

Qigong
Daily
365 big
ideas to
transform
your Qigong
and your life
Marcus Santer

Daily Qigong

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Qigong And Your Life

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January 1st – What Is Qigong?

Qigong is the art of deliberately managing your vital energy. Think of vital energy as the ‘stuff’ that keeps you alive and all of the functions of your body doing what they should be doing.

Qigong is deceptively simple – but don’t let looks fool you. There is far more to Qigong than what you can see.

With a history of 1000’s of years you’d be right in thinking there are many different schools and styles of Qigong. So don’t get caught up in the ‘my style of qigong is better than yours’ type conversations, I used to do that and they are a waste of time.

Remember that regardless of what school you belong to, or what style of Qigong you practice there are 5 main reasons for practicing Qigong:

1. Health and vitality
2. Longevity
3. Internal force
4. Mind expansion
5. Spiritual cultivation

Quote: *“If you have energy you can handle just about anything”* – Anthony Robbins (Self Help Author and motivational speaker).

January 2nd – Qigong Is A process

We live in a society of instant gratification, instant meals, instant information, instant on demand TV, instant money – it's everywhere we look.

It's no wonder so many of us start practicing Qigong looking for instant solutions to our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual problems.

Problem is, Qigong is a process; it takes time to remove the blockages we've developed through years of poor posture, unhealthy lifestyle choices and the stresses and strains of modern life.

Improving health takes time, increasing vitality takes time, mental and spiritual cultivation takes time – there are no immediate solutions.

But the tools, principals, skills and practice of Qigong can lead us to the solutions that are right for us.

When we stop expecting immediate results, instant solutions we may come to realise that where we are today is exactly where we are meant to be.

Today's Reminder:

Qigong is not a 30-day miracle cure. It takes regular, daily practice – over time – to overcome illness, increase vitality, enhance the minds capabilities and cultivate the spirit.

January 3rd – The 3 Requirements For Success

The 3 requirements for success in Qigong (and pretty much everything) are:

1. **Method:** Research is important. You want to spend time finding the best method that claims to satisfy your aims and objectives.
2. **Master:** Next you want to find the best teacher of that method. This type of research can be hard and take time, but it's worth it.
3. **Student:** You are the 3rd and the most important requirement of them all. You can find the best method taught by the worlds greatest teacher, but if you don't apply and follow the instructions of your teacher then you're wasting your time, energy and money.

Today's Reminder:

Great teachers of Qigong are rare, but great students are even rarer still.

January 4th – Comparing Results

It's normal for us to want to compare the results of our Qigong practice with those of our friends. But there is a danger attached to this activity.

When I first started practicing Qigong, I was often jealous of the reports of my fellow practitioners. Such as cosmic experiences, visits by Bodhisattvas, being aware of spirits and receiving great wisdom from ancient masters.

But my practice was very unremarkable or spectacular. Or so I thought. And I nearly quit on a number of occasions as a result of comparing my practice results with those of others.

One day, completely unprompted, my wife commented on just how much nicer I was to be around these days. Calmer, more relaxed and less prone to outbursts of anger. I also realised that in the last 8 months or so, I couldn't remember having had a cough, cold or 'bug' of any description. This was almost a miracle because I was the kind of person who only had to look at someone with a cold and I'd have it by the next day.

You see, I'd been so busy focusing on the seeming grandeur of other peoples results that I'd completely failed to recognise or acknowledge my own achievements.

This taught me a valuable lesson – the only sensible comparison is with myself.

Today's Reminder:

You compare – you lose. Sure today you might be progressing better than the next person, but sooner or later you'll come out of a comparison worse. The best way to stop feeling that your Qigong practice is not good enough is to stop comparing altogether. Judge your practice by the benefits you get from it.

January 5th – No Such Thing As A Bad Emotion

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM theory underpins the effectiveness of Qigong) there are 5 main emotions, they are:

1. Joy
2. Sorrow
3. Fear
4. Worry
5. Anger

All emotions are necessary; the only problem comes when we hold onto them. For example, I may become angry when a driver dangerously ‘cuts me up’ in traffic. Or I may become fearful as my son moves too close to the edge of the pond whilst feeding the ducks.

And that’s fine.

But if I hold onto that anger, if I hold onto that fear – long after the ‘event’ has finished – then I can get into trouble.

Today's Reminder:

What ever happens during your day remember the true power you possess is how you react to it. Feel whatever you feel. If you feel angry, feel angry. If you feel sorrow, feel sorrow – and then let it go.

Quote: *“Holding onto Anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned” – Buddha.*

January 6th – A Quick Exercise

Make a fist – seriously, make a fist right now. Either hand it doesn't matter. Now squeeze it tight, tighter, go on even tighter still. Feel your whole arm tensing.

Now let go and relax.

Feel the difference?

Good.

Now, when you're entering a Qigong State of Mind (QSoM) you're aiming for this kind of contrast between pre QSoM and post QSoM – physically, emotionally and mentally.

I always ask my students to give themselves a score from 1 to 10.

Where 10 is: *“I'm so tense my body hurts”*

And 1 is: *“I think I'm going to melt”*

Then I ask them to see if they can lower that score by 1.

Next time you do your practice, give your QSoM a score from 1 to 10 and see if you can lower it by 1 notch.

Today's Reminder:

If you can't relax you can't do Qigong – it's that simple. And whilst many people practice Qigong to learn how to relax (*which is a great reason by the way*) – relaxing is only the tip of the Qigong benefits iceberg.

January 7th – How To Tell If Your Qigong Practice Is Correct

Here's a quick tip on how to make sure that your Qigong practice is correct. Simply answer this question:

Do you feel better at the end of your practice than you did before you started?

If 95+ times out of a hundred the answer to this question is 'Yes', then your practice is correct. Every now and then it is common for your Qigong practice to leave you emotionally upset, tired or just a little 'blurgh!' and this is most likely due to cleansing the meridians (*energy streams*) of the body.

However, if your Qigong practice regularly leaves you feeling worse than you did, or more tired at the end of it, then you're practicing incorrectly. The best course of action is to take a break from your practice and speak with your teacher.

From my experience the most common area where Qigong practitioners tend to over do it is when building internal force. Especially using *Zhan Zhaung* exercises like Golden Bridge.

Remember these advanced Qigong exercises are lessons in relaxing, not endurance.

January 8th – Qigong And Problems

Sometimes I think that because I have been practicing Qigong for a long time, I shouldn't have any more problems. When difficulties do arise, I feel something is wrong with me or with Qigong.

Through my practice I know that I can't fix anyone but myself and I challenge myself daily to seek a richer, more meaningful life. I'm bound to run into snags here and there. Sometimes, life just doesn't want to follow my plans. I still get overwhelmed and have days where I don't want to get out of bed.

At such times it helps me to remember that Qigong doesn't take away problems, but it does give me the courage and the insight to keep going in spite of them.

Today's Reminder:

In handling my difficulties, what is important is not how long I've been practicing Qigong, but how willing I am to implement the skills and tools I have available to me through my Qigong practice. While Qigong doesn't grant immunity from problems, it does offer a healthy way to deal with them.

Quote: *“Troubles are often the tools by which God fashions us for better things.”* – H.W.Beecher (1813 – 1887 Minister, author and lecturer).

January 9th – Journey To The West

Qigong, like many arts that have made the journey from East to West e.g. Yoga, Taijiquan, Kung Fu – has lost much of its original essence.

You could say that it has been ‘lost in translation’. And what we often end up with is an art that has an over emphasis on the external, visible forms.

Don’t get me wrong, forms are important, but they are the least important aspect of Qigong. It is the Energy and Mind aspects that make Qigong such a powerful tool for happiness, health and longevity.

Without these aspects Qigong becomes what the masters of the past would have politely called Qigong form. Whilst not without it’s merits, Qigong form only gives the benefits you’d associate with gentle exercise.

If you’re going to invest your precious, finite time practicing Qigong, make sure what you’re practicing is Qigong.

How can you tell?

The practice of Qigong brings good health, vitality, mental freshness and inner peace.

If you’ve been practicing Qigong for more than 6 months and are still unhealthy, lacking in energy, have fuzzy thinking and are buckling under the stresses and strains of modern life, then what you’re practicing is unlikely to be Qigong.

January 10th – The Door

When I learned Qigong my teacher lived 7000 miles away and spent nearly 9 months of each year travelling. So I'm sure you can imagine that my lessons were few and far between!

I invested £1,000's of pounds and travelled many 1000's of miles in the 9-year period I spent under his tutelage.

He showed me the techniques of Qigong, talked of and demonstrated the skills of Qigong. But I had to put in the effort to practice the techniques he showed me correctly and daily so as to acquire those skills.

As great a teacher as he was he couldn't do that for me.

If you're lucky enough to be able to attend weekly Qigong classes with a good teacher, you're seriously blessed. So take advantage of your good fortune. Practice daily and ask lots of questions in your lessons.

Don't be like those Qigong students who only practice once or twice a week in class. Because whilst you may get temporary benefits they're simply not powerful enough to overcome the daily stresses and strains of life in the 21st century.

You must practice Qigong daily to gain the benefits of Qigong.

"The teacher shows you the way, but you must walk through the door."

January 11th – Bad News...

I'm sorry, but today I've got some bad news for you.

Qigong is not a 30-day miracle cure.

If you want to get the benefits of Qigong:

1. Health and vitality
2. Longevity
3. Internal force
4. Mental freshness
5. Spiritual cultivation

Then you have practice Qigong every single day. And the more months and years you practice the better the benefits.

Most people do get some immediate benefits during their Qigong practice, like feeling calmer, more relaxed and focused. But for beginners, these benefits are soon lost when your session ends.

Only after months of daily practice will these benefits stay with you after you've finished your practice.

And if you are practicing Qigong to overcome a specific illness, then depending on the severity of the illness and how long you have had it – that will dictate how long it takes to recover from it. Depending on your skill level with Qigong it will normally take at least 3 to 6 months of daily practice before you notice a significant improvement.

The practice of Qigong on a daily, consistent basis requires discipline. But it also requires something more important and that is enjoyment. There is a reason why I encourage you to enjoy your practice. Because when you enjoy it, you can't wait to do it. And instead of it being a chore you have to force yourself to do, your practice becomes something you look forward to doing.

There's a **B—I—G** difference.

January 12th – Pain Is A Signal

In Qigong pain is a signal you are doing something wrong. There is no clearer message in Qigong than this. Unlike traditional forms of Western exercise where you are encouraged to ‘feel the burn’ and ‘push through the pain barrier’ Qigong is completely different.

It took me a long time to come to terms with this. In my teens I had enjoyed bodybuilding, triathlon, cycling, running – pushing myself daily, often to the point of injury. In fact when I used to work out with weights, if I didn’t feel completely exhausted and ready to drop then I didn’t feel I’d had a decent work out.

Eventually, I realised bringing this approach to my Qigong practice was completely wrong. I couldn’t understand how by being relaxed and gentle I could become strong, healthy and happy. It wasn’t until I understood some of the basic concepts of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) that I was able to make sense of this.

In a nutshell: Qi or energy flows through the meridians, or energy streams, of the human body. Blockages to the harmonious flow of Qi through the meridians results in illness. The severity of the blockage relates to the severity of the illness. If a blockage is serious enough to cause Qi flow to stop completely, death quickly follows.

By cleansing the blockages using Qigong we restore harmonious energy flow and have good health. As we continue our Qigong practice we increase the ‘vigour’ of the Qi flowing in the meridians and we have vitality. As we continue our Qigong practice we develop an abundance of energy and we have longevity.

Pain, tension, and stress are core contributors to blockages. If you bring a ‘no pain no gain’ attitude to your Qigong practice, there’s a very good chance you’ll make your health worse and not better.

Remember Qigong uses a completely different model of health and vitality than the traditional Western model.

January 13th – Shit Still Happens

Practicing Qigong does not make you immune from ‘shit’ happening to you. At least this has been my experience over the last decade.

Practicing Qigong has certainly improved my ability to respond appropriately when something bad happens. And it definitely takes a lot more to get me riled than before I began practicing Qigong.

I used to be a very angry young man.

Today I’d like to share with you a powerful tool I utilize, that combined with my Qigong practice improves my ability to move happily through life in the 21st century.

Every morning I write a list of 10 things I am grateful for. It’s that simple, yet incredibly powerful. This tool gives me a daily reminder of the things and people in my life that I am grateful for.

Take 3 minutes now to make a list of the 10 things or people that quickly come to mind that you are grateful for, for extra merit points write a short sentence that explains why you are grateful for that thing or person.

Here’s one of mine to help get you started.

“I am grateful for the train I am sat in, that allows me to travel from London to Devon in just over 3 hours and in such warmth and comfort that I can write this now.”

Try this exercise for a week and if it gives you value keep doing it. If it doesn’t don’t.

Quote: “If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, ‘thank you’ that would suffice.” – Meister Eckhart (Author and spiritual teacher).

January 14th – How To Be A Good Student

Recall that the 3 requirements for success with Qigong are the method, the teacher and the student. The most important requirement is you. Which is good news because it's the only one you have any control over.

Here's how to be a good student:

- 1) *Do what the teacher tells you* – If they tell you to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, do it. If they tell you to be relaxed and gentle, do it.
- 2) *Don't do what the teacher hasn't told you to do* – Did they tell you to put the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth? Did they tell you to visualise energy? Did they tell you to add that really funky Yoga technique to your Qigong practice? No. Don't try to be cleverer than your teacher, otherwise why bother to learn from them?
- 3) *Respect the teacher* – If you don't respect your teacher find another one.

There is one important caveat I would advise you to keep in mind though and that's to use your common sense.

If your teacher tells you that you should pay his high fee even if it means going into debt, or that you should have sex with them for your benefit – or anything suspect.

Then use your common sense and walk away.

Safety first!

January 15th – A Powerful Little Exercise

Here's a simple little exercise that is vitally important for your future.

Close your eyes and get as clear an image as you can of a man (if you're a man) or a woman (if you're a woman), in their 70's. And if you're in your 70's think of someone in their 90's. Really invest some effort with this.

- What do they look like?
- What do they wear?
- How do they move?
- How do they smell?
- When they talk, how do they sound?

Go on really get involved with this for the next 3 minutes and don't read on until you've done this exercise.

The Point of This Exercise: So how was that? Did you get a really good clear image, idea, feel for it? I want to tell you now that the image you formed is you at that age. It's a reflection on how you view a person of 70 (or 90). So did you like what you saw? If you did, congratulations.

If you didn't and I certainly didn't when I first did this exercise then listen up. When would now be a good time to change your ideas about what it means to be in the 'winter' of your days?

The daily, correct practice of Qigong can help you to live a happier, healthier and longer life. It is well documented as being a powerful tool for health, vitality and longevity. There is a reason why a literal translation of Qigong is 'Energy Work'.

Today's Reminder:

Perception is often more important than reality. Do some research of your own, contrary to popular, conventional western wisdom it is not compulsory to be weak, frail or feeble minded in old age. Change your perception now.

January 16th – What Can't Be Measured

Many of us have doubts about the effectiveness of our Qigong practice at some point or another. Especially in the beginning once the 'honeymoon' period is over.

This is natural.

When you learn to swim you can get into a swimming pool and swim. When you learn to drive you can get into a car and demonstrate that you can drive. When you practice Yoga you can see quite quickly that your flexibility is improving.

In most activities we have engaged in we can see or demonstrate tangibly the results of that activity.

But Qigong is different. It's not always easy to demonstrate the tangible results of our practice to ourselves. Especially when the results are gradual, it's easy to miss them altogether.

This is why I encourage you to keep measuring the results of your practice in a number of areas. It doesn't need to be complicated or grand, just a simple score from 1 to 10.

Here is a link to the tool <http://qigong15.com/progress-tracker.pdf> I use with my students to help them keep on track and be aware of the benefits that they are getting from their practice.

Today's Reminder:

Progress, results and benefits often come gradually with Qigong and are not always obvious like in many activities you have undertaken in the past. Accept that it is normal to have doubts about your practice and realise you can easily overcome such doubts by regularly recording and measuring your results.

January 17th – Not Just Air

When you breathe in, you are not just breathing in oxygen, carbon dioxide, Nitrogen, and a host of other gases. You are also breathing in Qi, in fact you are literally swimming through Qi. It is important to remember this, especially when doing your Qigong practice.

Why?

Well, take a look at where you practice your Qigong. Is it an area with lots of free flowing fresh air? Or is it in a centrally heated, double-glazed stuffy bedroom? Or is it near a cemetery? Or perhaps it's near the bins outside?

When you practice Qigong you want to do your best to make sure the environment you are practicing in is as fresh as possible. If you're practicing indoors then open the windows, if there is cemetery or power generator near by, you're going to have to find a better place to practice than your backyard.

Today's Reminder:

Where you practice your Qigong is important.

January 18th – Qigong Increases Your Luck

When you make a literal translation of the characters that make up the word ‘Luck’ in Chinese. You find that they can be translated as ‘Good circulation of Qi’.

So every time you practice your Qigong, you are literally improving your circulation of Qi (by removing blockages in the meridians) and therefore improving your luck!

January 19th – A Powerful Metaphor

Your life – literally – is a mirror image of the thoughts you regularly entertain in your mind.

Picture a camera. If the camera is used to take pictures of nature, of beauty, of wholesome occupation and pursuits – then what pictures does the camera produce?

Good, beautiful, wholesome pictures.

But if the same camera is used to take pictures of greed, of selfishness, of hate or fear then the pictures it produces are greedy, selfish, hate filled and fearful.

Now, think of the camera as a metaphor for your mind.

The practice of Qigong helps you to cultivate your mind. The benefits include mental clarity, increased creativity, strength of focus and peace of mind. We can speed up the acquisition of these benefits by maintaining awareness of what pictures we are taking with our mind during our daily lives.

Today's Reminder:

Your life is a reflection of the thoughts (pictures) you regularly entertain in your mind. Do you like what you see?

January 20th – Safety First

Where you practice Qigong is important. Ideally you want to be outdoors in a natural environment with lots of fresh air. Perhaps the perfect location for Qigong practice, from a Feng Shui perspective, is stood on a beach, with the sea in front of you and hills behind you.

But not all of us are fortunate enough to have such a location to practice in. So we do the best that we can. But always we keep in mind: *Safety First*.

Make sure that where you practice does not have any sudden drops or obstacles to fall over during energy flow.

Also make certain that your practice area is free of breakable objects. I once broke my wife's favourite tea cup during Energy flow and not only does that make maintaining a Qigong State of Mind impossible – it puts you in someone's bad books too!

If you're practicing outdoors give some thought to the other people around you. If you practice early in a morning then your most likely companions are going to be dog walkers and they're usually a friendly bunch. But use your common sense when practicing in public places and make sure you are safe.

Safety first is a most important principal for all areas of your life.

January 21st – Anyone Can Start A Race

But finishing it is a different matter! Many people start practicing Qigong with unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved in a short time. And as a result quit too soon.

In the short term, even after your first practice session, you should feel more relaxed yet alert and clear minded. But you'll notice that this feeling doesn't last for long and isn't strong enough to stand up to the constant stresses and strains of 21st Century life.

Qigong gives incredible benefits, but it takes time.

In our '*Instant*' obsessed culture it is easy to become fed up with your Qigong practice if you don't realise that it will take at least 3 months of daily practice before you can notice significant improvements in your physical health, vitality, clarity of mind and strength of character.

I know this isn't 'sexy' but it's important you know the truth.

Qigong is not a quick fix solution. It takes time to put down a solid, firm foundation upon which you can build the expectations you had for your Qigong when you first started out.

January 22nd – Poor Posture

Poor posture is one of the most common causes of physical blockages to harmonious energy flow through the energy streams/meridians of your body.

Being sat at a desk, sat in front of a computer, slumped in front of the TV – for hours at a time plays havoc with the smooth flow of energy in your body. If this happens once in a while, no need to worry.

But if it's your work, or your hobby, or your recreation time then there's a good chance you do this on a daily basis and the results can be painful.

The human body is designed to be used and one of the benefits of Qigong is that it can improve posture – often without you noticing.

If you have my book: 'Smiling From The Heart', you'll find the following Qigong techniques of benefit: 'Lift Arms Above Head' on page 115 and Emperor Walks Heart Opens on page 31.

If you don't have access to the book and your work involves lots of sitting, be certain to stretch every now and then, take walks during your breaks and be sure to check and correct your posture whenever you remember.

January 23rd – Flowing Breeze Swaying Willows

Energy Flow or ‘*Flowing Breeze Swaying Willows*’ is a vital part of your Qigong practice. Energy flow speeds up the removal of blockages from the energy steams/meridians of the body.

I was told that if someone is stamping their feet during Energy flow they are getting rid of toxins and that if they are shaking they are cleansing the tissues.

However your body moves, or does not move, during Energy flow remember that you are not moving your body. You don’t think:

‘*Oh, I’ll stamp my feet and that will help to get rid of toxins*’.

No, no.

During Energy flow you let go and do nothing. You let your energy/Qi do the healing.

Your job is to get you out of the way!

Quote: “*By doing nothing, everything is done*” – Lao Tzu

January 24th – Why Qigong is Brilliant

So what are we really dealing with here?

What is the cause of this physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual illness or problem we are experiencing? Is it an excess of Yin? Qi stagnation? Heat in the blood?

In a living body millions of different functions occur simultaneously. Each one has it's own ideal balance of yin and yang.

The great thing about practicing Qigong is we don't need to know where the problem is or what is causing the problem.

From the Qigong perspective there is only a problem of energy. Not diabetes, not cancer, not heart disease or asthma. It's a malfunction of energy. When we practice Qigong our aim is to generate Energy flow.

Qi has an intelligence all of its own. When left alone during Energy flow it will naturally flow to the areas of low energy. That's the purpose of Energy flow during our Qigong practice.

Do you have to concentrate or perform mental gymnastics to digest your food, to heal a cut or a bruise, to keep breathing when you go to sleep at night?

No, of course you don't. So afford Qi the same courtesy during Energy flow. Let go, do nothing, let everything be done for you.

There is a reason that Qigong was the preferred healing method of Emperors. They did not want to risk the dangers of being cut open, or risk being poisoned by a doctor with a grudge prescribing herbs.

Now you too can benefit from the brilliance of Qigong.

January 25th – Qigong Power

There is a common misconception amongst Qigong practitioners that you can become more powerful or energetic by adding Qi.

The truth is that cleansing will likely be more beneficial.

Imagine that you have 100 units of energy flowing through a meridian to an organ. But due to blockages in the meridian only 50 units of energy reach the organ.

Now imagine that through focusing on cleansing in your Qigong practice instead of building, you get rid of some of the blockage and now 75 units of energy are reaching the organ.

Think you might feel more powerful and energetic?

You betchya!

January 26th – Empty Vs. Real Illness

Western medicine has a great record of treating ‘*Solid*’ or real illnesses, where the cause of the illness is obvious. E.g. Bacterial attack.

Unfortunately western medicine is not so brilliant at treating ‘*Apparent*’ or empty illness. An empty illness is where the cause and/or symptoms are not clear, we cannot define the site of the illness and the cause, or site of the illness is not clear.

It is in the treatment of empty illness that Qigong really shines.

During Energy flow your Qi will naturally flow to areas of low energy, or blockages and do whatever work needs to be done to restore harmonious energy flow or health.

Qi does the work we don’t have to.

We just have to get out of the way so it can do the work!

January 27th – My Cup is Full...

There is a Zen story of a university professor who came to inquire about the philosophy of Zen. While Zen master Nan-In silently prepared tea, the professor expanded on his own beliefs at some length.

Nan-In began to pour tea into his visitor's cup and carried on pouring.

The cup overflowed, and still Nan-In poured, until the professor exclaimed:

"It's already full! No more will go in"

"Like this cup", explained Nan-In, "you are already full of your own speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

I love this Zen story.

I have Qigong students like this, and unless they can empty their cup – they are impossible to teach.

How's your cup?

January 28th – Qigong Enriches Your Life

We practice Qigong to make our life better, not to restrict it or take it over.

Take your practice seriously by all means; carve out your sacred, daily ‘*Me*’ time, but never at the expense of enjoying your life.

When I used to be heavily into marital arts, I remember speaking with a black belt who spent so much time practicing and practicing, that even though he’d got his black belt, he’d lost the relationship with his wife.

Each to their own, but I don’t think it was worth it.

Enjoy your Qigong practice, but don’t let it take over your life.

January 29th – Good Health Is Your Birth Right

Honestly.

If the cells, organs, muscles and systems of your body are working the way they are supposed to work you will not be sick.

Unfortunately due to the stresses and strains of 21st Century life many of us have come to think that it is natural to be unhealthy every now and then and experience pain and illness.

Pain or illness is a signal that some system or part of our body is not functioning the way it should do naturally.

Qigong can help you to restore health if you are experiencing illness and amazingly the same qigong exercises can help you to stay happy and healthy – AND – increase vitality, improve mental clarity and make you better at everything you do.

Remember, good health is your birth right.

January 30th – The Only Illness There Is...

When we apply yin/yang theory to health we use yin to represent our body's natural ability to respond appropriately to our constantly changing environment and yang to represent all the factors that may cause illness.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (*TCM*) there is only one illness and that illness is yin/yang disharmony. Or put another way it means our body has failed in its natural ability to respond appropriately to disease causing agents.

From the TCM view of medicine there is no such thing as an incurable disease. If we can restore the balance between Yin and Yang we will restore health.

Caveat: This does not mean that TCM can cure all illness! If an illness has been left untreated for too long it may not be possible to fully restore Yin Yang harmony.

The brilliance of Qigong is that we don't need to know the specifics of where this yin/yang harmony has failed. We just do our practice and let our Qi do the healing during Energy flow.

How does it do this?

Because, when left alone Qi will always flow to areas of low energy, or where the blockages are and then work to remove the blockage and hence restore yin/yang harmony.

January 31st – Don't...

“Don't have a heavy meal or a cold bath immediately before or after your Qigong practice. Neither should you be hungry nor stuffily uncomfortable. A heavy meal interferes with energy flow, while water vapour may enter your body through pores in your skin, which open up during Qigong practice.”

- Shaolin Chi Kung p.134

February 1st – More Than The Sum Of Its Parts

If someone who knows nothing about Qigong watches you doing your Qigong practice, they may conclude that what you are doing is some form of slow gentle exercise.

Based on their understanding they might conclude you are doing tai chi.

But you and I know Form is not the art of Qigong.

If we look at the 3 core skills of Qigong – we can see that Qigong is more than relaxing physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually which we do when we enter a Qigong State of Mind.

We can see that Qigong is more than flowing breeze swaying willows, which we do when we let go and let our Qi restore harmonious Energy flow through the meridians of the body.

We can also see that Qigong is more than meditation, which we do at the end of our practice to consolidate the work we have done.

Even when we put these 3 core skills together, which we do *every* time we practice, we receive so much more than the benefits of increased relaxation, restored harmonious energy flow and meditation.

I find it helpful to remind myself that Qigong is more than the sum of it's parts.

Personally, I consider it to be the greatest tool for personal evolution, in all its dimensions.

Wow!

Let's go practice.

February 2nd – It's Up To You

I've noticed there is a common belief that prevents many Qigong practitioners from realising the full benefit of their practice.

I always try to point out the error of this belief when I spot it and explain the damage it can cause. I like to get this one out in the open as quickly as possible in my classes.

Because when I finally rooted it out, I felt liberated, excited and strengthened and dug even deeper into my Qigong practice.

But letting go of this belief isn't sexy and it's too scary for some.

What is this common belief that proves to be such an obstacle to so many practitioners?

Put simply, it is the belief that your health and well-being is somebody else's responsibility.

There are many areas of your life where it is safe to abdicate responsibility, letting someone choose your weekly groceries and deliver them to you for example. But your health isn't one of them.

When you understand and accept that your health and well-being is your responsibility and nobody else's then the practice of Qigong simply makes so much sense.

Knowing the benefits it offers why wouldn't you practice it?

February 3rd – Meridians

I had to use a smaller font today as today's thought simply won't fit on a page at size 11. So, here's a quick recap on the meridians.

There are *12 primary meridians*, called primary because they flow through organs of the body and so are given the name of that organ. The primary meridians are in pairs so there're actually 24, but diagrams of the meridians usually only show 1 pair to avoid confusion.

There are *8 secondary meridians*. These are like energy grids and can be used as reservoirs to store energy.

The two most important meridians of the body are the ren meridian that runs from below the lower lip down the front of the body to just before the anus. And the du meridian which runs from the tip of the spine, up the spine over the top of the head and down the front of the face to just above the upper lip.

If you can bridge the 2 gaps between the ren and the du meridians and achieve a constant flow of Qi through them then you have achieved what is known as the breakthrough of the small universe. And the classics say you will never be ill again.

Having a continuous flow of energy through the 12 primary meridians is called the break through of the big universe. If you can achieve this it is said you will live 100 years.

We practice Qigong first to remove blockages to harmonious energy flow through the meridians of the body; this will give us good health. Then if we continue our practice, Qigong increases the flow of energy through the meridians, which gives us vitality. Finally Qigong develops an abundance of energy, which results in longevity.

There are many important 'points' along the meridians that can be stimulated by needles (*acupuncture*) or direct pressure (*Tuina*) to help influence the flow of energy through the meridians. For example stimulating Large Intestine 4 is known to bring relief from pain and nausea, but should never be done if you are pregnant.

Perhaps the most wonderful aspect of practicing Qigong is that we do not need to know in which meridian/s blockages have occurred that are preventing the harmonious flow of energy and have resulted in illness. Qi does the work for us, but only if we let it.

As Master Li Junfeng always says: "the Qi is smarter than you"

February 4th – The Biggest Qigong Secret Ever Told

Today I'm going to share with you the biggest Qigong secret ever told, a secret that Qigong practitioners through the generations have struggled to discover. And what is this secret? It's the answer to the question: 'What is the best Qigong exercise?'

I've waited this long to share it with you because I wanted to make sure you were worthy of hearing this secret...

Truth is, there is no secret as to what the best Qigong exercise in the world is. The best, the most powerful Qigong exercise in the world is the one that will allow you to live a happier, healthier and longer life.

And this changes as your practice develops.

If you're ill then the best Qigong exercise is the one that helps you to get well again.

If you're healthy then the best Qigong exercise is the one that helps you to increase your vitality, mental clarity and spirituality.

And so on. The key question you must answer to be able to discover the most powerful, the best, Qigong exercise for you is this:

“What do I want from my practice?”

Once you can answer this, choosing the best Qigong exercise/s becomes simply a matter of research. Discovering the best Qigong exercises that are known to fulfil your 'want' and then finding the best teacher of those Qigong exercises.

Quote: “The best Qigong exercise is the one that you practice daily”
– Jon Gage (member of the Cherokee Nation).

February 5th – Different Levels of Qigong

This is an extract from a report I wrote titled: *How Chi Kung Works*.
Note: Chi Kung is simply another way of writing Qigong.

You need to know what to look out for when choosing a Qigong/Chi Kung class because there are three levels of Chi Kung taught today:

1. **Low-level Chi Kung** – Is where only the form is practiced. Strictly speaking this is not even Chi Kung it's Chi Kung form. Unfortunately it is the level at which the vast majority of Chi Kung in the world is practiced today. The benefits you get are minimal and less effective than traditional Western exercises like swimming, running or working out in the gym. This level of Chi Kung will not help you to overcome pain and illness; it will not improve your health, increase your vitality, promote longevity, enhance mental clarity or give you glimpses of cosmic reality.
2. **Middle-level Chi Kung** – Is where a practitioner actively seeks to influence his Qi flow, by removing energy blockages and increasing energy flow. This is the minimum level you want to be practicing Chi Kung at if you wish to gain all of the benefits I mentioned earlier.
3. **High-level Chi Kung** – Is where the mind is used and has always been very rare. Here a practitioner enters into a higher state of consciousness called a “Chi Kung State of Mind” and is able to directly manipulate energy the way they want, such as tapping energy from the cosmos, channelling energy to various parts of their body or being able to transmit energy to people in other countries to speed up their healing.

February 6th – How To Live To 120

Our bodies were designed to last for 120 years and there are many references to back up this statement. My favourite is Dr Walter M Bortz of Stanford University, an expert on aging, who wrote in his book “Dare to be 100”:

“There is now a virtual consensus that the maximum human lifespan is around 120 years, or one million hours”

Our organs are very hardy and can continue to function sufficiently even when not in peak condition. For example the liver can have up to 80% of its energy blocked before signs of illness begin to manifest.

Even if energy to our internal organs is blocked, we may not show any signs of illness, but it is very likely that our vitality and resistance to illness will be affected.

Once you begin your Qigong practice you start the cleansing process.

Using your liver as an example, let’s say that it has been operating at 30% of its functional capacity (i.e. 70% of it’s energy is being blocked somewhere). You keep practicing and as you have no obvious illness you may wonder if your practice is actually giving you any benefits.

But gradually your liver moves to 40% then 50% of its maximum functional capacity. As you continue your practice so does the cleansing. When all your internal organs are operating at maximum functional capacity not only will you have great health, you’ll have abundant vitality and great resistance to illness as well.

A long and healthy life will be yours.

February 7th – The 4 Stages of Mastery In Qigong

As with much of the Qigong theory I share, this post relates not only to Qigong, but to almost any skill you might want to master in life. For example the title of this post could have been ‘The 4 Stages of Mastery in Lock Picking’. You’ll see what I mean as you read on.

Stage 1 – Unconscious Incompetence

At this stage you don’t know that you don’t know how to perform Qigong because you’ve never heard of it or practiced it.

Stage 2 – Conscious Incompetence

When you picked up your first book on Qigong, went to your first lesson, or saw Qigong being practiced you became aware that there was a lot you didn’t know.

Stage 3 – Conscious Competence

After a few weeks of practicing you begin to be able to practice Qigong, but you have to do a lot of thinking, and referring back to your lessons in order to do it correctly.

Stage 4 – Unconscious Competence

At this stage you start and finish your practice by moving so smoothly through each part of it, that you give it no thought whatsoever. You know that you are practicing Qigong because you are gaining the benefits of Qigong.

How quickly it takes you to move through these 4 stages depends on a number of factors. For example are you learning from a book, dvd or direct from a good Qigong teacher? Do you practice correctly, daily and consistently, or when you feel like it?

Quote: “If people knew how hard I worked to get my mastery, it wouldn’t seem so wonderful at all.” – Michelangelo (Italian Renaissance sculptor, painter, architect, poet and engineer).

February 8th Smile From Your Heart (*part1*)

Smiling from your heart plays an important role in entering what I call a ‘Qigong State of Mind’ (*QSoM for short*). You can think of it as a heightened state of consciousness.

Practicing Qigong without this QSoM will have an impact on the benefits you receive from your practice.

Smiling from the heart makes reference to the Chinese view of the heart, which is more than just a 4 chambered muscle that pumps oxygenated and de-oxygenated blood around the body.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine the Heart is considered the Emperor, because it is the supreme controller of all the functions of the body. It houses the ‘Shen’, spirit or mind.

Long story short, it’s vitally important!

Remember you don’t just have to practice Smiling from the Heart during your Qigong practice, I always advise my students to practice it EVERY time they remember to. Sat on the bus, washing the dishes, watching TV – whenever and wherever you’ll be glad you did as it is a powerful skill worth practicing.

Go on try it now. Don’t just keep it locked up until practice time!

February 9th – Spiritual Does Not Mean Religious

The practice of Qigong also brings with it spiritual insights. You can gain insight into universal reality that can confirm that there really is more to life than what appears through the senses.

But always remember that spiritual does not mean religious. A person of any religious faith can practice and receive the benefits of Qigong. Qigong is non-religious.

By spiritual I mean being in touch with who you really are, the deepest part of you. Everyone has a spiritual life, a spiritual journey. If you are involved in a specific religion then that might be spiritual for you.

If you're not religious then anything that gets you in touch with your inner self, e.g. quiet time, meditation, listening to music, reading books – might be spiritual for you.

Only you can define this part of your life, there are no right or wrong answers. I remember one of my students telling me that for her flying kites was a spiritual experience.

Our spirituality is so important to our health and well-being, but it is sadly the most often neglected. You can see this happening as spiritual illnesses increase at an alarming rate.

Perhaps the most common type of spiritual illness is depression. A person's spirit is literally locked up and pressed down.

Qigong is a powerful tool for overcoming spiritual illnesses like depression, and keeping them away for good. It is also a great guide to exploring your own spirituality.

Enjoy your practice...

February 10th – Internal Force; An Analogy

Developing Internal Force is one of the 5 main reasons people practice Chi Kung/Qigong. Think of Internal Force as Energy+.

It helps you to wake in a morning full of beans, work and play hard all day and still feel ‘alive’ in the evening.

Whilst Internal Force is usually associated with martial arts, it’s not just for martial artists.

Martial artists favour Internal force because it helps you to stay focused under pressure, make quick decisions, keeps the mind clear and allows you to spar for long periods of time.

Here’re 2 ways it can be specifically utilised in combat:

- 1) **Like a hosepipe used by the fire department.** When Qi fills the arm the arm is strong. Like an empty hosepipe vs. one filled with water. This type of Internal force is great for breaking bricks. It is the ‘hard’ aspect of Internal force.
- 2) **Like an electric wire.** This is the soft aspect of Internal Force. If you connect the wire and then turn on the electricity...Boom! This type of Internal force is great for disrupting an opponent’s energy flow.

It takes a lot skill, acquired through correct practice to perform these two types of Internal Force and they are best learned directly from a teacher who has these skills.

February 11th – The Dan Tian

You'll often hear a Qigong teacher making reference to the Dan Tian. For example: "Bring your attention to the Dan Tian..."

But what is it?

Dan Tian means 'elixir field' and refers to a point in a person's body where vital energy has accumulated into a field. Whilst Qigong practitioners can accumulate energy at many different places in the body, there are certain specific spots that are better than others.

The best place for storing energy is the Qi-hai (*sea of energy*) or the Guan-yuan (*gate of origin*). The Qi-hai point is about 2 inches below the belly button and the Guan-yuan is 3. Both are about 2 inches beneath the skin.

Note this inch is a biological inch, which is the distance between the first and second joint on your right index finger.

Other dan tian are the Bai-hui (*on the top of your head*), Tan Zhong (*located in the centre of the chest*), Hui-yin (*the part of the body called the perineum*), Ming men (*on the spine level with your belly button*), Ling tai (*on the spine further up*), Laogong (*centre of the palm*) and Yongquan (*gushing spring, located centre of the sole of the foot*).

Usually though, if the word Dan Tian is mentioned on it's own, reference is being made to the Qi-hai.

February 12th – Yin Yang Theory (*part 1*)

Yin Yang theory is a theory of relativity. Nothing is completely Yin or completely Yang and you cannot go into a shop and buy a bit of either because they are symbols.

At it's simplest something is either Yin or Yang when in relationship to something else. For example in a relationship between a boy and a girl, the boy is more Yang (*male*) compared with the girl who is more Yin (*female*). But if we take a different relationship, say between a boy and a man, the boy is more Yin compared with the man who is more Yang.

Yin and Yang can be used in all relationships e.g. front/back, night/day, slow/fast, chronic/acute etc.

Yin Yang theory is the foundation upon which the Chinese model of medicine is built.

In TCM we use Yin and Yang to describe contrasting characteristics that are relative to each other.

When we look at health we use Yin to represent our body's natural ability to respond to our constantly changing environment and Yang to represent anything that may cause illness.

That's enough for today.

Enjoy your practice.

February 13th – The Difference Between Aims And Objectives

If you want to get the best results from your Qigong practice in the quickest time, one of the most powerful exercises you can do is to get clear on what you want from your practice. I'm amazed at how many people come to Qigong with flimsy reasons for practicing Qigong.

When you're clear on what you want from your practice and why you want it, it's like putting 4 horses at the front of a carriage and shouting "Yahh!" When you're not clear it's like having 4 horses and putting one on each side of the carriage. You could end up anywhere!

I encourage all my Qigong students to have clear aims and objectives for their Qigong practice. Aims are long term. They usually take more than 6 months to attain and are general. The main aims of Qigong are:

- Health and vitality
- Longevity
- Internal force
- Mind Expansion
- Spiritual Cultivation

Objectives are specific and short term. Examples of objectives:

- Increase my understanding of how Qigong works by reading all the blog posts on Qigong15.com
- Learn and practice the best Qigong exercise for overcoming depression every day. Checking my progress regularly.

Give some thought to what your Aims and Objectives are for practicing Qigong. If in doubt speak to your teacher.

Quote: "The starting point of all achievement is definite knowledge of what one wants." – Andrew Carnegie 1835 – 1919 (Industrialist and philanthropist).

February 14th – Yin Yang Theory (part 2)

There's No Such Thing As An Incurable Disease!

Remember: with regards to health we use Yin to represent the natural ability of our body and mind to adjust to the constantly changing environment and the demands made upon it. Yang represents everything that may cause illness.

You are exposed to disease causing agents everyday. You overcome serious illness regularly without even being aware of it, there are millions of germs in your body and many of them are deadly but you don't get sick.

Why?

Because you have Yin Yang harmony.

Yin Yang disharmony (*illness*) happens when our body's natural ability to manage disease causing agents fails. Ultimately it is caused by disturbed energy flow.

Because good health is your birth-right, Yin Yang disharmony is unnatural and temporary. In the Chinese model of medicine there is no such thing as an incurable illness. Though this does not mean that it can cure all illness!

If the illness has been left untreated for too long and has caused much damage it may not be possible to restore balance fully.

But, if we can restore Yin/Yang harmony we will restore health.

Happy Valentines Day!

February 15th – Heart To Heart Transmission

One of the most important reasons for learning Qigong directly from a good teacher is to benefit from what is known as ‘Heart to Heart Transmission’.

In an art like Qigong it is often not enough to correctly follow clear and complete instructions, especially in advanced Qigong arts like Small Universe or Cosmos Palm.

Heart to heart transmission doesn’t just happen when student and teacher are face to face, it can happen when both are physically separated by great distance. Here are 3 common factors that allow heart to heart transmission to take place:

- 1) **Qigong State of Mind** – all heart to heart transmissions occur in a heightened state of mind where there is no thinking or reasoning but only being.
- 2) **Complete Trust** – doubt, arrogance, and lack of respect in a teacher block heart to heart transmission. But remember it is you that gives this trust to your teacher out of deep respect for your teacher, not because the teacher demands it. *Safety first.*
- 3) **Beyond Words** – to transfer skills and experience to the student at the level of energy and mind, the teacher must have these skills and experiences.

The highest level and best known of heart to heart transmissions is found in Zen. Buddha showed a kambara flow to a gathered assembly of followers. Only Kasyapa (*first patriarch of Indian Buddhism*) understood the teaching beyond words and attained instant enlightenment.

February 16th – The Two Most Important Words In Qigong

In Qigong the two most important words are *relaxed* and *gentle*.

Apply these two words to your Qigong and you can avoid deviations in your practice and get the results you want in the quickest time possible.

So remember:

*“Your movements are relaxed and gentle,
Your breathing is relaxed and gentle,
Your mind is relaxed and any thoughts are gentle.”*

February 17th – A Simple Technique To Calm The Mind

Here's a simple tip to calm the mind. But first you need to understand why is calming the mind is so important in Qigong.

Here's a quote:

“It only, and simply, takes a stilling and receptivity of the human mind to experience THAT WHICH IS because it is only the ACTIVITY of the human mind that is the SENSE of lack of THAT WHICH IS”. – Paul Gorman.

That's a pretty heavy quote, and I'd recommend you read it a few times to really grasp its message.

Here's the tip.

Sit or stand comfortably and symmetrically:

- 1) As you breathe in *say to yourself* the word 'One'.
- 2) As you breathe out *say to yourself* the word 'One'.
- 3) As you breathe in *say to yourself* the word 'Two'.
- 4) As you breathe out *say to yourself* the word 'Two'.

Continue this process until you reach the count of ten and when you get to ten, start again from one.

If you lose count, just start from one again, don't get hung up about it.

Start by practicing this for just 5 minutes at a time. If you enjoy it, g-r-a-d-u-a-l-l-y build up.

This technique uses '*One thought to overcome the 10 000 thoughts*' to still the mind and experience peace. I cannot stress the value of this simple tip.

But don't take my word for it, try it for yourself...

February 18th – Qigong is Not Just Cultivation of Energy

“Chi Kung is not just cultivation of energy. It is also cultivation of Jing and Shen. In other words when you practice Chi Kung not only do you cultivate energy but you also cultivate your physical body (Jing) and your mind (Shen). When we say:

‘Internally we train Jing, Chi and Shen’

We mean we improve our body, increase vital energy and promote our Spirit.”

Extract from page 18 of my book *Shaolin Chi Kung – 18 Exercises To Help You Live a Longer, Healthier and Happier Life.*

February 19th – Gratitude Didn't Work For Me...

I wasn't always able to make gratitude work for me, especially when I first started out on my spiritual journey. The act of sitting down and writing a list of 10 things I was grateful for and why, just didn't seem to do much for me.

So one day I sat down and made a list of 10 things I was fed up with, pissed off about, feeling sorry for, angry about etc.

This was a powerful exercise for me, because I rarely got to 10.

The simple act of getting these 'negative' thoughts and feelings out onto paper made me realise just how petty and small-minded I was being.

This realisation allowed me to let go and was very cathartic.

Feel free to take this technique for a spin.

February 20th – The Form Is Not The Art

I think the title says it all really.

Always remember that Qigong form is not the art of Qigong. Knowing this we can understand why ‘collecting’ new Qigong forms is a waste of time, if we do not have the art/skills of Qigong.

However, once you pick up and master the 3 cores skills of Qigong:

- 1) Qigong State of Mind
- 2) Energy Flow
- 3) Standing Zen

You can learn and benefit from new Qigong forms much quicker than most other practitioners.

Early in my Qigong ‘career’ I didn’t understand this and I spent too much time on learning new forms instead of acquiring skills.

Don’t make the same mistake as me.

February 21st – Smile From The Heart (*part 2*)

This Qigong technique is a vital tool for ‘relaxing spiritually’ – the 4th step in entering a QSoM. Whilst it is unwise (*especially in the beginning*) to practice Qigong skills and techniques in busy public places, I believe Smiling From The Heart is an exception to this rule.

Remember that when I say ‘Smile From Your Heart’ I don’t just mean the muscle in your chest that pumps blood around your body, I mean the Heart, mind, Spirit, Shen.

I like to practice Smiling from the Heart as often as I remember to, where ever I remember to.

Here’s a very simple way to practice it:

Let yourself smile from your heart

I agree, easier said then done. So here are a few more instructions if you need them.

Put a big cheesy grin on your face, or imagine a beautiful flower blossoming within. If it helps imagine the smile you’d feel looking at a beautiful sunset that really moves you with it’s magnificence, or the smile you would give to a child smiling at you. Then...

Let yourself smile from your heart

Feel vibrant, feel alive, and feel good.

And remember, practice makes perfect.

Enjoy your practice.

February 22nd – Qigong Meditation

Qigong and meditation go together like bread and butter, bees and honey, Laurel and Hardy.

One of the first skills we learn in Qigong is how to enter a Qigong State of Mind, also known as a higher state of consciousness. The ability to which you master this skill will have a great impact on the benefits you get from your Qigong practice.

We aim to maintain this QSoM throughout our practice and we consolidate our practice at the end by entering Zen or Standing Meditation.

Through Qigong we aim to cultivate *Jing* – our physical body, *Qi* – our energy and *Shen* – our mind. But if the mind is full of worries, thoughts, anxieties, you end up just doing Qigong form.

In the early days of my Qigong adventure, when my mind wasn't well trained, I often found it necessary to spend 5 minutes before my practice just quietly sitting, counting my breaths. Then I would proceed to do my Qigong practice.

Think of the mind as a deep, beautiful, clear, pure, Mountain Lake. As you look into the lake you can see a beautiful statue of you, perfect in every way. Healthy, abundant, energetic – alive!

Now realise that every thought is like throwing a rock into the lake, with each rock you make more and more ripples on the surface and before long you can no longer see the beautiful statue.

Heaven is here on Earth; it's just the waves of mind that obscure it from you and me.

February 23rd – Energy Blockages

Blockages to harmonious energy flow through the meridians of the body occur in 4 ways:

- 1) *Physical* – if you accidentally cut yourself or fall over this may cause a physical blockage to the flow of energy around your body. If the accident is severe enough to completely stop energy flow e.g. a car crash then death quickly follows.
- 2) *Emotional* – if you've been suffering from a lot of stress over a sustained period of time this will cause emotional blockages, other emotional factors to consider include regular and prolonged exposure to fear, anxiety and worry.
- 3) *Mental* – the main cause of mental blockages may seem a little odd at first. I know I found it hard to accept. But I know it to be true from direct experience. So here it is: Thinking *too much* is bad for your health.
- 4) *Spiritual* – the most obvious example of a spiritual blockage is depression. Depression crushes the human spirit and affects you physically, emotionally and mentally.

Of course blockages don't just occur in isolation. For example a bad accident won't just cause physical blockages, it may also cause emotional and mental blockages. Depression is well known to affect a persons health and overall well being.

I have split out these 4 definitions in order to aid understanding. When you practice Qigong, and enjoy Energy flow, your Qi will naturally flow to where it is needed most, you don't need to worry about it!

February 24th - Qigong Trouble Shooting Tips #1

Practicing Qigong is safer (*and more fun*) than crossing the road, but occasionally problems with practice can occur. Always bear in mind that if problems with your practice persist the best course of action is to stop your practice and seek the assistance of your teacher.

A common problem experienced by new Qigong practitioners is pain or discomfort. The solution usually lies in checking your posture at the location of the pain or discomfort.

Energy blockages can easily get located in areas of the body with poor posture – very common with the back.

Check how you're performing your Qigong exercises; there are many patterns where you are required to lean forwards or backwards. New students and those who learn from books or DVD's can, in their enthusiasm, easily over do it.

In Qigong pain is not a something you grit your teeth and push through. No, it is a signal that you are doing something wrong.

February 25th – The Difference Between Masters And Students

One of my first business mentors was a man called John Eggen, he told me a story about one of his mentors called Tom.

Tom and John were walking down the street when Tom asked:

“Do you know the difference between a master and a student?”

John thought for a while and replied:

“No I don’t”

Tom stopped walking, looked John square in the eye and said:

“John, the difference is that a student does less and less by doing more and more. But a master does more and more by doing less and less.”

For me the practice of Qigong is an example of how to do more and more by doing less and less.

I’d encourage you to think on this.

February 26th – Yes You Can

A question I often get from new students takes the form of:

“Now that I practice Qigong, can I still drink/party/smoke/make love/ etc”

There seems to be some assumption that if you practice Qigong then you also need to become a Monk and forsake all earthly pleasures.

I’m not a Monk, I’m a man of the world. I still have a duty to look after and provide for my son and be a good husband to my wife.

When my ‘work’ is done as a husband and a father, then I may consider becoming a Monk. But for now I continue to enjoy eating fine food, going out with friends and enjoying what the material world has to offer.

I always answer the students question by saying that if you could do and enjoy doing something *before* learning Qigong, then you will be able to do it and enjoy *after* learning Qigong. In fact you often enjoy it and do it even better than before.

Because Qigong practice cultivates Jing (*the physical body*), Qi (*the energetic*) and Shen (*Spirit/Mind*) it effectively makes you better at everything you do.

Enjoy your practice!

February 27th - On Breathing Out Through The Mouth

The full name for the type of Qigong I teach is Shaolin Cosmos Qigong, I teach it based on the core principals my teacher taught to me, and that his teacher taught to him and so on.

In this type of Qigong we encourage students to breathe in gently through the nose and out gently through the mouth when practicing Qigong and I'm often asked: Why?

This is my answer:

When we breathe in, we don't just breathe in air, we also breathe in Qi/Chi/Energy. And when we breathe out, we don't just breathe out air (*with less oxygen in it*), we also breathe out Qi. Usually negative Qi.

The term negative Qi is *relative*, in that it's negative to us, but to the trees it is positive.

One of the most effective ways of clearing blockages from the meridians of the body is by breathing out negative Qi. The most effective way to get rid of this negative Qi is by breathing out through the mouth.

This facilitates good energy flow – we breathe negative energy out through the mouth, and we breathe good energy in through the nose. A useful instruction to a new student is to imagine good energy flowing in as they breathe in through their nose and negative energy flowing out as they breathe out through their mouth.

Many people confuse energy flow with energy drain. Energy flow is natural and healthy. Natural because when we breathe Qi out, fresh Qi comes in. Energy drain is harmful – it is where Qi 'escapes' but there is no fresh Qi coming in. Energy Drain can be caused by over working, excessive sex and too much thinking.

Please practice Qigong the way you have been taught by your teacher. So if you have been instructed to breathe in and out through your nose, then be a good student and follow those instructions. There's more than one way to practice Qigong.

February 28th – The Emperor

In TCM terms the Heart is called the Emperor and when it is ‘open’ it benefits all the emotions. It also has the following functions:

- *It is the supreme controller of the systems of the body.*
- *When functioning well you feel at peace, but if it’s chaotic then you may well experience feeling out of control.*
- *The Heart governs the balance between the formation of blood and Qi. Strong Qi requires nourishment from the blood. Heart Qi keeps blood circulating, but overworking can deplete it.*
- *It controls the movement of blood in the vessels – the heart maintains the condition of the blood vessels and regulates blood flow.*
- *The Heart houses the Shen (Mind/Spirit) – it controls the way the brain thinks and feels.*
- *The Heart expresses its condition through the complexion and opens into the tongue. The colour and texture of the tongue, particularly its tip and the clarity of speech reflects the health of the Heart. The sense of taste is closely related to the Heart.*
- *Sleep is always related to the Heart. If you have lots of dreams it is likely your Heart energy is out of balance. Nightmares? Your Heart energy is VERY out of balance.*

The Pericardium is called ‘The Guard’ in TCM because it protects the Heart.

As you can see from this very brief look at the Heart you can see now why it is called the Emperor. You’ll also be pleased to learn that the easiest way to improve the functioning of the Heart is through the daily practice of Qigong.

February 29th – Every Day Is Special With Qigong

I've always liked leap years. The slotting in of an extra day in order to keep the man made calendar in time with nature's season's strikes me as funny.

A national radio station here in the UK has been asking listeners to call in and share what they plan to do on this special 'extra' day. From wedding proposals (*I proposed to my wife on a leap year*) to an agoraphobic committing to getting on a bus and everything in between.

Today is seen as a special day.

I feel the practice of Qigong has spoilt me though, because through it I get to experience every day of the year as special.

I get my day started with Qigong and when I've finished I open my eyes and the world looks more vibrant, more alive and I feel stronger, physically and in my Heart.

As a friend humbly reminded me yesterday, Qigong offers so much more than just personal healing. Because we are all 'invisibly' connected to one another when you practice Qigong those close to you benefit from your healing Energy flow too.

Today I offer deep and sincere gratitude to the teacher who set my feet on this marvellous Qigong adventure and to all those who have joined me.

Enjoy your practice.

March 1st – Emperor Walks Heart Opens

Poor posture is one of the most common causes of physical blockages and whether you're slumped over a desk, slobbering in front of the TV or walking around with poor posture it's easy for your chest area to collapse inwards.

Over a period of time this can result in the locking up of energy and closing of the heart.

Try this as a quick experiment...

Get an image of how a depressed person would stand and then adopt that position.

I'm guessing that you're now slumped over, looking at floor etc.

There's a saying that our physiology affects how we feel and I believe it to be true.

The solution is simple: *Emperor Walks Heart Opens* is a Qigong healing technique that you can use to help 'open the heart'.

Simply stand upright, put your hands behind you and clasp the fingers together. Stand upright and walk around. You'll feel your chest area is open and if you try this for 3 weeks, as often as you remember to.

I think you'll be pleasantly surprised with the results.

As a bonus, you can find video instructions for this important Qigong healing technique here:

<http://smilingfromtheheart.com/ewho/>

March 2nd – The Ultimate Purpose of Shaolin Qigong

Why did the Venerable Bodhidharma (*28th patriarch of Indian Buddhism, 1st patriarch of Zen/Chan*) teach the monks of the Shaolin Temple the 18 Lohan Hands and Sinew Metamorphosis?

You'll probably answer by saying that he found the monks too weak for the rigors of spiritual cultivation and you're partly right.

Later, the Shaolin 18 Lohan Hands evolved into the 18 Lohan Fists, which was the prototype of Shaolin Kung Fu, and Sinew Metamorphosis became Shaolin Qigong.

Today we tend to think that you practice Shaolin Kung Fu for health and self-defence and Shaolin Qigong for health and vitality.

Whilst you can certainly gain these benefits, remember that Bodhidharma didn't teach the Shaolin monks these skills so they could fight or to overcome illness – *but to help them attain enlightenment easier.*

Always remember that whilst Shaolin Qigong is a powerful tool for health and vitality, its ultimate purpose is for Spiritual Cultivation.

March 3rd – Different Types of Qigong

With a history of around 5000 years, is it any wonder that today there are so many different schools and styles of Qigong?

Different religious view points led to different schools of Qigong: Buddhist, Taoist, Confucianist.

Different needs led to different schools of Qigong: medical, scholar, warrior, monk.

There are so many different ways we could categorize the various schools and styles of Qigong in the world today. Personally I don't believe you have to be Buddhist or Taoist to benefit from these schools of Qigong.

But I do believe that you need to decide what you want to achieve from your Qigong practice, as this will help you to decide whether to focus on Qigong that is best for medical, scholar, warrior or monk purposes.

Personally I don't think there's any point cultivating Spiritually if you are full of illness.

However all of these different categories pale into insignificance when we consider the skill level of the practitioner. A Qigong master could practice what is considered a low-level medical Qigong exercise and derive more spiritual benefit than a new student practicing the Big Universe.

Remember: *the form is not the art of Qigong* – it's skills that are important.

March 4th – The 3 Hallmarks of Shaolin Qigong

There are 3 hallmarks by which we can judge if something is a genuine Shaolin Art. It should be:

- 1) Simple
- 2) Direct
- 3) Effective

If we take Shaolin Qigong as an example, the forms are simple, the breathing is simple and the mind is simply empty.

Shaolin Qigong practice is direct because it only takes 15 minutes to achieve what some other systems achieve in 60.

Shaolin Qigong is effective in that it can restore and maintain health, increase vitality, promote mental clarity and enhance spiritual cultivation.

Caveat: Just don't make the mistake of interpreting 'Simple' as meaning 'easy'!

March 5th – How Do You Start Your Day?

I'm a great believer that how you start the day has a *massive* impact on how that day turns out.

For example, which start to the day would you prefer?

a) *Get up 15 minutes before you need to, practice your Qigong and finish feeling relaxed, alert and energized.*

Or

b) *Get up 15 minutes late, run around like a headless chicken trying to find your keys, whilst getting dressed and eating your breakfast – all at the same time.*

Now be honest, which start do you usually experience?

Whilst getting up early and doing your Qigong practice is no guarantee that you'll have a perfect day, it certainly helps to stack the odds in your favour!

March 6th – The Hand Pump

I sometimes tell new students that practicing Qigong is a little like operating an old style manual hand water pump.

In the ‘good ole days’ before running water, it often took many strokes from the lever in order to get the water flowing. If the operator gave up too soon then the result was no water.

Qigong can be like this in the beginning. Whilst it is common to feel benefits like a sense of peace or relaxation from the very first session, it can take up to 3 months to start to see significant, sustainable improvements in health and vitality.

I believe it is important to be clear that Qigong is no ‘30 day miracle cure’ otherwise new students may have unrealistic expectations of what to expect from Qigong and as a result give up too soon, usually just before they’re about to see the results that they wanted in the first place!

The practice of Qigong requires commitment and discipline, no wonder it’s so unpopular here in the west.

But the results are worth the effort.

March 7th – Qigong Trouble Shooting Tips #2

If you're experiencing tiredness or muscular tension as a result of your Qigong practice then make sure that the way you perform your Qigong exercises is relaxed and gentle.

There should be no physical exertion in your Qigong practice.

If you're confident that your practice is relaxed and gentle then the next item to check is to make sure you're not over practicing.

Are you doing more than two sessions a day? Are you practicing for more than 15 minutes each session?

As strange as it may seem you can over do it with Qigong and too much can be more harmful than not enough.

March 8th - Frankenstein's Qigong Monster

Whether you've learned Qigong from me or another good Qigong teacher – follow the instructions you have been given. If your Qigong teacher tells you to breathe out through the nose, breathe out through the nose.

Remember Qigong has a long history and many different schools and styles – there is no *ONE-WAY* to get the results of Qigong. The worst thing you can do as a Qigong student is to cut and paste techniques from other schools and other styles. Actually, there is something worse you can do, you can take skills and techniques from other disciplines like yoga, tai chi, reiki, etc. and bolt them into your Qigong practice.

When you do this, whether you mean to or not, you're disrespecting your teacher. You are saying that you know better. If you know better then why are you learning from them in the first place?

Now I'm not saying don't practice other energy arts, or styles of Qigong, let's get clear on that. What I am saying is don't change what you've been taught.

For example, I've had a number of students who've ignored my instructions (*deliberately*) to breathe out through the mouth or to make sure that their movements are relaxed and gentle and have instead removed these items from their practice and substituted them for techniques from other systems – or even from their own thinking.

Are they still practicing the Qigong I taught them? No. Can I help them if they run into difficulties? Perhaps. But I am a master of what I teach, not what they are practicing.

Be a good student and avoid building Frankenstein's Qigong monster! If you practice more than one energy art, then keep them exclusive from one another.

March 9th – Qi Flow Vs. Qi Drain

There are a number of routes the body can use to eliminate the toxic waste (negative Qi) cleared by internal energy flow from the meridians. The mouth is one of the most important and efficient.

Now some of you may be thinking that letting Qi escape is a bad thing as it may make you weak. This simply isn't true. This view confuses Qi flow (good) with Qi drain (bad)

Qi Flow – *by breathing out through your mouth you allow negative Qi to flow out and it is replaced with fresh Qi. This is natural and healthy and occurs without you having to do anything apart from being relaxed and breathing out through your mouth.*

Qi Drain – *occurs when Qi escapes but no fresh Qi comes in to replace it. Examples of this are over-exertion (often through vigorous exercise), excessive sex, and obsessive thinking. All of these activities result in Qi drain and are to be avoided.*

- Extract from Shaolin Chi Kung – p.36

March 10th – How To Really Speed Up The Qigong Healing Process

I'd like to share this extract from Deepak Chopra M.D.'s book: Quantum Healing:

Let us say that a doctor takes a patient's X-ray and discovers a malignant tumour, then a year later another X-ray is taken and the same tumour shows up. The doctor is in fact not accurate in calling this the same cancer, because the cells that showed up the year before have been entirely replaced. What he is really seeing is the result of a memory that has persisted, reincarnating again and again in a new tumour.

Physical injuries clear naturally, but mental imprints may cause the injury to continue. Therefore it is vital when using Qigong to overcome illness that you remind yourself daily that your illness is getting better and better. This will help you to overwrite the mental imprint in your mind and allow your body to heal itself.

March 11th - It's You

Can you remember that feeling you get when you open your eyes after your Qigong practice and everything looks brighter, sharper, crisper and more alive?

The air smells better, your mind feels sharper, your body feels relaxed and strong. The world just seems like a better place.

Can you remember that sensation? Hopefully you've had it very recently, like during this mornings practice.

But what's happening? Has the world changed as a result of your practice?

No.

You've changed!

One of my favourite quotes comes from the French born American author Anais Nin is this:

"We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are."

When you've finished your Qigong practice you've done some cleansing of the 'doors of perception'. Let me wrap up today's entry by borrowing the words of William Blake:

*"If the doors of perception were cleansed
everything would appear to man as it is, infinite."*

March 12th – So Much Choice

How lucky are we that we have so many Qigong exercises to choose from? When I first started my Qigong practice I often found the choice overwhelming. I wanted to make sure I was investing my time wisely by doing the best Qigong Exercise possible.

But how do you choose?

When you look at the benefits to be had from the different exercises... it sometimes feels impossible to make a decision.

This is where clear aims and objectives for your practice can help.

For example if you're practicing Qigong to improve your martial arts then you're likely to want to focus on those exercises that work on Internal Force.

Or...

If you want to overcome a health problem then those Qigong exercises that promote Qi flow will be of more benefit to you.

Perhaps the best advice though is to practice those Qigong exercises that you enjoy the most. Those are the ones that will give you the best results in the long run. Better results than you'll get from forcing yourself to do an exercise you don't like.

This has been my experience.

March 13th – You’re In Control At All Times

I remember an amusing incident that occurred during one of the first events I organized for my Qigong teacher.

I was observing a class of around 70 students of varying experience enjoying Qi/Energy flow. Let’s just say it is a rather spectacular event. There were a number of what I call ‘Qi flow superstars’ in the group and watching them running, jumping, groaning, shouting etc. is very ‘interesting’. But most people were gently swaying and enjoying this aspect of their practice.

Then I noticed one student bolt for the fire exit at an amazing rate of knots. As the organizer of the event I decided to check and see if he was all right. I found him around the corner, clearly unhappy. I asked him what was the matter; I can still remember his reply to this day:

*“When people start behaving like that
I end up running for the medicine cabinet”*

I asked him what line of work he was in and he replied: “I’m a psychiatric nurse”. The penny dropped and I explained to him that Qi flow is a natural part of Qigong. That the people in the hall had not gone insane or been possessed by an evil spirit. They were in fact in complete control and could easily reduce the ‘ferocity’ of their Energy flow should they wish, with a gentle command to ‘slow down’.

Energy flow is a powerful way for our bodies to get rid of blockages in the meridians and therefore promote harmonious energy flow, which results in good health. How those blockages are released can manifest in many different ways. The instruction is to let go and let your Qi do the work. But you remain in control at all times, so that should a fire alarm go off you would leave the building safely.

Enjoy your practice.

March 14th – We Are Swimming In Qi

Put your hand out flat against a wall. Now walk away, but keep your palm pointing towards the wall.

Look at the space between your palm and the wall, what do you see?

Nothing? Think again.

The fact is we are literally swimming in Qi/Chi. The space between your hand and the wall only appears empty because of the limitations of your human senses. That space is literally full to bursting with Qi/Chi/Energy.

It is this awareness that allows a Qigong Master to transmit Qi over great distances and aid healing without even being on the same continent.

Just because you can't see it, doesn't mean it isn't there. Here's a quote from Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit's book Sukhavati:

“Many people would be surprised to find out that the ability of our senses to perceive physical reality is infinitesimally limited.

For example, the range of the electromagnetic spectrum visible to our eyes is only from 0.4 to 0.8 micron (i.e. 0.0004 – 0.0006mm), where as the range of the electromagnetic spectrum presently known to science is from 0.000000047 micron to over 30Km's!”

March 15th – Playing Your Edge In Qigong

I believe that Qigong is about results.

But not results gained via the route of ‘no pain no gain’, ‘feel the burn’ and other potentially dangerous western exercise mantras. I much prefer this mantra instead: ‘Playing your edge’.

What this means is that each time you practice your Qigong you are aiming to improve just a little bit more.

For example, consider the Qigong exercise *Lohan Draws Sabre*; few students are able to clasp their hands together at the start. But by reaching just a little bit further each day – you are playing your edge and will eventually be able to do it.

Zhan Zhuang students in particular should pay close attention to playing their edge. Each day you may increase your time in Golden Bridge, 3 Circle stance etc. by 1 or 2 breaths. This is playing your edge, it’s progression that is sustainable, achievable and avoids over training.

How are you playing your edge today?

Remember; don’t keep these daily tips locked up in your Qigong practice, many of them can easily be applied to other important aspects of your life too. Especially this one.

March 16th – Quality Vs. Quantity

If I were to offer you two different Qigong courses:

- 1) Dan Tian breathing course – £400 for 2 hours
- 2) 18 Lohan Hands course – £400 for 12 hours

Which do you think is the better value for money?

The answer may surprise you, because the 2-hour course is by far the better deal.

Why?

Because you're actually getting more for your money in a shorter time. Dan Tian breathing is of a much higher level than the 18 Lohan Hands and is therefore of greater value.

Here's a metaphor:

Imagine you have a toothache and you have two dentists to choose from:

A master dentist = pain relief in 5 minutes at a cost of £200
A normal dentist = pain relief in 45 minutes at a cost of £100

If money weren't a limiting factor, which would you choose?

Exactly.

March 17th – You’re Worth Billions

Your body already has enough energy in it to light the whole of North America for a week.

Convert that to Kilo Watt Hours and that’s got to worth billions.

Crazy?

Well in the 50’s a DuPont scientist determined that there is approximately 11 million Kwh per pound potential energy locked up in the atoms and electrons of your body – You’re a living, breathing, moving power station!

And the practice of Qigong helps you improve the flow of your vital energy.

Remember this the next time you feel you don’t have enough energy.

March 18th – Overtraining In Qigong

It is possible to over train in Qigong.

If your body is used to 10 units of energy a day and you start pouring in 20 units per practice session and you're doing too many sessions, then is it any wonder your body gets overloaded and feels tired?

Where I live the TV signal is very weak and the reception is poor. The solution is to use a booster to boost the signal strength. I decided to max out the signal strength to my set and much to my disappointment discovered that the picture was still terrible.

I was later informed that too much signal strength is as bad as not enough. Your body is like this and needs to adjust *gradually* to the increase in energy.

Perhaps the easiest area to over train though is when developing Internal force. Trust me, I speak from personal experience on this. And one of the most common signs is heaviness in the chest where the sternum is.

If you experience this, or you experience feeling more tired than usual then the solution is to slow down and stop your practice until the symptoms have passed.

When you start your practice again, maybe just do one session for a week then go to two sessions. If you're practicing *Zhan Zhuang* then build up again gradually. Don't start from where you left off. I.e. if you were up to 100 breaths in Golden Bridge, start at 30 and build up. Don't start at 100!

Note: A lot of practitioners get hung up on *Qigong Deviation Syndrome*, I've actually found this to be just a grand term for students not following instructions correctly (usually deliberately) or trying to learn 'advanced' Qigong from a book or DVD. Do the opposite of this and QDS will be something that only happens to other people.

March 19th – Qigong Do #1

Practice regularly and consistently – Qigong is not a subject like history or geography that you can read up on and become knowledgeable about.

Nope.

It is an art or skill that needs a lot of practice. If your practice is haphazard your results will be minimal at best. For example if you practice every day for 4 days and then take 2 days off, then practice for another 3 days, then take 1 day off – your practice is haphazard.

If you feel like you can't be bothered to do your practice or you don't feel like it – remind yourself of your aims and objectives. Remind yourself WHY your practice is important to you.

If that doesn't work, try using this simple tool:

- 1) Ask yourself this simple little question: “What’s the smallest step I’m willing or able to take? It might be just to stand up and walk to where you do your practice.
- 2) Take that smallest step.
- 3) When you’ve done it, ask yourself the question again.
- 4) Repeat steps 1 and 2 until you’ve either done your Qigong practice or you can go no further.

But here's the most important part:

***As long as you have taken the first smallest step –
There is to be NO recrimination or beating yourself up
if you go no further.***

I use this tool frequently, how else do you think I've managed to write 3 books, create a 22 week Qigong Home Study Course etc.

It works, but only if you use it. Nuff said.

March 20th – The 3 Treasures of a Human

Every human has Form, Energy and Mind or Jing, Qi and Shen.

Jing – The subatomic particles that make up the human body. Jing is inherited from our parents and after birth we acquire Jing from ‘air’ and food. Jing produces marrow (*stored in the bones*) and creates blood. Jing is vital for growth, successful reproduction and to live a long healthy and happy life. Reserves of Jing are stored in the kidneys.

Qi – Vital energy that makes things happen. It keeps you alive and makes sure all of the functions of your body work. Qi warms the body, enables it to be nourished, defends it from external pathogenic invasion and maintains the correct position of organs and blood.

Shen – in the west we would call this Spirit, Mind, Consciousness and you can see it in a persons eyes. Strong Shen equals peace of mind and is produced by Jing and Qi and nourished by blood and body fluids. Shen helps you to articulate your thoughts, be creative, remember things and is vital for intelligence.

And guess what?

The practice of Qigong is the best tool I know to nurture and develop your 3 treasures.

March 21st – The Breath Is The Bridge

I like to think of the breath as a bridge that connects the internal and the external. Through our breathing we can affect (*positively and negatively*) our physical body and our minds.

Gentle and relaxed breathing helps to relax the body and the mind. When my mind feels out of control and refuses to respond to reason (*i.e. using the mind to calm the mind*) I find there is nothing like 3 deep breaths to bring peace.

When my body is tense or tired, again I find 3 deep breaths can bring release and vitality.

Consider this:

- *How long can you live without food?* Most doctors and nutritionists state that the average person can live about 4-6 weeks without food.
- *How long can you live without water?* No more than 3 days.
- *How long can you live without breathing?* After 4-6 minutes the brain cells begin to die.

Never underestimate the power of your breath.

March 22nd – Inside Or Outside?

If you ask most Qigong practitioners they'll agree that they prefer to practice Qigong outdoors. If you can practice outdoors I certainly recommend it.

But it's not always possible.

Sometimes the weather is too cold or too wet to realistically practice outdoors. Sometimes there are just too many people around (*I find it hard to totally relax if I know there are people wondering around*).

Here are a few simple tips that will make practicing indoors easy and enjoyable:

Windows – If possible aim to practice with a window open. Remember that what you're breathing out is not just air, it's also negative Qi. If you've ever been to a Qigong course indoors you'll notice that the air in the room gets 'stale' very quickly. Having fresh air coming in through the window helps to remove this stale air.

If it's too cold to practice with the window open be sure to open it after your practice and keep it open for at least 15 minutes.

Safety first – Before you begin your practice check around the room to make sure there is nothing that you can easily knock off or break during Energy Flow. Also make sure that there are no sudden drops, practicing on the landing at the top of the stairs is a recipe for disaster.

Other people – If you share your house with family or other people then make sure they know you are doing your Qigong practice, so they don't walk into the room unexpectedly, or turn the TV up too loud, or shout you to come and answer the phone when it rings.

March 23rd – No Concept of Energy

Here's an interesting quote from Julian N. Kenyon M.D.

“The idea of biological energy is developed to a greater or lesser degree in different therapies, but probably finds its most sophisticated expression in TCM where the energy is termed Qi...It comes as something of a surprise to realize that conventional medicine is the only medical system ever known to man which has no concept of biological energy”

Wow, makes you think.

March 24th – A Malfunction Of Energy

From the Qigong perspective there is only a problem of energy, not diabetes, not asthma, not high blood pressure etc.

It's a malfunction of energy.

Today's Reminder:

Smooth energy flow = good health

Vigorous energy flow = Vitality

Abundant energy flow = Longevity

March 25th – Simple Exercise Powerful Point

Put a pencil, pen or any small object on the floor. Go on, take a second or two and do this now.

Done that? Great. Now pick it up again. Brilliant.

You're probably wondering what is the purpose of this exercise? We'll get to that in a moment. But first, I'd like you to quickly reflect on how easy and effortless it was for you to pick up the object.

Now, put the object back on the floor again. This time when you pick it up – tense your whole body, grit your teeth and growl under the enormous effort you're exerting to pick up the object.

Don't worry about looking silly it's only you and me here and there is a very serious point I want to share with you.

Here it is:

When you picked up the object the first time you used just enough effort and energy to get the job done. Just enough tension in body and mind to get the job done.

The second time you used f—a—r more effort, energy and tension to do the same job.

This is commonly what happens when students practice Qigong, especially advanced Qigong like *Zhan Zhuang*. The lesson here is to only use the minimum amount of effort, energy and tension required to do the job. And that's not just physically, it's mentally as well.

Today's reminder:

Avoid unnecessary tension in your Qigong practice. Physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

March 26th – Qigong Trouble Shooting Tips #3

If you regularly experience a dry mouth or feelings of thirst during or after your Qigong practice, the most likely cause is that your breathing is too forceful.

This is very common amongst beginners who think that by breathing forcefully they will somehow make their Qigong Exercises more powerful.

The solution to this problem is simply to make sure your breathing is relaxed and gentle.

There're my favourite two words again =)

Enjoy your practice.

March 27th – My Qigong Is Better Than Your Qigong

Confession time.

I used to be very arrogant when I first started out on my Qigong adventure. I'd done my research and was convinced that I had found the best Qigong being taught. I moved heaven and earth and made many sacrifices in order to learn as much of it as I could.

I was intolerant of other peoples approaches to the practice of Qigong, again convinced that what they were doing was a waste of time, or at best inferior because they didn't practice the same Qigong as me.

As the years passed I noticed that this seemed to be quite a common theme in most energy arts. Talking with a Yoga friend about this observation he commented that there is a need in many people to confirm their beliefs. If they have made a lot of effort to learn from a particular teacher or guru, then they convince themselves that their teacher is the best. Normally this isn't a problem. I mean if you didn't think your teacher was any good, why would you bother learning from them?

Unfortunately this type of belief can have its dark side with people being utterly convinced of their superiority by association with their teacher.

Luckily, for me common sense prevailed. I realised that with a history of 1000's of years and due to different religious, political, social beliefs, values and needs – Qigong comes in many different flavours.

I no longer believe that there is only one supreme way to practice Qigong. As the Buddha explained, there are 84 000 dharma doors – i.e. there's more than one way.

March 28th – Qigong Do #2

The best times to practice Qigong are:

- *Sunrise* – referred to by Qigong masters as the time of creative energy.
- *Midnight* – referred to by Qigong masters as the time of blossoming energy.
- *5am – 9am*
- *5pm – 10pm*

If you can't practice during these times don't worry, it's better to practice when you can than not practice at all.

But, avoid practicing between 11am and 3pm on a daily basis.

March 29th – Spirit Is Not A Dirty Word

Modern people often neglect the spiritual aspect of their lives. But the Spirit is so important for health, happiness and well-being.

Through practicing Qigong I began to realise that nurturing my spirit had a powerful, beneficial affect on my health and happiness. This troubled me because I was very ‘anti’ religion and I lumped spirituality and religion together.

Fortunately through talking with fellow Qigong practitioners I came to learn that there is a big difference between spirituality and religion. Anything that allows you to get in touch with your inner self – meditation, listening to music, reading, walking, flying a kite – can be spiritual.

There is no wrong or right here – Only you can define this part of your life.

From the TCM perspective spirit is attributed to Shen. If Shen is weak then Qi and Jing (*the energetic and the physical*) will also be weak.

Don’t neglect your spirit, take time each and every day to nurture this aspect of you fortunately the practice of Qigong is a very powerful tool for this purpose.

March 30th – Qigong Is All About Results

You practice Qigong because you want some result or benefit. You want to overcome, improve, or develop something.

But are you perfectly clear as to what the result is that you want? If I asked you to write it down could you do it in a single paragraph, or would it fill a page?

Clarity of purpose is king if you want to gain maximum benefit from your Qigong practice. Knowing what you want is vital to getting results in the shortest time possible.

Take 3 minutes now to write down exactly what you want from your Qigong practice.

If it helps use these headings to guide you:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Mental
- Spiritual

March 31st – Qigong And The Lamborghini Gallardo

I once had the good fortune to drive the Lamborghini Gallardo belonging to one of my private Qigong clients. I'd never driven a super car before, but I do have the skill of driving.

Within minutes this skill allowed me to safely drive this beautiful car (*and yes it did take hours before the smile faded from my face*).

It is the same with Qigong.

Once you have what I call the 3 core skills of Qigong:

- 1) *Entering a QSoM*
- 2) *Flowing Breeze Swaying Willows*
- 3) *Standing meditation*

You can 'drive' any Qigong form, practice it as Qigong and gain better results with it in less time.

Why?

Because skills are important in Qigong not forms.

April 1st – A Simple Tip For Mind Mastery

Today I'd like to share a profound realisation I had during my Qigong meditation. Finally I was able to understand why my mind is so chaotic and frequently 'out of control'.

This understanding led to me making changes in my life that have resulted in incredible experiences. From these experiences I have been able to eliminate the doubts I had about there being 'more to life than this'.

The realisation I made was that in each 24 hours we spend perhaps no more than 10 – 15 minutes a day working directly on the mind.

This simply is not enough.

Think of a pair of scales. Put 23.75 Kg on one side and 0.25 Kg on the other – spot the problem?

By taking regular 'Awareness Breaks' i.e. consciously checking in to see what the content and focus of my mind is I've been able to make significant shifts in awareness.

The benefits have been very rewarding. I invite you to try implementing Awareness Breaks into your day and shift the scales more into balance.

April 2nd – The Ultimate System?

The system looks like this:

The foundation is *UNDERSTANDING*. From understanding we have *EXPERIENCES*. From our experiences we eliminate *DOUBT*.

Example: We develop our understanding of how to drive a car through having lessons. From this understanding we have experiences of driving a car. When we develop enough experiences of driving a car we finally eliminate all doubt in our ability to drive a car.

Of more relevance to you as a Qigong practitioner:

You develop our understanding of Qigong through lessons, reading, conversation etc. As you practice Qigong and build upon the foundation of our understanding you start to have experiences.

You experience Energy flow; you experience a lift in your spirits, an increase in your resistance to coughs, colds, bugs, stress, and anxiety. From these experiences you overcome and eliminate all doubt in the effectiveness of Qigong.

The foundation of this system is always: Understanding.

If your practice is not bearing fruit, start by taking a look at what your understanding is of the scope and depth of Qigong.

April 3rd – What Happened?

Have you ever attended a class, course or seminar with a great Qigong teacher? Did you find that during the seminar your experiences were off the chart?

Yet when you got up to practice the next day, your experience was now far less than it had been?

When I first started what I consider my real education in Qigong in August 2000 this happened to me many times. Because I was unable to attend weekly regular classes, I would go on a day or weekend course and then go home and practice for months what I had learned in the seminar.

Eventually I decided to ask what was happening. Why were my experiences so much ‘less’ when I practiced at home than when I was at the seminar. The answer was simple.

When you are in the class you have two major benefits that you don’t have when you’re at home.

- 1) *The heart to heart, non verbal transmission from the teacher*
- 2) *The group. When you’ve 30+ people in a room practicing Qigong, the ‘sum’ is often greater than its parts.*

So if you’ve been to somewhere exotic for an intensive recently only to get home and find your experience has plummeted, don’t be discouraged. This is normal.

If you can – find a Qigong class and benefit from the two major benefits I mentioned above on a weekly basis!

April 4th – Energy Malfunction

A quick recap:

From the Qigong perspective there is only a problem of energy not:

Diabetes, cancer, heart disease, viral infection, tuberculosis, high blood pressure, asthma, ulcers, indigestion, insomnia, nervousness, depression, phobia, anxiety, addiction, aggression, back pain, joint ache, eating disorder, obesity, migraine, chronic fatigue, kidney stones, skin problems, sexual problems, allergies, fibromyalgia, bowel problems, infertility, tinnitus, arthritis, rheumatism, OCD, menstrual problems, prostrate.....

It's a malfunction of energy.

Health will be restored if yin/yang harmony is restored.

This is achieved by removing the blockages to harmonious energy flow through the meridians (*energy streams*).

The practice of Qigong is an excellent way to restore harmonious energy flow.

April 5th – Too Much?

What do you do if your Energy flow is too strong during Qigong practice?

Simple.

- 1) Remember that you are always in control.*
- 2) Gently, but firmly command your energy to slow down.*

When Mind commands, body has to obey.

April 6th – My Introduction To The Importance of Skill

I know I keep going on about the importance of skill in your Qigong practice. But it's a vitally important principle if you want to gain all the wonderful benefits of your practice.

I learned this lesson during the very first course I attended with my favourite Qigong teacher back in August 2000, Sergovia, Spain.

During the course I noticed that there was a student whose form was terrible. Sure you could tell what form she was doing, but it was *UGLY!*

Mine on the other hand was perfect.

Yet it was obvious from her Energy flow and her feedback of her experiences during rest periods that she was getting better results than I was.

By the last day of the course I was fed up and during lunch I privately asked Sifu why this was the case.

And that's when I learned that whilst Qigong forms are important, it's skills that give the results.

She was simply better at attaining a Qigong State of Mind, letting go in Energy flow and enjoying her Standing Zen.

Skills beat techniques, no matter how good your techniques are.

April 7th – Qigong Is Simple

Google kindly sends me two e-mails a day with news on what is happening online with regards to ‘Chi Kung’ and ‘Qigong’.

I do this so I can keep informed and up to date with what is moving and a shaking in the Chi Kung/Qigong world.

And you know what I see a lot of?

Complicated explanations and approaches to Qigong. You could easily be forgiven for thinking that Qigong is a complicated subject, but it isn't.

Recall: Qigong seeks to remove the blockages to harmonious energy flow, which results in health. Then it seeks to increase the flow of Qi/Chi/energy, which results in vitality and longevity.

- *You don't need to know which meridian or system has a blockage.*
- *You don't need to know where that blockage is, or what form it takes.*
- *You don't need to understand TCM theory, read mountains of books on Qigong or go to college for years.*

You just need to practice Qigong twice a day – every day and the results will take care of themselves.

You do the practice and let Qigong take care of everything else for you.

Brilliant!

April 8th – Qigong Do #3

Remember that what you are breathing in is not just air, you are breathing in cosmic energy from the universe. And what you are breathing out is negative energy.

Can you see why practicing where the air is stale or dirty will mean that you are taking in stale or dirty energy?

Whenever possible do your Qigong practice outdoors in nature where the air is fresh and moving.

April 9th – Yin Yang Disharmony

Let's keep it simple:

- 1) *Yin/Yang disharmony = illness.*
- 2) *The cause of Yin/Yang disharmony is disturbed energy flow.*
- 3) *What does energy flow through? Meridians.*
- 4) *Qigong restores harmonious energy flow through the meridians by removing blockages.*
- 5) *Result: Yin/Yang harmony = health.*

April 10th – The 3 Core Skills of Qigong

The 3 core skills of Qigong are:

- 1) ***Entering a Qigong State of Mind*** (QSoM) – Recall that Qigong is a composite of form, energy and mind. The mind aspect begins by entering a QSoM at the start of your Qigong practice. This is achieved by relaxing:

Physically – Relax your body from head to toe.

Emotionally – Let go of all feelings.

Mentally – Clear the mind of all thought.

Spiritually – Really smile from your heart.

- 2) ***Energy Flow*** – Flowing Breeze Swaying Willows – in the past many Qigong masters would not teach this. It was top secret and as a result not many people know about it today.
- 3) ***Cosmic Balance*** – Standing Zen – Helps you to cultivate the mind and consolidate the results of your Qigong practice.

April 11th – Thematic And Holistic Healing

Taking medical drugs to manage blood pressure is a *thematic* approach to health, because it does not improve the health of the patient as a whole person.

It addresses one particular problem. If he has a stomach problem later, he would need a different treatment.

With Qigong healing, the approach can be thematic or holistic. By performing a specific Qigong exercises, he can overcome high blood pressure.

But he will need a different exercise to overcome a stomach problem. This is using Qigong thematically to heal.

But Qigong healing can also be holistic; as it doesn't just treat the presenting problem it treats the root cause. In fact Qigong healing is usually holistic.

An excellent example of holistic healing is self-manifested qi flow (*a wonderful exercise for curing illness*). It doesn't matter what the illness is, the qi flow will eventually overcome the illness as well as other illnesses the healer and the patient may not even be aware of.

April 12th – Visualisation In Qigong

What does visualisation mean?

It's a gentle thought.

For example you may be given the instruction to bring awareness to the Dan Tian. To do this you use a gentle thought, in the same way that you might think of a friend or your nose. You don't think about what shirt Bob's wearing etc. It's just a gentle thought, that's all. And if you're not aware of anything happening as you have that gentle thought – that's fine, it doesn't matter.

Too many students overcomplicate their Qigong practice by getting hung up on visualisation, don't be one of them.

It has been my experience, with most beginner and intermediate level Qigong that visualisations are more likely to reduce results than increase them.

Why?

Because thinking too much is a great way to ruin your Qigong practice and if visualisations are not taught properly it is far too easy for the practitioner to over think.

Of course advanced Qigong like small universe and big universe etc. make extensive use of visualisations. Which is why, in my opinion, they must be learned directly from a good Qigong teacher.

Personally, I think you'd be crazy to try and learn advanced Qigong from a book or DVD.

April 13th – Is Your Qigong Cleansing Happening Too Fast?

For the vast majority of Qigong practitioners the rate at which blockages to harmonious energy flow are removed from the meridians is just right. Others may experience feelings of tiredness for a little while, or suffer from what appears as cold.

This is normal.

But for a few, the cleansing experience of Qigong can be quite extreme and uncomfortable. It's like the blockages are being removed too fast for your body to adjust to comfortably.

If this happens to you, you have 3 choices:

- 1) *Brass it out – Chances are your uncomfortable symptoms won't last too long.*
- 2) *In a QSoM, thank that part of you that is doing the healing, then gently and firmly command it to slow down. It's as simple as that so don't over complicate it.*
- 3) *Stop your practice until you feel better and then start again.*

Which one you choose is up to you.

Of course, I must point out that I am not a doctor and you should always seek advice from your medical professional about your health.

April 14th – Qigong Is Not A Martial Art

I see this a lot on the Internet, Qigong described as being a martial art.

It isn't, period.

Yes martial artists have much to gain from the practice of Qigong i.e. internal force, iron shirt, cosmos palm etc.

But always remember that Qigong is a 'health' defence system, not a self-defence system.

April 15th – Root And Branch

Root – Main problem or cause of illness, disease, unhappiness, etc.

Branch – Symptom, the result of something wrong.

Qigong treats the root, but if the branch is life threatening then it treats the branch first.

And how do we know which is which?

We don't need to. Qi knows.

Practice Qigong, enjoy energy flow and 'let' the work be done for you.

April 16th – Qigong Do #4

When you do your Qigong practice, especially for beginners, do it when you are happy and relaxed, or at least indifferent.

Avoid practicing Qigong when your emotions are running high, or when something or some event is fresh on your mind.

Qigong is a composite of form, energy and mind, with mind being the most important of the 3.

When your mind is unsettled it will affect the quality and benefits of your Qigong.

Yes, Qigong helps to overcome out of control emotions and a disturbed mind, but this takes time.

So if your emotions, your feelings are too powerful, it's best to wait until you're feeling more balanced and at ease.

April 17th – How To Choose The Right Path For You

Don't wait for the 'Universe' or 'God' to show you the way. You choose your destiny. Start now. Here's how:

- 1) Get clear on what it is you really want to achieve with your life, what's your vision? - Aims and objectives will help you to gain this clarity.
- 2) Find a system, art or role model that is known to give the results you are after. Or in the case of a role model, choose someone who personifies what you want to stand for. See if they have an autobiography and study it.
- 3) Take lessons if necessary to develop the skills, discipline, tenacity or whatever qualities you might need to develop in order to succeed in your quest.
- 4) Practice, practice, practice.
- 5) Regularly review your results, your progress. If you're heading in the right direction, keep going. If not make a course adjustment.

You don't have to get this right straight out of the gate; in fact it's very unlikely you will. Simply check the results you're regularly and adjust your path as necessary.

You have unique tasks to perform in the world and the world is waiting for you.

Quote: *"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all."* – Helen Keller 1880 – 1968 (overcame being deaf and blind to become one of the 19th century's leading humanitarians).

April 18th – Qigong Visualisation

Many advanced Qigong arts utilize visualisation. But many book/dvd taught students get this aspect of their practice seriously wrong. It's one of those areas of Qigong that is definitely best learned directly from a teacher.

Think of your son or daughter, husband or wife, mother or father – that's visualisation. You don't sweat trying to form a perfect picture of them, or wander what clothes they were wearing.

You just have a gentle thought of them – that's the best approach to using visualisation in Qigong. I sometimes think the word visualisation causes more confusion than it's worth.

But if you must have visualisations in your Qigong practice, here is a simple and safe way to use it.

Have a gentle thought of good energy coming in as you breathe in and a gentle thought of negative energy going out as you breathe out.

Every now and then is enough. Say once or twice for every 10 breaths.

Keep it simple!

April 19th – Progress Can Be Hard To Recognise In Qigong

Unlike other arts, say Yoga for instance, progress in Qigong can be hard to recognize.

In Yoga you can quickly notice that you're becoming more flexible. But as the focus of Qigong is more on your vital energy than your ability to touch your toes, it's easy to think you're not making any tangible improvements.

This situation is made even worse if your expectations have been set unrealistically high by the hype that surrounds Qigong.

If you expect your health, emotions, mental clarity, spiritual cultivation to improve quickly and completely, you're likely to be disappointed.

Progress is also hard to see when we measure ourselves against idealized standards. A much better way is to compare our present circumstances only to where we were in the past. And the progress tracker is a powerful tool for doing this.

A simple question you must ask yourself regularly is:

“Is it working for me?”

If your answer is ‘yes’ then, very good carry on. If it isn't then you need to speak with your Qigong teacher.

Stop seeking perfection; what really matters is that you're making progress.

Quote: *“Be not afraid of growing slowly be afraid only of standing still.”* – Chinese Proverb.

April 20th – The 5 Major Causes Of Poor Qigong Results

Been practicing for a while? Disappointed with the results you're getting. Here're 5 of the most common reasons why:

- 1) ***What you are practicing is not Qigong*** – *It is Qigong form. Qigong is a composite of form, energy and mind. If you only practice Qigong form you will only get the benefit of Qigong form and not Qigong.*
- 2) ***You do not practice regularly or consistently*** – *Qigong is no 30-day miracle cure. Progress with Qigong takes time and effort. It is not for lazy people who want everything doing for them.*
- 3) ***You think too much*** – *If the mind is busy worrying about your form, about that bill, about that meeting tomorrow. It isn't relaxed and it disrupts your practice.*
- 4) ***You do not relax*** – *If you can't relax you can't do Qigong. If you have OCD, rest assured that with repeated practice you can learn to relax.*
- 5) ***You are distracted*** – *Which disrupts your Qi flow.*

April 21st – Round Pegs And Square Holes

When you're playing football you use the principals of football.
When you're playing soccer, you use the principals of soccer.

Both are sports, but both have very different principals and approaches to the game. Unless you're the goalie in soccer, picking up the ball and running with it will get you into a lot of trouble!

When you practice Yoga you use the principals of Yoga.
When you practice Qigong you use the principals of Qigong.

It's the same thing.

Using non-Qigong principals to practice Qigong can get you into a lot of trouble.

So when you practice Qigong, practice it the way you have been taught. When you practice Yoga, practice it the way you have been taught.

Avoid mixing and matching.

April 22nd – Qigong Makes You Better At Everything You Do

Because Qigong works on the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of you (*Jing, Qi and Shen*) – it literally makes you better at *everything* you do.

Don't believe me?

Can you think of any activity that doesn't involve you physically, emotionally, mentally or spiritually? If you can then maybe I'm wrong.

The chances are that if you could do something before you practiced Qigong you'll be able to do it even better after practicing Qigong.

In my opinion Qigong is the most powerful tool for your personal evolution.

April 23rd – Qigong Trouble Shooting Tips #4

Problem: Headache or Giddiness

Solution: At the beginner stage of your Qigong practice, breathing out is more important than breathing in. Remember when you are breathing in you are inhaling Cosmic Energy or Qi/Chi and when you breathe out you are exhaling negative energy from your body.

So make sure you are practicing in a clean and fresh environment and make certain you breath out fully through your mouth – relaxed and gentle.

April 24th – How To Tell If Your Qigong Practice Is Correct

Here's a quick, simple tip you can use to work out if your Qigong practice is correct. Ask yourself this question:

*‘Do I feel better at the end of my practice
than I did at the start of it?’*

Do you feel more relaxed, peaceful, energised, focused, calm etc.?

If the answer is yes then it's likely that your practice is correct and the best thing to do is to keep on doing what you're doing.

Occasionally the answer will be no, usually if you are experiencing some heavy or stubborn cleansing from the meridians.

If you're answer to this question is more often 'No', than 'Yes' – then you need to stop your practice and find a Qigong teacher to show you what you're doing wrong.

April 25th – Wondrous Meridians

Recap: As you already know, your energy or Qi/Chi flows through energy streams called meridians. There are 12 pairs of ‘primary’ meridians – called primary because they flow through internal organs and 8 secondary meridians.

Do not let the term secondary fool you into thinking that they are of secondary importance.

Two of these secondary meridians are the Ren and Du meridian – when these two meridians have a continuous, harmonious flow of energy circulating through them it is referred to as the ‘Small Universal Flow’.

There is a Qigong saying that a person who achieves the break through of the small universe will be free of illness and full of vitality.

It might be more appropriate to think of the secondary meridians as ‘Wondrous’ meridians or the *Qi Jing Ba Mai*.

They are like energy grids that protect the body and they also act as energy reservoirs where the body can store reserves of energy.

April 26th – What To Do If Your Qigong Practice Is Disturbed

A severe disruption during Qigong practice can cause your Energy Qi/Chi to become scattered and result in you finding yourself feeling nervous, anxious and fearful for no obvious reasons. This can happen long after the initial disturbance occurred. Remember these 3 steps to handle disruption correctly:

- 1) ***Be Prepared*** – When you are Preparing to start your practice, whilst you are walking around or making sure you are standing upright and balanced. Gently tell yourself that if anything happens to surprise or disturb you, it cannot hurt you, because it is only the phone ringing, or a friend trying to attract your attention.

Note: If you live in a shared house or practice in a shared garden, let your friends and family know not to disturb you during your practice, ask them to take a message for you if the phone rings. These are basic ground rules.

- 2) ***When It Happens*** – When disturbance to your practice occurs, gently and firmly keep your composure. Tell yourself that your energy and your mind are intact and that everything is okay. Now take some slow, deep breaths and continue your practice when you are ready. Finish off as normal.
- 3) ***If You Have To Stop*** – If a fire alarm goes off in the building you are practicing in, or you have to stop your practice before you are ready, here's what to do:

Bring your attention gently to your Dan Tian (the energy point just below your belly button). Rub your hands together briskly and give yourself a quick facial massage. Attend appropriately to whatever has demanded your attention. Then as quickly as you are safely able to do so – have an Energy flow and finish off your practice as normal.

April 27th – Judge Your Qigong Practice By Your Results

You practice Qigong because you want a particular result. If you're a smart Qigong practitioner then you're clear on your aims and objectives for your Qigong practice. You know what results you want and so you can judge the effectiveness of your practice by how quickly you gain those results.

If you're in the top percentage of Qigong practitioners you also measure your results regularly to make sure you're moving in the right direction.

If you have learned directly from a suitably qualified Qigong teacher, are clear on your aims and objectives and measure your progress regularly you can expect to see significant results in 3 to 6 months of daily practice.

If you have learned Qigong from a good DVD, good video or a good book, but without any direct face-to-face tuition from a Qigong teacher, but have clear aims and objectives and measure your progress regularly then it may be 12 months before you can expect to see significant results.

If you've learned Qigong Form from a mediocre book, are not clear on why you're practicing and do not measure your progress – is it really any wonder why you've never experienced significant or lasting benefits from Qigong?

April 28th – Qigong Breathing, A Simple Tip

Students often ask me how to remember the breathing pattern for a particular Qigong exercise. Here's a simple tip that never fails to help.

Just remember the first breath.

All of the Qigong exercises from the Shaolin 18 Lohan Hands set that have specific breathing patterns start by breathing IN. After breathing in, three things can happen.

- 1) *You gently hold the breath*
- 2) *You make some kind of sound*
- 3) *You breathe out*

Which of these 3 you do next, is usually very clearly dictated by the form you are practicing.

Just get the first breath right and the rest follows simply.

April 29th – You’ve Got To Take Your Power Back...

One of the many qualities I adore about Qigong is that it allows you to take back the power and the responsibility for your health, vitality, longevity, happiness, in fact your whole well being as a human.

Obviously, if you have a serious health condition you continue to work in harmony with our health provider, but the long-term practice of Qigong can help you to feel in charge of your life, instead of your life being in charge of you.

We are a society in danger of believing that there is *a pill for every ill*. In believing that whatever ‘ails thee’ can be overcome simply by a visit to the doctor and the prescription of some pill or potion.

For those of you aware and committed enough Qigong equips us with the tools to harness and enhance the natural healing power within us.

If you’re not going to take responsibility for your own health and well being then you should not complain at the price that must be paid.

Quote: “*A man too busy to take care of his health is like a mechanic too busy to take care of his tools.*” – Spanish Proverb.

April 30th – How Do You Eat An Elephant?

One mouthful at a time and that's the way you should approach your Qigong practice.

When you start out on your Qigong adventure, there can seem like a mountain of information to take in, moves to remember, challenges to overcome when incorporating Qigong into your daily life and so on.

I used to work with young people helping them to prepare for important exams. We used to have a saying:

“It's a cinch by the inch, but a trial by the mile”

We broke up each subject into bite-sized chunks that they could easily digest. And if it was too big, we broke it down even further.

If necessary do the same with your Qigong practice. Take it one practice session at a time. If necessary focus on one particular area each session, it might be working on entering a QSoM, or the focus may be on co-ordinating the breathing with a new form.

You have the rest of your life to master Qigong, so what's the rush? Take your time and practice at your pace.

May 1st – Qigong Exercises

I know well over 100 different Qigong exercises. I used to be a proud collector of them, but now I think: ‘*So what?*’

I eventually realized that it’s not the number of Qigong exercises you know that is important, it’s the skill with which you can practice them.

I’ve witnessed this thirst for new Qigong exercises frequently amongst Qigong practitioners. I think it’s a part of humankind’s obsession with ‘New’.

The problem is if you’re constantly learning new exercises, you don’t have time to focus on developing the 3 core skills of Qigong. And as I hope you know by now, skill wins every time in Qigong.

These days I am content to practice a handful of Qigong exercises and focus on deepening my core skills. I have found this to be a much more rewarding and enjoyable use of my time.

You will too.

Quote: “*When love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece.*” – John Ruskin (1819 – 1900 Leading English art critic of the Victorian era).

May 2nd – Good Health Is Your Birth Right

If the systems of your body are working the way they were ‘designed’ to work then you will be healthy. It is natural to be healthy.

Our modern lifestyles can often expose us to:

- *High levels of stress.*
- *Burning the candle at both ends.*
- *Not taking the time to look after ourselves properly.*
- *Poor diet.*
- *A host of unhealthy lifestyle choices (smoking, drinking, etc.).*

And the result is that we think it is normal to feel tired, to be run down, to be ill every now and then.

Some people have even resigned themselves to a lifetime of illness and pain.

Illness and pain are unnatural; they signals that one or more of the systems of your body are not functioning correctly.

Qigong is a powerful tool for restoring good health by re-establishing the correct functioning of the bodies systems.

What makes Qigong especially powerful is that if you are already healthy it will help to keep you that way and help you to live a happier, longer and more vital life.

Today’s Reminder:

Good health is your birth right.

May 3rd – Qigong Do #5

What to wear when practicing Qigong?

The answer of course is Lycra! No, only kidding, though maybe if we promoted Lycra wearing, Qigong would be as popular as Yoga, what do you think?

Seriously though, to encourage the flow of Qi in your body, make sure you are wearing loose, warm, comfortable clothing. No tight belts, collars and ladies, no high heels.

When practicing Qigong you want to be wearing flat-soled shoes.

What do you wear when the weather starts to get cold? Is such a common question, and the answer is to wrap up warm.

Just make sure your gloves, scarf, hat and coat are not tight fitting.

If you can see your breath, or you can't enter a QSoM because it's too cold to relax, then it might be time to consider moving indoors.

May 4th – Qigong Don't #1

Don't stop your daily practice – whilst Shaolin Qigong is simple, direct and effective. It does require discipline.

For me the word discipline has a deep link to the word *disciple*. And I believe the work of a disciple is to serve. When we have the discipline to practice Qigong daily, we are serving ourselves in one of the best ways I can imagine: By supporting and encouraging our health, happiness and well-being.

And when you serve yourself well, you are in a much better position to be of greater service to others.

I recently visited a hospital to see a friend and I was reminded that good health is one of the most precious possessions we can ever own. But it's also very easy to take for granted.

Quote: “*With self-discipline most anything is possible.*” – Theodore Roosevelt (1858 – 1919 26th President of the United States of America).

May 5th – A Simple Technique To Calm The Mind

Sometimes the mind is too agitated to allow us to practice. Eventually as we develop our Qigong skills, we can use our practice to calm the mind.

But in the early days, and occasionally even for more advanced students; the best solution is to go outside take a walk and practice later.

I never cease to be amazed at the benefit of a walk on the state of my mind. I'm lucky I get to take Louis the Labrador for 2 walks a day and I consider this to be a part of my daily practice.

If possible take your walk somewhere in nature and away from the crowds.

And here's an advanced tip for if your mind is really racing with lots of unhelpful and nasty thoughts – *make it a brisk walk*.

Just because this seems simple and obvious, don't make the mistake of blowing it off as not worth your time. This technique plays a useful role when I put my Qigong Healing hat on.

In fact, why not take it for a 'test drive' right now and find out for yourself how beneficial it is?

May 6th - The Cure For Procrastination

We've covered this subject before, but as the saying goes: "*Repetition deepens the impression*". So whether it's not feeling like doing your practice or completing your tax return, here's a simple cure for procrastination:

Ask this question:

What is the smallest step I'm willing to take?

Decide what it is and then do it. Do that one step. Then ask the question again. Keep repeating the question until you've completed the 'task' or until you can go no further.

Now here's the key to this. As long as you've taken that very first step, there are to be no recriminations. It doesn't matter whether the task was completed or not as long as you took the first step.

Let's take doing my Qigong as an example. I ask myself the question:

What is the smallest step I'm willing to take?

So I get up, and go to where I practice my Qigong. And then I ask the question again. And so on.

99 times out of a 100 – I'm there and I end up doing my practice.

But if all I do is take that first step and don't get any further – then that's it. ***No recriminations.*** That's important.

This tip never fails, but it only works when you *use it*.

Please don't take my word for how powerful it is, next time you find yourself procrastinating about *ANYTHING*, try it and find out for yourself.

May 7th – Are You Serious?

The very first time I learned what I consider to be real, authentic Qigong was in August 2000. Even though I'd practiced Qigong before then, this is when I consider my true Qigong adventure to have started.

The course I attended was also 1170 miles away from my home.

I'm sharing this with you to demonstrate that if you really want to learn Qigong, sometimes you have to leave your hometown.

I made the journey to Spain after discovering Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kits web site. I decided to take a risk and see if this was the real deal – and it was.

Over the next 10 years I invested well over £18,000 in my Qigong 'education'. I don't tell you this to impress you, I tell you this to impress upon you that if you want the best, you often have to make sacrifices in both time and money.

If I had continued to stay at home and learn Qigong from books, dvds and Qigong form instructors I would never have experienced the wonders and benefits of Qigong that I have.

If you're serious about your Qigong, find the best teacher you can and do what you need to do to learn from them directly.

Caveat: *I advise against going into debt to learn Qigong. Ask me how I know...*

May 8th – The Evolution Of Your Qigong Practice

Your Qigong practice changes with time.

When you first start out practicing Qigong you'll spend most of your 15 minutes practice time trying to get into a QSoM and remembering how to do the form. By the time you've done that, you'll have a few minutes left to finish off.

But as you continue your practice and your skills increase you'll notice that it takes you less time to get into a QSoM, you can easily remember the form and so you can concentrate on the breathing (*if applicable*) and really letting go in Energy flow.

After 3 to 6 months, you'll notice that it takes fewer repetitions of a qigong exercise before you can feel it's time to let go and enjoy Energy flow.

After a year of daily practice, the majority of your 15-minute practice time is spent in Energy flow and Cosmic Balance/Standing meditation.

Now you really begin your Qigong adventure.

May 9th – Qigong Don't #2

Don't practice Qigong in crowded, noisy, smelly or dirty places.

If the air is stale or polluted where you practice, any benefits gained will be outweighed by harmful side affects.

Remember when you breathe in, you are breathing in more than air!
You are breathing in Qi too.

Make sure where you practice is safe. Avoid areas with sudden drops like at the top of the stairs, balconies and windows. Make sure where you practice is free from fragile and precious items. Trust me, breaking your partners favourite bit of '*objet d'art*' during Energy flow is a great way to ruin your practice.

Whilst Qigong offers great flexibility in that it can be practiced almost anywhere, where you practice is important, so please choose wisely.

May 10th – Qigong Learning Index

From best to worst:

- 1) **Directly from a Qigong master** – *They are few and far between. Even if you do find one, don't expect them to be obliged to teach you.*
- 2) **Directly from a Qigong teacher** – *There are many more of these around. But remember you want to learn Qigong, not Qigong form.*
- 3) **Learn from a good teacher via Skype** – *It's called technological progress and I believe the Qigong masters of the past would have embraced it.*
- 4) **From a Good online course/DVD** – *I never believed I'd be putting this in at No.4. But the truth is a good online course or DVD can be of greater benefit than a Qigong form teacher.*
- 5) **From a Good Qigong book** – *Probably the hardest way to learn Qigong. Book learners have to put in more effort for lower returns. It's not impossible to learn Qigong from a book, just really difficult.*
- 6) **Directly from a Qigong Form teacher** – *There are a lot of Qigong form teachers out there. Whilst not without its merits, just be realistic about the results you can expect. Do your research thoroughly.*
- 7) **From a Poor Qigong course/DVD** – *Why would you want to waste your time and money doing this? Do your homework and you won't have to.*
- 8) **From a Poor Qigong book** – *How can you tell? These usually rely heavily on Qigong theory. Nothing wrong with that, but it's usually very dry, boring and as much practical use as a chocolate teapot.*

As with anything you plan to invest time, energy and money in – do your homework first!

May 11th – 3 Aspects Of Internal Force

Internal force training is not just of benefit to martial artists. We can all benefit from cultivating internal force. Here're the 3 major benefits of it:

- 1) *Maintains life*
- 2) *Enhances life*
- 3) *Makes you better at everything you do.*

Its not just about hitting people so they don't get back up again. Like I used to think when I first started out in Qigong.

I'm pleased to admit I've come a long way since then.

May 12th – Qigong And Mental Illness

The western way of viewing a person ‘holistically’ focuses on their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects. From the Qigong perspective there is the physical and the Heart.

But we’re talking about the TCM heart. Which includes not just the organ but also the systems attributed to the organ. The heart in Qigong overlaps with the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects from the western view.

As a result mental illness is perceived as an illness of the heart.

Therefore Qigong exercises that are known to benefit the Heart system will be of benefit to those suffering from mental illnesses.

Here’re a few of the best:

- 1) *Butterfly Dancing In Front Of Flowers*
- 2) *Green Dragon Separating Water*
- 3) *Three Levels To Ground (best avoided if you have known heart problems)*

With pharmaceutical companies and psychiatrists inventing new mental illness’s every week and more and more people being prescribed psychotropic drugs. The need for Qigong has never been greater.

Whilst some medical professionals criticize Qigong, at least its ‘side effects’ don’t include: suicide, seizure, blurred vision, tremor delirium, coma, aggressive reaction, paranoid reaction, psychosis, heart problems, heart failure, increased risk of death and sudden death.

Psychotropic drugs kill an estimated 42,000 people year*

*Source: Citizens Commission on Human Rights: <http://cchr.org>

May 13th – A Simple Tip To Feel Better Quickly

Whenever I notice that I'm starting to feel down, or that 'stinking thinking' is starting to fill my mind. Whenever I become aware that I'm feeling stressed, anxious, nervous or fearful in any way. The very first thing I do is to check my breathing.

Why?

Here's an example. When I'm racing model boats, if I'm not careful I get so caught up in the excitement and the action that my breathing becomes shallow and I start holding my breath. This quickly affects me physically, emotionally and mentally.

The solution?

Several deep, slow, mindful breaths.

And I think the word 'mindful' is very important.

Make a habit of checking in with your breathing every now and then and if necessary use this simple tip to improve your situation.

Remember good breathing habits aren't just limited to our Qigong practice.

Quote: *“Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts.”* – Thich Nhat Hanh (Vietnamese Buddhist monk, teacher, author, poet and peace activist).

May 14th – Use It Or Lose It

Less than 6 months after starting what I consider my ‘proper’ Qigong practice (before that I’d only been practicing Qigong form) – I had a panic attack. Of course I didn’t know it was a panic attack at the time. At the time I thought I was having a heart attack.

I remember an uncontrollable sensation of numbness creeping down my left arm, tightness in my chest and temporary relief when I realised the numbness was in my right arm as well.

This event occurred whilst I was in a session with my counsellor. I was training for my advanced diploma in counselling at the time, and one of the requirements for this qualification was undertaking counselling.

I won’t share what brought on the panic attack, that’s not the point of this entry. The point is to tell you that I had been practicing Qigong twice daily for several months when this event occurred.

As my body went into lock down and my mind started to freak out, I had the clarity of mind to do my Qigong. I stood up on autopilot, walked around the room briskly for a few paces and began lifting the sky. I didn’t have to think about what to do, because I had already laid down a solid foundation from my months of correct practice. I just did my Qigong.

Within moments I felt completely back to normal, as if the event had never occurred. Only the look on the counsellor’s face confirmed that something had definitely happened!

I was only able to use Qigong in this situation because I had put down a firm foundation in my twice daily, regular as clockwork Qigong practice. If I had needed to access the benefits of Qigong during this panic attack, but my practice had been haphazard, or mainly based on what I’d read.

Then I dread to think how differently that situation would have turned out.

If you wait until you need Qigong before you get serious about your practice, then it might be too late.

When would now be a good time to put down your Qigong foundations?

May 15th – Shaolin Qigong

The 18 Lohan Hands is a set of 18 Qigong exercises originally taught by the great Bodhidharma to the monks of the Shaolin Temple in 527.

Bodhidharma was the 28th Patriarch of Indian Buddhism and the first patriarch of Chinese Chan or Zen. So it's fair to say he knew his stuff.

His original aim for teaching the monks these exercises was to help them to achieve Enlightenment *in this lifetime*.

The word 'Hands' in the Chinese language refers to techniques or patterns.

This set of Qigong patterns later evolved into the 18 Lohan Fist. A Kung Fu set that was the prototype of Shaolin Kung Fu.

The word 'Fist' here refers to a Kung Fu set.

If it seems odd that a set of Qigong exercises later evolved into a set for combat, remember that the Shaolin Temple was an imperial temple and that many of its monks had, in their previous lives, been high ranking military generals. Or in other words there were many highly skilled martial artists in the temple.

Many people erroneously think that the Shaolin Temple gave birth to martial arts. This simply isn't true. Since one man hit another at the dawn of time, there have been people who've worked out better ways of doing it. And these ways became closely guarded secrets because they could mean the difference between life and death.

No, the Shaolin Temple represented the coming together of many different martial arts experts and the free exchange of ideas leading to the creation of Shaolin Kung Fu.

Think of it as the ultimate Kung Fu University!

May 16th – Stamping And Shaking

Students often ask me why they are making a particular movement, or set of movements during their energy flow.

I tell them the reason is because it's the best way for Qi to get rid of their blockages.

But whilst an energy flow is as unique as the individual practicing it, there are two very common sites you will see when people are practicing Qigong in a group:

- 1) ***Stamping of feet on the floor*** – *This is a great way of ridding toxins from the body.*
- 2) ***Shaking*** – *Sometimes the whole body, sometimes parts of the body, this is a great way of cleansing tissues.*

Remember: you don't stamp or shake; it's your Qi that does the work.

May 17th – Qigong State of Mind - Advanced

The practice of Qigong will make you better at everything you do.

One way you can speed this process up is how skilfully and deeply you can enter a Qigong State of Mind (QSoM).

When you begin your Qigong career it takes you 5 or 6 minutes to get a QSoM. As you continue your daily practice you find that you can enter a QSoM faster and faster and that even though you can get there faster, it's also of a much deeper level than when it took longer!

This is the acquiring of skill.

Your aim is to be able to enter a QSoM in a single breath. So that should you suddenly be called upon to perform some task or take part in some event that is normally outside of your 'comfort zones'. You can take your breath, enter a QSoM, smile from the heart and give the best 'performance' of your life.

This is just one way in which the continued practice of Qigong complements all areas of your life.

May 18th – Share A Qigong Blessing

Here's a quick tip for those of you who want to offer help, comfort or support to another.

At the end of your standing meditation, send a blessing, in whichever way makes sense to you, to the other person.

It's that simple. There is no need to go into any elaborate ritual of sequence.

There's no need to sweat buckets of blood trying to visualise them or anything like that.

Just a simple, gentle thought of the person for a few moments is all it takes, then finish your Qigong practice in the usual way.

May 19th – Qigong And Depression

I consider Qigong to be an internal and solitary art. Yes you can practice Qigong in a large group, but when you close your eyes and go inside it's all you.

This is why many teachers of Qigong do not advise practicing Qigong for those suffering from depression.

I personally consider Qigong to be a very powerful and effective, drug free treatment for depression. I know this from my own personal experience and the experience of my students.

But I do agree that if you are suffering from depression it is better to practice Qigong with a group of people if you can. The meeting of people in such a situation can bring much extra benefit to a depressed person.

May 20th – Thinking Too Much and Qigong

As I moved through the various ranks of the educational establishment I learned to treasure the power of thinking. The ability to think for long periods of time and to reason and contemplate were seen as valuable assets.

Imagine my confusion when I was first faced with main cause of mental blockages and one of the main hindrances to successful Qigong practice:

Thinking too much!

My first reaction was: “How can a person think too much? In my experience people don’t think enough...”

As my practice developed I discovered the answer to this question. I noticed that I was an obsessive thinker, like a dog with a bone, or a child with a scab I’d keep chewing and picking at problems and challenges in my life. The usual outcome was that I ended up tying myself in knots and feeling unable to make a decision.

I also noticed that during my Qigong practice I was thinking about everything I was doing, everything I wasn’t doing and a tsunami of subjects that had nothing to do with my practice at all. On reflection it’s a wonder I gained any benefits from my early Qigong practice.

Gradually through regular twice-daily practice I was able to turn the volume down on this thinking, thinking, thinking during my practice. Then I began to notice that my obsessive thinking on projects, problems and challenges was slowing down. And much to my delight I was able to make quicker and better decisions without agonizing over them.

Today’s Reminder:

Thinking too much is harmful to your health and your Qigong practice, but that doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t think at all!

May 21st – Why Your Qigong Results Suck

There are many reasons why you may not be getting the results you want from Qigong. The biggest reason of all is that you are not practicing Qigong, but Qigong form. There's a huge difference between the two.

If you are practicing Qigong then I have found these to be the three biggest reasons why a practitioners results suck:

- 1) ***You think too much*** – *Qigong is not a mental exercise. Over intellectualizing whilst practicing just gets in the way. Don't do it.*
- 2) ***You don't relax*** – *To be blunt; if you can't relax you can't do Qigong.*
- 3) ***You're disturbed*** – *If you practice in a place where there are lots of other people coming and going it's hard to access the depths that Qigong has to offer*

Take the necessary steps to address these three main reasons for poor Qigong results and watch your practice skyrocket.

May 22nd – Qigong Exercises – Progress Not Perfection

When it came to practicing Qigong exercises I was always obsessed with getting the form perfect. Now don't get me wrong, there are worse things to obsess about during your Qigong practice. But I kept forgetting that the form is not the art of Qigong.

I see the same struggle in many Qigong practitioners. Some of the Qigong exercises in the Shaolin 18 Lohan hands are technically, or physically difficult. For example *Plucking Stars* can be a bit like patting your head whilst rubbing your stomach at the same time. Did you ever try that at school?

And there are few people who can perform *Lohan Draws Sabre* perfectly first time.

No, the aim for your Qigong practice overall and the practice of Qigong exercises/form specifically is progress not perfection.

If you are making progress with your Qigong practice then all you need to do is keep doing what you are doing. Forget perfection. Each time you practice a Qigong exercise you find difficult, aim to do it just a little bit better than last time. Aim to get your fingers just a few millimetres closer together.

That's progress and it's maintainable. My experience is that perfection leads to frustration and disappointment. It's best avoided.

May 23rd – How To Really Let Go In Qigong

Today I'd like to say just a few words about the importance of letting go in Qigong.

I used to find it very difficult to let go, especially when it came to Energy flow. I'd often think, what does it mean to let go?

Eventually I made the following discovery and I'd like to share it with you:

Trust that in letting go and relaxing that Qi knows what it is doing. Your Qi knows, so you do not have to know. Just rest like a new-born baby in its mother's arms, relax and be effortless, be receptive to the experience of Qi flow that will follow.

May 24th – Qigong’s Two Major Flaws

Whilst I’m very up front about how brilliant Qigong is for happiness, health, vitality and longevity. I have to admit that there are two very serious flaws with Qigong. If you can accept these flaws then there is a very real chance that you can gain all of the wonderful benefits that Qigong has to offer. But if you can’t, then it might be wiser in the long run for you to look elsewhere.

Qigong flaw #1: It takes time – Many new practitioners of Qigong have unrealistic expectations of what to expect from their practice, especially short term. And when these benefits don’t turn up, they conclude that Qigong doesn’t work and quit.

The truth is that Qigong is no 30-day miracle cure and Qigong exercises will not turn you into an indestructible super human being able to stop speeding bullets with your teeth.

Qigong flaw #2: You have to do the work – There are many people who like to have things done for them. And you know what? I’m one of them. I’m happy to pay for someone to do my grocery shopping and then deliver it to my front door.

There are many areas in my life where I am happy to abdicate responsibility to someone else. But you know what? My health isn’t one of them. I consider my health and well being to be my responsibility. And that’s a daily, on going responsibility. It’s probably the reason I can’t remember the last time I went to see the doctor.

Today’s Reminder:

Practicing Qigong takes time and only you can do your Qigong practice. The great news is it’s really easy if you believe your health is your responsibility and not your doctors.

May 25th – Everyone Benefits From Your Qigong Training

I once went to visit a famous Qigong master in Penang. Being a typical Westerner, I expected his school to be a separate building; I didn't expect it to be the backyard of his house.

Penang is a crowded place and as I stood in his backyard I could see many of his neighbours who smiled politely at me.

I asked him if his neighbours minded him teaching Qigong to students in his backyard and he replied that it was quite the opposite.

His neighbours were happy to have him there and he explained that:

“When you practice Qigong, it's not just you who benefits but the people around you as well.”

It seems that the barrier of the human form, your skin, is just an illusion of the human senses. When we practice Qigong and work on the energetic, cosmic level there is no barrier between what your human senses would call you and not you.

And, the more powerful the Qigong practitioner the wider the sphere of influence. It's like a torch on a dark night. The more powerful the torch, the more powerful the illumination. The more powerful the illumination the more people can benefit from the light.

It's also why when you practice outdoors you might find your cat, or your dog, or the local wildlife is attracted to you.

Today's Reminder:

It's not just you that benefits from your Qigong training.

May 26th – Qigong Don't #3

Don't do your Qigong training near a cemetery, in a violently moving vehicle, or in thunder and lightning storms.

It was explained to me that the Qi near a cemetery was too 'dead' or too yin. Which reminds me of a funny story. Well, it wasn't funny at the time, but I can look back on it now with a smile.

During one of Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit's visits to the UK to teach the Summer Camp I had organised. I accidently selected him a hotel across the road from a cemetery. Of course I didn't know this when I booked the hotel, because I was not from that area, the cemetery was behind a big wall and it's not the usual kind of question you ask when booking a hotel!

But you could see it easily from the upstairs hotel rooms. I arrived for breakfast to find Sifu enjoying his breakfast and with his case packed. A valuable lesson was learned: Don't book a hotel for a Qigong master near to a cemetery. Right got it...

Next:

Don't practice your Qigong in a violently moving vehicle, like a plane or a train (or the back of a van?) as it may cause the Qi in the practitioner to flow astray. Whilst the Qi during a storm is so powerfully charged it becomes harmful to body cells.

May 27th – What Qigong Exercise To Choose?

At the start of your Qigong career, there are 2 main ways to choose what Qigong exercises you want to practice:

***Thematic** – If you know you have a specific illness then you might like to choose a Qigong exercise that is known specifically to be of benefit to that illness. E.g. Nourishing Kidneys is known to be of great benefit to the Kidney meridian, which is known to be of benefit in overcoming any problems related to the sexual organs.*

***Holistic** – If you wish to improve energy flow to remove blockages. Then it doesn't really matter which Qigong exercise you choose to practice as long as you experience Energy flow.*

May 28th – That’s All Folks

Today I have run out of subjects to write about. Day 148 of this year and I’ve nothing to share with you.

So I asked the community for ideas about what to write on, new subjects they wanted to hear about. Or else I was going to have to start recycling old material.

And someone wrote:

“Recycle the old ones, we need a reminder, not new info.”

I was humbled. They were so right. You don’t need new information. You need reminders. If you’re like me, it’s so easy to get caught up in wanting ‘new’ all the time and equating new to better.

And if there is one single thing my Qigong training has taught me, it’s that skills are what are important. And skill is developed through practice, practice and practice. Not by adding more and more ‘new’. How’s that saying go?

“[Correct] repetition is the mother of skill”

I added the ‘correct’ bit.

Most of us live busy, always on the go, 21st century lives, we usually only have a small amount of free, ‘Sacred Me’ time. If you want to succeed with Qigong you must practice it and resist spending that precious time on ‘new’.

From today, if you read a daily inspiration and think ‘this sounds familiar’ then don’t make the mistake of glossing over it. Take a deep breath – in and out – and then continue reading.

Know that by doing so you are deepening your understanding of Qigong and increasing your skill.

May 29th – Qigong Eyes

It is said that the eyes are the windows of the soul, it is also said that the strength of a persons Shen can be seen in their eyes.

The eyes are important and we are very visually stimulated creatures. The eyes are also one of the biggest sources of distraction in your Qigong training.

That is why, if you can, I recommend you practice your Qigong with your eyes closed. By doing so you ‘shut out’ one of the main sources of distraction.

Obviously it’s okay to open them every now and then to be aware of your surroundings, or to check that the world hasn’t disappeared.

And some Qigong exercises are nigh on impossible to practice with eyes closed, try practicing ‘*Lift heels bend knees*’ if you don’t believe me.

But where possible, like entering a QSoM, Energy flow or Standing Zen try to practice with your eyes closed.

You’ll be pleasantly surprised at the depths your training can reach without visual stimulation to distract you.

May 30th – Why We Practice Qigong

Can you remember the 5 main reasons (aims) why we choose to practice Qigong? Here's a quick reminder:

- 1) **Health and Vitality** – *Qigong literally is the art of managing your vital energy or Qi. Qi is the 'stuff' that keeps you and me alive and all the functions of your body doing what they should be doing.*
- 2) **Longevity** – *After we have removed the blockages to harmonious energy flow through the meridians of the body, we have health. The next stage (and Qigong will do this naturally for you) is to increase the flow of energy, which will result in vitality. As you continue your practice you will have an abundance of energy and this improves longevity.*
- 3) **Internal force** – *Not just of benefit to martial artists. Internal force helps to maintain life, enhance life and make you better at everything you do.*
- 4) **Mind Expansion** – *The practice of Qigong helps you to empty the mind of useless clutter. You're then able to harness the power of your mind and the results are elegant solutions to problems, inspiration, increased creativity and the like. No wonder ancient scholars treasured Qigong.*
- 5) **Spiritual Cultivation** – *Spiritual does not mean religious. Qigong is non-religious. Also remember that the prime reason the Venerable Bodhidharma taught the monks of the Shaolin Temple Qigong was to help them to achieve 'enlightenment' in this lifetime.*

May 31st – Qigong Is...

I love Qigong; I never cease to be amazed by it's brilliance.

Qigong is easier to learn than Tai Chi. Tai Chi sets are made up of anywhere between 24 and 108 patterns. But it's not just the patterns you have to learn; you also have to be able to flow elegantly and correctly from one to the other.

Qigong consists of a few simple moves, usually co-ordinated with the breathing and performed in a meditative state of mind. It is not a marital art and does not have to be practiced as a martial art in order to gain its health and vitality benefits.

Qigong is less strenuous than Yoga. I have practiced Yoga, my wife practices Yoga and I have a good friend who is a 'big deal' in the Yoga world. Yoga is brilliant; if you find a great teacher it can be a step-by-step guide to spiritual enlightenment. I can understand why it is so popular.

But it can also be very demanding physically. Qigong requires virtually zero athleticism and only takes 10-15 minutes per training session.

Qigong Vs. the Gym. Qigong requires no expensive monthly membership fees. It requires no expensive supplements. It requires no expensive equipment or training apparatus. It can be practiced almost anywhere, so you can go home after work and practice there instead of traveling to the Gym. Qigong focuses on relaxed and gentle – not 'no pain, no gain' and as a result you are less likely to experience aches, pains, strains and over training.

And yet still hardly anyone has heard of Qigong! I consider it to be the worlds best kept health and vitality secret and that has got to change. You can help by sharing Qigong with your friends and work colleagues. The world has so much to gain from Qigong, don't keep it a secret.

June 1st – Qigong Healing An Introduction

Qigong healing is the art of restoring harmonious energy flow through the meridians of the body.

From the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) viewpoint there is only one illness, regardless of what we might call the symptoms, and that illness is Yin/Yang disharmony.

Remember Yin and Yang are symbols and something is only Yin or Yang in relationship to something else. In the relationship of human health we say that your body's natural ability to respond accordingly to its ever-changing environment is Yin and anything that causes illness is Yang.

The cause of Yin/Yang disharmony is disturbance of harmonious energy flow. This disturbance may be caused in a number of ways, but perhaps the two most common are:

***An increase in Yang** – for example by eating a ham sandwich that is way past its 'best before' date, we introduce a lot of harmful bacteria into our digestive system.*

***A decrease in Yin** – you might have been burning the candle at both ends, not taking care of yourself etc.*

One of the many beauties of Qigong is that we don't need to know which meridians are affected; we don't have to make a correct diagnosis of the root problem. We just have to be able to enhance Energy flow and then *LET* the healing be done for us i.e. let the restoration of harmonious energy flow be done for us.

June 2nd – All Healing Begins With The Heart

There is an important distinction that must be made for the title of this post to make sense. We are talking about the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) version of the heart and not the western medical version. Remember TCM is the foundation upon which Qigong rests.

The ‘western’ heart is a 4 chambered muscle, left of centre, in the chest. It pumps oxygenated and deoxygenated blood around the body.

TCM focuses on the functions of organs. For example some of the functions of the heart are:

- *Governs the balance between the formation of blood and Qi*
- *Controls the movement of blood in the vessels*
- *Houses the Shen (mind/Spirit)*
- *Expresses its condition through the complexion*
- *Opens into the tongue*

The TCM heart is very different. It is so important that it is referred to as ‘The Emperor’ because it is the supreme controller of all the other organs and systems of the body.

Now can you see why your heart is so important in healing?

June 3rd – PFAR

Many years ago when I was studying for my NLP practitioners certificate I was introduced to the importance of physiology.

In a nutshell:

Our physiology affects how we feel

If you look at other people and pay attention you can get a pretty good idea about how somebody is feeling by looking at how they carry themselves, how they move, how they talk.

You could say we wear our feelings on our body.

The great news is that by using your body ‘correctly’ you can affect how you feel for the better. How you feel has an effect on what type of actions you take and the kinds of actions you take effect the quality of results you get.

Hence the title of this post: PFAR

Physiology -> Feelings -> Actions -> Results

What’s this got to do with Qigong you might be asking?

Everything!

It demonstrates another reason why Qigong is such a powerful force for good in your life. It promotes great physiology (which gives us PFAR), it enhances energy and it cultivates the mind.

And all in just 15 minutes – why wouldn’t you want to practice Qigong?

June 4th – What About The Tongue?

What is it about the tongue in Qigong?

I get asked about where to place the tongue during Qigong on an almost weekly basis. I'd say it's definitely one of the top questions I get asked about.

In some advanced Qigong exercises like 'Small Universe' what you do with the tongue is very important. Because it is used to help join the upper gap between the Ren and the Du meridians.

The smooth, continuous flow of energy through these two meridians is known as the 'Small Universe' or 'Micro Cosmic Orbit'.

But for exercises such as those found in the 18 Lohan Hands the aim is not to connect the two meridians and therefore where you place the tongue is not important.

If you want to move the tongue as you practice that's up to you, but there is no need to when practicing the dynamic patterns of Shaolin Qigong.

That's another thing less to think about whilst doing your practice.

Let me hear you say: 'Simple, Direct and Effective'.

June 5th – 7 Qigong Tips

- 1) **Relaxed and Gentle** – *The two most important words in Qigong. Let your movements be relaxed and gentle, let your breathing be relaxed and gentle, let any thoughts be relaxed and gentle.*
- 2) **Where you practice is important** – *Avoid dirty, noisy, crowded busy places if you want to make the most of your Qigong training.*
- 3) **In through the nose, out through the mouth** – *If you're practicing Shaolin Cosmos Qigong.*
- 4) **Skills are more important than forms** – *The 3 core skills are: entering a QSoM, Energy Flow and Standing Meditation. Mastering these skills is far more important than how many forms you know.*
- 5) **Simple, direct and effective** – *Qigong is not complex; it is a simple and powerful way to work directly with your body's vital energy.*
- 6) **If you must use the mind during your Qigong training** – *Imagine good cosmic energy flowing in when you breathe in and negative energy flowing out of you when you breathe out.*
- 7) **Enjoy your practice** – *This is perhaps the most important tip on this page for your success with Qigong.*
- 8) **Be clear on why you're practicing Qigong** – *If you don't know what your target is, how will you ever reach it?*

Wow, I just noticed that's 8 tips. What can I say? I just like to over deliver!

June 6th – Don't Get Hooked On The Light Show

In the first year of my 'proper' Qigong training I often felt that what I was doing wasn't very good.

Why?

Because I was comparing my results with other peoples. Especially what I call the 'light shows'. I read the stories of fellow students who had visitations from past Qigong/Kung Fu masters, who received wisdom direct from the Buddha's, who saw Bodhisattvas and a whole host of wonderful experiences.

I never did and I felt that maybe I was doing something wrong.

Then I made two discoveries from discussing these feelings with my teacher.

- 1) *All these type of experiences are still of the 'phenomenal' realm of existence, in our spiritual practice we are aiming to transcend the things of the phenomenal realm and therefore, whilst nice, we shouldn't pay too much attention to them.*
- 2) *Such experiences can be a hindrance to further spiritual progress, especially if the practitioner gets hooked on them. For example always expecting something 'special' to happen when they practice.*

Many masters have said that these types of experience are actually distractions and to exercise caution with them.

With this new understanding I was able to enjoy my practice even more and enjoy newfound happiness and increased resistance to the stresses and strains of daily life.

June 7th – Not Too Fast And Not Too Slow

Most Qigong exercises are made up of more than one move or pattern and these patterns are usually performed smoothly as one continuous movement.

I say usually because clearly there are exceptions, like *Zhan Zhuang*, which is just one pattern, and many other Qigong exercises which make use of deliberate pauses.

The purpose of this post is to bring to your attention the importance of performing your Qigong at the right speed. It is common for new students to practice Qigong too fast. It can take a while to believe that slow, relaxed and gentle really can be beneficial to health.

Then there is the other end of the stick. Those who move too:

S — l — o — w — l — y

You can still enhance Energy flow by super slow movements, but if you're new to Qigong you probably won't notice it.

If you're happy with your Qigong results then 'very good, carry on...', but if you think there is some room for improvement try increasing slightly the speed at which you perform your Qigong and then slow it down a little. Be sensitive and aware to how you feel.

A useful rule of thumb is to let the breath guide the speed of your movements. I.e. when you get to the end of one 'move' you should have exhaled fully and then when you get to the end of the next move you should have inhaled fully, and so on.

Today's Reminder:

Make sure your Qigong practice isn't too fast and isn't too slow. Like Goldilocks you're looking for 'just right!'.

June 8th – Following Instructions In Qigong

A common question I get from Shaolin Qigong students is:

“Why do we Bang the Heavenly Drum 24 times?”

I usually answer:

“Because we don’t do it 23 times or 25 times”

It is our job as Qigong students to remember that we don’t learn Qigong we practice Qigong. It’s important to ask questions, but it is also important to follow instructions.

Not blindly, never blindly. Blind obedience to a teacher is not something I would encourage. But at the same time respect is important.

If you are unable to respect your teachers instructions, especially after asking a question about it and receiving an unsatisfactory answer (*from your view point*) – then it might be a good idea for you to change teachers.

The answer to the question above is:

The number 24 corresponds with the Chinese solar year that is divided into 24 seasons.*

(*Excerpt from my book: Smiling From The Heart. Page 50)

June 9th – The Importance of Renewal

Have you noticed how as a society we place a huge value on expending vital energy – *working hard, playing hard* – and virtually none on renewing it?

There is an unhealthy attitude that if you participate in activities that help you to recharge – *resting during the day, taking time out, meditating* – then you are lazy or a ‘slacker’.

The truth is that renewing energy, taking the time to recharge is vital for career success, health and happiness.

Even NASA recommends taking ‘power naps’.

You don’t expect your mobile phone to keep working without allowing it to recharge fully on a regular basis, yet that’s exactly what many of us demand from our bodies and our minds when we try to ‘burn the candle at both ends’.

Today’s Reminder:

Treat your Qigong training as vital ‘recovery time’. A time for renewal, to recharge and get you ready to play at your best.

June 10th – Get Up With Qigong

Today's Reminder:

How you start your day has a dramatic, long reaching influence on how the rest of your day will turn out.

Spending just 15 minutes in a morning practicing Qigong is the best way I know to stack the odds for a great day firmly in your favour.

But if you'd rather spend that extra 15 minutes in bed and then rush around like a chicken with its head cut off, trying to remember everything you need to do before going out of the door, well, that's up to you.

June 11th – Soma And Psyche

In a nutshell, Soma means *body* and Psyche means *mind*. In Qigong healing the unity of Soma and Psyche is a very important principal. It is important that we treat the whole patient and not just the illness.

For millennia Qigong masters have known that the body and the mind are connected, Chinese masters state:

*“The body is alive because of the Mind
and the Mind operates through the body”*

A fact which western medicine is slowly been coming to grips with.

I like to think of the breath as a helpful bridge between the body and the Mind. Even something as simple as 3 deep breaths can be enough to relax the body and calm the mind.

June 12th – Qigong Don't #4

Don't practice Qigong when you are tense, irritated, furious, frightened or anxious.

Negative emotions block Energy flow and are harmful to the 'heart'.

Yes, continued practice of Qigong will help you to overcome these negative emotions, but it is best to wait until they have passed before practicing. Especially if you are new to Qigong training.

June 13th – Time To Review Your Qigong Training?

The aims and objectives you set for your Qigong training need to be reviewed on a regular basis. They're not something you do once and then set aside to be lost or gather dust.

Regularly reviewing your aims and objectives allows you:

- *To make certain you're making progress in the right direction towards them.*
- *To discover if you've already achieved some of them.*
- *To check that they are still valid and appropriate for you.*
- *To promote personal growth.*

You're constantly changing, even at a sub atomic particle level. So it is wise to review your aims and objectives to make sure they are still relevant to you.

There was a time when I wanted to become the best martial artist I could. But today, this aim is no longer important to me. You need to know that some changes are not easy to make. It took me a while to let go of this aim, especially as it was one I had invested so much time, energy and effort in working towards.

Setting clear aims and objectives for your Qigong training is a vital part of getting maximum benefit from your practice. And so is reviewing them regularly. Practicing Qigong causes you to change (*for the better*) and as you change you might have to let go of those things that were once important, to make space for things more appropriate for where you are now.

Today's Reminder:

Reviewing your aims and objectives, being honest and sometimes being courageous are essential steps towards your own personal evolution.

June 14th – 7 Steps To Perfect Qigong Practice

Today I'd like to introduce you to a tool that I use with my students to help them get the benefits of Qigong quicker and easier. Over the next 7 days will take a look at this tool in more detail.

You see I discovered a long time ago that from start to finish there are 7 'steps' to a Qigong training session. What I also discovered was that these 7 steps exported well to other Qigong systems and to the practice of Taijiquan and Shaolin Kung Fu training too.

The more I explored them, the more versatile and useful I realised they were. I knew from my own Qigong 'beginner days' that a big hurdle to gaining the benefits of Qigong was remembering what to do next.

It's all very well to enter a powerful, heightened state of consciousness (QSoM), and then blow it because you have to stop and think about what to do next. This tool enables you to know what comes next easily.

I also heard from practitioners of other Qigong systems that they were able to use these 7 steps to complement their own Qigong training. I wish I could take credit for these 7 steps, but the truth is I literally stumbled over them whilst teaching. My only contribution was to notice them and write them down.

I call it the Perfect Qigong System (PQS). But please keep in mind that it is just a tool. Its purpose is to help you gain the benefits of Qigong quicker and easier. And like all tools once it's done its job, you can leave it behind.

Like a car takes you to your destination, once you've arrived you leave the car behind, you don't take it in with you. It's the same with PERFECT.

June 15th – Step 1: P Is For Preparation

The scout motto is ‘Be Prepared’ and it’s the first step of PERFECT. Because how you start your Qigong training will have a significant affect on the benefits you get from it.

Deliberately preparing for our practice allows us to put the needle on the record (*for those who still remember vinyl*) and get ready to press play.

I usually start by walking around briskly for about 30 paces, this is a signal to my body that I’m about to start my practice. Then I find a safe spot to practice and make sure I am standing upright and balanced.

To do this I check my nose, sternum and belly button are in a straight line and that my weight is evenly distributed between both feet and between the balls and the heel of each foot.

One of the major causes of blockages to harmonious energy flow through the meridians of the body is poor posture. Just standing upright and balanced is enough to start improving energy flow.

I also find it useful to make sure the spine is ‘long’ what I mean by this is that you tip your pelvis forwards slightly, just to take the pressure of the lower back.

Once you’re Prepared, you’re ready for Step 2.

June 16th – Step 2: E Is For Enter A Qigong State Of Mind

Recall: Qigong is (*usually*) gentle external movements, co-ordinated with the breathing and performed in a meditative state of mind.

We achieve this meditative state of mind by deliberately entering a Qigong State of Mind or QSoM for short.

This is one of the 3 core skills of Qigong and like all skills you can only acquire it by practicing it (and practicing it, and practicing it...). If you practice Qigong without this meditative state of mind or QSoM then you cannot gain the full benefits that Qigong has to offer.

To enter a QSoM you relax:

- 1) **Physically** – *Systematically working from the top of the head to the feet making sure your skin, your muscles, your bones, your organs and every part of your body is as physically relaxed as possible. Without falling over!*
- 2) **Emotionally** – *Letting go of all feelings. Feelings, especially negative feelings are like big heavy weights. If you hold on to them, it's like filling a big rucksack up and dragging it around with you. Holding onto negative emotions wears you out.*
- 3) **Mentally** – *Clearing the mind of all thoughts. Wondering what to have for breakfast, or working out how to tell your boss that you need more time for a project is not something you do whilst practicing Qigong. Such thoughts are distractions and will dilute the results of your Qigong.*
- 4) **Spiritually** – *The best way to relax Spiritually is to....(I'll tell you tomorrow)*

June 17th – Step 3: R Is For Really Smile From Your Heart

I'm certain you know by now that when I use the word heart I am referring to the TCM view of the Heart i.e. the seat of the mind, Spirit, the master controller.

If you're anything like me – *an over thinker* – then there's a really good chance you're going to wrestle with this step of your Qigong practice. I certainly did. I remember being told time and time again not to think about it, but to just do it.

I never felt like I could.

Until one day someone told me to try one of the following:

- *To imagine a beautiful flower blossoming within*
- *To get a picture of a loved one*
- *To imagine the feeling when a child smiles at you for no reason*
- *To remember what it feels like when you see a gorgeous sunset*
- *And even to just: Put a big cheesy grin on my face.*

Eventually, with much practice (*and no thinking*) I finally got it.

You'll know when you've got it because smiling from the heart is a big sensation. It feels like your smile is beaming out into the world, it is bigger than your physical body. And you don't have to have a massive cheesy grin on your face (*unless it helps*).

Feel free to practice smiling from the heart any time you feel like it. Don't just save it for your practice!

Quote: “*Don't think. FEEL. It's like a finger pointing at the moon. Do not concentrate on the finger or you will miss all of the heavenly glory!*” – Bruce Lee in Enter The Dragon (1940 – 1973).

June 18th – Step 4: F is for Form

Recall: Qigong is a composite of Form, Energy and Mind.

For too many Qigong practitioners, form is Qigong. It's not their fault; it's how they've been taught.

The core skills of Shaolin Qigong and other Qigong systems have been closely kept, jealously guarded secrets for centuries. In some systems they were kept so secret they've been completely lost.

Many well-intentioned Qigong teachers teach Qigong without ever having been taught these skills by their teachers. It's a very sad state of affairs.

But it's not unique to Qigong.

Taijiquan, Shaolin Kung Fu, Yoga – are just a few of the arts that have had their essence '*lost in translation*', that have become form focused only.

But luckily for us, we are aware that Qigong Form is only 1 of the 7 steps in our Qigong training.

Tomorrow I'll share with you the 2nd of the 3 core skills of Shaolin Qigong: Energy flow.

Until then...Enjoy your practice.

June 19th – Step 5: E Is For Energy Flow

Recall: Qigong is a way of deliberately working with your body's vital energy (Qi or Chi) to promote health, vitality, longevity, mental and spiritual cultivation. But how do you work with the body's vital energy?

The answer is Energy flow. It is the 2nd core skill of Shaolin Qigong but was also utilized in many other Qigong schools or systems. The problem is that it was kept so secret, only being taught to the highest ranking students (and emperors) that it is virtually unheard of today and completely missing from most Qigong systems.

If you don't have Energy flow in your Qigong training then I hate to say it, but you're not going to get the best results that practicing Qigong can offer.

Form practiced with correct breathing and in a QSoM is used to deliberately work with and enhance your natural energy flow. Once you can feel your energy flowing or (after 10 – 15 reps) you just let go and do nothing.

The aim being to remove blockages in the meridians = *good health*. Then to increase the vigour of the flow = *vitality*. And finally to have an abundance of vigorous, harmonious energy flow = *longevity*.

This is perhaps the true brilliance of Qigong. You see you don't need to know where the blockages. Because Qi/Energy has it's own 'intelligence', when left alone it will automatically flow to areas of low energy (*which is where the blockages are*) and work at removing them.

Energy flow or Flowing Breeze Swaying Willows as it is more elegantly known is vital to your success with Qigong.

June 20th – Step 6: C Is For Cosmic Balance

The signature of Energy flow is movement. To restore cosmic balance (Yin/Yang harmony) we must have stillness. This is achieved through standing meditation.

Cosmic Balance, standing meditation, standing Zen – *call it what you will* – is also the 3rd of the 3 core skills. It helps us to consolidate our practice. If we likened energy flow to generating wealth, then standing Zen is securing that generated wealth in the bank.

Now, if you're like the vast majority of people taming the 'monkey mind' will take some doing. Another brilliant aspect of Qigong training is that every time we practice, we are also increasing our skill at taming the monkey mind through meditation.

The highest instruction is to 'Think of nothing'. But this is very difficult to do. So we can use the following instruction:

“Use the one thought to overcome the 10 000 thoughts”

And what is the one thought? It is this:

When you breathe in through your nose you say the word 'In' to yourself.

And

When you breathe out through your mouth you say the word 'out' to yourself.

When you become aware that you are thinking about anything else (*and you will*) just bring your mindfulness back to 'In' and 'Out'.

After a few minutes of this, remember we want quality not quantity, you are ready for the final step of your Qigong training session....

June 21st – Step 7: Time To Complete

It is very important to complete your Qigong training session correctly. When you practice Qigong correctly you enter a higher state of consciousness I call a QSoM. At higher levels you may even catch glimpses of ‘Cosmic’ reality or Satori.

This is all very well and good. But we live and operate in the phenomenal/ material realm of existence.

Completing your practice correctly is important because it allows you to make a smooth transition from the Cosmic to the phenomenal, the Spiritual to the material. Whilst bringing the benefits of your Qigong training back with you.

Why is this so important?

Because if you stay in a blissed out state it is very easy get ‘shocks’ from the world around you. At the least these shocks are enough to undo the good results you got from your practice. At the worst these shocks can disturb your energy flow and leave you feeling fearful and anxious for no obvious reason.

These are the steps I teach to complete your practice and prepare yourself to function at your best in the phenomenal realm:

- *Face massage*
- *Point massage*
- *Bang the heavenly drum*
- *Walk around briskly for at least 30 paces*

It’s a bit like putting your clothes back on before you go outside!

Simple, direct and effective.

June 22nd – Qigong Reality Check

I'm always at pains to point out that Qigong is no 30-day miracle cure. The expectations of many Qigong students are unrealistic. But it's not their fault. When you read some of the claims in the sales literature for what Qigong can do, is it any wonder that people want to overcome Cancer or develop 'super human' powers by next month?

Whilst many of these claims can be true of Qigong, the one thing that is rarely explained is that it takes time and effort. Can you remember what Qigong or Chi Kung means?

Gong or Kung means work. You have to work to gain the benefits of Qigong. Luckily for us, that work is enjoyable.

You didn't get into whatever shape you are in overnight, and you're not going to get into what ever shape you want to get into overnight either.

I guess a lot of people don't want to hear that, it sure isn't sexy! But I believe it to be true.

Yes, in Qigong theory there is only 1 illness and that illness is Yin/Yang disharmony caused by the disruption of harmonious energy flow through the meridians of the body.

Yes, in theory if we can remove these blockages utilising qigong exercises and restore harmonious energy flow then we can overcome any illness.

But that doesn't mean that Qigong can cure every illness. If the illness has been left untreated for too long, it may be impossible to restore full, harmonious energy flow.

It is important to realise this.

June 23rd – Certainty And Uncertainty

If you ever needed confirmation that God/Universe/Tao has a sense of humour, consider this:

We have a need for certainty in our lives. It brings stability and security. Knowing where your next meal and pay packet is going to come from helps you focus on and enjoy other areas of your life. We also have a need for uncertainty. Do you ever crave adventure? Do you know what someone is going to say before they say it? Do you ever feel that your life is 'Groundhog Day'?

'But Marcus' I can hear you asking 'what has this got to do with Qigong?' and the answer is: Everything.

Your Qigong gives you certainty. You know that it's always going to be there. You know what to do, you know how to do it, you know when you do it, you know where you do it, and you know you're going to feel better at the end of it than you did at the start. If it hasn't happened already, then you need to know that at some point. You're going to get bored with your practice. Everyone's different. It might be months, it might be years, but at some point every Qigong practitioner I know has fallen 'out of love' with their training.

Enjoying your practice is hard when it feels like a chore. When you feel so certain about it, that there doesn't seem much point in practicing. The solution is to introduce some uncertainty. This needn't be complicated.

You can practice a new qigong exercise you can practice in a new location, at a different time of the day (try midnight or sunrise for a change) and so on. Just introduce enough uncertainty to make your practice feel 'new' and alive again.

Certainty and Uncertainty are opposing, yet complementary forces, did anybody out there say Yin/Yang? You need to find a balance between the two that works for you if you're going to keep enjoying your practice and increasing your skills.

June 24th – Qigong Don't #5

If you have any problems on your mind, put them aside, at least for the 15 minutes of your Qigong practice. If you can't stop thinking about a particular problem, then it is best to wait until you feel calmer.

If the problem is that your mind is constantly wondering then one solution is to be gently mindful of what you are doing.

Since you only have one mind, when you focus gently, yet fully on your practice, i.e. being aware when you are breathing in and out, what you are doing with your body etc. – then there is no room for other thoughts which may previously have appeared to be so important.

Once your mind is calmer, let go of this mindfulness. There's no need to use it all the way through your practice. Only when your 'monkey mind' gets out of hand.

June 25th – Stress Is Not Your Enemy

As far as I'm concerned stress is a sign of life and the only way to get rid of it is to get dead, which I can't recommend.

You can increase your resistance to stress and surprise; surprise Qigong is a brilliant way to do this. In fact it's just one of the many 'side effects' you'll notice from correct, continued, daily practice.

Have you noticed how as a society we place an emphasis on the expenditure of energy, but frown on resting, relaxing, renewing, recharging activities? .

Stress is a sign of life, too much stress is a sign that you need to take a rest, relax, recharge or renew (let's call these the 4R's)- but you need to do it on a regular basis.

Practicing Qigong twice a day is usually more than enough to keep stress at manageable levels, but if some event comes into your life that tips your stress quota into overdrive and threatens to overwhelm you, make sure you build in deliberate 4R time.

If you're suffering from too much stress, take a look at your daily routine. Have you deliberately built in times when you enjoy any of the 4R's? And if you do have them built in, do you actually take them?

I like to work in 90 minute 'chunks' with a 20-minute 4R session at the end of it. But I'll hold my hand up and admit that I often I skip these 4R sessions. It's very easy to do.

Today's Reminder:

Stress is not your enemy. Stress can help you to focus, to dig deep, to play your A game, to exceed your own expectations, set new Personal Bests and it can be a push to improve your life. Not taking time to deliberately rest, relax, renew, recharge is the enemy.

June 26th – Generating Energy Flow

Much of the material written about Qigong mentions Generating Energy Flow. I've come to believe that this term is a little bit misleading. I think a clearer definition would be *enhancing* energy flow.

You see if you are reading this then your energy is already flowing.

If energy flow stops, death quickly follows. So if you're alive (*and I'm guessing you are*) then you're already generating a flow of energy.

This is great news because it means no matter where you are starting out from with your Qigong training, whether you are practicing to overcome illness, or to catch glimpses of cosmic reality, your energy is flowing – you are alive.

Through the daily, correct practice of Qigong you can enhance the energy flow you already have and that can only result in good things.

June 27th – Control

Many people find when they start to relax deeply they get to feel a little irritable. This is very common amongst Qigong students.

Relaxing deeply means letting go physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. This can often be very scary. Many of us may think that letting go, means losing control but this simply isn't the case.

Control is often an illusion; it can be a comforting one to start with, but ultimately leads to tension, frustration and the expenditure of massive amounts of energy trying to keep everything in place.

I would go so far as to say that the only real control any of us have is over our own thoughts, actions and deeds.

I used to be a 'control freak' until I realised there were so many things, people and places outside of my sphere of control.

If you don't believe me, try standing on the beach and telling the tide to go out when it's coming in. Or try controlling your bowels when you've got explosive diarrhoea.

If you find it hard to relax without getting agitated, it's important to let go gradually and the daily practice of Qigong is an excellent opportunity for you to let go just a little bit more each day.

Letting go is freedom, and if it helps, remember the serenity prayer (using the word God as you understand it):

*God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change.
Courage to change the things I can
and wisdom to know the difference.*

June 28th – Qigong And Headaches

Question: *What connects your head to the rest of your body?*

That's right, your neck.

Now there are a few Qigong exercises that offer significant benefits, even when practiced at the level of form only. There aren't many, trust me.

Rotating Winch is one such exercise.

Practiced at the level of form, you give all of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, bones, connective tissues and meridians running through this area a really good stretch.

This encourages your Qi to flow harmoniously to your head and it can bring great relief to those who suffer from frequent headaches and migraine.

June 29th – Qigong And Sex

Many people practice Qigong to improve their health and vitality. Many martial artists add Qigong to their training to develop internal force. Scholars of the past and the present value Qigong for its ability to improve and increase mental clarity. Holy people and monks practice Qigong for its expertise in promoting Spiritual cultivation.

Emperors of the past, with many wives, would practice Qigong and benefit from its ability to enhance sexual performance and prevent the side effects of too much sexual activity.

From the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) perspective anything to do sexual health and functioning is linked to the Kidney system.

Any Qigong exercises that benefit the Kidney system will be of value to anyone suffering from infertility, impotence, premature ejaculation or any sexual problem. It will also be of value to those who wish to increase sexual performance.

Perhaps the best Qigong exercise I could recommend would be: Nourishing Kidneys from the Shaolin 18 Lohan Hands Qigong set.

June 30th – Overcome And Prevent Pain And Illness

The same Qigong exercises that can be used to overcome pain and illness, can also be used to prevent pain and illness, to increase vitality, promote mental clarity and enhance spiritual cultivation.

Many people are amazed and then confused by this marvellous attribute of Qigong.

How is it possible?

Qigong achieves two fundamental tasks: Cleansing and building.

Some Qigong exercises emphasize one task more than the other, but here's the important part – all of them achieve both tasks.

The key is Energy flow.

You don't even need to know whether you should cleanse or build, just enjoy your energy flow, let go, do nothing and let everything be done for you.

Leave it to your Qi, to God, to Tao.

Today's Reminder:

Smooth energy flow = good health

Vigorous energy flow = good health and vitality

Abundant energy flow = good health, vitality and longevity

July 1st – How Do You Know If You’re Eating An Orange?

I’m often asked this question about Energy flow:

How do I know if I’m moving my body or if it’s my Qi moving my body?

My usual reply is how do you know if you’re eating an orange? The answer is, you just know from your experience.

After a few lessons, it is very common to see new Qigong students in a class begin to let go enough to enjoy Energy flow. It usually starts with a gentle swaying and then at some point you will see them tense and the movements will stop.

They tense because they’re about to lose their balance and instead of going with it, they tense their leg muscles.

Eventually they learn to let go and if their Qi moves them forwards they just move forwards and if their Qi moves them backwards, they just move backwards.

Are you moving your body, or is Qi moving it?

You’ll know from your own experience.

July 2nd – Qigong Trouble Shooting Tips #5

***Problem:** Nothing seems to be happening.*

***Solution:** Assuming you have been practicing Qigong for four weeks or more and you have noticed no benefits, start by checking that your form is correct. If it is correct next check that your breathing is relaxed and gentle.*

If your form is correct and your breathing is correct, next check that your mind is relaxed, that is you're not worrying about whether your form is correct etc.

July 3rd – Qigong Don't #6

Qigong Exercises and Sex – Many books and schools of Qigong advise against sexual relations for weeks or months if you want to gain benefits from your practice.

Whilst there are certain benefits to be gained from abstinence whilst practicing, these benefits are not worth damaging a healthy relationship with your partner.

My advise is avoid practicing Qigong and then having sex, best to wait at least 30 minutes after your practice.

But I highly recommend practicing Qigong after sex, especially for males, to help replace lost energy.

July 4th – We Don't Learn Qigong

'We practice Kung Fu, not merely learn it' – Sigung Ho Fatt Nam

Whilst this quote relates to Kung Fu, it also applies to Qigong.

There are many Qigong 'scholars' out there who know mountains of Qigong theory and philosophy, but only practice Qigong Form.

Whilst it is valuable to understand some of the theory and principals that underpin and confirm why Qigong is such a powerful tool for healing, happiness and health – *it is far from essential.*

If you are interested in healing, happiness and health then the simple fact is that you must practice Qigong. Knowing is never enough. You will only gain the benefits of Qigong through practicing Qigong, ideally twice a day – every single day.

And that is why I say:

We don't learn Qigong we practice Qigong.

July 5th – Fear

Qigong is a powerful therapeutic tool for overcoming fear. If you believe in such things, as reincarnation then there is a belief that imprints from past life's can be carried forwards into the next life.

E.g. a fly being eaten by a spider, but it is a good fly and becomes a human, but the fear is still imprinted.

It is interesting to note that the first part that grows on a human foetus becomes the kidneys.

Whether you believe in re-incarnation or not (*and there's no need to for Qigong to be of benefit for you*) it's important to understand that from the Qigong perspective the Kidneys are very important for overcoming fear, so a Qigong Exercise like 'Reverse Hands Bend Waist' (*A.K.A. Nourishing Kidneys*) is a great form to practice to help overcome fear or phobia.

Caveat: But only when practiced as Qigong of course.

July 6th – Too Smart

Whatever branch, school or system of Qigong you are practicing. It's important to avoid trying to be smarter than your teacher.

If you have done your research and found the best teacher, teaching the best method to help you achieve your aims and objectives then follow their instructions.

If they tell you to:

- *Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.*
- *To not worry about what you do with your tongue.*
- *Practice Horse Riding Stance (Chat Ma) every day.*
- *Turn your feet inwards whilst doing a particular stance.*
- *And so on...*

Just do as you're told. Arts like Qigong are usually past down from Master to student. The student eventually becomes a Master and they pass the art down to their students and so on. As a result the material that makes up the 'syllabus' of your school is the result of the crystallization of the past masters.

They've done the hard work for you. They've worked out what goes best with what in order to get the results you want. All you have to do is follow instructions. When you try to be smarter than your teacher by combining techniques from other systems, or bolting on something you've read about. You're not being a good student.

If you do not respect your teacher enough to follow their instructions to the best of your ability, then why are you bothering to learn from them?

Please keep in mind that every good teacher of Qigong, or any subject, hopes that their students will surpass them in ability. But the biggest disappointment is that so few students have the discipline required to do so.

July 7th – You Are Not A Procrastinator

Personally I question whether there's any such thing as a procrastinator. I believe it's more a question of 'lacking motivation'.

For example:

- *I hate doing my accounts, that's why they're always left until the last possible moment until I do them.*
- *I hated doing my coursework at University, that's why it was always left until the night before.*

I'll wager that if you look at those areas of your life where you procrastinate, you'll find that what you're really lacking is enthusiasm for the task that needs completing.

And it's the same for your Qigong training. If you find that it regularly gets to the end of the day and you still haven't done your practice and you're having to squeeze it in. Don't call yourself a procrastinator. Realise that your lacking enthusiasm for it.

What can you do?

One of the best ways to get the 'fire' back for doing your practice is to remember why you are doing your practice. In the past I have found that being clear on my aims and objectives is the greatest motivation.

And if that fails I would tell myself that missing one day of training was actually more like missing 10 and that would usually do the trick.

Today's Reminder:

You're not a procrastinator; you're simply lacking motivation for the task that needs doing, whatever it may be.

July 8th – Faith In Qigong

I have great faith in the effectiveness of Qigong as a tool for health, vitality, longevity, happiness, mental and spiritual cultivation – personal evolution.

But I wasn't born with this faith, so where did it come from?

I have come to realise that faith in anything starts with belief.

I started out with a belief that Qigong worked. This belief originally came from the books I had read and teachers I had practiced with who were living examples of the benefits that Qigong has to offer.

As I continued my Qigong training, I encountered more experiences that backed up my belief and so it grew stronger and stronger until gradually it grew into faith.

You don't have to have faith in Qigong for it to work. I've had plenty of success using Qigong healing techniques with members of the public who had little belief in Qigong (*but who'd also run out of conventional healing options*).

But let me tell you, faith in the effectiveness of Qigong will turbo charge your result like nothing else and it starts with belief.

July 9th – Lee Child’s Qigong Lesson

I discovered an interesting fact yesterday that highlights an important Qigong principal.

It happened whilst I was buying a copy of Lee Child’s ‘One Shot’. In case you didn’t know, Lee Child is the author of thrillers which feature the character ‘Jack Reacher’ who is described as: ‘Men want to be him, women want to be with him’. LOL! Love it.

Lee Child’s books regularly top the bestseller charts and have been translated into over 40 different languages. It’s fair to say they’re very popular and Lee Child is a very successful author. As I was buying the book the counter assistant said:

“I went to see Lee Child at an event in 2004 and there were only 11 people there, I think it’d be very different now.”

Being Qigong obsessed, I realised that this is very much like the Qigong process. We start our practice and for a good few months, nothing really seems to be happening.

Yes, we feel good, we feel relaxed at the end of our training session, but those feelings don’t often last very long and aren’t very strong. It doesn’t take much to knock down those ‘Haaahhh, all’s right with the world’ feelings.

But if we persevere, if we continue our practice, little by little, often so gradual we don’t notice the changes. We become more resilient to coughs and colds, we’re nicer people to be around, we’re more relaxed, it takes more to upset us and the doctor wants to know what you’ve been doing because you’ve made such improvements with your health. Success with Qigong, real, long term, lasting, strong success with Qigong, like becoming a best selling author, comes from perseverance.

Stick with it.

July 10th – Brain Beats Brawn

Qigong is simple when you know what you're doing – I realised this whilst helping my dad to fit some new cabinets in his kitchen.

I was struggling to get a side panel out as it was no longer needed, because the cabinet would be holding the weight of the work surface above.

I had undone all the connecting screws, and was huffing and puffing trying to get it out. It was wedged in pretty good and I was starting to sweat from the exertion. My dad walked in, took one look at the situation, lifted the work surface up slightly releasing the pressure on the side panel and it popped out effortlessly.

My dad called it 'brains over brawn', I call it working smarter instead of harder. Either way it demonstrates how easy something is when you know what you are doing.

Today's Reminder:

Qigong can seem complex, confusing and contradictory when you start out. But once you know what you're doing you realise it really is very simple, direct and effective.

When it comes to health, vitality, longevity, mental and spiritual cultivation, I believe that Qigong is the most brilliant example of working smarter instead of harder.

July 11th – Nothing Is Good Or Bad

It's important that we remember that life is an on going and fluid process. Something that seems to be bad now may actually turn out to be a blessing later on. Let me give you an example.

When I wrote my first book Shaolin Chi Kung book, I gave it to a VIP to review and make suggestions on improvements, additions etc. I'd given them a hardcopy print out of the book and shortly after I received a phone call explaining that I hadn't put any page numbers on it. As a result any comments, corrections or adjustments they might make would take ages for them to explain where they needed to be made.

I felt like an idiot. The solution was to add the page numbers to the only other copy, which was sat on my computer, and upload the book to a place on the web. They could then later download it and make any changes etc.

A few days later my computer hard drive started acting funny and to cut a long story short, I lost 2 years of data – family photographs, videos, marketing, newsletters, personal correspondence, Qigong notes, customer data, accounts, projects, my book, the new website I was building – all gone.

Luckily for me I had forgotten to put page numbers on the hard copy manuscript and as a result had had to upload a copy 'to the cloud'. Relieved is not the word. I learned 2 very valuable lessons from this experience:

- 1) *Labelling an event as 'good' or 'bad' is short sighted. Not putting page numbers on my manuscript was, I thought, bad, but it turned out to be very, very good as it meant I had to create a virtual copy and saved me from losing all of my work on the book!*
- 2) *To regularly back up my data!*

July 12th – It's Natural To Be Healthy

Today I was reminded that:

- *We are constantly exposed to disease causing agents.*
- *Our bodies are overcoming serious illnesses regularly without our even being aware of it.*
- *There are millions of germs in our body and many of them are deadly'*

And yet we don't get sick.

Why?

Because it's natural to be healthy. Recall that in Qigong there is only one illness, regardless of what we call the symptoms. That illness is Yin Yang disharmony.

When it comes to health, Yin is used to symbolize our body's natural ability to respond appropriately to our ever-changing internal and external environment. Yang is used to symbolize anything that causes illness.

Practicing Qigong helps our bodies to continue to respond appropriately to anything that causes illness – this is what it means to be healthy.

July 13th – Guidance

An electronic speed controller (ESC) is basically a computerized throttle used in radio controlled model cars, boats and planes. ESC's have a small computer chip and some transistors that take the throttle signal from a transmitter and send the proportionate amount of power to turn the motor.

Got that?

If you think that's a bit of a handful, let me tell you that programming them is not for the faint of heart. Though to be fair, most of them today are 'plug and play'.

Now I consider myself reasonably 'techy' with my degree in computer science, but the last ESC I tried to program nearly ended up being attacked by a hammer – and that was with the comprehensive instructions that came with it.

So what did I do?

I took it to an expert at my next race meeting and in a matter of minutes he'd programmed it and it worked perfectly. That could have been an end to it, but I asked him if he would show me how it was done. 15 minutes later I walked away a wiser man.

He admitted that trying to set up the ESC yourself from the instructions was nigh on impossible, yet when someone who knew how to do it, showed you, you could pick it up quite quickly and he was right.

The point?

It reminded me that trying to learn Qigong from a book is nigh on impossible, yet with the guidance of a good teacher you can learn Qigong and fulfil your Qigong aims and objectives quicker and easier.

July 14th – Your Current Limitation

Whenever I'm teaching new Qigong exercises to students I always advise them to practice the form within any current 'limitations' they may have.

It's important for me to point out to them that any limitations they may perceive in their health, whether physical, emotional, mental or spiritual are not necessarily permanent.

If someone has a physical limitation on how far they can raise their arms above their heads, due to an accident then I ask them to 'play their edge', to raise their arms as far as they are able to do so comfortably. And then on the next training to try and raise them just a little bit further – this is playing their edge, it is safe and sustainable.

If you've been given a label on your health or abilities be very careful. I was labelled asthmatic and I believed it for many years. I let it affect what activities I would undertake for fear that 'MY' asthma would strike. Thanks to Qigong I have eliminated the need for daily asthma medication.

I encourage you to take a fresh, objective look at your limitations. Question your beliefs about them, where did they come from, when did you get them, are they still true today?

Your answers may surprise you.

Quote: *"Argue for your limitations, and sure enough they're yours."*
– Richard Bach, Author.

July 15th – Qigong Is Brilliant: Reason #197

Qigong and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) principals can be very tricky to understand, especially if they're taken literally. *Case in point* – I was explaining the 5 Element Processes to a student and their response was along the lines of: “How is that useful?”

Once I'd explained that Earth, Water, Fire, Metal, Wood were symbolic, like Yin and Yang, that helped a bit. When I further explained that the creative and destructive cycles had been used for 1000's of years to help TCM practitioners overcome illness in all it's forms that was also beneficial.

As this conversation continued I was struck by how simple and powerful Qigong is. You can practice Qigong successfully without having to know any theory what so ever. If you are an acupuncturist or Tui Na practitioner, you have to know in great detail where the meridians and important points are.

If you're a herbalist you have to learn a mountain of pharmacopeia information. And let's not even talk about how important a correct diagnosis is to even be able to treat illness effectively. There is a very good reason why TCM practitioners practice and train for many years.

With Qigong, we simply let our body's own vital energy do the healing. It knows:

- *Where the blockages to harmonious energy flow are.*
- *How best to remove them.*
- *What to work on first.*

So you don't have to.

Qigong is incredible and I wish everybody could have access to it because I believe the benefits to the worlds health care would be beyond measure.

July 16th – Vital Energy

I was sat next to a stranger on a train journey between London and Dawlish. We struck up a conversation whilst we waited for the driver to ‘clear some cows off the line’ – *rural living does sometimes have its drawbacks...*

When he asked me what I did, I told them I helped people to live a long, healthy and happy life by teaching them skills and techniques to overcome physical, emotional, mental and spiritual illness. Usually that’s enough to encourage the conversation to take a different route.

But this guy seemed genuinely interested in learning more.

I explained that I teach Qigong, which is the art of deliberately working on your body’s vital energy. And how vital energy is the ‘stuff’ that keeps you and me alive and all of the millions of functions of the body working correctly.

The word ‘deliberately’ got me thinking.

You see we often do Qigong without realizing it. Stretching, tensing and yawning are a few of your body’s ways of working on your vital energy. But when we practice Qigong you get far better results, because you’re doing it deliberately. You benefit from the findings of the Qigong masters of the past.

We who practice Qigong are very fortunate to be doing so.

July 17th – Accountability

Today I want to share with you the number one tool that has enabled me to write and publish 3 books on Qigong, to complete my training when I didn't feel like it, that allowed me to create a 22 week Home Study Course and has also kept me motivated to achieve dozens of important non Qigong events as well.

What is this incredibly powerful tool?

It's called an accountability partner (AP). I first discovered the power of being held accountable when writing my first book. Each week I would have a short talk with my AP. She would start by asking me if I had done the task/s I had agreed to do at the end of last week's call. If I had very good and I asked her the same question.

If not, then we weren't interested in excuses and if necessary a good verbal kick in the pants was handed out.

Next we'd say what we'd commit to getting down by next week and that would be it. These weren't social calls; in fact most calls took less than 5 minutes. But you know what? I'd spent over a year trying to write my first book. Once I got an accountability partner it was written in less than 12 weeks.

It's not hard to find an AP, it can even be a member of your family. The only requirement is that they must hold you to task. If you don't meet the agreed actions you promised to take on the previous call or conversation, they must be able to challenge you on that and not just tell you it's okay.

Today's Reminder:

If you're having difficulties keeping your Qigong training going or want to increase your chances of completing an important project, get yourself an AP!

July 18th – Learning Qigong

If I was pushed to compile a list of the top 10 qualities that make Qigong so brilliant, I think that in position two or three I'd put:

“The benefits from learning Qigong are directly proportional to the effort you put into your practice.”

With the exception of Shaolin Kung Fu, I find there is not much in my life where my rewards are directly related to my efforts.

In many areas of my life the amount of effort, energy, money I expend rarely results in equal payback.

But with Qigong I've found that if I practice I gain beneficial results. And over time as I invest more effort the results I gain are stronger, longer lasting and 'deeper'.

In fact I would be so bold as to claim that the return on investment from your long-term practice of Qigong is considerably more than the time and effort initially invested in learning Qigong.

Enjoy your practice!

July 19th – Qigong Trouble Shooting Tip #6

Problem: Inattention, headache, giddiness

Solution: The likely cause is mental stress. Once you've practiced your chosen Qigong exercise and are confident you know all the moves, do not worry about whether you are doing it correctly. Minor mistakes are okay.

During Energy flow, don't worry if nothing seems to be happening.

Just let go.

During standing meditation don't get frustrated if your mind won't settle, progress is gradual and everyone has the odd day where the mind refuses to be calm. Even using one thought to overcome the 10,000 thoughts proves fruitless. This is normal and happens to all practitioners.

Today's Reminder:

Relax. Smile from your Heart and enjoy your practice.

July 20th – 3 Rules For Qigong Training

- 1) **Don't worry** – when you worry you can't relax. When you can't relax you can't do Qigong. One of the very first steps in practicing Qigong is to enter a Qigong State of Mind; if you are worried entering a QSoM is nearly impossible.

The best course of action is to wait until you are feeling less worried and then do your practice.

- 2) **Don't Intellectualize** – You would never contemplate doing your practice whilst gritting your teeth, tensing your muscles and using 100 units of energy to do a 5 unit of energy task. Yet when you're thinking, thinking, thinking during your practice it has a similar effect.

Aim to keep your mind free of thoughts whilst practicing.

- 3) **Enjoy your practice** – If there was a 'most important' requirement for getting the best from your training this would probably be it. Of course there will be times when your Qigong training will feel like a bit of a drag. That's normal. But overall, to succeed with Qigong you need to enjoy it.

If it helps remind yourself of how relaxed and mentally fresh you feel after your practice. Remember the satisfaction you get from knowing that you've done something good for yourself.

July 21st – Expectations

I've come to realise through my Qigong training that my expectations can set me up for a fall. If I expect something or event to happen, or I expect to feel a particular way after doing something – when it turns out completely different I can easily be left disappointed, frustrated and even confused.

Through the practice of Qigong I have (*gradually*) learned to let go of my expectations. I just do the work and let the outcomes take care of themselves.

Free from expectations about how my practice will make me feel, how it works, how it keeps me healthy or what's going to happen next – I am better able to enjoy what is.

Quote: *“Your proper concern is alone the action of duty, not the fruits of the action. Cast then away all desire and fear for the fruits and perform your duty.”* – The Bhagavad Gita.

Today's Reminder:

Qigong is a journey not a destination.

July 22nd – A Scary Fact

I heard a snippet of news today whilst waiting at the barbers to get my hair cut:

“4 in 10 people can expect to have some form of cancer in their lifetime”

Now that’s a pretty scary statistic. Flipping it around I realised:

“6 out of 10 people will not have some form of cancer in their lives.”

Both are true, but I know which one I prefer!

Mike Hobday (*head of policy Macmillan Cancer Support*) went on to say that lack of fitness, living longer and other lifestyle choices are reasons for the increased risk of cancer.

It immediately struck me (*again*) how beneficial practicing Qigong can be for reducing the risk of cancer.

- 1) *Because I believe it is the best form of exercise you can engage in.*
- 2) *It is well documented for helping you to live a long, healthy and happy life.*
- 3) *As for ‘lifestyle’ choices, a natural by product of practicing Qigong is that negative choices have a habit of disappearing and being replace by positive ones – often with little to no effort on your behalf.*

Thank heavens for Qigong!

July 23rd – Qigong Don't #7

Don't have a heavy meal or a cold bath immediately before or after your Qigong training. Neither should you be hungry.

A heavy meal interferes with energy flow, while water vapour may enter your body through the pores in your skin, which open up during qigong practice.

July 24th – A Meaningful Flow

There is a saying that: “Life is a meaningful flow of energy” but what does this mean?

When energy/Qi flows harmoniously through the energy streams of the body we have good health.

When this meaningful flow of energy is disturbed ill health is the result.

Qigong is a simple, direct and powerful way to restore and maintain the meaningful flow of energy so that we experience good health, vitality and a long happy life.

July 25th – Missing A Day Of Qigong Training

Consider this post heavy weight artillery only to be used if you're finding it hard to maintain your daily Qigong training.

In the past I have used it when all other attempts to get out and do my practice have failed.

I wish I could remember who had first mentioned it to me, and I can't even tell you whether it is true or not. But I know that for me it works.

So here it is, make sure you use it wisely:

Missing a day of Qigong training isn't just missing a day of benefits. It has the same affect as missing 10 days of training.

Right, I'm off to do my training. Are you joining me?

July 26th – I Want To Tell You Something

Whilst this isn't directly related to Qigong, it's important to me that I share this with you now.

As a counsellor I was taught that: 'reassurance doesn't reassure'. Well that might be true in a counselling environment, but as I found out recently, in real life that's just not the case.

My son recently had a seizure, long story short, my whole family has had a week of sleepless nights worrying it might happen again.

Whilst talking to a friend about all this, he reached over, touched my arm and said:

“You're doing alright Marcus”

Nobody has ever told me that before. Its affect on me was profound. I felt like he'd lifted a great heavy weight off my shoulders. As I let out a big sigh, I could feel a massive wave of negativity being released from my body.

And I want to share this gift with you. So to you I say:

“You're doing alright.”

And I mean it. I might not know you personally, but I know that we humans are always doing the best that we can with the tools we have available to us. Even if what we are doing may seem 'crazy' to somebody else.

And that's why I say this to you again:

“You're doing alright, you're doing your best and it's good enough”

For the rest of today, extend to yourself the kind of courtesy and consideration you'd naturally give to someone who needed your help.

July 27th – Is Your Qigong Training Stuck In A Rut?

I first wrote about this subject (*Qigong Exercises Going Nowhere Fast*) over a year ago because nobody else in the Qigong multiverse was talking about it.

Fast forward 13 months and still nobody is talking about it. But I believe it is one of the major reasons why so many people quit practicing Qigong.

It's not a question of 'if' this is going to happen to you; it's a question of 'when'. I first became aware of the solution to this problem after reading a book called 'The Inner Game of Skiing'. The timing couldn't have been better.

I was stuck in a deep rut at the time. No matter what I seemed to do my training just seemed to be getting worse and worse. No results, no motivation, unable to relax, unable to enter a good QSoM, increasing levels of frustration. And then I found the answer.

Quite simply: I'd reached a plateau in my practice.

The solution to plateau's is to keep practicing.

In fact if you ask any professional of any discipline who has been practicing improving skills for a long time, they recognise when they are entering a plateau and the get excited.

Why?

Because they know *plateaus are the precursors of progress*. This holds true from Qigong to Skiing and everything in between. So the next time you feel your training is going nowhere, get excited. Progress could be just around the corner.

July 28th – Into Every Life A Little Rain Must Fall

It is unreasonable to expect your life to be free of pains, problems, trials, upsets, defeats and set backs – no matter how long you’ve been practicing Qigong.

I’ve heard it said a butterfly needs to struggle out of the chrysalis in order to strengthen its wings. Or else it will never fly.

I don’t know how true that is, but it makes sense to me.

Having said that though I do like to try and stack the odds in my favour. So, the saying goes:

Into every life a little rain must fall.

And to that I like to add:

Think of Qigong as your giant golfing umbrella!

Qigong brings valuable benefits to your health, vitality, longevity, mental and spiritual well-being. All of which contribute to your happiness.

Whilst your training doesn’t mean you are safe from getting wet, it can help you to avoid getting a soaking.

July 29th – Qigong Certification

I'm often asked if my Qigong training and courses lead to certification and the answer is a big 'No'.

There is no single, universally recognized regulatory body for Qigong. And until there is, certificates will only be of value to the students who receive them and the schools that issue them.

Some say that regulation is essential to protect the public and for weeding out unsuitable teachers.

I can only agree.

It has been estimated that there are about 2,400 types of Qigong, so you can imagine that the task of evaluating and separating the 'wheat from the chaff' is not going to be easy.

Personally I would welcome the establishment of a single Qigong regulatory body, but until it materializes I won't be in a hurry to hand out certificates.

July 30th – Why Do You Practice Qigong?

Whether you practice Qigong for health, vitality, longevity, internal force, mental or spiritual cultivation (*or all of the above*) the underlying reason why we practice Qigong is to complement our lives.

The full story though is that we practice Qigong to complement our lives, not for it to take over our lives.

Qigong training can help us to be better at everything we do, by improving our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health and well-being. And it is worth investing the effort required to develop the skills of Qigong.

But, there needs to be a balance.

It is possible to take your practice too far and then instead of being a benefit to your life it can become a hindrance.

How can you tell if you're taking your practice too seriously, or too far? This is a tough call because we're all unique.

But as a 'measuring stick' I'd offer you this consideration: If you could do something before you began practicing Qigong, then you can continue to do it after you start practicing Qigong and often times you'll find you do it even better as a result.

So, if you find that you're deliberately forcing yourself to not do things that you used to enjoy doing before practicing Qigong, then you might want to 'slow down' a little and remember that we practice Qigong to complement our lives.

July 31st – 5 Qualities Of A Great Qigong Teacher

Great Qigong teachers have always been rare and hard to find. There is a good reason why I invested over £18,000 and travelled 10's of thousands of miles to increase my Qigong skills.

I've had a lot of people asking me recently what to look for in a good Qigong teacher and I advise them to look for the 5 following qualities:

- 1) ***They must be an example of what they teach*** – *I would recommend against learning from a teacher who is ill, gets sick a lot or is lacking in energy.*
- 2) ***Be knowledgeable*** – *But remember we don't learn Qigong we practice it. You're not looking for a Qigong theory master!*
- 3) ***Teach in a systematic manner*** – *You shouldn't have to make 'quantum leaps' in your understanding in order to be able to use and benefit from their teaching.*
- 4) ***Be inspirational*** – *As shocking as it might sound, Qigong training can often seem a little boring. A good teacher helps you to stay inspired.*
- 5) ***Have high moral values*** – *E.g. if a teacher has a history of sleeping with their students, best to avoid them.*

This is such an important subject that I've written a deliberately short, nothing but the facts, 4-page report for you addressing this topic. You can grab a copy here:

<http://qigong15.com/qigong-teacher.pdf>

August 1st – A Serenity Prayer

Feel free to skip this entry. Any person regardless of their religious views or complete lack of such views can practice Qigong. So don't let the use of the word 'God' put you into a spin.

The aim of the Q365 project is to help all Qigong practitioners regardless of what style they practice. In that vein I offer this prayer I have found to be extremely beneficial.

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot
change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.*

*Grant me patience for the changes that take time,
Appreciation for all that I have,
And compassion for those less fortunate than myself.*

*And give me the strength to get up and do it all again
tomorrow,
Thy will, not my will be done.
Amen.*

The Serenity prayer comes in many different versions and has been attributed to several different authors from the theologian Dr Reinhold Niebuhr in the 1940's to the philosopher Boethius in 500 A.D.

Personally I'm not interested in who wrote it, I'm just interested in how useful it is. And I have found it to be very useful. It is in that respect that I offer it here to you.

August 2nd – Qigong Mistake #1

For far too many Qigong students, their only source of information comes from books, DVD's and online videos.

This is quite a claim from someone who is an author, DVD maker and creator of the Internets most comprehensive resource to learn Qigong online.

So let me explain...

These tools can be a good introduction to Qigong and for students who have learned the material directly from a teacher they can also be very useful 'aide memoirs'.

And yes, I have come to appreciate that a good book or online Qigong course can be better than a Qigong form teacher.

But if you're learning and practicing Qigong without the direct guidance of a Qigong teacher then it is my duty to inform you that you *will* have to work harder to gain results and the results you do gain will be *less* than if you learned direct from a good teacher.

That's just a simple fact I'm sorry to say.

August 3rd – Qigong Mistake #2

I'm always saddened when a new student gives up on their Qigong training too soon. But I'm not surprised.

In the 'Get It NOW With No Effort' culture we live in, it's hardly surprising that few people have what it takes to persevere with Qigong.

Whilst the practice of Qigong does give many immediate benefits like feelings of calm, a clear mind, a sense of being refreshed. These benefits often do not last very long.

Only through regular daily practice do these benefits start to overlap into your daily life and offer sustained resistance to the stresses and strains of modern life.

If you have an illness then it can take a minimum of 3 to 6 months before you notice a significant improvement in that illness (and much, much longer – if at all, if you are learning only from books and videos).

Compared with the constant bombardment of 'Get It NOW With No Effort' – This message just isn't sexy enough, but if you're one of the few unique individuals who is prepared to be disciplined with and committed to your training, then you will find that the rewards are deeper, more sustainable and superior to anything 'Get It NOW' has to offer you.

August 4th – Priorities

Everybody can find time to practice Qigong.

If you really believe that you can't afford the time to practice then you don't have your priorities right.

Given the benefits to your health, happiness, vitality, mental and spiritual well-being and life in general, the question you need to ask yourself is whether you can afford *not* to practice Qigong!

Start by committing to one session every single day. Then work out when the best time for you is.

- *Are you a morning person or an evening person?*
- *Would you find it easier to get up 20 minutes earlier or stay up 20 minutes later?*
- *What chores or tasks can be juggled around to make room for practice?*

By thinking ahead, looking hard enough and planning everyone can find time for Qigong training.

August 5th – Qigong Misconception #1

*The more Qigong exercises you know,
the better teacher you are.*

Stands to reason right?

Off the top of my head I can name over 100 different exercises I know. So I must be a pretty awesome Qigong master right?

Wrong.

This only works if you're saying that quantity is better than quality. And when it comes to the practice of Qigong, we want quality – every time.

As I'm fond of saying, it is the skills of Qigong that are important, not the forms. I can honestly say that if you have the skills of Qigong, you can learn a new form quicker and get better results from it than a student who doesn't have those skills, but who has been practicing it for a year.

The form is not the art of Qigong; it is only a small part.

When you learn Qigong from a good teacher, you're not paying them to learn forms, you're paying them to learn and more importantly practice skills.

Today's Reminder:

Forget about how many Qigong exercises you know and focus on developing skills instead. You'll get much better results.

August 6th – Qigong Mistake #3

Not having a roadmap for your Qigong training is a big mistake that far too many students make.

It's vital that you have clear aims and objectives for your training. You should be able to tell me what they are in just a few sentences.

Most importantly they must excite you.

Seriously.

I spent years setting and not achieving 'goals'. Eventually I found that the missing ingredient to my success was having goals that I was genuinely excited about.

If you're not excited by your aims and objectives – by what you want from your Qigong training – then I can tell you from my own direct experience that you'll be unlikely to succeed.

You can download a tool I use with my students to help them choose clear aims and objectives for their Qigong training. I call it the 'Route of the Masters'. And you can get it here:

<http://qigong15.com/route-of-the-masters.pdf>

Quote: *"Nobody ever wrote down a plan to be broke, fat, lazy and stupid. Those things are what happen when you don't have a plan"* – Larry Winget – Author.

August 7th – The New

I believe that your success with Qigong is dependent upon your level of skill, not on what Qigong exercises you practice.

A Qigong master could practice the ‘lowest’ qigong exercise and gain better results than a beginner practicing the ‘highest’ Qigong exercise.

Why?

Because the masters skill level is far higher than the beginners.

Avoid being seduced by ‘NEW’; it is the second most powerful word in a marketer’s toolbox. You don’t need to learn new exercises, you need to practice the ones you know in order to develop Qigong skills.

I’m human; I admit that sometimes I might get a little bored with my Qigong practice. So every now and then I might practice a new exercise in order to introduce a little uncertainty back into my training.

But I’d say 95 sessions out of a 100 you’ll find me practicing the same exercise and this allows me to work on skills.

Today’s Reminder:

Did I mention that skills are far more important than Qigong exercises? I hope you’ve got the message.

August 8th – Qigong Don't #8

Don't wear tight clothing or practice bare foot. Tight clothing restricts physical movements as well as internal qi flow. Negative energy from the ground may enter your feet if you practice bare foot. If you like wearing high heels, wear them after your Qigong training.

Nuff said for today...

Enjoy your practice.

August 9th – Is Your Qigong Teacher A Good Example?

Perhaps one of the most important qualities of your Qigong teacher is that they should be an example of the benefits of Qigong.

Recall the 5 major benefits are:

- 1) *Health and vitality*
- 2) *Longevity*
- 3) *Internal force*
- 4) *Mind expansion*
- 5) *Spiritual cultivation*

Is your Qigong teacher healthy and full of vitality?

Of the 5 main benefits of Qigong, this is the most basic. If your teacher is ill a lot or appears to get tired easily then I would question whether what they are teaching you really is Qigong.

August 10th – Qigong Misconception #2

Practicing Qigong will give you mystical, magical powers.

Nope. Sorry. From my experience that's just not true. Granted, at the time of writing I only have 16 years or so of experience gained from 2 different schools of Qigong. So I'm happy to be proven wrong on this.

There is nothing magical about a Qigong practitioner's ability to overcome a so-called 'incurable' disease through regular daily practice of the material they have been taught by a good Qigong teacher.

Such feats are commonly documented.

Since I first encountered Qigong back in 1993, I have heard some pretty tall tales been told about the abilities of certain Qigong masters and the experiences of many students.

But I personally have not witnessed anything that makes me think that the practice of Qigong leads to the accumulation of magical powers like you see in the films.

I remain open minded about this but I maintain a healthy scepticism too.

As the Buddha reminds us:

“Don't believe me, don't believe anybody, and don't accept anything based on tradition. Don't believe anything based on the fact that your community believes this or your country believes this or the people that you are around believe this.”

Believe what you know to be true from your own direct experience. Accept no substitutes.

August 11th – Qigong Don't #9

Don't use force in your breathing or in your Qigong movements. It is a common misconception to think that the more forcefully you do something, the more force you can develop. This is not true.

Forced breathing or movements constrict the flow of energy. Relaxed and gentle is the way to practice Qigong.

August 12th – Qigong Mistake #4

If you can't relax you can't do Qigong.

When you're tense it is difficult for Qi to flow harmoniously through the meridians of your body. If you're tense you'll also find it very difficult to enjoy Energy flow.

That is why it is important to spend some time at the start of each session to relax. Not just to relax physically, but to relax emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It is worth taking 4 or 5 minutes to do this properly every time you practice.

When you can do this well you have the skill of entering a Qigong State of Mind (*QSoM*), one of the 3 core skills of Qigong.

Your aim in entering a QSoM is to be able to do it in a single breath. This takes a lot a practice but it is a very desirable skill to have.

With it, you'll find that should you ever be called upon, unexpectedly, to perform some challenging task you can take a breath, enter a QSoM and give your very best to the task at hand.

August 13th – How Many Repetitions For Qigong Exercises?

A question I'm often asked is: 'how many repetitions of a Qigong exercise do I do?' The answer is, it varies on your level of skill.

When I was 16 I fell in love with lifting weights and discovered the simple pleasures of sets and reps. The way we do reps in Qigong is different than in weight lifting.

Why do we practice Qigong exercises? Because when they are combined with correct breathing and performed in a meditative state of mind they lead us to our desired destination, which is Energy Flow. It is Energy flow that allows us to remove blockages, to increase the flow of Qi and develop and abundance of Qi.

When you're new to Qigong training, because of your lower skill level you will have to practice a higher number of repetitions to enhance energy flow. Usually between 15 and 30 depending on which exercise you are practicing.

As your skill level increases you will find that the number of repetitions you have to perform to noticeably enhance energy flow decreases. When you are highly skilled you may need to only do 2 or 3 reps to get your energy flowing strongly and then you simply let go and do nothing – you enjoy your energy flow.

It's quite common to see an intermediate Qigong student, struggling to complete 15 reps of an exercise like 'Lifting The Sky' whilst their body is swaying – they are literally struggling against the energy flow they have 'generated' in order to complete the number of reps they are trying to do. Once they are reminded that Qigong reps are a means to an end – the end being Energy flow – they make quick progress.

Today's Reminder:

Once you begin to feel your energy flowing, don't struggle to squeeze out a few more reps, just let go and enjoy your Energy Flow.

August 14th – Qigong Misconception #3

You can learn Qigong from a book.

I agree that:

- *A book can be a good introduction to Qigong.*
- *You can (with great difficulty) learn Qigong form from a book.*
- *A good book can be of more value than a poor teacher.*
- *If you have the skills of Qigong then yes you can learn new Qigong exercises from a book*
- *If you've learned the material in a book directly from a teacher, then the book can be a useful memory resource.*

But I don't believe you can learn Qigong from a book.

I am the author of: '*Shaolin Chi Kung – 18 Exercises to Help You Live a Longer, Healthier and Happier Life*' and there have been times when I wish I'd never written it. It turned out to be a double edge sword as I started to receive videos from people who'd read it, asking me to check out their form. 99 times out of a 100 the form was clearly wrong. 1 times out of a 100 what I watched was down right dangerous and harmful to health and vitality.

Before my book was published, it went through several draft editions and was reviewed and improved by some Qigong authorities I'd prefer not to mention. As a result I know that the instructions are clear and comprehensive. And yet they're interpreted so poorly.

This taught me that it is very, very difficult just to learn Qigong form from a book. If it's difficult to learn forms from a book then I conclude that it is virtually impossible to learn Qigong skills from a book.

And as I'm certain you know by now, it is the skills of Qigong that make it such a powerful tool for health and vitality, not the forms!

August 15th – Qigong Mistake #5

Qigong needs to be practiced regularly and consistently over a period of time to gain maximum benefits.

The best way to achieve this is by establishing a daily practice habit. This can be difficult to install into your life but is worth the effort.

Usually all it takes is a commitment to get up 20 minutes earlier in a morning.

You see, if your practice is sporadic, if you practice regularly for a few days, then take a few days off, then practice for a week and take a day off and so on – then your results (*if any*) will be sporadic and short lived.

If you want help setting up your daily practice, please read this article ‘10 ways to set up regular Qigong practice’. You can read it here:

<http://qigong15.com/blog/chi-kung/10-ways-to-set-up-regular-chi-kung-practice/>

August 16th – Money In The Bank

If you've noticed that the results from your Qigong training seem to be less 'impressive' than when you first started out, you'll find the following simple metaphor helpful.

Imagine that you have \$12.36 in your bank account.

If I put \$100 into your account, you're going to notice the difference.

Now imagine that you have \$12,362 in your account. If I put in \$100 there's a good chance that you wouldn't even notice it.

This is what happens with your Qigong training as you progress.

At the start you notice the increase in energy, in well being, especially if you have a lot of blockages.

But as you advance you're so used to feeling well, of having an increased resistance to the stresses and strains of modern life, to coughs and colds that you don't even notice it.

Keep practicing!

August 17th – Qigong Don't #10

Don't be mean or malicious in any of your dealings with any persons. What you put out comes back to you.

Plus the negative energy generated when you become mean or malicious is harmful to you.

Don't do it!

Quote: “How people treat you is their karma; how you react is yours.” – Wayne Dyer, Author.

August 18th – Qigong Misconception #4

Anybody can practice Qigong.

Okay, it's true that anyone can practice and benefit from Qigong, but it is my experience that not many will.

Why?

Simply because one size doesn't fit all. To benefit from Qigong it has to be practiced daily, preferably for the rest of your life.

For those who are not prepared for that level of commitment, or who aren't prepared to take responsibility for their own health and well being, then Qigong isn't going to work for them.

It still amazes me that Qigong is so unwell known, but I guess that an art that requires discipline, commitment and a desire to be responsible for your own health and well being, just isn't popular.

We'll see...

August 19th – Qigong Mistake #6

Not following instructions – this often happens when a student tries to combine aspects from different Qigong styles or add concepts from completely different systems like Yoga, Tai Chi or Reiki for example.

By doing so they hope to get better results – but this is faulty logic.

If what you're practicing is authentic Qigong then it is very likely that what you're being taught is the crystallization of generations of past masters.

These Qigong masters have done all the hard work for you. They have tried and tested, simplified and stripped down and through more hard work and commitment than many of us can possibly imagine handed down to you, through your teacher a precious treasure.

So if you are instructed to breathe out through the mouth, then breathe out through the mouth. Don't think, '*ah, but in my Yoga practice I breathe out through the nose...*'

Today's Reminder:

If you don't respect your teacher enough to follow as closely as you can the instructions they give you then I would suggest that you find another teacher.

August 20th – Qigong Misconception #5

Many people think that Qigong isn't scientific.

Because of literal translations of Chinese texts by interpreters with no understanding of the subject matter and well-intentioned students with an incomplete knowledge of the subject many texts available on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) are just down right confusing.

In TCM preventative medicine is considered superior to healing. In the Nei Ching it is written:

“The inferior physician treats disease, the superior physician teaches the well to remain well”.

Keep in mind that TCM is the longest continual medical system known to man. It has been keeping one of the world's largest populations healthy for millennia. A population with one of the longest sets of continual written records and history, a population that has enjoyed a high standard of living and cultural achievement.

There are many examples of where TCM methods were far in advance of western medicine, but perhaps my favourite is this one:

“2500 years before William Harvey accurately described the circulation blood through the body. The Inner Classic of Medicine (Zhou Dynasty 1027 – 256 BC) described how blood flow in the human body moved in a never ending circle.”

Qigong is firmly built upon the foundations of TCM. The ancient energy masters have left us the art of Qigong and our only job is to practice it correctly and regularly, confident that it is built upon a scientific model of health and well being that has stood the test of time.

August 21st – Qigong Misconception #6

Qigong is a religion.

Wrong.

A person of any religious faith, or lack of faith can practice and benefit from the practice of Qigong.

Yes there are Taoist, Buddhist, Confucian, and other religiously influenced schools of Qigong, but you don't need to adopt their religious views to benefit from them.

You don't have to shave your head, become vegetarian, or adopt any views you don't want to – in order to benefit from most of them.

Yes there are exceptions, but you can always choose to learn from a different school if you wish.

It is more accurate to say that Qigong is a spiritual practice and your spirituality is vitally important to your health and well-being. Unfortunately many sadly neglect it.

So it's no wonder that spiritual illnesses like depression (from the TCM viewpoint) are on the increase?

August 22nd – Qigong Misconception #7

Practicing Qigong means you can't have sex.

Wrong.

Remember, we practice Qigong to complement our lives, *not to take over our lives*. If you could do something before you started practicing Qigong, then you can continue to do it afterwards – and often do it better!

Yes in the past, dedicated Qigong students abstained from sex for the first 100 days of their practice so as to build a 'pearl of energy'. But after these 100 days they carried on their normal sex lives.

So, it's true that having sex in the first 100 days will slow down your progress, but it's more practical for most people to carry on a normal sex life and take 200 or 300 days to achieve a Qi foundation.

The benefits to be gained by abstention while practicing are not worth damaging a healthy relationship with your partner.

Today's Reminder:

It's a good idea to avoid having sex directly after a Qigong session as this will drain away a lot of Qi. It's better to wait at least 30 minutes to an hour.

Best of all is to wait until after sex to practice Qigong. This is highly recommended as it helps to replenish lost energy. Especially in males.

August 23rd – Qigong Mistake #7

Too many times I have seen students bring western exercise concepts to their practice of Qigong.

It can be hard to accept that by being relaxed and gentle you can become healthy and happy. Especially when it has been drilled into us from an early age that health and fitness only comes about through sweating and huffing and puffing.

It can be tough to accept that ‘playing your edge’ gives better and more sustainable results than pushing yourself beyond what is comfortable.

Coming from my background as a YMCA qualified personal fitness trainer I definitely found the Qigong approach to health and vitality hard to swallow – *at first*.

As soon as I fully grasped the importance, and the power behind the Qigong principle of being relaxed and gentle, my results improved significantly.

August 24th – Making Mistakes Is Okay

When it came to my Qigong training I used to subscribe to a philosophy of ‘all or nothing’. I used to believe that if my training wasn’t perfect and if I didn’t practice twice a day, every single day then I was wasting my time.

As you can imagine this put a lot of pressure on my practice. If there’s one thing I’ve learned it’s that bringing pressure to your training is a great way to cause blockages to harmonious energy flow – not get rid of them!

Now there is also a saying that goes like this:

‘How you do anything is how you do everything.’

I’m here to tell you that taking an ‘all or nothing’ approach to life is like playing a game on the ‘Super Hard’ setting. It’s a great way to make life harder for yourself and who wants to do that?

Eventually I learned that it’s okay to do something poorly, or to make mistakes when I first started to learn, or do, something new. I finally realised that expecting to do something, anything, perfectly the first time I tried it was unreasonable.

In fact I’d go as far as to say that making mistakes at the start of anything new is preferable. Learning from the mistakes I’ve made has been a valuable part of my growth, as a Qigong teacher, a husband and a father.

And don’t worry if you don’t learn from your mistakes, because I’ve noticed that Life will always give you another opportunity and another and another...

August 25th – The 4 Things Everyone Should Know About Qi

Here are the 4 things every Qigong practitioner should know about Qi:

- 1) ***Qi is energy***
- 2) ***Qi has material reality*** – *The world we experience through the 5 human senses is just a tiny fraction of the world that is currently known. Even though Qi is invisible to the human eye it is real.*
- 3) ***Qi is the basic building block of the universe*** – *If you had the most powerful telescope (which doesn't currently exist) and you kept looking for smaller and smaller building blocks. You would eventually come to Qi.*
- 4) ***Qi fills the whole universe*** – *If the basic building block of the universe is Qi then it follows that Qi fills the whole universe. Regardless of whether through the human senses we label it an apple or a car.*

Today's Reminder:

Qigong allows you to deliberately work with the Qi inside your body, which is what makes it such a precious tool for living a happier, healthier and longer life.

August 26th – Self Discipline

It takes discipline to practice Qigong every single day. Without discipline you will not gain all of the benefits to be had from your training, because if your practice is haphazard, your results will be haphazard too.

And I'm not going to lie to you, maintaining discipline for the long term – it's not easy.

I recently ran a survey of all my clients and one of the highest ranked obstacles they felt they faced to succeeding with their Qigong training was a lack of self discipline.

Perhaps the most useful tool I have is to set times for my practice and at those times, just go and do my practice. Eventually it becomes a habit, like brushing my teeth.

The best solution I've discovered when I feel like I'm lacking the self-discipline to do my practice is this:

Stop dwelling on it. I tell myself I'm just going to go to my practice place and the least I'm going to do is enter a QSoM.

I've found more often than not that the act of doing this is enough for me to complete my practice session.

In the immortal words of that old 'Nike' ad: *Just do it!*

Quote: “*Self discipline is self caring*” – M. Scott Peck, 1936 – 2005 Psychiatrist and Author.

August 27th – How To Increase Your Motivation

2 large studies into the psychology of motivation discovered that those who:

- 1) *Used a celebrity or great leader as a role model.*
- 2) *Think bad things will happen if they don't achieve their goal.*
- 3) *Try to suppress unhelpful thoughts.*
- 4) *Rely on willpower.*
- 5) *Fantasize about how great their life will be when they achieve their goal.*

Were unlikely to achieve their goals. Whereas, those who:

- 1) *Make a step-by-step plan.*
- 2) *Tell other people about their goals.*
- 3) *Think about the good things that will happen if they achieve their goal.*
- 4) *Reward themselves for making progress towards their goals.*
- 5) *Record their progress in a journal or a chart.*

Significantly increased the likelihood of them achieving their goals.

If you want to succeed with your Qigong training then you must:

- 1) *Have a step-by-step plan – I use PERFECT with my students.*
- 2) *Share your aims and objectives with others, another reason classes are the best way succeed with Qigong.*
- 3) *Think about the good things you'll be able to feel, see, hear or do when you achieve your aims and objectives..*
- 4) *Reward yourself– Completed a week or a month of twice daily practice? Reward yourself. Rewards don't have to be expensive.*
- 5) *Record your progress – What can't be measured can't be managed. Which is way I use the progress tracker tool with all of my students.*

Implement as many of these 5 tools into your Qigong training as you can and see for yourself the improvements they brings.

August 28th – Qigong Results Metaphor

Imagine a pint glass filled with water.

Then imagine putting a single drop of ink into the glass. That drop would make no difference to the colour of the water.

Now imagine every day you put a single drop of ink into the glass.

After a week you'd possibly notice a light blue tinge to the water if you held it up against a pure white background.

After a month the water would be a little darker. By the time you'd done this for a year, the water would be very blue.

So what? You might be asking.

This is a great metaphor for your Qigong training.

Early on in your 'career' you'll notice hardly any changes for your effort. After a short while you begin to see a slight change, then after a year you'll see real changes.

This is exactly like your Qigong training; it has an accumulative effect that only shows significant results after a long period of time.

Well, long by most people's standards today.

August 29th – Are You Too Old To Practice Qigong?

When asked in a recent survey the following question:

What is your core/biggest fear or obstacle that is preventing you from succeeding with Qigong?

A significant number of people stated that they felt their age was an obstacle.

If you think this applies to you, I'd ask you to consider this:

In 1908 1 in 200 people in the UK lived to 100. In 2008 this figure rose to 1 in 4.

I think it's safe to say that there is a good chance you're going to live a long life.

Practicing Qigong is a really clever way to do your best to make sure it's a long, healthy and healthy life.

Qigong requires virtually zero athleticism or strength to practice it, which makes it suitable for virtually any one, regardless of their age.

My oldest student began their Qigong career aged 83.

It is also universally agreed that the human body is designed to last for 120 years. Personally, I'd say if you're beginning your Qigong training under the age of 100, then don't worry about it.

Qigong exercises can easily be modified to suit whatever range of movement you currently experience.

Today's Reminder:

Whatever your age you're never too old to start practicing Qigong, preferably with the guidance of a suitably qualified teacher.

August 30th – Qigong And Creativity

I was feeling a little anxious a few days ago. I usually write the posts for the Qigong 365 project in advance, sometimes by as much as 10 days. I've always had a steady stream of posts to rely on.

Until yesterday when I published the last post and there were no more in the pipeline.

I have often found Qigong to be beneficial for creativity. But I've never deliberately practiced to enhance the creative process. So I decided it was time to put it to the test.

I did my Qigong training as normal and when I finished I set a timer for 90 minutes and in my post practice 'glow' I set to work.

The result?

7 new posts, 7 more days of breathing space, 7 more days for creativity to visit again.

I watched a very interesting video online the other day "Elizabeth Gilbert on nurturing creativity" in it she talks about having a genius and not being a genius.

http://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_gilbert_on_genius.html

A distinction that really helps to take the pressure off those involved in creative work. If you need to find a creative solution to an aspect of your life, whether it is writing a blog post or finding an elegant solution to a problem.

Try setting aside some time after your Qigong practice. When you know you will not be disturbed and 'let' creativity flow.

This takes practice and it requires you to let go of the problem and let a solution appear. Have fun.

August 31st – Qigong And The Zeigarnik Effect

In the 1920's a Russian psychologist called Bluma Zeigarnik was sat in a cafe with her supervisor. Whilst sat people watching they noticed a very curious phenomenon.

When a customer asked for the bill, the waiters could easily recall what the customer had ordered. But just a few moments later, after the bill had been paid, the waiter would struggle to remember what the order was.

It was as if the payment had closed an unfinished loop and erased it from memory.

Back in the lab, Zeigarnik found that unfinished tasks stuck in people's minds and so were easier to remember. It seems that unfinished, or 'open loop' activities cause a sense of mental anxiety. Only when the activity is finished can the mind let go and relax.

If you've ever watched an episode of 'Lost' you've been exposed to this effect. Did you notice how they showed you snippets from the next episode? Snippets that would leave you thinking:

"I've got to find out what happens next!"

So, what does this have to do with your Qigong training?

Everything!

The next time you don't feel like doing your training, just persuade yourself to do it for a few minutes. Tell yourself that you're going to stand up and enter a QSoM – and that's it.

Thanks to the Zeigarnik effect you're very likely to find that this initial activity will create a situation where you refuse to rest until your Qigong is finished.

Try it and let me know how you get on.

September 1st – Knowing When To Quit Qigong

This is always a tough subject to write about. Before we begin, let me make it clear that Qigong is not the only way to live a happier, healthier and longer life.

It is *ONE* way, and it is the best I know of. But, if you're not enjoying your practice and haven't for a while then it might be time for you to call it a day. You see, if you don't enjoy something, especially something you don't *HAVE* to do, like a job – then its days are numbered.

Each of us is given 24 hours each and every day. It's the great leveller. What you do with this finite commodity has a massive impact on your life. Time is too precious to waste on any activity that you don't enjoy.

I practice Qigong, I enjoy practicing Qigong and I enjoy the benefits I get from it. Would I continue to practice Qigong if I didn't enjoy it – would I continue to practice just for the benefits, forcing myself each day to turn up and do the work?

Not for long.

Oh, and whilst we're on this subject. If you've been practicing Qigong with the face-to-face guidance and support of a Qigong teacher for 6 months or more and you haven't noticed significant improvements in your health and well being.

You might be wondering whether it's time to call it a day and find something else to do – you're probably correct. Life is short, time is precious and there is always more than one way to achieve the health and vitality you want.

So make sure whatever you do – you enjoy it.

September 2nd – Information Overload

Today I'd like to present another case for why you need to learn Qigong directly from a great teacher. The inspiration for this post came from of all places an article I was reading on google:

"..more content is created now in 48 hours than was from the beginning of time until 2003." Eric Schmidt from Google.

I'd recommend you re-read that a few times and then let it sink in. I nearly fell off my chair when I first read it. And whilst you're at it, consider this;

"48 hours of video are uploaded to the site every minute"
– Youtube blog 25/5/2011

Every minute on Youtube alone, 2 days worth of content is uploaded.

Is it any wonder that you and I feel overwhelmed when we go online? Never, in human history, have you had access to so much information. Not just on Qigong, but also on anything you can think of. And it's only going to increase.

If you're not careful this onslaught of information can make it hard to stick with anything for very long. And because Qigong is no 'quick fix' then you need to stick with it for at least 3 to 6 months.

But you also need to stick with *ONE* method for that time. You want to avoid chopping, changing, adding and subtracting from your training. Authentic Qigong is the result of trial and testing by the past Qigong masters of whatever school or style you are following. These masters have done all the hard work for you.

Perhaps the biggest challenge you face is to stick with what you are practicing and not get sidetracked into something else.

Information overload is a very real danger that you need to protect against.

September 3rd – Simple, Direct and Effective

Shaolin Qigong, the type of Qigong I practice really is simple, direct and effective.

- **Simple** – *It only requires 15 minutes, there are only 4 or 5 moves for each form and the instructions are straightforward.*
- **Direct** – *It works on the ‘root’ cause, there is no need to add any thing to it.*
- **Effective** – *Beneficial effects like feeling peaceful, relaxed, focus and energized are felt during and after your practice and significant results can be seen in 3 to 6 months.*

If you're not a fan of simple, direct and effective, if you value the complicated more then I'm certain you can find something suitable if you keep looking.

I frequently wonder why other teachers wish to make Qigong seem mystical, secretive or unnecessarily esoteric.

My life is complex enough without my Qigong training adding to it.

September 4th – Deva

From the Buddhist viewpoint a Deva is a heavenly being.

I remember when I first read about Deva's I found it funny to think that a Deva can be so engrossed in heavenly bliss that they forget to eat and then die!

I thought that was hilarious. Can you imagine having so much enjoyment that you forgot to eat and died? If only.

I used to think it was funny until I recently became aware of how wrapped up I was in material worries caused by a threat to my finances.

I completely lost sight of my belief that I am pure spirit. I shut out God. I had become so engrossed in material affairs, in fears of poverty, struggle and hardship.

It wasn't fun.

Luckily due to my Qigong training I was able to recognise what I had done and was able to open up and let my energy flow again.

Today's Reminder:

Avoid letting material pressures divert you from your Qigong training. Relax and let your energy flow. Don't hold onto your worries – let them go - everything is going to be all right.

September 5th – Success

One of my aims with the Qigong 365 project is to share my mistakes and fears so that you can avoid making them.

Another is to share my triumphs, experiences and discoveries so that you can benefit from them.

I struggled for years with feeling that nothing I did was good enough. I constantly compared my results and successes with Qigong to those of others. And frequently found myself lacking.

Then I heard this definition of what success is by the great coach John Wooden:

“Success is the peace of mind that is attained only through self satisfaction of knowing you made the effort to do the best of which you are capable”

This was music to my ears and proved of great benefit to my Qigong training.

I was no longer interested in the achievements and experiences of my peers. I no longer judged my successes by comparing them to theirs. This gave me a great sense of freedom.

As long as I knew that I had made the best effort that I was capable of then that was good enough.

If you feel like you’re putting yourself under unnecessary pressure to gain results and have experiences like those of others and not just with your Qigong, then I’d advise you to write John’s quote down and re-read it regularly – until you get it.

September 6th – Seasons Change

Ah, autumn is in the air here in Devon.

As I took Louis for his morning walk I watched leaves falling of the trees and felt a chill in the air.

And Ollie went back to school today. Start of a new academic year.

Today seems like a brilliant time to review and change my daily habits/rituals.

I reflected back on the last 3 to 4 months and have made some adjustments to my morning routine as a result.

Louis is happy because his morning walk is now top of the list, first thing I do when I get out of bed at 6am. Followed by my morning practice when we get back.

I find a brisk 45-minute walk with my furry friend a great preamble to my Qigong training.

If you have time today I'd recommend that you set aside an undisturbed half hour and you reflect on your aims, objectives and morning rituals. Reviewing your progress on a regular basis is just as essential as setting your aims and objectives.

Do you need to make any adjustments? Any slight changes in course direction?

Today's Reminder:

Remember how you start the day has a *MASSIVE* influence on how that day is likely to turn out.

September 7th – Is Qigong Giving You A Bad Back?

I've recently been experiencing a touch of lower back pain and decided to take a look on the Internet to see what information was out there. I did this, because it seemed to be my Qigong training that was causing it!

Eventually, I came across an interesting study called:

The reduction of chronic nonspecific low back pain through the control of early morning lumbar flexion. A randomized control trial – Snook et al., Spine, December 1st 1998;23(23):2601-7.

Luckily I read these things, so you don't have to! In a nutshell, they took a group of 85 people with persistent or recurring lower back pain and randomly split them into two groups. Group 1 received instruction to restrict the amount of bending they did early in the morning. Group 2 received fake treatment made up of 6 exercises known to be ineffective at reducing low back pain.

The findings were that after 6 months, back pain was reduced in the group told to restrict bending activities early in the morning. Why?

Further research into the anatomy of the spine shows that the discs between the vertebrae slowly increase in water content as you sleep. This is why younger people are a *LITTLE* bit taller in the morning than at the end of the day.

So when you wake in a morning these discs are full of water. If you do a lot bending, like say in the Qigong exercises: Reverse Hands Bend Waist or Big Turn of The Cosmos, first thing upon waking up – you put a lot of stress on those discs.

Apparently up to 3 times higher than if you performed the same qigong exercise two or three hours later.

This is what Professor Stuart McGill – *a professor of spine biomechanics at the University of Waterloo in Canada* – has to say:

“Researchers have documented the increased annulus stresses after a bout of bed rest. Yet many athletes and laypeople alike get up in the morning and perform spine stretches, sit-ups, and so on. This is the most dangerous time of day to undertake such activities.”

So, if you're suffering from low back pain, it seems that the best thing you can do is to reduce the amount of bending you do for the first few hours of the day after getting out of bed. I'd recommend Lifting the Sky in the morning and leave Reverse Hands Bend Waist to the evening.

September 8th – Emotion

I love words. They're always so full of surprises. Take 'Earth' as an example. Remove the letter 'h' off the end and pop it on the front and you get a new word, a very important word for Qigong practitioners.

Emotion is another favourite of mine. Whenever I think of this word I always think of it as 'Energy in Motion'.

We have very little power over what emotions arise during our day, but we are responsible (*or response able*) for what we do with them.

It's important to remember that emotions are feelings, not facts. It's important not to hold onto them.

The key to emotions is to acknowledge them, accept them and then *LET THEM GO*.

I found that I got into real trouble when I held onto my emotions. Anger was a big one for me. Eventually, I realised that an emotion is Energy in motion, and that Energy needs to flow.

It is the harmonious flow (*motion*) of energy through the meridians, energy streams, of the body that gives us good health.

As the Buddha said:

*Holding on to anger is like
grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at
someone else; you are the one who gets burned.*

Which can also be interpreted as, Holding onto emotions, holding onto who said what, who did what is a sure fire way to cause yourself trouble. My advice is to acknowledge them, accept them and then *let them go*.

September 9th – An Interesting Discovery

I'm in the habit of regularly spending time to make a gratitude list. Usually before I do my Qigong training. But some days, I just don't feel grateful.

On days like these I usually make a list of things that I'm not happy about. I've done this for quite a while. It was only recently that I made a startling discovery and I'd like to share it with you.

For some reason I happened to compare my '*not happy with*' list with my '*gratitude list*' and to my amazement both lists were nearly identical!

Same people, same things, same life.

I was confused by this for a while, how could it be that one day I could be grateful for my wonderful family and yet the next day be annoyed with them?

Finally I concluded that it wasn't them that had changed, it was my perception of them that had changed. I was reminded of this:

$$T \rightarrow F \rightarrow A \rightarrow R$$

Your thoughts influence your feelings, your feelings influence your actions and your actions influence your results.

Lesson?

Thoughts are powerful and yet most of the time, we're unaware of them. Daily practice of Qigong helps us to become aware of them, and with that awareness comes the ability to change them.

Quote: "*All that we are is the result of what we have thought. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.*" - Buddha.

September 10th – Don't Just Scratch That Itch

How many books do you have on your shelves that you've never read, or never finished reading?

If you're anything like me, there's probably more than a couple.

Let's say I want to improve, or develop some area of my life. I see a book and I think:

“Yes, that'll do it, with the information in that book it will help me to <fill in the blank> or get better at <fill in the blank>”.

When you buy that book it's like scratching an itch. But, it's only by taking action on the material in the book, applying what you learn that gets rid of the itch permanently.

Otherwise, give it a few weeks or months and it's back again.

Today's Reminder:

Knowledge is not power – knowledge applied is power. If you had to choose between learning more about Qigong or practicing Qigong, you know which to choose.

Why?

Because we don't learn Qigong we practice Qigong!

September 11th – Can Qigong Boost Self Confidence?

A few years ago I was speaking with a friend who is brilliant with the Chinese language. I asked him if he could confirm that the Chinese word for ‘Courage’ literally translates as ‘Big Gall Bladder’.

Here’s what he told me:

- *Cantonese: Tai Tham*
- *Cantonese (Yale): daai6 daam2*
- *Mandarin (Pinyin): da4 dan3*

Da Dan means – Being Courage/Big Gall Bladder.

Remember we’re looking at the world through the TCM lens, not the western one in this book.

With this understanding, if we look for Qigong exercises that are known to benefit the gall bladder, then it’s a pretty safe bet that they’ll help to boost confidence, or give us courage.

Personally, I’d recommend *Plucking Stars Change Galaxies* and *Reverse Hands Bend Waist* as two of the best.

September 12th – Impermanence

As I took Louis for his walk this morning, I couldn't help but notice that there is a lot of new development/building work going on in Dawlish at the moment.

As I continued walking I started to reflect on the nature of change.

To paraphrase the Greek philosopher Heraclitus

'The only constant is change.'

I realised that my natural 'stance' is to resist change, to try and keep things permanent.

Looking around me it was obvious that this struggle to keep things the same is against nature. Nature is always changing. As I sit in my office and write this, summer has changed into spring.

I later found this quote by Thich Nhat Hanh that I think sums it up beautifully:

"It is not because of impermanence that we suffer, but because of our ideas about permanence."

Today's Reminder:

I know it's an old hippy cliché, but it's true: 'Go with the flow'.

September 13th – Qigong Is...

I am a professional Qigong teacher. Professional in that I make my living from teaching Qigong – online and off.

As a professional I spend a lot of time researching Qigong and I find that it is common for people to talk as if Qigong is a Taoist art.

A lot of people talk as if Qigong is a Buddhist or Confucianist art and so on.

Who's right? Who's wrong?

Qigong can be segmented into medical, dynamic, martial, scholarly, or spiritual “types”.

In fact we can segment and categorize Qigong until we're blue in the face. With a history of 5000 years is it any wonder there is so much diversity?

Today's Reminder:

As Qigong practitioners we should be less interested in the religious or philosophical origins of what we are practicing and more interested in how effective the Qigong we practice is at meeting our aims and objectives.

September 14th – Compare And Despair

You know, some people's ability to compare themselves with others knows no bounds, and it's not just confined to the results of their Qigong practice.

Today I appear to be one of them – now I need to get perspective and focus on what I'm grateful for. Focus on what I do have instead of what I don't have.

How about you?

September 15th – Tai Chi Is Qigong

I believe that Tai Chi is Qigong, in that it is a composite of form, energy and mind.

In fact, the only difference between Tai chi and Qigong is that Tai Chi is, and should be practiced as, a martial art.

And then it is not known as Tai Chi, its Tai Chi Chuan or Taijiquan, or as I like to call it:

Supreme Ultimate Fist =)

September 16th – Qigong, Your Unfair Advantage

Cortisol is one of the stress hormones that eats away muscle and increases body fat. Continued high levels increases your appetite and turns off your disease fighting white blood cells.

Many people suffer from sustained high levels of stress yet the practice of Qigong has been shown to help increase your resistance to it. For the proof read this:

<http://qigong15.com/blog/qigong-healing/qigong-and-stress-resistance/>

Qigong is also known offer the following advantages:

- *Overcome illness*
- *Help keep you fit and healthy*
- *Refresh the mind*
- *Enhance sexual performance*
- *And much more.*

I wish everyone would practice Qigong and gain these advantages too, but until they do – I guess you and I will just have to enjoy the results.

Quote: “*Sometimes a small advantage some place in life can yield tremendous results someplace else*” – Terry Moore, Director of the Radius Foundation.

September 17th – An Important Qigong Energy Aspect

Perhaps the most important energy aspect of Qigong, especially for beginners, is breathing out.

The out breath through the mouth allows Qi to escape and without you having to do anything, fresh Qi will flow in from the cosmos to replenish the Qi that has escaped.

This is a natural and healthy process; there is no need to stop your Qi from escaping this way.

This is not to be mistaken for Qi drain, which happens when Qi escapes but is not replaced. Activities that cause this to happen are over exertion, excessive sex and over thinking.

September 18th – The Two Wolves Story

One of my Qigong buddies shared this story with me. I liked it so much I wanted to share it with you:

There is a story about a boy who tells his grandfather that he is feeling very angry and upset. The Grandfather explains to the boy that he too sometimes feels angry, but also he often feels very happy.

The grandfather says to the boy:

“It’s as if there are two wolves battling inside me.

One is very angry, aggressive and acts out of fear. This wolf wants to fight all the time.

The other wolf is happy, playful and only wants to make friends and live in peace.

But the two wolves are constantly battling inside.”

The little boy asks, “Which wolf wins?”

And the Grandfather replies “The one I feed.”

I don’t know the original source of this story, but it seems to be generally accepted that it’s Cherokee in origin. If you know otherwise please let me know.

September 19th – GIGO And Qigong

GIGO – is a computing term I came across many years ago when I was studying from my degree in Computer Science.

It stands for Garbage In Garbage Out and means if you put ‘garbage’ data into a computer it will process it and output ‘garbage’.

It’s the same with your body and your mind.

Whilst Qigong allows you to ‘have your cake and eat it’, that doesn’t mean you can throw caution to the wind.

Poor diet, poor lifestyle choices and burning the candle at both ends can really hinder your health and well being, no matter how good your Qigong is.

Today’s Reminder:

Give serious consideration to what you’re actions do to your body and mind, Garbage In, Garbage Out...

September 20th – HALT!

Sometimes I get so engrossed in my work that many hours can pass before I take a break.

Sometimes I only become aware that I'm over doing it when I start to feel out of sorts. When this happens I like to use HALT as a checklist to see what I need to do.

It stands for:

- **H** – *Hungry*
- **A** – *Angry*
- **L** – *Lonely*
- **T** – *Tired*

If I'm feeling hungry, I'll go and grab something nutritious to eat.

If I'm feeling angry, I'll usually go out for a walk with Louis.

If I'm feeling lonely, I'll go call a friend.

If I'm feeling tired, I'll go take a nap or practice the Qigong exercise Big Turn of The Cosmos.

Today's Reminder:

Next time you're feeling out of sorts, do a quick HALT system check. It's a powerful little tool that can help get you back on track.

September 21st – The Importance of Rest

Qigong is known as an energy art. It allows you to work directly with your body's energy. But this doesn't mean you should burn the candle at both ends.

Rest is so important, especially when starting out with your Qigong training, yet culturally we don't value it enough. Even NASA recommends taking naps.

In fact a NASA study found that naps can improve certain memory functions and that long naps are better than short naps.

The National Institute of Mental Health (*NIMH*) found that a midday nap helps to overcome information overload and could even boost an individual's performance.

In their report, the NIMH team wrote:

“The bottom line is: we should stop feeling guilty about taking that ‘power nap’ at work”

Personally I find that 20-25 minutes works best for me. But find out what works best for you.

Caveat: If you decide to take a NASA power nap during the day make sure it's less than 90 minutes. This will stop you waking up feeling groggy or disrupt your sleep at night.

Go on, take a power nap and dream of being an Astronaut =)

September 22nd – Not Just For Qigong

One of the many aspects I love about Qigong is that it's so highly exportable.

Many of the tools you use in Qigong work really well when applied to other important areas of your life e.g.

- *Route Of The Masters (aims and objectives)*
- *4 Requirements for success*
- *4 Stages of Mastery*
- *5 Motivational Strategies that work*
- *Progress Tracker*

And so on...

Don't just keep them for your Qigong practice!

September 23rd – 15 Minutes of Qigong

When I first started practicing authentic Qigong I knew I had to practice for 15 minutes.

So being an over zealous student, I split my practice into three, 5 minute chunks.

- **Chunk 1** – *Preparation, Entering a QSoM, Form*
- **Chunk 2** – *Energy Flow*
- **Chunk 3** – *Standing meditation and completing.*

I used to count every single repetition and find new and interesting ways to make my practice as complex as I possibly could.

I was explaining my practice to a friend and they told me it was making their head spin, just listening to what I did.

They asked me if I was meant to have my watch on a 5-minute countdown timer, whether I was meant to count exactly how many repetitions I was supposed to be doing.

I realised that I had never been taught to do these things.

So I stopped. I allowed my Qigong training to become more fluid, I stopped worrying about whether I was doing it ‘exactly’ right, I stopped worrying if I had done 9 repetitions or 17 – and you know what?

The results were amazing!

If you’re like I was when I started out with my practice, uptight and overthinking everything, I advise you to learn from my mistakes.

September 24th – 7 Not So Deadly Qigong Sins

Someone once told me that the word ‘sin’ is an ancient archery term that means to ‘miss the mark’. A bit of research shows that this isn’t actually true.

But personally I find it to be a more helpful way to look at things.

So using the word in that context only, here is a list of 7 common ‘sins’ in Qigong (*in no particular order of importance*):

- 1) **Thinking too much** – Obsessive thinking causes Qi drain. You want to avoid this.
- 2) **Using muscular force** – Tense muscle locks up Qi. Your movements must be relaxed and gentle when practicing. If you can’t relax, you can’t practice Qigong.
- 3) **Poor practice location** – Where you practice Qigong is very important. When you breathe in, you’re not just breathing in air, you’re breathing in Qi. Make sure where you practice has good Qi.
- 4) **Practicing Qigong form** – Qigong is a composite of Form, Energy and Mind. If you only practice Qigong form, you will only get the benefits of gentle exercise and not Qigong.
- 5) **Not following instructions** – If you start thinking you’re smarter than your teacher and decide to add and delete bits from your practice then you’re not being a good student.
- 6) **Haphazard practice** = haphazard (if any) results. You must practice daily.
- 7) **No compelling Why?** – Having a reason to practice Qigong that excites you is a must. Especially as the days are starting to get shorter and the mornings darker.

Avoid these 7 ‘sins’ and watch your results improve.

September 25th – Qigong And Weight Training

I'm often asked if it's okay to work out with weights and practice Qigong. My answer used to be 'no'. But recently I've changed my mind. Back when I was 16 I started working out with weights a lot. I loved resistance training and even went on to gain my personal fitness training certificates with the YMCA.

But my approach to weight training was not very healthy.

If I didn't feel sick, dizzy, or completely exhausted by the time I finished my 'work out' then I felt that I hadn't worked hard enough. I picked up some bad habits and approaches to weight training.

In fact it's a wonder I didn't seriously harm myself. I truly subscribed to the 'no pain, no gain' philosophy. You can imagine how I felt when I later discovered Qigong!

I was faced with a choice and I chose Qigong. The way I worked out with weights would not mix well with my practice of Qigong.

It took me a long time to make the transition from 'no pain' to 'relaxed and gentle'.

These days I believe it is fine to work out with weights and practice Qigong as long as you avoid over doing it. Gritting your teeth and pulling a face that would frighten a young child is over doing it in my book.

A major 'issue' with Qigong and weights is that your vital energy or Qi finds it harder to flow through tense muscle and another serious issue is over exertion which causes Qi drain – so if you can avoid over doing it you can avoid these issues.

I'd also recommend leaving 15-30 minutes between your Qigong and your weights practices.

Other than that I'm all for it.

September 26th – Qigong And Your Stress Capacity

I believe we all have a certain ‘stress capacity’. The amount of stress we can handle before the SHTF. Some of us have the capacity of a bucket; others of a thimble and the rest of us have something in-between.

When your capacity to handle more stress reaches ‘full’ you’re in trouble. Even the smallest, most ridiculous events can result in over reaction. You might even be aware that you are being silly, over acting, but you can’t stop.

To be honest I’m not certain that we can increase our stress capacity.

But the good news is I am absolutely certain that we can empty the bucket, or the thimble, of its stress contents quicker.

How?

Through the regular daily practice of Qigong of course!

Qigong is concentrated cleansing. When the stresses and strains of modern life in the 21st century are coming thick and fast, Qigong allows you to ‘empty your cup’ before it overflows.

By combining form, energy and mind elements to influence the meridians of the body, correct breathing and meditation – Qigong is the most powerful stress-releasing tool I know of.

September 27th – Fed Up With Your Qigong Training?

When I'm feeling a little fed up with my Qigong training – *yes it happens to me too* – I like to look back and reflect on where I've been with my practice. When I was very new to authentic Qigong I would think:

“Wow, I feel real good. I feel better off than before I practiced Qigong. I think I'll keep practicing.”

When I hit plateaus in my training and grew frustrated I would think:

“This too shall pass, nothing lasts for ever. I still feel better at the end of my practice than I did at the start. Keep practicing.”

Much later I remember thinking:

“If someone had told me a year ago that my practice would bring such positive changes to my life, I wouldn't have believed them. Keep practicing”

Time offers me evidence that Qigong works. I can see the growth, the benefits and the proof in my own life. And the longer I practice the more proof, the more benefits and the more growth I experience.

Can you appreciate how when you feel fed up with your practice or when you hit a plateau looking back can help you to continue moving forwards?

Too often we use our memory to recall negative experiences, to remember past hurts and shame. But now you can use your memory to see the progress you have made, to take inspiration from your journey so far.

Quote: *“God gave us memories so that we might have roses in December.”* – James M. Barrie, 1860 – 1937 Author and dramatist best remembered for creating Peter Pan.

September 28th – Feelings Are Not Facts

Feelings are not facts, they are just feelings.

It's important to remember that we cannot control the outcome of our actions.

We can make sure that we do the best that we are capable of, but what will happen in the future is out of our hands.

If you're not smoking, drinking, having affairs, and engaging in activities you know are not 'healthy' and you're practicing authentic Qigong, then realise that a positive outcome in the future is just as likely as a negative one.

Today's Reminder:

In the absence of certainty, you get to choose what you focus on.

Choose wisely.

September 29th – Escape From Perfection

If anything is worth doing, it's worth doing badly to start with.

It used to be that if I attempted anything new I had to do it perfectly. And if I didn't (*and let's face it, I never did*) I would put myself through 7 levels of hell.

Nobody could put me down like I could. It got to a point where I didn't want to try anything new, because I knew what I'd do if I cocked it up.

It's been a rocky journey making the escape from perfectionism, but it has been worthwhile.

Now when I try something new, whether it's a new Qigong exercise or trying to race a 2ft long fast electric model boat competitively I consciously give myself permission to do it badly – *to start with*.

Logically it is unreasonable to expect to do something new perfectly the first time you try it. But since when did logic apply to human behaviour?

To all you perfectionists out there I invite you to subscribe to progress instead. As long as you're make progress with your Qigong or whatever new activity you are involved in then that's brilliant.

Be not afraid of going slowly; be afraid only of standing still.

Chinese Proverb

September 30th – The Bamboo Story – It Takes Time

There is a story often used by motivational speakers about the unusual quality of bamboo. The story goes that it takes 5 years for the seed to do anything.

To human sense it seems as if nothing is happening at all – because you can't see it. Then POW! That bamboo grows many feet in a few months.

I don't know how true this is of Bamboo, but the message of the story is clear. If you hadn't of fed, watered and tended to the bamboo shoot for the first 5 years – *when nothing seemed to be happening* – you wouldn't have had the explosive growth.

It's interesting because in Kung Fu circles there is a saying:

3 years small success, 10 years big success.

The bottom line is it takes time to be successful with Qigong. It requires effort and often – *especially in the beginning* – the return on your investment for that effort may not seem equal.

This is called 'The Process'.

As I've mentioned before, we love to hear about 'The Event', the huge, overnight successes.

But the truth is this: preceding virtually every success there has been a lot process, time, effort.

Keep up the good work and enjoy qigong.

October 1st – Are Qigong Books Worth The Money?

Simple answer: Yes and No =)

Yes:

If you have some familiarity with the content of the book, i.e. you've taken a course with the teacher.

As and 'aide memoir' – Again, you've taken a course with the author of the book and want a reminder on how to do a particular qigong exercise or what is involved in a particular technique or skill.

Entertainment – If you want something to read, or if you are a Qigong scholar and want to learn the theory about a particular school or style.

No:

If you want to learn authentic Qigong – whilst a good book can be a better resource than a Qigong form teacher it is a very poor substitute for a Qigong teacher. I believe it is next to impossible to learn the inner essence of Qigong from a book, no matter how good it is, unless you are already familiar with Qigong.

The contents are static – once a book is written and printed, the material it contains is frozen in time forever, or until the author updates it. It represents the teachers understanding at the time the book was written.

The best Qigong teachers continue to develop their own understanding of Qigong through teaching others and through their own direct experiences gained from their practice. Hence a book may contain 'out-dated' information.

Don't get me wrong, a good Qigong book can be a great introduction to Qigong for a beginner, but it should be just that, an introduction.

October 2nd – How To Feel Happier In Less Than 10 Seconds

Quite a claim, but from my own experience and the experience of my students I know it to be true.

When I reveal the answer to you, don't make the mistake of saying 'Yes I know that.' and then forgetting about it – big mistake.

You know something when you can do it. There's a huge difference between knowing what to do and doing what you know.

If you want to feel happier in less than 10 seconds the answer is to:

Really smile from your heart.

You don't have to keep this powerful tool locked up until Qigong training time. You should use it many, many times a day. Repetition is the mother of success.

First time you really practice this, you might feel silly with a huge 'cheesy' grin on your face, but as you continue and make progress, you may exhibit no outward signs that somebody watching you would notice.

Though they would notice that there was definitely something different about you.

Promise me, that just for today, whenever you remember to you will practice smiling from your heart.

And if you need some guidance on how to smile from your heart I can recommend no better resource than this:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DavY-T-eFYg>

October 3rd – Qigong Form Bashing

I know, I give Qigong form a pretty hard time, but that's only because it's what the vast majority of people think of as Qigong, and that's a shame.

Because as you know Qigong is a composite of form, energy and mind.

Now form may be the least important part of that composition, but it is still important.

I feel disappointed when I see Qigong students with sloppy, poor form. If the reason for the poor form is injury or a current lack of mobility, fair enough.

But more often than not, it's just poor form. A major casualty of this is:

Shoot Arrows – *especially the 1 Finger Zen hand form* – looking at most people's 'Shoot Arrows Left Right' I don't know whether to laugh or cry.

Another is:

Divine Crane Starts Dancing – keep your heels on the floor!

Today's Reminder:

Whilst form may be the least important component of your Qigong practice, it is still important and you should always aim to perform it to the best of your ability.

October 4th – Let It Be Done For You

One of the many activities I love during Fall is catching leaves as they fall off the trees.

I used to do this as part of my Shaolin Kung Fu speed and agility practice. Now I practice it during Louis walks for fun.

Today whilst trying to catch leaves I found myself becoming frustrated, as I missed and missed and missed and missed.

So I gave up and focused on finishing Louis walk.

Suddenly, for no reason, I looked up as a leaf fell on my face and floated off to be caught in my half open jacket. As I began to laugh, this got me thinking.

For the last 30 minutes of Louis walk, I had tried hard and failed to catch a falling leaf. Then I'd stopped trying and one landed in my jacket – I didn't have to 'DO' anything.

I realized that this is just like Energy flow, or *Flowing Breeze Swaying Willows* – you can't do Energy flow – you have to let it be done for you.

You practice your Qigong form in a QSoM, maybe you use the form to enhance energy flow, or maybe you use a combination of form and breathing to enhance energy flow, or if you're very advanced you maybe just use the mind to enhance energy flow.

Which ever method you are practicing, if you've done the preliminaries correctly then you can just let go and let the work of cleansing be done for you.

But the more you try to do Energy flow – the less benefits you will gain.

October 5th – Taking Notes During Qigong Lessons

I used to be a zealous note taker during Qigong, Tai chi and Shaolin Kung Fu lectures, seminars and classes.

In my office I have a draw full of notebooks and those notebooks are full of half legible scribbles and hurriedly drawn stick men.

I've even been known to take a Dictaphone into lessons before.

I can tell you from the benefit of my own experience that this fastidious taking of notes has not always been beneficial.

In fact I've stopped this practice now.

Why?

Because I realised that I was often so busy taking notes about what had been said or demonstrated that I missed what was been said or demonstrated now.

I discovered that a much better system for recording important information (*I'm not saying don't take notes!*) in seminars and classes was through discussion afterwards with my fellow students.

Doing this allowed me to concentrate more and participate fully in class and if you happen to be a prolific note taker, I'd recommend you give it a try.

October 6th – How Badly Do You Want It?

There is a story of a student who wanted to become a Qigong master. So he went to a well-known Qigong master and said: 'I want to be at the same level you're on'. And the master said: 'If you want to be at the same level I'm on, I'll see you tomorrow on the beach at 4 am.'

The next day the student arrived at the beach at 4 am and waited for the master to appear. The master turned up and took the student by the hand. As they walked towards the sea, the master asked the student: 'How badly do you want to become a Qigong master?'

The student replied: 'I really want it'.

The master led the student into the sea. They're waist deep and the student started to think that maybe the master was crazy. He thought to himself: 'I want to be a Qigong master and he's got me out here swimming...'

The master led the student further into the sea, now the water level was up to his chest and the student was thinking: 'Heck, this guy may be a Qigong master, but he's crazy!'

The master continued to lead the student out into the sea, by now it was up to the student's chin and the student said to the master: 'Blow this, I'm going back'

And the master said: 'I thought you wanted to succeed at becoming a Qigong master...'

'I do' said the student.

'So come out here a little further' the master replied.

As the student moved out of his depth, the master held his head under the water. The student started to struggle but the master was too strong and continued to hold the student under the water. Just as the student was about to pass out, the master lifted him up and said:

'I have a question for you, when you were under the water, what did you want to do?'

'I wanted to breathe' spluttered the student.

'When you want to succeed as badly as you want to breathe, then you'll be successful.'

Now, I'm not saying you've got to want to succeed with your Qigong as badly as you want air. But you have got to want to do your practice more than you want to lay in bed in a morning for a few extra minutes. You've got to want to practice more than you want to goof off with your friends, watch TV, or engage frequently in lifestyle choices that negate the effects of your practice. It's up to you.

*Thanks to my friend Eric Thomas A.K.A 'The Hip Hop Preacher' for the inspiration for this post.

October 7th – The Shortcut To Mind Mastery

Many students quickly become discouraged when developing the mind aspect of their Qigong training. If you've ever worked out with weights in a gym, you'll know that to build muscle you have to work really hard. You can't just think nice thoughts and wish to get bigger, you've got to sweat and you've got to 'go to work'.

If working the physical body to get it fit seems like hard work, well I have to tell you that it's small potatoes when compared to working with your mind.

You can't see it, touch it, smell it, or taste it. But you can hear it. And you probably hear it in the form of constant useless chatter (*on those occasions you consciously tune into it*). Mind training seeks to calm this relentless chatter, to help you be able to focus the mind, like a laser beam onto solving a problem, gaining spiritual insight or merging with the cosmos.

But you better believe you are going to have to work harder, maybe harder than you've ever worked for anything in your life. Now pay attention, because I don't mean working hard in a sweaty, straining, gritting your teeth and injuring yourself kind of way.

I mean discipline, commitment and a desire to go the distance.

Progress is often measured in months, if not years, so don't get discouraged too soon. I receive no end of correspondence from people asking me for short cuts to mind mastery. There is only one short cut I know of and that's to receive instruction, guidance and support directly from a Master.

Today's Reminder:

If mind mastery were easy, we'd be falling over enlightened Zen masters everywhere we went and the world would be a more peaceful place. Mind mastery is not easy. It requires discipline and commitment.

October 8th – You’ve Got To Want To Get Better

If you are practicing Qigong to overcome a particular illness or health problem then the first and most important requirement for your recovery is that you’ve got to want to get better. I know, it’s an obvious thing to say. Why wouldn’t someone want to get better?

Many years ago a friend of mine had a bad accident that damaged vertebrae in his spine, broke his legs, some ribs and smashed the calcaneus in both feet (that single block of bone in your heel) into several pieces. The prognosis for his recovery was not favourable. Doctors felt that if he were ever able to walk, it would be with heavy reliance on a walking stick.

I remember visiting him in hospital and even though he was heavily medicated he was determined. I have never witnessed such a determination to get well. Guess what? It will come as no surprise for you to learn that he does walk, and he does walk without a stick. But because this isn’t a Hollywood movie, he does have a pronounced limp.

And yet, I have met people with minor illnesses and injuries, compared to him, who make little to no improvement. And the most common reason is that the patient doesn’t really want to get well. Now I’ve got to be careful here, because rarely is anything in life as black and white as it might first appear.

I have witnessed there can be a lot of ‘payoff’, usually emotionally, for people when they are ill. Friends call more, family treat you differently, partners are more attentive and people cut you a lot more slack. This can be more appealing than the idea of health and vitality.

As a Qigong healer, I’ll often ask potential clients how badly they want to get well. Their reply will influence my decision as to whether to take them on or not. It is nearly impossible to help someone back to health and vitality if they don’t really want it.

Enough said.

October 9th – Energy Vampires

I love a good vampire movie, it's hard to pick a favourite – they're all good. Whilst jungle trekking in Sumatra, back in 1995, I was told a story of a beautiful woman who lived in the jungle, but she was not all that she seemed. Men that saw her whilst out hunting, sometimes never returned and once a number of bodies were found drained of their blood in the caves nearby

As fun as these stories are (*and I've some great ones*), you're more likely to come face to face with an energy vampire than one that wants your blood.

'The blood is the life'

Crops up often in Vampire films, well, I'd also say that 'Qi is life'. Have you ever come into contact with someone and when you left him or her, you felt completely drained of energy? And yet all you did was talk with them. I mean it's not like you went for a 10-mile run or anything.

There seem to be a lot of people out there who can leave you drained of your energy. I don't claim to understand what is going on, but I do know how to stop it happening. You have a choice. If you're meeting with someone, friend or family, and you know that the meeting with that person is going to leave you drained of energy then I recommend the following:

Tell yourself that your Qi is flowing so strongly it's like a shield that negative Qi simply bounces off you.

There's no need to sweat blood (*pardon the pun*) over this. Just have a simple, gentle thought. The same simple, gentle thought you might have if I asked you to think of an elephant. Though feel free to remind yourself frequently of your 'shield' during the meeting.

Once the meeting is over, and as soon as you are able to do so – practice your Qigong.

October 10th – Avoiding Overwhelm

I used to be worried about becoming overwhelmed by all the material I had to ‘master’ in order to become a suitably qualified Qigong teacher.

Then one day I was told the following and I’d like to share it with you:

*Don’t worry about overwhelm. Just let it flow over you,
you don’t have to remember everything.*

*The trouble comes when you ‘hold onto it’.
It’s like forcing water into a sealed vessel it can’t escape.
So sooner or later it will explode and that will cause problems.*

*When you start to feel overwhelmed don’t try to hold onto it,
just let it overflow when necessary.*

Relax, smile from the heart and enjoy your life.

Here’s part of a quote from the film ‘American Beauty’. At the end Kevin Spacey’s character ‘Lester Burnham’ says:

*I guess I could be pretty pissed off about what happened
to me... but it’s hard to stay mad, when there’s so much
beauty in the world.*

*Sometimes I feel like I’m seeing it all at once, and it’s too
much, my heart fills up like a balloon that’s about to
burst...*

*And then I remember to relax, and stop trying to hold on
to it, and then it flows through me like rain and I can’t
feel anything but gratitude for every single moment of my
stupid little life...*

October 11th – 5 Things I Wish I'd Known

Here are 5 things I wish I'd known when I started my Qigong training

- 1) ***Not to be so uptight about following instructions*** – Obviously it is good to follow the instructions you're given, that's not what I'm saying. It's just that if you're like me, you tend to over think things, then it's important not to get too hung about them. Just follow the instructions to the best of your ability and aim to make progress. You don't have to get everything 100% perfect first time.
- 2) ***The importance of skills in Qigong*** – I used to think that it was Qigong exercises that were important. That practicing the right one would unlock the health and vitality that I was searching for. Eventually I realized that it is the core Qigong skills of: QSoM, Energy flow and Standing Zen that are the key to success with Qigong.
- 3) ***My way isn't the only way*** – I used to be very arrogant. I believed that the Qigong I was practicing was the best and if you didn't practice the style I practiced, you were wasting your time. Today I believe that one size doesn't fit all.
- 4) ***Sometimes you get results where you least expect them*** – I was so focused on healing my asthma, I didn't notice that I was becoming less angry and more at peace with myself. Which is why I advise everyone to maintain some kind of weekly/monthly record of their training. One that focuses on a wide range of health areas. This way you don't miss the benefits you're getting and think you're your practice isn't working.
- 5) ***Keep it simple*** – When I first began my true Qigong training, I was convinced that for something to be powerful – it had to be complex. The simplicity of real Qigong baffled me. How could something so simple be so powerful? Eventually I realised that the art I was learning had been past down from master to student for generations. During this journey only the essentials remained all the 'fluff' had been removed and I was the benefactor of the work of these past masters. They'd done all the complex work for me, all I had to do was practice.

October 12th – An Important Guiding Principle

Today I'd like to share with you one of the most useful guiding principals my Qigong teacher taught me.

It was a summing up of the Buddha's teaching:

Avoid evil, do good, cultivate the mind.

Avoiding evil and doing good are self-explanatory and a great way to cultivate the mind is through the daily practice of Qigong.

October 13th - Don't Wrestle With Pigs

Believe it or not, in my work of spreading the brilliance of Qigong with the world, I receive a lot of 'hate' from people via the Internet. It used to really upset me and I often felt like quitting. The Internet is essentially an anonymous, impersonal medium. It allows anybody to reach out and tell you what they think, and to be rude. When you use the Internet as an important strand of your business efforts, the 'hate' can really mount up. I'm not going to go into the psychology behind why people do this; I want to focus on solutions. You see, I've had the good fortune to speak with a number of people involved with Internet businesses and ask them how they deal with it. And here are 3 of the best lessons I learned and apply regularly:

- 1) **Delete, move on** – *There is a saying: "Don't wrestle with a pig. The pig loves it and you end up covered in shit". As soon as you become aware that a comment, email, whatever is rude, don't waste time crafting a reply to it. Just delete the offending article and move on as quickly as you can.*
- 2) **Make a list** – *Make a list of 20 reasons why what somebody said about you simply isn't true, for example here are a few of mine: I have made over 460 free posts available on my blogs, I have written 6 free reports, I offer a 21 day free online Qigong course, I have paid over £18,000 to learn these skills... and so on. Now when I get an email from someone telling me that I'm a money-grabbing son of a motherless goat, I know it's not true because of my list.*
- 3) **Free speech** – *We're lucky to live in a democracy where we value the right to free speech, to express our opinion. This is of great importance. But remember, like my dad said to me: "Opinions are like ar*eholes, everybody has one". With the Internet a major part of many people's lives, it is important to know how to protect yourself from the 'negatrons' as I like to call people who have nothing better to do than try to upset you.*

October 14th – Simplicity And Qigong

I first came across the term ‘simplicity’ whilst reading a book by Pavel Tsatsouline called ‘Power to the people’.

To quote Wikipedia:

“Simplicity is an emerging theory that proposes a possible complimentary relationship between complexity and simplicity.”

I think this term lends itself beautifully well to Qigong. It’s very easy for Qigong theory to become complex the deeper you dive into it. Especially as its theoretical foundation is built firmly on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) principals. There is a reason why TCM students spend many years becoming proficient in TCM, because it’s very complex.

Yet, there exist tried and tested diagnosis tools that make it easier for a TCM practitioner to apply TCM principals, when working with a client. Here are the four main processes of diagnosis:

- 1) *Viewing*
- 2) *Asking and listening*
- 3) *Smelling*
- 4) *Feel*

Such tools simplify the complexities of TCM.

Personally I believe that the practice of Qigong allows a practitioner to gain the benefits of TCM without having to understand any of the complexities of it. You don’t need to learn any diagnostic tools, you don’t need to know if you’re suffering from a relative excess of Yin, or empty heat, or whether your illness is caused by a blockage in a particular meridian. You simply practice Qigong, enhance energy flow and allow your Qi do to the work for us.

Qigong is simplicity in practice.

October 15th – The Origins of Qigong

I've resisted writing this entry for a long time. You see a quick glance through this subject shows that nobody really knows the origins of Qigong. Which isn't very surprising because it certainly existed long before written records were kept.

In their book 'A Brief History of Qi', the authors attribute the dances of prehistoric shaman, as being the predecessor of Qigong.

Some authorities suggest Qigong is 5000 years old, others that it is 2000 years old.

Qigong is also a relatively new term, for the art of energy. In the past it was called Nei Gong and it has been known by many other names too.

It's going to take a greater Qigong scholar than myself to untangle the research.

But I'm not really bothered about the origins of Qigong.

You see, I was taught that Qigong is an experience, not just a gathering of knowledge. Personally I prefer to teach and practice Qigong.

I'm not much of a Qigong scholar to be honest.

As for the origins of Qigong, I don't know and I don't really think about it. But I am very grateful to the generations of past Qigong masters who have crystallized their knowledge and experience so that I can benefit from it today.

I like this quote by John F. Kennedy, 1917 – 1963 35th President of the United States.

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”

October 16th – Free Online Qigong Information

The problem with the Internet is that there is so much information available and so much of it is rubbish. So much of it is only half the story. So much of it is confusing. So much of it is unnecessarily complicated; so much of it is there simply to get you to part with your hard earned cash.

Your time is precious, once lost it can never be regained. Wasted time searching for free information on the Internet leaves a bitter taste in the mouth.

As a Qigong teacher I know that the best way to learn something is from a knowledgeable source that can give you a simple, clear, step by step, tried and tested plan for achieving your aims and objectives.

The problem with free information is that you're gambling your time in exchange for saving a bit of cash. The question is:

“How can you tell the ‘gold’ from the gold painted rocks?”

Be very careful what information you choose to trust from the Internet, with such easy access and virtually no regulation you could be wasting more than your time. Dig around a bit, check the source of the information out. Google the person sharing the information, are they the real deal?

The Internet makes it very easy to collect information from expert sources, get it rewritten and then pass it off as your own. I frequently find my blog posts and articles up on other people's websites, with no credit given to me as the original author.

Do your homework before investing your precious time (*and money*) putting into practicing something you've read on the Internet.

Just because something is written down, doesn't mean it is true.

October 17th – Silence Is God Speaking

I was at a spiritual meeting last night and towards the end of it, for 5 minutes or so, nobody spoke.

There was a BIG silence.

It wasn't planned, it just happened.

As the silence continued to grow I started thinking about what other people had said during the meeting, I was reflecting on what these things meant to me.

And still the silence continued to grow.

Then one of the 'seniors' at the meeting broke the silence and said:

"I was looking around during that silence and everyone here was deep in thought. And for the newer members I wanted to let you know that that was God speaking through the silence."

Don't get hung up on that word 'God', feel free to substitute it for any 'word' that makes sense to you. But last night I discovered why I love silence so much, and I get it regularly through my practice.

Many people have told me that one of the most precious gifts they get from their Qigong training is the gift of regular 'chunks' of silence.

Today's Reminder:

If silence really is God speaking, you'd better make sure you're listening closely!

October 18th – A Secret Fact You Need To Know

Always remember that just because something is presented as being:

- *Ancient*
- *Esoteric*
- *Complex*
- *Secret*

It doesn't automatically mean that it is better for you than something:

- *Modern*
- *Mainstream*
- *Simple*
- *Well Known*

Since the film 'The Secret' was released, the word 'Secret' is almost as powerful a part of a copywriter's lexicon as 'free' and 'new'.

October 19th – Why Do You Teach Qigong?

I was recently interviewed by my nephew for a project he was working on. He asked me a series of questions. But the one that really stuck with me afterwards and refused to budge was this one:

“Why do you teach Qigong?”

I gave him an answer that focused on how much I enjoy sharing it with people, how brilliant it is, how it’s better than Tai Chi and Yoga and gives more benefits than mediation alone.

Standard stuff.

But later as I was washing the dishes I realised that there was more to it than that.

The reason I teach Qigong, the reason why I’ve written well over 760 blog posts on all aspects of Qigong, put together 7 free reports, created the most comprehensive online Qigong study course, offer a free 21 day course and much more is because:

I want to make my living doing something I enjoy that is of value to society. I want to give people the best tools to empower them to take back the responsibility for their health, happiness, vitality and longevity.

That’s why I teach Qigong.

October 20th – Time Saving Tips For Qigong Training

At 15 minutes per practice session, I'd hardly call Qigong a time intensive activity! But here are a few ways you can save on extra time:

- 1) **Be Ready** – *Get your stuff ready the night before clothes, practice area etc. Get up, get dressed and go practice.*
- 2) **Be Prepared** – *If you're going to be practicing a new Qigong exercise, or if you're working on deepening your skills, make sure you've already done your homework.*
- 3) **Be Clear** – *Make sure you're clear on the aims and objectives for your training. If you're not you can easily waste time going down the wrong path.*
- 4) **Be Smart** – *The quicker you can gain the results you want from your Qigong training, the more time you can save. By measuring your progress on a regular basis, you can adjust your course if necessary and save weeks, sometimes even months of wasted training time.*

And remember: Enjoy your training!

October 21st – How To Choose A Great Online Qigong Course

Whilst Qigong is best learned directly from a Qigong master or suitably qualified Qigong teacher, I know that's not always possible. So here are 5 crucial elements to look out for when choosing an online Qigong course:

- 1) **Check the credentials of the person who put the course together** – *What is their history? Do they teach Qigong or do they teach everything from Crystals, to Angels, to Qigong? Are they a good source for helping you get to where you want to be?*
- 2) **What material are they offering?** – *Whilst online material is useful in that you can access it in many different locations, if it doesn't incorporate video material, then you'd be better off with a good book. Because a book is far more transportable!*
- 3) **Is it comprehensive?** *Look at the blurb for the course. Does it cover setting aims and objectives? Does it have tools for measuring your progress? Is it specific? Does it sound systematic? If not, browse elsewhere.*
- 4) **What are others saying?** *Check around online to see what others are saying, either about the teacher or the course. Do you like what you learn? Facebook can be a good place to check – especially if the teacher has a page. Check out what is being said on there. Forums are another good source of feedback.*
- 5) **Does it come with a money back guarantee?** *Listen. The costs of creating and delivering information online today are almost nothing. Unlike physical books and DVD's which can be very costly.*

With an online course you're paying for the quality and usefulness of the material. Not how well it's designed or necessarily whether the video is in high definition or not. I mean how well does the material help you to fulfil your aims and objectives?

October 22nd – How To Choose A Great Qigong Book

Bearing in mind what was said yesterday. Here are 5 things you want to be looking out for if your budget means you're looking for the best Qigong book to learn from:

- 1) ***Is it Comprehensive?*** – *Flicking through the book, look at the contents page what do you see? Take a look at the index. Scan the chapters. Does the material being covered seem complete? Trust your gut on this one.*
- 2) ***Is it the right level?*** *As you scan the material does it seem accessible to you, or would you be better approaching it with a degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine?*
- 3) ***Is it Systematic?*** *Is the material presented in a logical, methodical, step-by-step, systematic manner? Or are you going to have to make giant 'Quantum' leaps in your understanding? Look at the pictures or diagrams, how helpful are they going to be?*
- 4) ***Is it Beneficial?*** *Does the book promise to meet your needs? I.e. if you want to practice Qigong to overcome depression a book on how to develop internal force for martial arts is unlikely to be of great benefit to you.*
- 5) ***Is it Enjoyable?*** *Learning shouldn't be dry or boring! Never before has there been so much information, easily available. So if a Qigong book looks as exciting to read as watching paint dry. Look for another one.*

Armed with these 5 questions you'll easily be able to choose the best Qigong book for you.

October 23rd – I Bet You Don't Do This...

...And if you do I apologize.

I've been thinking about Qigong a lot recently. That might not come as a surprise to you bearing in mind what I do for a living.

But the more I teach Qigong and write about it the more I realise the *MEGA* importance of spending time to set and regularly review your aims and objectives for your training.

- *How do you know if you are succeeding with your training?*
- *How do you know if you're making progress?*
- *How do you choose new/additional material to increase your understanding?*
- *How do you keep yourself motivated to practice when the mornings are cold and dark?*

And so on.

If you do not have clear aims and objectives and if you do not review them at least monthly then you will be lucky to succeed with your Qigong practice.

It really is that simple.

If I asked you right now to tell me what your aims and objectives are for your Qigong training, would you be able to tell me in just a few sentences?

If not, and you're serious about getting results from your training, you've got some work to do.

Remember you practice Qigong because you want results.

October 24th – 10 Signs Your Qigong Training Is Working

Qigong training is all about results. Here are the kinds of results you can expect from your training:

- 1) *You feel better at the end of your training than you did at the start.*
- 2) *People start to make favourable comments about your personality or appearance.*
- 3) *Somebody close to you had a cold, and you didn't get it too.*
- 4) *You notice that you have more 'choice points' in areas of your life you never used to.*
- 5) *You look forward to your practice.*
- 6) *You're making progress towards your objectives.*
- 7) *You have more energy for work and play.*
- 8) *You feel more peaceful.*
- 9) *You are able to find new solutions to old problems.*
- 10) *You feel more creative.*

If you experience any or all of the above on a regular basis then you can be confident that your Qigong training is correct and you are making progress.

October 25th – Why Qigong Is Better Than Meditation

Qigong is often over shadowed by it's more popular and well-known contemporaries: Tai Chi, Yoga and Meditation. I believe this is a real shame. I've written about why I believe Qigong is better than Tai Chi, but in a nutshell, it is quicker and easier to learn. I've written about why I believe Qigong is better than Yoga, but in a nutshell, it is less strenuous and requires virtually zero athleticism – *or a desire to dress in Lycra!*

But only recently have I realised that Qigong is also better than meditation, because you can't practice authentic Qigong without practicing meditation too. So whatever benefits you gain from mediation, you get those *PLUS* the benefits of Qigong, when you practice Qigong. Or to put it another way, when you practice Qigong you get the best of both worlds.

I recently wrote an article for Dr Rick Hanson about the benefits of Qigong for increasing a person's resistance to stress. During my research I discovered that meditation has a dramatic and positive effect on stress and the physical and emotional problems caused by stress, but nowhere near as dramatic as Qigong.

I found a piece of research by Dr Sancier that I highlighted the advantage of Qigong over one form of meditation, Zen. He wrote:

“According to Kawano and Wang, these differences in brain function suggest that Qigong is a semiconscious process that involves some awareness and activity, whereas Zen meditation is a neutral process that releases the meditator from all concerns. Perhaps because of this difference, Qigong is considered a healing art, whereas Zen is generally not.”

Today's Reminder:

Every time you practice Qigong, you are also practicing and getting the benefits of meditation.

October 26th – Unlearning For Qigong

I've seen a lot of new students struggle with getting to grips with Qigong training.

I was pondering this the other day and believe that for many students raised in the west and exposed to western ideas of exercise, the Qigong approach to health seems impossible.

As a result they treat Qigong as they would treat physical exercise i.e. if you want better results you have to work harder. Instead of being relaxed and gentle they are tense and forceful.

But as you know by now, Qigong is not just a gentle form of physical exercise. It is a training of form, energy and mind or Jing, Qi and Shen.

I've reached the conclusion that most students who fail with Qigong, fail because they are not practicing Qigong.

There are two reasons for this:

- 1) *They were not taught Qigong, but Qigong form.*
- 2) *They were taught Qigong, but couldn't 'unlearn' their western approach to health.*

October 27th – Good, Better, Best

When it came to my Qigong training I used to subscribe to a philosophy of ‘All or Nothing’ – I bet you’ve heard of that one. I used to believe that if my training wasn’t perfect and if I didn’t practice twice a day, every single day then I was wasting my time.

Everything was black or white, good or bad.

As you can imagine this put a lot of pressure on my practice. If there’s one thing I’ve learned it’s that bringing pressure to your training is a great way to cause blockages to harmonious energy flow – not get rid of them! Now I subscribe to Good, Better and Best:

- *It’s **good** to read a book on Qigong, it’s **better** to watch a DVD and it’s **best** to learn directly from a suitably qualified Qigong teacher.*
- *Going for a walk is **good**, doing Qigong form is **better** and practicing Qigong is **best**.*
- *It’s **good** to want to practice Qigong; it’s **better** to practice once a day and it’s **best** to practice twice a day.*

You get the idea I’m sure.

Do what you can, because doing some Qigong is better than doing no Qigong. Certainly, you aim for the best, but be prepared to accept good enough – especially when you’re starting out on something new.

Avoid the thinking I used to have that if I wasn’t doing everything I was instructed to do, 100% correctly, then I was just wasting my time. Drop ‘All or nothing’ from your strategy tool box and replace it with ‘good, better, best’ – and remember, like most of my entries, this material is applicable to all areas of your life. Not just your Qigong practice!

October 28th – For Important, Read Vital

Apparently new sushi chefs can spend years doing nothing but making rice for the head chef.

That's how important the rice is to great sushi.

Most people are more interested in the toppings or fillings: meat, vegetables, seafood, mushrooms or eggs – which may be raw, cooked or marinated.

Traditionally a new Kung Fu student may spend months doing nothing but practicing 'stances'.

That's how important they are to great Kung Fu.

But most students are more interested in the various forms: Wing Chun, Praying Mantis, Hung Gar, Choy Lee Futt etc.

And the same can be said of Qigong training.

Most practitioners are more interested in 'new' Qigong exercises than they are in developing the important core skills of Qigong.

To quote Seth Godin, Entrepreneur, author and public speaker:

“Too often, we quickly jump ahead to the new thing, failing to get good enough at the important thing.”

October 29th – Qigong Role Model

It is harder to be successful with Qigong if you don't have a role model of what that success looks like.

This is another reason why the best way to learn Qigong is directly from a master or suitably qualified Qigong teacher.

A good teacher does more than teach you the skills, forms and tools of Qigong. They also give you a clear picture of what you are aiming for with your training.

If you have a good teacher, treasure them.

October 30th – When Your Qigong Teacher Lives Far Away

This entry is for those of you who learn Qigong from a teacher who lives a long way from where you live.

When I first began learning authentic Qigong I had to travel over 1000 miles to get to the course. For 9 years I racked up tens of 1000's of miles of travel to learn from a Qigong master.

But most of my time was spent at home, practicing what I had learned during 2 day, 3 day and 5 day courses.

Often months passed between me seeing my teacher and this often caused problems.

I always tried to follow the instructions I had been taught to the best of my ability. But sometimes I made mistakes. It wasn't like I could call him up for a chat, because he travelled the world teaching for 9 months of each year – so I could never be certain what the time was for him.

Email wasn't much better, the amount of email he receives is staggering and I don't know how he manages to keep on top of it.

Eventually I learned that the key was to follow the instructions I had received to the best of my ability. I also learned the importance of really paying attention during a course and being certain to ask a ton of questions whilst I was there with my teacher.

Following this route I was able to get the best benefits from my Qigong training, even though my teacher was 1000's of miles away.

October 31st – Sweating And Straining

Always remember that you practice Qigong because you want a specific result.

Whether it be improved health, increased vitality, greater internal force, strengthening your mind, deepening your spirituality or simply because you want to live a happier life.

However, these results are not gained via the route of sweating, straining, puffing and panting.

They are gained by being relaxed, gentle and where necessary playing your edge.

Today's Reminder:

Qigong approaches physical, emotional, mental and spiritual 'development' from a very different theoretical framework.

November 1st – Qigong: Let's Keep It Simple

Here is a very important lesson for you. Make sure you really 'get it'.

I received an email on the 11th October. The sender asked 3 questions. But the one that really stood out was this one:

“Why do you never talk about breathing when you practice Qigong? I mean not only breathe IN and breathe OUT but full breathing, like:

Take a really deep breath in, starting with the tummy (2/3), then moving up through the chest (1/3), and then as you breathe out really empty the chest, really let it go, just let all the muscles of the chest...”

On and on it went.

This was my reply:

“Unnecessarily complex – just breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. Simple.”

I keep saying it, but the message does not seem to be getting through as much as I would like.

Qigong is simple, direct and effective. Don't make it complex.

November 2nd – The Shadow Bag

I often think of negative emotions as 5kg weights.

Every time you feel a negative emotion: anger, jealousy, guilt, shame etc. – *and hold onto it* – it's like putting that 5kg weight into a rucksack on your back – let's call it the Shadow Bag.

The Shadow Bag is magical, it's invisible and there's always room for more. It never fills up.

In the course of a day, you could probably get 15-20kg in it. Imagine how much you could fit in over a week, a month, a year!

It's quite staggering the amount of emotional baggage that people carry around with them.

Is it any wonder they're exhausted at the end of each day?

The practice of Qigong, especially 'Smiling From The Heart', is the best way to deliberately let go of negative emotions. It is a powerful tool for emptying the Shadow Bag.

When you do, you will literally feel lighter.

I'll just quickly add, that there really is no such thing as a 'bad' emotion. The trouble only comes when we hold onto them.

I've used this quote before, but it is especially relevant today:

Quote: *“Holding onto Anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned”* – Buddha.

November 3rd – Kai Xin

Pronounced *kai-sin*, where the ‘kai’ rhymes with ‘sky’.

If you ask a Chinese speaker what Kai Xin means, they will tell you it means ‘Happy’.

But if you take the word Kai Xin apart and look closer at it, it really means ‘Open Heart’.

And when the Heart is open it benefits all the emotions.

The Chinese language is full of surprises if you know where to look. Kai Xin is just one example.

November 4th – How To Catch A Monkey

To catch your monkey, you will need the following equipment:

- 1) *Something very tasty for the monkey, like some nuts.*
- 2) *A heavy container with a long narrow neck.*

The method is very simple and looks like this:

- 1) *Put the nuts in the bottom of the container.*
- 2) *Put the container on the floor. Optional: use a chain to connect the container to something solid, like a rock or a tree.*
- 3) *Come back tomorrow and collect your monkey.*

How it works:

The hole in the heavy container needs to be wide enough for the monkey to put its hand in, but not wide enough to extract its closed hand. Because the monkey will not let go of the nuts it cannot escape the trap.

I first came across the monkey trap in Robert Pirsig's 'Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance'.

Many of us get caught in a similar trap. When we won't let go of our problems, or our negative emotions we can end up as trapped as the monkey in our scenario above.

All we have to do is 'let go' and we are free. Qigong is powerful tool for letting go.

Every time we have Qigong Energy flow we are practicing 'letting go' and the more we practice the better we get at it.

Enjoy your practice.

November 5th – Are You Fully Charged?

When my car is running low on gas it makes an attention grabbing beeping noise to let me know.

When my mobile phone battery is running low it also makes an attention grabbing beeping noise.

Even my water filter has a flashing display warning me when it's time for a new filter.

What about your body?

It doesn't make an attention grabbing beeping noise or flash to warn you when it is running low on energy.

But you know when it's dropping because you feel tired, it's harder to think straight, you become more easily irritable, everything seems like a major hassle and so on.

Fortunately Qigong is a powerful energy-charging tool for your body. When practiced daily you stay fully charged which helps you to avoid illness, make better decisions, feel energetic and think clearer – to name a few benefits.

Today's Reminder:

Qigong is an excellent tool to recharge your body, so is placing a high value on rest and avoiding burning the candle at both ends.

November 6th – A Comforting Fact

When everything in my life appears out of my control. When the world situation seems chaotic and uncertain. There is always my Qigong training.

If I practice I get results, I receive benefits. My practice is always mine; it's always dependable and certain.

If I get up, get out and practice it always meets me more than half way.

Make a rock of your practice and know that whatever else is happening in your life that you cannot change – your Qigong is always there for you.

Enjoy your practice.

November 7th – How To Become A Qigong Teacher

I'm often asked how to become a Qigong teacher. I sometimes think if I had known how difficult a journey it was going to be before I started out, I'd have chosen another career!

I love teaching Qigong, there are few times when I am happier than when I'm sharing its skills with keen students.

If you want the satisfaction of:

- 1) *Being your own boss*
- 2) *Contributing to society*
- 3) *Independence*
- 4) *An opportunity to improve yourself*
- 5) *A job that commands respect from others*

Then here is the tried and tested route to becoming a Qigong teacher:

- 1) *Learn your art from a Qigong master or good teacher*
- 2) *Be a good student.*
- 3) *Use your art to heal yourself and benefit your life*
- 4) *When your teacher tells you that you are ready, then and only then do you begin your teaching career.*

Not following this route is foolish and only serves to swell the ranks of Qigong form teachers.

Please don't do that.

November 8th – Are You Practicing Qigong or Qigong Form?

Many people who practice Qigong do not gain the 5 main benefits of Qigong because they've been practicing Qigong form. But because they think they have been practicing Qigong they mistakenly believe that Qigong doesn't work.

The truth is that Qigong form doesn't work, apart from giving your body a gentle stretch and increasing blood flow. Now whilst these are beneficial, they are minor league when compared to the 5 main benefits Qigong offers.

So how can you tell if you're practicing Qigong or Qigong form?

- 1) ***Qigong makes use of the 3 core skills:*** *If your Qigong training consists of moving from one Qigong form to another and this process lasts for 20 to 30 minutes or longer per session. If it does not involve entering a QSoM, Energy flow or Standing Zen, then it is not Qigong.*
- 2) ***You notice big improvements:*** *If you've been training for 3 months (with the supervision of a teacher, longer if you're learning from a DVD or book) or more and have not noticed any significant improvements in your resistance to illness and stress or increases in energy levels then you're not practicing Qigong.*
- 3) ***You regularly feel energized:*** *If you feel tired at the end of your training then you're not practicing Qigong. Why? Because Qigong enhances energy, where as physical exercise uses energy.*

Which are you practicing?

November 9th – The Dark Side Of Qigong

As your practice of Qigong deepens, you are likely to come into contact with other Qigong teachers, masters, and practitioners. 99% of them will be some of the kindest, warmest, most generous people you could hope to meet. After all they practice Qigong and when practiced correctly it promotes physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being. But, the truth is that there are some very odd characters (*to put it politely*) out there in the Qigong ‘universe’. Here are 7 rules to keep in mind as journey deeper into this universe:

1) **Maintain a healthy scepticism** – Just because someone says they can do something, doesn’t make it true. A good question to keep in mind when someone tells you anything is: ‘according to whom?’

2) **Beware of Narcissists** – Be wary of anyone who requires a stage or a platform because it is a blatant form of narcissism. If you don’t see humility in a teacher be careful. My experience is that arrogance is based on insecurity and it’s a clue.

3) **Don’t give your power away** – The psychologist Stanley Milgram coined the phrase ‘Obedience to authority’. It means we tend to believe *without question* the words spoken by an authority figure we respect.

4) **Observe their conduct** – Do they sleep with their students? That is an abuse of authority. It’s not hard to appear really cool and spiritual for an hour-long class.

5) **Are there clear boundaries?** – Just because a person is in a position to teach you Qigong, doesn’t mean they can teach you about investing money, your diet, your relationships etc. But that might not stop them trying!

6) **Trust your own instincts** – If your ‘spider senses’ start tingling, listen to them. Are you attending a class or are you signing up for a cult?

7) **Never be afraid to walk away** – There are hundreds of other instructors, schools and classes out there. Don’t feel obliged to stick with one if it doesn’t feel right for you.

Useful Link: If you’ve been part of a school for a while and are having doubts about its orientation or the ethics of its ‘leader’ then check out this useful questionnaire:

<http://www.gospelassemblyfree.com/facts/questionnaire.htm>

November 10th – The Best Qigong Style Is...

Which is the best style or set of Qigong exercises?

- *Shaolin*
- *Cloudwater*
- *Cosmic Freedom Qigong*
- *Spring Forest*
- *Ba Duan Jin*
- *Zhan Zhuang*
- *Small Universe*
- *Big Universe*
- *Dan Tian Breathing*
- *Sinew Metamorphosis*
- *Golden Bridge*
- *18 Lohan Hands*
- *18 Shaolin Exercises*

To list a tiny selection.

As a smart Qigong teacher once said to me:

The best Qigong is the one YOU practice everyday.

Get it?

November 11th – Naturally Healthy

You have an inbuilt ability to heal yourself. It is natural to be healthy. So why are so many of us unhealthy?

Recall: When looking at health, Yin is your body's natural ability to adjust itself appropriately to its ever-changing environment.

Yang is anything that causes illness.

Too many of us live lives that are out of balance:

- *We burn the candle at both ends.*
- *We don't take time to rest and recover.*
- *We eat dead, nutritionally questionable food.*
- *We don't exercise the body in a healthy way.*
- *We make unsustainable demands on the body.*

And so on.

If you practice Qigong, but still feel unhealthy, then either:

- 1) *What you're practicing is not Qigong.*
- 2) *You haven't been practicing long enough (3 months minimum).*
- 3) *Your life is out of balance due to too many Yang elements in it.*

It's natural to be healthy, but you have to do your bit to help nature. Qigong training is one part of the equation a healthy lifestyle is another.

Today's Reminder:

Your lifestyle has a major impact on your body's ability to be healthy. Practicing Qigong doesn't give you a green light to indulge in negative lifestyle choices.

November 12th – Choice Point

The alarm goes off, it's cold, it's dark and you're warm and cosy.

This is a 'choice point', you're at a fork in the road and here the battle is won or lost. One choice gives you short-term pain in exchange for long-term gain. The other gives you short-term gain but leads to long-term pain.

Get up, or stay in bed?

You're facing a shrinking window of opportunity, think about it too long and the struggle will be lost. Roll over, close your eyes and grab an extra 15 minutes in bed?

Or...

Take a deep breath, put your feet on the floor and start the day with your Qigong training?

You have so many choice points during the day:

- *One sugar or two with your coffee?*
- *Make that extra call at work or leave it until tomorrow?*
- *Watch another hour of TV or go to bed early?*

The choice is yours, which is it going to be?

Quote: *"It is in your moments of decision that your destiny is shaped."* – Anthony Robbins, author and speaker.

November 13th – Discover Your Destiny

Have you ever played the ‘Hotter/Colder’ game with a child? You know, you hide something and as they walk around the room you say:

“You’re getting warmer, warmer, colder, warmer, hotter, boiling hot – There It IS!”

You can use the same approach for plotting your life path.

It works like this:

I look at two possible options (or more).

- 1) *Wash dishes for a living in a local hotel?*
- 2) *Teach Qigong?*

Option 2 feels much ‘Hotter’ for me than option 1.

Here’s another one:

- 1) *Focus my time on getting to the USA to teach Qigong?*
- 2) *Focus my time on writing my second book?*

Option 1 is ‘Hot’ but option 2 feels ‘Hotter’.

Obviously these examples are simplistic, there are a lot of other variables to consider, but when faced with a lack of certainty about what to do or what path to take – you get to choose. You never need to know what the end destination is, you just need to decide whether one course of action feels hotter or colder than another. As long as you keep choosing the one which feels ‘Hotter’ for you, you will be certain that you are moving ever closer to your destiny.

Quote: *“Each man must look to himself to teach him the meaning of life. It is not something discovered: it is something moulded.”* – Antoine de Saint-Exupery, 1900 – 1944 French aristocrat, writer and poet.

November 14th – The Importance of Exercise

“Just as a door which is not frequently used will rot, a person who does not regularly exercise will be sick”

– Hua Tuo Famous 2nd Century Chinese Physician

The practice of Qigong twice a day fits the bill nicely.

That was reason number 318 for why Qigong is brilliant.

November 15th – Is Qigong Better Than A Wonder Drug?

As I've written previously, I believe that Qigong is better than Tai Chi, unless you're practice Tai Chi Chuan for it's martial benefits. I believe that Qigong is better than Yoga because it's far less strenuous. I also believe that Qigong is better than mediation, because every time you practice authentic Qigong, you are also practicing and gaining the benefits of meditation.

Today I'd like to look at some of the benefits that researchers have directly attributed to the practice of meditation:

- *Reduce pain, anxiety, blood pressure, cholesterol, substance abuse, and the levels of stress hormones in the blood.*
- *Create a 12.5% lower risk of stroke or coronary mortality in adulthood.*
- *Relieve stress, rheumatoid arthritis symptoms, reduce cardiovascular risk factors, decrease psychological distress and improve sleep patterns.*
- *One study found that 66% of those recovering from depression remained stable (no relapse) over a year.*
- *Relieves tension, creates the will power and consciousness to be in control of ones life and alleviates depression, loneliness, hopelessness and despair.*

When we practice Qigong, not only do we get all of the benefits of mediation (*as listed above*) but we also get the benefits of Qigong: Improve health and increase vitality, longevity, develop internal force, expand the mind and spiritual cultivation.

How incredible is Qigong? Just 15 minutes a day, 30 if you're super committed, to get all of those incredible benefits. Can you imagine a wonder drug that could give you all of these benefits I have mentioned?

It would be worth an absolute fortune!

November 16th – Different Views Of The Mind

The history of the mind is fascinating.

The ancient Assyrians believed that the liver was the home of the mind. The ancient Egyptians believed that the heart was the seat of intellect and wisdom.

Aristotle (350BC) believed the heart was the seat of intelligence and emotion.

The English physician William Harvey, in ‘On the Circulation of the Blood’ (1628) wrote:

“The heart’s one role is the transmission of the blood...”

But even he metaphorically described the heart as the King of the body.

Which is interesting because the Chinese attribute the heart with being the Emperor, because it is the supreme controller of the all the systems of the body.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine the heart houses your Shen (*mind/spirit*) and controls the way the brain thinks and feels.

At the end of the day whether you believe the mind is located in the liver, heart or brain doesn’t matter. What matters is that your Qigong training will bring great benefit to it.

November 17th – Inspiration

Inspiration is good, but it can only do so much.

I know you enjoy reading these daily entries, but simply reading them isn't going to help you gain the benefits of Qigong in your life.

Only when you become a stake holder, when you take responsibility for you own health, happiness and well being will you grow.

I believe Qigong is the most powerful tool for allowing you to take back the power for your health and happiness – but only if you use it daily.

I know that as the days get colder, the mornings get darker and the weather gets worse, it's easy for your practice to slide – it happens to me too.

So if necessary, get inspired and then get up and do your Qigong training.

November 18th – Qigong Is Meditation

I recently tried to run a Qigong course at a local community centre. I advertised it in all the right places; spoke with as many people as I could in the area and 2 people turned up.

Whilst talking with one of the students he made a comment I found very interesting:

“I guess not many people have heard of Qigong, if you were teaching a meditation course I think many more people would have turned up.”

A quick Google search proves his point has great merit. Put the word meditation in and you’ll get over 23 million results. Do the same with Qigong and you get just over 9 million.

That’s a huge difference!

The most frustrating (*for a teacher of Qigong*) aspect of this is that Qigong is meditation and so much more. If you look at any list of benefits to be gained from meditation – Qigong matches that list and then some.

Can meditation help you heal a bad back? Get rid of knee pain? Develop internal force? Get rid of haemorrhoids, repair sexual functioning, relieve indigestion, heal old sporting injuries, increase flexibility, increase fertility and so on?

Qigong is meditation, but meditation is not Qigong.

Perhaps next time I teach a Qigong course, I’ll drop the name Qigong and call it a ‘Moving Meditation’ course instead!

November 19th – Qigong Is A Placebo

I've encountered a lot of people recently saying that Qigong is a placebo.

Does Qigong only work because it is a placebo? First let's take a look at what the 'Placebo Effect' is:

Something that has no effect on the body, like a sugar pill. The patient is told that this is just as effective as the medication. What happens is that the placebo has the same effect, sometimes greater than the medication that is supposed to be designed for that effect.

So they [Western Medicine] found out that the human mind is the greatest factor in the healing arts. More so sometimes than medication.

- Dr John F. Demartin

So, is Qigong a placebo?

For me the key question would be:

“Does it work only if the patient/practitioner believes in Qigong?”

The answer from my own direct experience as a Qigong teacher is 'No'. I have found Qigong to benefit clients even when they don't know that it is Qigong they are being taught.

Clearly more scientific studies have to be carried out to prove beyond all doubt that Qigong works because of more than the placebo effect, but until then, I'm satisfied.

November 20th – Qigong And The Piano

Qigong is as easy and as hard to play as a piano.

Anyone can play a piano it's easy.

Just press the keys and make some noise. But far fewer people can play the piano so that those listening to it have a pleasant auditory experience!

The same is true with Qigong.

Anyone can do Qigong it's easy.

Just close your eyes and move your body around gently. But far fewer people can practice Qigong and gain the benefits of Qigong.

Today's Reminder:

Playing the piano is more than just pressing keys and Qigong training is more than just waving your arms around with your eyes closed.

November 21st – Qigong And Bike Sheds

Whilst reading author Tim Ferriss's book '*The 4 Hour Body*' I came across something called the bike shed effect, attributed to C. Northcote Parkinson.

The idea is that because most people rightly feel that they know nothing about the complexities involved in building a nuclear power plant they are likely to keep their opinions to their self.

But most people will wrongly assume that they know something about how to build a bike shed and so will happily argue until they are blue in the face about all the details right down to what colour it should be.

Unfortunately like a bike shed, when it comes to exercise and health, everyone has an opinion and most people don't mind telling you that yours is wrong, even if (*like the majority of people*) they've never even heard of Qigong.

Today's Reminder:

In my experience it's best to avoid 'bike shed' conversations with people. No matter how well intentioned they might be. Because what usually happens is that you're bombarded with confusing, distracting, biased and often plain wrong information masquerading as facts.

November 22nd – Chinese Yoga

Here's a quick tip.

If Qigong comes up in a conversation you're having and somebody says: "What's that?" you now have a choice.

Based on the genuine interest of the questioner you can either opt for:

*"Qigong is a composite of form, energy and mind.
Practiced for health, vitality, longevity, internal force,
mental and spiritual cultivation."*

And take it from there.

Or

"Qigong is Chinese Yoga".

And then change the subject.

My wife used to have a terrible time answering the question: 'What does your husband do?' now she simply replies: 'He teaches Chinese Yoga'.

November 23rd – Qigong Is Sexy

I once spoke with a group of Yoga practitioners about Qigong. At the end of the presentation I asked them what they loved about practicing Yoga. Here is a quick sample of the replies I got:

- *I feel I'm doing something positive for my future health.*
- *My body is getting toned up and I feel sexy.*
- *I'm breathing fully in my everyday life.*
- *My practice relaxes me.*
- *My practice energizes me.*
- *I feel smug about my yoga because I know I'm doing something really good for my health.*
- *My body feels stronger.*
- *It stills my mind and stops me stressing out.*
- *It increases my flexibility, improves my balance and leaves me feeling great.*
- *It's sexy, the postures look sexual.*
- *Old age is now more attractive physically.*
- *I like that Yoga is none competitive.*

I have to admit that when it comes to 'Sexy' Yoga wins over Qigong hands down. As an example, I've never been to a Qigong class where the uniform was Lycra based!

Other than that and it's toning abilities, Qigong ticks all of Yoga's boxes whilst being far less strenuous.

But I think that most Westerners are body-centric, they want a better-looking body and as a result perhaps Yoga will always be more popular than Qigong as a result.

What do you think?

November 24th – Total Health Qigong

Qigong is a total health tool. But what is total health? The western view of total health focuses on 4 areas:

- *Physical*
- *Emotional,*
- *Mental*
- *Spiritual*

Or PEMS as I like to call it.

The Qigong view of total health covers the physical and the Shen, or Heart aspects. In this model the western Emotional, Mental and Spiritual areas map onto Qigong's Shen/Heart aspect.

Personally I prefer the PEMS approach, as it is more easily accessible as a model.

But it's just a model. The bottom line is that Qigong is a simple, direct and powerful tool for achieving and maintaining total health.

November 25th – The 4 Thinks Worth Fussing About

Have you ever heard of Felix Dennis? Author, poet and estimated to be worth between \$400 and \$900 million USD. He wrote a book I read recently called: “How To Get Rich”. The introduction is titled: ‘How Rich?’ in it he writes:

“Rich enough to buy the only two things apart from health and love worth fussing about in life. Time. And the option of not having to be in any particular place on any particular day doing any particular thing in order to pay the rent or the mortgage.”

I found this fascinating. A man who clearly can afford to buy pretty much anything is stating that the only 4 things worth fussing about are: Health, Love, Time and Freedom. Well the good news is Qigong can help you to have all 4. Here’s how:

- **Health** – *this one’s obvious right?*
- **Love** – *You’ve got to start with self love, if you can’t love yourself it’s really hard to accept the love of others. Qigong helps you to come to terms with who you are, to realize that you are unique, that your life and what you have to offer is precious.*
- **Time** – *Practicing Qigong takes just 15 minutes once a day, or 30 minutes if you practice twice a day. Compare that with working out 3 times a week in a gym.*
- **Freedom** – *Life is so much easier when you feel good. You make better decisions, you make a better impression on those around you, you produce better work, and you’re more creative and fun to be with.*

Yet another compelling reason to practice Qigong!

November 26th – Qigong Principles

What is it that allows you to get out of one car, into another and drive it? Or how is it that you are able to use one mobile phone and yet be relatively competent on another one, even though you are unfamiliar with that model?

It's because you have enough of an understanding of the principles involved in each activity.

The same applies to Qigong.

Once you have an understanding of the core principles of Qigong you can quickly pick up the techniques or the forms of any other type of Qigong and practice it as Qigong.

These are what I consider to be the core principles of Qigong:

- *Qigong is a composite of form, energy and mind.*
- *Qigong has its roots in TCM.*
- *The 3 core skills of Qigong are QSoM, Energy Flow and Standing Zen.*

Today's Reminder:

Without the core principles of Qigong it won't matter what Qigong you practice – you'll never get the benefits of Qigong.

November 27th – Information Applied Is Knowledge

Take a look at your bookshelf, hard drive or DVD collection. Now be honest, how many of the books you have have creased spines? Have written notes in the margins and are underlined or have highlighted text?

How many of the Pdf's, Podcasts, and videos on your computer have you opened and read, listened to or watched and made notes on? How many of the DVD instructional videos did you practice for more than 3 months?

And then for all of these media types, how much of that information have you applied? Now here's an interesting thought. If you've got a lot of information, not all of it can be bad; some of it must be very good.

So if your finances, your health, your weight, your relationships, or anything you are interested in, is not at the level you want it to be – some of the responsibility for that has to come back on you. Don't worry I've done this myself.

Mere knowledge is not power. Information is so easy to get hold of these days, consider this:

“..more content is created now in 48 hours than was from the beginning of time until 2003.” – Eric Schmidt from Google.

And:

Youtube: 48 hours of video uploaded every minute
– source youtube blogspot blog.

And it's only speeding up. Always remember that the acquisition of information is pointless, ***unless you apply it.***

Quote: *“For most of us, the how-to books on our shelves represent a growing to-do list, not advice we've followed.” – Tim Ferriss, author.*

November 28th - Expiry Date

Everything has an expiry date on it.

Look in your fridge and I'll wager everything in there that's still in its packaging has an expiry date on it.

Guess what?

I hate to tell you this but you have an expiry date as well. However, the good news is that your body was designed to last for 120 years, and there are plenty of references to back this up.

Here's one of my favourites:

“There is now a virtual consensus that the maximum human lifespan is around 120 years, or one million hours.” – Dr Walter M. Bortz of Stanford University.

The upsetting news is that most of us never even reach it.

The stresses and strains of life in the 21st century, poor diet, burning the candle at both ends and unhealthy lifestyle choices are the main culprits.

I believe that if you will make a few healthy lifestyle changes and make Qigong as much a part of your life as eating every day then you can go a long way to reaching your maximum expiry date.

November 29th – 3 Quick Tips For A Good Nights Sleep

Here are 3 quick and easy tips you can try the next time your ‘sleepy thought’ is hard to find:

- 1) *Enter a Qigong State of Mind* – relax physically by checking for unnecessary tension in your body and getting rid of it. Relax emotionally by letting go of any emotions from the day. Relax mentally by clearing the mind of all thoughts. Feel free to practice counting breaths to do this. Relax spiritually by really smiling from your heart. As Bruce Lee would say: “Don’t think, feeeee!”.
- 2) *Body Road Trip* – Starting from your head, work down to your toes and back up again. For the road map visit: <http://qigong15.com/blog/qigong-exercises/3-tips-for-a-brilliant-nights-sleep/>
- 3) *Lifting the Midnight Sky* – This translates as performing Lifting the sky in bed. But: But be sure to show due care and consideration to anyone else in the bed with you. Waking them up by hitting them with one of your arms is not recommended ask me how I know! Be sure to look out for walls and bedside lamps too.

If all else fails, get up and do something creative. I often find that when I can’t get to sleep it’s a great time to write or read.

Give yourself an hour and then go back to bed.

November 30th – How To Stay Present During Qigong Training

It's very common during Qigong training for your mind to seem like it has an agenda of its own. And that agenda is to want to focus on everything other than your training. When this happens try 1 of these 3 tips to stay present.

- 1) **QSoM** – *Spending more time entering a Qigong State of Mind can have an enormous benefit on your training. Your practice may have evolved so that yo're used to only spending a few minutes on this step. But if you find it hard to stay present during your practice then following this tip will often prove to be the solution.*
- 2) **Focus** – *If the mind wants to focus more on a problem or what to have for lunch for example, then distract it by focusing on what you are doing in your practice. Pay attention to the movement of your body, focus in on your breathing and so on. But just be sure not to over do it!*
- 3) **1 Thought** – *A continuation of Tip #2, but especially useful when practicing Standing Zen. Because the mind can only really focus on one thing at a time. You can use this to your advantage. You use 1 thought to overcome the 10,000 thoughts. And what is this one thought? When you breathe in through your nose, say the word 'IN' to yourself and when you breathe out through your mouth, say the word 'OUT' to yourself. Then repeat. Simple, direct and effective.*

The next time your mind is behaving like a naughty monkey during your Qigong training, try out one of these tips to bring it back in line.

December 1st – Is Qigong The Next Big Thing?

I've recently become aware of a lot of hype in the media with regards to Qigong. The usual stuff, along the lines of:

'Is Qigong the next exercise trend?'

Here's a quote from a recent press release:

"...Devotees believe this 5,000 year old energy cultivation system is poised to become the new kid on the block..."

As a Qigong teacher on a mission, who believes that Qigong:

- *Is easier to learn than Tai Chi.*
- *Is less strenuous than Yoga.*
- *Gives greater benefits than Meditation alone.*
- *Requires virtually zero athleticism.*
- *Does not require any expensive equipment.*

I sincerely hope that Qigong does become the next exercise trend to explode into popular culture (*it's long overdue its 15 minutes of fame*). I believe that there are millions more people who can benefit from Qigong.

But I won't hold my breath and in the meantime, I suggest those of us who are 'ahead of the crowd' continue to deepen our practice so that maybe one day we can pass on these Qigong benefits to others.

Until then, enjoy your practice.

December 2nd – Medical Qigong

As the name suggests Medical Qigong focuses on overcoming a specific or general illness or disease. The aim is restore the harmonious flow of Qi through the energy channels (meridians) of the body. With harmonious energy flow you have good health.

There are many different Qigong exercises that focus on overcoming illness and improving health and perhaps one of the most well known is Self Manifested Qi Flow (*SMEF*).

Medical Qigong usually consists of more than one Qigong exercise practiced during the same training session. An example of a very popular combination is:

- 1) *Lifting the Sky*
- 2) *Pushing Mountains*
- 3) *Carrying the Moon*

All practiced in the same 15-minute session. But how does this work? If you focus on one Qigong exercise during your training, then you'll know that it would be nearly impossible to practice 3 exercises and still only take 15 minutes. The difference is that when you focus on one exercise you are using the form and the breathing – performed in a QSoM to generate energy flow. But with Medical Qigong you are using just the form to generate energy flow.

As a result the exercises are performed quicker and the breathing is not coordinated with the movements. It's spontaneous. Because the form is used to generate energy flow medical Qigong is considered 'low level', but this does not mean that it is of low value. Quite the reverse. If you are experiencing ill health this type of Qigong can be very high level for bringing you back to good health.

The key point to remember is that even though the emphasis of Medical Qigong is on 'form', it is still practiced in a QSoM, it still has Energy Flow and Standing Zen. I.e. Qigong form is not Medical Qigong!

December 3rd – Qigong Is Better Than Western Medicine

I'm a big believer in having my cake and eating it. Just ask my wife!

So it does frustrate me when I hear people spouting on about how alternative health models, paradigms, systems etc. like Qigong or TCM are better than Western Medicine (WM).

It also frustrates me when I hear the WM establishment dismissing alternative therapies like Qigong as being placebos, at best.

Both groups are as bad as each other in my opinion.

I believe there are areas such as contagious diseases, bacterial attack and Solid illness (*where the cause and site of the illness is clear*) that WM is far better at treating than Qigong.

But I also believe that for Empty illnesses (*where the cause and site of the illness is not clear*), depression, anxiety, worry, fear, stress etc. – then Qigong is much better than WM.

Saying one is better than the other is not very helpful.

Asking which approach will work best for the presenting problem is the way forward.

I'm a great believer in having the best of both worlds and that means benefiting from Qigong and WM.

December 4th – Qigong Success Blueprint

Here are 8 components you need to succeed with your Qigong training. I call them the ‘Qigong Success Blueprint’:

- 1) **Learn from the best source you can** – Remember the *Qigong Learning Index or QLI?* It goes like this: *Qigong master, Qigong teacher, Skype, good online course of DVD, good book, Qigong form teacher, poor DVD or online course, poor book.*
- 2) **Practice Qigong and not Qigong form** – Qigong is a composite of Form, Energy and Mind. If you only practice Form you are practicing Qigong form and not Qigong.
- 3) **Develop the 3 Core Skills** – they are: *Qigong State of Mind, Energy Flow and Standing Zen*
- 4) **Practice daily** – Qigong is an art. You get good at it by daily practice. There are no shortcuts to this.
- 5) **Have clear Aims and Objectives for your Qigong training** – Qigong is all about results. But you’ve got to be clear on what results you want if you’re ever going to get them.
- 6) **Measure Your Progress Regularly** – What can’t be measured can’t be managed...
- 7) **Relaxed and Gentle** – Do not use unnecessary force in your movements, your breathing or your thoughts.
- 8) **Be A Good Student** – Follow the instructions you are given to the best of your ability. Don’t try to be cleverer than your teacher by mixing and matching skills and techniques from other energy arts.

Follow this Blueprint and your success with Qigong is guaranteed.

December 5th – Clean Up With Your Qigong Training

Remember that your Qi (*vital energy*) flows through the energy streams of your body (meridians). As a result:

- *When your Qi flows harmoniously through the meridians, you will have good health.*
- *When your Qi flows harmoniously and vigorously you will have good health and vitality.*
- *When your Qi flows harmoniously, vigorously and abundantly you will have good health, vitality and longevity.*

The problem is that life in the 21st century is highlighted by a lack of proper rest, too much unhealthy stress, poor diet and burning the candle at both ends. This leads to blockages of harmonious energy flow in your body and the result is ill health, lack of energy etc.

Qigong is such a powerful tool for health, vitality and longevity because it first removes these blockages, improving health, and then increases energy flow. Listen carefully now, because this concept of vital energy flow doesn't just apply to your body, it applies to all areas of your life. This shouldn't really come as a surprise. Can you remember the 4 things everyone should know about Qi? Number 3 is:

Qi is the basic building block of the universe.

That is, everything is Qi and if it can't flow, whether it's through your computer, your office, your house or your body because of blockages – whether they be in the form of old information, clutter or poor lifestyle choices – then the result is always undesirable.

The solution?

You just need to clean up and get rid of the blockages that you can and let your Qigong training help you clear the rest.

December 6th – A Personal Realization

It was cold, dark and starting to rain as I watched my son getting ready to sing with his school choir.

The occasion?

To celebrate the switching on of the Christmas tree lights in the small Devon town where we live.

As I looked at him I saw myself, many years ago. In his place I knew that I would be feeling very anxious about forgetting the words, anxious about all the people watching me, anxious of screwing up in some embarrassing way.

As an adult, with the benefit of much ‘water under the bridge’, I realized that those anxieties only mattered to me. As an adult I knew nobody would care if I had forgotten my lines, stood staring at the floor or screwed up in an embarrassing way.

The legion of anxieties I suffered as a child, my mountains of worry about everything I did, said or thought, didn’t matter. Nobody cared about any of it – apart from me.

What a colossal waste of energy.

As I stood watching my son singing his heart out, I wondered if on my deathbed I would look back and feel the same way about the anxieties and worries I feel are valid today.

I have a suspicion that they’ll probably matter as much as my childhood worries do now – i.e. not at all.

If that is the case, perhaps I can let go of them today and free myself from their energy-draining death grip. How much better could life be without these self imposed burdens?

December 7th – Balance

Balance in your Qigong training is vital. Being obsessive about your practice is not necessary or healthy.

It is okay to miss one or two days of practice a month if circumstances arise that are out of your control.

I used to give myself such a hard time if I missed a session, even if it was unavoidable.

Qigong is about bringing healthy balance to your life, not rigidity or inflexibility.

Bamboo does not break in a fierce gale because it is flexible.

So take it easy (*but not too easy!*) and remember that you're practicing Qigong to improve your life not to make yourself guilty for missing a session every now and then.

December 8th – Modifying Qigong Exercises

Sometimes, mainly due to an accident, operation or old age, I'm asked if it is okay to make modifications to a Qigong exercise. The quick answer is yes, as long as your training is still a combination of Form, Energy and Mind. Many Qigong exercises that are normally performed standing can just as easily be performed seated if the student is unable to stand up for 10 to 15 minutes. If you need to modify a Qigong exercise, here are 3 keys to keep in mind:

- 1) ***Play Your Edge*** – *Especially if recovering from an illness or mobility issue. For example you try to lift your arms, just a little bit higher above your head each time you practice Lifting the Sky. This is playing your edge and it is sustainable, which is the opposite of pushing through the pain barrier, which isn't and can easily lead to further injury and pain. Qigong is all about gain without pain!*
- 2) ***PERFECT*** – *As mentioned earlier. Qigong is a combination of Form, Energy and Mind. Whilst form is the least important it is still vital that it is performed as Qigong and not Qigong form. Which is where PERFECT comes in. You may make changes to the form, but Preparation, Entering a QSoM, Really smiling from the heart, Energy flow, Cosmic balance and Time to complete – remain the same.*
- 3) ***Safety First*** – *Please seek the advice of your doctor and make sure they give you a green light before applying anything you read from me. With a bit of common sense it is possible to continue your Qigong training during your recovery or in later years.*

For much more information on modifying Qigong exercises, with a specific focus on the Shaolin 18 Lohan Hands Qigong set, please visit: <http://qigong15.com/blog/qigong-exercises/3-ways-to-modify-qigong-exercises/>

December 9th – Focus On The Root Not The Branch

Qigong healing works by focusing on the root cause of illness and not the symptoms or the branch.

Though having said that, if the ‘branch’ is life threatening then we treat the branch first. It’s not a great idea to work on someone’s energy if they’re unable to breathe for example.

From the Qigong view the root cause is always an energy problem or more precisely a malfunction of harmonious energy flow due to blockages in the meridians of the body.

The marvellous quality of Qigong is that we do not need to know where these blockages are. If we can enjoy Energy flow our Qi or vital energy will naturally flow to areas of low energy and work on clearing the blockages for us.

December 10th – How To Get The Most From Your Qigong

If you want to speed up the healing, the energy, the mental or spiritual benefits of your Qigong training then you must remind yourself daily that you are doing something that is proven to improve your health, increase your energy, cultivate spiritually and mentally.

This tip alone will help you to overcome any ‘negative’ mental imprints you may have picked up through your life about who you are, what you can do and what you’re capable of.

But you know what is even more powerful?

Enjoying your Qigong practice.

When you are you are entering a QSoM, doing your Form, letting go and enjoying Energy flow, maintaining Cosmic balance in your standing Zen – enjoy it.

*Enjoy your breathing in. Enjoy your breathing out.
Enjoy every aspect of your practice.*

Today’s Reminder:

Enjoying your practice is the simplest and easiest way to get the most from your Qigong training.

December 11th - Growing Pains

There are growing pains associated with undertaking any new endeavour and Qigong training is no exception. Sometimes moving forward can seem overwhelming and progress may feel non-existent. And once the ‘honeymoon’ period wears off, the desire to practice, like a candle flame can easily be extinguished. Here are 3 tips that can help you through your Qigong growing pains:

1) ***Progress not perfection*** – As long as you follow the instructions you are given to the best of your ability, that’s enough. Give yourself permission not to be perfect. When you start out on your Qigong training it’s okay to forget things. It’s okay to make mistakes. It’s unreasonable and cruel to expect yourself to be perfect straight out of the gate. As long as you are making progress with your practice that’s good enough.

2) ***Don’t Think, Do*** – Ever heard the saying ‘paralysis by analysis?’ That’s what happens when you think about things too much. Thinking too much is a major hurdle for many Qigong practitioners. The key is to stop thinking and do. Stop thinking about how to do a Qigong exercise and just do it. Stop thinking about how to practice and practice. Stop thinking about the best time or place to practice and practice. The process of doing often helps to fill in the blanks of your understanding. Doing can give you insights that thinking usually can’t.

3) ***Plateaus*** – There will be pockets of time during your training when it seems that you are going nowhere fast. Your Progress Tracker scores aren’t going up, some of them may even have going down! You can’t seem to make any progress towards your aims and objectives. Well, I’m here to tell you that this is completely normal. Plateaus are an essential part of growth. Growth is very rarely linear. There will always be peaks and troughs. The point to remember is that plateaus are a precursor to growth: If you have the discipline and determination to keep moving forward.

December 12th – When The Student Is Ready..

When the student is ready the teacher will appear.

I love this statement. Perhaps you've heard it? I've experienced it and seen enough examples of it to believe it to be true.

Here's my experience:

In 1995 I spent a year exploring South East Asia. Whilst not deliberately on the search for a great Qigong master, I certainly kept my eyes and ears open. And found – nothing.

5 years later my teacher appeared in Spain, only later did I discover that during my travels I'd literally passed his front door 4 times!

Here's my favourite example:

I know a great martial arts master who spent a number of years traveling the world deliberately seeking a true master of the martial arts. Near to giving up his search a friend asked if he could hire his Kwoon for a visiting master to teach a course.

Long story short, the visiting master turned out to be just the teacher he had been looking for.

After several long years of searching, his teacher turns up in his own Kwoon!

Love it.

Today's Reminder:

Be patient and enjoy your practice.

December 13th – 3 Different Ways To Enhance Energy Flow

From my experience of teaching Qigong there are 3 different ways of enhancing Energy flow during your Qigong training. Here they are:

- 1) **Level 1 – Using The Form:** *I refer to this as Medical Qigong. Using this method you practice more than one Qigong exercise. The most common number is three. These exercises are performed at a much faster pace than when your training focuses on just one. As a result breathing is spontaneous and not coordinated with the movements.*
- 2) **Level 2 – Using The Breathing:** *Frequently referred to as Dynamic Qigong. Here you focus on just one Qigong exercise during your training and the movements are much slower than in Level 1. Where appropriate the breathing is coordinated with the movements of the exercise. Though not all dynamic Qigong exercises have specific breathing patterns.*
- 3) **Level 3 – Using The Mind:** *Advanced Qigong exercises like Small Universe, Big Universe etc., use the mind to enhance Energy flow. Usually the only externally visible movement is the abdomen rising and falling as the practitioner breaths in and out. It's what's going on 'inside' that counts. And this is why you'll never catch me teaching this type of material as an online Qigong course. I personally believe that this material can and should only be learned directly from a Qigong master who has these skills.*

Clearly it goes without saying that all three levels are practiced in a QSoM, because Qigong is more than just Qigong form.

December 14th – Finish Strong

This year is quickly reaching its expiry date. Once it's over that's it. Time is so very precious. With time you can get money, with time you can get health. With enough time you can get pretty much anything you want.

Do you spend your time wisely, do you invest it in activities that give you a good ROI – Return On your Investment?

What do Richard Branson, Oprah Winfrey, Brad Pitt, the First Lady and a crystal meth addict all have in common?

Think about it...

24 hours!

Time is the great leveller. We all get 24 hours each and every day. The big difference is how we spend it, how we invest it, what we do with it.

Let me make it clear that I'm not saying you shouldn't enjoy yourself, that's nonsense. What I'm saying is that this year isn't over yet, there's still plenty of Qigong training days left.

That 15 minutes you spend in a morning and/or in an evening is, in my opinion, the most highly profitable time you can invest towards living a happier, healthier and longer life.

Today's Reminder:

You're never going to get this day back, so invest your time wisely.

December 15th – Qigong Prevents Rust And Stagnation

Today I decided to clean up my office up and I found an old notebook that had fallen down behind the back of a draw. I hadn't seen it years. Flicking through it I found this written down and underscored several times:

*A moving hinge never rusts,
and flowing water never sours.*

I wish I could find the original source of this statement, a quick search online shows it to be a common Chinese saying.

I think its meaning is crystal clear, but I can't resist expanding on it.

A moving hinge never rusts – Qigong helps you to keep your body moving and prevent rust accumulating. Use it or lose it applies here.

Flowing water never sours –Through the practice of Qigong we *actively* encourage the removal of blockages and the restoration of harmonious energy flow through the meridians of the body. As such our Qi never stagnates and we save ourselves from illness and disease.

I wish I could say that the old notebook I found was stuffed with such gems on Qigong training, but I'm sorry to have to report that it is mainly filled with the embarrassing ramblings of an over enthusiastic young man.

December 16th – 8 Ways To Survive The Festive Season In Style

Christmas and New Year are coming. Two of the biggest social events of the year and for many of us it is a time of over indulgence, burning the candle at both ends and abundant stress. No wonder so many people start the New Year with ‘Flu’, is it any wonder? I’m not saying don’t enjoy yourself, oh no. That’s not acceptable. So here are 8 tips I’ll be using to make sure I enter the New Year in full health. Feel free to use them too.

- 1) ***Smile From Your Heart More*** – Don’t just keep this powerful Qigong healing skill locked up for your Qigong training.
- 2) ***Keep Warm*** – Your body uses a huge amount of energy to keep your internal organs warm. Ladies, I know the party season is here, but don’t walk around outside like it’s summer (unless it is where you are!). Damn, I sound like your dad.
- 3) ***Schedule Time To Relax*** – Don’t just think about taking time to relax. Schedule it and it will happen.
- 4) ***Don’t Over Do It*** – Too often. Too much food and alcohol places a stress on your bodily systems. This is just plain old ‘not so’ common sense.
- 5) ***Say ‘NO’*** – Got an invitation to a party or social gathering you don’t really want to go to? Then say no to it. Go on, I dare you. Don’t waste your precious time and energy on gatherings you’re not excited about.
- 6) ***Be Balanced*** – We practice Qigong to complement our life, not to rule over it. If you miss a Qigong session or two during the next few weeks, for whatever reason, don’t worry about it. Just do your best.
- 7) ***The Ace Up Your Sleeve*** – Remember, you practice Qigong! An elite energy art for promoting health and vitality. Whilst this isn’t an excuse to over do it, if you’ve been practicing for 3 months or more, then as Yoda would say: “The force is strong in this one”.
- 8) ***Be Generous*** – When it all starts kicking off in the high street or on the road. Take a breath, remember your Qigong training, smile from your heart and spare a kind thought for those around you. They very likely feel the same way you do about this festive craziness.

December 17th – How Long To Install The Qigong Habit?

If there is a habit you have in your life right now that you'd like to be rid of. Let's say you want to stop lying in bed in a morning. As Og Mandino put it so eloquently in his best selling book: 'The Greatest Salesman in the World'.

"...only a habit can subdue another habit."

There is great merit in this statement. So how long does it take to install the habit of getting out of bed in a morning and practicing Qigong instead of lounging around? Well a quick look at the information available will tell you that it takes 21 – 30 days to install a new habit. But there is no hard evidence for this number. My research shows that the '21 days' figure stems from the work of Dr Maxwell Maltz of 'Psycho-cybernetics' fame.

However, I recently discovered interesting research in the European Journal of Social Psychology on this subject. Phillia Lally and her colleagues at University College London observed 96 people who wanted to form a new habit.

In a nutshell the average time to install a new habit was 66 days. The full range was between 18 days and 254 days depending on the dedication involved. For example the habit of drinking a daily glass of water was much quicker installed than doing 50 sit-ups before breakfast.

Today's Reminder:

Because Qigong requires discipline and dedication, it takes longer than 21 days to install a daily Qigong training habit into your life. But this doesn't just apply to Qigong! The *21 days to a new habit* message is a myth and now you know you won't become disillusioned when it takes you more than 21 days to install a new habit into your life. That's powerful knowledge.

December 18th – The Millionaires Viewpoint

One of my Qigong students became a multi millionaire in his mid twenties. He didn't win the lottery or inherit it. I asked him recently for his thoughts on what the difference is between people who succeed and those who don't. This is what he wrote:

“Some people are winners, and from that, they tend to have prior life experiences where they can recall trying things and succeeding at them. Other people do not have these types of prior experiences and thus, their only recollections are of trying things and failing.

I believe that this is the main reason why people try things and subsequently give them up. Qigong is one example, but gym memberships are another classic example where people start them highly enthused, yet within a few months they have quit. I have known several friends who have started going to the gym, but have quit within a month because they didn't see the muscular gains they were expecting.

The key however, is EDUCATION about how muscular development works – if they had the right education, they would know that large muscular gains are just not possible within such a short time frame and thus they would have the knowledge base to continue until the gains they want to see do indeed start to materialize.

Because I have spent the time to study Qigong since working with you, I know what my practice is doing to me internally, and I know the benefits I will be experiencing, even if I can't actually see or touch them. This gives me the motivation and knowledge to continue.”

Success leaves clues and there are plenty of clues in the passage above. If you need help with the education of how Qigong works and what it does, you'll find all the answers here in this book.

December 19th – Practicing Qigong Whilst Ill

My thoughts on doing Qigong training while sick are that you have to make your own decision on this. A very important requirement for humans, but one that is totally devalued by modern society is having proper rest.

Sometimes being ill is your body's way of forcing you to take a break. This isn't usually that common with Qigong practitioners though.

If you can, continue to practice whilst ill. If you have a cold and your nose is solidly blocked up, then you'll need to breathe IN through the mouth. But try to breathe IN through the nose every now and then; as it's likely your nose will clear during your practice.

Also remember to practice some of the skills of Qigong 'outside of' your specific Qigong practice. Whilst resting feel free to *Enter a Qigong State of Mind* and *Really smile from your heart*.

Don't keep your Qigong skills locked up just for practice; they can still bring great benefit to your health and happiness, even if you're tucked up in bed with a cold.

December 20th – Beat Jet Lag with Qigong

Since August 2000 I've racked up many air miles in my pursuit of Qigong excellence and a skill I quickly had to learn was how to use Qigong to beat jet lag.

It used to affect me so badly that by the time my body had adjusted, it was usually time to go home again.

Here's the solution I discovered works the best:

- 1) *Before you go on the plane practice Lifting the Sky. Don't worry about what your fellow air travellers think.*
- 2) *Continue to relax as much as possible during the flight. Avoid consuming alcohol, just because it's free doesn't mean you have to have it!*
- 3) *Once you land practice Lifting the Sky again and enjoy Energy flow – as soon as possible.*

Next time you're taking a long haul flight try this solution for yourself and see how great it works.

December 21st – Breaking Glass

Throw a small piece of gravel at a sheet of glass and it will just bounce off, but through a big handful of gravel and chances are it will shatter into many pieces.

What's this got to do with Qigong?

Everything!

Think of the sheet of glass as your health. Think of the stones as poor lifestyle choices such as not getting enough rest, over eating and drinking, etc.

Even though Qigong is like double-glazing for your health, it's still not wise to throw stones at it. Throw a stone big enough and it will still break.

The message?

Even if you practice Qigong it's still wise to improve your lifestyle choices. With the festive season upon us, don't party too hard or even your Qigong training may not be enough to prevent Yin/Yang disharmony.

December 22nd – An Uncomfortable Truth

I frequently receive contact from people asking me to help them overcome a serious, often long term, illness or disease.

But what still surprises me is that many expect to be able to watch a video, read a book or take an online course and be cured.

If overcoming serious illness was that easy, I think the world would have cottoned on to the fact by now and Qigong healers would be in hot demand.

The truth is that if an illness is severe or long term, then it is faulty logic to think that you can learn something from a book or DVD that will cure it.

If you are currently experiencing a serious and/or long-term illness then my advice to you is to receive direct instruction and guidance from a good Qigong teacher.

December 23rd – Aging Actively Through Qigong

I believe Qigong has a vital role to play in helping our aging population stay healthy and active. In a recent article I read the Mayor of Central Singapore district, Sam Tan said:

"Social isolation is one common issue facing the elderly, particularly those living alone"

The Mental Health Foundation backs this up:

Depression affects 1 in 5 older people living in the community and 2 in 5 living in care homes.

What can be done to help improve the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social well being of our increasing elderly population? I believe that Qigong is the answer. Here are just a few of its benefits:

No expensive equipment – you don't need to buy any special training gear or clothing.

Easily Modifiable – One of my students was 83 when she started and unable to stand without the aid of a walking frame. But I was easily able to modify her practice so she could do it sat down.

Improves sleep – I've many students who've found entering a QSoM a great aid for getting to sleep at night. For the first time in years they have been able to get to sleep easily and wake in a morning feeling refreshed – naturally, drug free.

Sociable – Qigong practiced in a group setting is very sociable. Staying socially connected is vital as we grow older and Qigong lends itself to being practiced in a group setting.

These are just a few of the reasons why I personally believe that Qigong must be seriously considered by local authorities and governments to help with the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social needs of an increasing elderly population. Not to mention the healthcare savings that could be made.

December 24th – The Antidote To Fear

I used to live my life in constant fear. I seemed to be scared of everything and everyone. I was virtually paralyzed by fear and often I couldn't even tell you what was causing it.

Quite a few years ago now I decided I'd had enough and began a quest to find the antidote to fear, I went on to have many adventures in overcoming fear.

Today I'd like to share with you one of the most powerful solutions I found.

The antidote to fear is faith.

But I had a hard time with faith. I just couldn't seem to acquire it. Luckily for me I met someone who pointed out that I did have faith. They explained that if I drove a car then I had faith. I had faith in those thin white lines.

I had faith in the other drivers on the road not to cross them. Without this faith I wouldn't be able to drive.

So how do you develop the kind of faith that overcomes fear? You start with a simple belief. For me it was:

“Everything is going to be okay.”

I'd repeat this many times a day to myself, like a mantra. I'd really chew it over, I'd say it slowly, and I'd ponder what it meant.

Gradually I began to have experiences that backed up this belief and gradually this belief became faith that everything really would be all right. This is the kind of faith that overcomes fear.

December 25th – Self Compassion

Happy Christmas!

Today I want you to do me and favour. I want you to forget once and for all about raising your self-esteem.

Why?

Self-esteem for most people is all about comparison. You can only feel good if after a comparison with someone or some socially acceptable ‘measure’ you come out *better than*.

The problem is that this is a constantly moving scale, up and down like a roller coaster. The disturbing feature of self-esteem is that to have high self-esteem you have to feel or believe you are better than others. That’s not healthy.

A much healthier solution is to focus on self-compassion instead.

Self-compassion means being kind to yourself, it means offering yourself the same level of concern and compassion that you would offer to a dear friend.

Self-compassion is noticing when you are experiencing a difficult situation, acknowledging it and doing your best without beating yourself up or lashing out at others. This is giving yourself compassion.

You always do your best – that’s a given. But from now on you’ll give yourself compassion even when you screw up or experience failure. Especially when you screw up or fail.

Oh, and if you must compare, remember the only meaningful comparison is with yourself. We’re interested in progress, not perfection.

December 26th – Qi Is What Makes Everything Happen

There are 5 names for the various functions of Qi:

- 1) **Gu Qi** – energy derived from food and drink
- 2) **Zong Qi** – energy produced from food and air by the lungs
- 3) **Yuan Qi** – energy inherited from parents
- 4) **Ying Qi** – the nourishing form of Yuan Qi
- 5) **Wei Qi** – the defensive function of Qi

I never worry about the functions of Qi. I practice Qigong and during Energy flow I let Qi do what it needs to do – not what I think it needs to do, a very important distinction.

I don't worry about how to digest my food, or how to grow my hair or how to breathe when I go to sleep at night. I let my body's own inbuilt 'intelligence' take care of such matters.

When I practice Qigong, I don't need to worry about developing or strengthening my 'inner shield' or Wei Qi. I practice gentle external movements, co-ordinated with my breathing, performed in a meditative state of mind to enhance energy flow.

Then I let go and let the work be done for me.

Qigong practiced correctly is holistic – it improves the functioning of all the aspects of Qi, not just one.

I think that's reason number 359 why Qigong is so brilliant.

December 27th – Qigong Warning

As I walked around my garden to complete this mornings Qigong training I was struck by how great it would be if you could ‘bottle’ Qigong, or put it into tablet form for people to take.

Then one thing led to another and I made up the following label for the back of the packet:

‘WARNING’

*Practicing Qigong may cause feelings
of euphoria, bliss, well being, peace,
tranquillity, insight and mental clarity.*

Use With Caution

December 28th – Qigong Checkpoints

Today I'd like to share with you one of the habits I attribute to my continued success in gaining significant benefits from my Qigong training. As I'm sure you know I'm a great believer in the saying:

'What gets measured gets managed'

Peter Drucker, 1909 – 2005 Management Consultant and Author

It's why all my students and I use a weekly or monthly progress tracker tool and if you're serious about your Qigong results then you will too. I like to take this a step further by using 'Checkpoints'. I've found that my training really keeps on focus if each year I schedule 6 checkpoints. I typically have them every 2 months. My last checkpoint was today I always make sure that I have a checkpoint on my birthday too. Each checkpoint is celebrated with lots of chocolate => During each checkpoint I look at my progress tracker results in 4 key areas:

- 1) *Morning Energy Levels*
- 2) *Immunity To Colds and Other Bugs*
- 3) *Sleep Quality*
- 4) *Ability To Cope With Worry*

These are just the ones that are important to me, you should choose your own. I also like to review my aims and objectives during a checkpoint too. The results of this examination help me to make any necessary course adjustments and gain confidence that my training is working. Checkpoints allow me to measure my long-term progress and keep me excited about my practice. Which is something many long time practitioners find very tough.

If more people would use frequent, regular, scheduled checkpoints – instead of just one, New Years Resolutions anyone? Then more people would stick with their Qigong training and gain the many wonderful benefits of it.

December 29th – Pain And Growth

As we reach the end of this year, it's important to reflect. I highly recommend you invest some time to look back on the trials and tribulations you faced this year.

Usually we only focus on what went well for us, but I invite you to take a closer look at those events that didn't.

This is what I discovered.

Some of the most painful experiences I've had this year have, on reflection being 'blessings in disguise'.

Pain can lead to growth. But pain itself does not create growth. Make sure you catch the distinction.

The key is your response to it.

Do you suffer it and just carry on as before?

Or do you let the pain inspire you to make changes that encourage you to grow?

The choice is yours.

December 30th – Time For Reflection

As this year reaches its conclusion I strongly recommend that you schedule 30 minutes to complete the following exercise. The insights you will gain from it will definitely be worth your investment. So set the timer, grab a pad and a pen and off you go:

- 1) *Write a list of your Top 10 achievements, break throughs, highlights of this year.*
- 2) *Celebrate your good fortune and feel good about this list.*
- 3) *Now write down the answer to this question: What was your biggest disappointment?*
- 4) *Write down 3 things you learned or changed as a result of this disappointment.*
- 5) *Finally, What's your #1 goal you're going to focus on this coming year?*

Clarity is king when it comes to living your life on purpose. I strongly recommend that you revisit August 26th if you want to gain extra brownie points.

Today's Reminder:

Like most of the principles in this book the benefits of this entry reach far beyond just your Qigong training.

December 31st – The Qigong365 Project

Phew, made it. I frequently thought this day would never come.

The most valuable lesson I've learned from the Q365 project is to never give up.

I've lost track of the number of times during this project when I honestly thought I had run out of topics that related in some way shape or form to Qigong.

When I started the project at the beginning of the year, I could easily write 10 entries in less than hour. Towards the end it might take me more than 90 minutes just to find 3 subjects to write about. Note I said 'write about' not write 3 posts.

Monday was always Q365 day. I'd aim to write at least 7 entries for the week ahead. But there were a number of times when I'd go to bed at night with absolutely no idea what tomorrows entry would be as there were no more Qigong blog posts 'left in the bank'.

It feels kind of scary when it is October 20th and you go to bed that night with no October 21st post lined up and ready to rock.

But always something came up.

If you speak to my friends they'll all tell you I regularly badgered them for ideas for posts. But most of my inspiration for new posts came after my Qigong training. There were times when I was convinced this project was never going to be completed, but todays entry shows how wrong I was.

Thank you to everyone who offered ideas and to the wonderful person who first suggested the idea for what became the Qigong365 project.

And thank you dear reader for joining me on this Qigong adventure!