ROOTS & BRANCHES
5 ELEMENT QI GONG

When our life force, known as “qi”, flows smoothly, it supports our health and well-being, and opens us up to the unity of all things.

In classical Chinese thought, “qi” is a force so powerful it holds the universe together, our solar system, our very bodies. When it is blocked or stagnant, instead of freely circulating, or when it is exhausted, illness and problems of life can arise.

For thousands of years, the practice of both qi gong and tai chi, done on a daily basis have been seen as having the power to keep our life force strong and healthy. As “qi” means life force, energy breath, “gong” means dedicated practice.

Roots and Branches can be practiced as individual moves by themselves or in various combinations. Classes can be taken both individually and in a series, whatever way best fits your life. Even a single class offers valuable material that can be remembered and practiced on your own. The first three moves, contained in this handout, are part of every class, and fortiy the Jing, or deepest energies of the body, and provide the foundation for the Five Elements, which energize and support our daily life. These three moves are said to be good for everyone. Roots and Branches works on specific energies and organ systems, as well as emotions and aspects of spirit which need strengthening, including will, self-determination, love and compassion.

The three moves in this handout are a very effective sequence done together upon waking. Within only 3-5 minutes each, we are ready to begin our day.

At the end of the day, these moves can help us prepare for a deep, restful sleep when done in the reverse order; even one or two minutes each can have a positive effect.

WATER: Wrist Fishing and Releasing Riding, Hakiing
WOOD: Spring Flowing, Dynamic-molding Liver, Gall Bladder
FIRE: Summer Warming, Internalizing Heart, Stomach
EARTH: Late Summer Nourishing, Clearing Lungs, Duodenum
METAL: Autumn Clearing, Letting Go Large, Governing

YIN YANG BREATH

Everything in nature has a cycle of action and rest; a rhythm of yang activity and yin rest and restoration. We see this in rapid rhythms like seeing and blinking, like waves breaking and then pulling back on the shore, and in longer cycles of day and night, summer and winter, life and death.

One way of attempting to grasp the ungraspable TAO, is to understand it through this rhythm of yin and yang. And in us, yin and yang are always present in the breath.

The Yin-Yang Breath can be done to wake in the morning and to calm the emotions during the day or to re-energize, and to relax at night.

As you exhale from the top of your lungs to the bottom, the diaphragm relaxes and draws down. An imagined thread from the heavens, arms raised. Breathe in slowly through the nose, your half closed, tongue on the roof of mouth; focus on the fan ten.

As your lungs are filled to the top, the rising yang cycle reaches its peak, and your fingertips extend outward.

As your hands come to rest, either on a cushion or pillow; then relax, fingers pointing down. The end of yin, resting, letting go. Now the yang, the intake, can begin again. Continue for 9 breaths to have a positive effect, and up to 20 minutes to affect the deepest (jing energy) as the breath moves the energy through the biggest channels of yin and yang in the body.

TAI CHI BREATH

In this posture, quiet the body, mind and heart, allowing your focus to rest in your fan ten, or center, about 4 finger widths below the navel, and a similar distance within. Imagine the fan ten as a point of light.

Begin by standing shoulder width, outside of the feet parallel, as if standing on railroad tracks. The feet are relaxed and open, the knees are bent, never straight. This allows for better circulation in the legs. Feel a need of energy from the heavens to the top of your head holding you straight, and relax the spine down from there.

Bring your arms up into a big generous circle, hands lightly crossing at the center, right hand outside, across from the heart. The wrists touch very lightly. Keep the circle big and round, shoulders and arms relaxed, as though hugging a tree. If your arms grow very tired at first, relax them even more, then release them down for a moment and bring them back up.

The chin tucks lightly in and down to create a stretch at the back of the neck. The eyes are half-closed, focused on the horizon. The tip of the tongue lightly touches the roof of the mouth, completing an important energy circuit.

Focus in the fan ten as a point of light. Inhale deeply and slowly through the nose into the bottom of lungs, then the middle, then the top, feeling the cool air enter. Exhale slowly, top to bottom, feeling warm air leave. Feel the fan ten draw the diaphragm down, pulling in breath. Gently draw the mind back to the fan ten and breath if it becomes distracted.

Under the photo is an ancient meditation that brings us into awareness of the vast incomprehensible TAO.

ROOTS & BRANCHES 5 ELEMENT QI GONG 2-DVD Set

The Roots and Branches 5 Element Qi Gong DVDs cover the first level of roots and branches, including the deep breathing moves, and a posture, walk and massage for each element's sections on principles, and how to practice, all photographed in beautiful natural environments. 2-DVD Set 295

THE TAI CHI FOUNDATION

The Tai Chi Foundation was founded by Professor Patrick Watson and Pat German, M.A., in 1978 to train teachers and develop courses and apprenticeships in Tai Chi, related Chinese Arts, and Five Element Philosophy. The Tai Chi Foundation has a European partner in the Stichting School of Tai Chi Chuan, both are nonprofit, and have over 100 active teachers around the world.

The Foundation offers summer intensive trainings in Vermont and Europe which include certified and accredited teacher and practitioner trainings in Tai Chi and Roots and Branches Qi Gong.

FOR INFORMATION ON:
- Classes in your area
- Summer Intensives
- Roots and Branches DVDs
- Copies of this handout

THE TAI CHI FOUNDATION
www.TaiChiFoundation.org