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Qi Gong for health

Most people have heard of Acupuncture, and know that it can be highly effective, not only for treating pain, but for many different conditions. But did you know that it is only one of the many therapies employed as part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)? TCM is a holistic system, and has been the primary health care system for millions of people for thousands of years. It treats not just the symptoms of disease, but seeks to balance the whole person, in body, mind and spirit.

TCM includes eight “branches” or modalities. While we are most familiar with Acupuncture and Herbology in the west, these are traditionally combined with other methods to treat holistically, and to support the treatment. TCM is primarily concerned with health maintenance, and correcting imbalances to prevent and treat illness. For this reason, diet and lifestyle therapy is a very important part of TCM. For lasting wellness, we must take care of our own health – no one can do it for us. TCM practitioners may make suggestions to tweak eating and lifestyle habits to support balance. Other therapies include Moxibustion, where mugwort herb is burned above acupuncture points to introduce warmth and movement into a meridian; Tui na, or Chinese massage and acupressure; and Cupping, where heated glass jars are placed on the body to loosen tight muscles and stimulate the immune system.

Qi gong (pronounced “Chee Gung”) is perhaps the oldest branch of TCM. This gentle exercise system has been used in China since ancient times for self-healing and cultivation. Every morning, hundreds of people can be seen in the parks practicing these slow movements, which are similar to Tai Chi. Certain movements may be prescribed to help balance particular organ systems or parts of the body. As well, the practitioner may “lay on hands” to redirect and balance the clients’ energy.

Qi gong helps to generate a healthy flow of *Qi*, (bioenergy) and release blockages in the body's energetic system, thus removing sources of disease and discomfort. Qi gong is particularly helpful for the relief of stress, trauma and anxiety and the treatment of chronic diseases. It is special in that, once learned, the simple set of movements can be practiced at home every day to maintain and support health, both emotional and physical. I often send clients to do a Qi gong training with Jack Risk – a great and fun way of taking responsibility for their own well-being. Jack has been teaching Qi gong since 2004 and I find his teaching style simple, clear and relaxed. He offers trainings in the Valley area, with one coming up in June in Kentville. (see www.jackrisk.ca for details.)

I find it magical how much better I feel after even 20 minutes of Qi gong practice. I find myself grounded, calm yet energized, and my whole body tingles with positive energy. This is because my *Qi* is balanced and flowing smoothly. This is the basic goal in Chinese Medicine, and Qi gong, along with the other therapies in the TCM toolkit, helps us to achieve and maintain this wonderful feeling of well-being.

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