

Qigong Secrets

Secrets of the Ancient Energy Masters - 22 Week Home Study Course

Week Eight

Plucking Stars Change Galaxies

This weeks pattern is introduced. Excellent for the stomach and the spleen and for overcoming indigestion. Also activates the 8 Wondrous meridians.

Page 2

Form

Here are the written instructions for the form. Make sure you watch the video as well! Much easier.

Page 3



A Picture Paints A 1000 Words...

Visual instructions for practicing this weeks pattern

Page 4

Breathing



Written instructions for the breathing component of Plucking Stars.

Page 6

The 10 Do's and Don'ts for your practice....

These 20 points will really help you to maximize the benefits of your practice.

Page 6

Homework & Coming Up Next Week....

Whatever you do, make sure you complete your progress tracker!!

Page 11



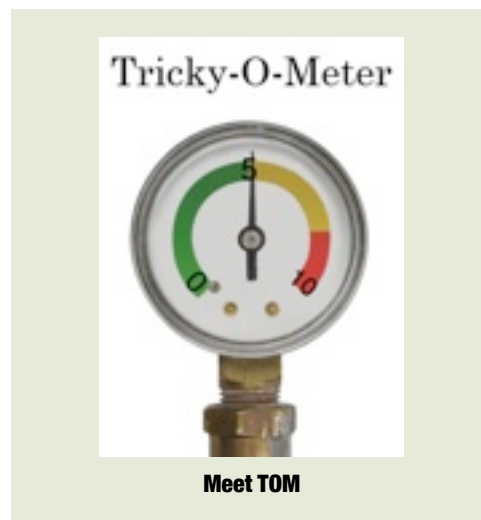
Welcome!



Welcome to week 8 of the home study course.

This weeks pattern is Plucking Stars Change Galaxies. On the Tricky-'O'-Meter (TOM) this pattern ranks as a 5 out of 10.

TOM is a combination of a patterns score out of 5 for



physical effort required. And a score out of 5 for technical complexity. This includes what flexibility level is required.

Adding these two scores together gives a total out of 10.

TOM is just something I use to give students an idea of what to

expect. It's not carved in stone, it's more for fun and some people disagree with my scores strongly!

So feel free to create your own!

I have fond memories of this weeks pattern, it came in very handy whilst eating at a wonderful restaurant in Portugal (but that's a story for another time).

This week I also share with you the 10 do's and don'ts for your practice - exactly as they were shared with me by my teacher.

Enjoy your practice!

Plucking Stars Change Galaxies

摘星換斗

Chinese: Zhai Xing Huan Dou



Also Known As: Plucking Stars

At A Glance:

- Overcomes disorders of the stomach and spleen systems (e.g. Indigestion and Diabetes)
- Overcomes Liver and Gall Bladder Problems
- Activates the Eight Secondary Meridians





Form “Plucking Stars Change Galaxies”

1. Start from Wuji stance (fig.1).
2. Bring your hands together in front of your body as if holding a large ball, left hand on top, right underneath (fig.2).
3. Bring the hands together and as the hands get close to meeting, your right hand curls around the left hand and pushes upwards, palm facing towards the ceiling. The left hand continues its journey down towards the floor. At the same time your head turns to look away from the right arm (figs. 3-5).
4. Turn the right palm down to face the floor and the left palm up to face the ceiling, so both palms are now facing each other. Bring the hands together to hold the ball. This time the right is on top and the left is underneath. At the same time turn the head back to the centre (fig. 6).
5. Pause
6. Bring the hands together and as the hands get close to meeting, your left hand curls around the right hand and pushes upwards, palm facing towards the ceiling. The right hand continues its journey down towards the floor. At the same time your head turns to look away from the left arm (figs. 7-9).
7. Turn the left palm down to face the floor and the right palm up to face the ceiling, so both palms are now facing each other. Bring the hands together to hold the ball. This time the left is on top and the right is underneath. At the same time turn the head back to the centre (fig. 10).
8. Pause.
9. Repeat these instructions until you have done 10 – 15 repetitions to the left and to the right. Then as you hold the final ball, lower your arms back to Wuji stance (figs. 11 and 12).

Plucking Stars Change Galaxies

摘星换斗

Chinese: Zhai Xing Huan Dou



fig.1



fig.2



fig.3



fig.4



fig.5



fig.6



fig.7



fig.8



fig.9



fig.10



fig.11



fig.12



Important notes:

- If you have difficulty co-ordinating the turning of your head with the movement of your hands, practice each one separately until you get the hang of it. When you start this pattern it can feel a little like patting your head and rubbing your stomach at the same time. Remember perfect practice makes perfect!
- Always be sure to turn your head in the opposite direction to your raised arm. If you end up with your nose in your armpit, you know you went the wrong way.

Why you may choose to practice Plucking Stars Change Galaxies

Because this pattern stimulates the meridians linked to the stomach and spleen systems it is particularly beneficial for the following disorders: indigestion, diarrhoea, stomach pains, constipation, auto immune disorders, diabetes, liver and gall bladder problems and anything to do with the abdominal area. Gynaecological problems and tennis elbow also benefit from this pattern.

This pattern also enhances longevity as it opens up the side meridians of the body for use as energy reservoirs. This means that once your energy is flowing harmoniously through your body, these side meridians can be used to store energy, enabling you to work and play longer.

Quotes from students about this pattern

"This is my favourite pattern because of the fantastic feeling of peace I get while practising. I also love the feeling of balance having regularised my in and out breath" – John, Republic of Ireland.

"This is my favourite pattern because when I started Qigong, plucking stars was the one exercise I immediately felt gave me lots of focus. It actually made me understand the depth of the 18 Lohan Hands because of the focus I got from it" – Tim, Belgium.



Breathing

1. Breathe in gently through your nose as you move from Wuji stance (fig. 1) to holding the ball (fig. 2).
2. Breathe out gently through your mouth as you part your hands (figs. 3 – 5).
3. Breathe in gently through your nose as you bring the hands back together to hold the ball (fig. 6).
4. Breathe out gently through your mouth as you part your hands (figs. 7 – 9).
5. Breathe in gently through your nose as you bring the hands back together to hold the ball (fig. 10).
6. Repeat steps two to five for 10 – 15 repetitions (aim to do the same amount on both sides)
7. Breathe out gently through your mouth as you lower your hands back to your sides (figs. 11 and 12).



Top 10 Do's and Don'ts for your practice

These are the classic important points to keep in mind for your practice. They cover the essentials that will help you to choose a good place to practice, to know when good, bad and excellent times of the day to practice, are and more. They will help you to get the most from your practice. Here they are as they were taught to me, with my comments added in italics:

The 10 Do's in Qigong practice

1. **Practice regularly and consistently:** Qigong is not a subject like history or geography that you can read up on and become knowledgeable about. 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. Tell yourself that 1 missed day negates 10 days of practice. This always gets me out of bed or off the sofa.*
2. **As far as possible practice in natural surroundings:** where the air is fresh and circulating. When practicing indoors make sure the air is not stale and open a window after practice. *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. Practicing where the air is stale or dirty (like next to a bin) will mean that you are taking in stale or dirty energy.*
3. **The best time to practice is at sunrise,** which Qigong masters refer to as the time of creative energy. Another excellent time is midnight, which is the time of blossoming energy. Other suitable times are between 5am and 9am and between 5pm and 10pm. If you can't practice during these times don't worry, it is better to practice when you can, than not practice at all, but please pay attention to "Don't number 3".

4. **Facing an open space** or the sea is also favourable. *This reminds me of a great story told to me. A Qigong student was practicing on the beach facing the sea - an ideal location. Her practice attracted the attention of a dog. But being a good student, she did her best to ignore the dog and continued with her practice. She started to enjoy a strong Qi flow and her energy gently moved her backwards and straight into the hole that the dog had been busy digging! The moral of this story is always be certain your practice area is safe.*
5. **You must be relaxed and cheerful during your training.** The mind is the most important element in Qigong. Much of the benefit derived from Qigong is from the mental aspect.
6. **One direct method** to use your mind rewardingly in Qigong training is to think gently of cosmic energy flowing into you, cleansing you of illness and toxic waste, and giving you radiant health and vitality. It is a mistake to think that this is all mere imagination; those with psychic sight can see the flow of cosmic energy.
7. **It is helpful to drink some warm water** or other hot beverage before training to facilitate sweating. Sweating is one of the major ways, especially at the beginner's stage, to clear toxic waste from your body. *Breathing out through your mouth is another.*
8. **Wear loose clothing and flat-soled shoes** to facilitate Qi flow in your body. Loosen belts and collars and take off any jewelry if it interferes with Qi flow. *A question that pops up every Winter is what to wear outside when it is very cold. The answer is to wrap up warm, just make sure your gloves, scarf, hat and warm coat are not tight fitting. Obviously if it is very cold outside it is wiser to practice indoors. You'll know when it's too cold to practice outdoors because you won't be able to relax and Enter a Qigong State of Mind.*
9. **Perform your breathing and movement gently**, gracefully and naturally. In Qigong training the most important ingredient that you breathe in is not air but cosmic energy. Gentle, graceful breathing and movement facilitates smooth flow of cosmic energy.
10. **Be kind and generous in your dealings with all people.** This advice has been given by many great Qigong Masters in history. Because our universe is intricately and organically interconnected, being kind and generous to others will result in being kind and generous to yourself.



The 10 Don'ts in Qigong practice

1. **Don't stop or interrupt your daily practice.** *Shaolin Qigong is simple, direct and effective. But it is not always easy. It requires discipline. Now to some discipline is a bit of a dirty word. Its root is in the word disciple and the work of a disciple is to serve. By being disciplined with your practice you are serving yourself. When you can be of service to yourself, you can then be of service to others. If you miss a day of practice here and there, don't worry about it. As long as your overall practice record is consistent, so will your results. I went to a hospital a few months back to see a friend who had had an accident. Seeing the many people in the hospital reminded me just how invaluable good health is. Remember: good health is one of the most precious possessions you will ever own.*
2. **Don't practice in crowded, noisy, smelly or dirty places,** where the air is stale or polluted. The polluted air, or negative energy that you take in will more than offset the little benefit you get from your physical movements, thus making your practice more harmful than beneficial. *Make sure that where you practice is safe, free from sudden drops, away from windows and balconies. Make sure there is nothing fragile in the room with you. Breaking your mother's favourite vase whilst in Q flow will really upset your practice! Remember: Safety First.*
3. **Don't practice at noon, or when it is very hot.** Past masters said that during such unfavourable times the cosmic energy was too "forceful". In modern scientific terms, it probably means that cosmic radiation is too strong and hence harmful to our cells. *It is also important to mention not to practice in direct sunlight. Always find some shade if available, if not practice indoors.*
4. **Don't practice near a cemetery,** in a violent moving vehicle, or in thunder and lightening storms. My Sifu's master explained that the Qi near a cemetery was too "dead" or too yin. A violently moving vehicle may cause the Qi in the student to flow astray, while the Qi during thunder and lightening storms is so powerfully charged that it is harmful to body cells.

5. **Don't practice when you are tense, irritated, furious, frightened or anxious.** These negative emotions block energy flow and are harmful to the "heart", which, in Chinese, often refers to the mind. Qigong actually helps us to overcome these negative emotions, but if they are too overwhelming it is better to stop practicing for the time being.
6. **If you have any problems on your mind,** put them aside, at least for the 15 minutes of your Qigong practice. One useful way to drop your mental problems during practice is to be gently mindful of what you are practicing. Since you have only one mind, when that mind is fully (but gently) occupied with Qigong techniques there is no room for other thoughts, including problems which you had previously imagined to be important. *You may have heard me say "use 1 thought to over come 10 000 thoughts". Here we are putting it into action. This technique can be invaluable if your "Monkey Mind" refuses to calm down during Standing Meditation. By gently focusing on your breathing in and out, you use this one thought to over come the thousands that want your attention. By doing so your mind will gradually relax and then you can focus on nothing.*
7. **Don't have a heavy meal or a cold bath** immediately before or after your training; 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.
8. **Don't wear tight clothing or practice bare-footed.** Tight clothing restricts physical movements as well as internal Qi flow. Negative energy from the ground may enter your feet if you are bare-footed.
9. **Don't use force in your breathing** nor exert force in your Qigong movements. It is a common misconception among beginners to think that the more forcefully they breathe, the more force they will develop. What is breathed in is not just air, but cosmic energy, and forced breathing or forced movements constrict the flow of cosmic energy. *I used to wonder what "internal force" was, imagining it to be a martial arts term for meaning that when you hit someone they didn't get up again. I finally understood this concept when I was taking Sifu back to Heathrow airport after a two week Shaolin Summer Camp UK event. I asked Sifu how he managed to get off a 12 hour flight from Malaysia, travel 4 hours in a car to get to the event, have a late night after spending it eating a fine meal with students, then get up early and for the next 14 days straight teach Shaolin Qigong, Wahnam Taijiquan and Shaolin Kung Fu courses without missing a single beat. Sifu looked at me, smiled and said "internal force". Finally I understood.*
10. **Don't be mean or malicious in any of your dealings with any persons.** In addition to the cosmic dimension of meanness and malice rebounding to the mean and malicious person because of the interconnectedness of the universe, at a more personal level the negative energy generated when a person becomes mean or malicious is harmful to himself.



Homework

1. Complete your progress tracker for Week 7 - **VITAL**, why not do it right now?
2. Last lesson you were practicing Shooting Arrows Left Right when you came to the F (form) in PERFECT. This week substitute Shooting Arrows for Plucking Stars.

Remember: We don't learn Qigong, we practice Qigong so practice preferably twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. But at least once a day.

Coming Up Next Week....

Next week we'll be learning and practicing the pattern called 'Turning Head'. On the Tricky-'O'-Meter you'll be pleased to know that Turning Head is a 3 out 10.

This pattern gives all the muscles, tendons, ligaments, bones, spine, connective tissues and meridians running through this area a good relaxing stretch. This encourages your Qi to flow harmoniously to your head. Which means this pattern is extremely beneficial for those who suffer from frequent headaches and migraine.

It also is beneficial for sufferers of neurological problems, prevent or overcome strokes and benefits problems with any of the organs. Can bring relief from thyroid, ear, throat, eye and any problems involving the face.

It can also be used to cleanse the nervous system and gives your spinal cord a gentle wake up. It is *IDEAL* for those who spend a lot of time sat at a desk.

Phew! Not bad for such a simple pattern. See you next lesson.

Marcus James Santer

