

# The 5 Tibetan Breathing Exercises

This set of exercises dates back centuries; to the origination of Tai Chi and its brother arts of Hsing Yi and Bagua. The 5 exercises were designed to energize all the key meridians, open up and balance body energy, and vastly improve the depth and effectiveness of breathing.

Like many Qigong routines, these five reflect the five elements and are specifically intended to send nourishing Qi to the meridians.

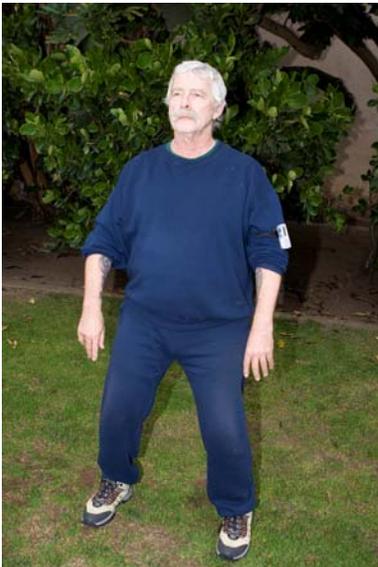
The exercises are very compact, combining the dynamics of several Tai Chi and Hsing Yi movements together in smooth, relaxed and flowing actions.

When performing the movements, one must never push or strain into the postures. Instead one must “relax into” the movements as if dropping lightly into a big soft easy chair.

At the further most point of each movement, there is a “static” stretch, just as in the Eight Brocades. When doing this stretch, one must exert no more than 70% of possible effort. When performing this stretch, you gradually perform the stretch and then gradually relax, then go into the next movement.

If you do the exercises daily; 9 to 16 repetitions per exercise, you will gradually acquire a much stronger, more flexible and more relaxed body.

Throughout the sequences, one should try to relax as if embracing the earth. Stay aware of your center, the area just below the navel. When moving, never PUSH the energy. Rather, open up, relax and ALLOW the energy to flow freely.



Photographs were provided by Deanna Beach. The pretty dark haired girl to my right is Veronica, one of our most enthusiastic student members.

## PREPARATION: the Mountain stance

To accomplish this, stand as if you are being lightly suspended from the ceiling by a small

strand of hair attached to the top of your head. Touch the tip of your tongue to the roof of the mouth and keep it there throughout the exercises.

Relax the entire body. Let the chest sink slightly (don't force it). Relax the upper back so the shoulder blades are separated and the back is rounded. Relax the small of the back and hip joints so that the entire body weight is centered between the feet.

Keep the knees loose and slightly curved, with the weight in the center of the soles. Always follow the palm, or palms with the eyes-and visualize healing white light being sent into the center; or centers, of the palms.

Once you are able to relax in this posture the internal affect of gravity and the relaxation of the whole body will cause a swelling feeling in the abdomen. The hands will also feel a little swollen and will have a blotchy, reddish look.

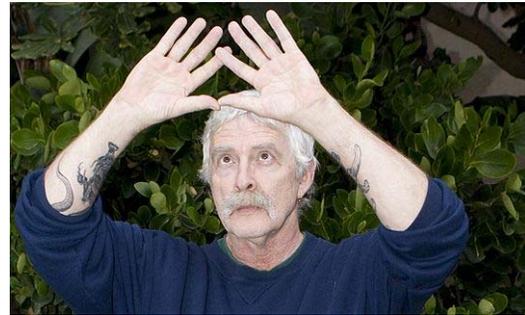
At first, you may need to straighten your legs from time to time to relieve the stress. As you become more practiced, you will be able to sustain the posture for long periods.

Most people have a tendency to overuse the knees in such postures. The goal should be to use the whole; not just the knees, to liquefy and relax into position.

## SALUTE THE SUN (Gazing through the prism)

The Fire elements exercise strengthens and nourishes the Heart and small intestine meridians, as well as the Triple Warmer.

The position opens up the back and separates the shoulder blades, increasing the flow of lymphatic fluid.



Form the thumbs and forefingers together to form a triangle. Keep the arms, back and shoulders as relaxed as possible.

Now raise the hands directly above the head as if looking directly above through the center of the pyramid.

Keep the gaze fixed on that spot and, without moving the hands from that spot, rotate the waist to the right and left, turning at least 45 degrees each time. Try to move the entire body as a unit.

As you turn right or left, inhale slowly through the nose, breathing from the belly, and without pushing or forcing the breath. As the rotate back to the center position, exhale.



This exercise also energizes the spine, the brain and the Pineal, Pituitary and Thyroid glands. It is often prescribed by Chinese medical practitioners for high blood pressure, hypertension and loss of memory.



Notice how the feet stay in place and the knee bends and flexes as one rotates from side to side.

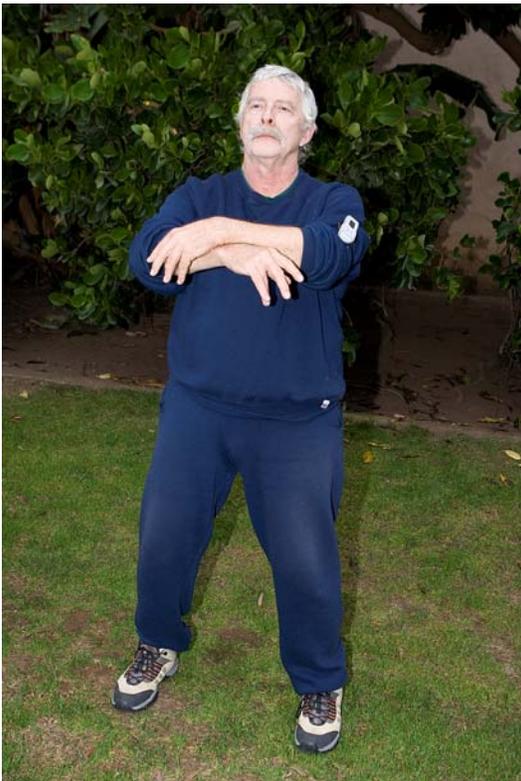
This rotation and waist twisting is essential. It alternately opens, closes and rotates all of the joints. This causes an increase in lymphatic circulation,

while also stretching and opening the heavy muscles, strengthening the tendons and massaging the organs.



## SEPERATING THE CLOUDS (the Metal element).

This is mainly an exercise for the Lungs and Large intestines. It alternately opens and closes the meridians.



Like all of the exercises, this one begins from the Mountain stance. It is essential to keep the body relaxed and springy (like rubber). Keep the chest relaxed and slightly sunken; the back relaxed and rounded, the small curve in the small of the back must be relaxed, so the hips tilt slightly forward. Keep the hip joints and knee joints open and relaxed and a slight curve in the legs.

With a feeling of “gathering” bring the fingers and thumbs together as if sprinkling salt (this is called the Eagles Beak).

Breathe in through the nose (breath from the belly) as you point all of the fingers downward and pull the hands apart.

Keep the arms slightly curved and gradually bring the arms back, level with the ground, until the arms are spread wide apart. Never force this movement; but you do want a little feeling of resistance and a rubber band affect as you bring the arms back.

Recoiling forward gently, rotate the fingers upward so they point directly upward as to relax into the momentum of the recoil.

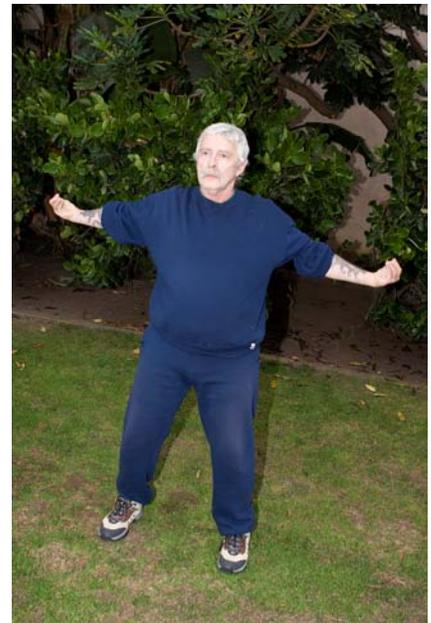


The wrists cross again, left on top, as the hands open and the wrists joints nestle together (The Eagle's Wings position).

Breathe in from the belly as you open and exhale gently as you bring the hands forward and cross the wrists.

It is essential to keep the whole body, especially the back, as relaxed as possible throughout the exercise.

Keep a feeling of "gathering" as you separate the hands and pull back.



You want to have an easy rubber band feeling as you sort of "bounce forward" rotating the fingers upward.

Try to have as little tension as possible in the arms and wrists.

This exercise, while mainly intended for the lungs, but also strengthens the tendons and ligaments of the arms and energizes the "youth

point”, the Thymus gland, in the center of the chest.

Inhale as you open (pull back) and exhale as you close (spring forward).

## OPENING THE TIGER’S MOUTH (the Earth element)

This exercise is from the Tiger set, and is designed to strengthen and energize the stomach, spleen and pancreas, improving the flow of all energy. It will strengthen the muscles of the upper body, especially the organic cavity. Regular practice will provide all of these things but its most immediate affect is to strengthen the bones and tendons. If done in a smoothing winding manner, with good springy, rubbery motion, one may acquire “Tiger Bones” with steel like strength and flexibility in the bones.



Begin from the Mountain position and lightly raise the right hand. Keep a curve in the arm and try to keep the back and shoulders as relaxed as possible.

The right palm turn inward in front of the face. There is a slight curve in the hand as if one is looking at a softball held in the hand. The tip of

the right index finger points directly skyward.

Relax and sink into the sole of the left foot, keeping the toes of the left foot pointing directly forward.



Rotate the body to the right while rotating the wrist of the left hand so that the right palm faces outward. Although it looks as though we are moving our arms a great deal, the motion is really caused by the rotation of the waist.

Note how the weight is “sunk” into the supporting leg, while the right foot; now empty of weight, rotates rightward on the heel.



As you rotate to the right, the right hand extends out as if reaching out to take a book off of a shelf.

One must really relax but stay springy to rotate fully through this posture and obtain its maximum effect.



As if holding a large sphere between the hands, rotate back to the center, then shift weight to the left foot and repeat the movement on the left side.

Breathe in as you rotate out, and breathe out as you relax and spring back to the center

position.

This deep posture will evolve as you continue to practice, and will also benefit the intestines, stomach and liver as you become able to smoothly sink and expand through the moves.

## SCOOPING NEEDLES FROM THE SEA (the Water element)

This exercise energizes the entire lower body and most especially energizes the entire immune system. Its main influence is upon the kidneys, bladder and the reproductive system. Versions of this exercise are often prescribed for sleep disorder, emotional issues, depression and sexual dysfunction.



As usual, this exercise begins from the mountain position. In this case, let one hand rest lightly (light pressure) against the kidneys (the small of the back) while the other hand is extended out, slightly curved, and the palm is down.

The hand stays in a relaxed, curved position, as holding a softball.

Because of the deep weighting and shifting involved in this exercise, it is very important that you never PUSH or strain your way into the movements. As with all of these exercises, one must “relax the motions” as if dropping into a big easy chair.



Shift the weight to the right foot and pivot the left heel outward. At the same time, rotate the waist and sink as you shift the weight and scoop with the cupped hand.



Continue the shifting and rotation until the palm is level with the ground and facing upward. Then, as the palm begins to rise rotate it inward so that your index finger is pointing the same direction



Keeping the elbow close to the body, rotating the palm to face out as you rotate back to the front facing position.



Pivoting on the left heel, shift the weight to the right, as if defending from a high attack with the edge of the right hand.



Repeat. Continue to rotate smoothly through making a big circular scooping motions. Exhale as you sink into the left leg and inhale as you shift and rotate rightward.

## CASTING OUT CHI (the Wood element)

This last exercise is intended to energize and balance the Liver, and to open up all the joints and free any trapped energy from the exercises. It is very beneficial because it frees up trapped emotions as well. It is very useful for those whom suffer from restless legs, insomnia, and eye strain and tension headaches.



Begin in the Mountain position, and raise arms as if holding a large sphere against the body. This position occurs many times and is often called HOLDING THE MOON.



With a springy motion, drop the weight and rotate the sphere so that the left hand is at nose level with the palm facing down. The right palm rotates upward.

Breathing doesn't follow a precise pattern, just keep it slow, even and relaxed, breathing from the belly.



As you “bounce up” rotate the sphere and raise the other hand.



As you rise up fully (its okay to straighten the legs) extend the sphere forward, with emphasis on the edge (little finger side) of the top hand.

**CLOSE**



Return to the HOLDING THE MOON position.

## MOVING THE MOON

Rotate the waist to the right and left, swaying gently like a tree in the wind, moving the sphere to one side and the other. This should be a very relaxed, swaying motion, like sitting in a rocking chair.



You don't need to sink the weight heavily. But, you do want to have a light, springy and relaxed.



Relax and stand for a couple of minutes in the Mountain position. Concentrate your attention on the lower abdomen and breathe slowly and deeply, without forcing.

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