

Qi-Gong Therapeutic Movements Introduction

These ancient Chinese folk exercises were originally selected from hundreds that were used therapeutically by those injured from the martial arts. I learned from my Sufi teacher, Neil Douglas-Klotz and have adapted them into a Focusing check in. The write-up is most useful after one has seen the exercises demonstrated and performed them oneself.

The exercises work to gently adjust and stretch the connective tissue throughout the body so that it provides the proper accommodation for the position of bones, ligaments, muscles and organs. Connective tissue holds every structure in the body. If the connective tissue is out of alignment (like a rumpled suit of clothes), then blood, lymph, ground substance and the other fluids of the body have difficulty reaching their destinations. Muscles, ligaments, tendons, nerves and organs become “dried out”. Fatigue comes more quickly; posture and relationship to the earth suffers - causing even more fatigue (especially in areas like the lower back, base of the neck and shoulders.) These exercises lightly stretch the connective tissue in all directions toward the periphery, so that it resettles in its natural position. The gentleness of the exercise is essential to their neuro-physiological effects.

Do each exercise several times (in each direction where applicable), beginning with 2-3 and increasing when your body asks you to stay here longer. The breath is natural and through the nostrils, except for exercises 7, 8, and 9. Here, we intentionally slow things down. We inhale through our nostrils and extend our pause between the inhale and exhale. Our exhalation is particularly extended and through pursed lips. Bring awareness to the sound and feel of air moving over your lips. In many cases the exercises produce an “internal breath” and massage. We will add our relational Focusing skills as a way to check in with our body from head to toe. This is part of feeling each movement, potentially catching something that is wanting our attention, rather than just “going through the motions.” Where they fit, I’ve added affirmations from Louise Hays work with emotional aspects of our body.

Throughout the exercises, we are also extending awareness to our relationship to the earth and how that integrates into the “posture” that supports us as we move through our day.
-- Sandy Jahmi Burg

Before beginning, allow yourself to feel your feet in the earth, knees soft, open from the sides, front and back to the horizon. Inhale chi (life energy), as you exhale, absorb it.

1. **SMALL CIRCLES WITH THE TOP OF THE HEAD** - Bring your awareness to the top of your head. Begin to imagine a thread connecting your crown with the top of the sky. Feel your neck long, lifted and relaxed. Now begin to make very small circles in one direction, as if you are gently opening the top of a very small bottle. Breathe naturally. Gradually expand the size of the circles until your ears are reaching toward your shoulder and your neck expands its reach forward and back. Pause. Listen within. Change directions gradually making the circles smaller again, ending with a sense of your neck long, lifted and relaxed.
Invite stubbornness in seeing all sides of an issue.
There are endless ways of doing things and seeing things. I am safe.
2. **ONE SHOULDER GOES BACK** - Check your posture. Begin to bring one shoulder up and backwards in a circular motion. Allow it to drop around on its own weight.

Experience the feeling of the shoulder moving up to the top of its arc and then letting go on its own. Breathe. Now move your other shoulder.

Invite the something carrying burdens of life for you. I stand tall and free.

3. SHOULDER ROLLS - Check your posture. Lift both shoulders and roll them forward. Experience what it is like to find the balance between forcing and collapsing. Breathe.
We make life a burden or joyous by our attitude.
4. CHEST MASSAGE - Widen your stance to allow more sway in the upper body. Gently move one shoulder backward, as it approaches neutral, the opposite shoulder begins moving forward. Start slowly, gradually find a gentle rhythmic movement. Experience the chest loosening, feel the lungs receiving a massage.
Listen for: Depression. Grief. Unworthiness.
Explore and embody your width. I have the capacity to take in the fullness of life.
5. CLAW/ BEAK/ PAW – Hands remain outward at chest level. Spread your fingers and turn fingers slightly inward like a tiger’s claw. Move fingers together and rotate wrist to the outside as if you are forming a bird’s beak pointing to the outside. Bring fingers together into a fist while rotating wrist back to return position. Image a bear’s paw. The wrist has completed a full rotation. Other direction. Now both hands in freeform movement.
Wrists represent movement and ease, fingers the details of life.
6. BEATING THE HEAVENLY DRUM - Using a movement that extends to include the shoulder and upper back, gently mime beating a drum. Alternate arms, allowing wrists to move freely. Hands hold the “drumsticks,” and the “drum head” is 1 to 2 feet in front of you at midriff level. Arms and hands are soft and relaxed.
My heart beats to the rhythm of love.
7. TIGER GREETES THE DAWN (from heart) – Really slow things down here. Hands are positioned like tiger’s claws, fingers touching. Beginning with bent elbows, extend hands outward from the heart, while slowing inhaling through nose. Pause with arms extended. Now begin exhale through mouth as arms circle around towards the back, rotating hands inward like tiger’s claws in front of chest, ready to repeat.
Arms represent the capacity and ability to hold life’s experiences.
8. TIGER GREETES THE SKY (from heart) – Same as above except facing sky. Hands are positioned like tiger’s claws, fingers touching. Reach both hands up towards the sky with palms up as you inhale through your nose. Pause with arms extended. Now begin exhale through mouth as arms circle outward to your sides, rotating hands inward like tiger’s claws in front of chest, ready to repeat.
I lovingly hold and embrace my experiences with love and joy.
9. DIAGONAL INTO DRAGON EMBRACES THE SKY, TOUCHES EARTH – Facing diagonally, widen stance now, like a warrior yoga position, gently shift weight from both feet to right foot. Hands together facing downward. As you inhale, one hand moves behind you pointing toward the ground, where you’ve been. As you exhale, gaze follows other hand upward where you are going. Pause to acknowledge that you are Presence, the space between. Lower arms. Bring hands to chest, as you inhale, raise hands to sky with palms up. Pause here. As you begin your exhale through your

mouth, feel the vastness of your dragon wings as your hands expand outwardly. Turn palms to the earth, gently landing toward the ground in a stretch that feels comfortable for you. As you raise hands, feel your weight shift evenly to both feet. Turn your body and shift weight to left foot. Continue, slow, graceful movements. Feel the vastness of the dragon as it lightly touches the earth. Turn your body; repeat diagonal and dragon in other direction. *I am living process. I am spacious.*

10. MONK WIPING SNOWFLAKES FROM FOREHEAD – Facing forward now, stance closer to shoulder width. Bring the back of the hand toward the face and wipe an imaginary snowflake from the forehead, first with the right hand, then with the left hand. Do the movement slowly at first, then increase the speed. Experience the wider movement to the rib cage. Other way. Palm of hand leads, first slow, then faster. *I experience life with a sense of balance.*
11. ANGRY EYES TO CATCH FLIES - Furrow the brow over the third eye area to activate the kidney meridian and Left Hemisphere. Right arm reaches to the left across the body about shoulder-high, torso twisting gently, and right hand “catches a fly” by all four fingers snapping closed against the thumb. Then the left arm reaches across to the right, left hand “catching a fly.” Continue alternating arms, gradually increasing the twisting of the body to reach further and further behind, above, around you. *Welcoming fears, failure, blame, criticism, shame, acting like a little kid. Bringing movement to anger. It is safe to be me. I love and approve of myself.*
12. OLD WOMAN WITH STICK – Maintaining furrowed brow, now shifting ‘catching’ movement to your legs. Mime leaning slightly forward, holding a stick in one hand, hand held about shoulder high. Move forward in small, swaying steps, rocking gently from side to side with each step, still softening lower back. Every few steps the Old Woman gives a kick forward, backward, or to the side with one or the other foot. *Welcoming guilt, lack of support, a sense of get off my back! I release the past. Bringing movement to anger. Life supports and loves me.*
13. HEART CIRCLES - Remain long and lifted with crown connected by a thread to the top of the sky. Now focus your attention on the heart center. Allow your heart to lead the movement as you begin to circle the upper body first to the right, then to the left. Breathe. *I follow my heart. I welcome joy to the center of my heart. I express love freely.*
14. SLAPPING ARMS - Check your posture. With the legs and hips remaining fairly still, begin slowly turning the body from side to side. The upper body is twisting smoothly around to the right, then around to the left. Let the arms swing loosely and begin to bring legs and hips into motion. Notice how the arms can gently touch the hips as you twist. Allow the arms to move upward as you twist. Gently touching your ribs, shoulders, over the shoulders. Now back down again to your hips. *I easily flow with new experiences, new directions, and new changes.*
15. BREATH ROLL - TRANSITION TO LOWER TORSO - Interlace loosely held fingers with palms facing inward. Hands and arms extend overhead and come down in a shape of an oval, as one breathes out. The oval is completed as one breathes in and the hands come up along the body. In a coordinated movement begin to bring hips forward as arms go down and backward as arms go up. As you find comfort in the

practice begin to engage the entire spine, moving it into convex and into concave directions as the arms move also in both directions. Feel a luminous egg created by your breathing and movement, connecting the lower (hara) and upper centers.
I feel the flexible support of life. I trust the process of life.

16. GECKO CLIMBING TREE – Stand with feet about shoulder width apart, knees soft, hands held softly open, palms facing out and parallel to chest. Move first right hand across body to the left, then left hand across body to the right, continuing to alternate, hands moving higher and higher on each repetition, while the hips and head gently rock from side to side, snaking the spine in a soft horizontal zigzag movement. When the hands reach their highest point overhead, the gecko climbs down the tree gradually; hands moving lower and lower on each repetition, until shoulders hunch slightly. (Lower and mid-back remain upright). Then begin to climb up the tree again.
I feel the flexible support of life horizontally as well as vertically. I am wide enough.
17. BUZZARD CLEANING BEAK - Feet are parallel to each other. Hands are loosely held like wings. Begin making figure-eight-movements with the back and arms. Follow through with the arms and hands as a buzzard cleaning its beak. This relaxes the lower back and massages the kidneys.
I am safe and taken care of.
18. HAWK VERTICAL FLYING - Place right foot forward and left perpendicular and back. Bend over halfway with arms out, palms up. Begin rotating hips. Arms follow through with movement of the hips. Same arm as hip moves forward. Scan your day/life freshly with a bird's view. Feel the support of the air around you as your arms glide with ease. Step back with right foot and repeat with left foot forward.
I expand my view and trust the process of life as I move with ease through my day.
19. FIGURE 8'S WITH HIPS – Pause to align head long and lifted as though connected with a thread to the sky. With feet parallel about shoulder width apart, place hands on hips and begin moving hips in a Figure 8 pattern. First right hip comes forward and then back to the right, then left hip comes forward and then back to the left, each movement flowing into the next. Shoulders, knees, and ankles are soft and relaxed, and respond to the movement of the hips.
Hips carry the body in perfect balance. I am balanced and free.
20. HIP CIRCLES - Still with hands on hips, rotate hips in a small circle forward, parallel to the side of the body (as one hip goes forward the other goes back). Then reverse direction with hips rotating backward. This movement allows for an inner breath that goes all the way to the base of the spine.
21. BIG CIRCLES/ UPPER BODY - With feet parallel, place hands on lower back near the area where kidneys are located. Bend forward in three small movements. Now rotate the hips keeping the head long and lifted as though connected by a thread to the sky. Knees stay bent throughout the rotation so that no strain is put on the lower back. Again feel the whole spine pulled lightly upward as through by a thread. Both directions.
Welcoming a sense of moving forward freely in life, listening for stickiness.

22. TOUCH SIDES OF BARREL - Place feet together. This time keep the head more or less stationary like a top, and spiral the movement down a little more towards the hips. Begin rotating the hips clockwise with hands still on lower back, hips first touch front of the imaginary barrel, then side, then back, then other side. After a few repetitions, smooth the movement out, sliding hips sliding along the entire circumference of the imaginary barrel. Repeat in other direction.
I welcome clear boundaries as needed for a particular situation.
23. KNEE ROTATION – Feet a bit wider. Move hands to the knees. Continue spiral motion, gently rotating the knees, first to the right, then to the left. Breathe.
Knees represent pride and ego, needing forgiveness, understanding & compassion from you. I am flexible and flowing.
24. CHARLESTON - Feet stay together moving heels together as you open the knees diagonally in the front and close them in the back. Now moving toes together to close knees in the front and open them diagonally in the back. Rise a bit here to really stretch the back of the knee. Faster, becomes a dance move, arms engaging freely.
25. SOUP STIRRING - Using a chair or wall for balance, if necessary, bring the right knee to the chest while balancing weight on the left foot. Begin rotating the lower leg first to the right, then to the left. Now stir from the bottom, moving the lower leg back and forth. Bring right leg down and repeat with the other side.
Shins represent the standards of life. Breaking down and claiming your standards.
26. ANKLE AND TOE CIRCLING - Lift right foot slightly while balancing weight on the left. Rotate right ankle to right, to left. Scrunch and arch toes as well. Move ankle back and forth. Change sides and begin ankle rotations with opposite foot. Circle to right, circle to left. Move ankle back and forth. (This, too, can be done in a chair.)
Feet: My understanding of life is clear. I am safe and willing to change with times.
Ankle: I deserve and accept all of the pleasure life has to offer.
Toes: Minor details in life take care of themselves.
27. WATER JOGGING – Standing upright, arms and shoulders relaxed, knees flexed, begin bouncing the body gently up and down. Balls of the feet remain on the ground, but the heels may rise slightly with each bounce. Invite your problems and challenges as if you are playing with them in the water. Allow your arms to playfully splash the water around you, inviting full belly laughs. Very much like laughing yoga.
28. LAUGHING FROM CROWN TO BELLY – Start a full laugh with hands above head and progressively laugh down through the body from crown of head to low belly laugh. Repeat with an emphasis on extending your range and allowing each sound wanting to be expressed to find 'its' way forward.
29. CONCLUSION – With hands and arms wide and open inhale life energy (chi) and while exhaling gradually bring hands to the dan tien (hara). 3x. The third time, feel the chi going all the way through you into the earth. Come to a standing position with both feet on the earth. Be aware of the entire body reconnected. Experience the entire body stretched to its most natural shape. Feel yourself refreshed and revitalized and ready for the rest of the day. Smile.