

4th Principle - Expanding / Absorbing



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May Principle Qigong Focus: Expanding Absorbing

This is the fourth Qigong Principle in our year long, exploration of Self through each of 8 Qigong Principles. We will share perspective on all three layers: physical, mental and emotional. With this Principle, we begin to also explore social impact. The level at which you participate is always up to you.

Qigong Principle 4 - Expanding Absorbing

Expanding/Absorbing is about recognizing the relationship between self and others. It's also about developing healthy internal and external boundaries physically, mentally and emotionally.

Physical Level: Develop the ability to open joints and expand your presence in all directions, and absorb into your smallest, strong centered alignment, ready to expand again when needed.

Physical Expansion: Our bodies have an optimum, functional range of motion. If we move beyond that range of motion, we become misaligned, rigid, inflexible, unstable and vulnerable. For example: If you overextend a pushing motion, your middle Dan Tien (heart area) shifts forward of the lower Dan Tien (core), moving you out of proper alignment and forcing your body to compensate, triggering muscle tension, potential strain and becoming ungrounded. If you keep your center core (Lower, Dan Tien) in strong alignment and do not overreach, you will maintain structure and therefore stability and core strength.

Physical Absorption: Absorption allows us to draw back into ourselves, deep into our centered alignment, with integrity and without collapsing into weakness. As you draw in, or retreat toward your core (Lower Dan Tien) you will need to provide strong attention toward Grounding and Rising Energy. Like a ball that has been pulled from the top (Rising Energy) and bottom (Grounding Energy), your spherical shape turns ellipse but will not lose any air. The ball is just changing shape, adapting to the situation at hand. If the ball were to lose air, it would collapse, becoming weak, flimsy, losing its shape and ability to resist outside influences. Similarly to the deflated ball, our bodies, when collapsed, feel weakened, unsteady and vulnerable.

Mental Level: Recognize when, and understand how, our mind reaches beyond appropriate boundaries causing disruptions and a sense of overwhelm in ourselves and others.

Mental Expansion: Life is going to happen, in spite of your desire to control it. Trying to resist the inherent flow and changes life offers us each day is a lot like trying to direct a movie you are watching on the big screen. This is not to say we are helpless victims on this journey, quite the contrary, we have the gift of choice. When life unfolds in front of us we can make choices on what comes next based on what is presented, and not what we force to happen. One of my favorite quotes related to this is "If you feel you have to kick the door open, it's the wrong door." Think back to a time when your mind was wrapped around something that really did not belong to you, was out of your immediate control, but you could not stop thinking about it. How does it feel? Are you distracted, annoyed, irritated? Then imagine you were expecting a specific outcome that did not happen. Are you dejected, frustrated, angry? One simple example of this concept would be the emotional attachment many of us have toward a sporting event, especially when "OUR" team is losing. How upset or even enraged do we get when "WE" are losing. This type of attachment leads to expectations and nothing is more frustrating or stressful than unmet expectations. What about if someone nearby is trying to cheer for the other team? Do you find yourself wanting to change their mind? When we expect someone to share our beliefs, opinions or values, we are effectively, expanding into their space and choosing not to accept who they are without us.

Mental Absorption: If I react to difficult situations with negative self-talk, helping to feed a deep sense of personal failure, that would be described as mental absorption. This "Stinking Thinking" can easily shift me into a victim role allowing me to create entire scenarios in my own head. I effectively am able to transform a molehill into a mountain of drama. Some

common examples are: “Why me,” “I failed, again” “I don’t know / I don’t care” or “This always happens to me.” When we allow ourselves to think this way unchecked, it creates a deep void which prevents positive thoughts from seeing the light of day. This mental self-destruction often leads from mental absorption into physical and emotional collapse. We can become lazy, apathetic and unmotivated and depressed.

Emotional Level: Recognize when, and understand how, our emotions reach beyond appropriate boundaries causing disruptions and a sense of overwhelm in ourselves and others.

Emotional Expansion: Emotions can often feel overwhelming, not only to us but to those around us as well. Anger is a great example of emotional expansion. Have you ever been in the presence of someone who was really angry but did not show it outwardly? You can just feel that something is wrong without a word being spoken. Now, if they yell and pitch a fit about something, it is easy to feel vulnerable in their presence. They don’t even have to be yelling at you to be affected by them. If you become uncomfortable at their actions, they have expanded into your space.

Emotional Absorption: If your mental self-talk moves into the negative, then your emotional absorption will follow close behind with feelings of defeat, failure, self-hate and rejection. A healthy absorption would be to think through the situation you just experienced and learn what you can from it so that you are better prepared for the next time. We are naturally prone to mistakes, but we have to work at learning from them.

What if instead of collapsing into failure, or exploding into rage, you have found that middle ground where you are able to stand by your feelings and express yourself clearly. You have stood your ground without having to stand on someone else to do it. You have learned where you end, and others begin.

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 - Tiger Pushes Mountain

RIGHT SIDE

- Inhale, sink weight right, hands draw up centerline to heart level, place left foot forward empty
- Exhale shift weight forward while hands press center, elbows heavy, shoulders relaxed
- Inhale sink weight back, draw hands into lower dan tien, place left foot empty, to the side
- Exhale, settle into a strong centered stance, palms pressing down

LEFT SIDE

- Inhale, sink weight left, hands draw up centerline to heart level, place right foot forward empty
- Exhale shift weight forward while hands press center, elbows heavy, shoulders relaxed
- Inhale sink weight back, draw hands into lower dan tien, place right foot empty, to the side
- Exhale, settle into a strong centered stance, palms pressing down