

# Healing Releases

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Qigong is about healing. In the course of practicing qigong you will very likely undergo experiences that seem out of the ordinary. Such experiences should be understood as healing releases.

How can we explain releases? Let's start with the term Karma. Karma refers to the results of actions. Not just the consequences of moral decisions, but all the results of every thought and emotion that one experiences are recorded and stored in the body-mind. Everything you experience is laid down as information encoded in the tissues, cells and neural pathways. Sometimes we imagine that it is what is done to us that shapes us but much more important is the way the mind reacts and responds to events. Mental patterns or tendencies combine with the karma we are born with — you can think of this as our genetic inheritance — to determine our sense of ourselves and our behaviour. Many of our mental and emotional actions are the products of ways of seeing and interacting with the world that are already mistaken and warped. Patterns of disease and ill-health are rooted deep inside us.

With a human existence we have the opportunity to unravel some or all of stored karma and to free ourselves of the burden of past experience. Qigong and meditation lower the barriers that normally keep this karmic information coiled within us. Our job is to "do nothing" and thus provide this information a way of escaping the normal defenses. Disease energies, once released, find their way out through the body.

Understand that our thoughts are not the same thing as our mind. Normal thinking and emotions alienate the mind from the body, driving it out in fantasies, desires, emotions, distracted thinking. Qigong movements and meditation practiced with bodily awareness invite the mind back in. The result is lifegiving and healing. Stored information is loosened and sorted out before it is energetically released. Karmic stores that are the source of disease problems are cleared off.

Our thinking minds are not up to the task of analyzing how karma works or how it is released from the body. Lacking a readily available intellectual answer, our minds will be tempted to provide one. We should exercise care in not allowing our imaginations to invent fanciful explanations. What is going on in healing releases is entirely mundane and natural. There is nothing miraculous, supernatural or magical about releases. There is nothing to be gained by trying to trace back a release to anything in the past. Rather than looking for ways of understanding the releases, we should give ourselves over to the healing process and avoid distracting intellectual speculations. Now that you know qigong, healing is perfectly commonplace. There is no need for excitement. Maintain your practice and hold your awareness on your body. Your attitude should be one of confidence in your practice to produce good results and faith in the healing process to bring you to a better place. Do not invite what has been released back into your body by allowing the mind to grasp onto it and seek to explain it.

With regular qigong practice we can expect releases. These can take any of many possible forms some of which are more pleasant than others. The following list is only a sample:

- smooth, flowing, pleasant reactions

- an increase in metabolic rate
- changes in colour in the body's energetic system
- muscle cramps or numbness
- spontaneous movements such as twitches, vocalizations, involuntary movements of the limbs etc.
- bioenergetic sensations (buzzes, burns, zaps)
- physical symptoms such as pain, skin eruptions, increased elimination
- numbness, heaviness, stiffness
- reoccurrence of old disease symptoms or old injuries
- the emergence of personality traits
- forceful dreams or nightmares
- laughter or weeping, intense emotional outpourings
- strong negative emotions
- troubling memories or disturbing thoughts

Beyond the body, releases of karma can affect the environment: objects can be moved or broken; equipment can be turned off, broken etc. All such occurrences are the result of the mind's reengagement with the body. While they defy simple logical explanation there is no need to build fantastic interpretations for them.

I am listing so many types of release phenomena simply to alert you to the possibility that they might happen and so you will not be taken by surprise. Do not take the extent of phenomena to be any sort of measure of your success in qigong. Many people do not experience such things and yet undergo significant healing. Pursuing them is also a mistake. Whether *qi* sensations are strong or endure after practice is immaterial to healing — in fact it might be an indication of illness. I am drawing your attention to the possibility of releases simply so that you will be aware that the body can "wake up" and undergo healing. Make sure that after practice you return to a normal state of mind to pursue your familiar functions.

When working with qigong and meditation we need a balanced approach, neither too excited nor too lax. Both inclinations are to be avoided. Keep practicing (doing the movements) and you will avoid reinforcing the tendency to stagnation through laxity. Particularly if you suffer from depression, this "just keep doing it" can be all-important.

Excitement, on the other hand, follows a predictable course: 1) the mind grasps onto ideas and gives them more substance than they have in reality; 2) the mind holds onto these ideas with increasing

intensity, strengthening them; karmic residues are stirred up in the process; 3) new mental, physiological and emotional reactions are generated i.e. more karma is created.

"Doing nothing" is the balanced approach that avoids both laxity and excitement. It involves large amounts of both detachment and equanimity.

Detachment means to avoid letting the mind grasp onto ideas. When an idea enters the mind don't reject it or try to suppress it. Allow it to emerge but avoid "thinking" it. Return to your practice, in particular by feeling the body, and allow the idea to find its own way out. Let go of the idea and relax it away. Remain open and unengaged. Even when an idea is extremely intriguing or interesting return to your practice and don't become involved with it. Your ability to detach will improve with repetition.

Equanimity is the ability to remain calm, even-tempered and untroubled regardless of what is going on. This is not suppression of emotions. It's a matter of not getting excited one way or another. Things just don't upset you. Whatever happens, while practicing or outside practice, try not to react or respond to it. Equanimity will increase as you progress with your practice.

In other words, maintain an even keel and just keep doing your practice. In fact, by doing the practice you will be strengthening detachment and equanimity — a virtuous cycle. You are heading toward peace. Having a mind that is at peace will permit healing at every level.

What if you are suffering from disease and are seeking healing and relief through practicing qigong?

Understand that the solution comes from not making a deliberate effort to solve the problem. Disease issues are not attacked or blown up; they are dissolved and uncoiled. Avoid concentrating on the problem as this will exacerbate matters. With any disease there are accompanying thought patterns and emotions and these can be difficult to escape. The disease will continue to hold an attraction for you. You will not succeed in trying to reason your way through it. Analysing the thoughts or arguing with them will make things worse — by hardening the patterns. It does no good to try to exert the force of your mind against your difficulty. Imagining that you will fix things by applying "positive thinking" will simply add another layer to the problem.

It is not by trying to make healing happen that we get better. We simply make use of the body's own resiliency and healing systems. Establishing the mind in peace and opening the natural pathways for *qi* flow will facilitate the body's recovery.

In your practice work at developing the skill of softening. Other forms of exercise seek to harden the body; in qigong we are softening it. Disease hardens. Softening will eliminate pain. To promote this, be warm-hearted and open in your practice. Start with an affirmative smile and hold an attitude of knowing that the practice is leading you in the right direction. Be willing to go along with the healing process and accept whatever emerges. Do the qigong movements in a loose, hollow, fashion with no intention, no holding on. Let the movements flow and, as far as possible, keep the mind free of thoughts. Gradually the disease issue will stand out and be removed. The direction of healing is down and out. To heal you will need to make some "connection" and "move through."

Karma allows us to understand how the effects of past and ongoing actions affect our lives and how we can reverse their effects. Unlike conventional medicine in which something is added to the body, qigong healing reverses the course of karma creation. It "undoes." Healing is a subtractive process in the course of which karma — in whatever form — is released from and exits the body.

Another way of looking at disease — this one from the point of view of traditional Chinese medicine and holistic healing — is to see it as having its origin in the blockage of *qi* somewhere within the body. Balance and harmony are restored as blockages in the flow of *qi* are cleared off. There is a common fallacy in many forms of qigong that *qi* needs to be added to the body, absorbed and stored. Practices that try to make this happen are dangerous and can result in serious mental and physical illnesses. The correct understanding is that *qi* flow is natural to the body's healthy functioning.

Healing is a natural outcome of healthy practices and releases are a natural consequence of healing. Releasing can arise during practice but it can also continue after practice and during sleep. Even seasoned meditators have healing releases.

Do not allow yourself to become overwhelmed by releases. In the course of clearing off karma, you might experience all manner of phenomena. Your first job is not to suppress releasing. Fear of what might lie hidden inside can easily lead a person to want to prevent it's coming out and stifle what is happening to them. Be aware of this tendency and do not fall prey to it. Have courage and let the release take place. Without trying to direct the releasing, maintain your sense of being in control. Make an effort to contain the release or spontaneous movements within the qigong movement.

Practice detachment and equanimity with regard to whatever comes up. Remind yourself it is only phenomena and that the karma is finding its way out. The process of releasing does not involve you. Do not react angrily to pain or discomfort as this will only invite the pain back in and solidify the issue.

Many practitioners of qigong will experience muscle cramps. Cramps are a good example of releasing and they provide an opportunity to teach ourselves how to respond. With effective practice, tension stored within the body will be released and seek a way out. As it finds an exit it can meet resistance. Muscles can cramp up, often in very painful ways. This can happen anywhere in the body. It is not uncommon for serious cramps to emerge as one is awakening from sleep. It is important not to panic and tighten up in response to the cramping. Don't take measures to try to get rid of it, such as stamping or forcefully stretching. Instead, go along with the cramp — let it happen without resisting it. Make every effort to relax and endure the pain until it has passed. For the tension to be fully released you need to permit the cramp to pass and for the muscles to lengthen of their own accord. In this way you will be facilitating the release of energies that have up to this point been causing harm to your body.

The correct attitude toward releases is to accept and forgive. Be thankful for every experience, even the scariest or most painful. Permit it to happen and let it proceed down and out. Clearing through allows muscles to be freed up and bones to regenerate. As healing deepens, releases are likely to become more internal as opposed to external. The body will realign. Organs can shift and change position. As the mind is enabled to spread evenly throughout the body there is true health.

Steer clear of these two kinds of strong reaction: (a) seeking to protect yourself and, at the other extreme, (b) being sucked into the release.

- a. Don't imagine that you can evade what is stored within. What is already there cannot be avoided. Root causes need to be confronted. So, don't try to wall yourself off from the stored memory that is being released. Detachment is definitely not dissociation or zoning out. Permit the memory to come forward, acknowledge it, relax and let it go. Be clear that what is being released is just phenomena and not the real you. You are strong enough to face it. These are just superficial things. At a much deeper level there is a place of safety within you.

- b. It is possible, especially in meditation, to fabricate experiences based on fantasy or wishful thinking. Such thoughts are deceitful; there is serious trouble in granting them legitimacy. Avoid practices that seek to promote heightened states of vibrational arousal or a disconnection between mind and body. Similarly, stay away from belief systems that build up the ego and a sense of being something special. Don't allow yourself to believe that what you are experiencing is the truth — it is just phenomena. Don't give yourself over to it and abandon your sense of being in charge of yourself. Don't sink into trancelike acquiescence. Again, remain detached and practice some discernment with regard to what you are experiencing.

Know that you are engaged in a process of healing. Let go of the old story and take responsibility for your situation. There is no point in finding who is at fault — this is not dealing with karma which is inside you. Maintain your practice and carry on happily with your daily life. The emotions that accompany the thought patterns of disease are generally uncomfortable so try to stay out of them. Keep yourself occupied and divert your thoughts from your problems.

You will find that there are all sorts of benefits to healing. You will experience flow, feel good and have wellness. Along with healing of physical and emotional diseases, you will discover that you are more stable, calmer, freer of anxiety and more at peace. Your mind will contain fewer conflicting ideas and be more in harmony. You will realize that your pain and discomfort have, in fact, aided your progress and you can be grateful for them. You may come to know true joy. Through knowledge of the self comes knowledge of the universe.

Much healing can happen quickly, even from the very beginning of practicing qigong. Healing might happen all at once or in incremental releases, like peeling the layers of an onion. To completely eliminate a particular problem might require time and determination. You need to make up your mind that you are genuinely interested in healing. Knowing qigong means you have been provided with the tools for self-healing. There is, therefore, no need to accept ill-health as inevitable. Normal aging is not “decline.” Make a firm decision to invest your time in healing. Qigong is extremely effective in addressing the cleansing of karma and the releasing of blockages. The deepest levels of healing are pursued through meditation.

Qigong is, in the first instance, about learning to heal oneself but it, also, involves external healing of others. External qigong healing seeks to activate healthy *qi* flow and release blockages in another person's body. A student of qigong can practice on friends, family members or pets to gain familiarity with procedures and mechanisms of qigong healing. Serious healing of others, however, should only be undertaken after one has maintained a committed qigong and meditation practice of several hours per day for several years. One needs to have progressed in self-healing and learning to clear karma before taking on other people's problems. Knowing how to clear karma is essential to knowing how to heal others and to keep oneself from harm.

In the case of receiving a qigong healing, the process of releasing and the attitude towards it is the same as for qigong practice. First of all, be open-minded. It is important not to allow doubt to hinder the possibility of healing. Hold a sincere desire to be well and a sincere belief that you will be well. Don't allow previous failures or disappointments to harden into a mental block that prevents your healing. Be willing to cooperate with the therapist. Healing procedures require the patient to relax and let go of mental activities. The therapist will typically assign exercises to be done at home. It is important that practice of these be maintained as they will extend the effect of the healing. They also serve the purpose of occupying the mind and keeping it from being taken up with negative thoughts that can

compound disease problems. During or after a healing session try not to put words to what is going on. Avoid allowing the imagination to fabricate fanciful explanations. Forget the theories one has acquired through books or other media. Head explanations impede healing. Instead, stay with the body-centred experience and maintain your practice to ensure a full release.