



Living in Harmony with Nature

by Shoshanna Katzman



Classical Chinese medicine guides us toward improved health and longevity through living harmoniously with nature. This includes the importance of spending adequate time outdoors whether it be taking a walk in the woods, strolling along the boardwalk or walkway, taking in the flowing energy of the ocean or simply sitting outside and gazing at the trees, mountains or body of water.

Such activities provide the opportunity to take a deep breath and appreciate the beauty and healing power inherent within our natural environment. This explains why it is traditionally recommended for Taiji (Tai Chi) or Qigong (Chi Kung) practitioners to perform outdoors whenever possible.

Living in harmony with nature also includes adjusting one's lifestyle habits based on the changing cycles of the seasons. For example, winter is classified as yin due to its association with inactivity, coldness and increased darkness. Becoming more reflective and retreating inward during this time of year conserves and replenishes Qi (life force) preparing one for the coming burst of spring. This might also include going to bed earlier and rising later to build one's energetic reserves by getting adequate and restful sleep. Another good idea involves slowing down and looking deeply into oneself to establish the best way to move forward in the interest of nourishing one's body, mind and spirit.

Being conscious about conserving kidney Qi is an excellent approach to increased health

as the kidneys store reserve energy to be used during high stress moments and major life changes in addition to being central to general healing, disease prevention and improved longevity. In addition, it is the organ system related to and the most easily depleted during the winter months. In terms of nutrition for strengthening Qi of the kidneys, a good place to begin is to eat predominantly cooked foods such as soups, stews, whole grains and roasted root vegetables in addition to warming drinks such as ginger tea. Moreover, covering your lower back during the winter months protects your kidney energy. Applying a compress of ginger tea over your lower back for approximately 15 minutes is another excellent method

to warm the kidneys and strengthen the immune system. General immunity can be further boosted with support from the herbal formula "Jade Screen". Receiving acupuncture or taking Chinese herbal medicine can assist in combatting symptoms accompanying a cold or flu and help speed up recovery.

According to the Chinese Medicine Body Clock (aka Horary Cycle), it is



best to incorporate kidney strengthening modalities such as Qigong exercises from 5-7pm as it is the two-hour period directly related to the kidneys. This is based on the Chinese medicine teaching that Qi flowing through the body's energetic channels has cyclical periods of high and lower tide which wax and wane in two-hour periods over the course of a 24-hour day in a fixed

order. The Hourly Cycle can be further employed to procure better health by adjusting daily habits and activities to match a particular time slot, thereby drawing one into the natural flow of their energetic cycle. Prime examples include eliminating one's bowels between 5-7am (large intestine meridian time) and eating breakfast between 7-9am (stomach meridian time). Taking a nap or resting between 11am-1pm to keep one's heart energy in balance is another way to better align and harmonize one's innate internal rhythms.

You now have several practical things you can do to enhance your life through establishing a greater connection with nature. Enjoy this process and remember that the more you feel connected with yourself and the environment the more energized and balanced you will become.

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