

QIGONG AND THE AGELESS WOMAN

SHOSHANNA KATZMAN, M.S., C.A.



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.

The ultimate goal in Chinese Medicine is to return to one’s true self – to nourish one’s destiny. And this is done through searching for your true self throughout life through virtuous deeds. A good first step toward this is to be quiet with yourself on a daily basis. Get back to the basic, true nature of peacefulness and oneness within ourselves. Calm down, release tension, and open the flow of energy throughout your body — Look deep within yourself and realize what the bottom line of importance is for you. Connect with yourself and find that inner peace and wisdom.

Let’s do an exercise for a moment to help you connect with yourself...

- ✿ *Open your mouth wide and feel if there is tension in your jaw.*
- ✿ *Massage the point Yintang which is located on your third eye*
- ✿ *Place your hands over your heart and do self acupressure on the point “Sea of Tranquility” located at the center of your chest.*

- ✿ *Take a few Qi Gong deep breaths into your lower dan tian located two inches below your navel.*
- ✿ *Open your mouth again and compare the amount of tension in your jaw from before.*

Open up and nourish your heart energy. Have wonderful, nurturing relationships is of utmost importance for the heart energy. There are so many beautiful things to experience within yourself in life. The heart energy must be nourished in order to be able to receive the love from your self and thus from others. Claim your spiritual and mental strength through the Harmonious working of your Heart.

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.

*Shoshanna Katzman is author of *Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20 Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy*, Avery/Penguin Group USA, October, 2003 along with a companion DVD and video produced by Swing Pictures, LLC. She has been a Tai Chi and Qigong practitioner since 1974 and Director of the Red Bank Acupuncture and Wellness Center (healing4u.com) since 1988. Shoshanna was the first woman President of the National Qigong Association (nqa.org) and currently serves as an Editorial Adviser for Body & Soul Magazine. She is President of the New Jersey Acupuncture Examining Board, producer of annual women wellness conferences (caringwomen.com) and co-author of *Feeling Light: The Holistic Solution to Permanent Weight Loss and Wellness* Avon Books, 1997.*

