

ZHAN ZHUANG



WANG XIANGZHAI

YIQUAN ACADEMY



ZHAN ZHUANG

Author: Wang Xiangzhai

Translated from Chinese by: Andrzej Kalisz

From translator:

Included here are translations of late period works of Wang Xiangzhai'a (1885-1963), written in 1950s and at beginning of 1960, concentrating on zhan zhuang as a form of health cultivating and therapy.

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SHORT INTRODUCTION TO YANGSHENGZHUANG

The art of nourishing health has long history and many methods. Although the exercise methods are different, their goal is getting rid of illness and prolonging life, preventing early senility. Recollecting several dozens years of study and practice of health nourishing methods, I must conclude that **zhan zhuang (yangshengzhuang)** is simple, easy to practice and at the same time bringing great benefits.

Zhan zhuang can be divided into standing postures, sitting postures, lying on bed postures, walking postures and half supported postures. There are several or even several dozens postures in each category. Although there are many postures, apart from walking postures, all of them have common characteristics – starting practice you should close eyes, focus mind, calm breathing, then slowly assume the posture, keeping it until end of the exercise. Beginners can start from standing postures. When doing the standing postures, feet should be placed shoulder width apart, making the Chinese ‘eight’ character (which looks like: / \ - distance between toes of both feet is bigger than between heels – in other words toes are slightly directed outward). Both legs should be bent to certain degree, buttocks as if sitting down. Then raise both hands. Demands of hands position are: not higher than eyebrows, not lower than navel, not touching body, not further from body than one foot, arms half rounded, armpit half empty (half open), left hand shouldn’t move to the right side, right hand shouldn’t move to the left side, all changes are done within this range. Beginner can practice 2 or 3 times every day, at beginning about 10 minutes each time, then the time can be extended to 40 minutes.

Below I will explain several issues related to zhan zhuang.

THE ORIGINS AND FUNCTION OF HEALTH NOURISHING POSTURES.

Health nourishing postures are developed from zhan zhuang (standing postures) of the Chinese martial art **xingyiquan**. So called xingyi (form-intention) means: *“taking intention from form; when there is intention, it is expressed in form; intention is born from form, form*

is following intention". It is a kind of exercise where body and spirit (mind) are trained at the same time. It can cause relax of central nervous system and at the same time it can promote blood circulation, improve metabolism. When central nervous system gets full rest, its regulating functions improve, blood circulation speeds up, metabolism strengthens, whole body and all internal organs receive complete nourishing. When whole body is as if "*irrigated and lubricated*", full of natural vigor and life, it is possible to achieve the goal of getting rid of illnesses and prolonging life.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTH NOURISHING POSTURES.

Although there are many methods of cultivating health, they can be divided into two groups – moving and static exercises. Generally moving exercises are strengthening body and bones and static exercises mostly serve training the **zhen qi** (true **qi**) inside body, creating abundance of **three treasures** (**shen, qi, jing**). Zhan zhuang is a method of training spirit and body at the same time. Its characteristic is that it is not necessary to control breath and concentrate on **dantian**. Usually the goal of abdominal breathing and tranquilizing mind can be achieved by regulating posture and aspects of movement and non-movement, empty and solid, using appropriate mind activity. Although we are talking about form, practitioner shouldn't stick to it too rigidly. Although we are talking about intention, it shouldn't be too much fixed. These exercises not only train body strength, but are simple and easy to practice. They can be done anywhere and anytime, walking, sitting, lying on bed, standing.

POSTURE AND TIME.

Although health nourishing postures are exercises of "*seeking movement in non-movement, seeking non-movement in movement*", which beginners are doing using certain positions, but there shouldn't be too strictly determined posture or time of practice. It can be adjusted according to body and health condition, without giving practitioner too much burden. Usually, it is not advisable to do many changes of posture, because when spirit and breath becomes calm, blood starts speeding up; when the changes inside start, sudden change of posture can create internal chaos. So old masters taught us: "*Small movement is better than big movement, non-movement is better than small movement, movement in non movement is the movement which is always born and never ceasing*". But when you master the law of internal movement, when external movements don't decrease internal movement anymore, you can

change freely, without limitations of posture. When old masters were saying: “*xingyi is not seeking for resemblance of form*”, it had the same meaning. As for time of practice, it is best to let practitioner decide it by himself. If he feels light, relaxed, comfortable and in good mood, he can extend time. If he feels tired, uncomfortable, irritated, he should stop the exercise, he shouldn't force himself to continue.

RELAX AND TENSION.

Zhan zhuang is a form of exercise where you are seeking strength in lack of strength, seeking slight movement in non-movement, seeking fast movement in slight movement. The more relaxed body, the faster blood circulation and the faster increase of strength. If using force, body becomes tense, losing ability of agile changes, it can even cause disturbance of blood flow. Proper kind of force is mainly related to spirit and is formless. If there is a form of force, the essence of movement is lost. This is why masters of old were saying: “*if there is form, body is broken, when there is no form, spirit gathers*”. In other words, when body is relaxed as much as possible, spirit focused as much as possible, although external form doesn't look impressive, there is agility of spirit. Those who practice for longer time, can experience this.

MUSCLES TRAINING

“*Muscles as one*” is next step in practice. This is closely related to direct teacher-student transmission. The postures become a bit different and muscles work is increasing. Without going through this stage of practice, practitioner will not be able to continue demanding exercises for longer time. But when training muscles, mind training should not be abandoned. It is still “*form as basis, mind for use*”. So while increasing training, effort can be decreased. Decreasing effort serves increasing training. Training and relax should be seen as one thing. But it should be adjusted properly, so practitioner gradually increases his ability of continuing demanding practice for longer time, even without noticing it. It should be accented that while increasing training, the burden for brains and heart should decrease, the principle is: getting the feeling of strength in comfort.

PRINCIPLES OF ADJUSTING

A. Adjusting posture

The changes of posture are based on intention. From the other side, form also can change intention. This is the principle of “*intention is born from form, form follows intention*”.

Adjusting, which doesn't go beyond the changes of high and low, right and left, single weight or double weight, is based on student's individual situation. No matter if we are talking about head, hands, body, shoulder, elbow, knee, hip etc., there should be realizing the difference between single and double, relaxed and tense, empty and solid, light and heavy. It's the same with all the smallest points.

- **Adjusting internal organs.**

The key for adjusting internal organs is: intention is leading psychology, influencing physiology, physiology is affecting psychology, they are influencing mutually each other. After getting instruction, student is using mental suggestions, if there is need it can be directed toward specific organ. Here we are talking about typical main issues of adjusting, and it is directed to beginners. For someone who practices for longer time and has deep experience, those methods are not of any importance.

CONTROLLING DISTRACTING THOUGHTS

As this kind of exercise stresses two aspects: not only training body, but also spirit, controlling distracting thoughts is quite important. But people's thinking is extensive, especially adults use to have many distracting thoughts. So usually getting rid of distracting thoughts is not easy. Many people practicing methods of nourishing health consider it a serious problem. They put a lot attention to tranquilizing mind, but they don't realize that the more they try, the bigger burden it creates for their spirit, it is like using bandit to fight bandit, one bandit goes away, but the other comes and stays - before one thought disappears, another arrives. So during history, those who studied the art of nourishing health established many methods, like concentrating on outside or inside, which can help beginners. But from my own experience I can say, that only using natural method of not controlling – not fighting with coming thoughts, not stopping thoughts which are leaving, can lead to stabilizing the spirit.

When the distracting thoughts are strong, you can imagine that body is like a great melting furnace, in which all objects of universe are melting. This way, there is no need to fight with distracting thoughts, and they diminish - there is not need of effort to control them and they are controlled anyway, the goal of tranquilizing mind is achieved.

The above introduction can only be used as a reference. The most important is individual practice and knowledge coming from personal experience.



DISCUSSING ZHAN ZHUANG

INTRODUCTION

Yangshengzhuang (health nourishing postures) is a form of cultivating health, kind of basic exercises of internal training. Because the postures and movements conform with physiology of human body, nervous system is resting and is being positively regulated, and at the same time body is trained, the goal of cultivating health and healing can be achieved (it has been proved in practice already). It can be said that it is a branch of medical science and at the same time it is a form of art training. This small booklet is intended as an introduction for beginners, so it is short and simple. Unlike in usually published texts, there are no detailed explanations here. Everybody knows, that even with direct teacher-student transmission, it is not possible to achieve understanding in short time. So I will not dare to claim that this text is complete and without shortcomings. Even if it is correct, further improvement is needed.

In childhood I was weak and suffered many illnesses. No medicine could help. This is why I started learning the art of cultivating health. Then I traveled in many places, met famous masters, studied all methods of cultivating health of mind and body, collecting the essence, removing the coarse, achieving some success in the art of cultivating health. I've been having many friends, students and teachers. Each of them was good in something. Learning, comparing, researching for several dozens years, merging it with the principles of the "Simple questions" chapter of "Internal canon" and with basic methods of martial art, I finally achieved the rough outline of the art of cultivating health. This art can be practiced walking, sitting, lying, but because standing postures are the basis, hence the name yangshengzhuang – health nourishing postures (also known as hunyuan zhuang – postures of primeval unity).

I am over 70 years old. I haven't got anything apart a bit of knowledge about cultivating health, which I am willing to share, introducing this method of cultivating health and of therapy. But apart from some fragments scattered through ancient works, there are no systematic writings about the art of cultivating health. Those methods were transmitted directly from teacher to student. And I haven't got enough ability and knowledge to explain

the content of health postures in writing in detailed and correct way. So the issue is too much simplified in this text, too many questions are not discussed here. I wasn't able to avoid shortcomings and mistakes. I hope that those who are experts in similar field will provide suggestions and corrections. I also hope that students will make progress.

THE SOURCE AND EVOLUTION OF YANGSHENGZHUANG

History of chinese health cultivating methods is very long. But there is lack of written sources. Only sometimes you can find some pieces, but they lack completeness. Basing on elder masters' teachings and my own research, I came to conclusion that the art of cultivating health started forming in the oldest times, when man had to fight with the nature and wild animals to survive. It is not possible to say how many people gradually collected experience and constantly developed those methods.

It is said that already 2000 years ago there existed the book „Internal canon”, the gem of chinese medicine, which even today is a guide for medical practice. Chapter “Simple questions” concentrates on cultivating health. For example we can read there: *"In ancient times great masters stood on earth, supporting heaven, controlling yin and yang, breathing with essence of qi, standing alone, guarding spirit, with body being a one"*. Although the text is simple, its meaning is profound. It was a method of exercise preventing illnesses, and in cases when acupuncture and medicine didn't help, patient could use these principles to do exercises. The main points are **yang** – cultivating, nourishing and **jing** – tranquility, non-movement: *"standing alone, guarding spirit"*.

Before the eastern Han dynasty many scholars and warriors knew the methods of “tranquil cultivating”. The exercises could be done walking, standing, sitting, lying. It was popular form of cultivating health. Later, during reign of Liang dynasty's emperor Wu, Damo came to China to teach (Damo, son of India Fan king was 67 years old at that time). He transmitted methods of “washing marrow” and “changing tendons”. During Tang dynasties two schools existed: Linji and Mizong, which transmitted cha tiao, rougang san zhe (“three folds of yoga”), sizhigong (“four limbs exercises”), baduanjin (“eight sections of brocade”), jingang shi er shi (“twelve forms of vajra”), luohan shi ba fa (“eighteen methods of luohan”) – generally known in India as yoga. Later there appeared more schools. There were so many, that it is impossible to name all of them. The methods were innumerable and it caused chaos.

This art not only was not developing, but it came to stagnation. 500 years ago only old fashioned ideas were transmitted.

After Song dynasty methods such as chan zuo (sitting zen) appeared. Many schools were established. They had common points, but there were also differences. And this sitting method was not natural enough, not concrete enough. The essence was removed, and the coarse was kept. Not only Damo's teaching disappeared, but also heritage of our philosophers was lost. It is a pity.

There are similar methods in Japan. Before training they are standing, focused, tranquilizing mind, mobilizing spirit. This is high art, there are valuable points in it, but they are scattered.

During my life I especially loved our nation's heritage: the health cultivating art and martial art. After I learned something about the art of cultivating health in my childhood, I looked for teachers and learned diligently. At the same time I studied ancient works and checked everything in practice. I practiced what I learned from my friends and teachers and using the principles of "Simple questions". From my over 50 years of practice I can say, that yangshengzhuang not only improves health and protects against illnesses, but it is also a very efficient therapy method in cases of many chronic illnesses, where other methods were not efficient.

THE MEANING AND EFFECTS OF YANGSHENGZHUANG

Yangshengzhuang is a branch of science. At the same time it is a form of therapeutic physical activity. These exercises can be used by anyone, regardless of age, sex, physical fitness – there are no limits. Those with health problems can be cured, those who are healthy can use the exercises to prevent health problems. Strict form, simplicity or complexity, determined order of movement are not important. The aim is to let brain rest completely, and give body appropriate amount of exercise. Movement is born in non-movement, non-movement is sought in movement.

This kind of exercises enable proper regulation of functions of nervous system, improve circulation, metabolism, condition of all organs, positively affecting health and curing illnesses. During 50 years there were no cases of side effects, and in over 90% cases the

method proved to be efficient. This kind of exercises enables improving functions of assimilating and excretion. The ancient were saying about cultivating the essence and getting rid of the rough and crude. This is the idea. This is kind of exercise where natural forces are being reinforced. Effects are constantly born in whole body and its parts. Those weak and sick can restore health, those healthy can still improve their health, and moreover they can experience unlimited satisfaction coming from understanding.

This form of exercise is different from other methods. It combines training and resting. While training, you are resting, while resting, you are training. It brings effect of harmonizing functions of nervous system, so all organs and parts of body can harmonically work under its control.

IMPORTANT POINTS

Yangshengzhuang is not only a form of cultivating health and therapy, but also of mind, will training. Yangshengzhuang practitioners must work on improving character. During exercises there mustn't be any vehemence or impulsiveness, fury, worrying, regretting, fear, thoughts of success or loose or of great luck. Those are all expression of insufficient will and character.

While talking about therapy, those learning yangshengzhuang for health, are usually people with long lasting health problems, where other methods of therapy were not efficient. They must believe that training actively, constantly fighting with illness, they will be finally able to defeat it and restore health. They will not achieve their goal if they will loose hope or patience, worrying, sometimes training with enthusiasm and sometimes get discouraged, sometimes practicing and sometimes stopping. Practitioner of yangshengzhuang should keep good mood, modesty, being open for experiencing the meaning of zhan zhuang. He/she should practice diligently and patiently, to achieve vigorous spirit. If he/she will practice this way for longer time, he/she will naturally get rid of the illness.

While practicing yangshengzhuang, you must calm mind, get rid of disturbing thoughts. *“Spirit is not wandering outside, force is not going over tips, intention is not revealed in form, force is not breaking body”*. You should feel natural lightness and relax, unity and power, force must be stable and proper, naturally swift. *“When there is no movement, there is no occasion, when there is no occasion, there is no satisfaction; there should be calm and*

silence in which there is readiness of swift action, ability of reacting as echo, whatever happens". Although the principles are simple and easy, for a beginner it is not easy to understand them. What is important is spirit, and not seeking superficial form. Mind should embrace the whole and the internal. A part should not disturb the unity of the whole. External movement should not spoil internal harmony. Whole body should be naturally relaxed and light, you should keep pleasant mood, as if taking a pleasant bath in the great bathroom of nature. To achieve this, before starting exercise you should calm mind, get rid of disturbing thoughts. You should also put attention to "four external attributes and five demands". Four external attributes are: straight head, straight sight, posture of dignity, calm voice. Five demands are: respect, carefulness, intention, truth, harmony. You should be respectful towards people and all matters. You should express your intentions truly. You shouldn't be rude toward anyone or anything, you shouldn't harm anyone. These are demands for character and external behavior of practitioner. He/she should keep the attitude and feelings like those of children toward parents of parents toward children. When talking about exercises, "*you should seek fullness of spirit and intention, not resemblance of form*". This is the basic demand of training.

In yangshengzhuang postures can differ, depending on person and illness. In case of different illnesses the situation of nervous system and muscles system is different. Living conditions, habits, mental state and other factors are important when choosing posture. Those factors should be considered when choosing posture, deciding time of practice and rest, amount of effort. Teacher must understand the specific situation, properly adjusting the way of practice for a given person. Practitioner must give enough intention to mastering the principles, practicing carefully. He mustn't sometimes practice, sometimes not, practicing only when he/she feels like it. Only when keeping proper attitude, results can be fast and side effects can be avoided.

Beginners often have doubts or fantastic ideas. Or they only sometimes practice, or they are trying to hard. Careful experiencing is needed. When practitioner gets more experience and achieves deeper understanding, this problem can be solved. "*Learn from the ancient, but don't stick to it too much*". It is easy to get results, keeping respect to teacher's method. A beginner shouldn't think that he/she is very wise, and is perfectly understanding everything or even knows better. On the other hand he/she should not practice in stupid way. Mood should be pleasant, body should be working. Abandoning body, there is nothing which could be

sought, but thinking only of own body is a mistake too. Force is sought outside, but mind is empty. If practicing according to these principles, seriously and carefully, it is not difficult to achieve the wonderful state of unlimited changes, when incredible satisfaction is being constantly born.

„STANDING ALONE, GUARDING SPIRIT”, „ALL MUSCLES ARE ONE”

In the chapter „Simple questions” of “Internal cannon” it is said: *"In ancient times great masters stood on earth, supporting heaven, controlling yin and yang, breathing with essence of qi"*. Here we'll discuss next part: *"standing alone, guarding spirit, with body being a one"*. *"Standing alone, guarding spirit"* means that before starting the exercise, mind must be prepared, thinking of being in the state of tranquility and non-movement, at beginning of everything, when anything can happen. Body is as a plant, static if looking from outside, but all kind of changes are happening inside. The “broken” method of techniques mustn't be used, as it would spoil everything. Although partial movement can be useful, but if practiced for long time it is harmful – it is movement which is chronically ruining health.

When practicing, you should always keep the feeling of light and swift upright standing, without breaking intention and force; light, relaxed, even wholeness, according to the principle of comfortable force.

When practicing, you should focus your mind, standing silent in face of the space of universe. Inside there should be clear emptiness, outside there should be harmony, balance and roundness. At the same time you should achieve pleasant mood, get rid of disturbing thoughts and feelings, calm your breath, gently cultivating internal and external. All pores of your skin are as if opening, there appears feeling as if wind was moving freely through them, through your body, inside and outside. All muscles are becoming as a one empty bag in the air, hanging on a rope, and supported from below. At the same time it is a feeling as if you were lying on a grassland below the vast sky. And as if you were standing in slightly moving water. In this way muscles are exercised, although you are not doing typical exercises. Your mind is also naturally cultivated. These are the basic demands of exercises.

How to focus mind? It should become as a big furnace in which everything is melting, and it should absorb all distracting thoughts. Those thoughts which come, are melted. Soon all

disturbing thoughts should disappear. And if you are trying to fight those thoughts, one though will not go away, and instead more thoughts will appear, spirit will be distracted and will be wandering outside, you will not be able to focus your mind.

During exercise, you should also have feeling as if there was mutual echoing between muscles and surrounding air. The ability of using body as a whole and using the natural abilities will develop this way. There shouldn't be non-natural, artificial acting. Artificial acting and partial methods are destroying the possibility of using the whole and using natural abilities. This is kind of science about natural human abilities. This is the meaning of saying; *“Let there be no one fixed method, so there is no method which is not available”*.

Although this training method is simple, actually it is difficult. At beginning *“small movement is better than big movement, non-movement is better than small movement”*. Only starting from non-movement you can experience the kind of movement in which *“when one is moving, there is nothing in whole body which would not move”*. This way it is easy to stabilize mind, warm of body is kept, metabolism is naturally increasing. When you have learned basics, you can gradually learn movement – only then it will be easy to experience movement in non-movement, movement as non-movement, movement in which movement and non-movement are based on each other. Then it is possible to feel pressure of air on surface of your body, using the force which is result of changes between relax and tension. It is not difficult then to control the dynamic balance (not-balance in balance), pulsating movement, movement in non-movement, non-movement in movement. Outside and inside there are undergoing complex changes between hard and soft, empty and full, relaxed and tense (as for imaginations which are accompanying all movements, it is too complicated, so I'm not writing about it here). This way you are naturally developing the movement in which *“when upper is leading, lower is naturally following, when lower is moving, upper is leading by itself, when upper and lower are moving, middle is attacking, when middle is moving, upper and lower are in harmony, external and internal are linked, front and back, left and right – everything is co-operating”*. Above I was talking about testing all kinds of forces. You get to know the force through shi li, knowing it, you get the possibility of using it.

In this kind of training, you are seeking force in the state of no force, in subtle movement you are seeking fast movement. If using typical force, mind and body get tense, body is losing agility, blood circulation is disturbed. The kind of force which we are seeking is related to

mind, spirit. When there is a form, body is broken, when there is no form, spirit is accumulated.

You should start experiencing from non-movement, then learn it through slight movement. As if you wanted to move and at the same time wanted to stop movement. As if you wanted to stop and at the same time wanted to move. In movement you cannot help stopping, in non-movement you cannot help moving. You should notice that agility is sought in clumsy, concrete is sought in abstractive.

During exercise all joints are bent (form bent, force straight), spirit relaxed, intention tense, force is felt in muscles, bones are like blades, you are alert as a leopard moving in fog, as a horse ready to gallop, like a coiling dragon, like a tornado pulling and turning a big tree, as a crouching dragon ready to fly. This force, twisting and rocking in all directions in undefeated, when something is bumping into it, there is no opening, when something is hitting there is no dispersion, calm and deep, stable as a mountain. Outside form may look clumsy and stupid, but intention and force are agile. Usual, yet unusual. You will not find the concrete, if you don't start from abstraction. When you learn the principle, everything will become clear.

„*Muscles are one*” is very important stage of training. It seems to be different kind of practice, but it is closely related to what I was talking about above. Without going through this stage, practitioner will not be able to do more demanding exercises for longer time. Although it is muscles training, there is still principle of “*form as a basis, mind for use, getting intention from the form*”. You should think about whole body, focused spirit is the main thing.

In case of this training method, when it becomes more intensive, effort decreases. When effort is lower, the exercise becomes more intensive. Training and resting are one. If it is properly adjusted, patient will gradually be able to practice for longer time, and at the same time effort of brain and heart will decrease. He will achieve the feeling of comfortable force.

A characteristic of these exercises is that all the time you are experiencing changes in your body, inside and outside. All big and small joints should be bent, creating triangle shapes, there shouldn't be even surfaces, there shouldn't be too much accenting of any part, but there should be feeling of light, swift, unified roundness. Imagine that blood is circulating in your

body, as if irrigating it, as water soaking into sand. Body is as an empty boat floating on a lake, reacting on even slight gust of wind, everything natural. Expression of this state of mind can be different, depending on practitioners character, manners, abilities, age, physical condition, time of practice and health condition. This is not something which could be expressed using a few postures.

So this kind of exercise should be experienced gradually deeper and deeper, made more intense and appropriately adjusted. It should be used in changing ways, according to situation, part should follow the whole. In most cases these exercises bring positive results. If in case of illness of some part, therapy is directed only toward that part, it not only doesn't bring positive results, but can be even harmful. If this issue is neglected, spirit and force will become insufficient.

As for adjusting, on one side it is related to form, on the other to formless. Form is postures and body (bones and muscles). And formless is unlimited – spirit, mind, imagination, force – it is impossible to express it in a few movements or positions. But positions are necessary too. But because objective situation and lack of abilities I'm not able yet to make illustrations of those exercises.

ADJUSTING METHODS

- Adjusting body: it doesn't go beyond the division of high-low, left-right, single and double. No matter if we are talking about head, hands, torso, shoulders, elbows, feet, knees or hips, the principle of differentiating between single and double, relaxed and tense, empty and full, light and heavy is used. It is used in relation to each, even smallest part of body. Bones should support body, force should be full and harmonious, muscles must be connected.
- Adjusting internal organs. It is lead by mind activity. Psychology is affecting biology, biology is affecting psychology. They are affecting each other.
- Adjusting time. It is based on practitioner's mind disposition and physical condition. There shouldn't be too much burden, as to avoid feeling of weariness and tiredness.

SONG OF HEALTH CULTIVATION STANDING POSTURES

Yangshengzhuang is extremely simple, but when you try pondering over it, thousands of thoughts are appearing. While practicing, you shouldn't be impatient. You should choose good place, with sunshine, fresh air. It is good if there are trees and water. No matter if you are practicing in walking, sitting, lying or standing, you should keep relax inside and outside. Body should be naturally erect, in relaxed and elastic way. Spine should be naturally straight. All joints should be bent. You should guard emptiness and clearness, focus mind and calm breath. Arms rounded, armpits half open. There is no place without feeling of comfort. You shouldn't ponder over anything. You shouldn't use too much effort. Exercise shouldn't create burden for your heart. Brain should rest. You may think of vast, unlimited space of universe, clearing mind from disturbing feelings and thoughts. There should appear feeling of empty, light agility, a melody which is linking everything. As if you were drunk or as if astounded or stupid. Smiling slightly as if you were playing in water, as if you were a baby again, listening to the nature. In ordinary and usual there is unusual natural pleasure. You should respect teacher's teaching, but you shouldn't follow it in mechanical, rigid way. Here is the unlimited profoundness and sweetness. Moving like fish in water. Natural comfort, natural comfort, true natural comfort. The meaning of teachings of ancient philosophers is not different.

Next let's talk about testing various kinds of force. There are different names. Some have form and some are formless, there are unified and partial, active and passive. There is accumulating, there are directions or there is no determined direction. There is use and training. Bones as blades, force of stretched tendons, sinking and raising, separating and closing, lifting and pressing down, absorbing and throwing out, tendons pulsing like springs, small hair on your body as if sharp blades. On one hand there should be soft spiral force, on the other hand there should be force able to break strong metal plates – fast, clear, rapid, as saber, as axe. In the movement on curved lines there is relax and tension. On surface there can be made distinction between full and empty. Sometimes high, sometimes low, all the time there are changes between low and high. Spirit is as if of a fierce tiger, a swift rhinoceros. Body is moving as if a heavy mountain was flying. Power is great as ocean. This science is not something strange and unusual. It is about “*seeking intention in form, seeking concrete in abstractive*”.

TYPICAL FEELINGS AND REACTIONS DURING ZHAN ZHUANG PRACTICE

Feelings and reactions during zhan zhuang practice can differ, depending on physical fitness and health condition of practitioner. Usually positive results can be noticed after some 10 days of practice. After exercise practitioner can feel lightness and is in pleasant mood. This feeling is deepening after longer period of practice. Some people after a few days of training can notice trembling of muscles, feelings of aching, numbness, swelling. In most cases it is caused by tension, blockades, disturbed circulation, exhaustion or other physiological factors. If practitioner is putting attention to getting the feeling of comfortable force, seeking relax, avoiding tension, blood is circulating freely, muscles become agile and those reactions disappear. But trembling which is not caused by tension and tiredness is usually a positive effect, related to getting rid of blockades. This is natural and you shouldn't try to control this. But you shouldn't try to induce or enhance this trembling. Sometimes there appear tears, yawning, hiccup, stomach rumbling, fear, prickling. These are normal reactions, which disappear when health improves.

THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS OF ZHAN ZHUANG

Zhan zhuang enables regulating nervous and respiration systems, improves blood circulation and metabolism. This is why this method brings good results when treating diseases of nervous, respiration, vascular and digestive systems, problems with muscles and metabolism. It works especially well when treating diseases which turned into chronic ones.

From my 50 years of practice I know that effects are varying, different with different people and diseases, sometimes bigger, sometimes smaller, sometimes slower, sometimes faster. But apart from situations when someone was sometimes practicing, sometimes stopping, there were almost no cases where there were not good results. Many people after getting rid of the problem continued practice, strengthening body and staying healthy until old age.

Here I will talk about my experiences of last two years, when I was engaged in studies of zhan zhuang therapy.

- Hypertension. In cases of hypertension related to the state of nervous system effects come very fast. But in case of functional changes, as hardening of vessels, results are slow.

- Depression, mental weakness. Typical headaches, feeling of head swelling, dizziness etc. can be healed easily. How fast the results come depends mainly on whether practitioner is able to stabilize his/her mind. When digestion problems or constipation was caused already, results of therapy are slower.
- Arthroplogosis. Normally rheumatic problems and problems which appear in many joints simultaneously are easy to heal. But those being results of other diseases or inherited are difficult to heal.
- Trachitis. There are many types. At early stage effects are fast. Inherited problems are difficult to heal. But it is related to age, physical condition, general health condition, mental condition, living conditions etc. When someone is practicing diligently, taking care of proper nourishing and healthy life style, healing or diminishing symptoms is possible.
- Liver diseases. Swelling and hardening of liver. If practicing patiently and in proper way, putting attention to proper diet and healthy environment, symptoms can diminish gradually, even to complete healing.
- Cholecystitis. Most patients had undergone surgery. Many of them suffer liver and spleen diseases. Basing on my experience with several patients I can say, that during zhan zhuang therapy their health situation improves. More observation is needed though..
- Lungs diseases. If patient practices patiently, in proper way, with proper stages, putting attention to proper nourishing, healing is usually possible.
- Hemiplegia. Diligent practice is necessary. Usually healing or improvement is possible. But recurrence is possible. Patient should practice, avoiding cold, exhaustion, irritation. Life style must be regulated. If tip of tongue, palms and feet are not reacting, healing is not possible.
- Stomach and intestines diseases.. Effects of healing are very good, but are coming slowly. In some cases 3-4 months are enough, in some more difficult cases it needs 8-9 months, sometimes even 3-5 yeas.
- Schizophrenia, loosing body awareness. Healing is relatively easy.
- Heart diseases. In most cases results of treatment are good. A lot depends on mental condition and living conditions. If mental condition and living conditions are bad, healing is difficult.



ZHAN ZHUANG EXERCISES

Zhan zhuang is a kind of ancient Chinese art of cultivating health. Already over 2000 years ago in “Yellow Emperor Internal Classic” it was said: “*In ancient times great masters stood on earth, supporting heaven, controlling yin and yang, breathing with essence of qi, standing alone, guarding spirit, with body being a one. This way they achieved longevity*”. But through ages this method was used only as a basic training in martial art. Basing on the principles of using soft and hard, empty and full, movement and non-movement, relax and tension together, employing the mutual changes between yin and yang, mutual complementing of fire and water, summarizing experience of several dozens years, I created a method which is combining movement and non-movement, cultivating external and internal, protecting against illnesses and curing them, improving health and prolonging life – zhan zhuang exercises. From many years practice, including working in Beijing Medical Academy, Beijing Railway Hospital and hospital of Hebei province Traditional Chinese Medicine Research Institute I can confirm that this method can be used as a therapy in cases of stomach and intestines diseases, arthroplogosis, liver, hearth, lungs, nervous system diseases, ophthalmologic and gynecological problems and other. Zhan zhuang is a suitable method of therapy because it cultivates spirit and exercises body, increasing force of mind and body. From point of view of modern science, this kind of exercise can improve circulation, metabolism, strengthen internal organs and improve functioning of all cells of body. Muscles of whole body are exercised, cerebral cortex is positively stimulated. Even before tranquilizing mind there appears feeling of relax and comfort, which is a positive stimulus. And after tranquilizing mind, effect of inhibitive protection is created. From point of view of traditional Chinese medicine this kind of exercise enables smooth circulation of blood and qi, balancing of yin and yang, complementing of fire and water, they strengthen spirit, exercise body, increase force. Zhan zhuang is different from typical forms of exercises. Main points of characteristic are:

- Mouth is slightly open, breath is natural. Practitioner doesn't focus on specific xuewei points, there is no talk of heavenly orbits. Thanks to this there are no side effects.
- Practice proves that if patients are practicing diligently, even if they are not able to tranquilize mind, they still can achieve quite good therapeutic results.

- There are no strict demands for time, place and conditions of exercises. It can be practiced anywhere and anytime, walking, standing, sitting, lying on bed. So it is easy to include these exercises in everyday schedule. They can be accepted and learned by many people.
- Postures and mind activity can be adjusted according to physical fitness, health condition, age, character, abilities, habits. This dialectic method of therapy, based on adapting to patient and illness, enables faster and better effects.
- As it is a kind of unified movement in which form, intention, energy, force are closely related and affect each other and the yin and yang balance is regulated, in result it is a method of exercise in which movement and non-movement are combined, in which internal and external are cultivated. Spirit is cultivated and body is trained (especially in case of standing postures). So these exercises are not only used as a therapy. Even more important is regular practice. Those who are weak, can gradually become strong. Those strong and healthy can still improve their condition. These exercise prevent premature senility, help to get rid of illnesses and prolong life, so people can undertake great and complex tasks in the building of socialism with light heart and joy.

EXERCISE METHODS

Zhan zhuang is a kind of unified movement in which form, intention, energy, force are closely related and affecting each other, and the yin and yang balance is regulated. Form (posture) and intention (mind activity) are basis of this kind of exercises. Both elements are affecting each other. You mustn't concentrate on one, rejecting the other. *"Intention is taken from form, it is also expressed in form; intention is born from form, form is following intention"*. If during the exercise form and intention are appropriately and flexibly co-operating, without training force - force is naturally born, energy is flowing without trying to move it. We can see that the therapeutic effects of zhan zhuang don't depend on simplicity or complexity of postures or order of movements. They don't depend on whether the posture is beautiful or not. It is not that effect of curing some disease will be achieved by mechanically using some determined posture and mind activity. Person which is leading therapy must understand patient's situation, and accordingly adjust the aspects of movement and non-movement, empty and full, relax and tension and the mind activity, so patient can very soon get the feeling of comfortable force in whole body, lightness, relax, pleasant mood, and this way will

achieve result of curing disease and improving health. So the person leading therapy must also practice these exercises, having deep experience and being proficient at adapting the exercises according to needs. If this principle is not considered deeply and instead you think about “what are therapeutically effects of certain posture”, you can easily fall in the trap of rigid pattern. And if you put attention only to mind activity, neglecting adjusting posture, force and energy will be insufficient, effects will not be big.

POSTURES

Zhan zhuang exercises are complex and simple. Complex, because there are many kinds of postures. They should be used flexibly, according to illness, according to person. Simple, because although there are many postures, they are based on common principles. When starting exercise, posture should be assumed first. Body should keep symmetry and balance. Chest should be comfortable open, muscles and tendons comfortably stretched, whole body relaxed (“relaxed but not slack”). Although the adapting is flexible, it is based on principles; strong and weak, movement and non-movement, empty and full, relaxed and tense. It should be adjusted in such a way that patient can feel comfortable force, it shouldn't be too much burden for him.

Postures of zhan zhuang gong can be divided into; standing, sitting, lying, walking and half supported. In each category there may be several to several dozens of postures. I will introduce them below.

1. Standing postures.

There are many methods of standing exercises. They are often used in therapy. Beginners, excluding some extremely serious problems or non-typical situations (as patients without limbs), can use standing postures.

- Tibao shi. Feet are shoulder width apart, making shape of 八 (Chinese character for 8). Weight evenly distributed on both feet. Main point of supporting weight is just behind ball of foot (*from translator: can be also interpreted as back part of foot – both variants are used in yiquan*). Knees slightly bent. They should not overreach toes (depending on situation of a specific person, they can be bent less, or not bent). Body

straight, arms curved, armpits half open. Shoulders very slightly moved back, so chest can be open – it is position of light, agile erection. Fingers of both palms are pointing toward each other. Distance between them is about 3 fists. Palms are at level slightly below navel. Insides of palms directed upward. Arms as if embracing a big balloon. Head straight or slightly leaning back. Eyes closed or naturally open (especially at first stage of practice), mouth slightly open. Whole body is relaxed (“relaxed but not slack”). On face there is “as smile not smile”. There is feeling like “urinating but not urinating”.

- Fu’an shi. Slightly raise arms. Fingers slightly separated, slightly bent, pointing obliquely forward. Palms are at navel level. Insides of palms directed downward, as if resting on a big balloon floating on surface of water. Other demands are the same as when practicing tibao shi.
- Chengbao shi. Place your arms in front of chest. Shoulders should be relaxed, elbows slightly lowered. Distance between palms and chest – about 1 foot. Fingers separated. Insides of palms directed toward body, as if embracing something. Or directed outward, as if pushing something. Other demands are the same as when practicing tibao shi.
- Fenshui shi. Both arms slightly bent and placed on both sides of body. Palms are below navel. Fingers separated. Insides of palms directed downward, as if separating water. Other demands are the same as when practicing tibao shi.
- Xiuxi shi – resting postures.

First posture. Backs of palms are resting on both sides, at waist or hips area. Or put palms into pockets, only thumbs outside. Other demands are the same as when practicing tibao shi.

Second posture. Both arms are resting on a balustrade on level of chest, elbows bent. One foot is more to the front than the other. Whole front foot is on the ground. Toes of back foot are on the ground and heel lifted. Positions of both feet can be interchanged sometimes.

Third posture.. Buttocks are resting on edge of a table. You can assume first resting posture or tibao shi posture. Feet can be put together, heels lifted. Palms can be put into pockets, only thumbs outside..

Fourth posture. Left palms is resting on a table or on back of a chair. Back of right palm is resting on your side, in the waist area. Left foot in front, whole sole on the

ground. Left leg straight or slightly bent. Right foot in back, right leg naturally slightly bent. Right heel raised above ground. The intention is as if this leg was starting step, but haven't started yet. Or you can turn slightly and slowly to the right and to the left, toes being axis of this movement. Head can be inclined to the left (not more than one fist), weight on left side. This way, right side can receive relax and comfort. Sides can be changed.

2. Sitting postures

Usually when illness is severe, but patient has some ability of taking effort (eg. in cases of serious arthroplogosis, when using standing postures is not possible temporarily) or in case of patients without limbs. They can also be used as supplement by patients who are mainly using standing postures.

- First posture. Sit on edge of a chair, with body straight, eyes closed, mouth slightly open. Feet parallel or making shape of / \. Distance between feet – about 4 fists. Whole feet are resting on the ground. Knees bent at about 90 degrees angle. Palms are resting on thighs, fingers pointing obliquely forward, arms curved, armpits half open, whole body relaxed.
- Second posture. Pull your both feet back. Heels lifted, feet making shape of / \. Knees bent at about 40-50 degrees angle. Palms are resting on thighs or are placed in front of chest, at distance of about 1 foot. Fingers separated, pointing obliquely forward. Insides of palms directed toward body, as if embracing something or directed outward, as if pushing something. Other demands are the same as when practicing first posture.
- Third posture. Straighten your legs. Knees are only slightly bent. Toes pointing upward. Heels are resting on the ground or are slightly raised above ground. Palms are resting on thighs or placed in front of chest, at distance about 1 foot from it, as if embracing something. Other demands are the same as when practicing first posture.

3. Lying on bed postures

They are usually used in case of very serious illnesses or those who are not able to leave bed. Can also be used as a supplement to standing and sitting postures.

- First posture. Lie down on your back. Eyes slightly closed, mouth slightly open, legs naturally straightened and separated (not more than shoulder-width). Or you can bend knees slightly. Heels on the bed. Palms resting on underbelly, elbows on the bed. Armpits half open. Whole body relaxed.
- Second posture. Put your arms on both sides of body. Insides of palms directed downward or upward. Elbows on the bed. Armpits half open. Other demands are the same as when practicing first posture.
- Third posture. Arms are as if embracing something in front of your chest. Elbows resting on the bed. Knees slightly bent. Other demands are the same as when practicing first posture.
- Fourth posture. Arms resting on both sides of body, or raised as if embracing something in front of chest. Legs straight, slightly separated, toes directed forward (as if you were pressing something with soles of feet). Or knees slightly bent, and toes pointing upward. Other demands are the same as when practicing first posture.

4. Walking postures.

In case of most patients they are used as supplemental practice. But in case of liver problems, in first stage of therapy as much attention is put to them as to standing postures.

- First posture. Put your palms into pockets, only thumbs outside. Legs slightly bent, shoulders comfortably stretched, armpits half open. Body as if leisurely leaning against something behind. Eyes closed, spirit focused. When whole body achieves feeling of relax and comfort, one foot starts lazy movement forward (about one fist distance), as if tried to make movement and at the same time as if wanted to stop. When left foot is moving, head is naturally leaning rightward, so there appears feeling of comfortable oblique stretching. Do it alternatively with left and right foot, as if wading through mud.
- Second posture. Backs of palms are resting on both sides in the waist area. Or place both palms naturally stretched to the sides. Other demands are the same as above.

5. Half supported postures.

They usually bring good results in cases of digestive problems. In such cases they can be used as main or supplementary exercises.

- First posture. Palms are resting on back of a chair or elbows are resting on surface of a table. Eyes closed. Left leg is in front and slightly bent. Right leg in back and naturally straight. Buttocks as if resting on something behind you. Abdominal area relaxed. Head can be twisted alternatively leftward and rightward. Position of legs can be interchanged too.
- Second posture. Feet separated, knees slightly bent or straight. Other demands are the same as when practicing first posture.
- Third posture. Put a quilt folded several times on edge of a bed. Feet separated, on one line, or one foot can be in front, close to the bed. Arms curved, resting on the quilt. Palms making shape of half open fists. Chin resting on fists. Other demands are the same as when practicing first posture.

MIND ACTIVITY

The main goal of mind activity is focusing spirit, stabilizing an tranquilizing mind. So mind activity is a process of curbing disturbing thoughts, “*uncountable thoughts are returning to one*”, it is entering the state of tranquility. The principle of mind activity is that the imagined objects and situations induce feeling of lightness, relax, comfort, bringing pleasant, happy mood, so you are avoiding tension and worry. Usually below listed forms of mind activity are used.

- Relaxation. One method is based on unified, complete experiencing the feeling of relax, by using method of “*as smile, but not smile, as if urinating but not urinating*”. In another method you are experiencing the feeling of relax beginning from head, gradually downward, through neck, shoulders, arms, wrists, palms, chest, waist, abdomen, hips, legs, feet, to the toes. This process of relaxation can be repeated many times. But for a beginner it can be difficult. So a beginner should start from the method of gradual relaxation, and after achieving some ability of relaxing, start practicing the complete relaxation as described above.
Method of gradual relaxation: first back, then front. Start from top of head, through neck, shoulders and arms (if it is difficult to relax left and right arm at the same time,

you can start from relaxing first one side, then the other, later you can do relaxing both sides at the same time), spine, waist, buttocks, hips, back side of legs, heels, soles of feet, to toes, repeating it 3-5 times. Then start again from top of head, through eye-lids, face, mouth, throat, shoulders, front side of arms, wrists, palms, chest, abdomen, front side of legs, feet, to toes, repeating it 3-5 times. After getting some ability of relaxing this way, you should do simultaneous relaxing of all sides.

This kind of relaxation can be used as basic form of mind activity in zhan zhuang exercises. Beginners, no matter which posture they practice, should start from relaxation and only later use other kinds of mind activity.

- Listening to a distant sound. Usually you start from listening to a close sound, gradually more and more distant, a very slight sound from very distant source. You shouldn't be impatient. You shouldn't listen firmly to some sound, but rather to slight sounds from various distances in unlimited space.
- Bath in a stream. Imagine that you are lying in water, temperature of which makes you feel comfortable. Whole body is surrounded by water. Water is flowing in direction from head toward feet.
- Shower. Imagine that you are taking shower. Temperature of water gives you comfortable feeling. Water is flowing on surface of your body, from head to feet. Listen to the sound of water flowing and water drops falling on the floor.
- Half of body in water. Imagine that lower part of body is in water. Its temperature gives you comfort. Experience this feeling.
- Standing in water. Imagine that you are standing in water. Its temperature gives you comfortable feeling. Water is lightly hitting your body from different sides and your body is naturally following the movement of water.
- Rooting. Imagine that you are as if a thousand years old tree, standing stable, as if roots of the tree were reaching deep under ground. Hurricane will not move you.
- Wading in mud. Imagine that you are walking, your feet moving through mud. Its temperature gives you comfortable feeling. Mud is giving resistance to your movement and you are walking very slowly.
- Stepping on cotton. Imagine that your feet are resting on a soft layer of cotton- wool. Once and again slightly shift weight to the left and to the right.

- Leaning against something. Imagine that you are resting, when your back, buttocks, legs are leaning against something soft and comfortable. Body is light and relaxed, without any effort.
- Suspension. Imagine that some of your hair is tied to a tree branch. Keep the hair slightly stretched but don't let it break. Whole spirit is focused on top of your head.
- Propping. Imagine that your both arms are resting on a balustrade or on balloons filled with air and floating on surface of water.
- Returning sight and watching inside. You can use this method when it is difficult to get rid of disturbing thoughts. Observe your whole body, checking if you are keeping the feeling of lightness, relax and comfort everywhere. If you notice that some part of body is not relaxed, without feeling of comfort, consciously relax it. This way your spirit, mind are directed toward inside of body. When you repeat continuously this experiencing of relax and comfort in whole body, there is no need to fight with disturbing thoughts, and they disappear naturally.
- Following what is happening. When there appear many disturbing thoughts and it is difficult to get rid of them, just follow it naturally. Don't fight with the thoughts which are coming, don't stop those which are leaving. Think of yourself as a vast sea, and of thoughts as of waves. Although wind creates waves, it doesn't disturb the sea. When wind is ceasing, waves disappear. This way, without trying to control thoughts you are controlling them.
- Attracting. If it is difficult to control thoughts, you can use method of attracting. Imagine that you are a furnace and thoughts are dry leaves. Strong thoughts are leaves which are falling into furnace and are burning. This way mind becomes open, strong, bad thoughts disappear naturally.
- Concentrating and dispersing. When practitioner achieves some basics and is able to experience comfortable feeling of relax during exercise, he can sometimes concentrate this feeling in some part of body and then again expand it to whole body. This concentrating and expanding can be repeated many times. This way not only the whole is trained, but it has positive effects to the part which needs healing.
- Calm watching. Imagine that you are standing, sitting or lying in a beautiful place and you are feeling comfortably. You are calmly watching blue sea, bright moon or other beautiful view. You are achieving pleasant mood and gradually entering the state of forgetting yourself.

- Unity of man and nature. Imagine that you are standing, sitting or lying in a beautiful place, feeling comfortably. You can feel that the air is embracing your body. Gradually you can feel that body and air are one. You feel extremely comfortably, as if floating in the air, entering the state of forgetting yourself.

EXAMPLES

In order to explain adjusting posture and mind activity I will give some examples. In case of patients with hypertension, mental weakness, arthroplogosis, if patient is able to take weight of his body, and there are no special factors, the standing postures are appropriate from the very beginning. For example patient with hypertension can use the fourth of resting standing postures, imagining taking shower. Those suffering mental weakness can use first of resting standing postures, or tibao shi and use imagination of stepping on cotton. Those with arthroplogosis can do tibao or fenshui postures, with imagination of being suspended or similar. I must stress once again that the person leading therapy must carefully observe the patient, should master the principles of adjusting posture and mind activity, using dialectical method in healing. Each patient's situation is different. You mustn't stick to a fixed method.

POINTS FOR ATTENTION

Patient should deject before practice. Collar and belt should be loosened. When starting exercise patient can lean head slightly backward, raise arms. Body can slightly twist and sway to both sides, heels raising and moving down. There should be feeling as if stretching lazily. Then he/she should stand in static posture again and start the main exercise. After finishing it, he can put palms on knees and do several movements of rotating knees and then do some loose swinging arms forward and backward. Patient can also be taught some kind of self massage.

It is not advised to practice shorter than one hour before or after practice.

Practice should be gradual. There shouldn't be haste, and there shouldn't be hesitating.

Time of practice should be adjusted according to patient's situation. Usually people in relatively good condition can start from 10 minutes. If condition is worse, patient can start

from 5 minutes. Then time of practice should be prolonged. It can be prolonged gradually (eg. from 5 to 6-7 minutes), or by longer steps (eg. from 10 to 20 minutes). Patient can practice 2-3 times every day, not more than 5 times. Time of single exercise and frequency of practice should be decided by checking if the feeling of comfortable force and interest don't disappear. Practice shouldn't cause too much burden. The principle is no tiredness. Only this way feeling of comfort in whole body, free blood circulation, cultivating spirit and strengthening body can be achieved.

During exercise there can appear feeling of pain, numbness, increased secretion of saliva, yawning, hiccup, fear, pricking or itching, prickling, feeling of warmth, increased sweating and other feelings and reactions. Sometimes feeling of aching, pricking or itching appears in area of old injuries. These are normal reactions. After some time they disappear. Finally state of great relax and comfort is achieved, as if not having body, but yet having clear consciousness of body. It is followed by improving health and curing illnesses.

Those patients, who practiced methods including control of breath and focusing on dantian, should reject those methods when starting zhan zhuang practice. Because there are contradictions between these methods, it is not advisable to use them simultaneously. Otherwise, not only it will be difficult to achieve good effects, but there can also appear difficult breathing, dizziness and other side effects.

Patient should have trust in the method, practicing diligently, developing belief in possibility of acting, the spirit of revolutionary optimism. At the same time he should obey doctor's instruction, not stopping practice, not giving up. This way he will be able to achieve positive results.



DEMANDS OF ZHAN ZHUANG EXERCISES

This text is co-autored by Wang Xiangzhai's daughter Wang Yufang

Practicing zhan zhuang you don't need to concentrate on deep breathing, focus on dantian. There is no talk of big and small heavenly orbit, yin and yang or eight trigrams. Through natural breathing, relax of whole body, focusing spirit and stabilizing mind, adjusting posture, movement and non-movement, empty and full, relax and tension, through using appropriate mind activity, gradually breathing becomes slow, long, even, subtle, mind is tranquilized, body achieves state of comfortable agility. Everything inside body is mutually connected. During exercise you are not pondering over anything. You can practice while standing, walking, sitting or lying on bed. This is a method which is simple and easy to use.

No matter which posture you practice, whole body must be relaxed. After assuming posture, you shouldn't change it. All joints should be slightly bent. You should put your attention to relax of body, but it means the state of *"relaxed but not slack, tense, but not stiff"*. Which means that basis for relax is keeping harmony and unity of whole body. In martial art it is called 'three internal harmonies' and 'three external harmonies'. 3 internal harmonies are: harmony of heart and intention, intention and energy, energy and force. External 3 harmonies are: harmony of palms and feet, elbows and knees, shoulders and hips. Inside body empty agility, outside balance and roundness. Intention for use, body as basis, non-movement for harmony, unity of form and intention. Getting intention from form, intention is born from form, form is following intention. External and internal are one. Only by practicing long time you can master the spirit of these principles.

As for adjusting posture, it depends on situation. Some weaker persons can concentrate on lying or sitting postures, with standing postures as a supplement. Those in better physical condition can concentrate on standing postures, with half supported and other postures as a supplement.

Practice for people of average physical condition in cases of not very severe diseases.

At beginning patient should concentrate on preparation posture and futuo posture, appropriately supplementing it with other postural exercises. Relax is very important. Mind activity which helps in achieving relax (*“relaxed but not slack, tense but not stiff”*) should be used to experience the feeling caused by imagination of taking a bath. Patient can practice some 30 minutes, avoiding tiredness and weariness. At this stage feeling of pain in limbs can appear. Reaction in place of old injuries can appear too. In such case patient should not loose trust in effects of exercises, resolutely continuing practice. There appears also feeling of comfort, pleasant mood, content, increased appetite, increased force, first symptoms of improving health. Usually this stage lasts 3 months.

At second stage the feelings of pain and non-comfort basically disappear. If there are some reactions, they are usually not related to pain. There is feeling of comfort and power. Using appropriate mind activity practitioner can get rid of disturbing thoughts, experiencing subtle internal movement, health improves visibly, trust in the method grows. There is visible change in spirit and external expression. At this stage tuituo and fenshui postures can be used. Patient should learn 2-3 standing exercises and 2-3 supplemental exercises. Practice can become more intensive. This stage usually last over half year.

Third stage is about making training more intensive. It will not be described here.

Examples of adapting postures to specific diseases.

- Depression, mental weakness: chengtuo posture and lying on bed postures can be appropriate.
- Hypertension: chengtuo posture and postures half supported with use of a tree or a chair can be appropriate.
- Heart diseases: posture half supported with use of a tree, futuo posture are appropriate.
- Liver diseases: massaging lower abdomen posture, upper hunyuan posture can be appropriate..

- Lungs diseases: Futuo and jushou postures can be appropriate.
- Kidney diseases: massaging lower abdomen posture, huantuo posture, fenshui posture can be appropriate.
- Stomach and intestines diseases: half supported posture with use of chair, massaging lower abdomen posture can be appropriate.
- Hemiplegia: half supported posture with use of a chair, futuo, chengtuo postures can be appropriate.
- Arthroplogosis: futuo posture, fen shui posture (deepened) can be appropriate.

It is related to typical situations. No matter what disease, beginners should mainly use futuo posture. Then, depending on disease, physical condition and other specific conditions it can be supplemented by other exercises. No posture can be forced – it is not possible to say in advance which posture should be used.

Mind activity and tranquilizing mind.

„*Focusing spirit, stabilizing mind*” is main principle of exercise. Thanks to it appropriate regulation of nervous system and physiological functions is possible. As at beginning it is difficult to achieve tranquility, some forms of mind activity are used. Mind activity is also known as ‘watching at imagined’. It means that practitioner imagines being in beautiful, quiet place, getting pleasant feeling. All thoughts are returning to one, mood is pleasant, there is feeling of being carelessly content. This way practitioner can avoid disturbances caused by seven feeling (over joy, anger, worry, melancholy, sadness, fear, panic). Below listed are usually used kinds of mind activity:

- Relaxation: checking if body is relaxed, starting from top, gradually moving attention lower. (1) On face there should be very slight smile – „as smile, not smile”, (2) There should be slight opening between upper and lower teeth. (3) Shoulders and elbows should be relaxed, (4) Then gradually check if chest, back, waist, abdomen, hips, legs and feet are relaxed.
- Bath: imagine that you are in a pool filled with warm spring water, feeling comfortable, body floating in water, listen to the quiet sound of small stream, which is flowing into the pool.

- Propping: imagine that your hands are resting on balloons filled with air and floating on surface of water, which makes you feel lightness and comfort.
- Imagining beautiful surroundings: imagine that you are standing on a big field, enjoying the view of rich harvest in people's commune, or that you are standing close to a stream with clear water in mountain forest, or a lake.

Above I only gave a few examples. Mind activity must be used according to posture and stage of practice. Mind activity has two more functions. One of them is initiating and enhancing effects of internal feeling of lightness and agility, floating, internal movement. Another is inducing relax of body by relaxing mind.



THE GAIN FROM PRACTICING MARTIAL ART

There is a saying: *"You need good health to make great deeds"*. In other words, if you are healthy, you can live long and engage in all great matters. Health is extremely important. And health is depending on constant cultivation and appropriate exercises. To know if some exercises are good for health, some research and practical tests are necessary. How can you test their value? Before someone will start practice, some scientific methods should be used - state of his heart should be checked, blood pressure, pulse, breathing, number of white and red blood corpuscles. After some time of practice, the testes should be conducted again. This will enable deciding if some exercise method is proper. Proper method is the one which conforms with the natural principles of functioning of human body. Only such method can be favorable for people's health.

Appropriate exercises can positively affect metabolism of all cells of human body and all organs, can improve functioning of breathing system, and vascular system, improve body metabolism. In other word, we say: can activate whole human organism. So appropriate exercises can activate cells. When we talk about growing youths, it will help their development, strengthen their body and organs. When we talk about mature people it will help them to keep fit and healthy. If the exercises are not intensive enough, you will not achieve results. But if they are too intensive, they will harm body and be cause of illness. In typical forms of exercises, before body is tired, there are already problems with breathing and heart is overburdened. So the exercise must be stopped in order to let heart rest, to get breath and regain normal state.

Chinese combat science uses opposite method. This is exercise of muscles and vascular system. You can say that it is exercise of all cells of body. The principle is: stimulating all kinds of cells and organs at the same time. Even if during exercise muscles become tired, the pulse is in normal range, breath is natural. And after the exercise you feel that breath is more "free", more "comfortable" than before exercise. This is constant and gradual development, without overburdening your heart. The result is keeping health and strengthening body. There is no age or sex limit.. And because there are no complex sets of movements, nervous system is not attacked by too strong impulses, you get rid of internal tension, achieving mental rest.

This is one of the elements which make combat science different from typical forms of exercises.

Although in zhan zhuang you keep some position, actually all muscle tissues and cells start working. This kind of work is very appropriate from point of view of cells development and the work of vascular system. All body and organs are activated. All organs are evenly stimulated, without danger of overburdening heart. This is not about external movement. You should know that in combat science *"big movement is not as good as small movement, small movement is not as good as non-movement, movement in non-movement is the being constantly born and never ceasing movement"*.

We can say that it is very specific, chinese branch of science, not known elsewhere. But so far not much attention was directed towards those exercises. And it is not something that most people could understand relating it to their former experience. If they think, that simple exercises in static position cannot help developing strength and fitness, they just lack a minimum of knowledge. Actually those exercises not only enable strengthening body in very short time, but can also help to heal many chronic diseases, which it was difficult to heal with medical therapies. They are very valuable in therapy and prophylactic. This is a method conforming with demands of physiology.

If we are talking about typical forms of exercises, some of them are too intensive, harming health, other are too one-sided. So when people with some health problems don't do exercise, they often improve health, and when they start exercises, it not only doesn't help them, but even harms them, making their problems worse. There is lack of scientific research on the subject of sports yet. This is reason of such situations. In the past there were really many martial arts masters who lost their health, because of using bad training methods. It's because those methods were not conforming with demands of physiology. You should know, that science is not about sticking to old methods, and for sure it is not about defending deficiencies in old methods. But science is about development based on experience. The methods should be constantly developed, testing value of the principles in practice. We should take it very seriously. We should think. This is the kind of relation as between reading a book and actual acting. So the exercises shouldn't be too intensive. Continuing, we can say, that most forms of exercises popular nowadays, were created for young people only. The needs of people in middle age and older are neglected. Whereas it is people over 40 years old, who are ready to accomplish big tasks in the state and society, because they have deep knowledge and rich experience. Neglecting their need for exercises means neglecting their health. This is big loss for country! When we talk about principles of exercises, we should stress: calm, respect,

realism. Rich spirit should be developed. It is easy to understand for people with rich experience and life knowledge, that they should avoid disturbing breath, making pulse too fast, tensing diaphragm. If we are talking about people over 60 years old, this is not age at which people could start seeking big success in martial art, but seeking improvement of health is not so difficult.

There are three main aims of exercises:

1. Cultivating health,
2. Self-defense,
3. Pleasure of study, of learning the principles of nature.

Cultivating health is easiest. It's enough to relax, feel comfortable, naturally, light, not using too much force, as if you start falling asleep, floating in water or in air - these are most of the important demands. If you try anything more, it only disturbs your mind and it's losing time. And if you want to do something very intensive, it only harms your health.

When body is healthy, we can start talking about self-defense. The so called self defense means, that when attacked "you put in use your fist and half of foot" to solve the problem. The highest level of skill it is difficult to describe with words. But self-defense is closely related to health. First you need health, then agility, strength and skill. But if you want to develop strength, you shouldn't use force. If you use force, you lose chance of developing strength. To make body and arms agile, and movements swift, the best method is non-movement. You find it boring or irritating? You can try small movement. But you should know that in this movement *"you move as if you want to stop, you stop as if you want to move"*. In other words *"there should be cause of movement, but there should be no result"*.

The meaning is that it should be strong in your mind, but it shouldn't be exhibited too much externally, you shouldn't "make" movement. If you "make" movement, it can be said: *"when there is form, strength is dispersed, when there is no form, strength is accumulating"*. When body is "broken", the strength is dispersing. So the slower the movement, the better. This way you can gradually be better and better aware of how your body works, including its various parts and cells. You shouldn't do it superficially, slipping over anything. These are the basic conditions for learning movement. If you only seek external beauty of fast movements, you will not only not achieve much, but actually there will be no hope of real progress.

If we are talking about methods and techniques of defeating opponent, you shouldn't have techniques. If you have artificially created techniques, you lose the natural ability of unlimited changes.

This kind of exercises is very easy. You see it, and you know it. The effects come very fast too. But you shouldn't strain too much mentally and to "force" physical force. This way you will develop good habit, useful in normal life, enabling acting efficiently. This is good for body and mind. If you want to demonstrate flowery movements and force, you will not achieve real results.

Although those exercises are so simple, but many intelligent people, the more they practice, the more they find it difficult. They practice diligently, but they are not able to distinguish between black and white. You should know that in the nature, the normal is unusual. If you seek unusual, you will go astray.

If we are talking about pleasure of study, learning the principles on which the exercises are based, it is something about which we could talk without end, and. I don't really know where to start. I will point only to some principles.. I invite all people interested to study them. For example: movement and non-movement, empty and solid; fast and slow, relax and tension; advancing and retreating, turning and siding; vertical (forward) and horizontal (to the side), high and low; opposing and absorbing, forcing and letting; pulsing and swaying, opening and closing; stretching and shrinking, leaning forward and backward; lifting and stamping, taking in and sending out; yin and yang, askew and proper; long and short, big and small; soft and hard and many other. It is all mutually related. When you come to the beginning of beginning, you should start your study from beginning again. This is all one, not to be divided. If you divide it, you will never understand it.

Relax is tension, tension is relax, there must be harmony between relax and tension. Solid is empty, empty is solid, there must be balance between them. Vertical and horizontal, expanding and embracing are supporting each other. Attack and defense, drilling and dodging, must be used together.

What was said above, is for those starting the study of seeking strength. If they neglect these advices, they can practice whole life and they will not be able to learn it. If they take those advices seriously, they will not be able to get all of this during their life. If we are talking about testing strength, using strength, issuing strength, accumulating strength and other kinds of strengths with form or without form, it seems too complicated, so I will not talk about it here. It is impossible to achieve it without studying it gradually, step by step. But when you start doing this, you will find that there is nothing unusual here, that it's very easy. Those

exercises are simple and accessible for everybody. You don't learn techniques. You react to the changes with open mind, without hesitation. When you understand this, you can understand other related subjects.

Martial art is not some determined punches or kicks. This is not "hitting three times and being hit two times". And in any case it is not set of forms. Martial art is acting according to situation.

In martial art health is stressed. Then there is self-defense. The exercises can help many people with chronic illnesses, who couldn't achieve improvement using normal medicine, to regain health. Thanks to exercise someone can be able to work till old age. If someone lost the ability of working, it can help to regain it. This is the value of martial art. This kind of exercise can be described as *"resting while training, training while resting"*.

Self-defense is a science about "changes" in fighting. It is not "this hand makes such movement, and that such", as most people imagine. This is not so complicated. On the other hand it is not so simple either. Self-improvement is most important, then there is testing strength and issuing strength and then you can gradually start studying the subject of fighting. Otherwise you will not achieve anything. If we are talking about self-improvement, you should start from principles of character, four external attributes and eight demands. The principles of character are: respect for elder, protecting younger, confidence and justice, humanity and love, being wise and brave, profoundness, being consequent and persevering. Four external attributes are: straight head, straight sight, posture of dignity, calm voice. Eight demands are: calmness, esteem, modesty, realism, respect, carefulness, awareness, gentleness. Having those attributes we can start talking about serious training of mind and body. This training is concentrating on zhan zhuang. You should study the question of control over joints and muscles, and use of single and double weight. Single and double weight is not only about distribution of weight on your feet. Head, hands, torso, feet, shoulders, elbows, knees, hips and all other bigger and smaller parts of body can be divided as double and single, tense and relaxed, solid and empty. If talking about principles of *"three parts of expanding and seven parts of embracing"* or *"four in the front and six in the back"* it is difficult to describe with words. Generally you should seek from abstract to real. I'm only pointing to some issues without explaining them.

Shi li (testing strength): there are many names of strength. It is difficult to describe all of them. You will know the strength thanks to "shi li" practice. When you know it, you can start using it. No matter what kind of force you practice, *"form shouldn't break body"*, *"intention shouldn't be visible"*, *"strength shouldn't go over tip"*. If force has one direction, it *"goes over*

tip", and it is limited, partial, and movements are mechanical, the use of force is not effective. Force is "broken" and "dispersed". The fight looks then as bulls struggling, it is stiff and "dead". In shi li you must use imagination. Imagination is formless, is unbroken. There is no direction where it doesn't reach. You learn it in the "void". When there is form, force is dispersed, if there is no form, spirit is accumulated. Spirit and mind should be "full". It is not about mimicking form.

Fa li (issuing force): to achieve effects of issuing force, you need good basis. When you master basis of various forces, you should have feeling of harmony with *"force of surrounding air"*. When you have this feeling of resonance, you can use relax and tension moving through your body like a wave. You should know that in practicing fa li it is not important if you throw off or not, if you hit or not. You should check if there is balance, harmony in all directions. Whether you can do it lightly, freely, if the change from slow to fast is natural, as by itself. After achieving such condition there is a hope of learning martial art. But if you will be able to learn it is still another question.

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