

HEALTH & FITNESS

Ancient Chinese health practice topic of lecture and workshop

by Fleetwood Bernstein

Many Westerners have heard of Kung Fu and T'ai Chi Chuan. Only a few know of Qi Gong (Chee Gong), the grandfather of T'ai Chi Chuan, Kung Fu and all of the other martial art forms. Qi Gong means energy work and is currently being practiced by a large part of China's population as a way of keeping fit and restoring health.

3000 Year Old Exercises

Qi Gong is a general Chinese term for exercises that move energy through the acupuncture channels. These exercises were developed at least 3000 years ago in China and have branched out into many forms. The Daoist form of Qi Gong has had the greatest influence on Chinese culture and medicine. Daoist teachings emphasize that long life and at-one-ness with nature represent the highest form of spiritual practice. Because of this, Daoist monks developed health techniques that maintained physical vitality and increased the life span. Through the Daoist tradition, Qi Gong health exercises, acupuncture, and herbology were developed. Qi Gong filtered down from the monasteries to the villages where a strong tradition of Qi Gong was established in Chinese culture.

Qi Gong is a system that is designed to treat diseases that are closely linked to the emotions. Qi Gong's potent combination of breathing, movement, and visualization help to release emotional tensions in the body and make it more receptive to rebalancing. During a workout the nervous system gets a gentle and steady stimulation that balances the electrical circuitry of the body. When the nervous system is relaxed, the body's energy output is efficient. Because less energy is used in daily life, the body can renew its store of energy, thus reversing the progress of an illness.

As Martial Art Training

Currently there are two main focuses of Qi Gong. It is used primarily as either part of a martial arts training, or as a health practice. When used in conjunction with a martial art, Qi Gong concentrates on developing strength and power. Qi Gong for the martial arts is called Iron Shirt

Training.

As the name indicates, the regime is intense and rigorous, usually requiring 4-6 hours of practice a day for 10-30 years. Astonishing feats are demonstrated when a Qi Gong master who has done Iron Shirt Training gives a public exhibition. Qi Gong masters can crush rocks with their hands and head, move inanimate objects, or make light bulbs that are unconnected to any electrical socket glow as if turned on. Qi Gong masters also lend their support to the healing arts. For example, adepts use their hands to stimulate the acupuncture meridians without the aid of needles.

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As Health Tool

Though Qi Gong's association with the martial arts is glamorous, its exercises are used by most people as a basic health and healing tool. In China, millions practice Qi Gong every day. When done correctly, there is a sensation of heat surrounding the body and a tingling sensation on the skin. The explanation given for this is that the energy inherently available in the environment is circulating and being taken into the body. During a Qi Gong workout, the diaphragm moves 3-4 times as far as in ordinary breathing. This movement massages the abdomen more thoroughly than if you used your hands. Research shows that by practicing Qi Gong, one can learn to breathe 4-5 times a minute instead of 15-20, thus reducing the body's oxygen consumption by 30% and slowing the metabolic rate. This means the body is using energy more efficiently.

As Medical Treatment

Qi Gong is also used as a medical therapy to treat chronic or life threatening illnesses. It is a treatment for many Chinese afflicted by serious disease. It is used in the treatment of asthma, emphysema, high blood pressure, arthritis, cancer and Parkinson's disease. It is not unusual for cancer patients to gather in the hospital parking lot every morning at 5 am where a Qi Gong master guides the group through exercises specific to their illness. Qi Gong used in connection with acupuncture and herbology is a respected form of health care.

Perhaps it is not surprising that so many in China opt for Qi Gong treatment when one realizes that traditional Chinese doctors believe that good health occurs when vibrant Qi energy moves through the acupuncture channels of the body in an unobstructed way. Acupuncture treatments primarily move the energy in the body. Herbal treatments primarily enrich Qi energy. Qi Gong is a powerful healing tool because it does both.

Lecture and Workshop

On February 6-7 the Eugene Center for Acupuncture and Acupressure will hold a lecture and workshop on Qi Gong techniques. The workshop will be held at Pacific Nautilus health club. Qi Gong expert Jake Fratkin will give an Introductory lecture on Friday, Feb. 6, 7:30-9:30 pm, for \$4, and will lead an experiential workshop on Saturday, Feb. 7, 9:30-5:00, for \$40. Fratkin is a professor of Chinese Medicine at the Southwest Acupuncture College in New Mexico. He has studied Qi Gong, T'ai Chi Chuan, acupuncture, and herbology for 12 years. He learned his Qi Gong techniques from a variety of Chinese and Korean masters. His mentors did not speak English and used only traditional Chinese teaching techniques. Fratkin travels throughout Europe and North America giving Qi Gong workshops directed to those who are interested in exercises that will improve general health, or augment a sports or martial arts training program. All levels of physical ability are welcome. Participants are asked to wear loose comfortable clothes and bring a pillow. Inquiries about this workshop can be directed to the Center for Acupuncture and Acupressure, 683-9230.



Photograph by David Stein

The University's S.H.A.P.E. Program offers weekly trips to both Willamette Pass and Mt. Bachelor, open to anyone.

Skiing Anyone? UO SHAPE Program

by Garde Wells

The University of Oregon has a number of ski programs that are open to the public.

For the downhill skiers, there are two attractive options—one is eight all-day Thursday trips to Mt. Bachelor; the other is a package of eight all-day Thursday trips to Willamette Pass. Both outings including transportation on large, comfortable buses, lift tickets, and instruction from certified ski-area schools. The Willamette Pass section even includes ski equipment rentals.

"The Willamette Pass trip is great for beginners," says University of Oregon Outdoor Pursuits Program co-director Mike Strong. "It's a shorter trip than Mt. Bachelor and it includes the rental of equipment." The cost for eight day-long outings is \$213 for Willamette Pass, or \$224 for Mt. Bachelor. There are three levels of ski instruction available as well as a Ski Racing course.

Other U of O Outdoor Pursuits Program courses include Wilderness Survival, several levels of cross-country skiing and ski touring; snow camping, and a new Avalanche Hazard and Interpretation class. All of these courses combine instruction and outdoor adventure. Call 686-3399 as soon as possible to find out about winter term activities.

The Outdoor Pursuits Program is one of 12 areas where the U of O's Sport, Health and Personal Excellence (S.H.A.P.E.) Program offers activities classes to any community member. Without having to go through the process of enrolling as a University of Oregon student, any

Eugene-area resident may take quality phys-ed courses. Most are \$25 per term. Some examples are: **AQUATICS**—Learn to Swim, Swim Improvement, Swim Conditioning, Swim Training; **COMBATIVES**—Aikido, Fencing I & II, Judo I-IV, Karate I-III, Taekwondo; **FITNESS**—"Our most popular interest area," according to S.H.A.P.E. director Lani Loken-Dahle) Aerobics I-III, Jog-Run, Marathon Training, Road Running 10K, Weight Training I-III, Hatha Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Gymnastics, Juggling, Trampoline I & II, Sports Photography, Badminton, Billiards, Bowling I & II, Racquetball I-III, Table Tennis, Tennis I-III; **OUTDOOR PURSUITS**—(all alpine and cross-country ski courses, winter camping, etc.) Riding I-III, Jumping I-III; **TEAM SPORTS**—Indoor Soccer I & II, Volleyball I-III.

"Our only limitation (in terms of course offerings) at this time is facilities," comments S.H.A.P.E. director Loken-Dahle. "There has been a sincere interest for physical activity participation among students and community members here."

With over 200 different courses, the S.H.A.P.E. classes have an age range of students from 12 to 80 years old. "We have a worldly pool of instructors for these courses," says Loken-Dahle, "graduate teaching fellows from all over . . . Australia, Korea, Holland, Mexico."

To easily find out about any of the U of O's S.H.A.P.E. Program courses for this winter call 686-4105 as soon as possible.

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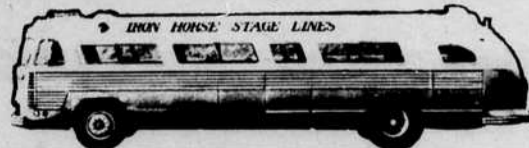
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