

Harnessing the Healing Energy of the Universe

The natural world pulses with the cycles of manifesting and changing energy: Winter trees awaken in Spring, blossom to the full green of Summer, only to retreat into Autumn and the slumber of Winter. The ebb and flow is a continuous process of becoming and decay. As far back as 5,000 years ago in China, this cycle of surging and then dwindling energy was recognized as the self-correcting and harmonizing dance of yin and yang. Within the turning of the year, for example, the Yin of Winter yields to the awakening Yang of Spring and then the full Yang of Summer, which dwindles into the awakening Yin of Fall and the full Yin of Winter again. This process is what is known as the Tao, which literally means the Way, and might be understood as the universal principle that the forms of all things are in a state of perpetual motion and change. As stated in the *Tao Te Ching*, “The great Tao flows everywhere. All things are born from it” (Chapter 34). The Tao is the force behind all things in the universe and in the self, and all things are subject to the always turning round of yin and yang.

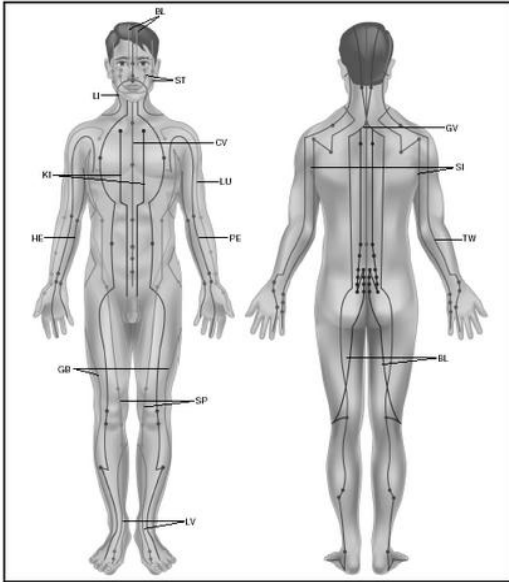
Since the Tao is present in all things, the principle of yin and yang informs all aspects of life including health and well-being. Traditional Chinese Medicine regards the internal and external processes of the body as having yin and yang attributes, and overall health is an extension of the harmony of the body. Disease and illness are imbalances that affect the energy (or Chi) that streams through the body. To maintain health, harmony must be sustained; and to treat sickness is to bring the body back into alignment.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM, for short) developed a number of practices such as herbs, acupuncture, moxibustion, Chi Healing, and Chi Kung (or qigong) that correct and realign Chi (energy). The basic principles embody the essence of the Tao: since

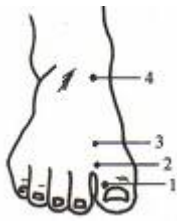
everything has yin and yang attributes, some with more of one than the other, that relationship can be realigned in order to promote health. For example, the kidneys are Yin organs affiliated with the Water element, and the adrenals, which are perched on top of the kidneys, are Yang with Fire element qualities. When the two are out of balance (Fire/Yang overwhelms Water/Yin, for example), a number of issues occur, but the most common is lower back pain. To re-establish harmony, Ginseng might be prescribed to boost Yin (water) and realign the relationship. The basic TCM principle is that yin balances yang and yang balances yin. Whereas herbs, acupuncture, and moxibustion is based upon the use of outside catalysts (the herbs, needles, or heat) to correct disharmonies within the body, the individual can heal him or herself by directing Chi through specific physical movements and mental focus. As a Chinese sage once remarked, “the Yi [the conscious mind] leads the Chi,” which proposes that the energy of the body follows the intentional mind. In essence, Chi, the energy that pervades all things, can be cultivated and focused, and with proper guidance and training, an individual can direct that flow for healing purposes. To do such self-healing, though, one must have an understanding of the pathways of energy in the body.

The Fundamentals of Traditional Chinese Medicine

The body is made up of numerous meridians—the pathways of Chi—that create a system not unlike the series of streets, roads, and highways that connect all points on a map. The major 14 meridians, which connect all of the organs of the body, are the crux of the acupuncture chart with its paths that correspond to yin and yang organs: Lung, Kidney, Large Intestine, Spleen, Gallbladder, Triple Warmer, Heart, Bladder, Stomach, Small Intestine, Heart Governor, and Liver.



If there is a blockage along the meridian, or if there is an excess of Chi, an imbalance occurs that affects the organ and manifests as a specific symptom. For example, an imbalance along the Liver meridian may manifest as an ankle problem (LV 4)



or at the eyes (where the internal path of the Liver ends). Whereas Western medicine tends to focus upon the site of the physical symptom, TCM concentrates upon the root of the problem, which may manifest in one spot, but is the result of an imbalance that may be physiological, psychological, and/or emotional. The treatment, in other words, must address the connection of the body, mind, and spirit in order to maintain overall health.

In addition to the meridians, the body is comprised of eight psychic channels—the pathways of energy that intersect with the meridians and are absolutely vital to healing. The Chi of the body courses through both the meridians and the Eight Psychic channels:

- Tu Mo: Governing (Back of Torso)

- Jen Mo: Conception (Front of Torso)
- Tai Mo: Girdle (Waist)
- Ch'uen Mo: Thrusting (Spine)
- Yang Yu Wei Mo: Arm (Yang on Outside of Arm)
- Yin Yu Wei Mo: Arm (Yin on Inside of Arm)
- Yang Chiao Mo: Leg (Yang on Outside of Leg)
- Yin Chiao Mo: Leg (Yin on Inside of Leg)

The energy of the body naturally courses through these channels, but a deepened mind awareness of these 8 channels enables the individual to generate and direct Chi in order to bring the body back into harmony. While the meridians can be regulated through physical practice (acupressure and acupuncture, for example), the psychic channels require the individual to cultivate mental acuity and the honing of the intentional mind, known as the Yi.

Healing through the Meridians and the 8 Channels

To work with both the meridians and the psychic channels, Taoists and Buddhists in Ancient China developed Chi Kung (or qigong) exercises that train both the body and mind and which have the capacity to help promote healing. Chi Kung exercises coordinate physical movements with diaphragmatic breathing and have been used for thousands of years to illuminate internal processes in order to locate and correct imbalances. These exercises unite meditation techniques with physical exercise, and while there are thousands of such exercises, one of the oldest and most beneficial self-healing sets is the ancient Taoist technique known as the Lesser Heavenly Circulation, which trains the individual to cultivate Chi and focus awareness to direct that Chi throughout the body.

The Lesser Heavenly Circulation is very accessible and its coordinated physical movement, breath work, and Chi work embody the essence of all Chi Kung practices.

To begin the exercise, stand in a relaxed position with the feet shoulder-width apart, the knees slightly bent, and with the hands resting at ones sides. With the inhalation, raise the hands up the front of the body to shoulder height and then draw them back towards the shoulders. Simultaneously, the legs straighten as the hands are raised. With the exhalation, the hands travel back down the body along the sides as the knees bend, thereby returning to the starting position. The mind concentrates on leading the Chi up the body—from the Du Qi (see below), about one inch below the navel, to the solar plexus, Shan Zhong—as the hands travel up to shoulder height and then back towards the shoulders. As the hands descend the sides, the Chi is directed down to the tailbone (Hui Yin) with the exhalation.



The entire exercise is repeated until one feels the warmth of the energy increasing with the hand movements and the breath.

In coordination with the mind leading the Chi, the muscles are used as pumps (arms are raised and lowered and the bending and straightening of the legs) to increase circulation. The coordination of breath and movement is the basis of therapeutic and medical Chi Kung wherein movements done in conjunction with the breath bend, stretch, and massage a specific organ. The muscle movement isolates an area of the body, thereby increasing the current of Chi to that spot. This principle of body and Chi movement was documented in the second century by the famous Chinese physician, Hua Tuo, who developed the Five Animals Frolic Chi Kung set, one of the first medical Chi Kung sets, which forms the foundation of contemporary medical and therapeutic Chi Kung practices that are used to address a range of illnesses and diseases. Each of the animals corresponds to a pair of yin and yang organs, which the physical movements affect:

Animal	Yang Organ	Yin Organ
Tiger	Gall Bladder	Liver
Monkey	Sm Intestine	Heart
Bear	Stomach	Spleen
Bird	L. Intestine	Lung
Deer	Bladder	Kidney

Hua Tou's discovery was profound, and his influence is evident in nearly all therapeutic and medical Chi Kung exercises including Soaring Crane Chi Kung, which is used in cancer treatment; Zi Ping Wang's Therapeutic Chi Kung, which remedies Hypertension, High Blood Pressure, and Migraines; and other Chi Kung sets have proved beneficial in treating diabetes, asthma, cardio-pulmonary disease, allergies, depression, anxiety, arthritis, and more.

Hua Tuo's principles are also the cornerstone of The Lesser Heavenly Circulation, which opens the primary energy gates (the eight psychic channels) to allow the Chi to accumulate and flow throughout the entire body. The effect is akin to rain running into

a pond: as the pond fills, the flow of the water increases from the pond and into the tributaries and streams that pour into other bodies of water. Similarly, the cultivation of Chi catalyzes a current of energy that invigorates the body and mind, harmonizes the organs, and fuels the body as a whole.

The Lesser Heavenly Circulation lends itself to rapid Chi generation and the simple body movements facilitate the circulation of Chi through the eight channels. The exercise is extremely beneficial by itself, but it can be incorporated into the practice of Chi Healing—the directing of Chi through one of the primary energy gates of the body, the palms of the hands. Chi flows in and out of the body through the five gates—the Bubbling Wells (balls of the feet), Heaven’s Cap (top of the head), and Heaven’s Valley (the palms of the hands)—but the gates in the hands are the most vital. To perform Chi Healing, first repeat the movements of the Lesser Heavenly Circulation until the hands tingle or feel warm. Then bring the hands to a problem area—the site of arthritic pain, for example, or to an organ—in order to concentrate the Chi. The laying of hands creates a bio-feedback loop that stabilizes and corrects energy imbalances.

The directing of Chi through the hands is the foundation of Chi Healing, a precursor to Reiki. A person can practice upon oneself, but for maximum benefit, one should use a trained practitioner since he or she is extremely adept at sensing another person’s energy and then melding his or her own Chi to create a harmonious and complete circuit. With one person laying hands upon the other, the two people form a Yin-Yang circle, with each person completing half of the whole. Both are working toward a sense of balance both within and with each other. The image of the two people in accord with one another embodies the Tao. In essence, energy healing practices extend beyond oneself; and to commit to healing oneself is to recognize the potential of peace, wholeness, and equanimity in the world.

The Explicit Harmony of Healing

From the Taoist standpoint, health depends upon attention to the whole self with all of its emotional, psychological, social, and physiological complexities. When the self turns its attention to maintaining equilibrium, then the individual experiences what Lao Tzu describes as the serenity of total harmony:

In harmony with the Tao,
The sky is clear and spacious,
The earth is solid and full,
All creatures flourish together,
Content with the way they are,
Endlessly repeating themselves,
Endlessly renewed. (Chapter 39)

The ultimate act of harmony and renewal is a state of peace and equanimity, and Lao Tzu's imagery of clarity, grounding, peace, and renewal conjures up images of the meditative mind. Not surprisingly, the origins of such Chi exercises and the Internal Arts practices of Chi Kung and T'ai Chi have their sources in Taoist and Buddhist Temples in China as the pathways for reaching a state of equilibrium and peace. For both the Taoists and the Buddhists, enlightenment is the ultimate manifestation of "good health"—a transcendent and unified state of mind, body, and spirit. And while our goal may not be an enlightened mind, these exercises produce greater vitality and health—both of which are necessary ingredients for the pursuit of a life of richness, depth, and value both in ourselves and in the world of which we are a part.