



# Chinese Medicine to Allay Anxiety

by Shoshanna Katzman

Chinese medicine is an excellent treatment for anxiety, a condition that is highly common as a result of today's fast paced, high-pressure society. According to Chinese medicine, anxiety is derived from a disharmony within either one or a combination of the heart, kidney, spleen and liver organ systems. Chinese medicine treatments such as acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, combined with the exercises of

qigong or tai chi are excellent options for restoring balance, peace, and harmony when anxiety has become an issue. These treatment approaches are appropriately directed to rebalance the energetics of the particular organ systems involved to restore calm and balance to the body, mind, and spirit. In general, they work by opening flow of qi (vital energy) and blood where it is stuck or stagnant, and strengthen flow where there is deficiency. These

ancient treatments for health and wellness also serve to allay anxiety by forging a stronger connection between the physical and energetic components of the body.

The heart energetic system is related to anxiety because it stores the shen or spirit and governs all emotions of the body. The kidney system is involved because it includes the adrenals, which have to do with "fight or flight" response. Moreover, the kidney is responsible for controlling energetics of the heart, decreases existence of fear, and is the "root energy" of the body serving to keep the energy of all vital organs strong and balanced. The spleen system is important because of its role in governing digestion and decreasing the chance for accumulation of phlegm and excessive worry, which are both directly related to anxiety. Lastly, the liver system is a key in treatment to eliminate anxiety because it opens up the free flow of qi and blood throughout the body and reduces excessive anger; both root causes of anxiety symptoms due to stagnation of the qi of the liver.

In the cases of anxiety due to kidney and heart, acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine would be provided to strengthen the energetics of the kidney, while simultaneously calming the heart and nurturing spirit. The practices of qigong and tai chi are also helpful to bring an individual back to a centered and calm state of being. This is achieved through activating qi and blood flow, calming heart and spirit, as well as establishing proper function of the parasympathetic nervous system. The following qigong exercise can be done on a daily basis to help deal with prevention of anxiety, and can also be used during an episode.

*Sit comfortably on a chair with your feet placed flat on the floor, back straight, shoulders relaxed, and head erect as if there is a golden thread reaching from the crown of your head up through the ceiling upward into the sky above. Place both hands on your abdomen two inches below belly button over what is called your lower dantian, or "sea of energy." Keep your eyes relaxed but open and concentrate on your lower dantian as you take*



*three slow, gentle, and rhythmical deep breaths. Upon inhalation expand your belly, upon exhalation contract your belly – as if you are inflating and deflating a big balloon. Rest for a few moments and then repeat two more times, for a total of 9 complete breaths. Next place both hands over the centerline of your chest between your nipples, an area called your middle dantian or "sea of tranquility." Concentrate your mind on your middle dantian and take three deep breaths as before, take a few moments of rest, and then repeat two more times, for a total of 9 complete breaths. Recite a positive affirmation composed of assuring words, such as "I am*

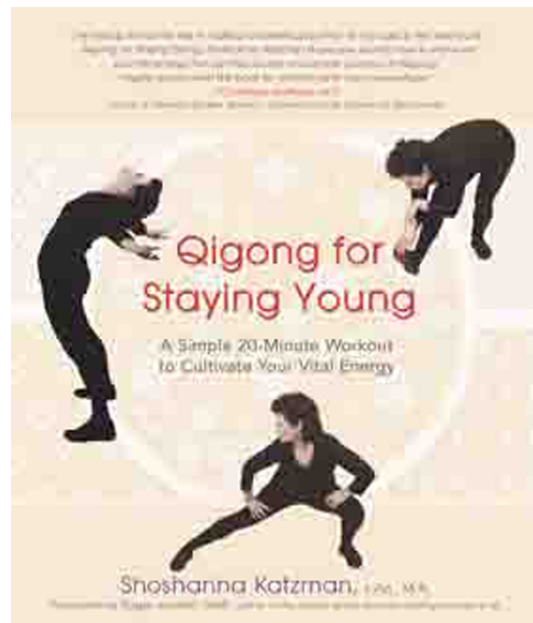
*safe, centered, and secure." When complete, sit quietly and reflect on your feelings.*

This qigong exercise balances the kidney and heart organ systems to center, calm, and integrate the body. Placing one's hand over the "sea of tranquility" calms energy of the heart, which is said to "house the mind." This leads to an easing of both anxiety and the mental distress of depression. Placing one's hand over the "sea of energy" nourishes the energy of the kidneys. The emotion of the kidneys is fear, which is at the root of many anxiety attacks. Breathing into this area helps release fear from the body.

Sitting in a quiet space, centering, and utilizing this simple Chinese breathing technique and affirmation

is a gentle, yet powerful method for opening capacity for self-healing and bringing oneself back to center. Anxiety is a difficult and challenging experience, often coming quickly without control. Seeking help from Chinese medicine can make a difference in the frequency, duration, and intensity of anxiety. It brings the body back into balance, thereby establishing free flow of energy and healing. This may require a dual approach involving a combination of Western and Eastern medicine. Fortunately, the ancient paradigm of Chinese medicine offers numerous ways to align one's energy, thereby restoring a centered and peaceful existence. It is a distinct possibility that it can help, remember this while working toward the creation of a life filled with focus, joy, harmony, and inner peace.

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