

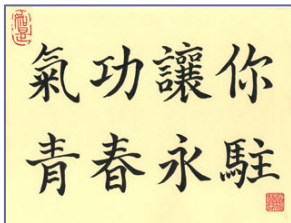
Articles for Self Growth

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She holds national licenses in Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine through the National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncturists (NCCA) and is licensed to practice acupuncture in California, Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.



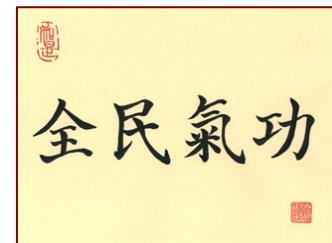
Shoshanna is a nationally licensed acupuncturist with a Master in Science in the field. In 1998, The Honorable former Governor Christine Todd Whitman appointed her to the New Jersey State Acupuncture Examining Board. In 2003, she became Chairman.

As author of ***Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20 Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy*** (Avery Penguin Group 2003), Shoshanna has produced a companion DVD directed by Eli Kabillo (Mad Dog Films) and Lorna Thomas (Swing Pictures).

As co-author of ***Feeling Light—The Holistic Solution to Permanent Weight Loss and Wellness*** (Avon Books 1997), she completed a successful national book tour in 1997. Shoshanna's suggestions for weight loss have been highlighted in *Alternative Cures, The Most Effective Natural Home Remedies for 160 Health Problems*, by Bill Gottlieb (Rodale, 2000).

The following seven articles have been written over the past few years and are being published for your learning experience. Please do not post any excerpt without the written consent of Shoshanna.

- ✿ **QIGONG AND THE AGELESS WOMAN**
- ✿ **THE THREE TREASURES: A CHINESE PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTH AND LONGEVITY**
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QIGONG AND THE AGELESS WOMAN

The Chinese have studied ways of creating and maintaining healthful longevity for thousands of years. One of “*the jewels*” coming out of this quest for everlasting youth is the gentle, life enhancing exercise practice of Qigong (pronounced chee-GUNG). Commonly known as “*Chinese Yoga*” and “*Feng Shui for the body*,” Qigong is an ancient form of Chinese medicine exercise that “retards the aging process” by cultivating and strengthening the vital energy (Qi) in the body. It is a gentle, easy to perform life-enhancing exercise. It provides the ability to self-create medicine naturally within the body.

Qigong practiced for simply twenty minutes on a regular basis tones not only the body, but also the mind and spirit with results that can seem miraculous. A typical Qigong workout includes stretching and strengthening exercises, breathwork, creative visualization, self-massage, vocalization of sounds and meditation through movement and stillness.

It is often likened to “*giving your self acupuncture*” because it opens the flow of Qi, releases Qi blockages within the energy pathways (*meridians*) and promotes blood flow. When Qi and blood is flowing freely as a result of this ancient art of self-healing and fitness youthful skin, eyes and hair is maintained, sexual vitality is enhanced, bones are fortified, muscles and tendons are flexible, hormones are stimulated, energy is plentiful, mind is clear and spirit is sparked.

Qigong can be practiced anywhere by anyone and is especially helpful to women who desire to be ageless. In ancient China prior to 500 B.C. and the dynasties led by kings, it is believed that it was the mature women shamans who created the art of Qi cultivation through their magical powers. The ideogram for women, “*wu*”, is even thought to originally mean “*to heal*.” As modern women, we too can benefit from the healing power of Qi to keep ourselves healthy, vibrant and beautiful for as long as we live.

According to Oriental Medicine, health can be assessed according to the predominance of either too much or too little Yin or Yang in the body. This is based on the Yin Yang theory holding that good health occurs when there is a balance maintained between these two opposing, yet intimately related and attracting energies. Each person is made up of a predominance of either Yin or Yang energy; however, women tend to be more Yin, whereas men tend to be more Yang. This is because women tend to be more cold, soft, deep, wet, internal and contracting which are Yin qualities, whereas men tend to be more hot, hard, superficial, dry, external and expanding which are Yang qualities. During a healing

process, the goal is to move more toward the center of the Yin Yang continuum, so that there is no longer a preponderance of Yin or Yang creating imbalance within the system.

The relative balance between these energies “*waxes and wanes*” depending on various factors such as the energetic of foods eaten, weather conditions, temperature and dampness of one’s dwelling, emotional state, and hereditary factors. For example, ingesting cold, wet food creates more Yin, whereas hot, dry foods create more Yang. The practice of Qigong is another viable method to create balance between Yin and Yang that improves health and reduces, even reverses the body’s aging process.

Women can enhance themselves and become ageless through the practice of Qigong as it creates body warmth without too much heat and adequate blood flow to counteract the tendency toward dryness. In practical terms, this explains how Qigong practice maintains healthy skin, nails and hair. Qigong practice also reduces hot flashes, insomnia, depression, pain, anxiety and diminishing vital fluids that so often accompany a woman’s life changes.

It helps women to cope emotionally through nourishing the spirit as it promotes “feeling up” and provides the energy necessary to be creative, achieve goals, and manifest dreams and aspirations. Practice of these empowering exercises, helps women to speak their mind freely and express themselves in a loving, gentle way that others can accept and honor. Through balance of Yin and Yang energies within the self, a strong, yet open standpoint exists that allows for the easy creation of bridges with others.

Life begins to flow, just like the movements flow. One becomes infused with peace, self-knowledge, intuition, balance, vibrancy and focus – all great things to create coping mechanisms to counteract the daily stress and pressures in modern life. Qigong softens women and helps them to go inward and draw from their natural feminine power. It is key to becoming an ageless, happy and healthy woman that looks and feels younger.

Women deserve to enjoy the pleasure that comes with connecting with themselves through the gentle, healing art of Qigong. It counteracts the tendency to retreat and provides a new zest for life as time moves forward. A final plea: Give yourself this glowing gift of Qigong so that you may truly enjoy this and many future years of looking gorgeous on the outside and filled with “*vibrant and juicy Qi*” on the inside.

THE THREE TREASURES: A CHINESE PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTH & LONGEVITY

What can we do to avoid sickness, debility, and senility in our lives? What can we do to help ourselves heal from diseases or afflictions already a part of our lives? What can we do to create a longer, healthier, enjoyable, and more productive life? I suggest we look toward the ancient wisdom of the Chinese people who have studied the phenomenon of longevity for over 5,000 years to find these answers. A vast body of Chinese medical knowledge has accrued from these efforts, providing a viable alternative to unhealthy, destructive life habits.

This Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) view of health emphasizes the influence of emotions, nature, electromagnetic forces, and energy on the human body and spirit. The system is built on the belief that energy flows throughout every living thing and health depends on how and where this energy is flowing. It greatly emphasizes the importance of prevention as a necessary first step toward the creation and maintenance of good health.

*THE FIRST CLASSIC OF CHINESE MEDICINE, THE NEI JING, STATES
THAT TREATING DISEASE AFTER IT ARISES IS LIKE BEGINNING TO DIG A
WELL AFTER ONE HAS BECOME THIRSTY OR LIKE FORGING SPEARS
AFTER WAR HAS ALREADY BROKEN OUT.*

The ancient Chinese medical texts are filled with information about how to prevent disease and degeneration combined with numerous guiding principles for how to create a healthful and long life. A basic tenet of these teachings holds that we are born with an abundant supply of “*the three treasures*” which are *essence*, *energy* and *spirit*. These three treasures are believed to have a direct affect on the aging process. Through proper cultivation, preservation, and protection of these three treasures, we can create a greater chance for a long and healthful life.

A fundamental relationship exists between essence, energy and spirit whereby an accumulation of one, in turn, creates abundance in the other. To retard the aging process, it is, therefore, essential to maintain balance and harmony within not just one, but all of the treasures. Understanding how these three treasures work together to promote proper body function provides a compelling impetus for making healthier choices in one’s life.

Essence, also known as *Jing*, forms the initial substance from which the body is created and determines genetic make-up and constitution. The quality of *Jing* determines longevity and resistance to degenerative

disease. Strong *Jing* generates a long life free of degenerative disease. Weak *Jing* manifests in children as failure to thrive and in adults as premature aging. Tooth decay, arthritis, hearing loss, lack of sexual drive, osteoporosis, and senility are all examples of the physical and mental deterioration that occurs with diminishing of essence.

A finite amount of *Jing* exists within the body at birth, when it is ultimately used up, one dies. To allay this process, extra energy left over at the end of a day can be transformed during sleep and used to protect *Jing* from being consumed too quickly. Since we tend to have less excess energy as we age, our bodies can be depleted of *Jing* more quickly during this time. For this reason, it is best to conserve energy each day, go to bed and rise at a reasonable time, and avoid chronic stress throughout life, but especially in our later years. In addition, *Jing* receives its nourishment after birth from food and water. Consuming the purest and most potent foods and drinks available is thus essential to maintaining strong *Jing*.

Essence is mostly related to the kidneys, the primary organ that controls growth, maturation, aging, and natural death. This explains why strengthening, protecting and cultivating kidney essence is a primary focus in Chinese longevity practices. The kidneys are considered to be the root of the body's energy and spark the energy of other vital organs. Maintaining proper amounts of kidney essence, therefore, has a profound effect on the energetics of the body.

Chinese tradition dictates that the kidneys are nourished by warmth, yet injured by cold. It is also believed that they are depleted from excess sexual activity. What constitutes excess in this case varies for each person, but in general no more than once or twice a week is the usual recommendation.

SELF-HELP HINTS TO PROTECT KIDNEY ESSENCE:

- ✿ *Sleep with socks on and refrain from walking barefoot on cold floors to warm and protect the "Bubbling Well Point" which is the first point on the kidney meridian located on the sole of each foot.*
- ✿ *Wear a band (or extra covering) around the lower back or simply make certain the lower back is covered to protect the kidneys from the cold elements, especially in the winter months.*
- ✿ *Abstain from cold food and drinks, especially in the cold weather or right after vigorous exercise.*

- ✿ *Don't overdo sex. You can withhold your orgasm to preserve kidney jing if desired during healing times.*
- ✿ *Do self-acupressure on the acupoint "Kidney 3" once daily for two minutes on each foot to strengthen not only the essence, but also the energy of the kidneys. Practice your acupressure in a quiet place so you can concentrate on your breathing and achieve a relaxed, receptive state of mind and body. Breathe into your lower abdomen, rather than into your chest as you perform it to further strengthen your kidney essence and energy. Use firm pressure applied gradually on the acupoint, using your thumb or middle finger.*

Energy, also known as *Qi*, refers to the life force flowing throughout every cell and tissue of the body. *Qi* motivates all vital functions and transformations and thus sustains life. Ultimately, everything in Chinese medicine is based on the concept of *Qi*.

After birth, *Qi* comes from the digestion and transformation of the food, water and herbs we ingest and the air we breathe. This means, it not only important to eat right to have strong *Qi*, but to live in a well-ventilated environment and to get plenty of fresh air.

The ancient Chinese exercises of Tai Chi and Qigong are excellent ways to cultivate *Qi*, thereby supporting the welfare of the physical body. These slow, rhythmical, and meditative movements permit the entire body to relax, opening and restoring the proper flow of *Qi* within the energetic pathways (*meridians*) of the body. The free flow of energy created through these movements promotes blood flow, which transports nourishment to our vital organs, glands, and tissues.

Tai Chi and Qigong movements are often synchronized with a slow, rhythmic, and deep breathing technique to not only increase lung capacity, but to cultivate and balance vital energy (*Qi*), calm the emotions and spirit (*Shen*), and to nourish vital essence (*Jing*).

The following Qigong exercise *Fluffing White Clouds* can be practiced to strengthen your *Qi* and thus nourish all three treasures.

To begin stand with your feet parallel, shoulder-width apart with your knees slightly bent. Your hands are resting open at your sides with your pinky fingers next to your legs and fingertips facing the earth. As you inhale, straighten your knees and lift your hands to shoulder height in front of you with palms facing upward and elbows slightly bent.

As you exhale, turn your palms downward and bring your arms down, drawing your wrists back in toward your body and bending your knees

again. The heel of your hand leads and fingertips follow. End with elbows slightly bent, palms face downward, your hands by your sides stretched out flat as if gently patting white clouds. Turn your palms upward and continue from the beginning. Coordinate the movement of your hands with the bending and straightening of your legs.

The sensation of *Qi* during this exercise can be extraordinary. As your palms move upward, you may feel they hold a heavy weight. This is abundant *Qi* from the universe. By contrast, when your palms turn down and float back to your sides, it may feel as if there is a light, fluffy pillow beneath them. The power of these sensations increases with every repetition of the movement and your deep, rhythmical breath.

Spirit, also known as *Shen*, represents all aspects of consciousness and mind. This includes awareness, cognition, thinking, feeling, will and intent as reflected in our personality. The Chinese principles for nourishing spirit suggest an open and peaceful way of being combined with a balanced emotional life. The more you can flow within your own mind, the more things will flow around you and the brighter your *Shen* will be.

THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS CAN BE FOLLOWED TO CREATE A VIBRANT, SHINING *SHEN*.

- ✿ *Visualize yourself strong, yet flexible as bamboo - a Taoist symbol of longevity. Bamboo bends in the strongest winds. It survives without breaking, whereas rigid plants break and die. Remain firm in your inner goals, yet flexible in your choice of methods to achieve those goals.*
- ✿ *Create relationships with people that are good for you.*
- ✿ *Find what you truly love to do and go for it! Focus yourself toward this special goal and manifest it. Be one of those people living well into the nineties imbued with a passion for life.*
- ✿ *Find time for fun, rest and relaxation.*
- ✿ *Learn to express your emotions by allowing them to naturally come out as they arise. The emotions of anger, fear, sadness, grief, and worry need to be expressed to stay healthy. If you keep them pent up inside they can have a negative affect on your vital organs. Begin this practice with care. Take your time. Be gentle with yourself and those around you as you honor and share your feelings. It is not the easiest route but it is certainly the healthiest.*

A combination of flexibility, spontaneity, and freedom from judgment is the best way to achieve peace within yourself and your environment. The more your mind flows, the more your *Shen* will be pacified, your *Jing* cultivated, and your *Qi* will flow freely throughout your body.

AS THE MASTER CHANG PO-TUAN SAID A THOUSAND YEARS AGO: "THE WORDS ARE SIMPLE, AND THE WAY IS EASY. IT'S LIKE FINDING THE SOURCE BY FOLLOWING THE STREAM." AS LONG AS YOU STAY ON COURSE AND DON'T GET SIDETRACKED *EN ROUTE*, YOU WILL GET THERE SOONER OR LATER. MEANWHILE, THE JOURNEY ITSELF IS HALF THE FUN, AND THE TAO TEACHES US HOW TO ENJOY THE TRIP WITHOUT EXHAUSTING ALL OUR RESOURCES.

Less Stress Means More Success

A business would not be a business without a certain level of stress. It is often stress that motivates us to do our work and it can also spur us on to achieving our work goals. It's the amount and level of stress that are the crucial factors to monitor for maintaining a healthy work environment. An inordinate amount and high stress level can become the demise of a business, one that would have otherwise flourished. There are several simple steps you can follow to insure that high, unrelenting stress doesn't get the best of your precious business. The following list of suggestions can be used to help you achieve this goal.

You can use them on a regular basis to help maintain and foster a less stressful workplace environment. Realistically assess your situation to see if you need to make some adjustments in your work environment. Most people spend countless hours within their workplace. It behooves you to make it a place you enjoy and long to be. Doing the following 14 preventative steps will enhance productivity, promote creativity, foster concentration - thus empowering your staff to operate at their personal best.

- ✿ CREATE PEACEFULNESS NO MATTER HOW BUSY IT GETS
- ✿ ARRANGE THE FURNITURE TO CREATE A SMOOTH FLOW OF ENERGY
- ✿ DESIGNATE AN AREA WHERE PEOPLE CAN BE ALONE
- ✿ ARRANGE FOR HIGH QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF LIGHT COMING IN FROM OUTSIDE AS WELL AS FULL SPECTRUM LIGHTING INDOORS
- ✿ KEEP CLUTTER TO A MINIMUM

- ✿ STRATEGICALLY PLACE A FISH TANK, ROCK GARDEN WITH FLOWING WATER, AND/OR PLANTS THROUGHOUT
- ✿ PLAY GENTLE, CALMING MUSIC EXCLUSIVELY OR DURING DESIGNATED PERIODS OF TIME
- ✿ ASK PEOPLE TO SPEAK QUIETLY TO ONE ANOTHER, DISSUADE ARGUMENTATIVE BEHAVIOR, AND OUTLAW GOSSIP
- ✿ HONOR THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF YOUR EMPLOYEES AND CLIENTS
- ✿ ACKNOWLEDGE YOURSELF AND OTHERS FOR DAILY WORK CONTRIBUTIONS
- ✿ ASK FOR TRUTHFUL AND CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK FROM YOUR STAFF TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE HAPPY WITH HOW THINGS ARE GOING
- ✿ ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO BE THEMSELVES, HONOR THEIR NEEDS, AND RESPECT THEM FOR THEIR UNIQUE QUALITIES
- ✿ TAKE DEEP BREATHS, ENCOURAGE BEING PRESENT, AND REMEMBER THERE IS ONLY SO MUCH ONE CAN ACCOMPLISH IN A DAY
- ✿ ENCOURAGE "SANITY BREAKS" WHERE PEOPLE LEAVE THEIR WORK AREAS TO DO SOME TAI CHI, YOGA, OR STRETCHING EXERCISES AS NEEDED.

Remember that pent up feelings can be one of the biggest culprits for creating a thick, heavy, negative and thus highly stressful atmosphere at work. Take special measures to help your staff process their feelings in a structured and safe environment. Appreciate them for all they do for the business. Make certain they know you are always there to hear them out. Remember the old adage that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" as you make the necessary steps to create and maintain a healthy and balanced workplace.

MENDING THE MIND, BODY, MOUTH CONNECTION

Creating a better relationship to food comes from a place within, not outside of your self. Eating issues are an external symptom that stem from a deeper underlying cause. It is essential to learn how to deal with them from a deep, profound level to ensure improved nourishment to your body.

Unhealthy eating patterns can be changed and healed over time by discovering what is "*eating at you*" on a fundamental, deep, no-nonsense level. These issues can be best eliminated through uncovering and releasing them, rather than the usual cover-up tactics of useless dieting. Periodic starving or following strict, regimented diet is a temporary fix that can have deleterious effects on the body.

According to ancient Chinese medicine principles, disease and illness come from the body's vital energy (Qi) being out of balance. When Qi is strong, it flows better and results in a positive state of health. When Qi is weak, it creates stagnancy within the organs and, in turn, results in disharmony, illness and disease.

The Chinese have developed ancient Qi cultivation techniques as a way of creating and maintaining balance within the body. These include the simple practices of Qigong (pronounced chee-GUNG), Tai Chi, acupuncture, acupressure and Chinese massage. They are "*tried and true*" methods for healing of the body, mind and spirit, ones people all over the world are embracing simply because they work. Some of these techniques you can do for yourself and others need to be providing to you. They are basically done to open and restore the flow of Qi throughout meridian (**energy**) pathways that run throughout the body. Qigong and Tai Chi accomplish this through exercise, Acupuncture through needle insertion into acupoints, Acupressure through finger pressure onto acupoints, and Chinese massage through a vigorous effleurage type of massage.

Qi cultivation techniques connect the practitioner with themselves in such a profound way to balance and connect the particular aspect that needs healing. This is based on the basic premise that the body heals itself naturally. This happens on its own, without the need for one to understand how or why. Everything just falls into place as one learns to take charge of and direct their healing.

These same ancient Chinese healing principles and resulting Qi cultivation techniques can also be applied to problems with food that lead to poor nutrition and weight issues. Extra weight held onto the body is an example of stuck Qi, but when Qi is flowing freely and effervescently weight issues and emotional attachment to food is resolved. When organs are operating harmoniously and Qi is abundant it results in healthier food choices in the right amount and at the appropriate time. Additionally, when the Qi of the internal organs is strong, the body works efficiently to naturally shed body unnecessary, extra water, toxins and thus pounds. This is especially true when it comes to balancing energy of the Spleen meridian that according to Chinese medicine is responsible for the transportation and transformation of food within the body.

The human body works efficiently and maintains balance on its own. A re-established and renewed flow of Qi gives your organ systems the fuel they need to carry out daily life activities with optimal efficiency creating the experience of a new and improved bodily felt sense of power and connection. In this state, you look at life differently, manifest what you want, awaken each day feeling vibrant, move through each day

effortlessly, speak your mind gently and honestly, and reveal your real self without regrets, and effortlessly make the right choices around food.

Our bodies are absolutely meant to be in a perfect state of health. This happens through listening and honoring the true needs and desires of one's inner voice to create, establish and maintain positive patterns of eating. This brings back memories of treating yourself with love and respect combined with the joy of nourishing and being good to oneself through food.

Each person has his or her own, unique mind, body and mouth issues. No one can heal another person, as true healing is primarily derived within each person. Mending and re-establishing the mind, body, mouth connection through ancient Chinese Qi cultivation methods awakens and recalls the body's inborn healing ability through opening and creating a free flow of Qi (*vital energy*) within the entire being. This experience creates a balanced state of dealing with food - re-establishing a primary relationship with food that has existed since birth. Through this experience, one returns to more simple natural cravings, eating to nourish the entire being, choosing the right foods and eating food in a regular pattern and proper amount to satiate the body, mind, and spirit.

Tips for Choosing the Right Acupuncturist

Acupuncture provides a highly effective way for people to heal themselves naturally. It stimulates, strengthens, and balances the flow of vital energy (*Qi*) throughout the energy pathways (*meridians*) of the body. Acupuncture also works by removing blockages and stagnation of Qi within the meridians to restore health as well. In addition, an acupuncture recipient taps into, connects and accesses their innate healing ability through the experience of a treatment making positive results even more likely.

During an acupuncture session, a recipient is provided with the opportunity to balance their system on a deep, profound level providing impetus for the creation of vibrant health and wellbeing. The results vary based upon the willingness of the recipient to heal themselves combined with the presenting state of their physical and energetic health picture. Just because acupuncture doesn't work for you for one problem doesn't mean it won't help for the same or another one that may arise at a later date. Our bodies change throughout time and one's readiness for healing is a variable as well. One may have not been ready or able to release a

problem or symptom at one point, but may be totally ready at another point in time.

The experience of an acupuncture treatment can also vary based upon the particular acupuncturist providing the treatment. In other words, not all acupuncturists are created equal. Just because one acupuncturist fails to obtain positive results, doesn't mean another acupuncturist wouldn't. There are many different ways that an acupuncturist can guide a patient toward a more positive, healing experience. Other than the obvious factor of needling approach and technique, some additional factors to look out for include the way they present themselves, speak to the patient, respond to patient questions, the manner of providing treatment, the environment of their treatment space, the music played, as well as how their employees run the office and answer the phone. All of these variables affect how you feel as a recipient of acupuncture and thus affect treatment results.

A primary goal of acupuncture treatment is for the patient to develop and find a way to connect with and own their healing. An acupuncturist must serve as a guide in this process, even though some acupuncturist may want to try to take sole credit for results. An acupuncturist is gently prodding the patient to self-heal through the insertion of needles. They are not doing the healing as it is the patient themselves who is responsible for their own healing. Therefore, It is advisable to seek an acupuncturist who gives the patient responsibility and credit for their own healing process.

An acupuncturist should take time to explain this and several other things during the initial consultation. It's not uncommon for a patient to be apprehensive during their first visit simply because it is a new experience. If a recipient is nervous about receiving acupuncture the first time the acupuncturist should be sensitive to their needs. An acupuncturist can choose to say and do things to help the patient feel more comfortable to allay their fears. For example, it needs to be explained that one's fear will quickly dissipates as soon as they experience a surprisingly, painless first needle. They should also be told there could be an occasional needle that is "*a zinger*", but most of the time it is a pleasant experience.

Prior to receiving the treatment, the acupuncturist also needs to explain that sometimes a needle starts "*to smart*" during a treatment signifying the release of a Qi blockage. An acupuncturist should warn the patient that this could happen and instruct them to breathe deeply into the area for a few minutes until the discomfort dissipates. Additionally, if the patient is uncomfortable for any reason, there should be a call button or a bell to summon the acupuncturist to their room. An acupuncturist should do their best to be there for their patients - close by, and ready to

be of assistance in all ways. This creates a safe and nurturing environment where the patient can access the best and strongest healing possible.

During the actual treatment, an acupuncturist may find it helpful to talk to the recipient to keep their mind from focusing on what is happening. They could also suggest that the patient may find it easier to close their eyes during the needling. Rather than closing the door of the room after the needles are inserted, an acupuncturist can offer to leave the door open and check in occasionally for an added comfort level for the duration of the treatment.

Creating the space for a patient to go deep into a state of healing during an acupuncture session is extremely important. Setting a proper stage enhances the chance for the patient to make the necessary energetic/physical shifts to move toward a more perfect state of health. Because a healing environment sets the stage for a successful acupuncture treatment, it is essential that it provide amenities to ensure safety, peace, and comfort. The more the patient can relax, the better the treatment will work. Some suggestions during the treatment time for this include being cognizant of creating soft lighting or darkness, elimination of loud, irritating sounds to uphold the maintenance of quietude, providing the right pillows for comfortable positioning, a accessible method to alert the practitioner, setting the room at a comfortable temperature, offer of blanket or other covering, and choice of pleasing music.

Chinese medicine teaches that strong needle stimulation provides the most benefit, but my experience has proven differently especially for those that are “needle-shy.” The proper amount of needle stimulation can make or break the success of acupuncture and can change from treatment to treatment and patient to patient. An acupuncturist must pay close attention and be sensitive to the not only the appropriate amount of stimulation needed to treat a particular condition, but also the needle tolerance of the recipient. If a patient is extremely sensitive, stimulation can be given ever so gently or even eliminated altogether with excellent treatment results. In this case, the mere insertion of the needle is enough to provide sufficient Qi stimulation. Other patients with a more robust constitution, in turn, may require strong stimulation to achieve desired results.

During a time when more and more people are seeking the expertise of an acupuncturist has arrived. Acupuncture is an excellent method to prod the body into a perfect state of health, balancing the energetic system to ward off stagnant or stuck Qi. Because disease is believed to happen on an energetic level first, keeping the energetic system open, flowing and working properly through regular acupuncture treatments is

an excellent addition to one's overall healthcare plan. However, this must happen with an acupuncturist that can be trusted to provide the best care possible. Having more knowledge as to what this might entail will help you to have a better acupuncture experience - a way to keep your energy flowing freely and abundantly, a gentle and sure way "to become unstuck!"

NO MORE VICTIM: STAND UP FOR YOURSELF IN LIFE

How many times have you been victimized or witnessed it happening to someone else? No matter what the particular situation, they all have the same thing in common - someone is the victim while the other is the victimizer. This develops into a mind-set that can become pervasive throughout every aspect of daily existence. Furthermore, living life in "*victim consciousness*" can become a trap difficult to escape. It can result in a life filled with fear, anxiety and pain devoid of authentic love.

Each person has a unique experience of where and when victim conscious first began. Whether it was from lack of parental support, "*down grading*" from a teacher, an abusive companion the result is still the same: poor self-image, fear, and insecurity. Victim consciousness can lead a person to say, be and do everything to please others, without regard for their own needs. Living with this sole purpose to give to others leaves a person without needs met. Even though the person thinks they are doing the right thing by serving others, they have abandoned themselves. This abandonment can then lead to an inner desire to lash out and hurt others that manifests in covert and sometimes even overt ways. It is at this precise point that the victim also becomes the victimizer.

Acts of aggression are not just the normally thought of physical or verbal lashing out, but also include non-physical or non-verbal acts. These non-physical and non-verbal acts are examples of "*energetic aggression*." Energetic aggression can actually be as bad as, if not worse than, overt acts of aggression. Energetic aggression can be felt, but can't be seen. It is when someone hits another person without uttering a word. It is simply done through feelings, feelings of aggression toward another individual. Even though people normally think others can't feel these energetic acts of aggression, they are mistaken. People can feel it and they do know what another individual is feeling about them, even if it is

not being openly said. They know it because they can feel it and on a subtle and sometimes not so subtle level.

VICTIMIZATION HAS BECOME A WAY TOO COMMON SCENARIO IN LIFE. A TYPICAL EXAMPLE MAY INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- ✿ *A wife does everything her husband demands regardless of her own desires and then wonders why she is depressed and feels worthless.*
- ✿ *A mother is manipulated by her nasty, condescending daughter to do things she doesn't really believe in and then finds herself feeling guilty about wanting to seek revenge.*
- ✿ *An employee covers inside as she interacts with her boss as if everything is wonderful, even though she is filled with fear that he will disapprove of her. But, at the same time she viciously gossips about him to fellow employees at every chance she gets.*
- ✿ *A friend or co-worker is outspoken and aggressive and you close down every time they confront you on an issue instead of opening up your mouth and saying what you feel. You then develop feelings of hate toward them.*

Both parties in victim/victimizer relationships suffer from poor self-image, feelings of unworthiness and undeserving of better. Both parties end up filling each other's gaps and it seems to work even though it is destructive. That's what makes it such a veritable trap for so many.

There is a way to get out of this victim trap. Although once out of a victim predicament you must always be on guard for future abusive situations. One of the keys to recovery is to speak your truth and do things you really want to do. In other words: learn to say '**no**' when you really feel '**no**'. Stop going through life saying and doing things to please someone else. In addition, stop caring whether they like it or not. I call this newly empowered self "**victim in recovery**."

Another remedy for this situation is for each person to really begin to connect and communicate on a deep level so that they are really there for themselves. When this happens they are no longer abandoning themselves and they can truly come forward in life as compassionate and loving individuals without a trace of aggression. Change toward wholeness and positive feelings flourish when both victim and victimizer begin to realize how precious they are as individuals and that they deserve to receive what they need. More importantly, is the realization that this will only happen when they begin standing up for themselves

and asking for that which they need. It is essential that we learn to love ourselves and share love with others, being not only good to ourselves but to each other.

The following steps are useful in your quest for victim recovery. Each person realizes and manifests change within their unique time frame. Please take gentle steps one at a time. Maintaining a victim-free life is a daily challenge even after it is achieved.

- ✿ *Realize & accept that you are a victim and/or victimizer*
- ✿ *Replace fear with love, peace, and understanding for yourself*
- ✿ *Surround yourself with people you feel safe being around*
- ✿ *Speak your truth to yourself and to others*
- ✿ *Be kind and there for yourself*
- ✿ *If you find yourself angry or depressed look inside and see what you are giving yourself*
- ✿ *Stop doing things to please others at your own expense*
- ✿ *Figure out what pleases you and just do it*
- ✿ *Say yes when you mean yes, and no when you mean no*
- ✿ *Create healthy boundaries around you*
- ✿ *Take back your power and don't give it away anymore*
- ✿ *Acknowledge yourself for the true gift that you are*
- ✿ *Laugh at yourself for being so silly for so long*

Living a life filled with self-acceptance, self-worth, and love for yourself creates peace and healing not only within your self, but others. From a global perspective, when each person takes care of themselves in this way it releases aggressive behavior and thus creates healing and peace for our planet. Letting go of your victim and standing up for your self in life is an excellent step toward this goal.

ENHANCE YOUR LIFE WITH QIGONG

What can we do to avoid sickness, debility, and senility in our lives? What can we do to help ourselves heal from diseases or afflictions already a part of our lives? What can we do to create a longer, healthier, enjoyable, and more productive life? I suggest we look toward the ancient wisdom of the Chinese people who have studied the phenomenon of health and longevity for over 5,000 years to find these answers.

A vast body of Chinese medical knowledge has accrued from these efforts, providing a viable alternative to unhealthy, destructive life habits. The ancient Chinese medical texts are filled with information about how to prevent disease and degeneration combined with numerous guiding principles for how to create a healthful and long life.

This Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) view of health emphasizes the influence of emotions, nature, electromagnetic forces, and energy on the human body and spirit. It also emphasizes the importance of prevention as a necessary first step toward the creation and maintenance of good health.

The first classic of Chinese medicine, the *Nei Jing*, states “treating disease after it arises is like beginning to dig a well after one has become thirsty or like forging spears after war has already broken out.”

The Chinese system of healing is built on the belief that vital energy (Qi) flows throughout every living thing and health depends on how and where this energy is flowing. Qi motivates all vital functions and transformations and thus sustains life. After birth, Qi comes from the digestion and transformation of the food, water and herbs we ingest and the air we breathe. This means, it is not only important to eat right to have strong Qi, but to live in a well-ventilated environment and to get plenty of fresh air. Ultimately, everything in Chinese medicine is based on the concept of Qi.

In ancient China prior to 500 B.C. and the dynasties led by kings, it is believed that it was the mature women shamans who created the art of Qi cultivation through their magical powers. The ideogram for women, “*wu*”, is even thought to originally mean “*to heal*.” This art of cultivation, known today as Qigong (pronounced chee-GUNG), is literally translated as “*Qi cultivation*.” Often referred to as “*Chinese Yoga*” or “*Feng Shui for the body*,” Qigong is an ancient healing tool used to create medicine

naturally, support the welfare of the physical body, and retard the aging process.

Twenty minutes of Qigong practice on a regular basis creates profound health benefits. Its slow, gentle, rhythmical, meditative movements prod the entire body to relax as it opens, strengthens and restores the proper flow of Qi. Qigong is suitable for all ages and abilities and can be performed standing, sitting or lying down. A typical Qigong workout includes stretching and strengthening exercises, breathwork, creative visualization, self-massage, vocalization of sounds and meditation through movement and stillness.

The free flow of Qi created through these movements removes Qi blockages within the energetic pathways (meridians) of the body and promotes blood flow that transports nourishment to vital organs, glands, and tissue. When Qi and blood is flowing freely as a result of this ancient art of self-healing and fitness youthful skin, eyes, and hair are maintained, sexual vitality is enhanced, bones are fortified, muscles and tendons are flexible, hormones are balanced, organ function is strengthened, and energy is plentiful.

The detoxification, Qi cultivation, storage and refinement that result from Qigong practice helps people take charge of their healing process and increases the effectiveness of other healing techniques. Qigong also tones the mind and spirit as it promotes mental clarity and a peaceful, nourished spirit (*Shen*). It is a powerful self-healing tool that has been likened to “*giving oneself acupuncture*” for all of the reasons already, in addition to its ability to balance the Yin and Yang energies of the body.

According to Oriental Medicine, health can be assessed according to the predominance of either too much, or too little, Yin or Yang in the body. This is based on the Yin Yang Theory which teaches that good health occurs when balance is maintained between these two opposing, yet intimately related and attracting, energies.

Each person is made up of a predominance of either Yin or Yang energy. Women tend to be more Yin whereas men tend to be more Yang. This is because women tend to be more cold, soft, deep, wet, internal and contracting which are Yin qualities, whereas men tend to be more hot, hard, superficial, dry, external and expanding which are Yang qualities. During a healing process, the goal is to move more toward the center of the Yin Yang continuum, so that a preponderance of Yin or Yang is no longer creating imbalance within the system.

| Yang relates to: | Yin relates to: |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Sky | Earth |
| Man | Woman |
| Qi | Blood |
| Hot | Cold |
| External | Internal |
| Day | Night |
| White | Black |
| Sun | Moon |
| Full | Empty |
| Fire | Water |
| Outside | Inside |
| Back | Front |
| Active | Passive |
| Left | Right |

The relative balance between these energies “*waxes and wanes*” depending on various factors such as the energetic of foods eaten, environmental conditions, emotional state, hereditary factors, and exercise habits. For example, ingesting cold, wet food or living in a cold, damp environment creates a predominance of Yin, whereas hot, dry foods or living in a hot climate creates more Yang. Practical application of this information leads one to lifestyle choices that tend to bring a person more to the center of the Yin and Yang continuum. Qigong, as a form of exercise, naturally promotes balance between the Yin and Yang energies of the body thereby improving overall health.

The following Qigong exercise “*Fluffing White Clouds*” synchronizes movements with a slow, rhythmic, and deep breathing technique. This is done to increase lung capacity, cultivate and balance Qi, calm the emotions and spirit (*Shen*), nourish vital essence (*Jing*), and balance the energies of Yin and Yang.

- ✿ *Stand with your feet parallel, shoulder-width apart with your knees slightly bent. Your hands are resting open at your sides with your pinky fingers next to your thighs and fingertips facing the earth.*
- ✿ *As you inhale, straighten your knees and lift your hands to shoulder height in front of you with palms facing upward and elbows slightly bent.*

- ✿ *As you exhale, turn your palms downward and bring your arms down, drawing your wrists back in toward your body and bending your knees again. The heel of your hand leads and fingertips follow.*
- ✿ *End with elbows slightly bent, palms face downward, your hands by your sides stretched out flat as if gently patting white clouds.*
- ✿ *Turn your palms upward and continue from the beginning. Coordinate the movement of your hands with the bending and straightening of your legs.*

The experience and sensation of Qi flow during this exercise may seem extraordinary, because it is. As your hands move upward, it may feel as if there is a heavy weight in your palms. By contrast, when your palms turn downward and float back to your sides, it may feel as if there is a light, fluffy pillow beneath them. These sensations may increase with each repetition. Please don't be concerned if you're not feeling anything, it is still working!

I encourage you to practice this and other Qi enhancing exercises to improve your well-being. The more you practice, the more your life experience flows. You become infused with peace, self-knowledge, intuition, balance, vibrancy and focus - all great things to counteract the daily stress and pressures in modern life. Best of all - Qigong provides a new zest for life and a time-proven way to experience a healthful, long life.

