



Linda's T'ai Chi Weekly Handout August 16, 2020

What is Qigong?

Qigong (energy breathing) is a gentle exercise that is composed of movements that are typically repeated, strengthening and stretching the body, increasing fluid movement (blood, synovial, and lymph), enhancing balance and proprioception, and improving the awareness of how the body moves through space. If you need a reminder, proprioception is the sense of self-movement and body position. This is essential to fall prevention.

There are number of synovial joints in the body and T'ai Chi uses many of them- the ball and socket of the shoulder that we rotate when we perform "rowing the boat in the middle of the lake" (Shibashi); the elbow as we circle round the elbow, and the wrist as we make small circles with the wrist (embrace the peacock's tail; slant flying, separating wild horse's mane to name a few.) Synovial fluid is the viscous substance that lubricates these joints by reducing friction. This is a very important function and by performing circle round the elbow and circle round the shoulder, we can keep this fluid healthy.

Much of the history of qigong and T'ai Chi is based on stories that have been passed from one generation to another, mythology, tradition, Master teachers, and literature. The origins of qigong are estimated at 1150. The oldest documented form of qigong is called Ba Duan Jin or the Eight Pieces of Brocade dating to around 1300.

Qigong is easier to learn than T'ai Chi but the challenge in performing Qigong is on your ability to focus, moving slowly, deeply breathing, continuity of movements and motion, softness and stance. That is the difficult part. Ultimately, the goal of qigong is to improve life.

There are 3 types of Qigong: Medical qigong (healing), meditative and martial arts. T'ai Chi is the martial arts form of qigong.

I teach a few qigong postures and routines as a meditative practice. These can be performed standing or seated:

- Five Animal Frolic
- The Five Treasures
- Eight Pieces of Brocade
- Shibashi (a qigong practice based on Yang style T'ai Chi)

The five animal frolic consists of the Tiger, the Bear, Monkey plucking peaches, the Deer and the Crane. This is a fun series of postures to imitate each of the animals.

The five treasures consist of ocean breathing, earth breathing or drawing up earth, gathering starlight, opening the heart and drawing down heaven.

Eight pieces of Brocade is comprised of holding up heaven, drawing the bow and shooting the arrow, owl looks behind, penetrating heaven and earth, punching with 2 fists, wagging the tail, brushing heaven and earth and bouncing on the toes.

As you can tell from the names, qigong like its marital arts cousin, T'ai Chi employs the spirit of creativity and connects our mind, body and spirit through imagery of nature and the natural world.

I do integrate Qigong practices into the T'ai Chi classes but if you want to learn the entire routines, here is where you can find them:

Tuesday Shibashi 3 PM: Five Animal Frolic

Thursday Chair T'ai Chi at 2:45 PM: Five Animal Frolic and The Five Treasures.

I will begin to teach the Eight Pieces of Brocade in these Shibashi Classes in September.

Enjoy and Peace,

Linda

