

Internal Chi Breathing

By Michael Winn

Note: This article is adapted from a transcript of the audio course "[Chi Kung Fundamentals #3: Internal Chi Breathing](#)". If you wish to learn the breathing method only, get this #3 audio 1-day course alone.

I recommend you get the [entire 2-day workshop package](#) (MP2).

MP2 combines Chi Kung Fundamentals #3 with #4: Internal Bone Breathing & Rooting. The [MP2 package](#) includes a video with the top 22 chi kung movements for tendon and joint health, plus the five core postures taught in the #3 & #4 audio course. You save \$20. by getting the package.

There are literally thousands of breathing techniques in the different healing and spiritual traditions of the world. There are books galore telling you how to breathe and what to do with your breath. Breath been used for everything from stress management to psychological self therapy to rebirthing your divine self.

The Taoist chi kung (also spelled "qigong") approach to breathing is distinctly different from many other eastern methods of breathing. If you go to India you will find that most of the methods there fall in the broad category of pranayama, which I practiced for many years, until I discovered the Taoist approach. The yogic schools involve the mind controlling the breath. This is usually powerful in the beginning, but it has it drawbacks in the long term that may weaken the lungs and adrenals by overtaxing them.

The Taoist approach to breath is very different: there is no counting or setting a certain rhythm or telling the intelligence of the lungs how it should breathe. The idea of the Taoist approach is to cultivate the intelligence and the natural spontaneous abilities of the intelligence of the body and of the "spirit of the lungs". The fundamental term "chi" (or qi) means "subtle breath".

If you study what I call Chi Kung Fundamentals - you first learn "the five animals do the six healing sounds". That's one form of

breathing. It gets each vital organ to open up and start to breathe. You immediately learn that breathing is not limited to the lungs. The liver, heart, spleen and kidneys each have their own subtle breath, marked by different physical and energetic pulsation rates. This method of chi breathing focuses on the out-breath, which is releasing – for cleansing, letting go.

There is also skin breathing – when you breathe through the skin. This requires subtle energy training. The skin is considered the outer membrane of the lungs. They are part of the same organ energetically. Within the Taoist tradition there are many different kinds of breathing methods. This is one of the hallmarks of the Taoist approach. Breathing activates and expresses bodily function as a yin-yang rhythm. Taoists use the body's energetic rhythms as the doorway to open communication with the body of the Tao, which manifests as Living Nature or Cosmos.

One of my favorite breathing chi kung methods I call “Ocean Breathing”. You create a rhythmic resonance between your physical breathing and the wave movement of the ocean. It becomes a form of “internal chi breathing” because your mind focuses the wave movement deep inside the core energy channels of the body.

Before jumping into new breathing practices one should first ask the very important questions: "What is breath? What is breathing?" People often make false assumptions about it. Taoist chi kung often uses various movement techniques to activate natural whole body breathing. When we do something with movement your body remembers it. It learns it much more deeply.

Since we are moving all the time, our whole body is always pulsing and moving, the whole body is breathing as one. This unity of body is the prerequisite for unity of the ego fragments of consciousness. This is the great weakness of much Western psychological work, it doesn't understand the intelligence of the body and how this can integrate the ego.

When we say breathing, we must distinguish between internal and external breathing. External breathing is the physical level of

oxygen going in and out of our lungs. But behind that movement of air in and out of the body is the hidden question: who or what controls the breathing process? Something is causing our lungs to move. Calling it “the autonomic nervous system” doesn’t answer the question, it buries it under mechanistic language.

There is a certain intelligence in breathing that we are interested in getting in touch with. We are interested in knowing, "How does that intelligence function?" How does it know when to breathe and how to breathe. This gets into many different subtle energetic and spiritual questions. Profound answers can be found in the study of chi kung (qigong) and neidan kung (neidangong), or Taoist inner alchemy.

The Taoist method of Internal Chi Breathing I learned and have since refined is the most powerful of the many breathing methods that I tested from different traditions. That’s because it is the most in tune with the complete functioning of the life force. All Chi Kung is essentially a method of cultivating your relationship with the life force, with the pulsating field of chi that exists all around you, infinitely in all directions. The inner chi field extends within yourself, infinitely in all internal directions and all internal dimensions. It cultivates this relationship between the inner and outer chi fields, using internal Nei Kung “mind breathing” coordinated with movement Chi Kung involving physical breathing.

The life force or chi field functions or “breathes” through three main currents known traditionally in China as yin, yang and yuan. These impossible to translate terms imply negative, positive and neutral. Yuan also means "Original Chi" or Original Breath. In terms of breathing the yin chi is energy of chi moving in, it's inhaling and contracting. Yang chi is breathing out, it's expanding by exhaling. The third type of energy, yuan, the original or neutral chi, would be equated roughly with the pause between the inhalation and exhalation, just in terms of breathing.

So each of us is actually practicing our relationship with the life force every moment because we are breathing in, we are breathing

out, and there is some pause or some turn around between those two, however brief. Our very nature, the way we are actually built to breathe, reflects the structure of the life force. Internal Chi Breathing is not doing anything new, it just teaches us to actually understand and experience deeply what it is that we are already doing with each breath.

We must ask, exactly what is "internal chi breathing?" This involves understanding the relationship between physical breathing and our energy body breathing. Our energy body is just the sum total of all energy channels and all your body-mind's subtle energy functions that underlie our personality traits. Most people are not aware of this relationship because they are walking around looking at everything like it's a solid physical world full of solid objects. They are not seeing everything as an energetic process. The deeper you get into the Chi Kung way of living the more you begin to embody and experience the world as changing energy fields. Your own body and breath is no different.

There is a relationship between an energy field and a physical process. The pattern in that energy field is what determines the pattern in your physical breathing; it is not the other way around. You can change your physical breathing pattern around but in order to do that you have already made a shift energetically. The energy field shift always precedes the shifting pattern of physical breathing.

When we focus on internal chi breathing what we are really doing here is acknowledging that there is something more subtle than just the air going in and out. You can call that chi field your mind, you can call it the matrix of your mind, you can call it whatever you like. But it is pulsating, it's vibrating and breathing just like everything else in this living universe. It has to move. If it stops moving it's dead. If it stops pulsating it's dead.

This doesn't mean that if you have very light physical breathing that you are about to die. It is possible to have very shallow physical breath but a very deep chi breath. This is not the ordinary case for most people. Most people if they have very shallow

breathing they also have very shallow movement of energy. This is not a healthy condition, your organ intelligences start to feel starved for breathe and they start crying out and acting out and all kinds of problems start to come up.

Internal Chi Breathing cures those problems at the deepest level where they begin, by unifying the physical breath and the subtle breath. The best way to pursue this is to find a chi kung teacher who knows these practices. But most of them, unfortunately, do not know about the formerly secret *kong jing* or “internal chi breathing” method taught in this course.