under Master Cheng, Dr. Yang became an expert in the White Crane style of Chinese martial arts, which includes both the use of bare hands and various weapons, such as saber, staff, spear, trident, two short rods, and many others. With the same master, he also studied White Crane qigong, qin na (chin na), tui na, and dian xue massages and herbal treatment.

At sixteen, Dr. Yang began the study of Yang-style taijiquan under Master Kao Tao (高濤). He later continued his study of taijiquan under Master Li, Mao-Ching (李茂清) and was also a student with Mr. Wilson Chen (陳威伸) in Taipei. Master Li learned his

taijiquan from the well-known Master Han, Ching-Tang (韓慶堂), and Mr. Chen learned his taijiquan from Master Chang, Xiang-San (張詳三). From this further practice, Dr. Yang was able to master the taiji bare-hand sequence, pushing hands, the two-man fighting sequence, taiji sword, taiji saber, and taiji qigong.

When Dr. Yang was eighteen years old, he entered Tamkang College in Taipei Xian to study physics. In college, he began the study of traditional Shaolin Long Fist (changquan or chang chuan) with Master Li, Mao-Ching at the Tamkang College Guoshu Club, 1964–1968, and eventually became an assistant instructor under Master Li. In 1971 he completed his MS degree in physics at the National Taiwan University and then served in the Chinese Air Force from 1971 to 1972. In the service, Dr. Yang taught physics at the Junior Academy of the Chinese Air Force while also teaching wushu. After being honorably discharged in 1972, he returned to Tamkang College to teach physics and resumed study under Master Li, Mao-Ching. From Master Li, Dr. Yang learned Northern-style wushu, which includes bare-hand and kicking techniques as well as numerous weapons.

In 1974 Dr. Yang came to the United States to study mechanical engineering at Purdue University. At the request of a few students, Dr. Yang began to teach gongfu (kung fu), which resulted in the establishment of the Purdue University Chinese Kung Fu Research Club in the spring of 1975. While at Purdue, Dr. Yang also taught college-credit courses in taijiquan. In May 1978, he was awarded a PhD in mechanical engineering by Purdue.

In 1980 Dr. Yang moved to Houston to work for Texas Instruments. While in Houston, he founded Yang's Shaolin Kung Fu Academy, which was eventually taken over by his disciple, Mr. Jeffery Bolt, after Dr. Yang moved to Boston in 1982. Dr. Yang founded Yang's Martial Arts Academy in Boston on October 1, 1982.

In January 1984, he gave up his engineering career to devote more time to research, writing, and teaching. In March 1986, he

purchased property in the Jamaica Plain area of Boston to be used as the headquarters of the new organization, Yang's Martial Arts Association (YMAA). The organization expanded to become a division of Yang's Oriental Arts Association, Inc. (YOAA).

In 2008 Dr. Yang began the nonprofit YMAA California Retreat Center. This training facility in rural California is where selected students enroll in a five-year residency to learn Chinese martial arts.

Dr. Yang has been involved in traditional Chinese wushu since 1961, studying Shaolin White Crane (bai he), Shaolin Long Fist (changquan), and taijiquan under several different masters. He has taught for almost fifty years: seven years in Taiwan, five years at Purdue University, two years in Houston, twenty-six years in Boston, and more than eight years at the YMAA California Retreat Center. He has taught seminars all over the world, sharing his knowledge of Chinese martial arts and qigong in Argentina, Austria, Barbados, Botswana, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, China, Chile, England, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, and Venezuela.

Since 1986 YMAA has become an international organization, which currently includes more than fifty schools located in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela.

Many of Dr. Yang's books and videos have been translated into other languages, such as French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Russian, German, and Hungarian.

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