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DR. YANG, JWING-MING

# Tai Chi Qigong

THE INTERNAL FOUNDATION OF TAI CHI CHUAN



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## THE INTERNAL FOUNDATION OF TAI CHI CHUAN

Tai chi chuan is an internal martial art that uses soft/round movements to redirect an opponent's incoming force.

Qigong exercises are an internal method of increasing and circulating your body's energy (qi).

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- They loosen muscles and joints
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- They sharpen concentration
- They build a deeper awareness of breath and body coordination



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

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The practice, treatments, and methods described in this book should not be used as an alternative to professional medical diagnosis or treatment. The authors and publisher of this book are NOT RESPONSIBLE in any manner whatsoever for any injury or negative effects, which may occur through following the instructions and advice, contained herein.

It is recommended that before beginning any treatment or exercise program, you consult your medical professional to determine whether you should undertake this course of practice.

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## Editorial Notes

### Romanization of Chinese Words

The interior of this book primarily uses the Pinyin romanization system of Chinese to English. In some instances, a more popular word may be used as an aid for reader convenience, such as “tai chi” in place of the Pinyin spelling taiji. Pinyin is standard in the People’s Republic of China and in several world organizations, including the United Nations. Pinyin, which was introduced in China in the 1950s, replaces the older Wade-Giles and Yale systems.

Some common conversions are found in the following:

Pinyin	Also Spelled as	Pronunciation
qi	chi	chē
qigong	chi kung	chē gōng
qin na	chin na	chǐn nǎ
jin	jing	jǐn
gongfu	kung fu	gōng foo
taijiquan	tai chi chuan	tī jē chǔén

For more information, please refer to *The People’s Republic of China: Administrative Atlas*, *The Reform of the Chinese Written Language*, or a contemporary manual of style.

### Formats and Treatment of Chinese Words

The first instances of foreign words in the text proper are set in italics.

Transliterations are provided frequently: for example, Eight Pieces of Brocade (*Ba Duan Jin*, 八段錦).

Chinese persons’ names are mostly presented in their more popular English spelling. Capitalization is according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* 16th edition. The author or publisher may use a specific spelling or capitalization in respect to the living or deceased person. For example: Cheng, Man-ch’ing can be written as Zheng Manqing.

Chapters 3 and 4. Chinese poetry is followed by the author’s translation with commentary.

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## Foreword

In recent decades, the general populace of the United States has been facing a radical reexamination of the state of our healthcare system. Not only has this investigation included wide-ranging debates on how healthcare is delivered and who pays the bills, but also has brought us to a different vantage point for examining our philosophical approach to health and well-being. We have been forced to reexamine our involvement in our own health care by the realizations that many new diseases and dysfunctions are rising up to challenge us and that the world has become so closely connected that what affects people on one continent will soon be active throughout the global village. Swiftly we made the discovery that we must be responsible for our own state of health; we have understood that we are either our own best friend or our own worst enemy when it comes to caring for ourselves. The requirement that we care for ourselves—self-care—has brought us to a need for effective methods of regaining or maintaining our state of well-being.

We have been turning to what were first called “alternative” health practices and then soon termed “complementary” health practices. These changes in our approach are not due to the lack of skills among contemporary medicine practitioners, nor to the dearth of research and empirical proofs. Never have we had better medicines, machines, and methods, nor better proof of their effectiveness. Modern medicine has not failed us; the state of medical research and care has never been higher. Why then are so many people unhealthy? What has happened is that we allowed ourselves to become dependent upon someone else or something else to “fix” our ailments, our bodies, our lives. These repairs have accomplished much, but too often they are not complete or not permanent. As we look around us for models of good health, we see that people who are bright, energetic, stress-free, happy—in short, healthy—are those who take care of themselves, and we ask what they are doing that makes them healthy and keeps them in that state.

People who take care of their health concern themselves in all areas—physical, mental, emotional, psychological, and spiritual—and those who have the best success in those regards have discovered methods that care for all aspects at the same time. What they have discovered is the catalyst that makes all healthcare really work: the realization of the wholeness of our being. Many people have been fortunate enough to discover the traditional Oriental exercise and practices that emphasize the development of these connections: the practices of *qigong* and *taijiquan*.

Until very recently, few people had heard of either of these, but over the past decade much information has come to light and been documented in terms that make research results acceptable in our culture, and now nearly everyone knows at least a little about them. In this light, it is important that, as we turn to ancient and little-known forms of health practice, we have a contemporary and thorough guide.

Dr. Yang is the best possible person to be this guide. His own credentials are well documented, and as a member of the faculty of A Taste of China for many years, he has consistently been very well received by students as he presented information on a variety of topics associated with Chinese health practices in general, and taijiquan and qigong specifically. As director of A Taste of China, an organization that since 1983 has promoted Chinese martial arts in general and presented international seminars and national and international tournaments, I have been pleased to include Dr. Yang as one of our most popular presenters. His depth of knowledge and his superb teaching style make him among the most valuable members of this community.

His background and training are very suitable to the subject of internal development, combining personal experience with a scholarly approach. He is able to present the setting and history of qigong and taijiquan without overemphasizing the relationship of background to the actual practices. He uses terms that have been in place for centuries and brings them into current usage, and he includes the right amount of information to acquaint us with the concepts. It's the mark of a cultured person to be able to combine the ancient with the modern, the esoteric with the common, the physical with the mental, the theory with the practice, and Dr. Yang does these brilliantly.

His style of explaining makes the information accessible; the personal touch of addressing the reader directly involves us in the process he is describing, stimulates interest, and reassures us that we can accomplish these exercises and achieve the desired results. It's "user friendly" in the same way that directions are effectively given for accessing information from other sources—that is, with clean outlines, plain language, clearly marked cautions, and complete illustrations. His teaching style matches his writing and literary style: simple, direct, thorough. He has respect for his readers but makes no assumptions about our level of expertise, and he speaks to us neither over our heads nor beneath our dignity. In this book, as in his others, he has developed a style that explains as clearly as possible in the medium of print and paper what you are supposed to do and feel, and why.

As we rediscover our bodies and our minds and make the connections that were always there to be made, it is important to have this resource, whose greatest value is that it leads us gently and effectively in the right way of practice and understanding, and that it helps us achieve our goal of health and well-being.

Pat Rice  
Director, A Taste of China  
Winchester, Virginia  
July 10, 1998



## Preface—First Edition (1993)

In the last twenty years, the Chinese concept of *qi* (氣) has gradually come to be understood by the Western public and accepted by modern medical society. It is now believed that *qi* is the “bioelectricity” circulating in the human body. It is only in the last twenty years that the field of bioelectricity has gradually opened up in modern science. Because of the interest in this new field of study, and also because of the more open communication with Chinese culture, this field will probably bloom in the next twenty years. The most obvious indications of this are the widespread acceptance of acupuncture treatment for illness and the popularity of *qigong* (氣功) and *taijiquan* (太極拳).

Surprisingly, the main reason for the popularity of taijiquan is not its martial potential, but rather its ability to improve health. Although it is a martial art, taijiquan brings the practitioner to a high level of body relaxation, calmness, and peace of mind. Most important of all, it improves the internal *qi* circulation, which is the key to maintaining health and curing many illnesses.

Unlike other internal martial styles such as *Xingyiquan* (形意拳), *Bagua* (八卦), and *Liu He Ba Fa* (六合八法), the beginning training of Taijiquan is completely relaxed and the use of the muscles is reduced to a minimum. Because of this, it can be practiced by people of all ages. According to my personal teaching experience, a large percentage of people beginning taijiquan are ill or elderly. Especially in China, taijiquan is well known for its ability to improve or even cure many illnesses, notably problems of the stomach, lungs, heart, kidneys, high blood pressure, arthritis, mental disorders, and many others. Once you understand the principles of qigong and taijiquan training theory, you will be able to understand how this can be.

Although taijiquan can give you a relaxed body and a calm mind, the most important benefit you can gain is a higher level of understanding of life and nature. Taijiquan leads you to the path by which you can use energy to communicate with nature. This is the path to both physical health and mental or spiritual health. Once you have achieved this, how can you wonder about or be unsure of the meaning of life?

The qigong sets used in taijiquan are simple exercises that give you a feeling for your *qi* and start you on the road to understanding how to work with your *qi*. It does not just improve your *qi* circulation; it is the key to the successful practice of taijiquan for either health or martial purposes. In fact, there is not much difference between taiji qigong and taijiquan itself. All of the requirements for correct practice are exactly the same for both of them. The only difference is that the qigong forms are much simpler than the taijiquan movements. This allows the practitioner to concentrate all of his effort on improving his ability to feel inside his body. Some of the forms in the qigong sets are actually simplified movements adapted from the taijiquan sequence.

There are a number of different styles of taijiquan, each with its own qigong sets. In this book I will introduce the ones that have been passed down to me from my masters. The first chapter will review the historical background of qigong and taijiquan, and introduce the general theoretical and training concepts of qigong. The second chapter will discuss the root or essence of the taijiquan training theory: *yin* and *yang*. Finally, the third chapter will introduce the taiji qigong exercises.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

## Preface—Second Edition (1998)

Since Chinese acupuncture was introduced to the West, the concept of *qi* and its circulation in the human body has gained recognition and acceptance from both physicians and the public. More and more people in this country are turning to acupuncture treatments or trying *qigong* (氣功) to improve their health. As they gain knowledge and experience the wonderful benefits of their practice, the reputation of these Oriental arts increases.

Practicing *qigong* (which is the science of working with *qi*, the living energy within the body) cannot only enhance your health and mental balance, but can also cure a number of illnesses, decreasing the need for medicines and drugs. *Qigong* uses both still and moving meditation to increase and regulate the *qi* circulation.

When you practice regularly, your mind will gradually grow calm and peaceful, and your whole being will start to feel more balanced. However, the most important result of regular *qigong* practice is the discovery of the inner world of your body's energy. Through sensing, feeling, and examining your inner experiences, you will begin to understand yourself not only physically, but also mentally and energetically. This science of internal sensing, which the Chinese have been studying for hundreds of years, is mostly ignored in the West. However, in today's busy and confusing society, this training is especially vital. With the peace, calmness, and energetic smoothness that *qigong* can provide, you will be better able to relax and enjoy your daily work, and perhaps even find real happiness.

I believe it is very important for the West to learn, study, research, and develop this scientific internal art immediately and on a wide scale. I believe it can be very effective in helping people, especially young people, to cope with the confusing and frightening challenges of life. The general practice of *qigong* balances the inner energy of our lives, and can be both healing and instructive to its practitioners. Older people especially will find that it will maintain their health and even slow the aging process, as well as maintain a healthy body. In addition, *qigong* can help older people to conquer depression and improve their quality of life. I am confident that people in the West will realize *qigong* practice will give them a new perspective on themselves and the universe of energy they both create and inhabit.

During the last thirteen years, I have traveled all over the world to share my knowledge of *qigong* and Chinese martial arts. One of the "hot" subjects that I am frequently asked about is *taiji qigong*. Through *taiji qigong* practice, countless *taijiquan* practitioners have had their eyes opened to the inner feeling of *qi* and have learned how to balance and manipulate it creatively and constructively. From this feeling and understanding, these practitioners learn how to adopt *taijiquan* practice into their daily lives, both physically and mentally. This is because *taiji qigong* is the foundation of *taijiquan* practice.

Once you comprehend this and can access the deep feeling of this foundation, your taijiquan practice will evolve into a deeper and more profound art.

I am very happy to see this revised edition become available to the public. Other than correcting some minor errors found in the earlier edition, I have also changed all of the Chinese spelling into the Pinyin system, which has become more popular, both in laymen and academic circles.

After you have read this book, if you find yourself interested in knowing more about Chinese qigong, you may refer to other books I have written on this subject.

### **Beginner Level**

1. *Qigong for Health and Martial Arts: Exercises and Meditation*
2. *Simple Qigong Exercises for Health: The Eight Pieces of Brocade* (special qigong style)
3. *Arthritis Relief: Chinese Qigong for Healing & Prevention* (special qigong treatment)
4. *Back Pain Relief: Simple Qigong Exercises for Healing & Prevention* (special qigong treatment)

### **Intermediate Level**

1. *Qigong Massage: Fundamental Techniques for Health and Relaxation*

### **Advanced Level**

1. *The Root of Chinese Qigong: Secrets for Health, Longevity, and Enlightenment*
2. *Qigong, The Secret of Youth: Da Mo's Muscle/Tendon and Marrow/Brain Washing Qigong Classics*
3. *The Essence of Shaolin White Crane: Martial Power and Qigong*
4. *Qigong Meditation: Embryonic Breathing*
5. *Qigong Meditation: Small Circulation*

Companion videos are also available for many of the above publications from YMAA Publication Center.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

# Chapter 1: General Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

*Qigong* (氣功), the study of the energy in the universe, is one of the great cultural achievements that China has contributed to the human race. It was through the study of *qi* (氣) that the balance between the negative (*yin*, 陰) and positive (*yang*, 陽) aspects of the universe was understood. This understanding led to the formulation of the “Natural Way” (*Dao*, 道) (pronounced “da-oh”), which became one of the guiding principles of Chinese philosophy. This “Dao” has come to be used in explaining not only nature, but also mankind. The Chinese hope that the study of the Dao can demonstrate the way to improve health or even to extend life. This led to the development of Chinese medicine. The circulation of *qi* in the body was also studied, which became the field of human *qigong*.

According to Chinese medical theory, the *qi* or energy body is considered *yin* (陰), while the physical body is considered *yang* (陽). *Qi* cannot be seen, but it can be felt. The *yin* aspect of your body is related to your thinking, soul, and spirit, while the *yang* aspect executes and experiences the decisions of the *yin*. Neither part can survive by itself. They must balance and coordinate with each other so that life can exist. *Qi* is the source of life, and the actions of the physical body are the manifestation of life. When the *yin* is strong, the manifestation of *yang* can also be strong. When *yin* is weak or too strong, the *yin* and *yang* may lose balance and sickness can result. For this reason, Chinese medicine and *qigong* are primarily concerned with how to maintain the correct balance of *yin* and *yang*.

According to many documents, although many other cultures have discovered the circulation of *qi*, none of them has studied it as deeply as the Chinese. Only since the 1970s has the West begun to accept the concept of *qi*, equating it with the bioelectricity circulating in the human body. More and more, Western doctors are starting to recognize that abnormal or irregular *qi* or bioelectric circulation is one of the main causes of physical and mental illnesses. Many Western physicians are sending patients to acupuncturists for an alternative method of treatment for certain diseases that Western medicine has difficulty treating. Some are even encouraging patients to take up *qigong* or *taijiquan* as a means of enhancing their health and quality of life.

As a qigong practitioner, you should trace back its history to see how it was developed. Understanding the past makes it possible for you to avoid repeating the mistakes that other people have made. It also helps you to develop an appreciation for the art, which is necessary in pursuing your own study.

For these reasons, we will devote the rest of this chapter to defining qi and qigong and reviewing the history of qigong and taijiquan. We will also introduce the general concepts that are critical in understanding the why and how of your qigong practice. In the second chapter, we will discuss the yin and yang of taijiquan. This will give you an understanding of taiji qigong's place in Chinese qigong. Finally, in the third chapter we will introduce several sets of taiji qigong exercises.

### 1.2 The Definition of Qi and Qigong

What is qi? In order to understand qigong, you must first understand what qi is. Qi is the energy or natural force that fills the universe. There are three general types of qi. The heavens (the sky or universe) have heaven qi (*tian qi*, 天氣), which is made up of the forces that the heavenly bodies exert on the earth, such as sunshine, moonlight, and the moon's effect on the tides. The earth has earth qi (*di qi*, 地氣), which absorbs the heaven qi, and is influenced by it. Mankind has human qi (*ren qi*, 人氣), which is influenced by the other two. In ancient times, the Chinese believed it was heaven qi that controlled the weather, climate, and natural disasters. When this qi or energy field loses its balance, it strives to rebalance itself. Then the wind must blow, rain must fall, and even tornadoes and hurricanes must happen in order for the heaven qi to reach a new energy balance. Heaven qi also affects human qi, and divination and astrology are attempts to explain this.

Under heaven qi is the earth qi. It is influenced and controlled by the heaven qi. For example, too much rain will force a river to flood or change its path. Without rain, the plants will die. The Chinese believe earth qi is made up of lines and patterns of energy, as well as the earth's magnetic field and the heat concealed underground. These energies must also balance; otherwise, disasters such as earthquakes will occur. When the qi of the earth is balanced, plants will grow and animals will prosper. Also, each individual person, animal, and plant has its own qi field, which always seeks to be balanced. When any individual life loses its balance, it will sicken, die, and decompose.

You must understand that all natural things, including man, grow within, and are influenced by the natural cycles of heaven qi and earth qi. Since you are part of this nature (Dao, 道), you must understand heaven qi and earth qi. Then you will be able to adjust yourself, when necessary, to fit more smoothly into the natural cycle, and you will learn how to protect yourself from the negative influences in nature. This is the major target of qigong practice.

## Chapter 2: The Root of Taijiquan—Yin and Yang

The theory of yin and yang is the root of taijiquan and is the source from which it was created and formalized. The qigong sets, which are an essential part of the practice of taijiquan, are also based on this theory. It is therefore desirable to understand yin-yang theory so you have a clear concept of what you are trying to accomplish in your practice.

### **2.1 The Concept of Yin and Yang, Kan and Li (陰、陽與坎、離之概念)**

#### **2.1.1 Yin and Yang (陰、陽)**

The Chinese have long believed the universe is made up of two opposing forces—yin and yang—which must balance each other. When these two forces begin to lose their balance, nature finds a way to rebalance them. If the imbalance is significant, disaster will occur. However, when these two forces combine and interact with each other smoothly and harmoniously, they manifest power and generate the millions of living things.

Yin and yang theory is also applied to the three great natural powers: heaven, earth, and man. For example, if the yin and yang forces of heaven (i.e., energy that comes to us from the sky) are losing balance, there can be tornadoes, hurricanes, or other natural disasters. When the yin and yang forces lose their balance on earth, rivers can change their paths and earthquakes can occur. When the yin and yang forces in the human body lose their balance, sickness and even death can occur. Experience has shown that the yin and yang balance in man is affected by the yin and yang balances of the earth and heaven. Similarly, the yin and yang balance of the earth is influenced by the heaven's yin and yang. Therefore, if you wish to have a healthy body and live a long life, you need to know how to adjust your body's yin and yang, and how to coordinate your qi with the yin and yang energy of heaven and earth. The study of yin and yang in the human body is the root of Chinese medicine and qigong.

The Chinese have classified everything in the universe according to yin and yang. Even feelings, thoughts, strategy, and the spirit are covered. For example, female is yin and male is yang. Night is yin and day is yang. Weak is yin and strong is yang. Backward is yin and forward is yang. Sad is yin and happy is yang. Defense is yin and offense is yang.

Practitioners of Chinese medicine and qigong believe that they must seek to understand the yin and yang of nature and the human body before they can adjust and regulate

the body's energy balance into a more harmonious state. Only then can health be maintained and the causes of sickness be corrected.

Now let us discuss how yin and yang are defined and how the concept of yin and yang is applied to the qi circulating in the human body. Many people, even some qigong practitioners, are still confused by this. When it is said that qi can be either yin or yang, it does not mean that there are two different kinds of qi, like male and female, fire and water, or positive and negative charges. Qi is energy, and energy itself does not have yin and yang. It is like the energy that is generated from the sparking of negative and positive charges. Charges have the potential of generating energy, but are not the energy itself.

When it is said that qi is yin or yang, it means that the qi is too strong or too weak for a particular circumstance. It is relative and not absolute. Naturally, this implies that the potential that generates the qi is strong or weak. For example, the qi from the sun is yang qi, and qi from the moon is yin qi. This is because the sun's energy is yang in comparison to human qi, while the moon's is yin. In any discussion of energy where people are involved, human qi is used as the standard. People are always especially interested in what concerns them directly, so it is natural that we are interested primarily in human qi and tend to view all qi from the perspective of human qi. This is not unlike looking at the universe from the perspective of the earth.

When we look at the yin and yang of qi within and in regard to the human body, however, we must redefine our point of reference. For example, when a person is dead, his residual human qi (*gui qi* [or ghost qi], 鬼氣) is weak compared to a living person's. Therefore, the ghost qi is yin while the living person's is yang. When discussing qi within the body, in the lung channel, for example, the reference point is the normal, healthy status of the qi there. If the qi is stronger than it is in the normal state, it is yang, and, naturally, if it is weaker, it is yin. There are twelve parts of the human body that are considered organs in Chinese medicine; six of them are yin and six are yang. The yin organs are the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, spleen, and pericardium, and the yang organs are large intestine, small intestine, stomach, gall bladder, urinary bladder, and triple burner. Generally speaking, the qi level of the yin organs is lower than that of the yang organs. The yin organs store original essence and process the essence obtained from food and air while the yang organs handle digestion and excretion.

When the qi in any of your organs is not in its normal state, you feel uncomfortable. If it is very much off from the normal state, the organ will start to malfunction and you may become sick. When this happens, the qi in your entire body will also be affected and you will feel too yang, perhaps feverish, or too yin, such as the weakness after diarrhea.

Your body's qi level is also affected by natural circumstances such as the weather, climate, and seasonal changes. Therefore, when the body's qi level is classified, the reference point is the level that feels most comfortable for those particular circumstances. Naturally, each of us is a little bit different, and what feels best and most natural for one person



# Chapter 3: Taiji Qigong

## 3.1 General Training Concepts

Before we go into the practice of taiji qigong, you should understand a few things. First, if you look at your qigong practice as a battle against sickness and aging, then your body is the battlefield, your mind is the general, your breathing is the strategy, your qi is the soldiers, and your spirit is the morale of the general and soldiers. Therefore, in order to win this battle, you must know your battlefield (body) and learn to arrange it most advantageously for the battle. The general (mind) who is in charge of the battle must be calm and wise, and always know what he is doing so he can set up the best strategy (breathing). When the battlefield, general, and strategy (body, mind, and breathing) are organized correctly, the soldiers (qi) can be led effectively. You also need good fighting spirit and high morale.

When practicing qigong, you should always pay attention to regulating your body, breathing, and mind. You must keep regulating them until your mind does not have to be on the regulating, and the regulation happens automatically. Then you will be able to feel the qi, and your yi will be able to lead it easily and smoothly. Ultimately, you will lead qi to your head to nourish your brain and raise your spirit of vitality.

Second, although you can learn the theory and movements from this book, the movements will not be as alive and your understanding of them will not be as detailed as if you had learned them from an instructor. In other words, although a book can offer a detailed theoretical discussion that can ultimately lead you to a deep level of understanding, it is often unclear and misleading in its description of movement. Videotape can remedy this lack. However, even if you have both book and videotape, you still will not get the feeling of the exercise. This internal feeling is one of the most important aspects of the exercise that an instructor can convey. However, despite all of these obstacles, thousands of qigong practitioners have reached a high stage of practice through reading, pondering, and training. If you understand the theory, know the movements, and practice patiently and intelligently, then you can gradually accumulate enough experience to achieve a great depth of feeling for the exercise. Only when you have this feeling will you be able to say you have gained the essence of the training.

Third, remember that theory is the yin side of knowledge, while practice is the yang side, which manifests the theory. This means if you really want to understand the exercise, you must both study the theory and practice the exercise. Each one helps the other,

so yin and yang can grow together and lead you to the essence of the practice. If you are interested in knowing more about qigong theory, please refer to other YMAA Publication Center qigong and taiji publications.

In this chapter we will review the keys and the general concepts of successful qigong training. Then we will introduce the warm-up qigong. Beginners frequently ignore the warm-up qigong training. This is unfortunate because it is almost as important as the qigong practice itself. The warm-ups prepare you by leading your mind and body into a deep meditative state, where they are ready for the practice. You will then be able to feel and lead the qi, which is critical for success. In other words, the warm-up qigong is an integral part of the training.

### 3.2 Fundamental Training Principles

In this section we will summarize the training principles and rules that we have discussed earlier. During the course of your practice you should always keep them in mind.

Above all, understand your goal. For example, if you are only a beginner, you should first learn to regulate your body until you feel relaxed and comfortable, and then begin regulating your breathing and mind. However, if you have practiced qigong for a while and have already grasped the key points of regulating the body, breathing, and mind, you should then practice using the mind to lead the qi. Naturally, if you have already reached this level, your target will be learning how to regulate your spirit. The process of regulation is crucial in qigong, so let us review the procedures before we start discussing the actual training.

#### Regulating the Body (Tiao Shen, 調身)

Regulating the body is adjusting your body until it is relaxed, centered, balanced, and rooted. For example, when you practice a pushing movement, the muscles should be relaxed to such a deep level that you can feel your arms relax all the way to the marrow. Only then can the qi be led into the marrow and also to the surface of the skin. In addition, your movements must be coordinated with the movement of your torso. This enables your whole body to move smoothly and continuously as a unit. The coordination of the body enables you to find your balance. In every movement, your body must be upright (i.e., the head suspended) and rooted, and your pushing arm must also be rooted. For example, in a pushing movement your elbow must be sunk and your shoulder dropped. This allows you to find the root of the push and makes it possible for your yi to strongly lead your qi. You can see that regulating the body is the most important and basic process in any qigong practice.

#### Regulating the Breathing (Tiao Xi, 調息)

When you have reached a level where you feel comfortable and natural and your body is relaxed, centered, rooted, and balanced, then the qi circulation in your body will not be

stagnant. In order to use your mind to lead the qi efficiently, you must learn to regulate your breathing—which is the strategy of qigong practice. If you breathe correctly, your mind will be able to lead your qi effortlessly.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are two common ways of breathing in qigong: normal abdominal breathing and reverse abdominal breathing. Normal abdominal breathing is commonly used to lead the qi to circulate in the primary qi channels. This helps you to relax both physically and mentally. However, if you wish to lead qi to the surface of your skin and to the bone marrow, you would normally use reverse abdominal breathing. It is more aggressive and is therefore emphasized generally by martial qigong practitioners.

Regardless of which breathing method you use, it is important to coordinate your breathing with the movements of your anus and huiyin cavity. A more detailed discussion of these two breathing methods will be given later in this chapter.

### **Regulating the Mind (Tiao Xin, 調心)**

In regulating the mind, you first learn how to bring your mind and attention into your body. This is necessary for feeling the qi circulation. The first step is learning to control your emotional mind so it is calm and peaceful and you can concentrate. Then you can use your yi to lead your qi.

### **Regulating the Qi (Tiao Qi, 調氣)**

Once you have learned how to use your yi to lead your qi effectively, you can start working toward several goals in regulating your qi. First, you want to make the qi circulate smoothly and strongly in your body. Second, you want to build up the qi to a higher level to strengthen your body. Third, you want to lead the qi to the skin and also to the marrow. This will keep the skin fresh and young, and keep the blood factory (the marrow) functioning fully. Finally, you want to lead the qi to your head to nourish your brain. It is the center of your whole being, and your health will have a firm root only if your brain is functioning well. If your brain is healthy, you can raise your spirit of vitality, which is the main key to the secret of longevity.

In order to reach these goals, you must first learn how to circulate the qi in your body without any stagnation. This is possible when all of your concentration is on the qi circulation and there is no physical stiffness to make the qi circulation stagnate. In time, it will feel like your physical body gradually disappears and becomes transparent.

### **Regulating the Spirit (Tiao Shen, 調神)**

Once you reach the stage of “transparency,” you will be able to clearly feel the state of your body’s yin and yang and adjust them until you reach the state of no extremity (wuji). When you have grasped this wuji center, you will be able to return your whole spirit to its origin (the state before your birth), your qi will unite with the qi of nature, your spirit

will unite with the spirit of nature, and you will become one with nature. This is the final goal of enlightenment and Buddhahood.

When you practice, you should also be aware of the following:

1. Do not practice when you are too full or too hungry.
2. Do not practice when you are upset. You will not be able to regulate your mind efficiently and may cause yourself harm, especially if you intend to use your yi to lead your qi.
3. Do not drink alcohol before practice. It can excite your emotions and qi, and make them unstable.
4. Do not smoke, since it will affect your lungs and the regulation of your breathing.
5. The best time to practice is just before sunrise. Eat a little bit right after you wake up in the morning and then practice about thirty minutes to one hour. If you would like to practice another time, the best time is two hours after dinner. The second practice in the evening will help you relax before sleep.

To conclude this section, always remember that the final goal of taiji qigong is to be natural. When you regulate your body, breathing, mind, qi, and spirit, you should practice until the regulation happens naturally and automatically. This is the stage of “regulating without regulating.” Only then will you be relaxed and comfortable, your qigong practice effective and enjoyable.

### 3.3 Warm-up Qigong

Before you start your taijiquan or taiji qigong practice, you should always loosen up first to warm up your body. This will also prepare you mentally, so you will get the best results.

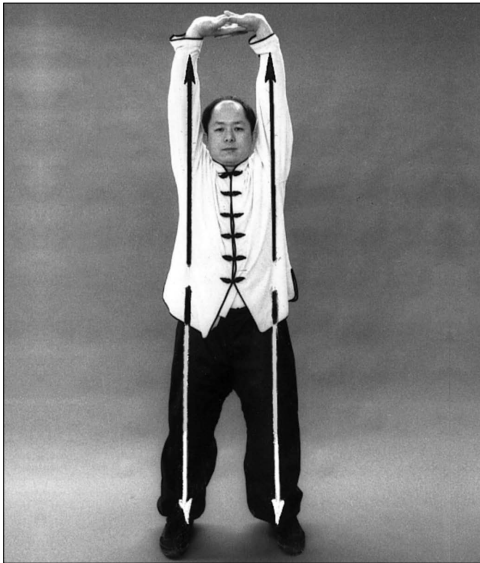
In this section we will introduce some of the loosening-up and warming-up exercises I have practiced for the last thirty-six years. Naturally, these exercises are only examples, and once you have practiced them and understand their theory and purpose, you may then create other movements that work better for you.

#### 3.3.1 Stretching the Trunk Muscles

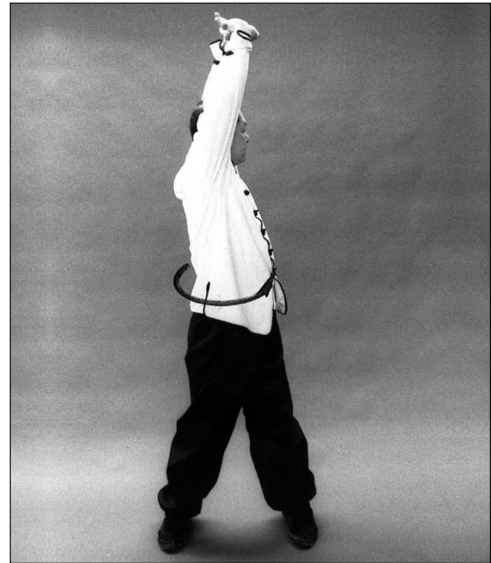
Theoretically, the first place that should be stretched and loosened is the trunk muscles, rather than the limbs. The trunk is at the center of the whole body, and it contains the major muscles, which control the trunk and also surround the internal organs. When the trunk muscles are tense, the whole body will be tense and the internal organs will be compressed. This causes stagnation of the qi circulation in the body and especially in the

organs. For this reason, the trunk muscles should be stretched and loosened up before the limbs, and before any qigong practice. Remember, people die from failure of the internal organs, rather than problems in the limbs. The best qigong practice is to remove qi stagnation and maintain smooth qi circulation in the internal organs.

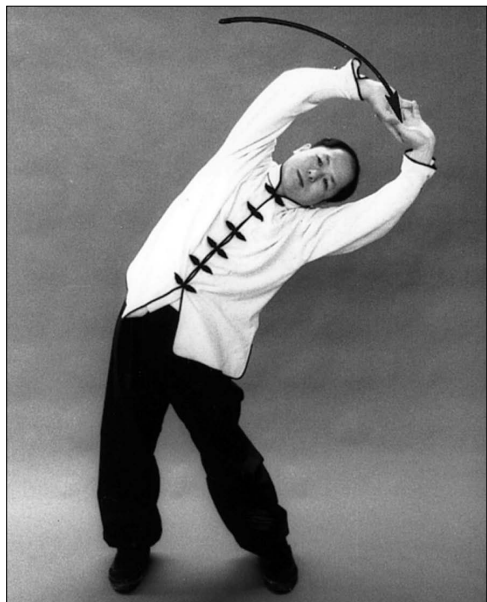
For these reasons, many qigong practices start out with movements that stretch the trunk muscles. For example, in the Standing Eight Pieces of Brocade, the first piece stretches the trunk to loosen up the chest, stomach, and lower abdomen (which are the triple burners in Chinese medicine). In fact, this exercise is adapted from the Standing Eight Pieces of Brocade exercises.



First, interlock your fingers and lift your hands up over your head while imagining you are pushing upward with your hands and pushing downward with your feet. Do not tense your muscles because this will constrict your body and prevent you from stretching. If you do this stretch correctly, you will feel the muscles in your waist area tensing slightly because they are being pulled simultaneously from the top and the bottom. Next, use your mind to relax even more, and stretch out a little bit more. Stretch from the side ribs and back, rather than from just the shoulders. Also, be sure to keep the lower ribs sunk inward and downward—don't let them hang forward, as this will overarch your back.



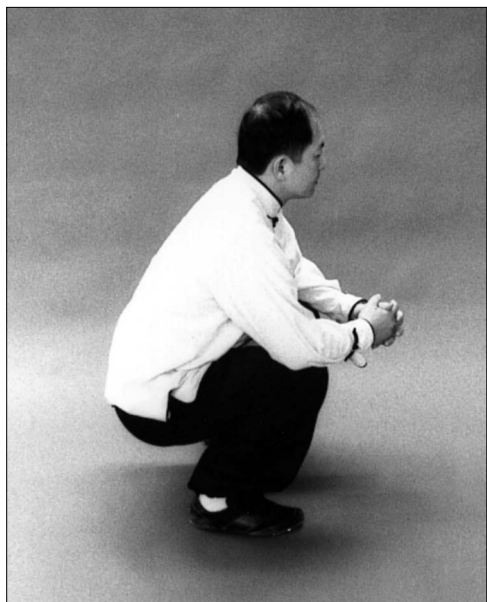
After you have stretched for about ten seconds, twist your upper body to one direction to twist the trunk muscles. Stay to that side for three to five seconds. Turn your body to face forward and then turn in the other direction. Stay there for three to five seconds. Don't lose the up and down stretching of the torso, even while twisting. Repeat the upper-body twisting three times in each direction.



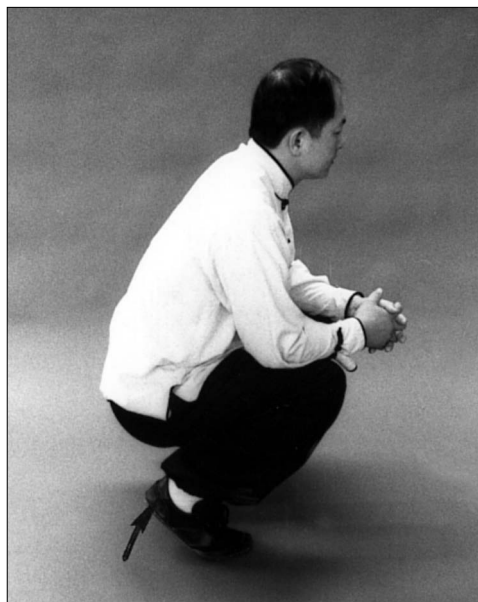
Next, tilt your upper body to the side and stay there for about three seconds; then tilt to the other side.



Next, bend forward and touch your hands to the ground and stay there for three to five seconds. Try not to round the back, which will put pressure on the internal organs.



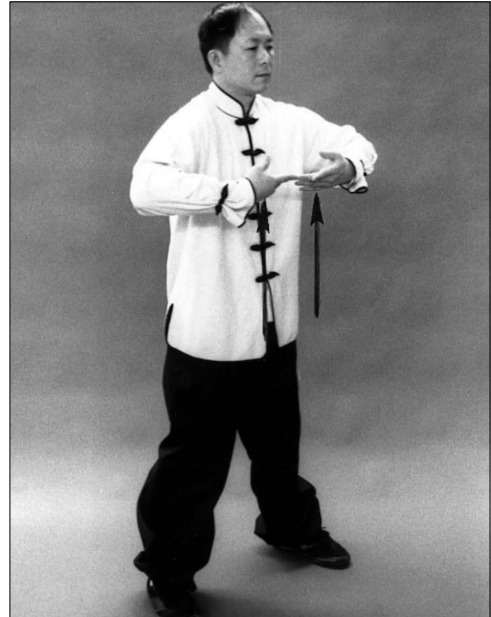
Finally, squat down with your feet flat on the ground to stretch your ankles.



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

### Left and Right to Push the Mountains (Zuo You Tui Shan, 左右推山)

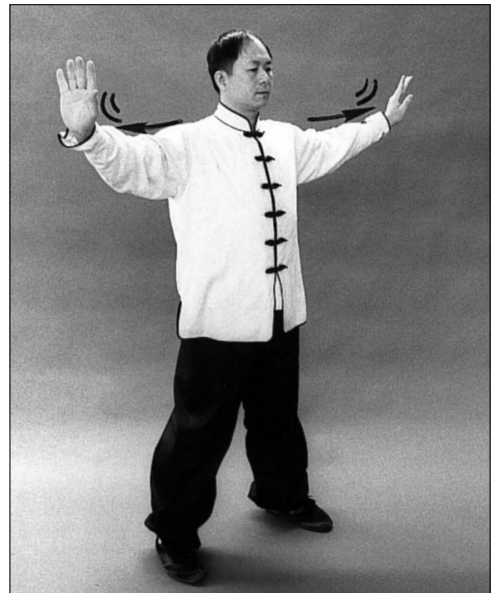
After you have cleaned your body and absorbed qi from heaven, you start building qi internally and using it for training.



As you inhale, raise your hands to chest height.



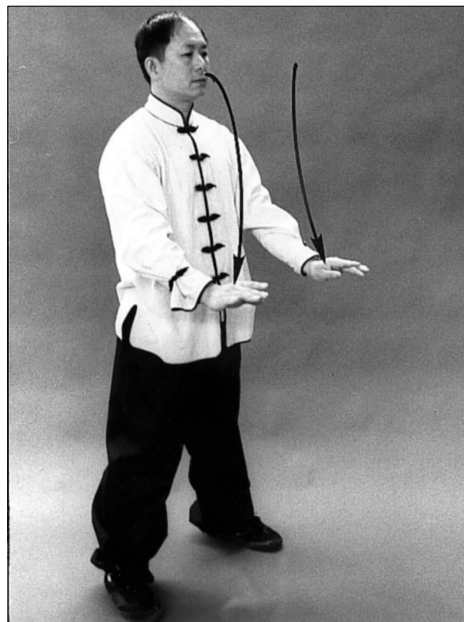
While continuing to inhale, lower your elbows and turn your hands until the fingers are pointing to the sides and the palms are facing down. Keep your wrists loose.



As you exhale, extend your arms to the sides. When the arms are halfway extended, settle (lower) your wrists and push sideways with the palms as if you were pushing two mountains away.



Inhale and bring your hands back with the palms facing inward.



Finally, exhale and lower the hands in front of you with the palms down and the fingers pointing forward. The muscles should remain relaxed throughout the exercise. Do not extend your arms to the sides as far as they can go because this causes muscle tension and qi stagnation. Perform ten repetitions.

### Settle the Wrists and Push the Palms (Zuo Wan Tui Zhang, 坐腕推掌)



This exercise continues the training of using your yi to lead your qi, only now you are pushing forward instead of to the sides. In order to lead the qi forward to your palms, pretend you are pushing a car or some other heavy object.

Start by raising your arms in front of you while inhaling. Palms up.



## About the Author

### Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD (楊俊敏博士)

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



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

At the age of sixteen, Dr. Yang began the study of Yang Style Taijiquan (楊氏太極拳) under Master Kao, Tao (高濤). After learning from Master Kao, Dr. Yang continued his study and research of taijiquan with several masters and senior practitioners such as Master Li, Mao-Ching (李茂清) and Mr. Wilson Chen (陳威伸) in Taipei (台北). Master Li learned his taijiquan from the well-known Master Han, Ching-Tang (韓慶堂), and Mr. Chen learned his taijiquan from Master Chang, Xiang-San (張詳三). Dr. Yang has mastered the taiji bare hand sequence, pushing hands, the two-man fighting sequence, taiji sword, taiji saber, and taiji qigong.

When Dr. Yang was eighteen years old, he entered Tamkang College (淡江學院) in Taipei Xian to study physics. In college he began the study of traditional Shaolin Long Fist (*Changquan* or *Chang Chuan*, 少林長拳) with Master Li, Mao-Ching at the Tamkang College Guoshu Club (淡江國術社), 1964–1968, and eventually became an assistant instructor under Master Li. In 1971, he completed his MS degree in physics at the National Taiwan University (台灣大學) and then served in the Chinese Air Force

from 1971 to 1972. In the service, Dr. Yang taught physics at the Junior Academy of the Chinese Air Force (空軍幼校) while also teaching wushu. After being honorably discharged in 1972, he returned to Tamkang College to teach physics and resumed study under Master Li, Mao-Ching. From Master Li, Dr. Yang learned northern style wushu, which includes both bare hand and kicking techniques, and numerous weapons.

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

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

In January of 1984, he gave up his engineering career to devote more time to research, writing, and teaching. In March of 1986, he purchased property in the Jamaica Plain area of Boston to be used as the headquarters of the new organization, Yang's Martial Arts Association (YMAA). The organization expanded to become a division of Yang's Oriental Arts Association, Inc. (YOAA).

In 2004, Dr. Yang began the nonprofit YMAA California Retreat Center. This training facility in rural California is where selected students enroll in a ten-year residency to learn Chinese martial arts.

In summary, Dr. Yang has been involved in Chinese martial arts since 1961. During this time, he spent thirteen years learning Shaolin White Crane (*Bai He*), Shaolin Long Fist (*Changquan*), and taijiquan. Dr. Yang has more than four decades of teaching experience.

In addition, Dr. Yang has also offered seminars around the world to share his knowledge of Chinese martial arts and qigong. The countries he has visited include Canada, Mexico, France, Italy, Poland, England, Ireland, Portugal, Switzerland, Germany, Hungary, Spain, Holland, Latvia, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia.

Since 1986, YMAA has become an international organization, which currently includes more than fifty schools located in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Venezuela, and the United States. Many of Dr. Yang's books and videotapes have been translated into languages such as French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Russian, German, and Hungarian.

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