

# Nourishing Your Life

by Shoshanna Katzman



The art of living in harmony with the natural rhythms of life is a central theme of Chinese medicine. One way this is imparted is through integrating the principles of Yang Sheng which means ‘nourishing life’ – based on the belief that “prevention is better than cure.” It provides a health discipline that empowers people to consciously take care of themselves by following various methods to keep energy flowing abundantly and freely through their bodies.

In terms of nutritional guidance, it emphasizes predominantly eating warming foods such as cooked grains, roasted vegetables, and hearty soups. Drinking adequate amounts of warm or room temperature water is also recommended. This means reducing intake of raw foods and avoiding

the use of ice due to their tendency to create coldness, dampness, pain, and stagnation. Consuming more warming food and drink supports digestion by strengthening spleen function which transforms and transports ingested food and drink throughout the body.

Healthy digestion is further supported by using the changing seasons as a guide for how we live, eat, and care for ourselves. This includes consuming more yin cooling foods in the summer and more yang warming foods in the winter. Yang Sheng suggests adding foods that nourish the organ system associated with a particular season. This means eating bitter greens in the spring to nourish the liver. Light and cooling seasonal fruits and vegetables in the summer to nourish the heart. Root vegetables in the late summer to nourish the spleen. Healthy fats, eggs, pears, and soups in the fall to moisten dryness and nourish

the lungs. And bone broth, black beans, walnuts, and black sesame seeds in the winter to nourish energetics of the kidney.

*Regular usage of herbs to balance energy is another “nourishing life” practice. Ginger root as a daily tea, added to foods, used as foot bath, or external compress over the lower back has warming and qi building properties. Goji berries are delicious as a snack or added to a soup to nourish the blood.*

Establishing harmony between body and mind is another goal of Yang Sheng through the practice of ancient Chinese exercises. Taiji’s “meditation through movement” and Qigong’s integration of “body, breath, and mind” help reduce stress and promote Body-Mind connection. Here is a one-minute Qigong exercise for low energy days. It warms kidney energy, encourages



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circulation of qi and blood, and calms the nervous system.

### “Warm the Kidneys, Settle the Mind”

*Stand with feet parallel and shoulder-width apart, knees straight but softened, and palms placed over your lower abdomen. Lift your crown and drop weight downward - allowing yourself to root deeply into the earth. Breathe slowly through your nose and center yourself.*

*Next, place palms together and briskly rub them back and forth until warm. Then place them over on your lower back, gently rubbing up and down or in small circles. Experience warmth sinking inward and nourishing your kidney energy.*

*When ready, relax arms by your sides and gently bounce up and down slightly at the knees for about 30 seconds. As you do so, allow your jaw, shoulders, and belly to relax.*

*Finish by returning your hands to your lower abdomen and take three slow, rhythmical deep breaths into your lower belly. Then stand for a moment and reflect on your experience. When you are ready, shake yourself off to remove any kinks and get on with your day.*

Enjoy the process of nourishing your life with these simple, yet profound ways of bringing forth abundant flow of qi and blood throughout your body, maximizing digestion, reducing stress, and harmonizing body, breath, and mind.

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