

QiGong Sample Exercise: The Gathering Breath



Sitting down, with the hands starting in the lap, or standing with the hands dangling at the sides, begin to inhale and move the hands outward and upward as if you are scooping something useful, even precious, from the air around you.

When your hands are slightly above and in front of you, the inhalation should be complete.

Then bring your hands, side by side, palms facing you, toward your head.

Then move them slowly down in front of your face, in front of your chest, in front of your abdomen, exhaling.

When your hands reach the navel area, linger for a moment and then repeat.

Many people find this breath practice very calming. It is a kind of meditation that allows for some gentle movement, which often makes it easier for people to relax. Frequently, people who have a hard time meditating find it easier if some mild movement is involved. Many who have found it difficult to take a full, deep breath have discovered that the arm movement helps to open up the rib cage and fill the lungs. Allow yourself to relax deeply during this practice.

In China this movement and breath practice is part of a powerful Qigong method called “marrow washing,” which gathers energy (Qi) from nature and then purposefully stores it in the marrow of the bones, like electrical potential in a battery. As the hands pass over the body, focus intently on the energy penetrating through the surface of the body, through the flesh and muscles, and through the surface of the bones to be stored in the marrow. This stored energy becomes an available resource to vitalize the organs and glands, harmonize imbalances, and heal disease. Allow yourself to float free of concerns and simplify your thoughts.

As you relax in this practice you may feel the warmth of your hands as they pass in front of your face. The Chinese call this “Qi sensation.” Rest in the rhythm of the movement, allowing the breath to be natural as you go deeper into relaxation. Notice that very soon you begin to feel carefree, lighter. You may become aware of a soothing floating sensation that makes you feel filled with lightness, as if the cells are less compressed, less dense.