

## Medical *Qi Gong* - The Heart Shen

By David Twicken, DOM, LAc

The *Ling Shui* is the Han dynasty classic on acupuncture. *Ling Shui* can be translated as the spiritual axis or spiritual compass. As a compass, it can identify a current location and reveal the way to a destination. This classic book presents a model for understanding existing health conditions, as well as offering directions and guidance to find health, longevity and spiritual realization. Chapter 54 of the *Ling Shu*: The Allotted Year of Human's Life, offers advice on the meaning of spirit (shen). *Qi Bo* states "when one's blood and energy are complete and harmonized, when nourishing and protective *qi* are complete and penetrating, when the five viscera are complete and matured, the spirit *qi* is sheltered in the heart and mind, the animal spirit and human soul complete the organs, the person is complete." Blood, nourishing *qi* and the animal spirit are Yin. *Qi*, *Wei Qi* and the human soul are Yang. The heart and mind are Yang and the organs are Yin. A meaning of this description of spirit is: when Yin and Yang are in harmony, vital substances, organs and emotions are in harmony, and the body and spirit are unified. This unification can lead to an insight. When we are in balance and harmony within ourselves, and with the world around us, our body and spirit naturally unify and we become a living expression of spirit.

The *Ling Shu* presents numerous ways we can become imbalanced and lose the harmony that is part of our intrinsic nature. The *Mawangdui* texts, the oldest Chinese medical texts, contain *Dao Yin* exercises. *Dao Yin* is the original name for the modern practice *Qi Gong*. The ancient Chinese from the *Zhou* dynasty knew the value of movement and breath work. This body of healing knowledge is part of medical *Qi Gong*. The healing sounds are one of the oldest medical *Qi Gong* practices.

Chinese culture is one of the most diverse in the world. It contains numerous philosophies, religions and spiritual traditions. There are a variety of viewpoints and insights about the meaning and the function of Shen. There are two inter-related understandings of Shen. One insight is the Shen is the sole spirit. Another insight is the five shen. The five shen are five aspects of one's Shen. In chapter 5 of the *Sun Wen*: The

*Manifestation of Yin and Yang from the Macrocosm to the Microcosm*, the five shen are introduced. The chapter introduces that the Yin organs house the five shen. It describes the functions and emotions related to each shen. The long tradition of medical *Qi Gong* includes a deep understanding of emotions and how they influence health. The heart shen corresponds to the heart organ and it rules mental and creative functions. The favorable emotions include joy and love and the unfavorable emotions include hastiness, impatience, arrogance, cruelty and hatred. The *Ling Shu*, *Su Wen* and medical *Qi Gong* traditions offer ways to release unfavorable emotions. A classical acupuncture strategy is to treat the Luo channels. The method is to bleed the Luo points and channels. Blood letting, plum blossom and *gua sha* are methods to treat the Luo channels. The central idea is to release blood from the body, which releases emotions stored in the blood. The healing sounds and a Luo treatment have a similar goal: to release emotions.

The early Chinese medical practitioners perceived that emotions are stored in the blood. The heart makes and circulates blood. When unfavorable emotions are held in the body they go into the blood and the heart, which circulates them throughout the body. As the emotions/blood are circulated into the muscles, organs, bones and brain, they saturate those areas with their emotional quality. If these emotions continue each day, the blood and body are charged with the emotions and they become that quality. If this emotion charged condition continues, over time this condition enters into the yuan level and can become our constitution. This condition at the yuan level will require more work to transform it. Understanding this process provides a way to change our emotional condition and reverse the process.

There are two major aspects to the healing sounds practice. The first aspect is to release unfavorable emotions and excesses. The second aspect is to allow the natural virtue of the organ and shen to manifest and unfold. Releasing unfavorable emotion(s) and excesses creates space for the unfolding, providing the opportunity for the natural virtues and emotional qualities to be felt. With continual practice these qualities will enter the blood and circulate in the same pattern throughout the body as the unfavorable emotions, energizing and nourishing the areas with these natural, favorable virtues and emotions. This process allows us to manage our emotional state, as well as providing the opportunity to take action to change and transform our life.

Medical *Qi Gong* is a powerful way to treat shen conditions. Unlike the practice of acupuncture, it is practical to perform medical *Qi Gong* daily. A medical prescription of daily *Qi Gong* can include practicing a few times each day. Continual practice has a powerful influence on a person's health and well-being.

The healing sounds can be traced back to early historic times. One of the most famous and influential Chinese medical and *Qi Gong* practitioners is *Tao Hongjing*. He lived during the southern and northern dynasty, estimated to be from 456-536 A.D. He is known for writing the classic and foundation herb book: *The Divine Farmer's Materia Medica*. He is well known for continuing the *San Ching Taoist* tradition and is famous for promoting the healing sounds as a medical *Qi Gong*. The previous articles written on the healing sounds include the lungs-large intestine, kidneys-bladder and the liver-gallbladder. The heart and small intestine healing sound is now introduced.

### **Fire Correspondences**

The color of the heart is red, its shape is a triangle or pyramid, the direction is the south, the planet is mars, the taste is bitter, and the element is fire. The sound is haw.

### **The Inhale**

Take a long, slow, gentle inhale from your lower tan tien, which is your lower belly. As you inhale bring your hands in front of your chest in the prayer posture. This is a triangle or pyramid shape.

### **The Exhale**

Perform a long and slow exhale making the "haw" sound. As you exhale, extend your hands out toward the sides of your body. Let the energy flow out of *Lao Gong*, Pericardium 8. Extend your arms about 90 percent of full extension. A way to increase the effectiveness of releasing specific emotions is to repeat one or more of the following words: hastiness, impatience, arrogance, cruelty or hatred, as you exhale.

Stay relaxed while inhaling and exhaling. Do not create any tension in your body during this *Qi Gong*.

When you have finished exhaling, cover your heart with your hands. Place your intention in your heart and smile. If you prefer, repeat "joy" and "love" silently to yourself as you smile into your heart. Continue smiling to the organ for a few minutes until you feel the joy and love.

### **Medical Aspects of Respiration**

Exhaling is the reducing method. It releases the unfavorable emotion. It also releases heart heat and fire and assists in the smooth flow in the channel and organ. It cools the heart. The rest period is the reinforcing method. When we place our hands over the organ, our *Qi* flows there to bring *Qi* to the area to nourish and

tonify/reinforce the organ.

The heart healing sound has a strong influence on emotions and the spirit. It is essential to clear heart heat and unfavorable emotions from influencing the heart. The heart healing sounds is a practical and effective way to harmonize the heart and allow the virtues of joy and love to be naturally expressed in our daily life.

In this next article the Spleen, Stomach and Yi Healing Sound is presented.

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