

Qigong Secrets

Secrets of the Ancient Energy Masters - 22 Week Home Study Course

Week Five

P stands for Preparation

If you want to do anything well, how you start is of great importance. Find out the best way to start your practice....

Page 2

E stands for entering a Qigong state of mind

1 of the 3 core skills of high level Qigong and a Shaolin Qigong 'secret' Page 6



R stands for Really smile from your heart

You know the drill - don't think about it, just do it....

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Homework & Coming Up Next Week....

Whatever you do, make sure you complete your progress tracker!!

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What's that sound?

If you've ever wondered what the 'jingle jangle' sound is....

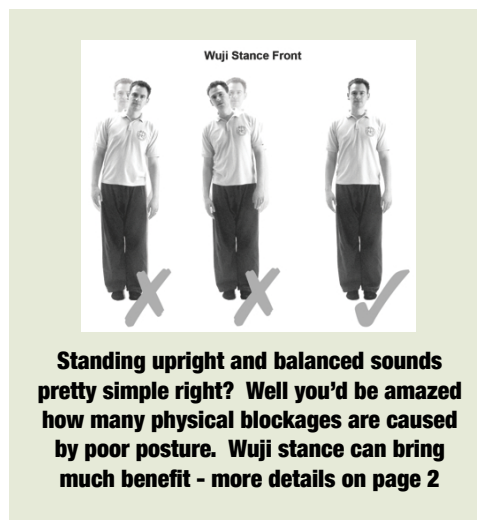


Welcome!



Welcome to week 5 of the home study course.

On first view this lesson may seem to be shorter than previous lessons. The truth is that as I compiled the information for an in depth look at PERFECT - it weighed in at a colossal 40 minutes of video.



And that was before I added the introduction, summary and next week parts. Therefore I decided to split this lesson into two parts.

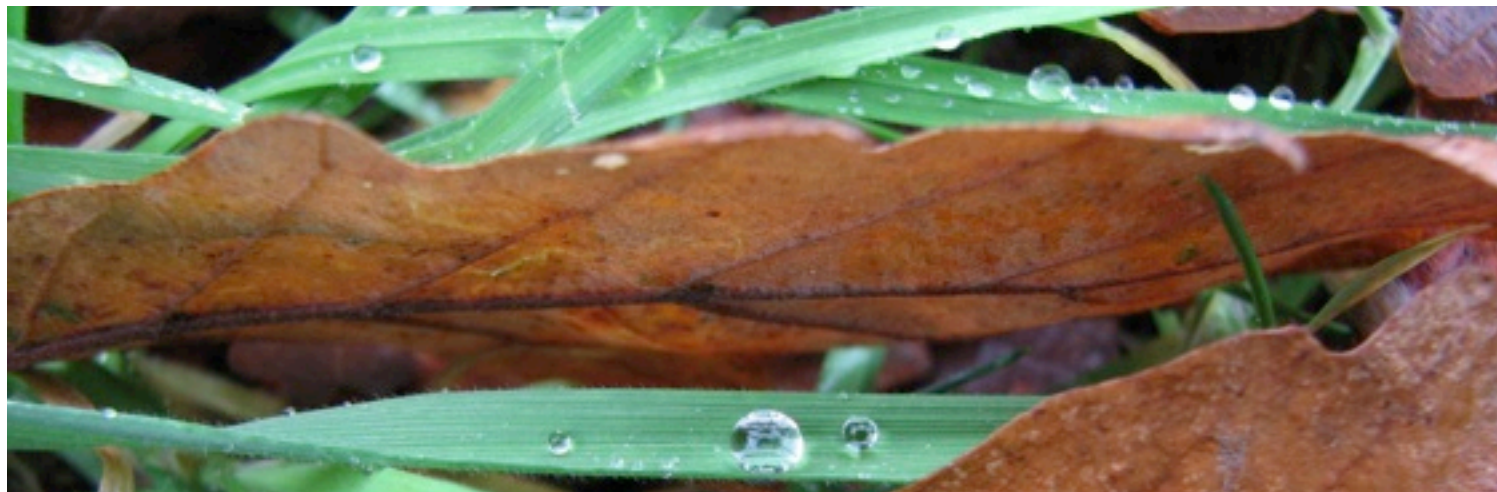
Lesson 5 will focus on P, E and R and lesson 6 will finish off with F,E,C and T.

Many people practice Qigong with a desire to relax. As you already know being able to relax is only the start of being able to get the benefits of Qigong.

I have therefore created an mp3 that you can download and listen to which takes you through E - Entering A Qigong State of Mind. It's the belt and braces version but many students have asked if they could have a copy to listen to separate from their Qigong practice. And here it is in Lesson 5.

Let's get started

Enjoy your practice!



P.E.R.F.E.C.T.

STEP 1 – Preparation

It is vital that you get ready for your practise and the best way to do this is to start by making sure that the place you intend to practise in is safe. By this I mean that there are no sudden drops, ornaments to knock over or furniture to bump into. It's best if you can practise outdoors, but not essential, and we'll cover practise areas in more detail in a later lesson.

Walk around briskly for about 30 paces, swinging your arms and loosening up as you go. Now find yourself a space where you are free to move your arms without knocking anything over or hitting the walls.

Now you are going to enter Wuji stance. Stand upright with your feet parallel and close together. Make sure that your nose, the centre of your chest and your belly button are in a straight line. Allow your arms to hang naturally at your sides.

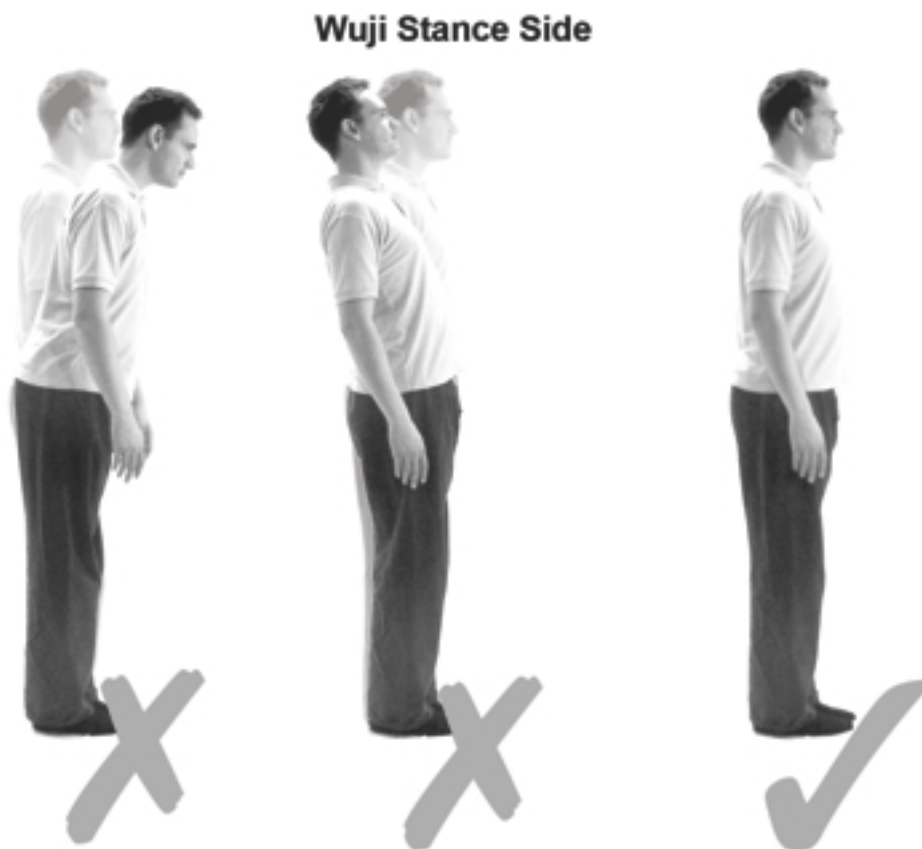
Close your eyes and gently bring your awareness to your feet. Make certain that your weight is distributed evenly, 50/50 on each foot. (See Wuji Stance Front diagram).

Wuji Stance Front





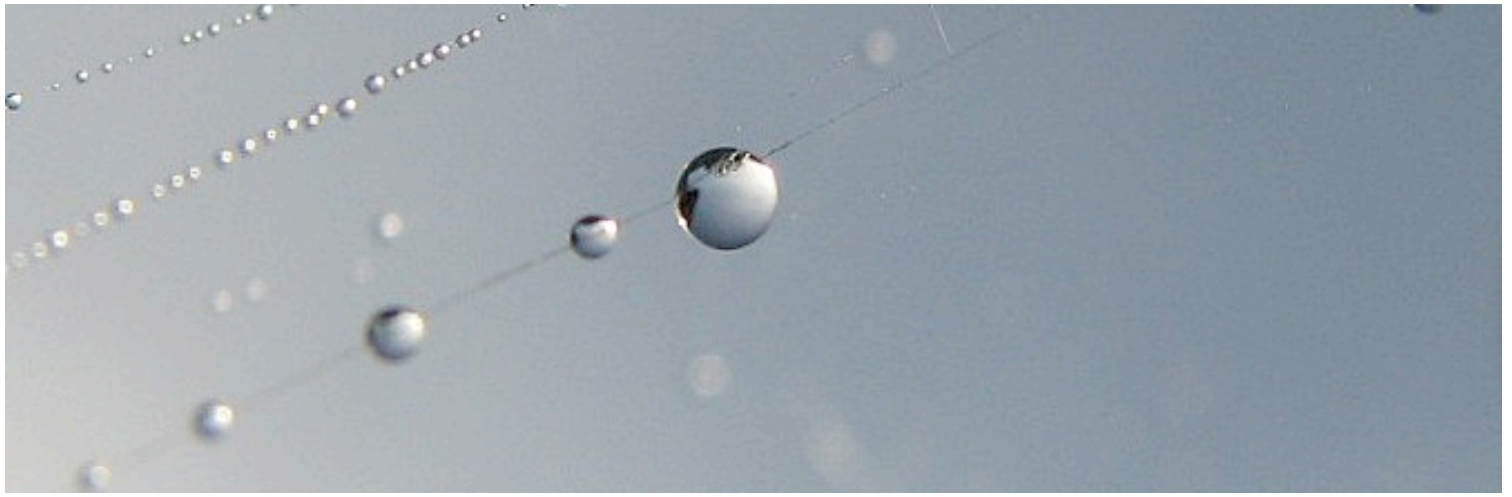
Now make sure that your weight is spread evenly over each foot. By this I mean that your weight is central, between the balls of your feet and your heels. See Wuji Stance Side diagram below.



If you find you need to redistribute the weight make sure you do so by moving from your waist and NOT by tensing the large muscles at the front and back of your legs!

You are now standing upright and balanced in Wuji stance. Standing upright is a vital component in allowing your Qi or energy to flow harmoniously through your body. Years sitting for hours at a desk, slouching in front of a TV or computer, or sleeping on a poor mattress mean that many of us suffer from poor posture. This is one of the most common causes of physical energy blocks in the body, and Step 1 alone can bring you many health benefits.

Standing upright and balanced in Wuji stance allow your breath to come in gently through the nose and gently out through the mouth. This is essential.



In Shaolin Qigong we always breathe gently in through the nose and gently out through the mouth (except during Energy Flow when you let go, do nothing and allow your breathing to be spontaneous and natural).

If you practice meditation, yoga or any other style of Qigong you may be used to breathing in and out through your nose and you may continue breathing in and out through your nose when practicing these other disciplines.

If you want to get the most from your Shaolin Qigong practise you must follow the instructions as they are given and not “modify” them as you see fit.

Changing or modifying the instructions in this course means you will not be practicing Shaolin Qigong any more and you are unlikely to get the benefits I have mentioned.

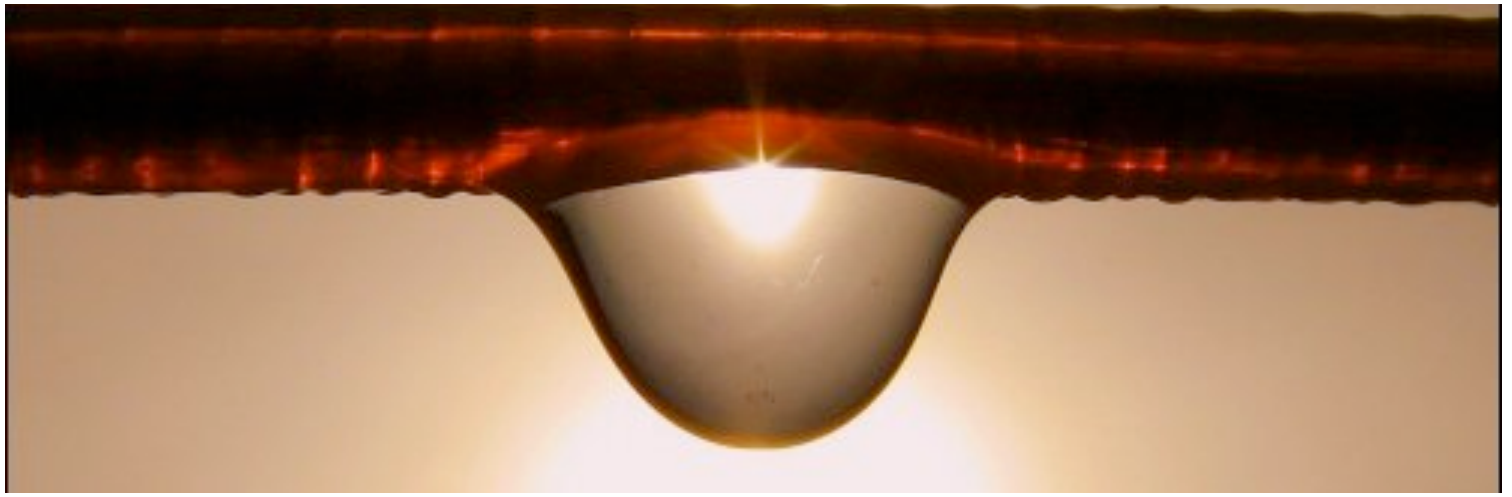
I mention this point specifically in relationship to breathing because it is a common area for beginners to make mistakes. For years my mother told me to keep my mouth shut when eating, and statements like “Are you catching flies?” or “Shut your mouth, there’s a bus coming” conditioned me to keep my mouth shut at all times.

From observing new students of Shaolin Qigong, they seem to have received similar conditioning! So do your best to breathe in gently through your nose and gently out through your mouth during your practice. Forgetting every now and then is one thing and won’t do any harm, but deliberately not following this instruction is something else all together.

An important point to consider is that from the Qigong point of view when we breathe in, we are not just breathing in air, we are also breathing in energy / Qi.

There are a number of routes the body can use to eliminate the toxic waste (negative Qi) cleared by internal energy flow from the meridians. The mouth is one of the most important and efficient. If you keep your mouth closed during your Shaolin Qigong practice this toxic waste may accumulate in your head causing you to feel giddy, dull or even get a headache.

Breathing out through your mouth allows this negative Qi to escape. Now some of you may be thinking that letting Qi escape is a bad thing as it may make you weak. This simply isn’t true. This view confuses Qi flow (good) with Qi drain (bad).



Qi flow – by breathing out through your mouth you allow negative Qi to flow out and it is replaced with fresh Qi. This is natural and healthy and occurs without you having to do anything apart from being relaxed and breathing out through your mouth.

Qi drain – occurs when Qi escapes but no fresh Qi comes in to replace it. Examples of this are over-exertion (usually through vigorous exercise), excessive sex and excessive intellectualisation. All these activities result in Qi drain and are to be avoided.

A word of caution: always work within your body's current ability and do your best with each step. If you've spent years compensating for poor posture by balancing your weight on the balls of your feet or your heels then it will take time to improve your posture and release unnecessary tension in the muscles of your legs.

The pictures in this course aim to demonstrate the "ideal" but it may take you some time to get there. That is fine. As long as you practise regularly and improve a little more each day you will succeed. Gently keep 'playing your edge'.

You wouldn't expect to be able to go from running to the bus stop once or twice a week to running a marathon in a few days. The same principle applies to your Shaolin Qigong practise.

Always listen to what your body is telling you. Gradual improvement is the safe and sustainable way to progress.



STEP 2 – Enter a Qigong state of mind

This is one of the main “secrets” of Shaolin Qigong and one of the reasons why it is so powerful. It is also best learnt from a competent Shaolin Qigong instructor or preferably a Master of this Art. Read the description below and do your best, and do not worry about whether you are doing it right or wrong. The key here is to relax physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually and if you worry, your ability to relax will be severely limited.

The main objective of many people who practise Qigong is to be able to relax. In Shaolin Qigong relaxing is only the beginning! There are four key steps and they are:

Relax Physically

1. Gently bring your attention to the top of your head and slowly allow your attention to travel down through the muscles of your head and your face and gently into your neck. As your awareness travels down through your body, be mindful and make sure each area is relaxed. Make sure your mouth is gently open and that you are breathing gently IN through your nose and OUT through your mouth. Allow your awareness to spread out to each shoulder and then flow gently down through the muscles at the front and the back of your arms, into your elbows, down through the forearms and finally into your hands. Gently open the fingers of each hand wide open and then allow them to relax back to their natural position.
2. Now bring your attention gently back to your neck and allow your focus to travel gently down through your body.
3. Pay special attention to your stomach area, this is a place where we unconsciously store a lot of tension accumulated through the day.
4. Continue your journey of physical relaxation into the legs, down through the legs and finally into the feet. If you are wearing a belt, then make sure you loosen it before you practise. In the West we place an over-emphasis on having a flat stomach but during your practise you have my permission to let your stomach out!
5. The breath is the bridge between your internal world and the outer world. Relaxing physically and relaxing your breathing allows you to start relaxing internally.



Relax Emotionally

1. Now you are more relaxed physically it is time to relax internally starting with your emotions. In Chinese medicine there are five major emotions: Fear, Anger, Joy, Worry and Sorrow. To relax emotionally let go of any worries, anxieties, fears or sadness. Be calm. If it helps, gently focus your attention on your breathing. I sometimes explain it like this to my students: “When we are angry at someone, worried about the outcome of an event or feel guilty about something we did these emotions use a lot of our energy. It’s almost as if we are walking around with lots of 10kg weights in our pockets. As you can imagine this would soon tire you out.”
2. So, when you relax emotionally, think of this as a chance to empty your pockets of all the weight you are carrying as a result of your emotions. Let them go.

Relax Mentally

1. Let go of any thoughts you have such as: “Am I doing this right...What did he say?...Are the arms bent or straight?...I forgot to buy eggs” and so on. Gently tell yourself that for the next 15 minutes you are going to focus on your practice and that you will take care of everything else afterwards. Gently clear your mind of all thoughts.

Relax Spiritually

The best way to relax spiritually is step 3:

STEP 3 – Really smile from your heart

I am deliberately going to resist writing about this aspect of the 7 steps in any detail. When my Sifu teaches this aspect he just says:

“Don’t think about how to do it, just do it. Smile from your heart”.

This is a classic example of the difference between learning from a book or a DVD and learning from a Master (or at least a competent instructor). It may help if you imagine a beautiful flower blossoming; picture a loved one or a favourite place of natural beauty. Alternatively you may put a big fat smile on your face. This is for you to find out what works best. But don’t worry about it, just do it.



Homework

1. Complete your progress tracker for Week 4 - **VITAL**, why not do it right now?
2. Practice the 3 steps: P,E and R at least twice a day. Preferably practice them before your Lifting the Sky practice. It is important that you are able to flow smoothly from preparation and into a Qigong state of mind easily and effortlessly.
3. Listen to the mp3 - Qigong State of Mind that comes with this lesson. Use it to get a firm grip on what a Qigong state of mind feels like, but don't use it during your practice! As your practice develops you want to be able to enter a Qigong State of mind as quickly as it takes you to smile from your heart. If you use this recording, it will take you 10-15 minutes! No, the recording is just a tool.
4. Practice Smiling from your heart as often as you like!

Coming Up Next Week....

Next week we will finish off our in depth exploration of PERFECT by looking at Form, Energy flow, Cosmic Balance and Time to complete. We'll also put it all together as we practice pattern 2 of the Shaolin 18 Lohan Hands - Shoot Arrows Left Right.

Bye for now....

Marcus James Santer