

Medical *Qi Gong*: The Spleen Healing Sounds

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The roots of Chinese medicine are found in the *Zhou* dynasty (1045-221BCE). It is in the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods, within the *Zhou* Dynasty, that the framework for the practice of Chinese medicine was developed. The natural school, consisting of cosmology, Yin-Yang and the five phases developed during that time. Wen Wang, the founder of the *Zhou* dynasty, created the basic structure of the *I Ching*. Wen's son, *Wu Wang*, continued his father's work on the *I Ching*. Confucius made major contributions to the classic work.

From the *Zhou* dynasty to the Han dynasty, Yin-Yang, the five phases and a sophisticated system of correspondences was added to the *I Ching*. The Ten Wings, which are commentaries on the *I Ching*, contain many insights about the eight trigrams and the hexagrams.

The eighth wing contains one of the most comprehensive presentations of universal correspondences with the eight trigrams. The eighth wing has many relationships to Chinese medicine. It is a must read for all students of the Chinese healing and divination arts. In the Han dynasty, the medical classics the *Su Wen* and the *Ling Shu* were written. These two books are a collection of medical, lifestyle and cosmological knowledge and experiences from an unknown origin. These classics contain the body of knowledge that is the basis of medical *Qi Gong*.

A major model in Chinese philosophy and medicine is post-natal and pre-natal. Post-natal influences include our lifestyle: nutrition, emotions and exercise. The spleen and stomach are the earth element, and are involved in post-natal processes and influences.

In Chinese philosophy, the Earth is considered the center, and it has the function of transformation. It transforms in many ways. For example, in the Chinese calendar there are twelve months that are represented by the twelve terrestrial branches (twelve animals).

During each of the four seasons, the month that flows from one season to the next season is an Earth branch month. For instance, February is the month of the tiger, which is Yang wood. March is the month of the rabbit, which is Yin wood. The month of April is the dragon, which is Earth. The dragon is the transformation energy from the spring and wood, to the summer and fire.

Each of the four seasons ends with an Earth branch (animal): April is the dragon, July is the sheep, October is the dog, and January is the ox. These are the four Earth branches (animals) and relate to spring, summer, fall and winter.

The five phases correspond to the human body in many ways. One way is with the sensory organs, which relate to the five spirits. The five spirits have different meanings depending on the tradition and its view of life. From a *Su Wen* and *Ling Shu* perspective, the five spirits can be viewed as the natural virtues, feelings, emotions and experiences of life. How we manage these aspects of life influences the condition of the five spirits and their correspondences in the body. The nose corresponds to metal, the lungs and the *po* spirit. The ears correspond with water, the kidneys and the *zhi* spirit. The eyes correspond to wood, the liver and the *hun* spirit. The heart corresponds to fire, the tongue and heart *shen* spirit. And the spleen corresponds with earth, the mouth and the *yi* spirit. The mouth takes in food and drink and transforms it into nutritive substances. The condition of the spleen and the stomach directly influences that transformation process. Transforming food and drink is the physical transformation. The earth organs, the spleen and stomach, also are involved in the psycho-emotional transformation process. Just like all food and drink goes into the mouth, all experiences in life are processed by the *yi*. The *yi* processes our life experiences. It organizes, categorizes, filters and makes sense of our experiences. In the same way the condition of the spleen and the stomach determine the quality of the nutrition processed from digesting food, the condition of the *yi* is instrumental in the processing of our experiences in life and our emotional well being.

The condition of our *yi*, which includes the way we perceive, experience and process life, influences the *hun*, *po*, *zhi* and *shen*. The *yi* includes our thinking and opinions about people and life. If the *yi* is in an imbalanced or unhealthy state, all the five spirits and their correspondences are influenced. The *yi*, as the transformer, processes our experiences. The *yi* includes the intellect and thoughts. When these qualities are over developed, the other aspects of our body, mind and spirit become imbalanced. When the *yi* is imbalanced, we become rigid, narrow and respond to life in a conditioned way. We respond to life based on past experiences and understandings of life. Often the past understanding is rooted in fear, anger, misunderstandings and prejudice. These influences create a conditioned response. The *yi* is susceptible to

fixed, rigid and repetitive patterns and reactions based on past experiences.

Three classic Chinese philosophy and medical books: the *I Ching*, the *Su Wen* and the *Ling Shu*, are books that emphasize learning to live in harmony with change is essential to health and vitality. The *yi* needs to understand change. When our *yi* understands the changing nature of life is essential to health and vitality, it can process our life experiences by letting go of what we do not need in life and retain what is beneficial. This letting go is essential to health and vitality.

The spleen "holds" blood in the vessels. And blood stores emotions. This link is essential in understanding how the *yi* "holds" experiences and emotions. On both a physical and psycho-emotional level, the *yi* can hold. When we hold emotions that should be let go, they become part of our conditioned response to life. Living in harmony with change allows us to live in a spontaneous way. Being spontaneous allows us to live in the present moment, which allows us to be in tune with natural rhythms and cycles of life. Learning to let go of experiences and emotions that are not necessary is essential in maintaining a healthy body and mind. When we hold on to experiences and emotions that are unfavorable, we become them. Our *Qi* and blood, and in the long-term our *Jing*, is infused with them and they become our constitution. This process is part of the spleen's and *yi*'s capacity to hold.

Qi Gong is a natural way to balance the internal organs to obtain their normal functioning. The balance can occur on physical and psycho-emotional levels. The six healing sounds are one of the most practical and effective medical *Qi Gong* to restore emotional balance. When the spleen, stomach and *yi* are in balance, they act to filter and process life experiences in a healthy way. When we hold unfavorable or unnecessary experiences in our body, they can enter any of the acupuncture channel systems: sinew, connecting, primary, divergent and eight extraordinary channels, and influence their functions. Understanding this dynamic reveals the depth and range of the influence of unfavorable emotions and experiences.

The six healing sounds (*Liu Zi Jue*) have a long history in China. Some of the most famous Chinese medical physicians encouraged practicing the healing sounds. For example, the legendary *Ge Hong* (283-343) wrote about it in the classic *Qi Gong* book: the *Baopuzi*. *Tao Hongjing* (456-536) was a key person in the development of *Shangqing* (Highest Clarity) school of Taoism; he promoted the practice of the healing sounds. And the extraordinary Tang dynasty physician, *Sun Si-Miao* (estimated 581-682), is well known for teaching and prescribing the healing sounds.



Figure 1 There are many variations to the healing sounds. The

healing sounds presented in this series is a comprehensive system, which integrates many correspondences, including a body posture, sound, color, and unfavorable and favorable emotions. Chapter 5 of the *Su Wen*, presents that the five spirits are stored in the five yin organs. The condition of these spirits directly influences the organs and their functions. The condition of the organs also influences the five spirits. The basic method of the healing sounds is to exhale the old *Qi* and inhale the new *Qi*. This basic understanding was presented by one of the most significant Taoists, *Zhuang Zi*, in the Warring States period.

The healing sounds clear heat in the channels and organs, cool the organ and body, release unfavorable emotions and allow the natural virtues to be expressed. The spleen, stomach and the *yi* correspond to the yellow color, the center position, the planet Saturn, the mouth and the sweet taste. The unfavorable emotions and activities are worry, obsessiveness, repetitive thinking, lamenting and pensiveness. The favorable actions and emotions include openness, receptiveness and fairness. Openness means being open to the spontaneity of life. It is not how you feel life should be, or how you feel it must be, but living in the natural reality of the present moment. This is living in the Dao.



Figure 2 The spleen and stomach *yi* sound is *Hoooooo*. The process for

performing the healing sounds is a long, gentle inhale, and a long, gentle exhale. Begin by sitting in a chair, your back should be straight and relax your body. Open your eyes and slowly inhale, and bring your hands out to the sides of your body by moving them in a circle, gently bring them to the spleen and stomach area. Place your fingers on your abdomen (see figure 1). Time your inhale to be complete as your hands touch the abdomen. As you exhale, gently move your body a little forward and tuck your middle abdomen in very gently. Make the *Hoooo* sound as you exhale. You can just make the sound. You can also name and exhale the unfavorable emotion(s) if they exist. After the exhale, gently move into the beginning position. The next stage is to place your hands over the abdomen or on your thighs, smile into the abdomen and breath softly and gently (see figure 2). Keep your intention (your focus) in the stomach, spleen and abdomen. The exhale is the releasing stage. It releases heat, gas and the unfavorable emotions. The rest stage is the reinforcing stage; it tonifies the organ and allows the natural virtue of the organ/*yi* to unfold.

The healing sounds are a safe, natural way to transform unfavorable emotions, release heat, detox the body and cool the body. They also tonify the internal organs and allow the natural virtues to unfold. In the Chinese and Taoist model of the three treasures: *Jing*/Physical, *Qi*/Energy and *Shen*/Spirit, each person can be focused more in one of these aspects of life. If one is stuck in *Jing*, or the physical aspect of life, the physical becomes a predominant focus. The healing sounds can allow one to realize they are not fundamentally their physical body and their emotions. The healing sounds begin a process of becoming more aware of the *Qi* and *Shen* aspects of their life. As these aspects of life become the focus of the *yi*, a balance is achieved among the three treasures. This balance is the foundation of health, happiness and vitality.

Medical *Qi Gong* can be practiced alone or used along with acupuncture and herbal medicine. Combining these natural healing methods creates a powerful healing synergy. The healing sounds are a gift from the insights of the early Chinese healers.

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