

Life Begins With a Breath®
The Chinese Medicine Guide to Health
Courtesy of the The Goodman Wellness Center

Yoga, Meditation, Tai Chi Chuan, and Qi Gong (Where do you start?)

There are yoga, tai chi, and qi gong centers popping up left and right all over the country that offer some or all of the above exercise classes. We are very lucky to live in a time with so many options regarding our longevity. The best thing to do is just pick one and commit to it. As, Anthony Hopkins says in “Hearts in Atlantis” about choosing a book, “Give the writer a few chapters and if you don’t like him by then, move on.” The same goes for each of the above styles of exercise. Give one of them between 6-8 months of consistent practice, if it doesn’t work for you, move on to the next. Here is a little help in differentiating the exercises for you.

Yoga

Yoga broken down to its’ basic form is a series of stretches with breathing incorporated into those stretches or postures. There have been many variations of yoga styles over the years with new ones added all of the time. Recent research has substantiated the many health benefits of yoga which yoga practitioners have known for years. Yoga will stretch, strengthen, improve respiration and circulation, reduce blood pressure, calm and focus the mind, and help you develop a strong sense of body awareness. People find that after practicing yoga for several months they start changing their diets also.

Meditation

Meditation is the act of centering the mind and slowing the breathing down. There are many different types and styles of meditation. Some styles of meditation focus on chanting phrases over and over again, some focus just on the breath, and some focus on the observation of the body sensations. All styles are beneficial. The health benefits are a calmer and more focused mind, stress relief, and lower blood pressure. Recent research has shown changes in brain activity and heart rhythms during meditation. It is the most simple of all of the above to practice, but does take the most dedication. In our fast pace society it takes great discipline to just sit and breathe for 30 minutes.

Tai Chi Chuan

Tai Chi Chuan is a series movements that were originally designed for self defense. Each movement is combined with breath so that the inhale and exhale matches the whole movement. The slower you go the deeper and slower you are breathing. Tai Chi Chuan is practiced at a very slow pace to help you learn the proper coordination of breath, movement, balance, and structure. This way

a Tai Chi Chuan practitioner will learn total body awareness and sensitivity. The benefits range from strengthening, flexibility, mental focus, blood circulation, and balance. Studies also suggest it helps prevent falls and fractures in seniors. Classes are usually taught at parks or martial art studios.

Qi Gong

Qi Gong was developed to add movement to meditation. There are hundreds of different styles, but again the basics are breathing with gentle movement of the body. Qi gong is an excellent choice for low impact and immediate benefits. You won’t walk away feeling exhausted like you got a huge work out, but you will walk away with feelings of tranquility, stillness, and energy. Qi gong sneaks up on you. If you practice for several months you will notice your health improving, you have gotten stronger, and your endurance is greater.

Do I have to change my religion?

No, you do not have to change your religion or philosophies on life. There will be some in the classes that may have different beliefs, but that is normal for our society.

Which is the best one?

One is not better than the other. It would be best to learn one system and practice it for a few years. Then learn another. After several years you can combine them to suit you personally.

Will I get any special powers?

Yes, the power to calm and focus your mind.

Medicine and the exercises

Yoga is based on Ayrvedic Medicine and Tai Chi Chuan and Qi Gong are based on Traditional Chinese Medicine. Meditation is practiced in all of the systems so depending on your teacher’s training he or she will talk about chakras or meridian

Returning to the center

Fall is approaching quickly. To prepare for fall and winter it is important to take a few weeks to build up your immune system and your digestion. Think of it as a cleanse prior to the holidays where nothing will stop the glutony of food and sweets entering your belly.

Steps for preparing for fall:

- 1. Eat smaller portions more frequently**
- 2. Eat nothing three hours prior to sleeping**
- 3. Take one hour per day just sitting and focused breathing**
- 4. Practice self massage**
- 5. Get a massage during the next two weeks**
- 6. Get and acupuncture treatment to focus on strengthening your spleen and stomach**
- 7. Stay away from sweets**
- 8. Go to bed by 9:00 PM**
- 9. No television**
- 10. No computer work at home**
- 11. Walk forty minutes per day**

I am only asking you do this for two weeks. It is the best way to give your body a fighting chance with the upcoming cold and flu season approaching.

Interesting Recipes

Here are a couple of good tips to add a little flavor to your food:

- 1. Horse radish with A-1 for steaks**
- 2. Salt on slightly unripe mangoes**
- 3. Honey on oranges**
- 4. Peanut butter on waffles or pancakes**
- 5. Peanut butter, honey, and banana sandwich**
- 6. Boil prunes with oatmeal**
- 7. Boiled beats with balsamic vinegar**

Good luck and enjoy.

If you have any questions regarding anything in the newsletter or have a favorite recipe you want to pass on give Steven Goodman a call at 949-460-9378.

Be healthy as you can and have a great month

Take Care

Steven Goodman L.Ac.