

Can You Feel the Qi? — Chief Instructor Brett Wagland

Qi is an ancient Chinese term for the basic building blocks of the universe. In traditional Chinese medicine, it means energy. Usually, it is associated with the breath. However, it is more subtle than the breath. Without an appropriate analogy, it is a challenge to explain such an intangible thing as qi. In our Tai Chi and Wu Dao Gong classes, we have exercises called qigong (energy work). Fontane has been conducting a special Qigong program for a group of dedicated practitioners for over 4 years. She also runs Qigong workshops and short courses to benefit students in general.

The qi will become stronger when you cultivate it. You need to know the way and **you need to practise the correct methods.** There are many different ways to practise qigong but they all contain a few main principles.



First is to relax the mind and body. This sounds simple enough until you have to do it. Then, you realise that you are a long way from being relaxed and quiet. As soon as we begin to slow down and relax, all sorts of distractions and tensions appear. We start to realise just how tense our bodies are and we notice how busy the mind is. The inner chatter seems to go on and on, even when we want it to stop.



In the Tai Chi Classics, it states that we should be as soft as a baby and breathe to the Dan Tian or the lower abdomen. Stand like a balanced scale so that even if a feather is added, it will set the body in motion. How do you become soft like a baby? It is not easy if you have spent your life tensing up your body. The key is to do the practice. **Gradually, you will change your body from a tense ridged form to a relaxed flowing being.**

It was interesting to hear a comment recently from a burly looking guy after his 3rd class. He said that during the Pouring of the Qi from One Hand to Another, he could feel as if he had two powerful magnets in his hands that prevented them from coming together. I jokingly replied, “What have you been drinking?!” This is a great experience of qi. This feeling will gradually become stronger and will become evident in other parts of the body. This is known as “**coming in the door**” which means you can feel what is happening and qi is no longer just a concept.

Important Notice!!



**Aranda and Kambah —
classes as usual on Mon 12 Mar
Canberra Day public holiday.**



**Also, classes as usual on
Easter Monday 2 April.**

In a world full of concepts, everything is in our heads. This creates an energy imbalance which can lead to all sorts of health and wellness issues. Learning to relax the mind allows greater feeling and input from the body which increases our capacity to experience what is actually happening in the moment. Learning to get out of our heads and into our bodies takes us into a whole new world of experience and knowing. The practice of qigong balances and enlivens our nervous system and takes us into our inner world.

Another important principle is **correct posture or alignment.** For this reason, we begin the qigong training process with standing instead of sitting postures. Traditionally, the ancient masters discovered that the body needs to be strengthened before it can become soft and pliant. So by standing, we learn to build a type of integrated strength. The correct alignment allows the body to unify. We learn to adjust our strength appropriately and **find a point**

Enrich Your Tai Chi Experience

See separate leaflets for details :

Tai Chi Bang (Stick) for Strength and Flexibility, Sat 17 Mar, 10am to 1.30pm

This is the only Tai Chi Bang (Stick) Workshop held in 2018.

Wudang Tortoise Qigong for Longevity & Vitality, Sat 17 Mar, 10am to 1pm

Annual Tai Chi and Meditation Retreat at SIBA : 5pm Sat 14 to Wed 18 Apr 1pm

of balance that requires a minimum of strength to maintain the body upright. It is part of the ability that we cultivate in order to find relaxation and stillness in motion which is what the Tai Chi form teaches you.

While Fontane and I were in Beijing during the January break, we met up with Chen Xiang, Grandmaster Feng Zhi Qiang's most accomplished disciple in our Hun Yuan Tai Chi system. He spoke at great length of the virtues of the standing practice. He said that once we can enter deeply into **a state of no-thingness called Wuji**, we will feel energy moving in the Dan Tian. This energy initiation is called taiji (tai chi) which gives birth to yin and yang. This all sounds very philosophical. However, if you keep practising, you will eventually discover these things for yourself which will make you feel happy and strong.



Sinking the qi to the Dan Tian is another important aspect. This is also based on how relaxed we are which is obvious to the trained eye in how we stand. In the beginning, most people are tense and top heavy. The body wobbles and sways. According to the internal arts, they have no roots yet. As the practice matures, they notice a sinking or lowering of the body weight. The breathing moves from the chest to the abdomen, the shoulders drop and the legs and feet feel heavy as if they are sinking into the ground. As this process continues to deepen, the lower body begins to feel rooted to the ground and the upper body feels light and relaxed. At this stage, you know the reason that the ancient Chinese used the image of a tree to express the ideal state of a relaxed and centred body.



There are many different types of qigong. The Santi standing in Wu Dao Gong is more for martial purposes. Practices such as the Wudang Taoist Five Pillars and the Five Animals Qigong are for general health and well being. The Self Healing Qigong and the Emei Wuji Gong (taught by Fontane) are strong healing practices which have a significant effect on anyone with a health challenge.

No matter what form of Qigong you practise, it is important that you have a teacher who really understands and has experienced the practice of qigong deeply so that he or she can guide you to the higher levels. This is not because of any danger from the practice but more because of the many layers of change you will experience. I often hear

students from the special Qigong program conducted by Fontane saying that they feel very fortunate to have access to such extraordinary training in Canberra. Three students travel regularly from the South Coast to attend the Qigong classes. What they have experienced can only be dreamt of by others, especially since some of these secret practices are well hidden. If you wonder what the secret of success is in terms of practising Qigong and Tai Chi, this is what Fontane says, **“willing to learn and practise, stick to the method, feel what is happening and get out of the way.”**



Practising Qigong is very enjoyable. It unites the mind and body through the medium of qi. Keep practising and you will eventually experience how great it feels and know what it is all about. You will naturally change for the better. Don't give up if you don't feel the qi yet. It will happen. It is truly worth it in the end. ☸☸☸

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Thank you. May you be well and happy!