



organs, improves oxygen absorption into the lungs and assists the secretion of hormones by internal glands to organs and tissues. Regular practice of Taijiquan can greatly help in improving all of the functions of the heart. The heart rate when you are quiet is lower than usual, slightly increasing when you are moving normally, and greatly increasing when exercising vigorously, but resuming its slow rate faster than usual. Overall, Taijiquan is beneficial to homeostasis, metabolism and the stability of the internal organs.

5. Stimulating the internal energy, smoothing the Jingluo

Jingluo (acupuncture meridians, or channels) are the main blood and Qi energy channels and are directly related to the body and mind's state of health. If the channels are free of blockages health will be good. If the channels are blocked sickness can occur. That is why according to ancient Chinese medical philosopher, Lingshu- Jingbi says "those 12 channels are the source of people's living, as well as people's sickness. To find out and cure the sickness you have to check the 12 channels and their condition." Essentially, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a lifetime of continuously studying the 12 channels.

Maintaining the channels by keeping them unblocked helps to prevent illness and maintains the body's natural balance and harmony.

Taijiquan and Qigong exercises have many different methods of practice. Whichever method you choose, the final goal and fundamental Purpose is to increase the level of Qi energy within the body and drive it through the 12 main channels, producing a half-body energy circle (Xiaozhoutian) or a full-body energy circle (Dazhoutian). The benefits of this can vary from the prevention of sickness to maintaining a good level of fitness, helping to keep the mind sharp and keen while enjoying a long and healthy life.



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Internal energy (Qi) is the vital living force existing within every human body. The flow of internal energy is integral to the health of the individual. This internal energy is present from birth but how it develops and strengthens depends upon the level of practice and training that is undertaken by each individual. As long as you practice with a reasonable method, the internal energy will begin to increase in power and become a united force within the body. The outcome being that one can use this enhanced energy for self-defence, maintaining a healthy life, enhancing the ability to rid oneself of sickness and preventing diseases from entering the body in the first place.

The Tai Chi for Health life enhancement method of exercising requires a relaxed body, a calm mind and a quiet environment. Using the mind in combination with correct body posture and movements to direct internal energy increases Qi circulation within the body. Once the internal energy starts to get more powerful, Qi energy will flow with greater ease through the 12 main energy channels and spread throughout the whole body. Under your control and direction, the internal energy moves through your heart, maintaining it in a good state by relaxing it and making it more flexible, thus helping to prevent heart attacks. If moved through the kidneys, the internal energy makes them stronger, making you feel



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more energized and revitalized. When the energy moves through the lungs it makes your breathing much longer and deeper, moving oxygen to the brain more efficiently. Also, because the breathing goes up and down to your Dantian (lower abdomen), it results in shortening the length of time in which you are out of breath after exercising or undertaking strenuous activity. Once the energy passes through the liver it helps to cool it down, relieving it from any 'anger-heat'. Then, if it is directed through the spleen, it improves its ability to work with the stomach which, in turn, helps the digestive system as well as the absorption of nutrition. Direct the energy up to the head and it brings a calmer and more refreshed feeling. As the blood supply increases and the brain gets more oxygen, the optical nerves relax, making your eyesight sharper. It also



the arteries, therefore helping to prevent heart attacks. When it travels through your hair, it makes the hair very sensitive, and the scalp more efficient in getting rid of all the waste fluids when you perspire. An ancient Chinese medical health expert once said, “use your mind to direct your Qi energy according to your own body’s requirements and, in this way, rid the body of any sickness. Many of the internal sicknesses can thus be cured.”

Section Three

The Key Requirements and Main Details for Exercising

1. Being relaxed, calm and natural

Relax your whole body. Relax the internal organs, bone structure, muscles, skin, and hair. Nothing should be tense whilst practicing.

Calm the mind. Make your spirit clear, calm yourself down, get rid of any unnecessary thoughts and concentrate on your practice. Breathe naturally. While you practice, do not hold your breath and do not use stiff strength. In the beginning allow your body movements to co-operate with your breathing naturally. Do not force your breathing to go along with your body movements whilst you are a beginner.

2. Co-ordinating the mind and Qi together, uniting the body with the spirit

Use the mind to direct your Qi and make your movements work in conjunction with your breathing. When your mind is concentrated on a movement, your Qi energy follows and then your strength comes. All in order, but all as one. The principle of co-ordinating the breathing with the movements is "when the movement is closing, breathe in and whilst opening, breathe out. When the movement is pulling in, breathe in, and when the movement is pushing out, breathe out. When the movement is rising up, breathe in and when the movement is dropping down, breathe out. When you collect the energy, breathe in and when you release energy or strike, breathe out". In general, everything has to be natural. Do not force your breathing to make it long and

deep in the early stages. It will make correct breathing harder not easier. It also clogs energy and clarity of thought, hampering training. Keeping it natural and taking it easy are highly recommended training methods.

3. Keep the body upright and centralized. Distinguish between Solidity and Emptiness

Whatever form your practice takes, Taijiquan, Moving Qigong or Still Qigong, the body should always be upright and centered. As a general rule, you should not lean to any side and you should not move your upper body around without this being a requirement of the whole movement. As a special requirement, keep your head erect and relax your neck and shoulders. Drop your elbows down, keep your chest in and relaxed, sink your waist down and relax the hips. When you move or rotate the body, your head, along with your central body and the four limbs should all be co-ordinated. Eyes should look forward in a level direction, not up or down. The acupuncture points Baihui (top of the head) and Changqiang (between the tip of the coccyx and anus) should be linked together and synchronized with each other.

Whilst practicing, pay attention to the transference of weight. Distinguish between Yin (emptiness) and Yang (solidity). Make sure your internal energy is flowing, and the structural strength of the posture is correct, using natural and flowing movements. If any of the above requirements are not met, you should consider adjusting your movements during your training.

Whilst you practice, you have to follow the golden rule, which is, ‘one moves, all move’. When your hand moves, the rest of your body follows. Pay attention to the whole body, make sure that hands, eyes, body movements and feet integrate and co-operate together. Place emphasis on moving your internal energy, spirit, strength and energy release in the same direction. Always follow these principles when you practice.



Senior instructor Zhang Dongwu in the Chenjiagou Tai Chi Centre China



4. Length of Practice

The practicing time can vary between 20 minutes to one hour for beginners, gradually increasing. The amount of exercise one should take depends on the individual level of fitness. For a healthy person, after you practice your body should feel a little bit tired. This will vary according to each person's level of fitness, but one should pay attention not to overdo it. Your mind and spirit should feel revitalized. For less fit people, the practice time should be shorter and less intensive with higher postures. The practice time and intensity of practice should be increased and the postures lowered gradually over time as your level of fitness increases.

Ill people should not become overtired during practice. Once you feel tired stop exercising and rest until you feel fit enough to continue your practice. It is recommended to have short breaks in the middle of a training session. Seriously ill people should consult their health consultant or G.P. (Medical Doctor) and discuss the health conditions with the class instructor before taking on any Tai Chi exercise.



Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei in Tai Chi Double Sabre posture, March 2005



Chapter Two

The Foundation Training

Exercises

Section One

Warm up exercises



Morning practice in the park in China during the China Trip 2004 organized by Chen Style Tai Chi Centre UK. Training lead by Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei.

Blood is described as being in the state of Yin, and Qi energy is in the state of Yang. Blood is the source of Qi energy, and Qi energy helps the blood to flow and circulate in a symbiotic relationship.

The Warm Up exercises consist of rolling, stretching and loosening the fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders, chest, waist, hips, knees, ankles and toes. This relaxes the muscles and tendons, along with a stretching and loosening of the joints. The Warm Up exercises also helps the blood to circulate more efficiently. This in turn makes the Qi energy stronger, helping the blood to circulate even more efficiently and so on.

The Warm Up exercises are preparation exercises prior to practicing Chen Style Taijiquan. They are also excellent as a warm up exercise for other sporting activities as well.

These exercises can also be extremely beneficial when practiced purely in their own right, as well as a warm up to more strenuous activity. They are good for joints and tendons and can help to prevent arthritis. The exercises should be done until you begin to produce a mild sweat. This will ensure that the entire body is sufficiently warmed up, reducing the risk of strain or injury.

These exercises have been well received the world over and are suitable not only for Taiji practitioners but also for all types of people ranging from athletes to the elderly. These exercises are clearly demonstrated on the DVD.

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1 Circling head

Stand upright with your feet shoulder-width apart. Place both palms on both sides of the waist with the thumbs pointing backward and the fingers forward. Using your neck as the pivot, roll your head to the left, back, right, front and left again in a circular movement eight times. Do the same in the reverse direction. (Fig 2-1, 2-2, 2-3)

2-1



2-2



2-3



2 Wrist Rotating Exercise

Stand upright with your feet shoulder-width apart. Join your hands together in front of the body with the fingers interlaced. Rotate your wrists and in a circular motion in both directions, keeping your fingers, wrists, arms and shoulders relaxed. Repeat this movement 2x8 times. (Fig 2-4)

3 Arm Circling around Elbow exercise

Stand upright with your feet shoulder-width apart. Hang both arms by your side at Waist level. (Fig 2-5) Move the arms (the movement should use the elbow as the pivot for your forearm movements as much as possible) in a circle. Your palms move inward, backward then move out to both sides of the body and finally reach the front of your body to form completed circular movements. (Fig 2-6) Repeat this movement many times (doing sets of 8 is preferable).

2-4



2-6



2-5



4 Elbow Circling around Shoulder

Stand upright with your feet shoulder width apart. Change both hands into hook-hands and place them on the front shoulders. Using both shoulder joints as pivots, start rotating the elbows in a circular movement. Both elbows move up, forward and then down in a circle. Do eight circles in both directions, repeating the exercise if necessary (2 sets of eight circles for e.g.) (Fig 2-7, 2-8, 2-9)



2-8

2-9



5 Chest-Stretching exercise

Stand upright with your feet shoulder width apart. Raise both arms horizontally in front of the chest with the palms facing down, elbows bent and fingers pointing toward each other. Move

both elbows backwards and sideways twice so that the chest opens. (Fig 2-10) Then bring the forearms in front of your chest so that the right one is above the left one. This time move both arms back rotating them so that the palms face up and the whole arm is extended fully. After another two repetitions return to the starting position and repeat the first exercise with the elbows. Do both movements eight times. (Fig 2-11)

2-10



2-11



6 Arm Stretching exercise

Stand upright with your feet shoulder width apart and arms at your side. Raise the left hand up keeping the arm straight and the palm facing forward. Your right hand should be hanging by the right side of your body, palm facing back. Move both arms backward and forward four times simultaneously, (Fig 2-12) feeling your chest opening and expanding, and then swap the position of the arms, repeating the exercise for another four times. (Fig 2-13) Do two or three sets of this movement.

2-12



2-13



7 Arm Relax with Body Turning exercise

Stand upright with your feet shoulder-width apart and arms at the side. The shoulders, arms and hips should be relaxed and the knees slightly bent. Fix both feet on the floor and turn the body to the left and then to the right by using the waist. Following the movement of the body, swing both arms in the same direction. The hands should gently pat the body at the extremities of the movement. The arms should rise slowly so that the hands pat the body from the waist, until they are gently patting the body behind the shoulders. Eyes look to the rear-left of the body and the rear-right alternately, following the movement. (Fig 2-14, Fig 2-15) Repeat this exercises as many times as you like.

2-14



2-15



8 Waist Turning exercise

Stand upright with your feet shoulder-width apart. Clench both fists and raise them horizontally in front of the chest, bend the elbows and bring the fists to face each other. Keeping your feet still, twist your waist to one side roughly 45 degrees. Return to the starting position and do another twist (same direction) up to 90 degrees. (Fig 2-16) Do not over-twist! Do two twists in each direction (Fig 2-17), making the first a gentle one, and the second a harder one. Repeat this movement eight times in each direction.

2-16



2-17



9 Hips Circling exercise

Stand upright with your feet shoulder-width apart. Place both hands on the sides of your waist with the thumbs pointing forward and the fingers pointing back. (Fig 2-18) Using the hips as a pivot, move them left, back, right and then forward in a circular motion, eight times. (Fig 2-19, 2-20) Change the direction of the movement and do another eight circles.

2-18



2-19



2-20



10 Knees Circling exercise

Stand upright with your feet shoulder width apart. Bend the knees and place both palms on the knees. Using the kneecaps as pivots rotate them in a circular motion, one clockwise and the other anticlockwise. (Fig 2-21) You can also place both feet together, the position of the palms unchanged, and using the knees as pivots rotate them from left to right for eight circles. (Fig 2-22) Repeat this movement on the opposite direction as well.

2-21



2-22



11 Ankles Rotating exercise

Stand upright with your feet slightly apart. Place hands on the sides of your waist, with your thumbs pointing backward, and your fingers forward. Shift the weight on to your right leg, the toes of the left foot just touching the floor. Using the toes of the left foot as a supporting point and the ankle joint as an axis, rotate the ankle in a circular motion. (Fig 2-23) Repeat the movement using the other leg. (Fig 2-24) Repeat this exercise as many times as you like.

2-23



2-24



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12 Relaxing exercise

Stand upright with your feet slightly apart. Shift your weight onto the right leg and lift your left foot up whilst relaxing the hips and bending the knees. Move the arms back and turn your body to the right slightly. (Fig 2-25) Kick down with the left foot and at the same time throw both arms forward, relaxing the joints of the entire body. (Fig 2-26) Then shift your weight onto the left leg and repeat the movement. (Fig 2-27, 2-28) Repeat this exercise as many times as you like.



2-25



2-26



2-27



2-28



Section Two Silk Reeling Energy Exercises

1. Single hand

1 Stand with your feet wide apart, knees bent, taking most (60-70%) of the weight on your left leg. Extend the left arm to the side at shoulder level with the palm facing forward. Place the right palm on the right side of the waist with the thumb pointing back and the fingers forward. Eyes look towards the left hand. (Fig 2-29)

2 Turn the body to the right slightly, moving the weight to the right leg. At the same time, move the left palm down and right rotating the arm counterclockwise, following the body movement in a semi circle in front of the abdomen. This is called - counter-clockwise arm rotating movement. (Fig. 2-30)

2-29



2-30



3 Continue to turn the body to the right. At the same time complete the semi circle in front of the chest with the palm turning to face out. The arm has to rotate clockwise. This is called - clockwise arm rotating movement. Eyes look forward and right. (Fig 2-31)

4 Relax the left hip and turn the body to the left. Move the left palm up and left in an arc until it is above the left knee at shoulder level. Eyes look at the left palm. (Fig. 2-32)



This single action will form a complete circle. Repeat this movement sixteen times or more (in sets of eight). Beginners must first understand the line of the movement, and then realize the movement of the weight, the turning of the waist and the changes of rotating the arms.

In this way, you will progress from being stiff and jerky to having smooth co-ordinated movements. When you have grasped the line of the movement well, incorporate your breathing into the movement. Inhale in the initial movement, collecting the fresh air (energy), from the centre of the palm, down to Dantian. Exhale in the final movement, where the internal energy flows from the Dantian to the fingers.



2. Both hands

1 From the Left Hand stance (Fig 2-32), turn the body slightly to the left, moving the right palm downward and leftward in a semi circle from the side of the waist in front of the abdomen (i.e. in a clockwise motion), warding off the left palm upward with a clockwise motion. Eyes look forward-right. (Fig 2-37)

2 Continue from the previous movement. Turn the body first to the left and then to the right with the weight moving to the right leg. At the same time, move the right palm leftward and upward, and then rightward and upward with counter clockwise rotating. Move the left palm downward and inward in front of the abdomen. Eyes look forward-left. (Fig 2-38) In this way, exercise the previous movements in a circular motion, so that the turning of the body and the rotation of both arms are co-ordinated.



3. Wave the hand at the side of the body

1 Both legs form a left side bow step, with the weight mostly on the left leg. Left palm stretch out with elbow bent and keeping high as shoulder height. The palm is vertically aligned above the left foot at shoulder height. Place the right palm on the right side of the waist, with the thumb pointing back and the rest of the fingers forward. Eyes look at the left palm. (Fig 2-39)



2 Continue from the previous movement. Turn the body to the left, move the left palm backward in an arc to the rear-left of the body. Eyes look at the left palm. (Fig 2-40)

3 Turn the body to the right and move the weight to the right leg. Move the left palm downward and forward above the left knee with arm rotate counter clockwise. Eyes look down and forward. (Fig 2-41)

4 Turn the body to the left slightly. Move the left palm upward with a counter clockwise arc movement whilst rotating the arm clockwise slightly until it is at shoulder level (Fig 2-42)

This movement consists of an opening and a closing that forms a circle. Complete this movement sixteen times or more, repeating the series for the right hand as well. The essential points of the exercise are the same as described already, simply reverse left and right. (Fig 2-43, 2-44, 2-45, 2-46)



2-41



2-44



2-45



2-42



2-43



2-46

4. Deflect back on both sides of the body

1 Both legs form a right bow step. Place the left palm in front of the chest at shoulder level. Place the right palm on the right side of the waist. Eyes look forward. (Fig 2-47)

2 Continue from the previous movement. Turn the body to the left slightly and move the weight onto the left leg. At the same time, rotate the left palm clockwise whilst moving it down and back to the side of the waist with a counter clockwise movement. Rotate the right palm slightly clockwise whilst moving it back; raise it up and over in a circle then move it forward and right of the body, rotating it slightly counter clockwise. Eyes look forward. (Fig 2-48)

In this way, exercise the previous movements in a circular motion, paying attention to your waist, which serves as the main axis to initiate the movement of the arms. The waist initiates the shoulders, the shoulders initiate the elbows, and lastly the movement reaches the hands. When changing the direction of the palm from facing down to facing up and then rising, do not shrug the shoulders.

2-47



2-48



5. Twining both hands with forward step

1 Stand upright with the feet separate as shown on the diagram. Keep weight on the right leg and both palms pulling backward with finger pointing forward and palms facing outward. Eyes look forward. (Fig. 2-49)

2 Pulling both palms backward whilst the body turns to the right slightly. Eyes follow the palms movement. Keep weight on right leg and body sinks down slightly at your hips. (Fig. 2-50)

2-49



2-50



3 Turn body to the left whilst both palms move downward in an arc movements to the front of the abdomen with both arms rotating clockwise. Both palms face forward as shown on the diagram. Transfer the weight onto left leg during the movement. Eyes look forward. (Fig 2-51)

4 Rotate both arms counter clockwise and move both palms up then pulling/deflecting backward to its start position. Transfer weight back to right leg and turn body to the right as well. Eyes look forward. (Fig 2-52) Repeat the previous exercise for eight times then changing from left side to right. Pay attention to the waist, which serves as the main axis to initiate the movements of the arms, and use awareness to initiate the energy.



2-51



2-52



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上下相隨妙無窮

Section Three Steps Training Methods

1. Forward step exercises

1 Stand upright with your feet placed together. The body should be relaxed with your breathing and concentration focused into the Dantian. Eyes look forward. (Fig 2-53)

2 Shift the weight to the right leg and take a step forward-left with the left foot. At the same time, move both palms in a forward and upward arc. Then move both palms back in a counter clockwise motion with the left palm facing up and the right palm facing out. (Fig 2-54)

2-53



2-54



2-55



3 Continuing from the previous movement shift the weight to the left leg and draw the right foot to the inside of the left foot. At the same time, move both palms down and forward with both arms rotating clockwise so that the left palm is facing forward and the right palm is facing down. Eyes look forward. (Fig 2-55)

Take a step forward with the left foot and move both palms forward and upward in an arc then pull back to the same position as previous movement (Fig 2-54), so that the movements of the hands are well co-ordinated with the foot.

Repeat the exercise several times, and then repeat the exercise on the right side as mirrored movement. Take a step with the right foot and draw up the left foot. The essential points of the exercise are the same as the previous movement, with left and right reversed.

2. Backward step exercise

1 Stand upright with both feet close together. Eyes look forward. Rest the right palm on the right side of the waist. Raise left arm up high as your shoulder level and push the left palm forward, (centre of palm facing outwards) the elbow lowered and the shoulders relaxed. (Fig 2-56)

2 Continue from the previous movement. Shift your weight to the right leg, left foot steps in an arc to the rear-left, the ball of the left

2-56



2-57



Foot sliding on the floor. At the same time, following the stepping back of the left foot, move the left palm down and back in an arc with the arm rotating clockwise slightly at the same time. Move the right palm back and turn it over whilst moving the palm up high as the shoulder so the palm faces forwards, then push it forward. (Fig 2-57)

3 Continue from the previous movement. Shift the weight to the left leg, then the right foot steps in an arc to the rear right side past the inside of the left foot, the ball of the right foot sliding on the floor during the step movement. At the same time, following the stepping backward of the right foot, move the right palm down and back in an arc with right arm rotates counter clockwise. Move the left palm back and up turning it over whilst moving the palm up as high as shoulder so that it faces forwards. Then push it forward. (Fig 2-58)

The movements are a method to train the co-ordination of the upper and lower limbs in stepping back.

2-58



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3. Side step exercise

1 Stand upright with the feet placed together. Place the right palm on the right side of the waist with the thumb pointing back and the rest of the fingers forwards. Move the left palm to the left side of the body with the palm facing left forward high as shoulder with the shoulder relaxed and elbow lowered. Eyes look forward. (Fig 2-59)

2 Continue from the previous movement. Turn the body slightly to the right, shifting your weight to the right leg, lift the left foot up and take a step left with the left foot and place heel on the floor. At the same time move the left palm downward and rightward in an arc, with arm rotating counter clockwise. Eyes look forward-left. (Fig 2-60)

3 Continuing from the previous movement. Turn the body slightly to the left, shift the weight to the left foot, lift the right leg and draw the right foot to the inside of the left foot. At the same time, move the left palm to the right and upward to a shoulder level then push to leftward in an arc with the arm rotating clockwise so that the palm faces out at the end of the movement. Eyes look forward-left. (Fig 2-61)

This exercise is a method of training the co-ordination of the upper and lower body, by opening and closing



the hand and foot in reverse order. Repeat this exercise for the Right side as well. Take a step rightward, the essential points of the exercise being the same as described above, simply reversing left and right. (Fig 2-62, 2-63, 2-64)



4. Wave hands incorporating footwork exercise

1 Stand upright with your feet together. Hang both arms naturally downward at the sides of the body, with the entire body relaxed. Eyes look forward. Relax the right hip, turn the body slightly to the right, keep the weight on the right leg, lift the left foot and take a step leftward with the heel of left foot landing on the floor, the toes of the foot lifted upwards. At the same time, move the right palm leftward and upward with the arm rotating counter clockwise and then ward it off upward and rightward. Move the left palm forward to the front of the abdomen so it is facing right. Eyes look forward-left. (Fig 2-65)



2-65

2 Continue from the previous movement. Turn the body slightly to the left and shift the weight on the left leg. Draw the right foot to the inside of the left foot. At the same time, move the left palm upward and leftward in an arc with the arm rotating clockwise. Close the right palm downward and leftward in an arc in front of the abdomen so it is facing left. Eyes look forward-left. (Fig 2-66)



2-66

Repeat this movement eight times then change this movement to the other side as well. Take a step rightward, the essential points of the exercise being the same as described above, simply reversing left and right as mirrored movement. The footwork should be light and natural.

5. Wave hands with feet in back cross-step exercise

1 Stand upright with your feet together. Hang both arms naturally downward at the sides of the body, with the entire body relaxed. Eyes look forward. Relax the right hip, turn the body slightly to the right, shifting your weight to your right foot, lift the left leg and take a step leftwards with the heel of the left foot landing on the floor and the toes lifted upward. At the same time, move the right palm left and up as high as the shoulder with the arm rotating counter clockwise. Move the left palm forward to the front of the abdomen so that it is facing right. Eyes look forward-left. (Fig 2-67)



2-67

2 Continue from the previous movement. Move the right palm down and left in an arc until it is in front of the abdomen, rotate the arm clockwise so that the palm faces left. Move the left palm up and left until it is in front of the left shoulder. With the arm rotating clockwise so that the palm faces out to the left. At the same time, take a step to the rear-left of the left foot with the right foot. The ball of the right foot landing on the floor. Eyes look forward-right. (Fig 2-68)



2-68

3 Turn the body slightly to the right with the right palm moving left and up in an arc and rotate the arm counter clockwise so that the palm faces out to the right. Move the left palm down and left in an arc then cross to the front of the abdomen, with the arm rotating counter clockwise smoothly so that the palm faces right. At the same time, shift the weight on the right leg, lift the left foot up and take a step leftward with the heel of the foot landing on the floor and the toes lifted upward. Eyes look forward-left of the body. Return the movement to the position shown in Fig 2-67 and repeat this movement. You can do it for the right side as well. Take a step rightward, the essential points of the exercise being the same as described above, simply reversing left and right as mirrored movement.

Chapter Three

The Taiji Skills of Preserving Energy

The Taiji skill of preserving energy (Qigong) includes Sitting Quietly (meditation in a seated position), the Taiji Stance for energy collection and exercises lying down (these are not included in this book). Regardless of which method you use, they all relax the body, loosen the limbs, concentrate the spirit and centre your mind. It will enable you to discover your potential energy source and maintain your energy levels, keeping your metabolism rate and digestive system in a healthy state. It can also help you to control your temper and emotional states by reducing your levels of anxiety and stress. With Taiji Qigong, blood circulation improves and energy channels open. This gives better energy circulation which will help you to maintain a good healthy body, prolonging life and preserving mental faculties into later life.

Section One

Sitting-Quietly Method (Meditation)

1. Preparation before meditating

Preferably you should wear loose comfortable clothes. First practice the warm up exercises, as described in Chapter Two of the book, to let your muscles and tendons relax, helping your blood and Qi to circulate freely. While you are sitting, your back should be straight without leaning forward or back. Make sure the air in the area you practice is fresh and if you are indoors that it circulates freely leaving a window slightly ajar. However avoid strong currents of wind while you practice, and try to keep away from any external interruptions, such as phones or other people.



2. The posture of meditation

Sitting freely

Sit on the floor. If the floor is too hard sit on a stool or cushion. Cross your legs naturally, with your knees not flat on the floor. Try to be in a comfortable position facing south. Keep both arms in a circle and remain relaxed, with your palms on top of one another, facing upwards, and the right palm above the left one. (Fig. 3-1)

Sitting flatly

Sit on a chair or a wide bench with both feet placed on the floor as wide as your shoulders. Keep the knees at an angle of 90 degrees. Place both palms on top of your thighs, near to the knees, with palms facing up, (Fig. 3-2) or down. (Fig. 3-3) Close your eyes lightly or keep them open. While you are sitting, keep your head erect and your neck relaxed, your body upright in a balanced position. Do not lean forward, back, left or right. Tuck your chin in and close your mouth with your teeth touching lightly and the tip of your tongue lightly touching the upper palette. Relax your face muscles, keeping a serene expression. Shoulders, arms, elbows and wrists should be relaxed. Keep your chest relaxed and in a little. Your back, while you tuck your chest in a little, should stretch out slightly, maintaining an upright and relaxed position. Your lower abdomen (Dantian) should be loosened and settled, with the perineum (Huiyin) lifted up slightly (the Huiyin is located between the genitals and the anus).



3. The key points of the exercise

Breathing naturally, whilst concentrating your mind

When your mind and body posture are relaxed and in position, focus on the movement of your breathing into your lower abdomen. Your breathing should be smooth, soft and natural. At the beginning, in order to speed up the energy collection, you could just simply use deep breaths, not worrying about focusing your mind on the exercise in great detail. Concentrate on your breathing, which should be controlled yet relaxed and as calm as possible, also try to focus your hearing to the back of your head. While you breath out, the focus of your mind should sink down from your heart to your lower abdomen, which will enable the heart energy to sink down to the Dantian. Constant practice in this way will gradually increase the heat in the Dantian. When you feel plenty of heat down in the Dantian, you should stop concentrating energy down to your lower abdomen in this way. Let the focus of your mind gently move away, whilst still breathing in and out from your Dantian (to maintain the heat and energy).

While you practice this Qigong, your mind should focus lightly on your Dantian. Do not be too frustrated nor persistent with your concentration. If you are more lightly and quietly focused on your Dantian, it will be easier for the energy to flow down to your lower abdomen and run throughout your body. If your mind is too tense and stressed, or if you are in a hurry for a quick result, the energy won't flow freely through your body. As the ancient Chinese book of Qigong philosophy Neijing says, "with light focus and no intention, your internal energy will follow your mind." The more relaxed the body is and the calmer the mind is, the stronger the energy will be and the better it will circulate throughout your body.

Constant practice and gradual progression

When you first begin to practice this meditation use natural breaths combining the lungs with the lower abdomen at the same time. In accordance with the improvements of your Qigong, gradually begin to use only your lower abdomen, with long, soft, deep and smooth breaths. To develop this type of breathing takes time, and it is not easy or recommended for beginners to attempt this stage straight away. Beginners should not try to hold their breath to increase its length, longer breathing comes from longer practice. Naturally people breathe 12 to 40 times a minute, which is the recommended number for beginners to start with. With more experience this will gradually reduce to 2 or 3 times a minute. Beginners should be cautious with this type of exercise and should breathe according to their level of fitness.

Relieve stress and empty your mind

Randomly thinking of things or being anxious will disturb your Qigong practice. It will become easier for you to overcome these kinds of problems as your level of Qigong improves and you become more experienced. It is hard for beginners but this book will introduce some useful methods to help you relieve stress and empty your mind.

A) Counting breath

Count your breaths during your meditation. Start from number one onwards. With this method, concentrate on one thing, counting, so that every other thought in your mind disappears. After a while this one thing will disappear and you will be able to concentrate on your practice.

B) Convince yourself

While practicing meditation it is quite common to think about lots of things going on in your life. When this happens, you should tell yourself in your mind "I am practicing meditation now and any other things will wait for me to finish my practice. It is pointless to think about them now. I should relax, not worry and concentrate on my practice." Say this to yourself a few times until all other thoughts go away.

C) Clear your mind

When practicing meditation some people may find that they have too many thoughts and worries in their mind. This may result in some peoples' minds creating images of what they are thinking or worrying about. If this happens and you feel uncomfortable or scared, you should open your eyes and let the image disappear. This kind of image is caused by your own mind, because you are thinking of something too much. For example, if you are looking forward to visiting somewhere and are constantly thinking about it, you may see that place while you are meditating. In that case the best way to get rid of an image of that kind is to clear your mind, have a short break and then continue practicing.

Put emphasis on the Dantian naturally

After a period of practicing meditation the inside and the surface of your body may experience various sensations such as cold, hot, light, heavy, solid, tingling, bulging or tickling. Initially, the tip of your fingers and your feet will be the likeliest place to get these kinds of feeling. Then the stomach and the intestines may possibly experience some sensations, with your body or part of your body feeling cool on the surface and warmer inside. Some muscles may begin to shake and feel tingly. All these feelings depend on the individual with some people experiencing strong sensations and others simply feeling relaxed and calm. Sometimes images may appear in a similar way to when your mind is thinking too much. These can range from a mountain or a lake



to even a person. In this case you should not be concerned. Also you should not be very anxious to see these kinds of images, because they are not real, they are a creation of your mind.

As those kinds of images occur, you should keep your mind still not paying attention to them. Focus on your Dantian. Let the image disappear itself. In Chinese we say: "Treat strange things as not strange. Then the strange things will become normal." All these kinds of images will disappear and your mind will gradually become cleared as your level of meditation improves. The perfect stage of meditation is when no thoughts remain in your mind and it is as still as water with long, deep, smooth and continuous breaths, naturally coming only from the lower abdomen. Your mind will drift between being completely absorbed in the moment or absolute concentration.

4. Completing exercise

With both palms touch your Dantian and start to rotate them as if you were brushing the area. Move them in a circle 36 times in a clockwise direction. Start from the centre of your Dantian and then enlarge the circles to your chest area. Reverse the motion back to your Dantian for 24 circles. After that, rub both palms together quickly and then massage your face with your palms 12 times. This kind of exercise is good for the spleen. After that, cross the back of your thumbs and rub them together. Use the back of the thumbs to massage your eyebrows and the area below the eyes 12 times. This exercise helps to maintain healthy eyesight. After that place both palms on top of and behind your ears using them to fold your ears over. The middle fingers of your palms should be connected behind your head at the mid-section of your skull. Lock your index fingers on top of your middle fingers, and use them to bang the cavity at the back of your head (Fengfu) for 36 times. This exercise is good for your hearing and the energy circulation from your body to your head. After that use both palms to massage from your thighs down to your ankles. Stand up slowly to finish your exercise.

Attention:

Although you should practice hard and treat this exercise seriously and carefully, do not be anxious for a quick result. As ancient Chinese philosophy says: "You should not be anxious to feel something in your mind and there should be no temptation to feel something. If you place your mind too heavily onto something, you will perceive the illusion of that something. If you have no temptation, you will not get anything. If you want to achieve something, drift between concentration and no concentration, and it will always be there." In conclusion, relax, enjoy, do not worry, avoid becoming anxious and try to practice regularly without pushing yourself too hard. Have the motivation to practice but try not to focus on the end result.



Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei in Meditation pictures.