

1st Principle - Grounding Energy



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Principle Qigong Focus: Grounding Energy

This is the first 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. The level at which you participate is always up to you. Awareness, empowers change.

Qigong Principle 1 - Grounding Energy

The relationship you develop between your core and the earth which empowers strength and stability in your physical, mental and emotional being.

Physical Level Goal: Recognize the importance of core / structural integrity to your physical wellbeing.

Building a house on a foundation made of sand will eventually cause it to destabilize and collapse under the load. The human body's response to weakness and instability is very similar. Let's assume your left knee is weak and causing you to lean or limp. Your body will begin to compensate for this instability by putting emphasis on other joints and muscles creating misalignments which, in the long run, will cause their own issues. To establish proper Grounding, we must start at the floor under our feet and "stack the bones" in a manner which allows for optimum alignment up through the ankles, knees, hips and up the lower spine, deep into the core.

Mental Level Goal: Recognize the value of a quiet, focused mind to your overall wellbeing.

In Chinese texts, it is often called "Monkey Mind" while the western world calls it racing thoughts, rumination, attention deficit, distracted or simply a lack of focus. When your mind is racing your entire being feels restless and unsettled like a leaf in a wind storm. Grounding Energy, at a mental level, involves learning to use focus training tools consistently. This allows the randomness to settle into quiet. This does not mean you will be free of thought, it only means that you will learn to choose what holds your attention. Think of your mind being like a lottery ball machine with each ball being a separate thought. Focus training or meditation is not about opening the machine and letting all the balls out, it is about turning off the air that drives the balls to fly around. With the air off, the balls settle and you can actively choose the ball (thought) on which to focus. This mental stillness reduces the sense of overwhelm and allows you to focus your attention on something in the present moment.

Emotional Level Goal: Understand the value of all emotions and how they can affect your overall wellbeing.

When the heart is unsettled it will affect your physical and mental balance. You can ground the body and calm the mind, however, without attention to the heart you can only take your training so far. To reach deep into your grounding practice the heart must be tended, nurtured, respected and helped to heal. Healing the heart can take many paths from artistic expression or journaling to life coaching, counseling, meditation or other deep, internal practice which serves to explore and strengthen a personal relationship with your heart. Once free from heartache, your Grounding Energy practice takes on a much more profound connection. With practice, this level of work will offer great personal reward. After all, unless you live in a cave by yourself, healing the heart is a life long journey.

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.

Basic Walking Meditation:

The goal of Walking Meditation is to become fully present to the process of walking. We want to release the destination objective and simply, mindfully be with each and every step. Allowing the breath to guide each step further enhances this practice. This encourages the ANS to switch from Sympathetic (fight, flight or freeze) to Para-Sympathetic (Rest, Digest, Heal) dominance thus inducing a shift towards relaxation.

• Proper Posture for Walking Meditation

- Stand with your feet parallel and hip width apart.
- Keep your knees soft and your pelvis relaxed (gently tucked under)
- Shoulders back and down; with your arms relaxed by your side
- Keep your spine and neck stretched tall with your chin parallel to the floor
- The crown of your head should reach towards the sky. For each of these to be most effective it is important that the breath invites the movement



• Tai Chi Walking

- Shift your weight right. (Don't lean to the right if you can help it. It is better to sink into the right leg with a soft/slightly bent knee.)
- Allow your left leg to become empty
- Step forward with the left foot into an empty step
- Place the foot softly on the floor - left leg still empty. (You'll know your leg is empty when you relax the thigh muscles enough to release any tension in the kneecap.)
- Shift weight slowly to a count of 10. (When you get to 5, weight should be 50/50 on both feet. When you get to 10, the left leg should be full and the right leg should be empty and ready to step forward.)
- Step forward with the right foot into an empty step.
- Place the foot softly on the floor - right leg still empty. (You'll know your leg is empty when you relax the thigh muscles enough to release any tension in the kneecap.)
- Shift weight slowly to a count of 10.
- Repeat sequence

• Balance Tips

- Keep your knees soft - not locked. Locking your knees will cause your ankle, hips and low back to fight for control
- Keep your walk at a hip width distance and your feet parallel. Narrow walking is like walking a tight rope with the sense of imbalance creating uncontrolled tension in your body
- Keep your posture tall. Bending your head down to watch your feet will throw off your center of gravity
- Shorten your step if you can't keep your front leg empty. Little 6-inch steps done properly are more strengthening than long steps in which you "fall" into your front foot.

