

# Alchemy of Breath

An Introduction and Practical Guide to Chinese Chi Kung  
Exercises for Health and Well-being



**Christopher Dow**

Phosphene Publishing Company

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Houston, Texas

*Alchemy of Breath*

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by Christopher Dow

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# Preface

**T**he beliefs and ideologies of the Chinese people have long puzzled the Western mind. Europeans and their philosophical offspring, steeped for centuries in an atmosphere of formal logic and scientific objectivism, have tended to look on the Chinese “sciences” as unsound and even a little bit silly precisely because of their empirical nature. A good example is an observation by Ernest J. Eitel, who had this to say in 1873 about one branch of Chinese science, feng-shui, which is the study of the energy of physical and geographic arrangement and alignment:

[Feng-Shui] is based on a materialistic scheme of philosophy, which had studied nature, in a pious and reverential yet in a very superficial and grossly superstitious manner, but which trusting in the force of a new logical formulae and mystic diagrams, endeavored to solve all the problems of nature and to explain everything in heaven above and earth below with some mathematical categories. The result, of course, is a farrago of nonsense and childish absurdities.

The whole system of Feng-Shui . . . is simply the blind gropings of the Chinese mind after a system of natural science, which gropings, untutored by practical observation of nature and trusting almost exclusively in the truth of alleged ancient tradition and in the force of abstract reasoning, naturally left the Chinese mind completely in the dark.<sup>1</sup>

Amusingly enough, one can read in Eitel’s words an equal indictment of Western man’s scientific advancement through logical positivism and mathematics. But rather than argue against the obvious benefits of modern science, let us look more closely at the positive values of Chinese “superstition.” After all, Chinese culture is quite as old as its Western counterpart, and arguably more continuous. It only would be fair to admit that the Chinese mind, though it has looked at the world differently than the Western mind, is equally as intelligent and observant. Thus we should not pass off as complete nonsense systems of belief and function that a highly cultured group of people have developed through research and experience and have found practical and effective for more than five millennia.

## Introduction

**I**t is time to visit the Hermit of the Jade Cave.”

The young acolyte opened sleepy eyes to see his master, an elder monk, standing over him. As he swung his feet to the floor, he felt a cold draft wash over him. Then he heard the howl of the wind outside and shivered.

“But Master, there is a storm.”

“Do you think so?” The old man cocked his head as if listening carefully. His serene face creased in a smile, and he waved it off. “It is nothing. Come.”

The young monk reached for his winter cloak, but the old man touched his arm and stopped him.

“What you are wearing will be sufficient,” the master said, gesturing to the boy’s thin robe. “But you may put on sandals if they make you feel better.” With a swirl of his own light garments, the elder monk turned and disappeared through the door. Though unenthusiastic, the young acolyte slipped on his sandals and hastened after his master.

He was even less thrilled when he stood at the main door to the monastery and peered into the whirling blindness. A fierce blizzard was sweeping over the mountain where the monastery crouched like a dragon seeking shelter from the storm. The Jade Cave lay a half-day walk from here, over tortuous trails. He looked down at his robe then at that of his master. It was just as flimsy as his own, and he noticed that his master had not even bothered to don sandals.

“You were right,” the older man said, staring at his pupil. “There is a storm.” He looked back at the tumult. “Is it not beautiful? Let us contemplate it from within.”

The acolyte shuddered as the icy wind whipped the hem of his robe and bit into his flesh. If he went out in that, he would freeze solid in an hour’s time.

“But Master, it is so cold. We shall never be able. . . .”

“Here,” the old man said. “Take my hand.”

Trusting, the acolyte placed his hand in his master’s, and the old man pulled him from the monastery’s warmth and shelter, into the frigid, purblind pall.

Within a few steps, all sight of the monastery vanished behind the howling flurry of snow. A few more steps, and the boy was quaking, his teeth rattling in his head. The freezing air shriveled his flesh. Everything, that was, except for the hand held tightly in his master’s grip. Come to think of it, not only did his hand feel warm, his whole arm up to the elbow did, too.

It was then that the acolyte noticed the warmth was continuing to flow up his arm. In moments, it reached his shoulder and spread into the rest of his body. The wind still howled and the snow still whipped around his ears, but he felt not the slightest bit of discomfort.

The acolyte looked with reverence at the older man. The master had great chi kung, he realized, powerful enough to sustain them both in this terrible storm.

Later, after the storm abated, when the old man stopped to let the acolyte rest, the boy watched the snow beneath the old man’s bare feet melt into steaming puddles.



What is *chi kung*?

The words translate as “mastery of chi.” Taken at surface value, chi kung (also spelled chi gung, chi gong, and qigong) can be called exercise, though it is not exercise of the sort generally found at a health club or spa. In fact, it is a considerably healthier occupation than much of the body punishment that passes for a healthy workout in some of these establishments. As a form of conditioning, chi kung is exactly the opposite of what Westerners usually think of as exercise.

Though it stands apart from typical Western calisthenics, weight training, and jogging, chi kung is not without its relatives. In philosophical background and basic concepts, it is closely allied to yoga, meditation, and the various East Asian martial arts such as kung fu and karate, and many writers have referred to chi kung as Chinese yoga. Its adherents admit to its meditative aspect, while martial artists of all persuasions have found that practice of chi kung improves the quality of their respective arts, lending them power, grace, and tranquility. Indeed, chi kung does overlap, to varying degrees, with all these various disciplines in purpose, method, and form.

Chi kung is exercise, then but if different from Western calisthenics, just how different? Western calisthenics and other athletics emphasize, primarily, development of the musculature. With these types of exercises, the size, form, strength, and functioning of the muscles are of primary importance. In this respect, calisthenics and athletics can be called external exercises, since they stress the outside of the body and attempt to bring about health from the outside toward the inside.

Chi kung, on the other hand, is not primarily concerned with the outside of the body. In chi kung, healthy musculature is simply an adjunct to healthy internal systems. Healthy organs and internal systems are prerequisites to general good health and well-being, so the chi kung adherent seeks to improve his inner workings—to keep the inside of the body healthy. If the inside is healthy, the outside will be, too. Therefore, chi kung is referred to as an

internal exercise that attempts to bring about health from the inside to the outside.

The method taken by chi kung is the antithesis of that used by Western exercise. Through the centuries, the Chinese have developed literally thousands of individual chi kung exercises. Many of these exercises require some physical movement, either in standing or sitting postures or lying down. Some—particularly in advanced stages—are done with little or no external movement at all.

But what all chi kung exercises have in common, whether moving or still, is their lack of muscular drudgery. In fact, muscular relaxation is the key. This isn't to imply that chi kung is always easy or that muscles aren't involved. Certainly, chi kung can be done at increasing levels of intensity, and at all levels the muscles are toned and strengthened. But muscles are secondary in importance to strengthening the internal systems and are neither strained nor hardened.

Chi kung, however, goes a step beyond merely taking an approach opposite that of Western exercises. Through physical manipulations, the chi kung adherent attempts not only to achieve glowing physical health from within but to gain conscious control over the very life force that flows through the body—to cultivate, strengthen, store, and manipulate it. This life force, called *chi* by the Chinese, is the essence of vitality that animates all living things. It is the universal spirit, the breath of being that inspires all creatures.

Toward this end of controlling the chi, the chi kung practitioner uses the most powerful tools a human being has at his or her disposal—mind, will, and spirit—and in doing so, exercises these as well as the body. As one of my teachers, Dr. John Song, put it, “Chi kung is not only movement, but the feeling of your mind and body in balance with the universe. Your energy works together with energy you touch, hear, see, and imagine. It is like spending a glorious day at the beach. You suddenly have a tremendous happiness filling you, and you just open to all the good energy.”

Despite its well-documented physical and

medical effects, which are discussed in a later chapter, chi kung is not a universal panacea. It is not, for example, appropriate for either weight loss or gain, though often it helps to regulate the appetite thus allowing the practitioner to better manage weight problems. Although it strengthens the muscles, it does not build them as weight training or progressive resistance machines might. It does not influence stamina in the same way that jogging or racquetball will. Nor does it strenuously stretch tendons or directly affect joint mobility.

But chi kung does what no other form of exercise can do. It strengthens the internal organs and the systems they form, energizes the body, tones the muscles without exhaustion, and helps bring glowing health. Moreover, regular practice concentrates the mind, will, and spirit and teaches one to control, strengthen,

store, and mobilize the tremendous power of the chi in the body. Health and well-being are positively affected, and the practitioner gains reservoirs of energy and inner strength to fall back on in times of illness, stress, or crisis.

Chi kung also has other advantages. It can be done by anyone—young or old, male or female, tall or short, healthy or infirm, slender or muscular or overweight. And because muscularity and exertions are not the focus, many of the various exercises can be tailored for the handicapped with mobility problems or limb loss. Nor are visual and auditory impairment deterrents. If you can breathe and can concentrate at all, you can practice chi kung and reap the benefits of 5,000 years of practical research into human well-being.

And it feels good!



# Philosophy

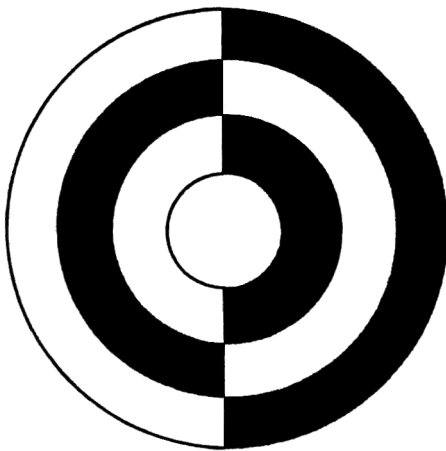
**A**t the root of Chinese beliefs is the concept of the Tao, which is the boundless void that predates and precedes all creation. It is important to note, however, that the Tao is not a religious concept, nor is it equivalent to a deity. Instead, it is a philosophical concept that refers to a state of being that simultaneously encompasses all opposites and opposing states harmoniously within itself. It has neither form nor substance, but in it exist all form and substance. Thought and thoughtlessness, movement and stillness, intent and purposelessness are all aspects of it. As the opening lines of the *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu say, the Tao cannot be truly described or talked about. The Tao is immeasurable, immutable, and impenetrable. All things are contained within it, yet it is nothing. It has no beginning and no end, though from it all things emerge and into it all things go.

And then it moved.

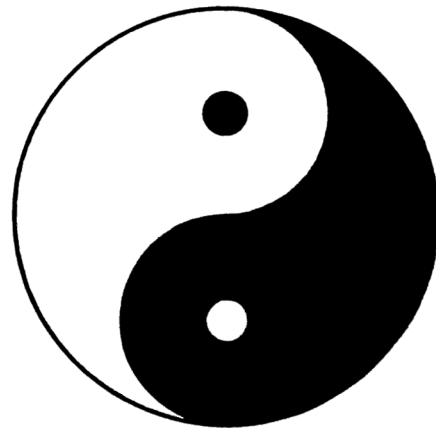
Or, to be more precise, half of it moved. That movement, or state of being called movement, is called yang. But no state can exist without its opposite to give it definition. In the very act of moving, yang created, or rather separated itself from, a second distinct state of being—that of stillness, called yin. Yang and yin are all the raw, primordial dichotomies in their most pure and unadulterated universal forms.

Once yang and yin were activated, they continued to motivate each other, each defining and giving the other multiple and manifold forms, each powering the other. If there is fullness, then there is emptiness. If there is day, there is night. If there is up, there is down. If a thing has one side, it has another. Hot necessitates cold.

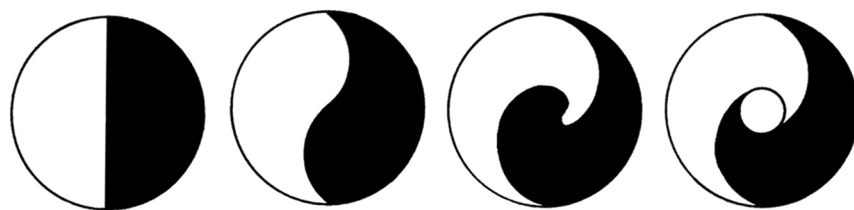
As the energies of yang and yin acted on



**Figure 1:** An early form of the tai chi symbol depicting the forces of yin and yang.



**Figure 2:** The tai chi symbol refined into the familiar two-fishes form.



**Figure 3:** The tai chi symbol does not depict a static state but dynamic movement much like a spiral or vortex that spins around a central point.

and reacted to each other, they became ever more deeply and inextricably intertwined and connected, so that no one thing is totally yang or yin but rather a complex and heady mixture of numerous opposing aspects. The energies of this complex interplay produced, as the Chinese say, “the ten thousand things,” or all the substance of the myriad forms of reality that exist and all the objects within those realities.

In order to depict the interplay of yang and yin, the secret basis of reality, an eleventh century Chinese named Chou Lien-ch’i created a diagram called the tai chi (grand terminus or grand ultimate). (Figure 1) Derived from the ancient Chinese text, the *I Ching* (*Book of Changes*), the diagram illustrates the interplay between yang and yin, yang being the white portions of the figure and yin the black portions. Or yang can be considered to be the left side and yin the right. In the center is an empty circle representing the void of the Tao from which yang and yin spring and to which they return. This empty circle is like the momentary hole left in water when a stone is thrown in, and the circles of yang and yin are like the waves and troughs of energy radiating from the core of emptiness.

Later Chinese rethought the diagram, simplifying it into the well-known circular configuration of two “fish” shapes rotating around each other. (Figure 2) Not only was this design more aesthetic, but it added two ideas missing in Chou’s original depiction. First was the visualization of movement, symbolized by the wavy line separating the two aspects of yang and yin. This curved line represents not only

a spinning motion between the two primary elements of reality but the cyclical nature of the whole of reality and being—when a thing, state, or aspect reaches the fullness of yang, it changes to yin, which eventually reaches its own fullness and changes to yang.

The notion of the Tao is contained in this movement, too, for if the spinning increases in velocity, it creates a whirling vortex, much like a hurricane, tornado, or whirlpool, with a void in the center. (Figure 3) The circle in the center of the diagram represents the primordial void that resides within natural action and reaction. This is the calm at the eye of the storm, the warrior’s detachment during the fury of battle, or the athlete’s composure in the midst of competition.

The second addition within this new diagram was the placing of spots of the opposite color within the largest part of each fish. These spots, or the “eyes” within the fishes, show that even in the fullness of a given state there resides the seed of its opposite. When yang reaches the zenith of its activity, then yin, or inactivity, begins. This is just as day, having reached its fullness at noon, wanes toward night, and night, having reached the darkness of midnight, moves smoothly on toward day.

In the West, though we have paid little overt attention to such “simplistic concepts” and “outmoded philosophies,” ironically we live and breathe them in our science, our technology, our culture, and even our ethical systems. Theoretical physicists now recognize that the ultimate state of matter consists simply of vibrations of energy, not tiny, material “build-

ing blocks.” And that energy is either positive or negative, yang or yin.

Likewise, our modern technology is based on computers, which utilize binary codes of on/off states as their core function. Not only that, but computer data is stored on magnetic media, such as disks and recording tape, which operates by positive/negative polarities of magnetic charges. And the very electricity that powers these computers, and our entire modern world, is charged plus and minus. Indeed, almost our entire modern cultural milieu is based on positive/negative electrical signals and magnetic recording, from the music industry to videos, though now all media are turning digital, which is, again, the computerized method of storing data using signals composed of on/off. Even film, which would seem immune to the electrical/magnetic synthesis/antithesis, is merely the blending of light

and dark. The same holds true for painting and many other visual arts. Writing is nothing more than areas of yang contrasting with a yin background, sculpture the presence or absence of matter and form.

And ethically, we have long lived with yang and yin disguised as the twin concepts of good and evil. An action is productive or nonproductive, it helps or hinders society, it is legal or illegal. There are those who wish to govern, and those who wish to dictate. Magic is either white or black. Some ethical thinkers have gone so far as to state that there are really only two emotions—love and fear, or attraction and repulsion.

But the idea of yang and yin and the dichotomous reality that springs from them are not the ends of Chinese philosophy. They merely set the stage. And now, the players enter on a breath of wind.

# Chinese Medicine and Chi

Western medicine, with its roots in a mechanistic world view, looks on the body as a conglomerate of parts that, while incredibly complex, is still only a machine. Put well-working parts together correctly, and you have an effective organism. Traditional Chinese medicine, on the other hand, looks at the body as a matrix of energy flows that must issue smoothly through the body and be in harmony for well-being to occur.

There is nothing incompatible, really, between the two systems, and only prejudice keeps them apart. The Chinese have long recognized the need for mechanistic adjustment. They have bone setters, practice surgery, and use drug therapy. But these methods are employed only when they are the obvious ones to be used. A broken bone needs mechanistic manipulation to be set, an infected appendix must be removed surgically, and antibiotics work wonders against infection.

Often, however, mechanistic adjustment used to treat disorders or illness fails precisely because the method is mechanistic rather than systemic. Traditional Chinese medicine recognizes that a human being is not simply a collection of parts. A human is a functioning system, and as such, what affects one part or area of the body can, and does, affect another.

In the West, only now are we beginning to approach medicine, and life itself, with the view that the body is a whole rather than merely an assemblage of interchangeable parts. As Western scientists turn their eyes and instruments on the organic energies the Chinese have spoken of for thousands of years, they are discovering that there is, indeed, a subtle force that permeates living being. Research is beginning

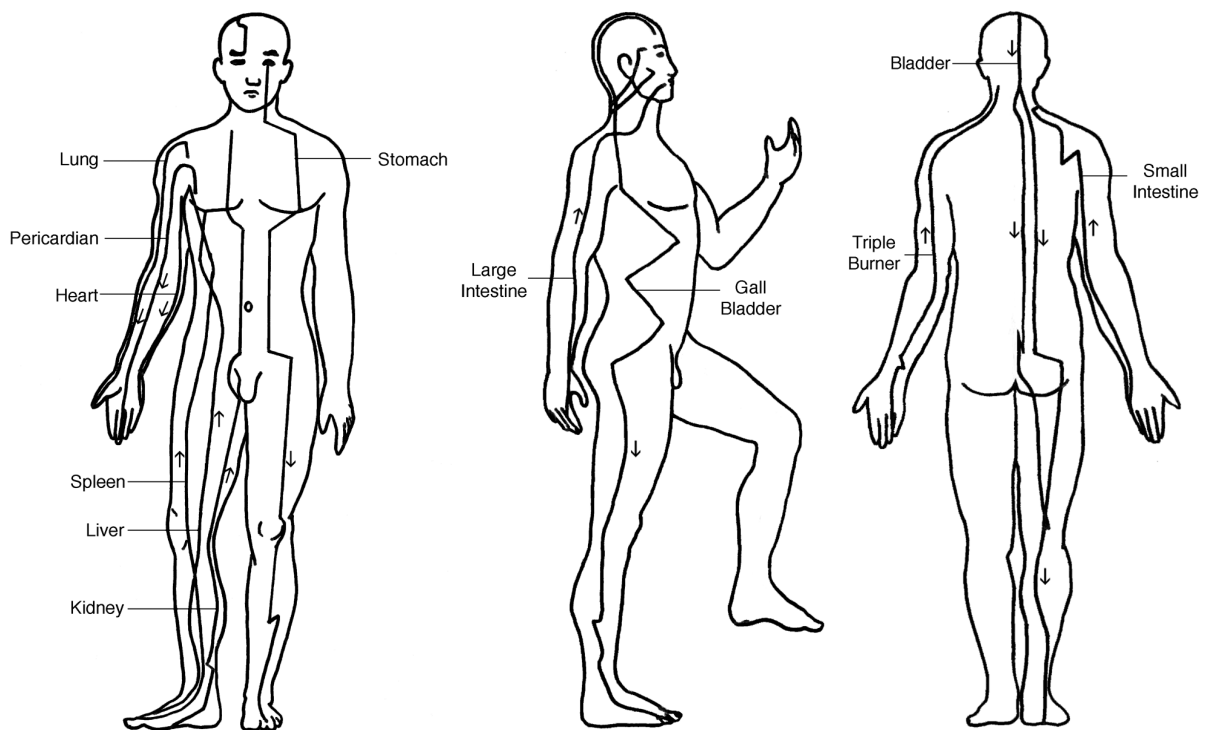
to show what the Chinese have known for centuries—that medical manipulation of this energy is just as effective as the mechanistic manipulations of Western doctors.

Dr. Herbert Benson, MD, in his foreword to *Encounters with Qi* by Dr. David Eisenberg, MD, points out that “only 25 percent of illnesses that bring a Western patient to a Western physician are successfully treated by specific agents or procedures. The other 75 percent either get better by themselves or are related to nonspecific, mind-body interactions.”<sup>2</sup> Traditional Chinese medicine can claim equal efficacy of treatment.

Traditional Chinese medicine is based on an energy that flows through the body, but it is neither the energy of muscular exertion nor that of nerve impulses. Indeed, the Chinese believe this energy suffuses the entire structure of reality rising out of the interplay between yang and yin, much as a wind passes through the air or waves pass through the water.

Many cultures besides the Chinese have been aware of this energy. The Polynesian word *mana* often is used to describe this pervasive natural power inherent in persons, animals, and things. In India, it is known as *prana* and in Japan as *ki*. Often individuals in traditionally nonaware cultures have found it on their own. It is tempting to speculate that Westerners such as Anton Mesmer, who discovered “animal magnetism,” and Wilhelm Reich, who identified “orgone energy,” independently chanced on and attempted to manipulate this energy. The Chinese call it *chi* or *qi*.

Chi is the energy of life itself. Its all-pervasive form, existing throughout the reality created by the interplay of yang and yin, is



**Figure 4:** The twelve primary meridians. These channels are associated with specific organs or organ groups. Note that all the meridians are bilateral, but that only the meridians for one side of the body are depicted. Also note that some of the meridians seem to end suddenly where they descend into the body's core. The direction of chi flow is indicated by the arrows.

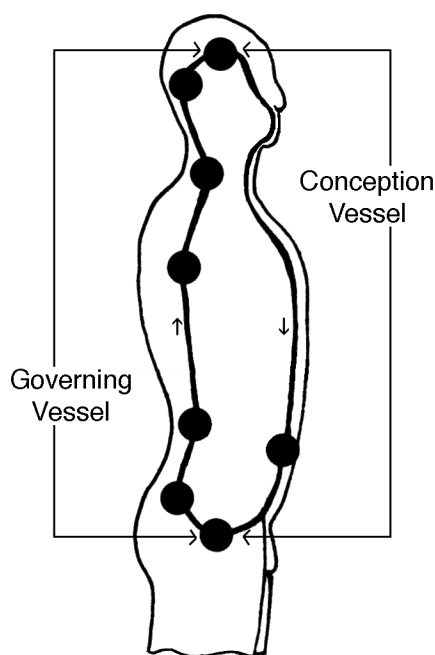
known as “universal chi.” At birth, all living things are imbued with a special form of this energy, called “prenatal chi.” In higher organisms, prenatal chi is associated with the air or gases sealed within the peritoneal cavity in the abdomen, since during gestation, chi is drawn into the fetal body through the umbilical cord. Prenatal chi represents the initial inspiration of life force, and though it is infinite in quality, it is finite in quantity. The supply of prenatal chi is used up gradually throughout life, and when it is depleted, death results. The rate at which prenatal chi is used up can be controlled through proper life style and through reinforcement by supplemental chi taken into the body after birth.

After birth, a different form of chi, called “postnatal chi,” begins to flow through the body. It completely and continuously circulates through the body each day, bathing every cell with life force, just as the cells are daily

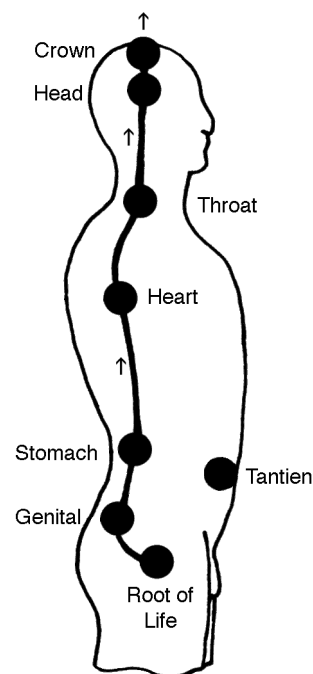
bathed with fresh blood. Postnatal chi is finite in quality, though infinite in quantity, and it comes from two sources.

The first source is food. In the West, food is viewed as “fuel” for the body to burn. The body metabolizes nutrients from food to power itself. Chi theory, however, does not consider vitamins, minerals, and calories to be of primary importance. Instead, what is important is the life force within a food substance. The energy vibrations are what count, and these come only from life, not from chemistry. Simple vitamin supplements, raw calories, and a little bulk, for example, cannot impart quality nutrition in the same way as a meal of fresh food that contains the same chemical composition and bulk. In other words, it is life we eat, not chemicals. Consequently, the fresher and less processed a food substance is, the better it is for you.

The second and more important source



**Figure 5:** The microcosmic orbit (left), also called the small circulation, is composed of the conception and governing vessels. The chakras, right, are energy centers located on the governing vessel. An important power center on the conception vessel is the tan tien.



of postnatal chi is all around us in the air we breathe and is vitally linked to the process of breathing. Breathing not only gathers postnatal chi but, in essence, is the engine that pumps it through the body. Thus, not only the quality of the air we breathe but the means of breathing are of concern. Correct breathing stimulates the prenatal chi as well, which is strengthened and augmented by postnatal chi, further reducing and controlling its rate of depletion.

Chi flows through the body along special pathways, just as blood and nerve impulses flow along specific channels. These chi pathways are called meridians. In the human body, there are twelve primary meridians running through the limbs and connecting within the torso, each associated with an organ or organ group. The twelve primary meridians are the bladder, gall bladder, heart, kidney, large intestine, liver, lung, pericardian, small intestine, spleen, stomach, and triple heater. (Figure 4)

In addition to the twelve primary meridians, there are two principal collateral meridians. The first of these is the conception vessel, which runs from the tip of the tongue, through the throat, and down the front center line of

the body, ending at the point between the genitals and anus. (Figure 5) The second collateral meridian is the governing vessel, which runs from the point between the genitals and anus, up the spine, and over the top of the head, ending at the hard palate in the roof of the mouth. Numerous minor meridians branch out into the organs and body tissue, much like blood vessels branch into capillaries.<sup>3</sup>

Also to be considered are eight points of importance, or power centers, along the conception and governing vessels. Seven of these are located along the governing vessel and are known in the yogic tradition as chakras: the Root of Life (the point between the anus and genitals), the genitals, the stomach, the heart, the throat, the head, and the fontanel. The eighth power center, located on the conception vessel about two inches below and two inches behind the navel, is called the tantien.

The meridians are closely associated with the nerves, though modern physiology has yet to clearly distinguish actual physical pathways for them. One major difficulty in defining the actual pathways is that they cannot be discerned in autopsy, for nonliving tissue has no



chi. Nor can examination of living, anaesthetized tissue reveal them, for anesthetic acts, at least in part, by blocking chi flow.

However, some physical evidence for the meridians may come from research conducted by Dr. Kim Bong Han of the University of Pyongyang in North Korea. His experiments on the meridians revealed a type of histological tissue previously unnoticed by scientists. According to Kim, the meridians are symmetrical, bilateral channels, twenty to fifty millimicrons in diameter, lying just beneath the surface of the skin. These thin-walled channels contain a transparent, colorless fluid, and branch intricately into the body tissue.<sup>4</sup>

Kim's research seems to validate a report by Sir Thomas Lewis of England, published in the February 1937 issue of the *British Medical Journal*. Lewis stated that he had discovered a network of incredibly minute lines that permeate the body. This network, or as he called it, an "unknown nervous system," was not related to or part of either the sympathetic or sensory nervous systems and was not composed of nerve tissue. The report went unnoticed by his colleagues.<sup>5</sup>

However, Western scientists are gradually becoming aware of this force of life within the body. Books such as *The Body Electric: Electromagnetism and the Foundation of Life* by Dr. Robert O. Becker<sup>6</sup> and *Biologically Closed Electrical Circuits: Experimental and Theoretical Evidence for an Additional Circulatory System* by Dr. Bjorn Nordenstrom<sup>7</sup> are beginning to influence the way Western medicine treats the human body as well as confirming the ancient Chinese theories and practices. But whatever meridians are, or whether or not they are identifiable physical channels in the body, it is well-known among practitioners of chikultivation exercises and meditation that these pathways are real and that they conduct an unexplained yet powerful energy.

Traditional Chinese medicine attributes most illnesses, disease, disorder, and malaise to partial blockage of chi flow through the body's meridian system. In addition, injury such as a cut, bruise, or broken bone causes blockage in the meridian or meridians associated with

the injured area. The greater the blockage, the worse the problem, or, conversely, the worse the injury, the greater the blockage. Death would result if the chi flow were blocked completely or blocked to a vital organ such as the heart.

The goal of traditional Chinese medicine is to free the body from blockages to facilitate the free flow of chi throughout the body. Two different methods were developed to accomplish these ends, and as usual with Chinese tradition, one is yang and one is yin.

The yang, or external method, consists of external manipulation of the energy flow and blockages by an individual trained in such manipulations—the traditional Chinese physician. These physicians, through training and experience, know how the chi flows and are able to identify areas of blockage. Through various techniques—acupuncture, acupressure, moxibustion, and herbs—the physician attempts to release the blockages, either temporarily or permanently.

The first three techniques entail manually stimulating certain spots, or power points, along the meridians, called acupoints. Acupoints are places where meridians come close enough to the surface of the body to be manipulated or touched. Each meridian has many acupoints along its length, and stimulation of the various points has varying effects on that particular meridian, the chi flowing through it, and the organs associated with it. Often, several acupoints are stimulated simultaneously, in a certain order, or in a specific manner to achieve the desired results. Because the meridians run throughout the body, the points stimulated can be located far from the organ actually affected.

Acupuncture is the use of extremely fine needles that are inserted into the acupoints. They are put in a precise location, at a precise angle, to a precise depth, in a precise manner. Insertion is either painless or accompanied by a mild stinging. Originally, acupuncture needles were made of stone and bone. Modern needles are metal, and some experimentation has been done with lasers and electricity.

Though there is no longer any question of acupuncture's efficacy in some instances,

there remains the puzzle of how it works. That acupuncture stimulates the meridian is not a sufficient answer. Is it merely the mechanical “tickling” of the meridian that does the trick, or is some exchange of chi necessary for healing to occur? Many acupuncturists theorize that exchange of chi is necessary, though not all agree just where the chi thus transferred comes from. Some think that it comes from the acupuncturist, while others believe that the inserted needle acts as a sort of antenna that draws universal chi from the air into the affected meridian. Some modern biochemical researchers speculate that stimulation of nerve areas by acupuncture needles releases endorphins, the natural anesthetic compounds produced by the body. Endorphins also are released by exercise and, as research has shown, by smiling. Very possibly, all these reasons why acupuncture works produce an effect in aggregate.

Acupressure is much the same as acupuncture, except that needles are not used. Instead, the appropriate acupoints are stimulated by the use of localized pressure from the fingertips, knuckles, palm, or heel of the hand. Acupressure is not as overtly effective as acupuncture, but then, it is not as drastic a measure, either. In addition, much acupressure can be done on oneself as a form of self massage. Reflexology, or massage of specific locations on the foot, is a fairly well-known example of acupressure.

Moxibustion, or heat therapy, is the act of stimulating acupoints with heat. For this, the physician will use a stick of tightly-wound paper or punk that is lit on one end. The flame is blown out, leaving a glowing ember on the end of the stick, much like the coal on the end of a cigarette. This ember is brought into close enough proximity to the appropriate acupoints to heat them up without burning the skin. Occasionally, a small wad of burning cotton is placed inside a small rounded jar, and the mouth of the jar is placed over the acupoint. As the combustion of the cotton inside con-

sumes the oxygen, the resulting suction causes the jar to adhere to the patient’s skin, stimulating the acupoint. The curve of the jar keeps the burning cotton away from the skin.

Herbs also are used to stimulate chi flow, and many Chinese herbs are quite effective in doing this. Herbs act as a tonic on the general system or as a specific on exact areas of the body. One well-known such herb is ginseng, which acts as a general stimulant and toner for the entire chi system. Other herbs are more specific and are used to treat particular disorders, either alone or in combination with other herbs. Some herbs or herbal mixtures may be taken orally, as is ginseng, while others are used in the form of a lineament or poultice. One lineament, *dit da jow*, is very effective for bruises, sore muscles, arthritis, and other inflammatory disorders.

But in addition to externally manipulating the chi and meridian system by physical stimulation of acupoints and the use of herbs, the holistic approach of the traditional Chinese physician has resulted in preventive techniques unparalleled in the West. Here, though we may propound that “a stitch in time saves nine,” we do little to forestall illness and aging besides take our vitamin supplements and maybe do a few calisthenics or jog. There is a Chinese saying that goes, “Don’t wait for calamity to fall before you pray,” and it is a philosophy to which they pay more than lip service.

The result is the yin aspect of traditional Chinese medicine because it deals with the chi system and the meridians from within rather than from without. The methods are internal exercises called *chi kung*, which translates to “breathing exercises” or “mastery of chi.” As with the external methods, there are different types of these exercises, some for specific organs or meridians for treatment of particular disorders or illnesses, and others designed to strengthen the entire system and the body as a whole.



## A History of Chinese Medical Calisthenics

In the slate gray of the hour before dawn, two Chinese men padded toward a frozen lake. Though a chill wind whipped across the ice, they were clad only in simple, thin robes, and their bare heads were cleanly shaven. As they approached the ice, the younger man set down a bundle and looked expectantly at his companion.

The older man, a monk and master of chi kung, had brought his student to this barren scene to test his mastery of internal energy. Silently, he held out an ax and gestured toward the ice.

In moments, the acolyte had chopped a hole in the surface. Then he removed his robe and, completely naked, assumed a seated meditational posture on the frozen beach. The old monk picked up the bundle and shook it out. It was a blanket that he dipped through the hole in the ice, soaking it with frigid water. Then he carefully spread it over his student's shoulders and back.

The air was so cold that the edges of the blanket were already stiffening as it was laid about the young man's bare shoulders. For several minutes, it seemed as if the old monk was here merely to oversee the making of an extremely lifelike ice sculpture. Then he saw a tenuous gossamer wavering in the air over the young man. It was a wisp of steam. As the old monk watched, the gossamer became whole cloth as vapor rose steadily from the drenched blanket. He nodded silently. Within a short time, the blanket was completely dry.



How the Chinese discovered chi and where they got the notion that a person can consciously and willfully cultivate his or her own life force by means of therapeutic exercises is lost in antiquity. But the origins of their knowledge of chi is perhaps less important than the fact that they did begin developing methods of strengthening, accumulating, and mobilizing it within the body.

The first literary mention of therapeutic exercises and, in fact, theories of Chinese medicine, comes from the reign of the nearly legendary Yellow Emperor, Hwang-ti, who lived in the twenty-seventh century BC. Besides being the first to unify China, he is credited with two other legacies. He is the first to have devised a codified system of personal combat, creating the earliest-known root for the many diversified systems of personal combat and self-defense now known as kung fu, karate, judo, and tae kwon do, to name just a few. His second legacy is China's, and the world's, first medical treatise, *Nei Ching (The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine)*. Its present form, rewritten in 762 AD by Wang P'ing, consists of forty-eight volumes and contains mention not only of medical calisthenics but of acupuncture, moxibustion, and herbs as well.

About a century after the Yellow Emperor, an entirely different approach to physical culture was devised by Chinese scholar monks who began developing series of medical gymnastics coupled with respiratory techniques. These physical exercises linked to breathing methods evolved into those we now call chi kung. The development of chi kung exercises continued for two thousand years, until the fifth century BC, when the Taoist writings of Lao Tzu had a



Deer



Crane



Tiger



Monkey



Bear

**Figure 6:** The Five Animal Frolics by Hua To.

profound influence on the development of chi kung. His emphasis on nonresistance to the natural order and on self-development gave the practitioners of chi kung a new focus. The Taoists further developed physical movement combined with respiratory techniques, adding the psycho-physiological emphasis so important to modern chi kung.

Development progressed along these lines until the third century AD, when a brilliant Chinese physician, Hua To, created a sequence of exercises based on animal movements. These consisted of jumping, twisting, swaying, crawling, rotation, and contraction. They were named after the animals whose traits they embodied: bear, crane, deer, monkey, and tiger. (Figure 6) Three hundred years after Hua To, in the sixth century, a visitor from India took up residence at the Shaolin temple in Honan Province. He was Ta-Mo. The son of a Brahman king, he came to be called Bodhidharma, or master. His teachings radically altered not only the practices of the monks of the Shaolin temple, but ultimately the entire course of religious and philosophical thought in China, Korea, and Japan.

The Shaolin temple had been built three centuries earlier, and there monks prayed and led ascetic lives. When he first arrived, Ta-Mo noticed that the monks, though devout, were weak, unhealthy, and prone to fall asleep during prayers due to the ascetic lifestyle they followed. He taught them *dhyana*, or yogic concentration, from his own Buddhist background to aid them in focusing their attention. The Chinese transliterated *dhyana* to *chan*. As the practice spread further east to Japan, it came to be called *zen*.

Ta-Mo also introduced three series of exercises designed to strengthen the monks' bodies. These exercises, called "The Change of Tendons," "The Marrow Washing," and "Eighteen Buddha Hands," were combined with Hua To's animal movements and already existing martial arts to create systems useful for fighting and self-defense, now known as Shaolin kung fu. The five basic systems were tiger for strengthening bones and jumping; dragon for attention, spirit, and stillness; leopard for ap-

plication of force and fighting; snake for inner breathing, sensitivity, and action; and crane for concentration, stability, and accuracy. All were external in nature, emphasizing physical strength and speed. Over the centuries, Shaolin kung fu proliferated into more than four hundred styles in China, and the techniques also make up the basis for the Korean martial arts system of tae kwon do, the Japanese systems of karate and judo, and most of the myriad other East Asian martial arts.

But while medical calisthenics imparted greater martial ability and strength when combined with fighting systems, they also could be practiced with emphasis on the breath and meditation. Many forms of chi kung were developed for the average person who wished superior health and well-being rather than self-defense skills. Habitual practice of the techniques of chi kung imparts good health, composure, relaxation, centered awareness, concentrated attention, calmed thought, well-being, and a vibrant, energetic inner strength.

Since chi has more to do with breath than with muscle, chi kung exercises embody breathing as their main method rather than exerting or hardening the muscles. In fact, stiff, rigid musculature actually inhibits chi flow as does any sort of tension. Poor posture and constricted joints also contribute to poor chi flow. Good chi flow can be likened to water running freely through a garden hose. If the hose is squeezed, bent, or kinked, the free flow of water is restricted.

The idea behind chi kung exercises is twofold. First, chi kung stimulates, deepens, and regularizes the breath, affecting the rate, frequency, and strength of the chi flow through the meridians. Second, chi kung relaxes, loosens, and limbers the body, opening it up so as to remove all kinks and blockages to the free flow of chi. The methods used in chi kung to achieve these ends are incredibly varied but can be broken into two main categories: moving chi kung and still chi kung. (Yang and yin, naturally!)

Within each category there are many techniques and methods, but in general, moving chi kung employs some sort of external

bodily movement in conjunction with breathing rhythms and chi flow in specific areas or throughout the body. The practitioner generally performs these while standing, but some are done while sitting. Still chi kung, on the other hand, does not use external movement. Here, all movement is completely internalized, without the stimulations of body movement or the visualizations that are part of moving chi kung. It is all breath and internal flow. Still chi kung routines are done standing, sitting, or lying down and resemble meditation.

But even moving chi kung forms are as much meditation as they are physical exercises, and as with all meditation, extraneous thoughts must be released. Attention is put on the lower tantien, just below and behind the

navel, and the mind is used with the breath to guide chi through the meridians. Initially this requires visualization, but over time, the sensation of flow becomes obvious and no longer requires the artificial aid of visualization.

Physical body movement, as well, becomes less and less necessary, and eventually the practitioner can guide the chi throughout the body using only the breath and mind. But even experienced practitioners often continue to practice moving chi kung forms to remain limber and strong. Sometimes chi kung is combined with self-defense techniques, as with the popular Chinese martial art of tai chi chuan, which is, essentially, a long moving chi kung that has self-defense applications.

## Modern Chi Kung

From its inception until the early 1970s, the People's Republic of China banned open practice of kung fu and chi kung since these arts smacked of the old imperialist regime and the superstitious religions and practices associated with it. However, the Chinese leaders realized how important public health was and how effective the old methods were in achieving health. The prohibition was lifted, and in 1974, the Chinese government revealed wushu to the world. Wushu (war arts), or kung fu under a new name, became the state-sponsored sport with local, regional, and national championships. More important for the masses who were not interested in the more overtly physical wushu, chi kung once again was allowed.

Almost instantly, chi kung became the national pastime. All over China, people gather in parks in the early hours before work, during lunch breaks, and in the evenings to practice alone or in groups. Literally millions of people practice regularly, and the numbers are almost equaled by the variety of styles they practice. Some people prefer the longer, more complex tai chi chuan, while others practice specific forms prescribed by their physicians. Still others train in regimens for general health and well-being developed by acknowledged masters of chi kung.

Why do these people routinely train in these ancient forms of exercise? The answer is manifest in the definite, observable, and obviously positive effects chi kung has on health, well-being, and energy levels. It works. It is relaxing and energizing, strengthening and calming, all at the same time. Even more simply put, it feels good!

Chi kung often has been called a univer-

sal panacea for illnesses and disorders ranging from the mild to the serious. While these claims often are exaggerated or irresponsible, the extraordinary has been known to occur. The following case histories are well-documented examples of some of the more extreme conditions cured or relieved by chi kung.

Madam Guo Lin of Beijing, the originator of a popular form of chi kung, suffered from cancer of the uterus when in her forties. After several operations, she took up chi kung by modifying the martial art form that was part of her family's heritage. She succeeded in regaining her health. At the age of seventy-five, she continued to work eighteen to nineteen hours a day and had many students throughout China, including seven thousand cancer patients, who have used her methods. She became a staple of Chinese television.

Another example, Gau Wen-Bing, was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1976.<sup>8</sup> Surgeons opened his chest, believed the cancer was too advanced to remove. Gau then received radiation and chemotherapy treatments. His white cell count fell below 4600 (from an average of 9000), and he felt weak and lacked appetite, had headaches and dizziness, and slept poorly. His doctors predicted he had only six months to live. In 1977, he began practicing chi kung and, after only two weeks, felt stronger and slept better, and his appetite picked up. The swelling he'd experienced in his lower extremities disappeared, as did the radiation-induced pneumonia he had contracted. To everyone's surprise, he got healthier every day, went back to work, and after three years, was diagnosed as being in good health.

Chi kung expert Lin Ho-sheng, who was



studied by specialists at the Shanghai Chinese Medical Research Hospital, released enough of his own life energy (chi) to enable surgeons to operate on others without anesthetics or acupuncture. The operations were performed by Mao Goun-yung, MD. Sufficient analgesic effect occurred to complete twelve thyroid removals. Three stomach removals also were performed with the addition of five milligrams of Valium to the patient to aid Lin's projections of chi. The patients remained conscious but felt no pain. Lin also worked at No. 8 People's Hospital and Shanghai Shukoun Hospital.<sup>9</sup>

Hu Bin, chief physician of the Department of Breathing Exercises at the Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine, reports dramatic results in the use of chi kung to treat several conditions. The results were taken from numerous hospitals and sanatoriums around China. In peptic ulcers, the effective rate of treatment was 90 percent, hypertension 98 percent, coronary heart disease 90 percent, and neurasthenia 85 percent. His success in normalizing blood pressure was 75 percent.<sup>10</sup>

In 1976, acupuncture and chi kung teacher Lee Zhong-Yu, who also was a Chinese medical doctor, contracted tuberculosis, kidney inflammation, and diabetes after a serious car accident. Traditional Chinese and Western-trained doctors gave up hope for him and thought he would die. As soon as he regained consciousness from a two-week coma, he practiced a form of chi kung that had been passed down in his family, and he regained his health. At that time, he already was over seventy years old. Years later, he was well, still practiced acupuncture, and was a well-known figure in Chinese medicine.<sup>11</sup>

But one does not have to have an extreme condition to benefit from chi kung, nor does one have to be expert. There is a Chinese saying that goes, "Don't wait for calamity to fall before you pray." In other words, do not wait until you are sick to begin practicing health. As preventative medicine, chi kung not only promotes health, relaxation, greater flexibility, and softening of stiffening muscles, but has proved effective against a long list of physical complaints and illnesses. Benefits include

stimulation of the immune and lymph systems and promotion of white blood cells resulting in fewer minor colds and infections, improved digestion and circulation, deeper sleep, balancing of the appetite, and lowered adrenaline levels, stress, and metabolic functions, thus reducing levels of crisis response. Chi kung also can help increase mental capacity and physical endurance, and it even tones the muscles and softens the skin.

Chi kung is useful for problems of the respiratory system (asthma, bronchitis, tuberculosis), problems of the circulatory system (abnormal blood pressure, heart problems), arthritis, problems of the digestive system (ulcers of stomach and duodenum, constipation, chronic hepatitis), and problems of the nervous system (insomnia, forgetfulness, anxiety, and the aftereffects of concussion and stroke). It also is used to alleviate menstrual irregularities, sexual dysfunction, tilted uterus, and diabetes.

One modern synthesis of chi kung techniques and Western medicine has been aiding those who suffer from arthritis. In 1981, Diane Harlowe, MS, OTR, then director of Occupational Therapy and Speech Services at St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center in Madison, Wisconsin, and Patricia Yu, MA, a health education consultant and tai chi chuan instructor, published *The ROM Dance (Range of Motion Dance)*. This paper detailed the results of a pilot project, funded in part by a grant from the Arthritis Foundation, of exercises for rheumatoid arthritis patients. The result was a series of forty movements that combined standard Western joint mobility exercises with traditional Chinese therapeutic movements and deep breathing exercises. The sequence has been shown effective in enhancing joint mobility and extension in an interesting and aesthetically pleasing manner.<sup>12</sup>

These are just a few of the many known benefits of chi kung. New exhaustive research into techniques and causes will uncover further uses for these amazing exercises. Additional exercises will be developed and systematized into routines designed to aid specific instances of illnesses or disorder. But as important

as these specific instances are, daily general health maintenance is even more so. Chi kung exercises developed for this purpose not only help prevent illnesses and disorders but enhance daily life by imparting strength, energy, and a calm well-being.

There are literally thousands of individual chi kung exercises. Many of them are quite different from each other, while some are variations on a particular theme or body movement. Often several different exercises will be compiled into a series that usually contains a mixture of moving and still chi kung. Such a series, or “form,” might take anywhere from five minutes to a couple of hours to perform, depending on the number of individual exercises contained in the particular form, the purpose of the form, and the desire and stamina of the practitioner.

One form designed for general health maintenance is Xiao (pronounced shaow—rhymes with cow) Style chi kung, which is detailed in a later chapter. This form was developed by Xiao Liang-An, a chi kung master who began studying the art at age four, and continued his study and practice until his death at age ninety-six in 1984. Xiao was well-known for his ability to help people with heart disease by projecting his chi from his palms. At age seventy-three, he developed cancer of the stomach. He practiced chi kung to arrest the disease and was successful at this for twenty-three years. Even until the time of his death, he could still project his chi to help people with heart disease.

Mr. Xiao passed on his knowledge to two students, one of whom was Dr. John X. Z. Song, who moved to the United States in 1982 and took up residence in Houston, Texas. Dr. Song, a professionally trained doctor of traditional Chinese medicine, is versed in acupuncture, moxibustion, herbs, massage, the martial art and moving chi kung of tai chi chuan, and numerous therapeutic chi kung forms. Dr. Song has practiced acupuncture through the Yale Hospital system and the Houston Wellness Center as well as privately.

In late 1982, he began teaching chi kung and tai chi chuan to small groups of Chinese,

and in spring 1983, he began his first public class in tai chi chuan through the Alief Independent School District. Since then, he has taught chi kung and tai chi chuan to thousands of students through the Alief Independent School District, Rice University’s Institute of Chinese Culture, the Houston Wellness Center, the Wilhelm Schole, and his own organization, the Chinese Healing-Arts Institute.

The author of this book was Dr. Song’s first American student. I came to him with four years of experience in tai chi chuan, and I studied with him for five more years. As his assistant instructor, I aided him in classes of both chi kung and tai chi chuan and taught many of his beginning students. During that period, he certified me as an instructor.

Xiao Style chi kung is practiced for daily health maintenance and muscle toning. Many people have found relief from chronic tension in Xiao Style. It is a relaxing yet energizing form with strong chi building potential. Much less strenuous and complex than a set of tai chi chuan yet keeping chi mobilized for a comparable length of time (about twenty minutes), Xiao Style is highly suitable for older practitioners and is an ideal compliment to regular tai chi chuan practice. Other benefits include aid to digestion, relief from some chronic muscular pains, and strengthening of the abdominal region and lower back. It imparts mental focus and aids in controlling emotions. It also will warm you up in cold weather.

With Xiao Style, even beginners can get the feeling of chi almost immediately. Most will first notice it as a sensation of warmth or tingling in the hands and arms. From there, the feeling spreads throughout the body. The form is flexible and suitable for the old or young, the healthy or infirm. And while the form promotes a general level of good health, it can be used to strengthen specific weaknesses in different individuals simply by stressing one or more of the individual exercises. Steady practitioners love the effects, finding it simultaneously energizing and relaxing, euphoric and stabilizing. Xiao Style is an outstanding routine for daily health maintenance.

# The Chi Kung Method

Chi kung are simple exercises that depend more on breathing, relaxation, concentration, and visualization than on muscular exertion. The ultimate aim is not to exert strength but to allow the chi to flow freely throughout the meridian system. In fact, muscular tension will inhibit the free flow of chi, therefore relaxation is of primary importance. At the highest levels of chi kung, the practitioner can deliberately and consciously move the chi to or through any part of his or her body, and even out of it. But no matter what level you are at or what level you eventually reach, you will attain benefits and feel positive effects.

The first important aspect to pay attention to is relaxation. Tension inhibits chi flow, so the body should be relaxed and soft. Unfortunately, this is difficult to achieve, especially for the beginner. Human beings in modern societies wear tension like they wear clothes. It is almost as if we cannot believe we exist if we do not constantly carry tension around with us. Tension permeates our bodies, affects behavior, and is a leading contributor to many chronic diseases and disorders. Chi kung can help dissolve tension, but the process often takes time. After all, if a person has spent an entire lifetime learning tension, it is only reasonable that time must be spent learning relaxation.

The first step in releasing tension is paying attention to body posture. Just as a building cannot stand without a framework, the body cannot stand without its skeleton. If the framework of a house is crooked, the house will soon sag. Its roof will leak, its floors will rot, and its walls will weaken and collapse.

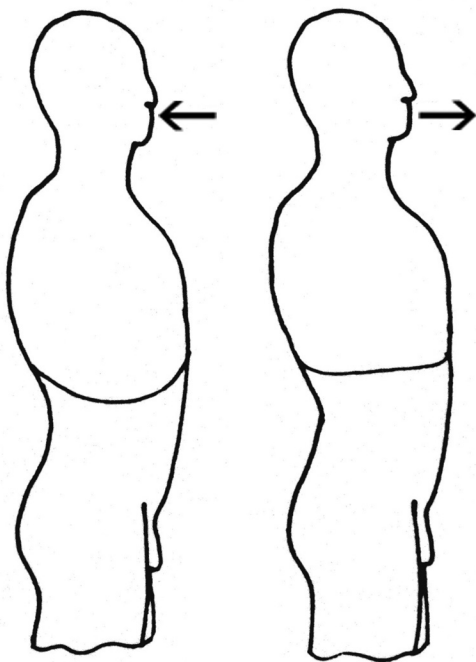
So it is with the body. If the body is not

held correctly, then muscles that should be able to relax are constantly occupied just holding up everything. This is particularly true of the muscles in the back and shoulders. Actually, it is the legs that should hold up the body, not the back or shoulders, and if the spine's posture is correct, then the body weight can sink directly down the spine and into the legs. Thus, the first step in relaxation is to pay attention to the basic skeletal alignments.

Because the spine is the most important support within the body, its alignment is of primary concern. It should be held upright and the head erect. Tuck the buttocks under slightly, straightening the curve of the spine at the small of the back, and tuck the chin in slightly, straightening the neck. Feel as if your body is suspended from a string attached to the crown of your head, with the spine forming a straight line pointing directly at the center of the Earth. This allows your body weight to go straight down into your legs and feet, releasing the muscles of your back and shoulders from former, inappropriate tasks. Now the rest of your body can hang from the central support of the spine much as the structure of a house hangs from its central ridgepole.

Next, remove constrictions in all the joints in the body and limbs by opening and relaxing them. This is achieved by loosening the muscles around the joints. After all, your joints are not going to fall apart if you do not constantly hold them in place. Let the joint structure hold itself together, and let your muscles relax. In particular, notice your shoulders. Many people carry a lot of tension in their shoulders, and it shows in the strained way they hold them crunched up around their necks.





**Figure 7:** Abdominal breathing expands the diaphragm downward on inhalation and contracts it upward on exhalation.

Relax the muscles in the upper back, and let the shoulders simply hang from the spine, rather than holding them in place. Let them drop, but do not push or force them down. As time goes by, they will relax more and more, giving the shoulders a rounded rather than square look. The neck will feel as if it elongates somewhat as a result of dropping the shoulders. Also pay attention to the elbows, wrists, knees, and ankles. Flex these joints slightly, without actually bending them. Never hold them too rigidly straight or with too much of a bend, for either extreme will inhibit chi flow.

Breathing is the second important aspect of the body to consider. The breath should be natural and relaxed, which means it is not forced or held, either in or out. It is even and continuous, inhalation blending seamlessly with exhalation, without holding the breath or panting. Unless otherwise noted for a particular exercise, inhale and exhale only through the nose. Nasal breathing not only filters dust but

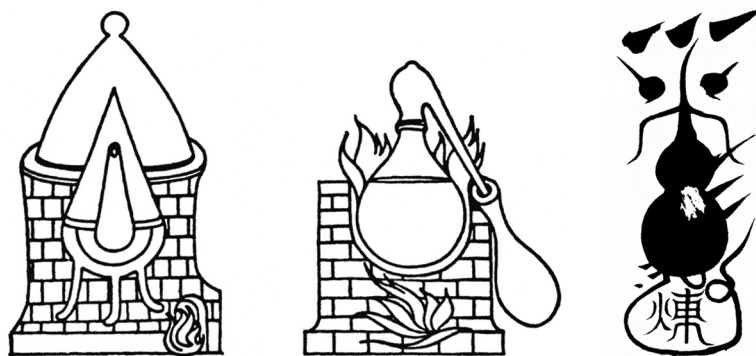
promotes breathing that is smooth, regular, and deep.

The breath should sink into the lower abdomen rather than stay in the upper chest. Many adults make the mistake of breathing by expanding and contracting the chest. Aside from creating tension in the shoulders, this form of breathing causes the internal energy of the body to “float” in the upper chest and shoulders. A great part of the purpose of chi kung is to bring this energy permanently into the lower abdomen (tantien), imparting calmness and stability. To sink the chi to the tantien, one must learn to breathe abdominally rather than from the chest.

Consider the structure and function of the lungs. In essence, they are a pair of bellows that expand to suck in fresh air and contract to expel stale air. Physiologically, the muscle that should be used to expand and contract the lungs does not exist in the surrounding chest but beneath the lungs. It is the diaphragm, a sheet of muscle that divides the chest cavity from the abdominal cavity and that is important to both breathing and the circulatory system. Everyone is aware of the existence and location of the diaphragm through the common, mild spasms of this muscle known as hiccups.

Abdominal breathing uses downward expansion of the diaphragm for inhalation, and upward contraction for exhalation. (Figure 7) In essence, rather than pulling air in and pushing it out as upper chest breathing does, abdominal breathing sucks air in and squeezes it out. This form of breathing is most obvious in infants, who have not yet been taught to carry tension in their upper bodies.

Breathing from the diaphragm has several beneficial effects. As mentioned above, it sinks the chi to the tantien instead of allowing it to float in the upper chest. Floating chi not only causes tension and physical instability but is a leading factor in emotional instability and over-reaction to stress and excitement. A second benefit is that abdominal breathing uses a greater percentage of lung capacity than does upper chest breathing, thus giving the body more oxygen per breath and more effectively expelling waste gases from the lungs.



**Figure 20:** The similarities between the athanors of classical Western alchemy (left and center) and the Talisman of the Ruler of the South (right), an ancient Taoist symbol used in refining spiritual energy, are remarkable.

Third, expansion and contraction of the diaphragm performs a gentle massaging of the internal organs and viscera, strengthening these organs and aiding digestion of food and elimination of wastes. Fourth, abdominal breathing strengthens the muscles of the abdomen and lower back through the rhythmic contractions of these muscles, aiding reduction of chronic back pain. A fifth benefit is that abdominal breathing stimulates the psychic centers. World-famous psychics, such as Frederica Hauffe, Eileen Garrett, Phoebe Payne, Olive Pixley, and Edgar Cayce all place or placed great emphasis on abdominal breathing, acknowledging that it is the indispensable preparation for trance or astral projection.<sup>13</sup>

Chi kung, as well as being both a physical and a psychic method, is also alchemy. Most people look on the alchemist as a primitive chemist who attempted to transform base metals, such as lead, into gold. Contrary to this popular misconception, true alchemy actually has nothing to do with metal or chemistry. Alchemical descriptions were merely metaphors behind which ancient alchemists hid the truth of their metaphysical research and processes, either out of fear of religious persecution or to keep the secrets of power hidden from the unworthy. Later men, ignorant of the allegorical nature of the descriptions, took them as factual methods. These later men were the ones

who actually attempted to distill gold from lead and, in the process, invented the modern science of chemistry.

The classical description of alchemical work is that the alchemist mixes his ingredients—mercury and sulfur—in a retort (alembic or athanor) and repeatedly heats and cools the mixture with a fire underneath. (Figure 9) After enough cooking, the refined result rises up the spout of the retort and is emitted as gold. From the viewpoint of modern chemistry, this description is ridiculous. However, looking past the surface, it begins to make sense. Sulfur is symbolic of the spirit, or the active aspect of nature, while mercury is symbolic of the soul, or the passive aspect of nature—the yang and yin. The gold is not the precious metal but either spiritual energy or the fabled Philosopher's Stone, a “substance” that imparts all wisdom.

The yang and yin—the active and passive elements of nature—usually are present within the human being in an unrefined and confused state. However, when the mind and breath are concentrated in the tantien, as with chi kung exercises or meditation, a heat is produced that is both physical and psychic. This is the fire. The abdominal area, the tantien, is the retort. Over time, with continued practice, the heat refines and condenses the yang and yin, or conflicting aspects, within the human

being into a unified whole, producing spiritual energy. Little by little, as the spiritual energy strengthens and grows, it rises up the governing vessel (the spout of the retort), opening the chakras as it rises, until it reaches the crown chakra (Thousand Petal Lotus, or fontanel), producing enlightenment.

So chi kung is, essentially, a method of achieving health, well-being, and enlightenment through refinement of body, awareness, will, and spirit by means of particular physical exercises that manipulate the breath to build psychic energy.

Each individual chi kung exercise entails coordination of a particular physical movement with the breath and movement of the chi. In the early stages, the practitioner needs to imagine and visualize the movement of the chi. Just where the chi moves during a particular exercise is detailed in the instructions for each exercise. After a time of steady practice, the imagination and visualization can be dispensed with because, with relaxation and the strengthening of the chi, the practitioner will begin to actually feel the flow within his or her body.

Often this feeling is first sensed as warmth or a feeling of fullness in the hands or feet, a sort of electric tingling on the skin, or a rush of energy through the torso or limbs. As awareness of it increases, the entire body will heat up, and the practitioner will be able to form a complete “circuit” of this energy within the torso. This is called the *microcosmic orbit* (lesser circulation) and is the loop formed

by the governing and conception vessels. The simplest way to power this circuit is this: On an in-breath, the energy rises up the governing vessel from the base of the spine, up the neck, and over the top of the head to the roof of the mouth. On the out-breath, it is pushed down the conception vessel to the point between the genitals and anus (the base chakra or Root of Life).

After a longer period of practice, one can feel the energy flow throughout the entire body. This is called the *macrocosmic orbit* (greater circulation) and includes the twelve primary meridians as well as the governing and conception vessels. One way to begin feeling the macrocosmic orbit is that on the in-breath, feel the energy being sucked into the soles of your feet, and up your legs, where it enters and rises up the governing vessel as detailed in the second method of powering the microcosmic orbit mentioned above. On the out-breath, the energy is pushed through the shoulders, along the arms, and out the hands, as well as over the top of the head and into the conception vessel. The next in breath pulls more energy up the legs as well as continues to power the microcosmic orbit.

Some people can feel chi energy flow, at least in part, almost immediately. Others may take longer. Development is largely contingent on frequency of practice, length of practice, relaxation levels, and ability to concentrate. All of these will increase with time as long as regular practice is maintained.

## Afterword

**T**he practice of chi kung is rewarding, but in order to practice, one must learn. Qualified instructors can be found in almost any major city in the United States. Check local leisure learning organizations or kung fu schools for the names of qualified teachers.

Although it is definitely better to learn from a knowledgeable teacher, that is not always possible. Lack of time, money, or a teacher in the area all contribute difficulties. It is the sincere hope of the author that this introductory manual will provide help and adequate instruction for those without access to personal instruction.

Personal instruction of Xiao Style chi kung to a class of a dozen or so takes six to eight weeks of weekly classes lasting an hour to an hour and a half. At the end of this time, the class members can perform the entire routine, albeit roughly. Another six weeks of instruction usually polishes the form and sets it in the student's mind. From this, you can see that you should not try to learn the entire form in one afternoon. Take your time and enjoy the learning process.

My suggestion is to set yourself a schedule—your own class time, if you will. Begin by learning one or two of the movements, and practice these daily during the week. Then learn one or two new movements, and add them to your routine. Each week, add one or two more new movements to your practice, and at the end of five or six weeks, you will have learned the entire set. Find a friend or two to learn with you, and you can take turns reading the instructions to each other. Also, the energy created by group practice produces a really terrific feeling.

There are two basic methods of beginning and adding new movements, and you should choose the one that best suits you. You can begin at the beginning, and learn each new movement in sequence until you get to the end. This may be the easier method for learning the sequence, but it poses certain difficulties. The movements of the Opening Sequence warm up the system, those of the Middle Sequence sustain the system, and those of the Closing Sequence cool down the system. If you learn from beginning to end, for several weeks during the learning process, you will be warming up the system and sustaining it, without cooling it down. There is no overt danger in this, but it is really better to follow a method similar to the one outlined in the chart on the last page of this chapter.

As you can see, the method outlined teaches you a warm-up, a sustaining movement, and a cool-down each week. If you feel that this is too fast for you, then simply slow down the process by learning fewer movements each time. If it is too slow, then combine weeks.

Chi kung is obviously very different from Western forms of exercise, but it does have one element in common with them. It must be done on a regular basis for the benefits to be felt and enjoyed. Practice at least once a day, either in the morning or in the evening. Twice a day will increase the benefits and effects. Set aside a regular time if possible. The entire form of Xiao Style takes about twenty minutes to perform, which is not much time considering the superior, long-lasting benefits regular practice imparts.

Learning anything is an expanding experience, and most people who have learned and

practice chi kung find that it deepens their awareness of themselves and of the world. It will make you more sensitive not only to your own energy but to the energy of other people. It will impart greater physical, emotional, and mental stability. As a consequence, you will be less likely to be hurt on any of these levels. Your greater sensitivity to the energy around you will enable you to avoid situations where hurt might result. And from all this comes a strengthening of the will, which gives one the power to realize—to make real—the positive qualities within, while at the same time helping to strip away the dross of negativity that we all carry along with our tensions and fears.

From these statements, it might seem that chi kung is some sort of magical process. This both true and false. Practicing chi kung will not magically eliminate all negative influences from your life or instantly make you perfectly healthy. But it is a method and a tool with which to cure and strengthen body, emotions, mind, and spirit. In the end, though, it is the work the individual does on him- or herself with this tool that creates the cure and strength, not the tool itself. You can think chi kung all day long, but unless you practice chi kung, all your thinking will come to naught. True results only come from true work.

There is the old statement, “No pain, no gain.” All growth entails some sort of effort, some sort of pain, and while the pain may not necessarily be physical, it is nonetheless real. Someone once asked me what is the most difficult movement in tai chi chuan, the long moving chi kung and martial art, which has more than one hundred sequential and continuous movements, several of which are somewhat physically difficult and strenuous. I had to answer that the first movement—just standing there, mentally preparing myself to do the form—was the most difficult. It may be the easiest to do physically, but implicit within it are all the other movements that follow for the next twenty-five minutes and all the days of twenty-five minutes spent doing and practicing. In other words, the discipline of making yourself take the time to exercise daily is the most difficult movement there is.

But if you give chi kung a chance, if you give yourself a chance to experience the benefits chi kung can help impart, you are sure to make that most difficult movement almost every day. And you will learn what millions of practitioners worldwide have already discovered—that chi kung is truly a wonder, a joy, and a deep pleasure.

# Xiao Style Chi Kung

## Preparation

Chi kung entails certain prohibitions. First, never breathe slower or more deeply than is comfortable. This can lead to dizziness or faintness. If you should feel dizzy or faint, rest until the spell has passed, and during future practice, breathe at a rate that is more comfortable for you.

Second, never strain or force the breath. In fact, never force anything. Force leads to tension, which blocks chi. Also, forcing the breath too deeply can cause internal stresses for which the body may be unprepared. Damage to abdominal muscles is one potential danger. In addition, forcing the breath might push an overload of chi into the brain, which can cause nervousness and irritability at the least, hemorrhage at the worst. Natural and easy are the key words. Let the breath flow easily and calmly, and it will deepen and sink naturally over time. You will achieve greater and truer results this way than by using force, and you will need never fear discomfort or injury.

Another prohibition is that you should not practice chi kung too soon before or after eating. Chi kung entails work with the internal structure, particularly the intestines, and the presence of food bulk can cause discomfort. You should wait half an hour to an hour before or after eating to practice chi kung. Also, do not drink cold water or other liquids for at least ten minutes after practicing. Menstruating and pregnant women more than half-way through term should refrain from practicing chi kung due to the internal pressure put on the lower abdomen.

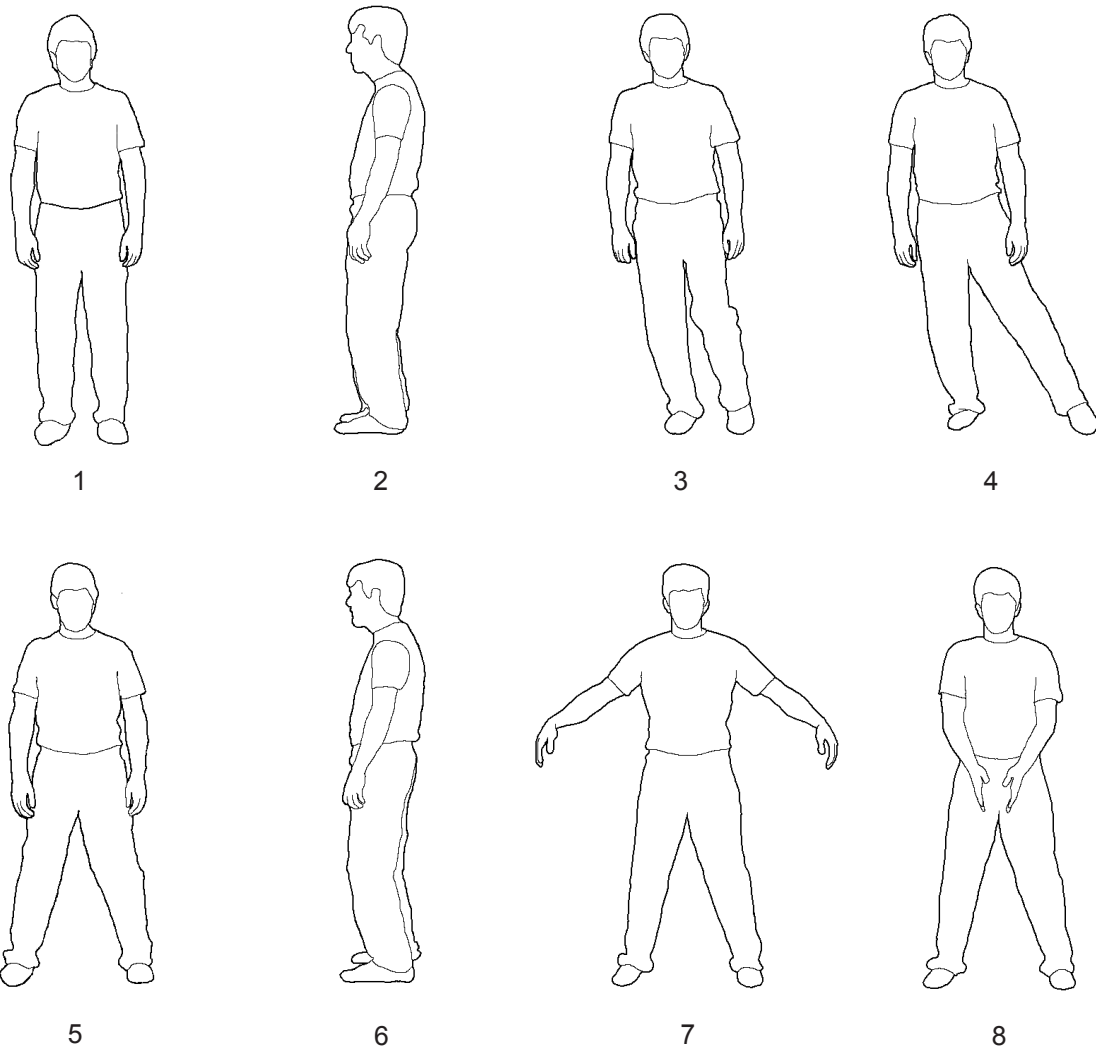
Since chi kung has the effect of opening up the meridians, do not expose yourself to chilly or damp breezes until your body has had a chance to cool down naturally, and do not perform chi kung in the rain, which could cause a damp chill to enter and settle in the body, causing stiffness and aching. And finally, do not practice sooner than half an hour before bedtime or after rising.

While performing Xiao Style chi kung, concentrate your mind on your lower tan tien, two inches below and two inches behind your navel, while at the same time paying attention to your body alignments and breathing pattern. Also lightly press the tip of your tongue against the hard palate on the roof of your mouth. This connects the governing vessel and the conception vessel. Keep your teeth lightly closed but not clenched, your lips closed, and your expression impassive.

Except where noted, the foot stance is shoulder-width, toes pointed forward, knees slightly flexed. The arms hang loosely at the sides, elbows flexed, at the beginning of each exercise and return there at the end. The eyes are neither wide open nor shut and are soft in appearance. Avoid jerky or sudden movements. All movements should be smooth, even, and continuous.

The Xiao Style form consists of three sequences. Stay with the number of repetitions prescribed for the Opening Sequence and the Closing Sequence. You may increase the number of repetitions of each exercise in the Middle Sequence as time and strength permit, using nine as a minimum. Perform eighteen repetitions of each exercise in the Middle Sequence for optimal daily health maintenance. Doing eighteen repetitions for each exercise in the Middle Sequence will cause performance of the entire form to take about twenty minutes. The set should be practiced at least once a day, either in the morning or in the early evening.





## Opening Sequence (Warm-up)

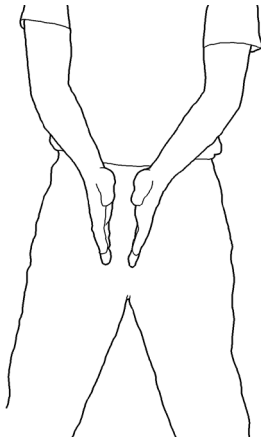
### 1.) Relaxation and Open

Stand with your feet one fist-width apart, toes pointing forward, knees slightly flexed. Relax your body without slumping (1–2). Drop your shoulders but do not force them down. Look straight ahead into the distance, not focusing on anything in particular. Visualize water running gently over your head. It trickles down your body and legs and drips off your fingers onto the ground, washing away your cares.

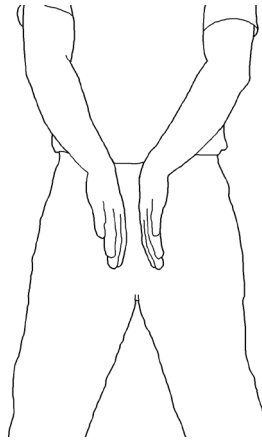
Lean slightly to the right until all of your weight is on your right leg, then step out with your left leg so your feet are shoulder-width apart (3–4). Touch the left toes down first, then settle flat onto the left foot as you bring your weight back to center (5–6). Keep your knees slightly flexed.

### 2.) Opening and Closing the Hands

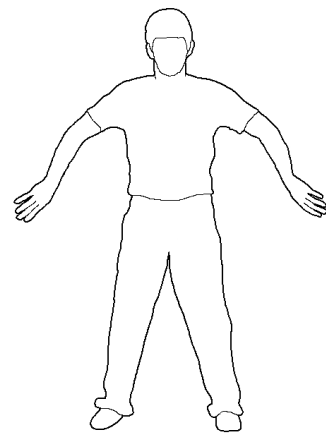
From their relaxed positions by your sides, raise the hands out sideways (7) to waist height



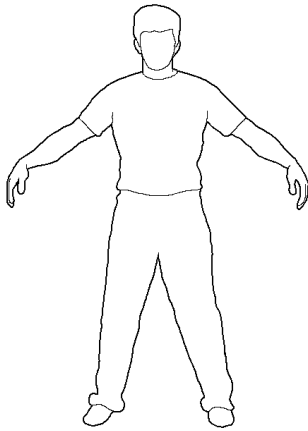
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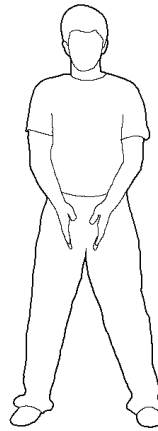
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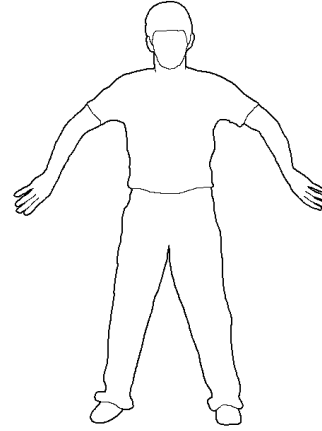
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and slightly in front of you. The palms are turned toward each other, fingers down. Breathe in as the hands rise.

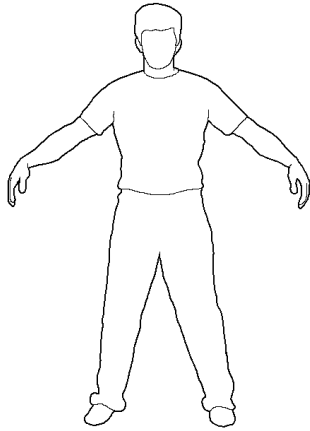
Now relax your arms, and bring your palms together until they almost touch in front of your tantien (8). The fingers still point down. Breathe out as the palms come together. Rotate both wrists at the same time, turning thumbs toward you and the backs of the hands toward each other (9–10). Fingers still point down.

Breathe in and move the hands apart. When they are out and about waist height (11), rotate both wrists at the same time, turning the palms toward each other, thumbs away from you (12).

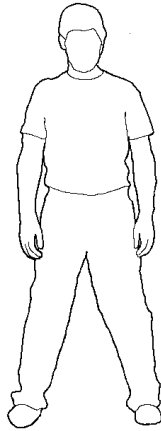
Breathe out as you bring the palms together in front of your tantien a second time (13). Rotate both wrists at the same time so that the backs of the hands are now turned toward each other (9–10), fingers still down. Breathe in, and raise the hands out sideways to waist height (11).

Rotate both wrists until the palms face each other (12), thumbs out. Breathe out and bring the palms together in front of your tantien a third time (13). Rotate both wrists so that the backs of the hands are turned toward each other, fingers still down (9–10). Breathe in, and raise the hands out sideways to waist height (14).





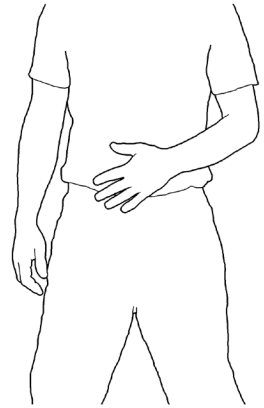
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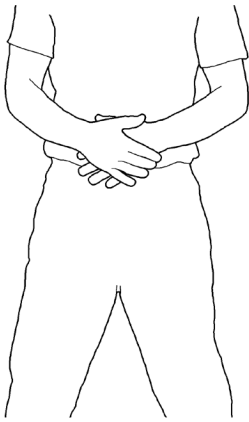
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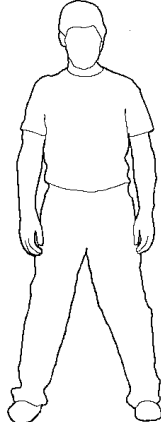
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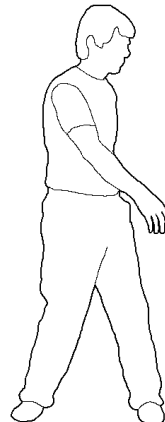
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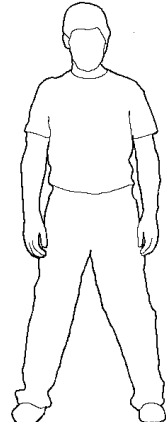
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Again rotate both wrists until the palms face each other, thumbs away from you (15). Then simply breathe out and relax your arms to let them hang loosely at your sides (16–17), fingertips down.

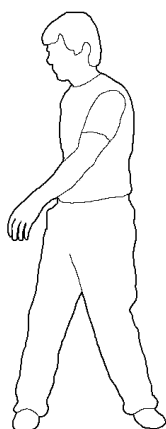
This exercise begins warming up the system and centers the breath and chi in the abdomen.

### 3.) Chi Breathing

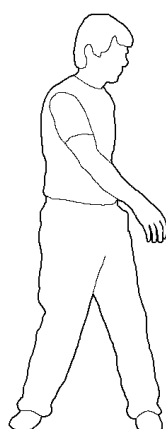
Keep the same stance as above (16–17), and place the palms over the tantien. Males position the base of the left thumb directly over the navel so the left palm covers the tantien (18). Then place the right hand over the left (19). Females place hands in the reverse order.

Inhale deeply through the nose, filling your lungs, but do not force the breath. When you have inhaled, then exhale through the mouth, blowing out the breath in a fine stream. Bend your knees and sink as you exhale.

The exhale should take longer than the inhale. When the breath is blown out and you have sunk as far as you can without strain, inhale through the nose and hold the breath for a couple



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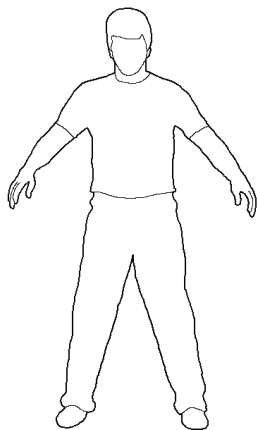
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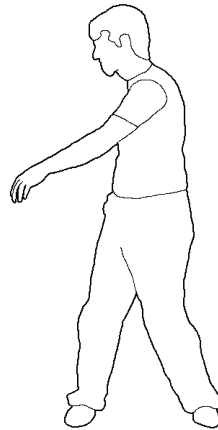
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of seconds. Then rise, puffing out the breath. Keep your hands covering your tantien. Repeat the above two more times, for a total of three. At the end of the third time, let your arms relax and hang loosely at your sides (20).

This exercise deepens the breath, further warms the system, and activates the belt meridian.

#### 4.) Two Dragons Wrapping the Pole

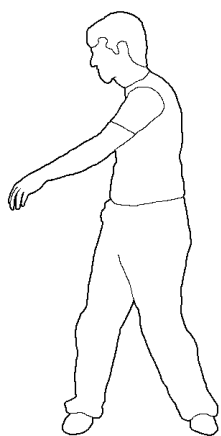
In the above mentioned shoulder-width stance (20), twist your hips loosely to the left (21), then to the right (22–23), then left (24–26), then right (27–31), and so on, back and forth, increasing the swing of your arms until your hands lightly slap the body at the hips.

With your hips turning and arms swinging, bob on the knees slightly, which will cause the hands to rise up the body (32–34). Do not use arm strength to lift the arms, but let the twisting and bobbing do the work.

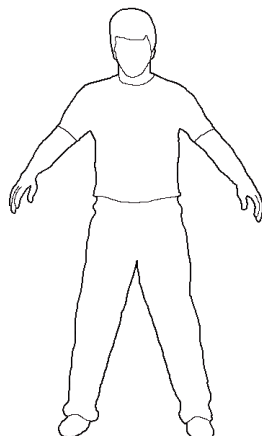
Let your hands work up your body, lightly slapping the torso several times, until they are up around your neck, where you lightly slap the vertebrae at the base of the neck a couple of times



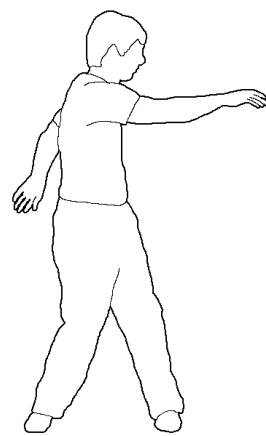
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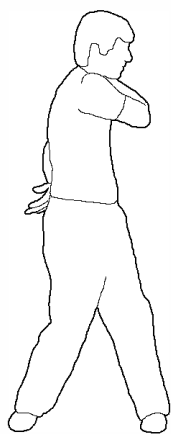
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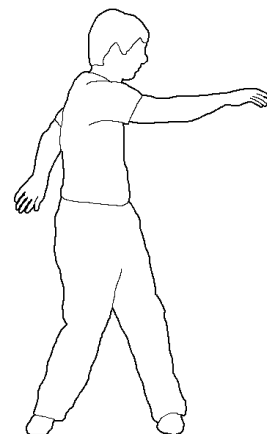
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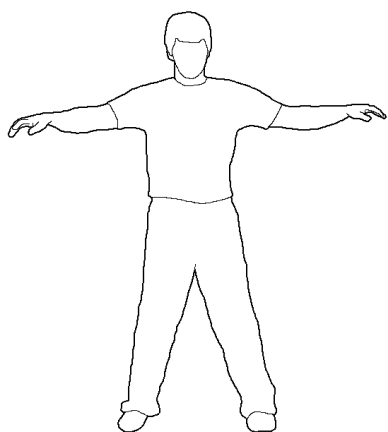
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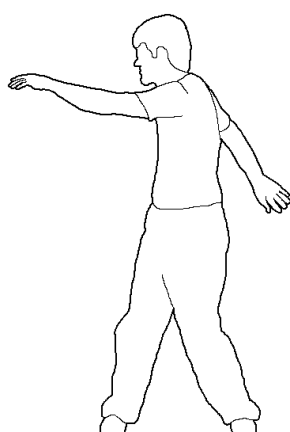
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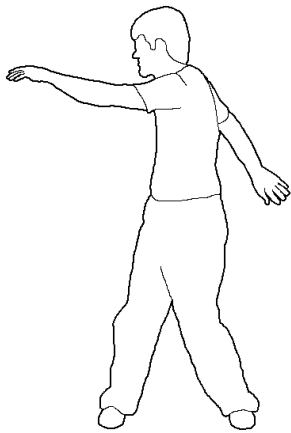
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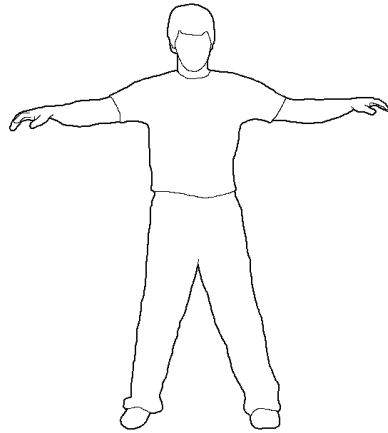
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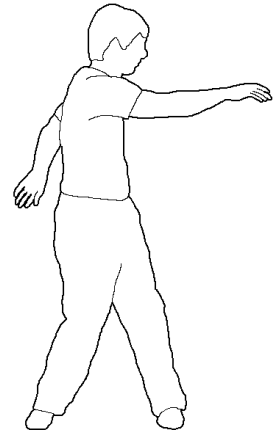
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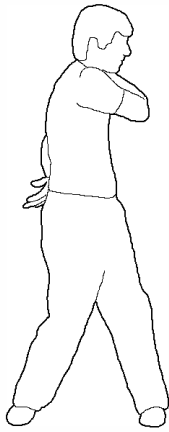
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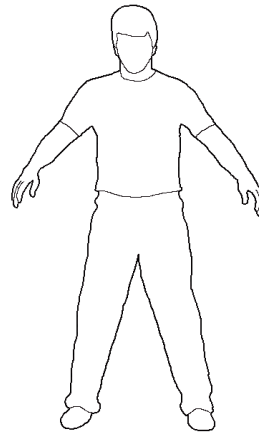
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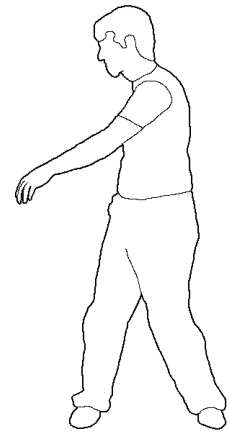
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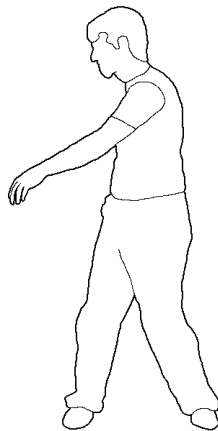
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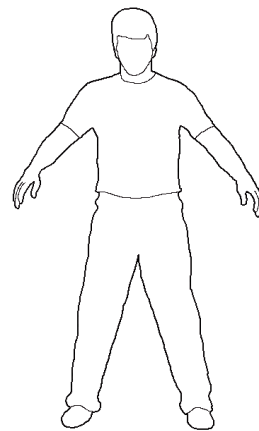
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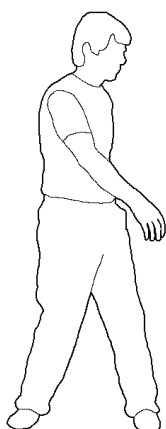
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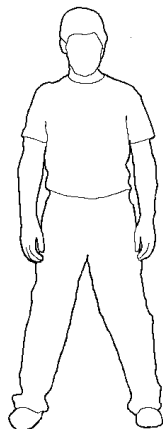
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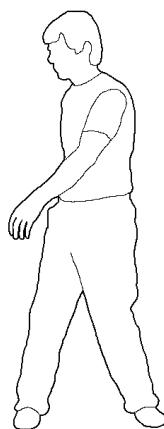
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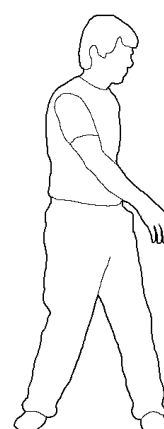
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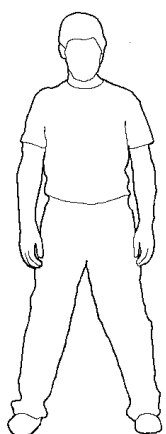
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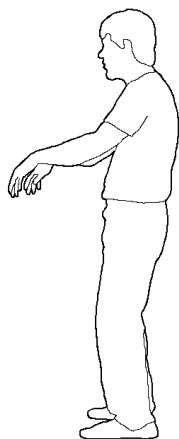


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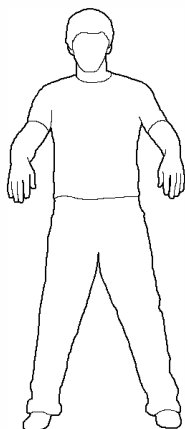
with each hand (35–44). Then slow the turning of the hips and ease the bobbing of the knees, allowing the hands to gradually descend the body (45–55), still slapping lightly.

Do not completely stop the rotation of your hips. When the hands have reached the bottom, increase the hip motion and knee bobbing, once again causing the hands to rise up the body, slapping lightly as they rise. Slap up and down the body a total of three times. Breathe lightly and spontaneously. At the end of the third descent, relax the hip movement entirely (51–55) until you stand facing the front, arms hanging loosely at your sides (56–57).

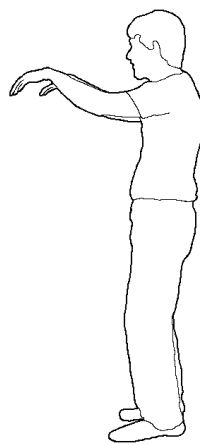
This activates the twelve major meridians and starts the chi flowing actively through them. It also loosens the muscles and joints, opening them for the flowing chi.



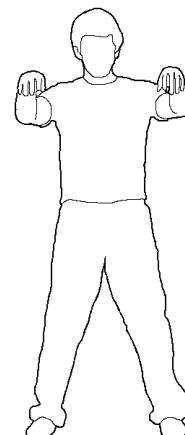
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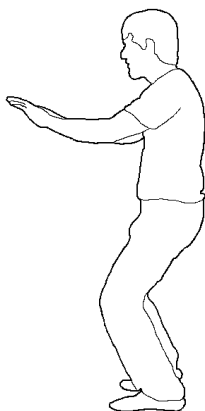
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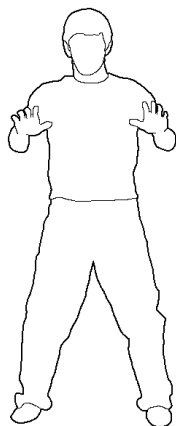
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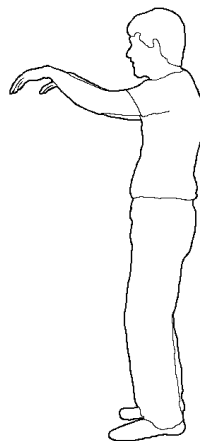
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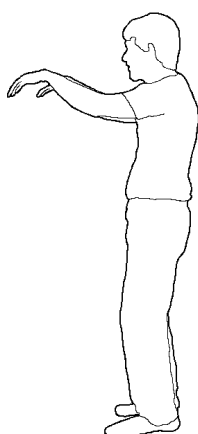
## Middle Sequence (Activation)

### 1.) Floating with the Waves

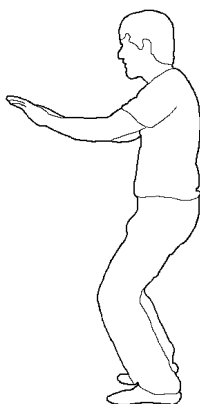
Look straight ahead into the middle distance without focusing on anything in particular. Raise the wrists (58–59) in front of your body to shoulder height (60–61). Breathe in through the nose as the wrists rise. Your arms rise at the wrists until they are comfortably extended in front of you, without stiffness, each hand directly out from its respective shoulder. Relax your shoulders and elbows. Your palms face down.

Then drop your elbows and lower the palms to the height of the lowest point of the sternum, bending the knees and breathing out through the nose (62–63). Again raise your wrists to shoulder height, breathing in and straightening the knees (64). Then again drop the elbows and lower your hands, breathing out (65). In/up (66), out/down (67), and so on, for nine to eighteen repetitions.

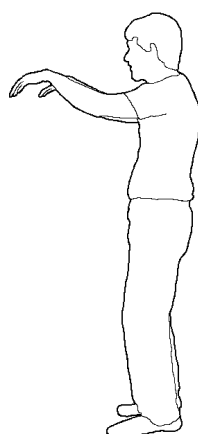
Visualize energy rising up the insides of both legs at once as you stand, rolling over the hips



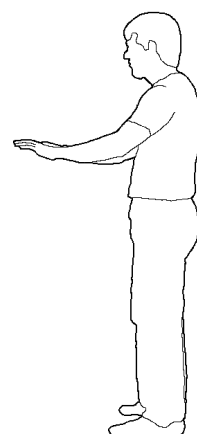
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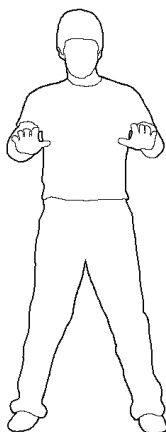
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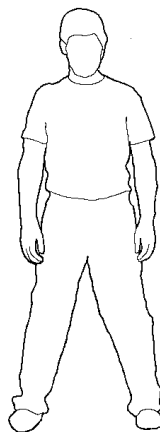
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as you reach the highest stance, and going down the outsides of both legs as you bend the knees and sink.

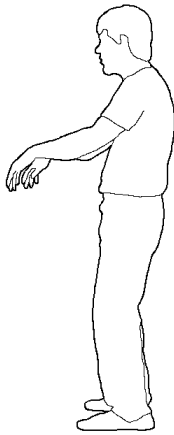
When you are ready to stop, raise your wrists to shoulder height (68) then simply lower your arms without bending the knees (69–71). Relax your shoulders first, then elbows, then wrists, then fingers one at a time beginning with the little finger. Leave the knees slightly flexed. Look straight ahead into the middle distance, without focusing (72–73).

This exercise activates the meridians in the legs, both legs at the same time.

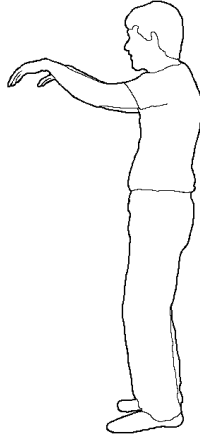
## 2.) Embrace Tai Chi

Begin as if doing the previous movement, raising the wrists (74) to shoulder height in front of you (75–76). Hands are comfortably extended out from their respective shoulders. Breathe in through the nose as the hands rise. Then, breathing out through the nose, turn the wrists outward so that the fingertips of the two hands point at each other, and the palms face you (77). Maintain a space of a couple of inches between the fingertips.

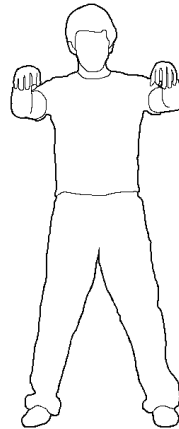
Relax your elbows and shoulders. Breathe in through the nose, and allow your arms to pull



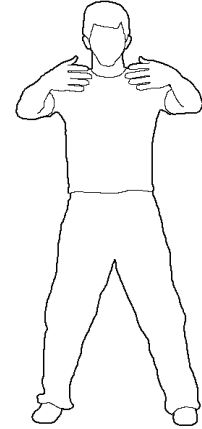
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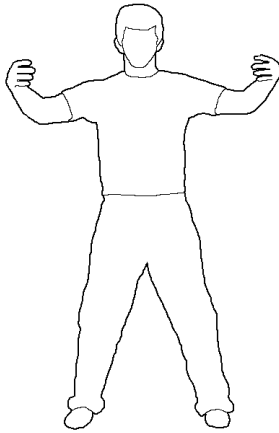
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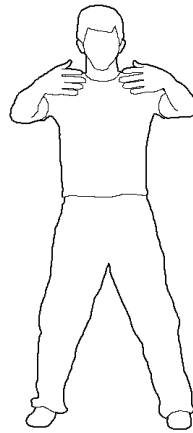
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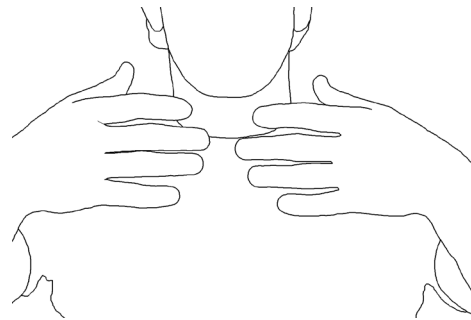
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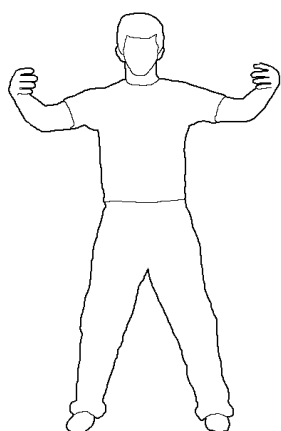
open as if from the back of the shoulders (78). Do not use strength, but let the breath do the work of separating the arms. The only strength you will use is to hold your arms up in the air.

When the hands are a little wider apart than the width of your torso, breathe out through the nose, and bring the hands together again (79). Stop them before they touch, a couple of inches apart (80). Pause the movement a second as your breath reverses, then repeat by breathing in and separating the hands (81). Do nine to eighteen repetitions. Keep looking into the middle distance in front of you.

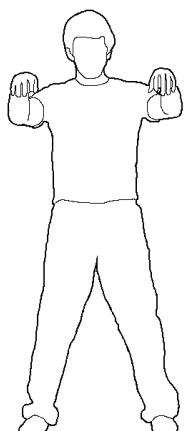
To finish, simply breathe in, and as the hands move apart, let the wrists rise (81–83). Then let your hands sink, (84–85) as you did in closing from Floating with the Waves. Relax the shoulders first, then elbows, then wrists, then fingers one at a time beginning with the little fingers, until your arms completely relax by your sides (86–87).

This exercise is for the meridians in the arms, both arms at the same time. As the arms part and you breathe in, the flow runs up the outside of the arm, from fingertips to shoulder. As the arms come together and you breathe out, the flow runs from the shoulder to the fingertips, along the inside of the arm.

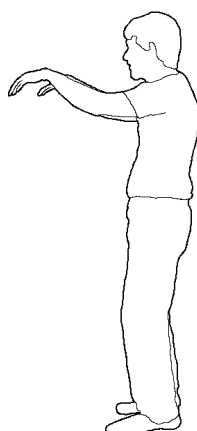




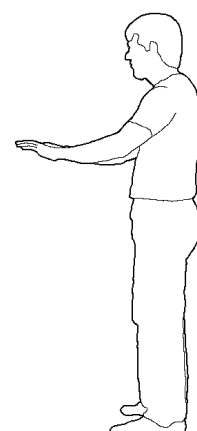
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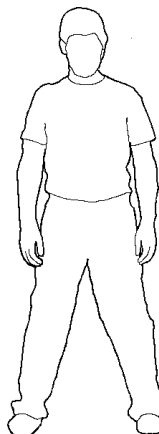
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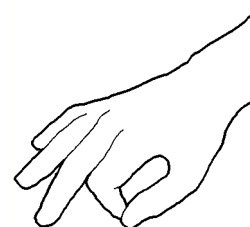
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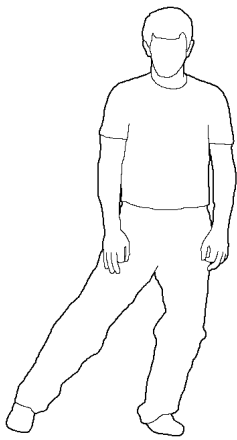
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### 3.) Turning the Wheel, Inhaling the Essence

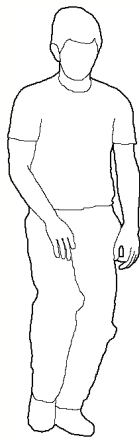
Keeping the rest of your fingers open and relaxed, touch the tips of the thumbs and forefingers together, and hold your hands with the palms down (88). Shift your weight to your left leg (89), and draw your right foot in to your left one (90). Then step to your front right with your right leg (91). Touch the heel down, but do not put any weight on it. The right toes come up in the air. Breathe in and draw your hands circularly up the front of your body (92).

Shift your weight forward onto the right leg, putting the toes down as your weight comes fully onto the foot. At the same time, extend the arms circularly out and away from you as they rise to shoulder height (93). Breathe out as your weight goes forward and the arms extend. When your weight is fully forward on the right leg, the arms are completely extended. Then let your hands drop slowly and circularly toward your forward knee (94).

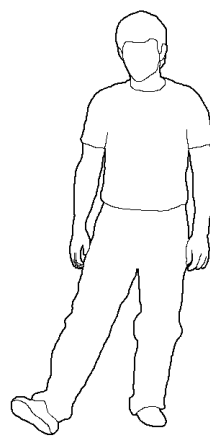
Now, simply sit back onto your left leg as your hands sink and circle in towards your hips (95–96). Right toes come up in the air. Breathe in. As the hands reach the hips, they again rise circularly up the body (97). Again extend the arms out and away from you as they rise, and shift your weight forward (98).



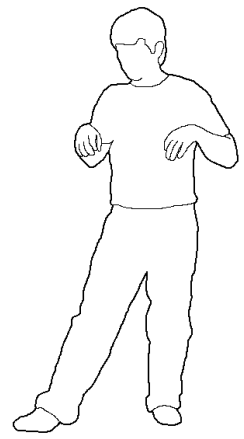
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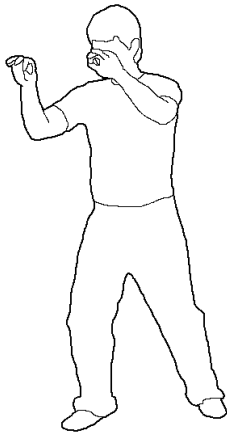
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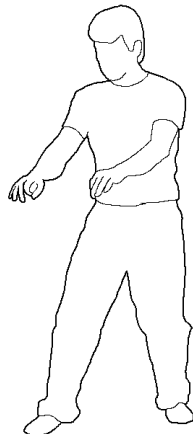
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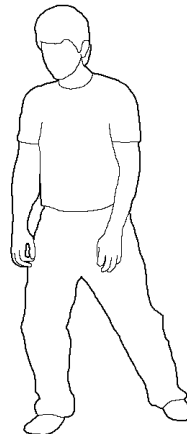
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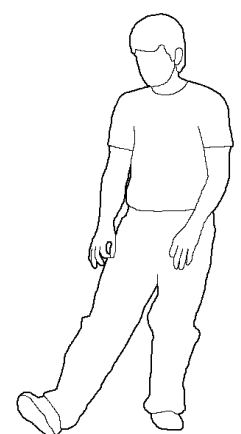
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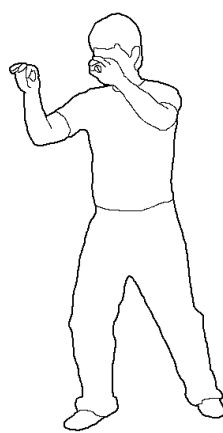
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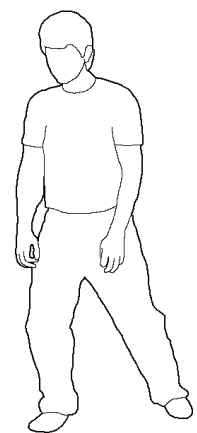
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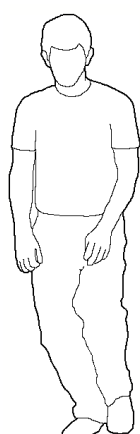
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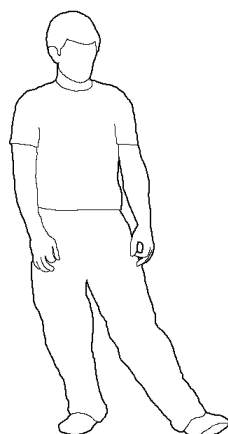
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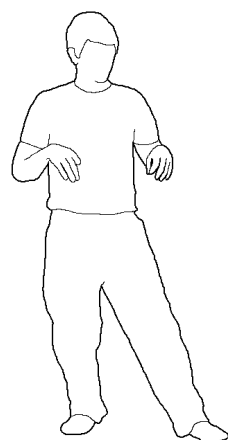
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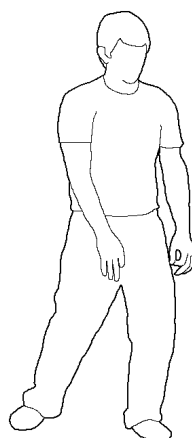
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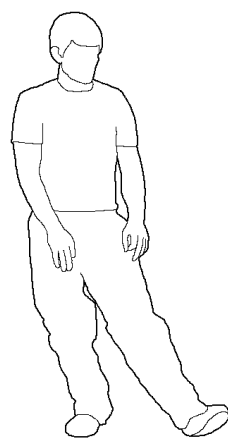
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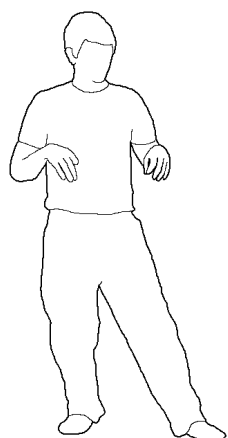
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This movement is as if the hands are turning a large wheel in front of your torso as your weight shifts forward and backward. Do nine to eighteen repetitions. Then, as your weight goes forward onto the right leg (99–100), step in (101), and through with the left foot, to your front left (102).

Do nine to eighteen repetitions with the left foot forward (103–108). To end, as your weight goes forward onto the left leg (109), draw your right foot up next to the left one (110), then step out with it to shoulder-width (111), let the hands drop to the sides, and relax (112).

During this exercise, the chi moves in one leg at a time. You should feel the energy come up the inside of the forward leg as you sit back and go down the outside of it as you move forward.

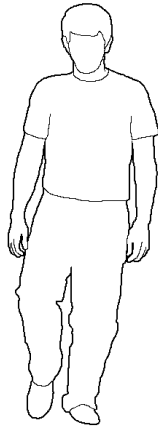
#### 4.) Bodhidharma at the Wall

Look into the middle distance in front of you, slightly unfocused. Raise the left hand (113), wrist loose but not limp, until the fingertips are at nose height, pointed up, and about eight inches out from your face (114). Breathe in as your hand rises. Look at the fingertips.

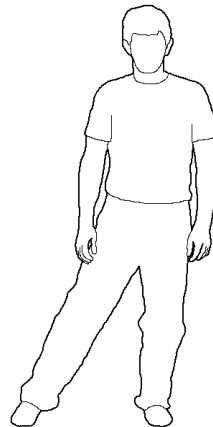
Then extend the hand out to the left (115), and turn your hips to the left. Follow the movement of the hand with your eyes. Palm turns down and fingertips point left. The hand is still relaxed but



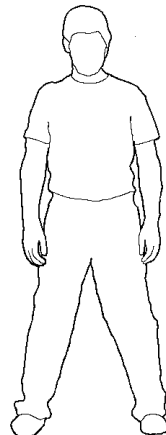
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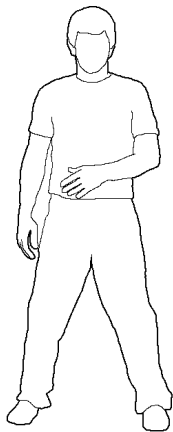
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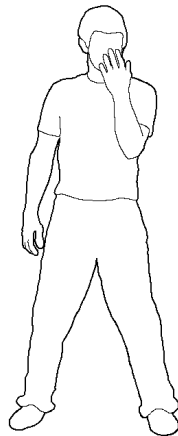
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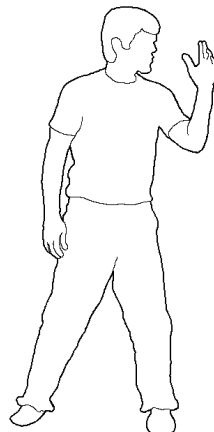
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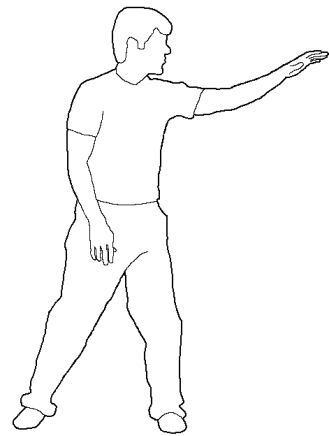
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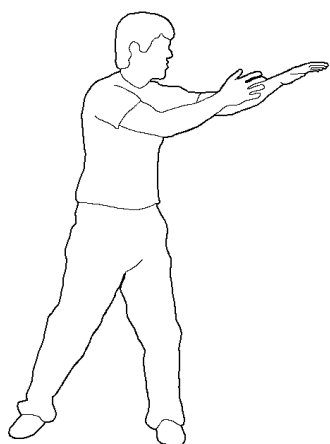


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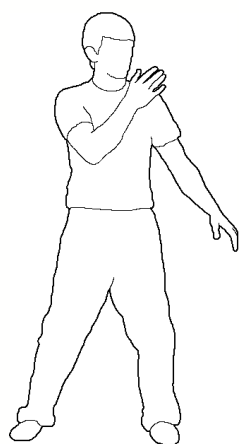
not limp. Breathe out as the hand extends. When it reaches its fullest extension (116), raise your right hand so that the right fingertips pass close to the left wrist (117). Breathe in as it rises. Now, forget your left hand, and let it slowly drop to just in front of your left hip (118). Stop watching it as it drops.

Instead, concentrate on your right hand as you move it across in front of your face, fingertips up and just below eye level (119). Then extend the right arm out to the right (120), and turn your hips to the right. Follow the movement of the hand with your eyes. Palm turns down, fingers point right, and you breathe out. When the hand reaches its fullest comfortable extension (121), activate the left hand (122–126), and forget the right hand and let it drop.

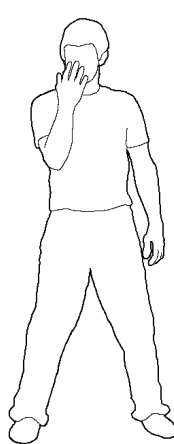
Continue for nine to eighteen repetitions on each side. Remember to turn your hips to each side as you extend your arms and to watch each hand rise and extend. Breathe in as a hand rises and out as it extends. After nine to eighteen repetitions to each side (eighteen to thirty-six total), end by keeping the left arm extended instead of letting it drop (127). Raise the right hand, and extend it too (128). Then bring both hands together in front of your chest (129), the fingertips of both hands pointing to each other. With your eyes, follow the movement of the right hand as it



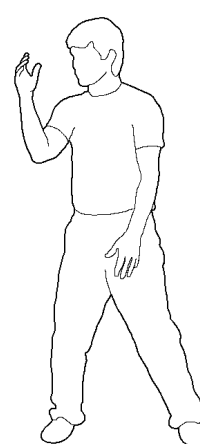
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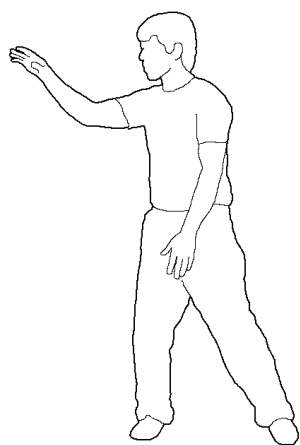
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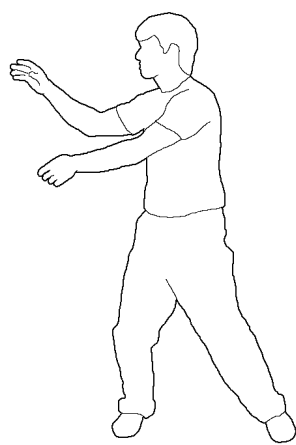
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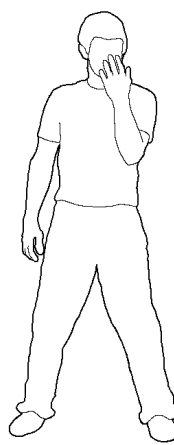
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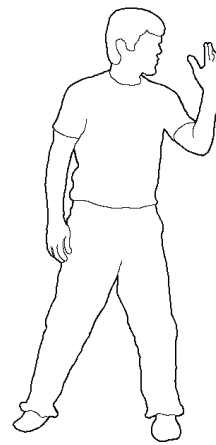
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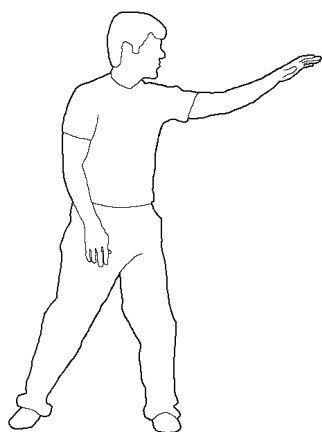
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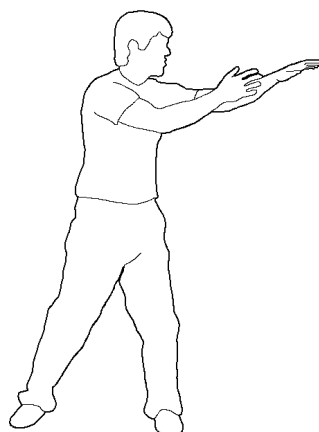
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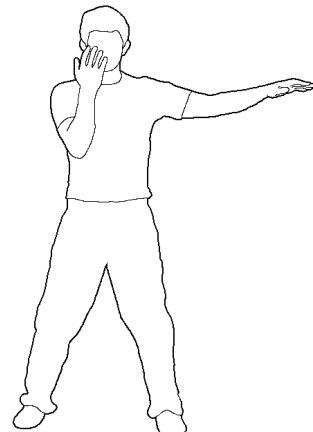
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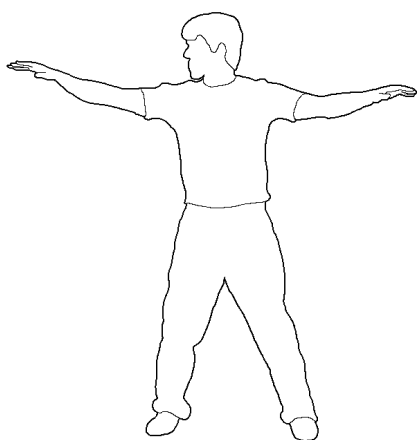
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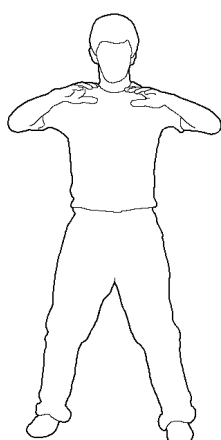
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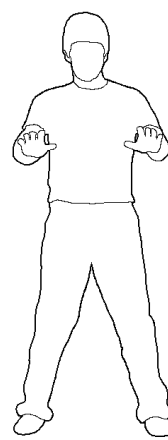
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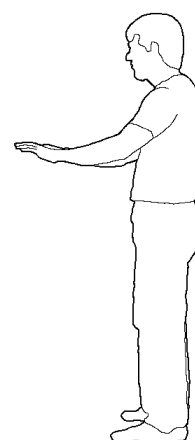
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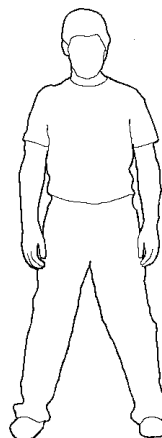
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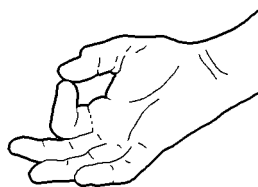


134

comes toward your chest. When it and the left hand reach your chest together, look straight ahead into the middle distance.

Close as before, by relaxing first the shoulders (130–132), then elbows, then wrists, then fingers, until your arms hang comfortably by your sides (133–134).

This exercise is for the meridians in the arms, alternating one at a time. The flow is from fingertips to shoulder along the outside of the arm as the hand rises to nose level, then from shoulder to fingertips along the inside of the arm as the hand extends.



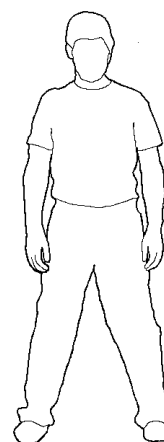
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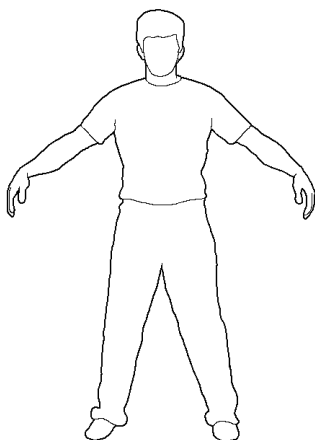
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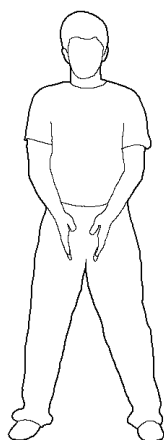
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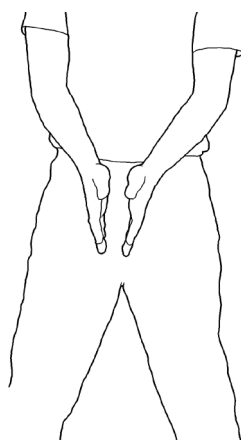
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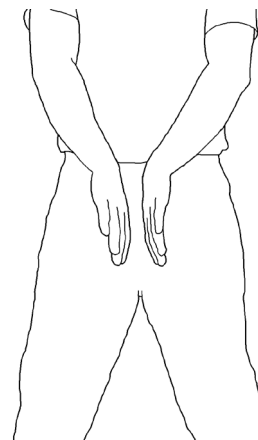
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## Closing Sequence (Cool-down)

### 1.) Shaking Tofu

Close your eyes. Leaving the hands hanging at your sides, turn the palms out and touch the tip of each forefinger to the tip of its thumb, making a circle with each hand (135–136). Now, begin shaking your hands back and forth, loosely from the wrists. Relax and loosen all your joints as your hands shake, and gradually, the shaking will shimmy your whole body.

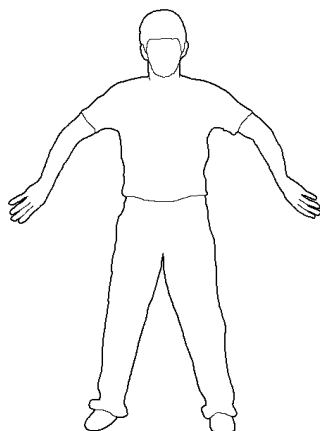
Keep all your joints loose and muscles relaxed, and shimmy for a minute or two. If you feel yourself begin to stiffen, simply stop, deliberately relax, then start again. When you are ready to finish, just slow the shaking, open and relax the hands, and stand still and relaxed (137–138).

This relaxes and loosens the body and calms the chi.

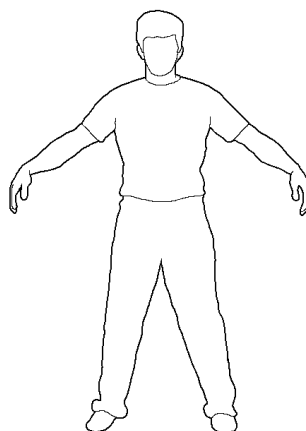
### 2.) Opening and Closing the Hands

Except that your eyes are closed, this exercise is the same as movement number two in the

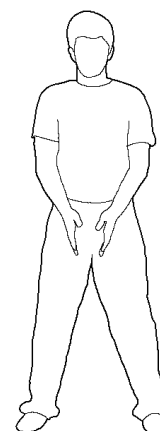




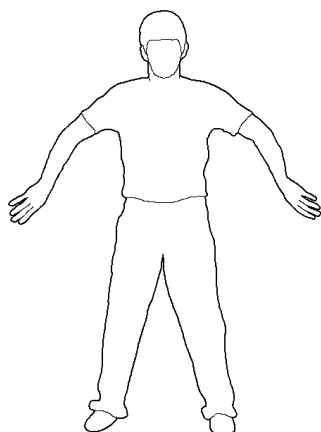
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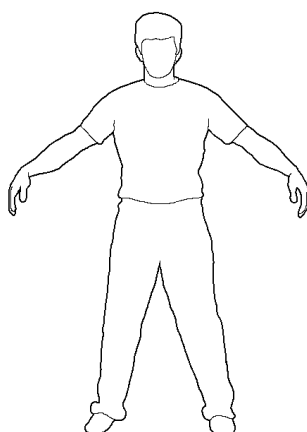
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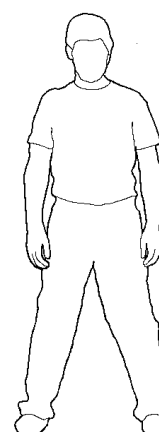
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Opening Sequence. From their relaxed positions by your sides, raise the hands out sideways to waist height, and slightly in front of you (139). The palms are turned toward each other, fingers down. Breathe in as the hands rise.

Now, relax your arms, and bring your palms together until they almost touch in front of your tantien (140). The fingers still point down. Breathe out as the palms come together. Rotate both wrists at the same time, turning thumbs toward you and the backs of the hands toward each other (141–142). Fingers still point down.

Breathe in and move the hands apart. When they are out and about waist height (143), rotate both wrists at the same time, turning the palms toward each other, thumbs away from you (144).

Breathe out as you bring the palms together in front of your tantien a second time (145). Rotate both wrists at the same time so that the backs of the hands are now turned toward each other, fingers still down (141–142). Breathe in, and raise the hands out sideways to waist height (143).

Rotate both wrists until the palms face each other, thumbs out (144). Breathe out and bring the palms together in front of your tantien a third time (145). Rotate both wrists so that the backs



149



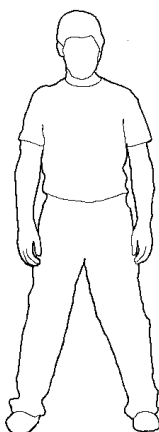
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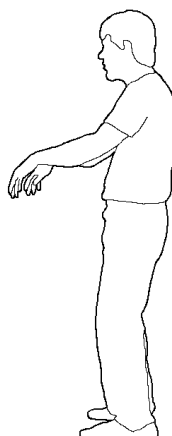
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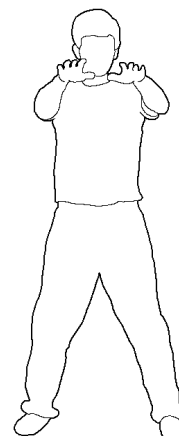
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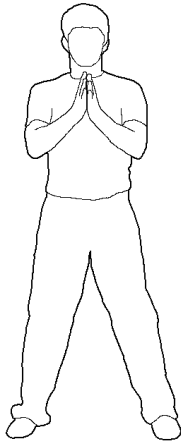
of the hands are turned toward each other, fingers still down. Breathe in, and raise the hands out sideways to waist height (146).

Again rotate both wrists until the palms face each other, thumbs away from you (147). Then simply breathe out and relax the arms. Let them hang loosely at your sides, fingertips down (148–149).

Performed here, this exercise has the effect of cooling the body and recentering the breath and chi.

### 3.) Channeling Chi to Tantien

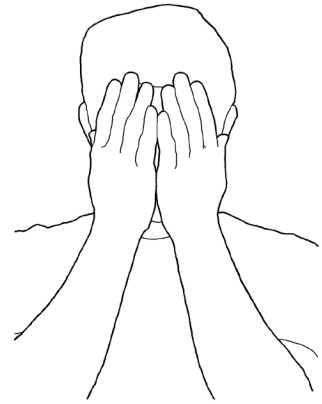
Keep the eyes closed. With your arms still relaxed by your sides, raise your fingers so that your palms face down and your fingertips point forward (150). Take a deep breath through the nose, following the sensation from nostrils, down wind pipe, through lungs, and into the tan tien. Suck the breath down from underneath as deeply as you can without strain. Feel as if your abdomen



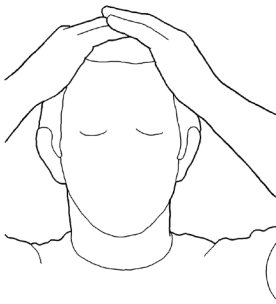
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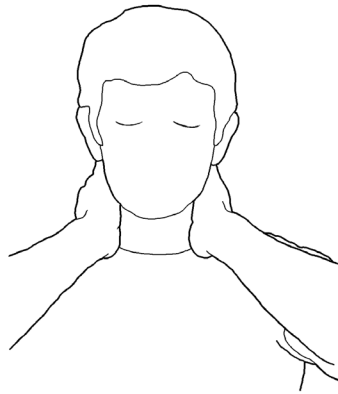
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is bottomless. Your hands will feel as if they are resting on balls floating in water, and they might even involuntarily move back and forth a little, giving that sensation.

Now exhale in a thin stream through the mouth, and bend the knees (151). Take longer to exhale than you did to inhale. When your breath is out and you have sunk as far as possible without strain, take a deep, normal breath in through the nose, hold it a couple of seconds, then rise, puffing it out through the mouth (152). Relax the hands as you rise by straightening the wrists and letting the fingertips drop, then relax the arms. Repeat the entire sequence two more times, for a total of three times. When finished, simply stand relaxed (153–154).

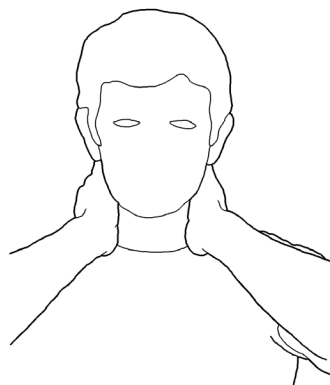
This exercise is similar to number three in the Opening Sequence. Here, it deepens the breath and concentrates the chi in the tantien.

#### 4.) Mouth Massage

The eyes remained closed. Massage the roof of the mouth, just behind the front teeth, with the tip of the tongue, nine times. Then chomp the teeth together nine times. Repeat these actions two more times.



163



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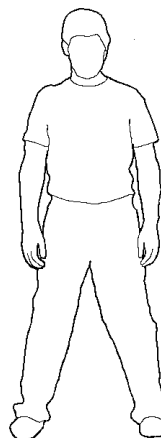
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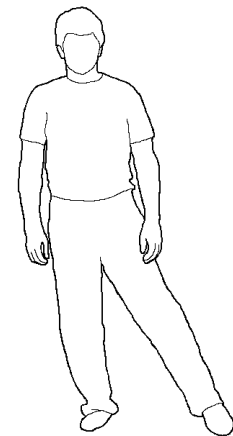
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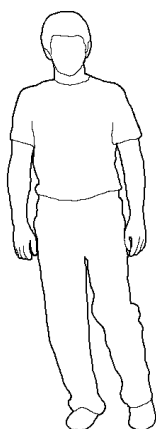
169

A lot of saliva will be generated, and at the end, swallow it slowly, a little at a time. Mentally follow it down to the bottom of the stomach.

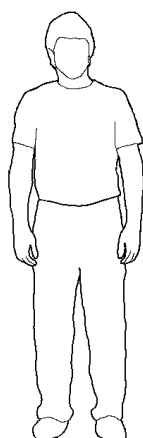
The chomping strengthens the teeth and gums. The saliva generated cleanses the mouth. Also, saliva generated by chi kung, according to the Chinese medicine, is an elixir that promotes health, good digestion, and immunity.

### 5.) Face and Head Massage

With the eyes still closed, raise the hands to chest level, about a foot out from you (155–156). Put the palms together and rub them for a few moments to bring the chi to them (157–158). Then run your palms up your face (159), from chin to forehead, over the top of the head (160), and down the back of it to the neck (161). Trail them down each jaw line to your chin. No need to press hard. It is the chi in your palms, not the pressure, that does the work. Repeat two more times (159–162). On the third pass upward over your face, calmly open your eyes (163). Then, as the hands come down your neck (164), just let them drop slowly and easily to your sides (165–166),



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relaxing first the shoulders, then elbows, then wrists, then fingers, until you stand comfortably relaxed (167–168).

#### **6.) Close**

Lean to the right so that all your weight is on your right leg (169). Draw your left foot in toward the right, breathing in, and place it flat on the floor one fist-width from the right (170). Center your weight, and stand up, breathing out (171). Hold this pose for one minute, relishing the calmed and relaxed yet energized state you are in. This is the end of Xiao Style chi kung.

# Program for Learning Xiao Style Chi Kung

## Week One

Opening Sequence	Relaxation, Open Opening and Closing the Hands
Middle Sequence	Floating with the Waves
Closing Sequence	Shaking Tofu Close

## Week Two

Opening Sequence	Chi Breathing
Middle Sequence	Embrace Tai Chi
Closing Sequence	Opening and Closing the Hands

## Week Three

Opening Sequence	Two Dragons Wrapping the Pole
Middle Sequence	Turning the Wheel, Inhaling the Essence
Closing Sequence	Channeling Chi to Tan Tien

## Week Four

Middle Sequence	Bhodidharma at the Wall
Closing Sequence	Mouth Massage Face and Head Massage

## Notes

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