

# 7th Principle - Listening Energy



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## October Principle Qigong Focus: Listening Energy

This is the 7th principle in our year long, exploration of self through each of 8 Qigong Principles. We will share perspective on three layers of being: physical, mental and emotional. The level at which you participate is always up to you. Awareness, empowers change.

### Qigong Principle 7 - Listening Energy

Becoming deeply aware of the physical, mental and emotional information being presented to you both internally and externally. Listening Energy is the most powerful of all the principles. Use Listening Energy to enhance your awareness of all other principles and create the most sustainable form of transformation.

**Physical Level Goal:** Learn to use Listening Energy to deeply connect with all the information your body is able to share and use it to promote your own well-being.

Your body has a very powerful mechanical feedback system called the Proprioceptive Response. This collection of specialized cells, embedded in the soft tissue of joints and muscles, offers a feedback loop which tells your brain where you are in space. Place your hand behind your back and close it gently. You know it has closed because the proprioceptor cells are communicating back to the brain, "the hand is now closed." One of the main reasons we ask you to move so slowly during Qigong practice is to allow your mind to listen deeply to the proprioceptive information your body is sharing. To date, the TMQP Program, has brought to your attention various things to be aware of when managing your posture and alignment: 3 points on each foot, keeping your knees flexible and unlocked, your pelvis gently tucked, stacking the bones of your spine and keeping your shoulders open and relaxed. We have asked you to pay close attention to the pattern and quality of your breath. We have guided you to coordinate your breath with simple and sometimes complex movements. This is only the beginning. It does take time to become familiar with this feedback system. Unless you have a strong background in choreographed movement such as Tai Chi, Martial Arts, Dance or Yoga you may struggle at first to feel coordinated when attempting new movements. Not to worry, for the beauty of the body lies in its ability to adapt, improve and succeed. This is another one of our most primal survival instincts. If the body does not learn what is being requested, our very survival might be at stake. Imagine the first human to ever climb a tree. It was not likely very graceful or even successful until the body learned. With Qigong, as is the case in any training environment, the more you listen, the more you learn.

**Mental Level Goal:** Learn to use Listening Energy to identify and decipher self-talk and other thought patterns to promote your own mental health.

Mentally, the practice of listening requires that you become aware of what you say to yourself. The "tapes" or self-talk we humans play in our minds govern our lives. Sometimes the words are clear: "I'm too fat", "Nothing I do is ever good enough, therefore I'm not good enough", "I deserve this", "I don't care", etc. Sometimes the messages that drive your choices are so buried, you don't even realize they exist. "If I make myself less attractive, maybe I won't get abused anymore", "No one cares about me", "If I don't look like the girl/guy on TV I'm not \_\_\_ enough." Many of us grew up with well-meaning messages that somehow got twisted in our heads and took a wrong turn. "Do your best.", "Be careful.", "Don't talk to strangers". These tapes can be supportive or destructive in the long run. They can pick you up or hold you back. They gain power from being in the background; ignored by the conscious mind, they go about their business of manipulating your thoughts and actions, unchecked. At some point in your life, some messages may have served to protect you, but later, they can become a hindrance to your personal growth. The problem is that they become so embedded that we do not even notice them playing; effectively, they are running on auto pilot and so are we. This reactive pattern often leaves us

wondering why we thought or did what we did, sometimes feeling guilty about it after the fact. In order to release harmful self-talk, you must first recognize its existence in your mind.

**Emotional Level Goal:** Learn to use Listening Energy to understand and connect with our emotions, how our self-talk impacts them and learn to use them to promote our own emotional wellbeing.

What are your common “go to” emotions? Are you sure? Emotions can be tricky. Our mind can create false realities that can mix and match, add, subtract and confuse our emotions almost at will. Listening to emotions means the mind must be clear and settled. Trying to read something through a stirred up glass of muddy water is difficult, but, allow the water to settle and the dirt will soon follow. Reading through the glass becomes easier. Allow the mind to settle and our emotions become easier to read as well.

### **Training Cautions Reminder:**

Throughout the year the Qigong practices we share will become progressively more challenging. With this in mind, it is important that each of us work within comfortable limits. There are three layers of attention we ask you to keep in mind for all manners of physical training; strength, flexibility and pain. Please do not push past what your body is willing to do, today. Learning to respect boundaries, is a vital part of our journey together.

### **Exercise - Listening with Intention**

This drill is designed to help you develop a deeper understanding of just how closely you can pay attention. Take a piece of bubble wrap (at least 1 foot by 3 feet - small bubbles preferred) and place it on the floor in front of you. Using your best Tai Chi walking, one foot at a time, slowly place your feet hip width apart onto the bubble wrap. Your goal is to avoid popping any of the bubbles during this process. Notice any thoughts and feelings that come up for you as you begin this exercise. Now that you are standing firmly on the bubbles, begin the Cloud Stepping exercise. Move slowly and mindfully enough to avoid popping any bubbles. If bubbles do pop, pay close attention to what you are thinking and feeling in that moment. Consider any popped bubbles as an opportunity for deeper awareness, not a failure. Notice the level of concentration and strength of intention you are able to create while on the bubbles, all just to avoid popping a few bubbles! It is important to note that this level of listening can be applied to anything you wish to have your full attention.

### **The Weakest Link in the Chain**

When you begin truly listening to your body, you will identify areas of weakness. Think of these “weak links” in your body-chain to be the areas which need closer attention. While each link needs to be listened to and worked with to improve, there is usually one weak link that gets your attention above the rest. This is your weakest link. If you have multiple areas of vulnerability, they may take turns being the weakest link depending on what activities you choose to participate in during that day which further irritate the area. Once that link is identified, tune your listening into that area with the intention to really understand the problem. As you learn about this weak link and begin to strengthen and stabilize it, the next weakest link will show up asking for your attention. After you have managed that one, the next weakest link will show up, and so on down the line.

Your goal is to work your way through each challenge, listening and creating a path toward healing. It is important to note that when you have improved a weak link and move onto another one, that at any time, any of your weak links can crop back up for attention. This is not failure, it is an opportunity to do deeper work on that area, especially with the awareness you created from working on that area before. This is a great time to evaluate your daily routines and determine if there is an activity you perform on “autopilot” which weakens your body.

### **Listening Energy Works With, Not Against Pain**

Repetitive motion stress is a very common factor in chronic pain. Each time you are able to deepen your work in an area of weakness, it becomes stronger. Your pain levels will decrease and your quality of life will increase. You may not like it but let your body say what it has to say, and listen.

Learning to become aware of how your daily actions can irritate your body, thus creating deeper levels of pain, can be a powerful tool toward healing. In addition to becoming aware of what not to do, you can learn what you can do that supports and relaxes the body, helping it to reduce or turn off its pain signals. e.g., gentle stretching, respecting pain limits, avoiding overuse and overexertion. If you begin to “hear” a rising pain at level 1 and begin altering your actions to prevent level 2, 3, 4 or higher pain levels, then you are well on our way to better body communication and lower pain levels overall. Would you rather care for a pain level of 1 for a **day** or a pain level 8 for a **week**?