

QI GONG

Qi Gong originated in Chinese Medicine. It is a slow motion combination of movement, breath and meditation that enhances the flow of energy ("chi" or "qi") in the body to improve circulation, enhance immunity and quiet the mind.

Measured Breath

Take a slow walk, measuring the breath with footsteps. Notice how many steps it takes to inhale, how many to exhale. Try to make the number of steps for the inhale the same as the count for the exhale. You will likely start with 3 or 4 steps for each. Repeat for a few breaths, then see if you can make the inhale and exhale deeper, increasing the count by 2 for the inhale and the exhale (e.g. 5 or 6 steps each) without changing the pace of your walk. Repeat a few times, then see if you can increase the count by one or two again. Stop this exercise after about 20 total breaths, or when your body says to stop. Breathe normally for a few minutes before repeating.

Calming Breath

Begin in a closed stance, feet together, then step the left foot out, a little wider than hip-width apart, knees soft. As you exhale, push the hands down toward the knees, letting the knees bend and your body sink a little. As you inhale, bring the arms up the front to shoulder level, then exhale, lifting hands overhead, palms facing the sky. As you inhale, lower the arms straight out to the side, level with shoulders, then exhale drawing the hands together in front at shoulder height. Inhale, pulling wrists toward chest, then exhale pushing hands down toward the knees, beginning the cycle again. Do a total of three cycles, then after pushing the hands down toward knees, inhale hands up with elbows resting against the body, forearms parallel to floor, palms facing down, drawing feet back to a closed stance.

Energizing Breath

Begin in a closed stance, feet together, then step the left foot out, a little wider than hip-width apart, knees soft, arms hanging at sides. Keeping arms straight, inhale and draw them out to the side and overhead with backs of hands facing each other. Exhale, reversing the direction and bringing the hands back to the beginning position. As you inhale, bring the hands together at heart center, then bend the elbows and take the hands shoulder width. Exhale, straighten arms and take hands out to side, still shoulder level. Inhale and draw the arms overhead, palms facing as though you're holding a ball. Exhale, bring the ball down to the center of the body, then let the arms return to the starting point. Repeat the sequence a total of three times, then inhale hands up with elbows resting against the body, forearms parallel to floor, palms facing down, drawing feet back to a closed stance.

Settle the Chi

When your practice is complete, settle the chi by inhaling arms out to the side and overhead, turning head to look up. Turn the palms down, fingertips together but not touching. As you exhale, move the hands all the way down the center of the body to below the T'an T'ien or hara center, following the motion of the hands with the head. Let the arms rest at the side.

