



Qigong and You

Discover Energy. Cultivate Vitality.

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There was something formless and
perfect before the universe was born.
It is serene.
Empty. Solitary. Unchanging.
Infinite. Eternally present.
It is the mother of the universe.
For lack of a better name,
I call it the Tao.

It flows through all things,
inside and outside, and returns
to the origin of all things.

LAO-TZU, THE TAO TE CHING (VERSE 25)

TRANSLATION BY STEPHEN MITCHELL



Welcome . . .

Over many years our newsletter has endeavored to address students' questions. Each chapter of this e-book is a thoughtful and concise article from a previous newsletter that will give you glimpses into the world of qigong.

This e-book was created for new students of qigong. Many are curious and ask the same basic questions when starting their qigong practice. It will introduce you to many inspiring aspects of qigong and give you insight into the benefits of a regular practice.

I invite you to enjoy this e-book filled with life-changing information. It is designed to support you in developing a meaningful qigong practice.

Hun Yuan Ling Tong,

Martha Blane



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What is Qigong?

QIGONG (PRONOUNCED “CHEE GUNG”) is an ancient Chinese healing art and health care system that integrates physical postures, movement exercises, breathing techniques and focused intention. It improves physical, emotional and mental well being, prevents disease and increases vitality.

The word Qigong is made up of two Chinese words. Qi is usually translated to mean the life force or vital-energy that flows through all things in the universe. Gong means accomplishment or skill that is cultivated through steady practice. Together, Qigong means cultivating energy. It is also spelled chi kung or ch'i kung.

The slow gentle movements of most Qigong forms can be easily adapted, even for the physically challenged and can be practiced by all age groups. Many health care professionals recommend Qigong as an important form of creating wellness for yourself.



Qigong, unlike traditional exercise programs, pairs mindfulness and intention with physical movements and breathing techniques. This creates a potent practice where benefits can increase quickly on the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels of our being.



Benefits of Zhineng Qigong

ZHINENG QIGONG IS A SIMPLE, yet profound practice for discovering your natural state of health and vitality. Regular practice awakens and strengthens our self-healing abilities. Practitioners often report feelings of harmony, tranquility and peacefulness along with a greater connection to life's purpose.

Many health benefits can be achieved, including:

- Reduced stress, anxiety and depression, creating more emotional stability and feelings of well-being
- Increased vitality and longevity by slowing down the aging process
- Increased availability of oxygen in the blood, which nourishes cells, tissues, organs and muscles
- Improved brain function with increased capacity for learning and effectiveness of brain activities
- Strengthened cardiovascular, respiratory, circulatory, lymphatic, immune and digestive system functions
- Improved physical stamina, posture, balance and blood pressure regulation

Zhineng Qigong is suitable for everyone, of all ages. It is practiced standing, seated and even lying down at any time and any place. It can also be modified for anyone. Benefits are cumulative with regular practice.



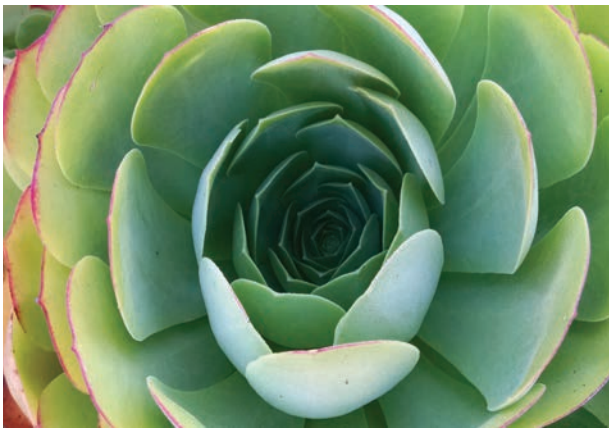
The Heart of Zhineng Qigong



I WAS RECENTLY ASKED WHAT ROLE consciousness plays in Zhineng Qigong. Our practices usually include a variety of meditations, movements, stretching exercises, breathing methods and we generally feel better when our practice ends. We often talk about changing the body and the mind, but it is really our consciousness that is most important.

At the heart of qigong is awakening and activating the conscious mind which includes expanded perception, mindfulness and self-realization. Qigong practice naturally awakens the healing energy of the body and, therefore, awakens the mind as they are always connected, influencing and informing each other.

When we feel more balanced and healthy and in our natural state, it is much easier to sense and observe all thought patterns including those that are unpleasant and destructive.



This heightened sensitivity naturally occurs during qigong practice. It gently opens a door to allow us to step out of limiting thought patterns and into an expanded consciousness. This is the place where repetitive thoughts of struggling, suffering and disease can be transformed.

If we are distracted from experiencing our true self in the present moment due to physical, emotional or mental discomfort, we are less likely to see the ways in which our mind operates, many times from a narrow, unsustainable perspective.

Often our narrow view is the underlying cause of our discomfort. It is usually a result of patterns learned years ago and continued because we were unaware of it.

As we step through the door of consciousness over and over again our perceptions expand. We begin to discover and understand our patterns and reactions.

We can come to accept that narrow thinking may continue, however, we are no longer held hostage by the relentless patterns of the past. We awaken to the ease of allowing the present possibilities to unfold. Through greater compassion we allow our true selves to come forward and even accept our so-called imperfections. We naturally experience an inner joyousness as we act with deeper kindness and generosity towards ourselves and others.



“The key to growth is the introduction of higher dimensions of consciousness into our awareness.”

– LAO TZU



“When we quit thinking primarily about ourselves and our own self-preservation, we undergo a truly heroic transformation of consciousness.”

– JOSEPH CAMPBELL

Zhineng Qigong theory and practice constantly points us towards cultivating consciousness. This practice of using the body to access the mind creates an exquisite opportunity for healing on all levels.

How we see ourselves and the world around is an inside job, one of opening the heart to compassion, contentment and generosity—this is the heart of Zhineng Qigong.



Zhineng Qigong was created by Dr. Pang Ming (Lao-shi), an extraordinary qigong Grandmaster. By combining his profound knowledge of Chinese medicine with modern science, he helped revive the ancient Chinese internal cultivation of qigong as a healing art, as well as a modern science of body-mind. He founded the largest physician-staffed energy-healing

hospital in China, where Zhineng Qigong was used to study mind-body science and its applications to self-healing. Currently over 10 million people practice Zhineng Qigong worldwide.



Seven Aspects for Optimal Self-Healing

MANY WISDOM TRADITIONS OFFER US STEP-BY-STEP formulas to attain higher levels of health, inner peace or enlightenment. I often shy away from formulas as they seem to trivialize the effort required to truly create a change within. That said, when I came across some of my notes from a retreat I attended with Jane Jin in 2010, I felt the approach she outlined could be very helpful for new students who are looking for ways to integrate qigong into their lives. It also serves the serious explorers of qigong because of the potential for human transformation. This approach offers a solid foundation, which is necessary for deriving the best benefit from qigong practices.

1 **STRONG BELIEF**

In Jane's words "You must believe, without doubt, from the bottom of your heart that you have the ability to heal. You have to believe in your own mind power. You are the master of yourself. You are the governor of your blood and life qi." She goes on to say that you must join your belief with self-confidence. All living things have the inherent ability to self-heal. We were born with this ability. We see basic evidence of this regularly when we recover from a cold or cut. However, we are often told otherwise in our society and culture. This has furthered our loss of connection with nature and our own wisdom. The ability to regenerate our bodies and/or change cellular structure is innate. We must also believe that we are able to be receivers of information and energy from teachers, nature and healers. We must use our own initiative to receive. This can be done by thinking of 'opening the door and inviting qi in'.

2 POSITIVE ATTITUDE

You will be more successful if you think positively rather than negatively. Living with a positive attitude is better than a negative one in that it creates a more desirable and resourceful frame of reference. Believing you can empowers you to take effective action. In truth, it is the action, not the thought that is important. Rather than cultivating the capacity to think “good thoughts”, cultivate the ability to choose what thoughts are useful and which are not. Like many wisdom traditions, qigong wisdom maintains that everything is connected, so naturally your life will seem better if seen through the eyes of positive attitude. It is often this simple: if you are kind, people will be kind to you. This positive way of looking at life liberates our mind and heart.



3 COMMITMENT TO PERSISTENT PRACTICE

When you begin a new practice, for the most rapid and greatest benefit, you have to practice every day. It's a fact. There is no way around it.

4 RATIONAL COMBINATION AND GOOD BALANCE

Qigong offers us many different types of practices. Not every practice is the most effective for everyone all the time. For example, some people have difficulty finding relaxation during seated meditation; therefore, a moving meditation would likely be more effective. You have to listen to your own body wisdom and think about your own level to customize your practice for the most benefit. You can balance your practices with movement (qigong forms and physical exercise), breathing exercises,

meditation, limb stretching as well as supporting yourself with abundant nourishment and rest.

5 **GROUP PRACTICE**

Group practice is very powerful for healing and support. Dr. Pang established the technique of using the group to create and amplify a strong energy field. Group experience sharing is also a unique aspect of Zhineng Qigong. It is a teaching/learning method that creates community, thereby strengthening our connection to each other and to all living beings.



6 **CHANGE YOUR LIFESTYLE**

I believe this message is clearest in Jane's words: "You must get rid of your bad habits: harmful diet, too much sex, drinking, and night life. You have to change your bad habits. For very serious illnesses you should not drink alcohol, have sex, or eat food with too much nutrition."



7 **MIND CULTIVATION**

The actual movement and meditation practices are just a small part of self-healing. We need to recognize that our

mental and psychological health is equally, if not more important, in cultivating self-healing. Jane reminds us that, “We need to be tolerant, practical, and realistic. It is important not to be too ambitious or too picky about things around you. Keep a peaceful mind. It helps to not be tempted by things you cannot reach, so you aren’t dissatisfied all the time. Be satisfied.” A way of cultivating this aspect is to take time regularly to examine our points of view (also called “Reference System”). These examinations can reveal where we are creating suffering within ourselves. A practitioner at our recent retreat succinctly put it this way:



“Keep your reference system as a hypothesis. New evidence can and will change your frame of reference temporarily at any time.”

– JIM FERRANTI

I have come to know that these aspects are potent and can be revered as a path for optimal self-healing. It provides a solid foundation for students at all levels. Taking these seven aspects to heart can truly create a change within.



Finding Your Perfect Qigong Teacher

“HOW DO I FIND THE PERFECT QIGONG TEACHER”? I considered this question some years ago when I realized that my martial arts practices were leading me towards a deeper curiosity of qigong. My martial arts teacher advised me to find a qigong teacher who could support my curiosity.

For the next few years I learned from a handful of teachers. Even though I didn't find a teacher I wanted to stay with I did learn some important practices, theories and ideas from each of them, for which I remain grateful. I also encountered some aspects that did not feel in alignment with my desires. These included not having the depth of knowledge I sought after or offering enough classes/workshops.



Eventually I met a few teachers in the US and China who challenged and inspired me. I then spent several years quenching my curiosity and mining the depths of qigong. I still enjoy the rich consistency of wisdom and learning opportunities I receive from my teachers.

Today we have the world at our fingertips and can shop online for anything we want, including a qigong teacher. However, it can be bewildering to discover how many choices there are out there. There is a huge variety of teachers and styles, systems and theories to choose from including ancient and contemporary; medical, martial, or spiritual and so on.

Plus with many CDs, DVDs and online classes readily available you don't really need a teacher that you can meet with or take live classes from. But maybe you want one. This desire to have a personal teacher is a compelling enough reason to undertake a search. Plus, there are many benefits to an in-person teacher and it is highly recommended for serious students. A few of the benefits include personal attention to your questions, energetic support in your journey of discovery and amplified qi from the teacher and other students in the classes/workshops. Searching for teachers in your geographic area will significantly narrow down your choices.



The National Qigong Association (NQA) offers these guidelines when looking for a qigong teacher: “Keep in mind the following criteria for choosing a qualified instructor: what is their background and experience; are they of good character; do they treat everyone fairly and with respect; do they live what they teach; do they refrain from making wild, unsubstantiated claims; do they encourage and bring out a student's highest potential? While keeping these points in mind, remember to trust your intuition in finding an instructor who is right for you.”

I agree with these guidelines with the caveat that you must remember your teacher is human and not a perfect being. You must not put them above you as this will create a skewed relationship and you will likely be disappointed. Even the best teachers make mistakes and can be a little zany or flaky. This is a part of the experience and learning opportunity that comes with having a teacher. You may even notice that sometimes their words may not match their behavior. Remember your teacher is learning, changing and evolving along with you.

An “imperfect” teacher may actually be one that activates the deepest insights and the best opportunities for you to see yourself more clearly. These instances can lead you to more liberation and empowerment. It is one of the gifts of having a teacher.

☯
“To lead others, one must find
one’s own direction.”

– CHUANG TZU

Of greatest importance is that you not surrender yourself to your teacher. Do not become a zealous disciple. Explore your doubts and trust your wisdom. Remember that you are at the helm, and the designer of your own life, which includes choosing or staying with a teacher.

It is recommended that you try out a few classes to get to know a teacher and some of the students. There should not be any obligation to continue if it’s not a fit. If you decide to keep practicing, be open to exploring new ideas and taking full advantage of your teachers’ training.

If the teacher and the system he or she teaches appears to be in alignment with your goals, you are fortunate. The next step is to decide whether it is time to undertake a consistent daily practice. The NQA website states: “It is recommended by

experienced teachers to stay with a form for at least 100 days. A consistent practice is the most important asset you can develop.” When beginners ask, “What is the most important aspect of practicing Qigong?” The answer is always . . . “just do it.”





What is a Gong?

“Gong” is a Chinese word that is often generally translated to mean cultivation or work. In qigong, martial arts, and other practices, accomplishing a Gong is considered the most effective way to truly change old patterns and integrate new ones. A Gong consists of doing a chosen practice for a pre-selected, consecutive number of days.



Length of a Gong: Often 100 days is chosen, as the maximum benefit will be realized. Some teachers tell us that the first 40 days are needed to release old physical, mental and emotional patterns/habits. The next 60 days are to establish, integrate and stabilize new supportive and healthy patterns. After 100-days the new patterns easily become part of your new way of being.

It is common to hear of 7, 28 and 40-day Gongs. If you are not sure you want to undertake 100 days, then try a shorter Gong to see what effects and benefits you notice. This can be an excellent method for gaining courage, resolve and insight into what it takes to accomplish a 100-day Gong. A shorter Gong can also be helpful when exploring a new practice.

Whichever length you choose for your first Gong, I recommend that you do not miss even one day, if you are desirous of obtaining the most benefit. But of course, it is up to you. Some teachers say it is OK to skip a day here and there, but for me dedicating myself to spend time each day with my practice made it much more powerful. I learned a lot about the practice I chose, my inner landscape and discipline.

PICKING A PRACTICE

For your first Gong, I suggest you pick a practice length that you can easily accomplish; 20-45 minutes each day is enough to achieve benefits. You may choose to do the breathing exercises, or Lift Qi Up Pour Qi Down, or a series from the Body Mind Method such as Crane Necks, Bend the Body, and Hip Rotations. A different practice or a combination of practices is fine, too.

However, doing the same practice each day, especially for your first Gong is best so that you can master that particular practice. Later on you can mix and match more and increase the length of your Gong practice to 60+ minutes. If you are faced with an illness or emotional upset, undertaking a practice of an hour or more can help support you in reclaiming a more balanced state.

WHEN TO PRACTICE

You can practice anytime you like. Find a time that is best for your schedule and try to set that time aside for your daily practice. For me, first thing in the morning is best, before breakfast, on an empty stomach. I like to start the day feeling grounded, calm and centered.

Many years ago I was deeply inspired by a fellow practitioner who is a CEO of a large local company, father of two young ones, and active in the community. He gets up in the morning before the rest of the family to practice for one hour. After the kids go to bed, he practices again for one hour. He has arranged his schedule



“Time is a created thing. To say
‘I don’t have time,’ is like saying,
‘I don’t want to.’”

– LAO TZU

because the benefits he derives are so important to him. If he can do it, most of us certainly can.

Think about the variety of things we do each and every day to take care of ourselves: brushing our teeth, taking a shower, eating, walking the dog, and so on. You can think of your practice as one of those everyday activities.

KEEPING TRACK

Some people like to use a chart or calendar to mark each practice with something like a smiley face or flower; others find that intimidating. Use a method that is supportive of your nature.



Be sure to approach your practice with light-heartedness—have fun. We don't need take our Gongs (nor ourselves) too seriously. One of our Chinese teachers used to encourage us with this well-known marketing slogan: Just do it!



What Students Are Saying

Barry Blackburn: Effortlessly in “The Zone”



Qigong students sharing their experience is an inspiring way to learn more about the many possible ways that qigong can enhance your life. We were delighted to hear about Barry’s experience with his 100-day gong. I found it particularly meaningful as Barry is no stranger to working with qi. He is a serious practitioner of internal arts. His smile says a lot—it is wonderful to have him and his wife Carol in our groups. Here’s Barry’s description:

At the time of this writing I am on the 90th day of a 100-day “gong”, consisting of a daily Zhineng Breathing and Lift Chi Up Pour Chi Down practice. As a 15-year serious Tai Chi Chu’an student, I have noticed a couple of effects of this gong:

When practicing a Tai Chi form, I find myself being almost effortlessly in “the zone”, where intention leads chi, bodily movements follow chi, and where “moving stillness” can be experienced. Tai Chi “postures” have associated with them one of two qualities -either expanding or condensing. The expanding and condensing (e.g., “puuusshh” and “puuulll”), that are a big component of Lift Chi Up Pour Chi Down and other practices in this system, have helped me to more easily express the quality of a particular posture.



All in all I have found this practice to have a beneficial effect on my other “internal arts” practices.

—BARRY BLACKBURN

Akino Tsuchiya: Qi is Like a Best Friend



Last year, I decided to try Tai Chi and started searching for a local class when somehow Martha's Qigong website showed up. What is qigong? It took no time for me to figure out that qigong is what we call Kikou in Japanese. I had not tried qigong before but it sounded good to me. Plus, I felt an instant connection with Martha without even talking to or meeting her. I immediately contacted Martha and shortly after found myself in a classroom surrounded by wonderful people like Martha, Leonard and all her students. I still remember leaving my first class extremely relaxed (as if all of my muscles decided to take a break) and asking myself, "What has just happened to me?!"

During the first class, I felt a strong connection with nature, which filled me with an overwhelming sense of gratitude. Then I noticed that tears were running down my face and kept flowing no matter how much I tried to stop. I've never cried that much with such feelings of happiness and peace. I didn't know such a thing was even possible. What an interesting and powerful experience that was!

The very next day I went for my usual walk on the nearby trail where rabbits and birds are the typical creatures that I see. But that day was different. I saw a duck out of nowhere who seemed to be totally fine with my existence and later a coyote who stood and stared at me in the middle of the trail. I was a little scared, but more intrigued. The sky seemed bluer and the color of flowers seemed more vivid than usual. I asked myself, "Is this because of the qigong practice yesterday?" "What is qigong?"

Next thing you know, I surrounded myself with 3 books and 3 DVDs on different styles of qigong because I wanted to know everything about it (my habit). A



few weeks into it, I was feeling crappy as if different qi was having a fistfight in me. I was also utterly confused with all the information I consumed from random reading. Thankfully, Martha advised me to stick to a simpler practice and stop reading and thinking so much! What wonderful and wise advice that was. I decided not to “figure out” more about qigong or to expect some results from qigong. Instead, I decided to simply acknowledge that qi is there and to be open to it.

Since then, I’ve done a 100-day gong of the breathing exercises and am currently doing another gong using a series from the Mind/Body Method. Since I started qigong, ‘relaxation’ has become one of my main intentions. “Relax” . . . what a simple, yet sometimes difficult task! We tend to consume ourselves in our busy daily lives and forget the importance of just being relaxed.

With my teaching job, I commute to San Francisco weekly in the Spring and Fall. Monday is a particularly long day for me, starting with the alarm at 3:40AM, a 50-minute drive to the SD airport to catch the first morning flight, a 30-minute ride on the subway, walk through busy downtown, working online from the hotel room before finally heading to the University to teach on-campus classes for 6 hours. By the time I go back to my hotel room at night, I feel as if I have just run a mini marathon! But qigong has taught me to find moments of relaxation even during these busy days. For example, when I leave home in the early morning and see the moon mysteriously smiling at me, I say hello and compliment her on her beauty and we have a talk. At the airport, I consciously enjoy every sip of the otherwise ordinary cup of coffee. On the way to the University, I take the long path only so that I can stop by the Grace Cathedral where I sit for a few minutes and admire its beautiful stained glass windows. During a class break, I purposely leave the campus to have time for myself, often accompanied by a cup of tea. When I have

more time, I simply sit under a tree at a nearby park and feel the breeze as I listen to wild parrots flying over me. When I'm in the hotel room, I make sure to find some time for meditation or qigong. It can be a bit challenging to practice with the constant background noise of the city, but it always re-calibrates me.

Some days I can keep my intention well, and some days, well not so much. But I feel great knowing that qi is always there like one's best friend. A year and a half into my relationship with qigong, it has become an important part of my life and I look forward to continuing my practice. I truly appreciate Martha for all of her guidance, love and help. What a precious gift she is to me and to all of us.

Abundant Qi to all of you!

Sandy Jackson: Quietness & Ease

I started attending qigong classes with Martha 4-5 years ago, thinking it would be a nice alternative/adjunct to my yoga practice. And it is. I must say the beginning



wasn't exactly stellar! It was a challenge learning the form. Being the type of person who likes precise instruction, it was a little too 'loose' for my 'striving addicted' Western mind. But I stuck with it and now 5 years later I am still discovering how beneficial 'loose' can be, and how striving can create turmoil in my life. In the beginning it was enough for me to come to class and have Martha lead me and the others through LQUPQD. Then there was an internal shift and I really wanted to

'get' qigong. I began a more consistent home practice, attended qigong immersions and brought more consciousness and awareness to the practice. Along the way I completed a 100-day gong with LQUPQD practice and am currently more



than halfway through a 100-day gong with ZBE practice. The benefits have been subtle and profound. There is a quietness and ease in my everyday life. At first I would look at the clock and see how much I could get done and how fast. Now I do my practice and everything falls into place as it needs to. And sometimes things just don't need to! My massage practice has benefitted also. Slowing down has allowed me to become more attuned to and curious about what is under my hands. A longtime client said recently, 'Your hands are so relaxed'. Music to my ears! Sharing before and after class offers another level of understanding. Martha's insights and responses to questions open up other channels of thought and inquiry.

There is always more . . . Qigong has become an important part of my life. It helps sustain me mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I know the more I practice the more benefits I will reap. Many thanks to Martha and Leonard for creating a special qi place for all of us.



About Qigong for Life with Martha Blane



Martha studied qigong and qi cultivation practices through internal martial arts and numerous styles of qigong. In 2003, Zhineng Qigong became her life study and passion. She received extensive training from qigong masters in China, Canada and the U.S.

Martha's focus is helping people live healthier and happier lives through the practice of qigong. You are invited to attend a class or workshop with her in San Diego, California or South Kona, Hawaii.

For more information or to subscribe to our monthly newsletter, go to www.Qigong-forLife.com



Resources

BOOKS

Life More Abundant, The Science of Zhineng Qigong

By Xiaoguan (Jane) Jin and Joseph Marcello

Basic Theories and Methods of Zhineng Qigong

By Master Yuantong Liu

Voyage to the Shore, Part 1

By Yuan Tze

The Healing Promise of Qi

By Roger Jahnke, O.M.D.

The Web That Has No Weaver: Understanding Chinese Medicine

By Ted Kaptchuk, O.M.D.

*Qigong Through the Seasons: How to Stay Healthy All Year with Qigong,
Meditation, Diet and Herbs*

By Ronald H. Davis

The Way of Qigong

By Kenneth S. Cohen

ARTICLES

A Conspiracy of Miracles: Qi, Spirit-Mind-Body, and the Transformation of Healthcare

By Roger Jahnke, O.M.D.

Demystifying Qi Gong

By Joseph Davis, LAc.

Nature As Last Resort, Qigong and Its Use to Combat Fatal Illness

An Interview with Pang Ming

Zhineng Qigong Treatment For 47,864 Cases (PDF)

Analysis of Effectiveness on Patients – Huaxia Zhineng Qigong Clinic

By Tian Yuancheng, Wu Wenhua and others, Huaxia Zhineng Qigong

Recovery Centre. Translated by Ooi Kean Hin, Island ZQ Centre (Feb. 2007)

WEBSITES

[The National Qigong Association](#)

[Abundant Life Qigong Intelligence \(Zhineng Qigong\) Center – Jane Jin](#)

[Medicine Begins with Me – Chilel Qigong, Frank Chan & Eva Lew](#)

[Life Qi Center – Yuantong Liu](#)

[The Chi Center – Mingtong Gu](#)