

Practice Tips

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Integration of Mind and Body with a Relaxed Spirit

Yi Jin Jing should be practiced with a relaxed spirit and a peaceful mind. Practitioners do not have to particularly initiate movements by the mind or focus on the intended parts of the body. Rather, the mind follows the movements, and should be coordinated with the circulation of Qi with the body's movements.

Meanwhile, however, concentration is required to accompany individual movements. For example, the mind should concentrate on the palms during the Wei Tuo [Wei Tuo, or Skanda, the temple guardian in Buddhism] Presenting the Pestle 3 routine, and the mind should be focused on the Mingmen point at the back of the waist while fixing the eyes on the upper palm during the routine 4 of Plucking a Star and Exchanging a Star Cluster. The mind should be focused on the palms during the Black Dragon Displaying Its Claws routine. Other movements require imagination, not consciousness, to accompany them. Among them are the Three Plates Falling on the Floor, Displaying Paw-Style Palms like a White Crane Spreading Its Wings, Pulling Nine Cows by Their Tails and Bowing Down in Salutation. These movements should be followed by a relaxed mind, and not hard concentration.

Natural Breathing

Gentle and easy breathing without any gasping or obstruction is required to relax the spirit and body, make the mind peaceful and coordinate the body's motions. Noisy breathing, gasping and distorted nostrils tend to upset the mind, disturb the balance and make the movements uncoordinated.

Free and unrestrained inhalation is particularly required when lifting the hands during the Wei Tuo Presenting the Pestle 3 routine, when expanding the arms and chest during the Pulling Nine Cows by Their Tails routine, and when expanding the arms and chest and relaxing the shoulders during the Nine Ghosts Drawing Swords routine. The reason is that the chest cavity expands and contracts during these movements, and should be allowed to do so freely and to the full.

Free and unrestrained inhalation is particularly required when lifting the hands during the Wei Tuo Presenting the Pestle 3 routine, and when expanding the arms and chest during the Nine Ghosts Drawing Swords routine, while natural exhalation is required when relaxing the shoulders in this routine, when withdrawing the arms in Pulling Nine Cows by Their Tails routine, and when pushing out the palms in Displaying Paw-style Palms like a White Crane Spreading Its Wings routine. The reason is that the chest cavity expands and contracts during these movements, and should be allowed to do so freely and to the full.

Softness in Toughness with the Interplay of the Substantial and Insubstantial

The softness and toughness of the exercise movements interchange throughout the practice. When stretched or relaxed, they display a dialectical relationship of a unity of opposites, in the same way as the reactions of Yin and Yang, the two opposing and

interactive aspects of the body according to traditional Chinese medicine. Various movements in the exercise require the practitioners to relax for a while after strength is applied, and suitable force is required after softness or relaxation. In this way, the movements will not be stiff and restrained or slack and fatigued.

While making a distinction between softness and toughness, the exercise aims to achieve a good combination of firmness with gentleness. The movements should be appropriately firm and gentle instead of going to extremes. Otherwise, excessive force could lead to stiff and restrained movements, thus affecting breathing and the mind. On the other hand, excessive softness or relaxation tends to cause slackness, also weakening the intended effect.

Flexibility in Performance and Articulation of "HAI"

The range of movements and extension of postures in Yi Jin Jing are adaptable to people of different ages and physical conditions. For example, practitioners can choose the range of squatting during the Three Plates Falling on the Floor routine. And the exercises should be done step by step from the easier to the more difficult movements.

When squatting and pressing the hands down during the Three Plates Falling on the Floor routine, the sound "HAI" is articulated. This is to assist the passage of the breath and vital energy down to the Dantian point, which is some two inches below the navel. It also has the advantage of avoiding restraint of the lower limbs caused by the squatting motion and upward flow of air back to the head. It also helps to strengthen Dantian and the kidneys. The sound should be produced from the throat, and concentrated at the Yinjiao point on the upper gum (not at the Chengjiang point on the lower gum).

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