



Gianni Crestani from Pixabay

Gentle Life-Enhancing Qigong

by Shoshanna Katzman



The practice of qigong optimizes energy to improve and maintain health and well-being. It is a gentle and slow-flowing form of exercise that can be practiced anywhere by anyone.

Qigong increases strength, flexibility, blood circulation and flow of lymph and synovial fluids. It promotes balance and stability along with proprioception which has to do with awareness about how one moves through

space. This practice will develop intuitive capacity and peace of mind, while enlivening spirit, brightening mood and creating a more positive attitude.

Qigong benefits are achieved through movements that focus on regulation of body, breath and mind. As a system of Chinese exercise, qigong teaches one how to breathe in a slow, long and deep manner while calming and relaxing the body, mind and spirit. A practitioner learns to strengthen their mind intent through visualization and vocalization of sounds which enhance the healing process. Additionally, self-massage and self-acupressure techniques are integral aspects of qigong practice.

This ancient modality has a wide variety of forms with roots in Chinese medicine, philosophy and the martial arts dating back more than 2,000 years. Traditionally, it is considered to be a practice for building and balancing the flow of “qi” which is the vital or life energy pulsating throughout all living things. Sometimes translated as “the vapor of the finest matter,” the Chinese character for qi represents the steam that rises from a grain of cooking rice, symbolizing distilled essence.

A workout typically contains both dynamic and static protocols. The dynamic or moving meditation type requires slow stylized movement that works with enhancing “stillness within movement”. Whereas the static type leads a practitioner toward experiencing

“movement within stillness”. Both practice approaches involve deep diaphragmatic breathwork, calm mental focus along with visualizing and guiding qi within the body. This is precisely how Qigong develops and balances the internal (yin) and external (yang) aspects of being. According to Chinese medicine, achieving balance of these polar opposites is an essential component of achieving good health.

Millions of people practice this ancient exercise throughout the world for its overall self-healing and meditative benefits. There is also a segment of practitioners who engage in medical qigong described as a form of external practice that involves providing therapeutic treatments via transmission of qi to others. As such, forms are classified as either medical, martial, spiritual, intellectual or life-nourishing Qigong.

No matter what your health and fitness goals, qigong can help you achieve them in a balanced, gentle way. It is easy to learn, low impact and can be done outdoors or in the privacy of your home. Qigong classes are readily available in person or online. Just be sure that the teacher has been properly trained. There is a National Qigong Association (www.nqa.org) that can be checked out for teacher recommendations. The biggest challenge is taking that first step, but after engaging in qigong the first time you will naturally be drawn to turning it into a “life-long learning” endeavor.

Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S. has been director of Red Bank Acupuncture & Wellness Center in Shrewsbury, NJ for thirty-five years. She provides acupuncture and Chinese herbal consultation along with her associates Kelly Van Sickell and Heather Quinlivan. Shoshanna also offers classes through her Two Rivers Academy of Taiji & Qigong. She is author of “Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20-Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy”, co-author of “Feeling Light: The Holistic Solution to Permanent Weight Loss and Wellness” and soon to be released “Center of Power: Life Mastery through Taiji” which is a comprehensive online curriculum with over 130 videos. For more information call or text 732.758.1800 or email info@healing4u.com.