

Yang Sheng: Nourishing Life

by Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S



...Yang Sheng means “to nurture or nourish life.”

Yang Sheng is an ancient paradigm containing ways for nourishing one’s life with right living habits. Its primary goal is to live in accord with the laws of nature and achieve harmony of mind, body and spirit. It is a paradigm that has been at the core of Taoist tradition and Chinese medicine for centuries.

Yang is translated as “nourishing or nurturing,” sheng as “life or health” and together Yang Sheng means “to nurture or nourish life.” Some of the oldest classic works on this subject are found within texts dating back to the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE. In addition, its precepts are delineated within The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine, which has been the fundamental source for Chinese medicine for more than two thousand years. A key to manifest-

ing Yang Sheng is to maintain balance throughout the physical, mental, psychological, emotional, energetic and spiritual aspects of being.

The primary focus of nourishing life through Yang Sheng is to maintain balance through awareness of one’s connection to nature, their body and their spirit. It also carries the important message that “prevention is better than cure.” Living one’s life according to these principles takes concerted effort in terms of nutrition, exercise, work, sleep, sexual practices and relaxation regimes. Getting ample sleep and rest is a good place to start in this regard. As is making sure to laugh and making time for doing fun things. Engaging in daily meditation or writing in a journal is another way to nurture one’s heart and spirit. Additional ways



to nourish life include cultivating oneself with qigong and/or tai chi as well as various methods of acupressure, yoga, mindfulness training and/or breathing techniques to keep energy flowing freely, thereby strengthening the whole of the body to avoid unnecessary pain and dysfunction.

Another core belief is to re-balance and strengthen one’s vitality and thus longevity through holistic healthcare practices. Seeking help from an acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine providers is recommended in Yang Sheng as a way to maintain balance and maximize qi (vital energy) flow throughout the body’s meridian system. Both of these methods are centered around preventative measures to maintain health and wellness, rather than seeking help as a last resort.

Getting back to nature is another essential component for nourishing life. This means engaging in a good hike, taking a leisurely walk in the neighborhood, getting one’s hands dirty while gardening as you begin to grow herbs and vegetables for daily use. Practicing tai chi, qigong or yoga outside is another perfect way to commune with nature. Another suggestion is to get more involved with learning about food preparation by picking up a book about organic foods or learning more about vegan and/or vegetarian cuisine and cooking methods. This serves to establish healthy habits that brings one more into the present moment to cultivate and bring increased harmony into their life.

There is a multitude of ways that one can choose to nourish life through the art of

Yang Sheng. This begins with mulling over what makes one’s heart sing and make a plan to get it started. It is up to each person to be proactive in taking charge of their self-healing and self-nurturance. This includes becoming more engaged with experiences that make one feel good and more connected to themselves. Take these small steps to make big changes in your life and smile all the way to the bank – your personal bank that is, one filled with vibrant energy, good thoughts and a tranquil spirit.

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