

Medical Qigong for the Heart: Part II

Lisa VanOstrand, DMQ

Editor's Note: Part 1 of Medical *Qigong* for the Heart focused on the physical aspect of the Heart. This article focuses on the mental-emotional aspect of the Heart. Although it is important to recognize that body, mind and spirit can be separated only in theory, in experience they are different dimensions of the same human consciousness.

Chinese Medicine is rich in commentary regarding the emotions and how they affect our *qi*. Through understanding the directionality of *qi* associated with the different emotions, we can help our patients understand how long-standing or suppressed emotions can cause injury to the associated organ system. Some patients are unable to connect emotional causes to their physical conditions. Additionally, some patients may be reluctant to discuss their emotions. Patients may be able to relate to the idea of emotions as forces disturbing the directionality of *qi* more easily than admitting or discussing their emotional problems.

The negative emotion that affects the Heart is joy. This is a difficult concept for most Westerners to completely understand. Joy as a cause of disease is not a state of healthy contentment, but one of excessive excitement or even mania. Chapter 8 of the *Ling Shu* tells us that joy scatters the *qi*.

This can be easily connected to the heart's taxation of excessive staring. Constantly looking for happiness, through other people and through possessions, it disturbs our peace and causes our *qi* to scatter.

The heart is also the home of our Spirit, our *Shen*. Although each organ, carries its own emotional associations, ultimately all emotions affect the heart by disturbing its peace. This same idea is expressed in Chinese Medicine when we speak of the Heart as the emperor. Like a well ordered government, the heart must create peace and order for the other officials in the body. For this reason, treatment of all emotional problems must include the Heart.

One of the more popular Medical *Qigong* exercises that Jerry Alan Johnson, author of five Medical *Qigong* textbooks, taught for emotional detoxing was "Old Man Looking for his Reflection in the Tide Pool." There is a story associated with this particular *qigong*. The story as well as the associated *qigong* exercise is in the 4th Medical *Qigong* textbook.

One night on a full moon, an old man on the southern coast of China went looking for sea crustaceans to feed his family. Holding his lamp upward, he gazed down and saw a large beautiful pearl at the bottom of a tide pool. "Oh my!" he exclaimed as he quickly placed his lamp on a rock. "Look at the size of that pearl! With a pearl that large, I'll be able to retire! Even my family won't have to work, and we'll all live in luxury for the rest of our lives!" So, the old man stretched his hands wide and began splashing his arms in the tide pool trying to grasp the large pearl. "Sh-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h!" went the water as the old man frantically grasped at nothing. Perplexed, the old man looked up. Reaching into the night sky, the old man's eyes widened as he saw the full moon. "Haaa!" exclaimed the old man, "It's the moon! whooo- o-o-o-o-o," cried the old man, "There's no

money!"

In a way, this is the story of our life, of how our life circumstances create these emotions which cause our *qi* to not flow smoothly. We think we have something and then we don't get it or we get something we don't really want. Emotions are meant to move. In discussing the emotional aspect of the disease process, it is important to remember that it is normal to experience the full range of emotions. It is only when a particular emotion is experienced over a prolonged period or with particular intensity that it becomes a source of imbalance.

Understanding the historical aspect of emotions is a subject that has been well debated. It is certainly possible that Westerners have imposed their own viewpoints on this subject. It is doubtful if the emotions of ancient Chinese living in an agrarian Confucian society would be viewed in the same context as people in a modern civilization which is unarguably egocentric.

However, I believe the universality of Chinese Medicine allows us to adapt it to modern Western perspectives.

Being at peace means being able to let go of things, having the ability to purge and release. "Old Man Looking for his Reflection in the Tide Pool" is meant to be a purging exercise, an exercise to let go of, to not be so attached. This *qigong* exercise is suitable for most patients - however, it is obviously important for a person with severe emotional problems to get professional help from a trained psychotherapist.

Healing sounds because of their connections to the breath, to the *qi*, are often used in Medical *Qigong* for working with emotional issues. The sounds for each of the organs except Kidney is used in this exercise. The Healing sound for the Heart is *Haaa*. The emotions of the Heart are anxiety and unhappiness. Although as previously mentioned, all emotions ultimately involve the heart. The healing sound for the Lungs is *Shhhh*. The Lungs emotions are sadness and grief. The sound *Whooo* although typically associated with the Earth element is meant in this exercise to be a combination healing sound for both the Liver and Spleen. The emotions associated with the Spleen are worry and obsessive thinking. The emotions for the Liver are anger and frustration.

Old Man Searching for his Reflection in the Tide Pool

As you perform the exercise, it is good to focus on a situation that causes you emotional disharmony. This allows the exercise to be uniquely tailored to each individual. Treating the individual is a hallmark of Chinese Medicine. To increase the effectiveness of releasing specific emotions, feel the emotions being released from each associated organ as you make the healing sounds. The healing sounds should be done loudly since this focus is on purging.

1. Begin the "Old Man Searching for the Reflection of the Moon at the Bottom of Tide Pool" exercise from a standing posture. Both feet are facing forward, shoulder-width apart. Inhale and imagine divine healing light filling the Lungs. While inhaling, separate and stretch both arms to the sides of the body, forming the shape of the letter "T."
2. Lean over and begin to exhale making the *Shhhh* sound. While exhaling, imagine toxic emotions from both Lungs flowing down each arm and pouring into the ground. Both arms should swing from one side to the other, crisscrossing each other as you continue to make the purging sound.
3. Return to an upright position while inhaling and imagining divine healing light filling the chest (especially the Heart, Liver, and Spleen areas). When inhaling, look upward and raise the hands over the head.
4. When exhaling, both hands should descend to shoulder level, making soft fists (as if embracing two sparrows). Exhale only half of your breath while focusing the mind's intention

on the center of the chest, and imagine the toxic emotions releasing from the Heart while making the *Haaa* sound. Next, exhale the second half of your breath while imagining toxic emotions releasing from the Liver and Spleen and making the *Whooo* sound. While exhaling, move both hands down to the hips while keeping the fists soft.

5. Repeat the last two steps (3 and 4) three times. This equals one set. Emotions, affect the way we move our *qi*. Unlike the child, whose emotions move freely, as we get older we can become stuck in our emotional patterns and our view of life. As Jeffrey Yuen, an 88th generation Daoist priest and revered teacher of Chinese Medicine says, "a bitter person lives in a bitter world". "Old Man Searching for his reflection in the Tide Pool" is a powerful emotional transforming *qigong* exercise. This exercise can be practiced 10-15 minutes daily and can be done any time we feel emotionally challenged. Equally important, it can be done when someone is unable to convey their emotions or has emotional blockages they are unaware of.

References

1. Chinese Medical Qigong Therapy Volume 4: Prescription Exercises and Meditations, Treatment of Internal Diseases, Pediatrics, Geriatrics, Gynecology, Neurology and Energetic Psychology (pages 57-59) By Professor Jerry Alan Johnson
2. Jeffrey Yuen, lecture notes

AUGUST 2014