

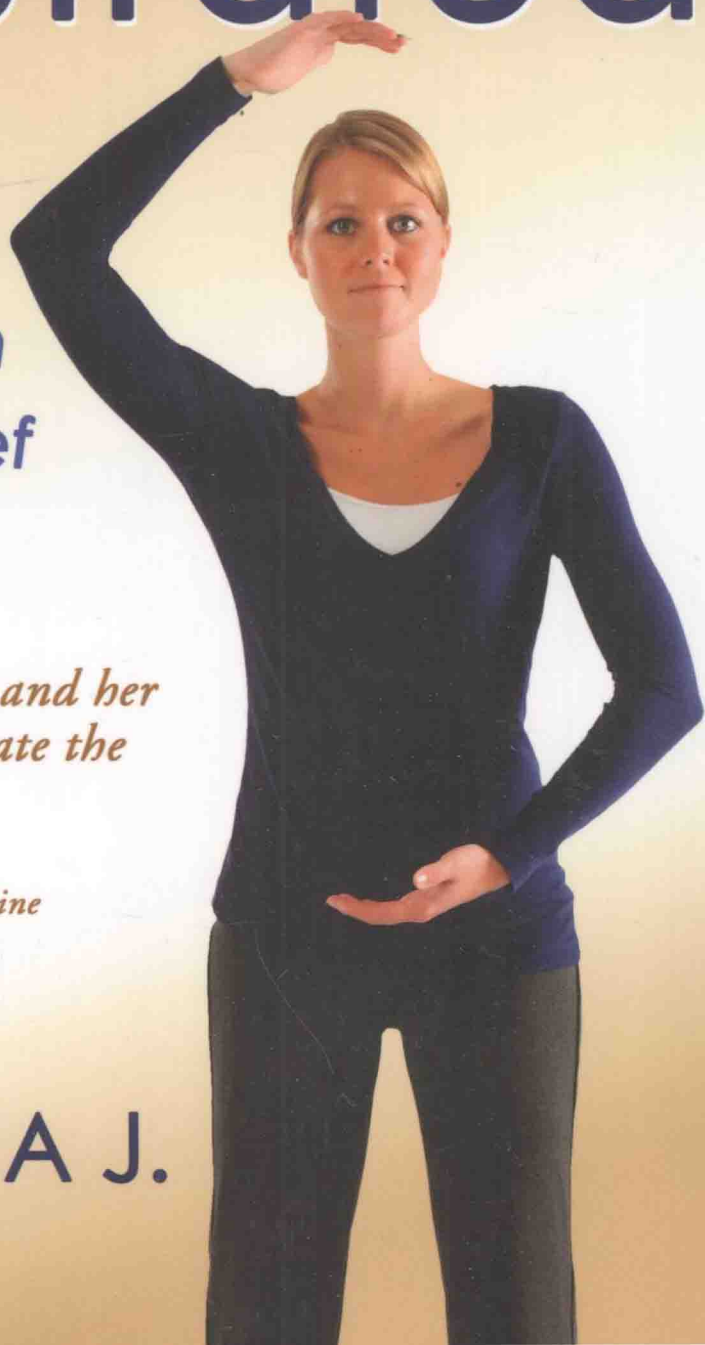
QIGONG Illustrated

- Strength
- Health
- Relaxation
- Stress Relief

"Christina Barea and her teachings illuminate the art of qigong."

Sydney L. Murray
Publisher, *Vision Magazine*

CHRISTINA J.
BAREA



QIGONG illustrated

Christina J. Barea



Human Kinetics

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Barea, Christina J.

Qigong illustrated / Christina J. Barea.

p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7360-8981-4 (softcover)

ISBN-10: 0-7360-8981-0 (softcover)

1. Qi gong. 2. Qi gong--Pictorial works. I. Title.

RA781.8.B37 2011

613.7'1489--dc22

2010028589

ISBN-10: 0-7360-8981-0 (print)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7360-8981-4 (print)

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The Web addresses cited in this text were current as of August 2010, unless otherwise noted.

Acquisitions Editor: Tom Heine; **Developmental Editor:** Laura Floch; **Assistant Editor:** Elizabeth Evans; **Copyeditor:** Alisha Jeddeloh; **Graphic Designer:** Bob Reuther; **Graphic Artist:** Tara Welsch; **Cover Designer:** Keith Blomberg; **Photographer (cover):** Neil Bernstein; **Photographer (interior):** Benjamin Lapid; **Photo Asset Manager:** Laura Fitch; **Visual Production Assistant:** Joyce Brumfield; **Photo Production Manager:** Jason Allen; **Art Manager:** Kelly Hendren; **Associate Art Manager:** Alan L. Wilborn; **Printer:** United Graphics

We thank Studio B in Decatur, Georgia, for assistance in providing the location for the photo shoot for this book.

Human Kinetics books are available at special discounts for bulk purchase. Special editions or book excerpts can also be created to specification. For details, contact the Special Sales Manager at Human Kinetics.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The paper in this book is certified under a sustainable forestry program.

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QIGONG

illustrated

For Matteo
Keep your Heart chakra open

Foreword

Today more than ever, it is imperative that we take responsibility for our health and well-being. As a society, we have allowed ourselves to become dependent on someone else or something else to fix our ailments, our bodies, our lives. Although these repairs can accomplish many things, too often they are not complete or not permanent.

When we realize that we are not a group of disparate systems (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) but integrated beings, we discover the secret to making health care really work. Qigong is one such system that provides for our whole being. It is an ancient form of exercise and meditation that has brought many people into true mental and physical health. It is a mind-body practice that integrates postures, movement, breathing techniques, and focused intention.

Although qigong has been used in China for thousands of years, few people in the West have heard of it until recently. Over the past decade the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other organizations have conducted research that validates what is commonly accepted in China and have made those research findings applicable to Western culture.

As we turn to ancient forms of health practice, it is important that we have a knowledgeable guide. Christina brings us a simple method of achieving a state of wellness. She draws on the roots of Chinese medical theory, allowing the theory to come alive into a personal practice. You will have the opportunity to discover the energetics behind the theory firsthand.

Christina's background and training are suitable to the subject of complementary and alternative health modalities as she combines her personal experience with ancient wisdom. I have had the fortune of seeing Christina in many settings: as a student, a practitioner, and a teacher. As a student, she demonstrated the willingness to be open and the discipline to practice. As a practitioner, she is compassionate and able to assist patients in profound ways. As a teacher, she speaks to our minds while speaking to our hearts.

Christina's writing style matches her teaching style: simple, direct, thorough. She makes the information accessible, stimulates our interest, and reassures us that we can accomplish these exercises and achieve the desired results. Christina uses ancient terms but brings them into current usage, and she includes the right amount of information to acquaint us with the concepts. The detailed illustrations enhance our understanding of the concepts.

Qigong Illustrated is your guide to achieving health and well-being with gentle effectiveness.

Dr. Bernard Shannon, DMQ (China)

Executive director, International Institute of Medical Qigong

Preface

Approaching qigong for the first time can feel challenging, especially if you are reading classics written by enlightened masters or watching videos of experts relying on almost a lifetime of practice in their art. It's easy to get lost in the mystical concepts of Heaven, Earth, jing, qi, and shen or confused with Chinese language and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) theory. However, the truth is that even we mortals have a chance at excellent health and longevity without having to go swimming too deeply in the river of knowledge. Practicing qigong doesn't require changing religions, speaking Chinese, or even having a strong, supple body. The beauty of qigong lies within the simplicity of its meaning—the practice of energy (breathing) cultivation over time. To practice qigong, all you have to do is take a deep breath and begin.

Qigong is enjoying a revival around the world, attracting people interested in its healing power, its graceful motions, and its incredible physical feats. It has been credited with curing diseases where Western medicine has failed and is now being prescribed by respected physicians at notable hospitals such as Stanford in California. The slow moves of qigong are attracting men, women, children, and seniors, granting them vibrant health, vitality, and longevity. And its demonstrations of incredible physical strength or prowess, such as by traveling Shaolin monks, fill auditoriums. This rise in qigong's popularity and its various applications accentuates the need for clear and accurate information. Although an ever-growing number of texts and teachers are becoming available in English, the bulk remains in Chinese, contributing to the dissemination of misinformation and widespread ambiguity.

The purpose of this book is to provide a solid foundation with which to begin building a quality qigong practice you can continue for years to come. Within these pages you will find clear definitions that demystify the elusive concepts of qi and cultivation as well as a step-by-step approach to qigong with easy-to-follow instructions for even the most inexperienced practitioner. The content of this book is the result of the knowledge and skills passed on to me by excellent teachers, along with the experience gained teaching in a variety of venues. My goal is to pass on the best information possible to make sure your qigong practice is both effective and enjoyable.

Most students are attracted to qigong because of the apparent simplicity of the moves, and they enjoy the rush of energy once they begin. Yet, in all classes core concepts and questions consistently surface. Does qi really exist, and how can I

identify it? I have injuries or surgeries, so how can I practice qigong? Can qigong heal me? This book answers these fundamental questions and highlights the major principles of qigong that will ensure that your practice is safe, enjoyable, and true to the art.

After you finish this book, you will be able to integrate your qigong knowledge seamlessly into other qigong styles or even martial arts such as tai chi chuan (the fighting application of tai chi) or kung fu, making everything contained in these pages practical for more than just qigong. You may, of course, decide to keep it simple and not explore any further, but be assured that within these pages lies enough material for at least three years of solid practice that will always reveal something new.

The first section of this book includes chapters 1 through 4, which address the most fundamental aspects of qigong, such as the definition of *qi* and *gong* as individual words as well as *qigong* as an entire concept. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 introduce the practitioner to the Three Treasures, commonly known in China as jing, qi, and shen but simplified here as posture, breath, and intention, providing a clear idea of what practicing qigong involves. Each chapter builds on the others, providing a flowing description of this multifaceted concept.

The rest of the book guides you through a complete qigong practice, from an opening sequence to cooling down and meditation. Each qigong exercise gives clear instructions on movements, breathing patterns, and visualizations. The Daoist Five and Eight Silk Brocade are core routines and have symbolic references to the Five Elements and eight animals.

Throughout the book you will find special elements—sidebars and FAQs—that include tips for improving your practice and answers to the most common questions asked by beginning practitioners. The information they contain is as important as the exercises themselves.

Note About Chinese Terminology

Throughout the book you might notice that some words are capitalized. TCM uses words that sound similar to Western anatomical terminology. However, when TCM uses certain words (identified by a capital initial letter), it implies an expanded meaning of the body part. For example, *heart* is the Western term and refers to the heart organ and its physiological functions when it is not capitalized, whereas *Heart* (TCM) refers to both the heart organ and its energetic and spiritual functions and representations, including its definition and correspondences according to the Five Elements theory, which you will learn about in this book.

It is truly my pleasure to put knowledge, experience, and passion together for your benefit as you begin this journey toward self-discovery and sustainable good health. I firmly believe that there are no accidents or coincidences; therefore, this book arrives at the perfect time. As you turn the pages, remember to breathe, wiggle your toes, and enjoy the journey of qigong. I send you many blessings for great health.

Acknowledgments

My journey through qigong, Daoism, and martial arts is blessed with the presence of great friends and teachers. Although they may have entered my life through one door or the other, today I see no separation. Teachers are friends who care enough to show you the path, and friends are teachers who through their unfailing loyalty show you unconditional love and compassion. Undoubtedly they are the people who have molded my decisions and led me to the place I am today.

To the following people I extend my deepest gratitude; without your influence, guidance, and help I would not be the person I am today, nor would the creation of this book have been possible.

To my teachers Sifu Jerry Alan Johnson, Sifu Bernard Shannon, and Sifu Florin Szondi, my deepest gratitude for sharing your knowledge, experience, and lessons, in addition to allowing me to be part of your lives as a friend.

To Sheri Gilburth and Essud Fungcap, thank you for being such gracious friends and giving your time to be models. I look forward to continuing on this path together!

Thank you to Benjamin Lapid for the photos, Laura Floch for editing, Joe Rodgers for the concept, Tom Heine for the follow-through, J.D. Scott for the studio, and the entire staff of Human Kinetics for the completion of the project.

To Christopher MacDonald, I am grateful for your support while this book was created. Your love, generosity, and words of Light were a blessing. Aho!

Thank you to my two best friends and true angels walking on earth: Lourdes Gonzalez and Victoria Cannon.

To my family: Matteo Aramis, my son, thank you for your unconditional love and patience, and thanks to JoAnne Harris (Mom), Julio Barea (Dad), Julio Barea III, Phillip Barea, Betty Harris (Mama), Pilar Barea, and Diego Barea for being there throughout all my many changes.

And in remembrance of my ancestors and departed friends who have inspired me in so many ways: Carmen Barea Bosch (Cachi), Julio Barea (Papa), James Harris (Granddaddy), Father Federico Consola (Spike), Edwin del Toro, and Jose Ignacio Bartolomei.

Contents

Foreword **ix** • Preface **xi** • Acknowledgments **xv**

chapter 1	Art and Practice of Qigong	1
chapter 2	Posture	11
chapter 3	Breath	21
chapter 4	Intention	29
chapter 5	Structuring a Qigong Routine	39
chapter 6	Qigong for Internal Organ Strength	59
chapter 7	Qigong for Optimal Health	83
chapter 8	Qigong for Stress Relief	115
chapter 9	Qigong for Relaxation	127

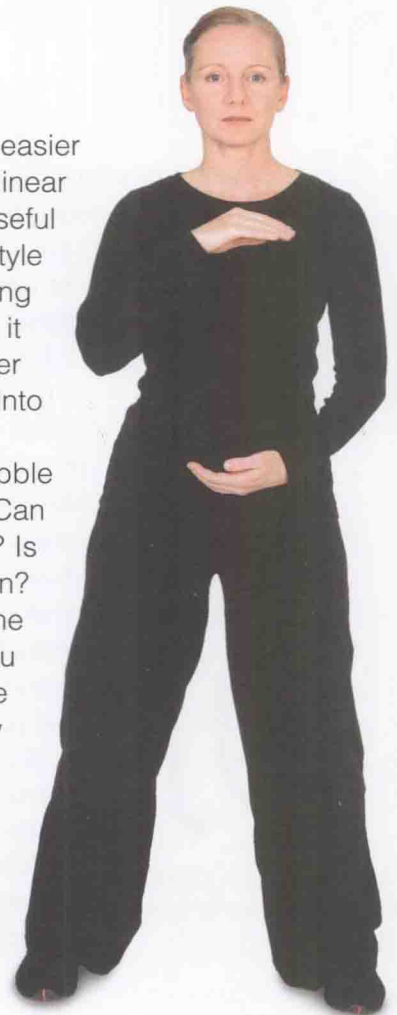
Appendix **137** • Glossary **141**
Resources **143** • About the Author **145**

Chapter 1

Art and Practice of Qigong

Qigong is a beautiful art with so many facets that it's easier to describe it as a spherical concept rather than a linear progression of ideas. The image of a sphere is also useful to describe how qigong can become a complete lifestyle rather than an isolated practice. As we begin exploring the sphere of qigong, bring your awareness to how it already may be a part of your life and allow the deeper understanding of its purpose and method to extend into new areas.

Let's begin our journey by envisioning a large bubble with the word **qigong** inside it, floating in front of you. Can you see the letters? Are they black? Fuzzy? Sharp? Is the word legible from left to right, or is it upside down? How it actually appears doesn't matter; just hold the word **qigong** in front of you. Inside the bubble, you can see that there is also space, or air, or atmosphere completely surrounding these floating letters. Now envision that you could arrive toward the letters of qigong from any angle. It could be from left, right, front, back, above, below, sideways, diagonal, and so on, multiplied over and over by the infinite angles contained within a sphere. Each angle will change the perspective or appearance of the letters, and this is exactly how to define qigong. It depends on how you approach it!



How do you pronounce qigong?

Qi is pronounced “chee,” as in “cheese.” *Gong* is pronounced “goong,” as in “goosey,” but with an “-ng” at the end. Although it is commonly pronounced “gong,” as in the large cymbal struck with a mallet, that pronunciation is not quite accurate. The word *qigong* is actually two words in Chinese: *qi* and *gong*. It is common to write two words that go together without a space in between, and therefore we use the term *qigong*. It is also correct to write *QiGong* as a title.

The art and practice of qigong is complex and encompasses countless meditations, exercises, breathing techniques, life habits, healing modalities, treatment protocols, spiritual beliefs, and more. It includes feng shui, Chinese astrology, medical qigong therapy, and Daoist practices, to name a few, each one applying the principles of qigong in a different way. But the richness of the practice should only entice one to continue its deep exploration. It would be unrealistic to expect to master the sphere of qigong in just a few lessons. One needs patience, persistence, and flexibility, thereby leading to the following definition of qigong: the practice of energy cultivation over time.

Defining Qigong

As we just mentioned, the word *qigong* is simply translated as “the practice of energy cultivation over time;” however, the word holds a much deeper meaning. Chinese is a descriptive language where each character represents a three-dimensional concept, so *qigong* stands for a wealth of ideas and practices, as we are about to discover. Let’s begin by breaking down the word *qigong* into two smaller components, *qi* and *gong*. (See figure 1.1 to see *qi* and *gong* in Chinese characters.)

Qi has several translations, including “energy,” “life-force,” “breath,” “air,” “mist,” “steam,” and more. But simply stated, it’s the particular *energy* of an object. It is believed that all objects have energy, including people, animals, plants—in short, anything contained on the Earth and in the Heavens. Perhaps you’ve heard about this energy and are wondering, “Well, what does *energy* mean?” You might even be a skeptic who doesn’t believe that *qi* exists. Defining energy can seem like asking someone to believe in a mystical force that permeates the universe and all living beings. And yet, that’s true—it is and it does.

Qi is mystical in the sense that we don’t fully comprehend how to define it, control it, or measure it. It exists, yet it constantly reveals new layers of discovery. The limitation of our understanding of those things we cannot see, feel, or hear is the same limitation we have in understanding the power of *qi*. But let’s find a more practical and perhaps scientific approach to defining *qi*.



Figure 1.1 Chinese characters for *qi* and *gong*.

Metaphor of the Three Treasures

The collective qi of the universe can be divided into three realms according to the quality of the energy. Each of these realms has unique characteristics that distinguish it from the others. Because each realm is an important part of the interaction of all energy, it is called a *treasure*. The relationship between the three realms, or *the Three Treasures*, becomes a metaphor for three-tiered interactions, many of which we will learn about in this book (see table 1.1).

TABLE 1.1

The Three Treasures

Lower treasure	Middle treasure	Upper treasure
Physical	Emotional	Mental
Earth	Man	Heaven
Body	Breath	Mind
Martial	Medical	Spiritual
Jing	Qi	Shen
Lower dantian	Middle dantian	Upper dantian
1st wei qi field	2nd wei qi field	3rd wei qi field

A basic way of defining qi is through the five energies of cells: heat, light, sound, magnetic, and electric. Simply stated, each cell emits wavelengths of heat, light, sound, magnetism, and electricity. Each of those wavelengths can be measured, altered, and controlled. We know that some of those wavelengths can be perceived without the aid of special devices. We see a wide gamma of light, but we can't see X rays or infrared radiation. Does that mean they don't exist? Absolutely not—they do exist. We can hear a car engine running, birds chirping, and music being played at the symphony, but we can't hear the sound of a dog whistle. Does that mean it doesn't exist? Just whistle at Fido—he will answer! Qi is this type of energy but not just each one in isolation; it's all of them put together. Together, these energies

Is qigong a religion? Is it the same as Falun Gong?

No. Qigong is not related to a religion or faith of any kind. The basis of qigong is working with universal energy. The foundation of qigong is that it exists everywhere independent from language, faith, gender, nationality, or race. The physical and energetic movements taught to Falun Gong practitioners are considered qigong. But, although Falun Gong claims to be independent of political, social, and religious ideals, its moral and ethical requirements have generated controversy in mainland China, where it is perceived as a threat to the stability of the Chinese Communist Party.

give a living cell a multidimensional quality that includes function, communication, and connection well beyond the boundaries of the physical realm.

Let's quickly examine a phrase that often accompanies popular definitions of qi and qigong: "Everything is connected." Many people wonder how we all can be connected when, for example, there are thousands of miles between millions of people in this world. Well, let's go back to the five energies of cells. We established that each one of those energies emits a wavelength, right? That wavelength travels as far as the intensity of the emitter. Visualize a magnet. It emits a field around it that is proportional to its strength—the stronger the magnet, the bigger the field. Humans are the same. We are a huge magnet or battery emitting a field of invisible,

inaudible, and otherwise insensible wavelengths from our bodies. Qigong masters have learned how to feel, emit, intensify, diminish, and otherwise control the field by controlling their bodies. It's easy to imagine that learning how to do this would require a lot of practice—in other words, gong.

Gong refers to practice which leads to "merit" or "achievement." Saying "qigong" implies practicing qi cultivation over time. The question now becomes, "How do I learn to cultivate qi?" Ah, well, that's the hard part. Actually, it's not hard; it just requires patience, practice, and discipline. Like any sport, art, or skill, qigong must be developed. One needs to begin to absorb the many nuances of the skill before being able to produce something that is both beautiful and powerful. However, there is infinite joy in taking time to learn an art of any kind. The learning process reveals our strengths, talents, and inspiration and patiently waits for us to work with our weaknesses.

Naturally, if one's objective is to be able to do magic with qigong, then the *gong* part of training will be more difficult and take much longer before results are seen. Fortunately, when practicing qigong for health, we can begin to see results immediately. Just a little guidance can get you started on the fast track to a great qigong practice.

Three Applications of Qigong

There are several ways to practice qigong, and the approach taken begins to define which type of qigong you'll be doing and perhaps the difficulty of obtaining results. Qigong practices can generally be classified into three applications: martial, medi-

cal, and spiritual. Each of these applications relies on the same foundations and definition of qigong but with a much different intention. Knowing that the foundation of qigong is the same regardless of the application is important because it explains why a person can practice one type of qigong yet obtain benefits in other areas.

To better understand the differences between each application, we can begin by asking, “Why? Why are you practicing this qigong?” The answer to this question is fundamental since it reveals the first path that you’ll travel upon to discover the sphere of qigong. Ultimately, if your practice is long enough, you’ll have the answer to all perspectives. But for now, let’s assume you are interested in the health benefits.

Keep in mind that many qigong movements may look identical to the observer but are a completely different exercise to the practitioner. This is referred to as changing the *intention* of the qigong. We’ll return to intention shortly. First, let’s take a quick look at the three applications of qigong.

Martial

Qigong is not solely a martial art, although there are aspects of qigong training that can be and are used in martial arts training. Martial qigong means practicing qigong in order to develop fighting skill or physical aptitude. It focuses on the body and increasing strength, resistance, and power. Training with qigong for martial purposes emphasizes tendons, muscles, and bones. The various types of Iron training are martial qigong (e.g., Iron Palm, Iron Shirt, Iron Fist). Martial artists bending spears with their necks or breaking seemingly impenetrable objects demonstrate this type of qigong.

Medical

Medical qigong means practicing qigong with the intention of improving one’s health and wellness. It focuses on qi

What are common side effects of practicing qigong?

Qigong stimulates the flow of energy, creating tangible expressions of its movement. Because of each person’s individuality, how it feels may not always be the same; however, some common descriptions are tingling, buzzing, raised energy level, nausea, dizziness, diarrhea, insomnia, deep sleep, hot, cold, rushing wind, sharp pains, dull pains, etc. These are all indications that qi is moving and readjusting. In all cases, these symptoms should pass within a very short time (less than an hour). If, for any reason, you have symptoms that last more than an hour, contact your qualified qigong instructor for guidance.

Can I practice qigong if I have an injury?

Maybe—it depends on the injury. Some factors to consider are location, depth (skin versus internal organ), severity (pulled muscle versus severed tendons), and date of incident (fresh versus old). A good guideline would be that fresh wounds or injuries need time to heal. If the majority of the healing is done, then it may be safe for you to begin a qigong practice. If you will be learning from this book and without a teacher, please contact a qualified qigong instructor or your physician for specific guidance.

Qigong for Health

The purpose of this book is to provide instruction on qigong exercises that will improve health. Qigong is gaining popularity around the world for its ability to provide profound healing to people with a wide range of medical conditions. Well-respected medical doctors are prescribing qigong for people with hypertension (high blood pressure), arthritis, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and osteoporosis, as well as for those who are undergoing cancer therapies. Major hospitals such as Stanford in Palo Alto, California, have included qigong classes on campus in order to provide group and individual instruction to patients. Qigong provides relief from symptoms of these and many other conditions without the use of medication and without the unwanted side effects. As more scientific research concludes with significant positive results, the West will continue to turn its eye to the East, searching for answers in the wisdom passed down for thousands of years.

The benefits of qigong extend far beyond relief from medical conditions. Anyone can benefit from this gentle art. Because qigong works on three levels simultaneously, it strengthens the entire body, including organs, tissues, bones, blood, and mind, becoming a powerful tool for prevention. Qigong provides benefits in the following health areas:

- ▶ Increased blood circulation and oxygenation
- ▶ Regulation of blood pressure
- ▶ Increased heart strength
- ▶ Increased lung strength and capacity
- ▶ Increased resilience of tendons and ligaments
- ▶ Increased immune function
- ▶ Balancing of hormones and endocrine system
- ▶ Increased bone mass
- ▶ Increased overall energy
- ▶ Increased flexibility
- ▶ Increased balance
- ▶ Increased coordination
- ▶ Increased focus and attention
- ▶ Increased ability to relax
- ▶ Stress relief

Qigong is being practiced by millions of people around the world as complementary therapy for the following conditions and more:

- ▶ Cancer
- ▶ Fibromyalgia
- ▶ Asthma
- ▶ Chronic fatigue syndrome
- ▶ Heart disease
- ▶ High blood pressure
- ▶ Low blood pressure
- ▶ Thyroid conditions
- ▶ Stress management
- ▶ Arthritis
- ▶ Recovery from surgery
- ▶ Recovery from injuries
- ▶ Diabetes
- ▶ ADHD