

Tao Yin Exercises

Last month I mentioned that the Tao Yin exercises are beneficial for preventing and ameliorating the symptoms of qi gong illness. The Tao Yin exercises are some of the oldest self-cultivation exercises of the Chinese health practices. Medical manuscripts discovered in the Mawangdui tomb site in Hunan province contain descriptions and pictures of exercise for cultivating and guiding the internal energy that is referred to as Tao Yin. These manuscripts date back as far as 200 B.C.

Tao Yin literally means *leading-guiding* or *guiding-pulling*. They are used to promote health and longevity by guiding and ordering the breath and qi according to the principles of traditional Chinese medicine. They are also useful as an adjunct to other qi gong practices because of their ability to regulate the flow of qi. Although they are relatively simple and easy to perform, they can have profound effects on one's health and well-being.

Tao Yin exercises are best performed in the morning before getting out of bed, although they may also be done at night to calm the body before sleep. Before starting the Tao Yin exercises, take a few moments to calm the mind. Sit or lie comfortably and breathe slowly, letting the lower abdomen expand with the inhalation. If thoughts come to the mind observe them and let them pass.

1. Click the teeth together nine times. This stimulates the interchange of qi between the ren and the du channels. It also relaxes the area at the base of the skull where the energy enters the brain and strengthens the teeth and gums.

2. Rotate the tongue to stimulate the flow of saliva. Rotating the tongue stimulates the heart, as the tongue has a direct connection with the heart in Chinese medicine. It also stimulates the digestion.

3. Swish the saliva in your mouth, and then swallow it in three parts. Imagine each part traveling down the midline of

the body to the area below the navel.

There, imagine the saliva transforming into steam like water hitting a fire. Imagine that the steam expands outward to fill and warm the lower abdomen. Saliva is a precious fluid, part of which is related to the kidney. Swallowing saliva makes turbid qi descend so clear yang can rise. It also returns fluid back to the kidney where it can be transformed into essence (jing).

4. Rub the hands together to warm them. Then use the side of the thumbs to massage downward from the center of the eyebrows and down along both sides of the nose nine times. This opens the breathing passages and dislodges pathogens from the nose.

5. Use the fingertips to massage around the eyes nine times. This stimulates the liver and the brain and clears the vision.

6. Wash the face with the palms nine times to stimulate the brain and open the circulation to the face.

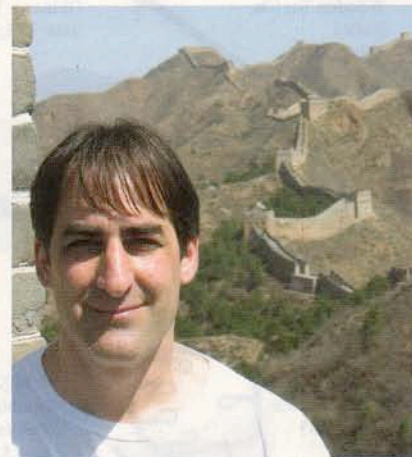
7. Comb the hair with the fingers nine times. This activates the brain and stimulates the meridians of the head. It also drains excess qi from the head and helps it to descend.

8. Rub and knead the neck and nape. This opens the area where qi enters the brain, thereby enhancing mental function. It can also disperse cold pathogens from the neck, preventing illness.

9. Beat the sky drum. With your palms over your ears, flick the forefinger off the middle finger to gently drum the base of the skull 18 times. Then sit quietly for a moment with your hands over your ears. This relaxes the neck, awakens the brain and aids hearing.

10. Massage the ears. This stimulates the kidneys and opens the ears to hear. Additionally because there are many reflex zones on the ears relating to different parts of the body, the whole body is stimulated.

11. Massage the throat down to the chest nine times to open the throat and dislodge pathogens and phlegm from the throat.



12. Rub the chest nine times with each hand to open the qi of the chest and stimulate the flow of qi from the chest to the arms. This also stimulates the lungs.

13. With both hands stroke upward from the lower ribs, along the sides to the solar plexus. Then with the hands touching, stroke down the midline of the body to the pubic bone nine times. This soothes and relaxes the liver, regulates stomach qi, aids digestion and helps the qi descend to dan tian.

14. Put one hand on top of the other and massage below the navel in a circle 36 times clockwise and then 36 times counterclockwise. This concentrates energy in the dan tian and aids intestinal functioning.

15. Put the palms on the back and stroke upward from the sacrum to the kidneys 18 times to strengthen and warm the kidneys.

16. Massage the sacrum and the tailbone with the fingertips nine times. This assists the flow of yang qi up the spine and helps prevent hemorrhoids.

17. Rub the knees with the palms, circling outward nine times and inward nine times. This energizes the legs and knees and stimulates the kidneys.

18. With the palms massage the KID 1 on the sole of each foot 81 times. This not only stimulates the kidneys but leads yang (heavenly) energy back to the earth (yin). ☯

Tom Bisio is a contributing editor of Inside Kung-Fu.

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