

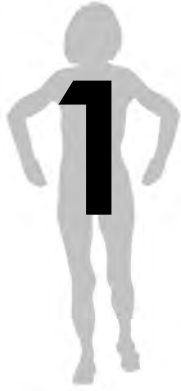
DRAGON AND TIGER MEDICAL CHI GUNG



Instruction PDF

BRUCE FRANTZIS

Author of *Opening the Energy Gates
of Your Body* and *The Chi Revolution*



DRAGON AND TIGER CHI GUNG

A Miracle Health System

Dragon and Tiger medical chi gung is a 1500-year old self-healing exercise that strengthens the immune system, mitigates the effects of chronic illness and improves relaxation. Over the centuries it has proven to be an extremely effective health maintenance program that has withstood the test of time. This medical form of chi gung (also transliterated as qigong, qi gong, ch'i kung or chi kung) is grounded in the ancient spiritual traditions of Buddhism and Taoism.

Today, Dragon and Tiger is practiced by millions of people in China to maintain a vigorous level of health, relaxation and vitality. It is also known for its powerful ability to prevent and heal cancer and to mitigate the effects of radiation and chemotherapy.

I studied energetic healing systems for 11 years in China, during which time I also worked as a chi gung tui na doctor. Dragon and Tiger was the most effective medical chi gung system I found that was not only easy to learn but also provided all the main health benefits generally associated with chi gung and many specific ones that will be discussed in these chapters.

Because Dragon and Tiger is a soft-impact exercise that is easy on the joints and knees, almost anyone can do it, regardless of age, weight, body type or fitness level.

One of its great strengths is that even if the movements are done inaccurately or within a small range of motion, it is still extremely effective.

2 *Dragon and Tiger Medical Chi Gung*

Dragon and Tiger: Medical Chi Gung Based on Acupuncture

Dragon and Tiger is a type of medical chi gung system that is based on Chinese medicine's acupuncture wellness model. Together, its seven movements regulate and strengthen all of the acupuncture meridians of the body.

Acupuncturists attempt to heal illness and pain by inserting needles into specific points along energy meridians (or channels) to stimulate and balance chi flow throughout the body. Increased energy flow through a damaged area can release chi blockages, thereby improving blood circulation and regenerating damaged tissues. An increase of chi flow in one meridian will stimulate greater flow in others.

Dragon and Tiger uses your hands and simple body movements to accomplish the same chi balancing goals as acupuncture. Because chi flows between your external aura and your internal energy channels, moving your hand in your aura near a meridian, stimulates energy flow in the same meridian inside your body. Each movement is designed to stimulate not just a single meridian, but groups of meridians.

Once you have finished all seven movements, you will have activated and balanced all of the major acupuncture meridians and released blocked and stagnant energy from your system. The movements are also designed to increase the flow of energy into your body from natural sources around you.

Dragon and Tiger: Using Chi to Heal

Dragon and Tiger is especially renowned for simultaneously accomplishing four major changes in the body necessary for healing:

- Helps the body get rid of stagnant chi that cannot move freely. Stagnant chi can be located anywhere there is a physical, emotional or psychic blockage of energy.
- Increases the speed, strength and evenness of the circulation of chi, blood and other fluids. This balances the body's energy.
- Quickly raises the energy levels of the body to boost its natural healing capacities.

You Don't Have to Feel Your Chi to Benefit

Dragon and Tiger's seven physical movements develop and strengthen chi and make you healthier. You do not need to feel your own chi to benefit from these movements. These movements enable you to feel all parts of your body, which might otherwise remain relatively numb, while helping you become more physically and possibly more emotionally sensitive. Over time, this increased sensitivity will help you naturally develop a personal and experiential felt sense of your chi moving along the pathways. As this happens, you will begin to learn to use your intent together with your movements to more strongly direct your chi. As you practice, your chi, body and mind will begin to move in harmony.

Dragon and Tiger—Layers of Meaning

The words "Dragon" and "Tiger" have many layers of meaning. In Chinese medicine, the tiger's immense strength and responsiveness are traits that derive from the liver—hence the tiger is a metaphor for a strong, healthy liver and powerful muscles. The dragon's ability to fly is a trait that resides in the lungs—hence the dragon is a metaphor for healthy and strong lungs. Metaphorically, Dragon and Tiger chi gung helps you develop the agility and flexibility of a flying dragon and the relaxed power of a moving tiger.

In ancient Chinese culture, the dragon usually represents the yang or male forces of nature and the tiger the yin or female forces. Balancing those energies inside yourself is an essential part of this ancient self-healing system.

Learning Strategies

This instruction manual provides you with an effective method to accurately learn the movements of Dragon and Tiger and continue to improve your practice. Just as Rome was not built in a day, neither can any high-quality form of chi gung be quickly assimilated. Give yourself the strength and patience of time to learn this valuable self-healing exercise.

This manual provides a systematic way to learn and practice the movements, one stage at a time. Each instruction builds upon and amplifies the one before it so that you can integrate it into what you have already learned.

4 *Dragon and Tiger Medical Chi Gung*

Each chapter contains many micro-components, each of which should be learned in the sequence presented. Understanding how the small details work will enable you to gain the maximum benefit from the time and effort you spend practicing.

Movements 1 and 2 are Front-end Loaded

The first two movements contain basics—such as standing, alignments, weight-shifting, breathing, turning and how to protect the knees—that are common to many movements of Dragon and Tiger as well as other forms of chi gung, tai chi and martial arts. Chi principles—tracing the acupuncture meridians, pulling and pushing energy, releasing stagnant chi—are also discussed in some detail because Movements 3-7 also use them in different ways.

Core Learning Principle: First Separate and Then Combine

The principle of breaking movements into micro-components follows an ancient Taoist principle of learning called “first separate and then combine.” First you learn to become comfortable with a specific micro-component. Next you learn and practice a second one. Then you combine both components and practice them simultaneously until they feel as though they are one movement. After this you will practice a new component by itself until it becomes comfortable. Then you will combine and integrate it with others until these three components feel like one. In this way you will build your skill in a relaxed manner and avoid feeling overwhelmed or leaving valuable parts out.

Take Breaks

At the end of many micro-components in this manual, you will be asked to “Take a Break” to encourage you to stop and let your nervous system assimilate what you have studied before going back to practicing that component again or moving on. It is especially important to assimilate the material in each component before attempting to learn the next one.

The breaks between might include:

- Taking 20 minutes off before practicing a micro-component again
- Using a few days to a week or more to practice and assimilate one micro-component
- Taking a few days to a week or more before going to a new complete movement, such as between Movements 2 and 3 or Movements 6 and 7.

What is important is to be patient and not be in a rush. If you give yourself the gift of time to take breaks, your learning will be smoother and less frustrating. Even the most

talented and well-coordinated athletes have had challenges to overcome when learning chi gung.

These breaks are those which I have seen to be the most effective for learning, both in China, and in teaching this material for nearly thirty years in the West. The goal is to build the necessary foundation that will make learning enjoyable and beneficial.

The 70 Percent Rule: Do Neither Too Much Nor Too Little

The principle of moderation is the heart of all Taoist energy practices and is embodied as the “70 percent rule.”

The rule states that you should only do a movement, or any chi technique, to 70 percent of your capacity. Striving for 100 percent produces excess tension and stress. As soon as you strain or go beyond your capacity, your body has a natural tendency to tense up or shut down, without you necessarily being consciously aware that this is happening.

Over time, staying within 70 percent of your capacities will help you attain optimum physical accomplishment in the shortest amount of time and simultaneously reduce stress. Although it may seem counterintuitive, the more you relax, the more energy, stamina and strength you will gain and the greater your range of motion will become.

In this modern era people are led to believe that by straining, they will progress faster and further. However, if you always push your energy to 100 percent, you will never allow your nerves and muscles to relax so that you can progress efficiently and with a minimum of unnecessary stress or needless physical injuries.

By staying within your comfort zone, your physical tension and subliminal psychological stress will gradually decrease and in time disappear. You will move forward faster than you would if you were to strain. Avoiding straining or stressing your body helps you to relax. And remember: no one goes to the hospital for a relaxation attack.

Following this rule will also help you to uncover and actualize your highest potential. Whether you are a novice or an experienced practitioner, this method will help you to move through the levels of accomplishment faster.

Incorporating the 70 percent rule into your practice may include—

- How far down you bend your legs

6 *Dragon and Tiger Medical Chi Gung*

- How much you turn your waist
- How much you straighten your elbows and knees
- How deep a breath you take
- How much time you practice
- How much mental energy you expend.

Adjusting the 70 Percent Rule When You Have Illness, Pain or Injury

If you are injured, or ill with any kind of chronic condition, or you have a cold or flu, you should temporarily practice chi gung using the 40 or 50 percent rule, i.e., move only to 40 or 50 percent of your maximum capability until you are healed. This may include doing movements while sitting or lying down. Once you are healed, you can resume practice again to 70 percent of your capacity.

If you have pain, only move to 40 or 50 percent of the point where your pain begins. This will enable your pain to dissipate. When it is completely gone, you can return to the regular 70 percent rule.

If you are in pain all the time, then judge your maximum movement as being the point at which your pain begins to escalate to the next level of significant or dramatic intensity. This pain level difference is very subjective, but it is the difference between “ouch” and “aaargh!” This could easily result in your range of movement being only 30 or 40 percent or even less of what you could normally do before your ailment began. When the problem is resolved, return to the regular 70 percent rule.

Following this principle will allow your nerves to relax and your pain to heal in the *fastest time possible*. In addition, you will be able to naturally return to your previous range of motion more quickly without discomfort.

Best Practice Surfaces

The best surfaces to practice on are grass, dirt, carpet and wood. Concrete is not recommended. If you are sick or injured, try to practice on as soft a surface as possible.

Expect Chi Reactions

Dragon and Tiger is a powerful tool for awakening your body on physical, energetic, emotional, mental and spiritual levels. As you practice these movements and begin to move your body in ways that may be different for you, energy and fluids in your body are stirred up and begin to move more vigorously. At some point you may experience reactions, which may seem either positive or negative to you. These are called chi reactions: the body's response to the effects of energy beginning to flow more freely through previously blocked places.

These reactions may show up immediately, hours, or even a day or two after practicing. Although many people will not begin to feel either negative or positive reactions without practicing a lot, others, particularly if they have done other forms of personal development work, may notice reactions almost immediately.

Positive Chi Reactions

The positive reactions can range from less pain and more energy to being more centered, relaxed and comfortable with your body. Some people report that they sleep much better; others report greater flexibility and balance. You may also notice that you are calmer and have fewer mood swings. You may experience an overall reduction in stress and tension.

A transformative effect, which most people consider positive, is an increase in and awareness of your sexual energy. This is entirely normal as it is the most fundamental energy in your body, and practice of Dragon and Tiger will increase sexual energy.

Finally, a transformative effect, which confuses many people, is what we call "good pain." Dragon and Tiger is designed to gradually work more and more deeply into your body, to release muscles and other tissues and joints that have been restricted or blocked. When an area of your body that has been frozen begins to loosen and realign, more energy moves through that area than you are used to. But if the energy cannot flow freely or fully, you may experience temporary pain in the area.

The Chinese medical theory of the body holds that pain in an area is a sign that the energy there is not flowing freely. You feel "bad" pain when an area is newly injured or hurt. In general, "good" pains tend to be temporary (lasting from a minute to at most a couple of days) and are usually dull, rather than sharp. As you practice you will learn to recognize such pains as signs of progress. Treat them with great care and keep within the 40 to 50

8 *Dragon and Tiger Medical Chi Gung*

percent rule when you have pain, illness or injury (see p. 6). Back off practicing and be sure to consult your healthcare provider if you begin experiencing either significant pain or pain that does not go away quickly.

Negative Chi Reactions

As your body wakes up on various levels, it may do so the same way as when aroused from a deep slumber—cranky, sore and confused. You may experience some negative chi reactions. These can range from relatively mild but confusing aches, nausea, light-headedness, tingles, fatigue, unsteadiness, body temperature shifts or mood shifts to strong emotional releases and mood swings to unusual dreams or shifts in perception. You may also experience physical discharges, such as stronger body odors or more frequent bowel movements.

As blocked and stagnant energy moves or leaves the body, energetic memories, which are associated with the problem stored in either your energy channels or physical tissue can awaken and cause you to relive the underlying and often repressed causes of the problem—especially if you have a severe condition.

Healing Crisis

You might experience what doctors refer to as a “healing crisis.” The term refers to that time during healing when a patient’s body temporarily feels worse before it feels better. For example, when the body burns out infections, the patient often has a high fever. When the fever breaks, the symptoms of the disease pass. The fever may cause the patient to feel terrible, until the stored toxins or blocked energy are released. Afterwards the individual feels better as the illness passes.

All these reactions are common to many natural forms of healing and are often a sign that your body is cleansing itself. Many people have a healing crisis when they fast or switch to a cleansing or vegetarian diet. The practice of Dragon and Tiger may often trigger such effects; they are fairly normal reactions. What is important to remember is that these reactions are temporary and usually pass when your body begins to rebalance itself.

If you begin to experience strong or uncomfortable sensations, immediately sit down, put your hands on your belly and gently breathe with your belly to ground and center yourself. Such sensations will usually pass within minutes. Then suspend or reduce your practice for

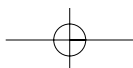
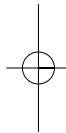
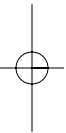
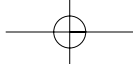
a while. Start again by following the 20 percent or 40 percent rule and very gently explore your body's reactions to these practices. Remember that you are not alone in such experiences; almost everyone that practices will experience some of these reactions at some time.

If the symptoms are intense, pull back your practice to 30 percent or 40 percent of what you normally consider your normal practice and consult with your teacher.

Remember to drink plenty of water. Water helps accelerate the release of toxins. Taking some Vitamin C also helps that process.

Make sure you rest after practicing.

Be sure to consult a healthcare professional immediately if you have any symptoms that might be a sign of a medical or psychological problem.





STANDING POSTURE AND LONGEVITY BREATHING

Movement 1 Basics

All Taoist energy practices—chi gung, tai chi, ba gua, hsing-i and meditation—emphasize fundamental physical, breathing and energetic principles as you perform their movements. These principles systematically train your mind and body to relax and master the control of chi. They empower your body to have maximum internal movement by taking into account how each part of the body moves and needs to be aligned, not only your muscles but also the deepest internal subsystems, such as internal organs, glands, bodily fluids, ligaments, tendons and nerves.

Two fundamental principles are taught in this chapter: the standing posture and Longevity Breathing®, which are both derived from ancient Taoist techniques.¹ These principles are integral to learning Dragon and Tiger's first movement and are incorporated into many of its other movements.

Learn the Basic Standing Posture

The standing posture is fundamental to all the movements of Dragon and Tiger and the transitions between movements. This posture provides the best structural integrity, as it enables your body to maintain its stability, balance (root) and relaxation as you perform Dragon and Tiger's movements. The fundamental alignments of the standing posture will help to free your body from tension and the habits of poor posture.

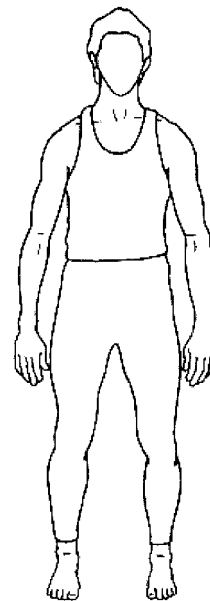
¹ Taoist breathing is fundamental to all Taoist longevity practices. Although these practices are thousands of years old, the author has developed his own method for teaching them, namely the Longevity Breathing program. Longevity Breathing makes these practices accessible and easy to learn, particularly for Westerners. These methods may be quite different from those that other instructors use to teach Taoist breathing.

12 *Dragon and Tiger Medical Chi Gung*

Fundamental Alignments of the Standing Posture

The basic alignments¹ (Figure 2-1):

1. Your feet are parallel, approximately shoulder's width apart.^o
2. Your weight should be distributed evenly on both feet. The ball, outside edge and heel of each foot must evenly touch the ground, so that you do not ride up on the outside edges or collapse on the inside of your feet.²
3. Your knees should be slightly bent.
4. Your tailbone should point to the ground, rather than backwards.
5. Your lower back should be straight, perpendicular to the ground.
6. Your belly and buttock muscles should be relaxed.
7. Your chest should be relaxed, slightly rounded and dropped. It should not be thrust forward, as in a military posture.
8. Your shoulders should be relaxed and your shoulders and shoulder blades should be rounded slightly forward.
9. Your arms should be relaxed downward and placed comfortably at your sides with your palms facing backwards and your fingers pointing downward at the outsides of your feet. Your armpits should be slightly open, as though they were holding a small ball.
10. Your neck and head should be lifted slightly and held straight.



Basic Standing Posture
Figure 2-1

As you practice this posture, sequentially focus on each alignment. Your primary consideration is that your stance must be comfortable and relaxed. At all times, remember the 70 percent rule. No alignment should be strained and stressed. Most people initially do not conform to all the alignment requirements of the standing posture. For example, many find it difficult to place their feet parallel. As you practice and incorporate these alignments into

¹ More detailed information on how to achieve these basic alignments is found in the author's book, *Opening the Energy Gates of Your Body*, revised edition (Blue Snake Books, 2006).

² For those with collapsed arches, specific leg twisting chi gung exercises can enable you to partially or completely restore your fallen arches. These exercises are taught in the author's Energy Arts teacher training and certification program for Opening the Energy Gates chi gung.

Dragon and Tiger's movements, your body will slowly relax and you will find it increasingly easier to maintain them.

Feet Shoulder's Width Apart Is the Ideal Stance

The force of gravity has a powerful effect on the human body. The more directly gravity moves downward from the place it contacts your body to its exit point in the ground, the less your muscles must work to maintain any physical position, which includes sitting and standing. In terms of body stability this is similar to the situation of a table whose legs fall perpendicularly to the ground. This positioning is inherently more stable and strong than one where the table's legs angle either significantly toward or away from the outer circumference of the table top.

In terms of body alignments, the line of the force of gravity falling through your body is most direct when your head and torso sit on your hips, your hips sit on your legs and your legs sit on your feet. When standing, this best occurs when your feet are shoulder's width apart with your weight distributed evenly on both feet. In this position—

- Physical balance is easiest to maintain.
- Your weight falls the most easily to your feet without needing your muscles to compensate for the force of gravity.
- Your thighs, hip and lower back muscles have to work the least to maintain the position.
- Your joints retain their stability with a minimum of physical tension and strain.

This width has been found to be within 70 percent of most people's physical capacity. In this stance, your legs will feel comfortable and relaxed, and you will be able to maintain your balance with minimum effort and tension.

Take a Short Break

It is recommended that you take a break at this point in order to allow your nervous system to absorb what you have just learned.

Learn Basic Longevity Breathing Principles

All Taoist chi gung practices, including Dragon and Tiger chi gung, incorporate the principles of Taoist breathing. If I could only teach one chi gung exercise that would have the maximum effect of changing people's lives for the better, I would teach Longevity Breathing. Of all self-help exercises, breathing properly is one of the most effective ways to improve overall health, decrease stress and mitigate the negative effects of aging.

Most Westerners are shallow breathers and use only a portion of the top of their front lungs. Not using the rest of the lungs is like starving the body of one of its most important rejuvenators. Only about 10 percent of people use their entire lung capacity and breathe deeply, smoothly and well. The rest inhale or exhale poorly, or hold or clutch their breath when they become tense or emotionally upset. Many experience shortness of breath as they age, a precursor to ill health, weakness and depression.

Learning how to take steady, smooth and deep breaths will enable you to improve not only your practice of Dragon and Tiger and other chi gung exercises, but also your overall health, stamina and mental clarity. It will help to train and increase your body's natural ability and desire to relax.

Breathing and Relaxation

In terms of breath and stress, here's a simple fact: The sympathetic nervous system turns on, stimulates and locks in stress responses. This means that every time you hold your breath, gulp air or breathe spasmodically in response to a negative situation, you lock stress and anxiety into your body and mind. Your body becomes conditioned to frequently adopt a "fight, flight or freeze" response, activating your adrenal glands and tensing your body. If you also hold your breath while eating, talking or thinking, you unconsciously reinforce poor breathing patterns that bring more stress into your life.

On the other hand, smooth, steady and even breathing patterns help your body to relax and stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system to lock in relaxation messages to your nervous system.

The antidote is to become aware of poor breathing patterns and change them to bring positive benefits to your parasympathetic nervous system. Once you learn Longevity Breathing, you can use it to relax your body and mind.

The Oxygen-Carbon Dioxide Exchange

When you breathe, you inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. The oxygen is released into your cells and powers your body's metabolism, circulation and ability to heal. When you don't get enough oxygen, your body becomes like a car that does not burn its fuel cleanly: it becomes sluggish and prone to problems.

As you exhale, you release carbon dioxide, a waste product that builds up in the cells and lungs. Not fully exhaling causes carbon dioxide to build up in your lungs. This can cause you to yawn, make you sleepy or spaced out. The excessive build-up of carbon dioxide also decreases the amount of oxygen available to your cells and starts a vicious downward spiral: your arteries start to contract, causing your airways to constrict, which in turn causes you to hold your breath. This leads to an increase in tension and a cascade of stress responses. A smooth, full exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide helps foster optimal health.

First, you must get the oxygen into your lungs strongly enough for it to be released into your cells and fully used by your body. Second, you must fully exhale carbon dioxide, which enables you to take in oxygen and make it available for usage in the cells.

If you don't exhale sufficiently to get the carbon dioxide out, the cells can't get all the oxygen they need. This is comparable to having enough money in the bank, but not being able to withdraw it.

The best way to get a strong oxygen-carbon dioxide exchange is by practicing deep breathing using your diaphragm and belly. Breathing from the upper chest, a habit of most people, is too shallow and weak to provide strong inhales and exhales. When you are breathing from your belly, your inhalations and exhales will arise seamlessly, as a natural reflex.

1. Breathe from Your Belly

Always try to breathe from your belly and not solely from your chest. This is the way you breathed when you were a baby. Belly breathing is the first step in learning Longevity Breathing practices and ideally should be incorporated into all Taoist chi gung or tai chi practices. Belly breathing drops and lifts the big muscle of the diaphragm, the natural body mechanism which pushes air in and out of your lungs.

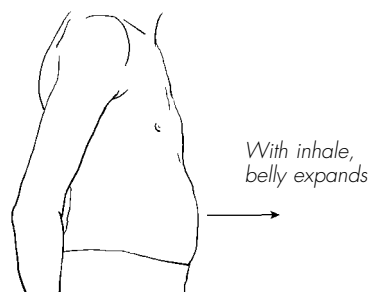
Belly breathing helps you to center your awareness in your body, rather than in your head, so that you feel more physically and energetically centered and grounded. It helps you to relax your neck, shoulders and arms. It improves the circulation of blood and the flow of chi in your internal organs.

16 *Dragon and Tiger Medical Chi Gung*

Belly breathing will provide a wonderful massage for your internal organs. Once it becomes a comfortable habit, you can breathe in this manner 24 hours a day. Just as massaging your muscles adds to their tone and overall functioning, so will belly breathing benefit your internal organs. In terms of your health, massaging your internal organs is more important than toning your visible muscles. Belly breathing increases the blood circulation in the blood vessels that nourish your internal organs.

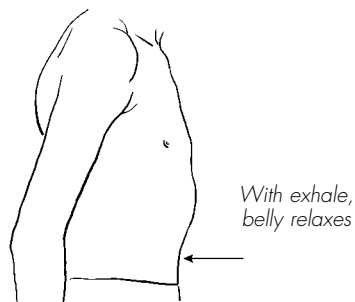
Ideally, inhale and exhale only through your nostrils. If medical reasons make this impractical, inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Inhale and exhale through your mouth only as a last resort.

1. When you inhale, feel your breath come into your nose, down your throat and into your lungs and belly. Let your belly muscles expand to move your belly forward (*Figure 2-2*).



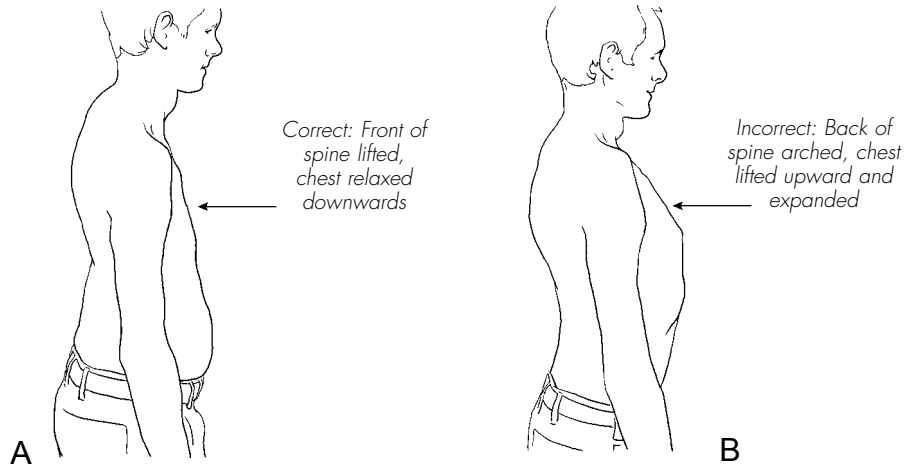
Breathing with the Belly: Inhale
Figure 2-2

2. When you exhale, let your belly return to its original positions and relax (*Figure 2-3*).



Breathing with the Belly: Exhale
Figure 2-3

Do your best to completely relax your chest (*Figure 2-4 A*) and not use any strength to puff it out when you breathe (*Figure 2-4 B*). You should have very little or no sense of air going into your chest.



Breathe with the Belly, Not the Chest

Figure 2-4

3. First, practice by focusing on expanding and relaxing your lower belly. Your lower belly extends from slightly above the top of your pubic hair to your navel. Breathe in such a way that there is no movement of the lower belly below the top of your pubic hair. Avoid straining or any feeling of pressure in your genitals.
4. When this is comfortable, turn your attention to moving the middle belly when you breathe, which for most people is more difficult. The middle belly extends from your navel to just before your diaphragm.

Placing your hands on the lower, middle and upper parts of your belly as you breathe will give you clear feedback as to whether and how much your belly is moving.

5. Finally, concentrate on expanding and relaxing your upper belly—your diaphragm and solar plexus—just underneath your lowest ribs. Try to have your diaphragm move downward as you inhale and upward as you exhale. This will help push air into the back and top of your lungs, parts that seldom get exercised.

Eventually, you will be able to move all three parts of your belly in unison.

18 *Dragon and Tiger Medical Chi Gung*

2. Breathe Smoothly and Deeply

As you breathe, make both your inhales and exhales smooth and full, without strain. When your exhale is full, your next inhale will naturally and smoothly arise by itself. Conversely, if your last exhale is shallow and not full, your next inhale will not come smoothly and you may have a tendency to hold your breath, gulp your inhale or hyperventilate.

Deep and smooth breathing enables you to take in and use more oxygen, better release carbon dioxide, calm your nerves, and, over time, take longer breaths, increasing the length of your inhale and exhale, without strain.

To get the sense of how to breathe smoothly and deeply, practice breathing from a straw for a few minutes a day, in a smooth and steady fashion. It will help you tune in to your breathing habits, and, over time, help you overcome poor ones. Often lifetime habits of poor breathing can be overcome by practicing breathing with a straw for a few weeks.

3. Exhale Fully

Exhaling fully will get rid of the carbon dioxide in your cells and lungs and decrease its buildup in your cells, which produces sluggishness and yawning, diminishes mental clarity and increases stress.

Exhaling fully will also make it easier for you to breathe in sufficient oxygen and make it easier for your cells to procure it.

You can do this in one of three ways. The first is by exhaling a little more than you inhale. For example if you inhale for four seconds, you might take five seconds to exhale. This is the method to use when practicing breathing without doing any movements. You will use this method in Dragon and Tiger's movements 1, 3 and 4.

The second method is to do an extremely rapid exhale (one or two seconds very forcibly). If you find yourself getting sluggish or yawning, you can do 3-10 forceful exhales and wake yourself up. Rapid exhales are used in Movement 5 of Dragon and Tiger.

The third way is vary the speed of the exhale. For instance you might exhale 50 or 60 percent of your breath in the first two seconds and take four more seconds to exhale the rest of your breath. Dragon and Tiger's movements 2, 6 and 7 use this method.

4. Never Hold Your Breath

Focus on not holding your breath between the end of an inhale/exhale and the beginning of the next inhale/exhale. Let one flow into the other in as relaxed a manner as you can.

Holding your breath can cause emotional tension and jangle your nervous system. Breathe smoothly and evenly, without stop-and-start breaks or jerkiness. Involuntarily holding the breath both triggers and escalates stress.

5. Keep the Tip of Your Tongue on the Roof of Your Mouth

As you breathe, keep the tip of your tongue touching the roof of your mouth. (If you make the sound "le," as pronounced in the word "let," your tongue will touch the correct spot just slightly behind your top front teeth.) Eventually, the muscles on the base of your tongue will stretch slightly and allow you to maintain this position comfortably, without effort.

When your tongue touches the roof of your mouth, it continuously stimulates and balances all your body's acupuncture meridians. The twelve main acupuncture meridians of your body are all connected to points along the governing and conception vessels, which are two of acupuncture's eight extraordinary meridians. The points along these two special meridians interface with and influence all the acupuncture points and meridians within your body. These two vessels form the chi pathway that is called the microcosmic orbit. That place just behind your upper front teeth on your hard palate is the acupuncture point where the governing and conception vessels meet. At this point, upward flowing energy from yang meridians in the back of your body changes to downward flowing energy in the yin meridians in the front of your body.

6. Only Breathe to 70 Percent of Your Capacity

There is no gain in putting tension in your body by straining to take longer inhales and exhales. Because breath is such a primary human function, it is quite possible to negatively pattern yourself and lock tension into your nervous system by forcing your breath. If breath-induced tension lodges in your nervous system, the tension and stress will far outweigh the benefits of breathing quietly, softly and deeply in a relaxed manner. By staying within 70 percent of your capacity, you will wean yourself from pushing yourself and gain the habit of relaxation.

How to Practice Breathing

You can practice Longevity Breathing any time you can remember to do so. The goal is to train the body to breathe this way 24 hours a day.¹

¹You can learn Taoist breathing principles in more detail from the author's book, *Opening the Energy Gates of Your Body*, revised edition, or from his *Longevity Breathing* DVD and *Taoist Breathing* CD.

20 *Dragon and Tiger Medical Chi Gung*

When you first start, establish a time when you know that you will be undisturbed for five or 10 minutes and practice either standing, sitting or lying down. This might be when you first wake up in the morning or while you are having your first cup of coffee or tea. Focusing on belly breathing is also a way to calm the mind before you go to sleep.

In any session, focus on one breathing principle at a time until it feels comfortable, for example moving one part of your belly. Then integrate it with another breathing principle, such as moving another part of your belly. Add, then combine the new principles one at a time, integrating them with the last one you have become comfortable doing. At some point, you will find that you have integrated all these separate principles into one seamless, smooth and relaxed breath.¹

Later, add more practice times, perhaps during or after meals. Finally, put your focus on your breathing while moving, such as when practicing Dragon and Tiger, walking or doing chores. Eventually, you will learn to focus on your breathing during larger and larger parts of the day and use it as a tool to become less stressed and more balanced.

¹The author's CD set, *Ancient Songs of the Tao*, is a compilation of Taoist chants that create vibrations for changing the energetic frequencies in human beings. It includes seven songs specifically meant to help you breathe into your belly and internal organs.