



Energize

YOUR SPARK OF LIFE

by Shoshanna Katzman

Sufficient energy flowing through the body keeps the spirit bright and makes life's challenges easier to handle on a day-to-day basis. Having enough energy is a precious commodity, one especially appreciated when lost. This energy that is vital to life is called qi (pronounced 'chee') and is the force that activates and nourishes every function and structure of the body. When qi is flowing freely vibrant health is the result. This is the cornerstone of Chinese medicine treatments and practices which are designed to open blockages of energy and/or strengthen flow of qi when deficient.

The primary organ system traditionally chosen by Chinese medicine practitioners to be treated in such cases is the kidneys, which are the "spark of life" and root energy of vital organs. They are in charge of storing qi of the bones and marrow, as well as jing which is a vital essence necessary for good health. The kidneys are considered to be one of the most important vital organs in Chinese medicine. In fact, a passage from the Chinese Classic states that "whenever we treat a disease, we must approach at the base." In this case, the base refers to the kidneys as the root energy

of the body. As such, there exist many treatments and recommendations to protect and maintain the integrity and health of the kidneys.

An easy method for self-cultivation of kidney energy is through a simple breathing technique known as "belly breathing." It is most effective when done naturally - without forcing, holding, or constricting the breath. Best when practiced daily, belly breathing nourishes the vital forces of kidney jing and activates 'life gate fire.' It is also an excellent method for centering and stress reduction.

How to do Belly Breathing:

Sit up straight on a chair with your feet resting flat on the floor. Keep your eyes looking downward, without closing your eyelids. Place your hands for the duration of this exercise on your belly 1 ½ inches below the naval - your energetic center of healing power. Keep your mouth closed and tongue resting gently on the roof of your mouth. To begin: inhale through your nose as your belly expands, and exhale through your nose as your belly draws inward. Expand your belly forward, while simultaneously breathing into your lower back. While doing so, concentrate your mind on

the expansion and contraction of your belly as it opens up the flow of energy within this area. Do three deep breaths, then rest, three more deep breaths, then rest, and then three more deep breaths - for a total of 9 breaths. Take a moment to feel any sensations that may arise as a result of this exercise.

There are numerous other ways to build kidney energy. This includes avoidance of cold, raw foods and cold drinks especially with ice. It is essential to keep your lower back covered and warm to protect it from cold wind or air. Each of these recommendations is based on the Chinese medicine belief that "cold injures the kidneys." These lifestyle suggestions are especially important during the cold, winter months as this is the season associated with the kidney meridian. These methods are also recommended to alleviate low back pain, which is said to stem from energetic deficiency of the kidneys.

To reinvigorate the fire energy of the kidney for added spark, practice the "Kidney Rub for Life" every morning upon awakening. This is an easy exercise to warm your kidneys involves making fists with your hands and circling them over your kidneys until they create friction. This exercise can be done every morning upon awakening for approximately 3-5 minutes. It is helpful to minimize levels of stress due to its negative impact on the kidney health. And be sure to not over indulge in sexual activity, work, or exercise - as each drains energy from the kidneys.

The number one rule for sparking the energy of life is to keep kidney energy strong in whatever way possible. A key component for a healthy body, mind and spirit involves keeping the kidney energy flowing, strong, and balanced. The overall goal is to protect and nourish the kidney energy to ensure a long, healthy and willful life.

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