

Qigong

Why do Qigong exercises have a healing effect?

Deborah writes: "I was in bed at least a week out of each month ... making hospital visits due to internal bleeding from ruptured cysts ...". Then she started Qigong practice. "Suddenly I felt so light, like a child ... and I could not even see the cysts sticking out. I just danced around the room with joy", she adds.

Is it true? I do not know. But there are too many people telling similar stories. I can only write about my limited experience. One of the exercises I do is called *wall squatting*. You close your eyes and place your toes against a wall. Very slowly you squat, trying to touch your knees with your hands. Then very slowly move up. Do not force yourself to go down if your muscles say "no". Think body. Think posture. Everything else is shut out of your brain.

At the beginning I could do just 20-30 squats. I was aching for days. But then I reached a point I could go forever, exactly like Deborah. Every morning now, before starting my day, I do 150-200 squats. Afterwards I feel light as a feather. Ready to go and face the markets.

Deborah had a similar experience, although she was very sick. There is a point in every Qigong exercise when you become totally unaware of your body. Your mind is in your body. Your body is your mind. "I alternately cried and laughed out during the squats", Deborah says.

What is going on? The mind is the clue, in my opinion. The mind is the process of collecting energy stored in your brain and directing it through your body. Thinking is the outcome of the process of collecting the packets of knowledge/logic/ energy stored in your brain.

As you do these exercises, the focus of your thinking becomes your body. You explore the various parts of your body. Suddenly you feel light. You feel better and relaxed. The ache coming from stretching your muscles disappears. You are floating.

A dear friend of mine used to tell me: "You enter the gap". "A new dimension," I added. Where the body does not exist. It is like your mind and body wander somewhere. Taoists would say you reach the state where nothing exists. In the meantime your muscles do things you thought were impossible. Unthinkable. It is really an exhilarating experience, as Deborah experienced.

It could be the healing process begins when you are in this state. The Chinese say illness is caused by body energy not flowing properly through your organs. When you reach the state of lightness, the internal energy produced by your mind flows freely and heals the body.

A word of caution. Qigong is hard, very hard work. The exercises seem easy, but at an advanced level become quite intense. You have to be totally committed and spend at least two hours a day doing the exercises. I believe it is the intense combination of gradual physical conditioning and concentrating your mental process on your body that seems to heal. It is not an easy feat. But eventually you will reach the state, as I do, of complete well-being. You will look forward to doing the exercises because they make you feel much better.

The Qigong experience gave me an incentive to explore oriental thinking, culture and way of living. How does it compare to Judeo-Christian and Islamic spirituality? Let your mind wander! It takes you to marvelous places. We'll talk more about it as I share with you what I learn.

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