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THE SEATED EIGHT BROCADES

First Brocade: Beating the Heavenly Drum

(aka Click Teeth to Assemble Gods)

1. Sit cross legged & create a yin-yang (taiji) mudra with your hands.
2. Close the eyes and quiet the mind.
3. Knock the teeth 36x.
4. Take 9 relaxing breaths: inhale w/nose, exhale w/mouth
5. Beat the heavenly drum 24x alternating sides with 24 on each side

Second Brocade: Shake the Heavenly Pillar

1. Grasp hands into taiji mudra.
2. Turn head left, then right- 24x to each side
3. Allow shoulders to gently sway with your neck.
4. Move slowly and smoothly.

Third Brocade: Red Dragon Stirs the Sea

1. Lift arms up above head and make fists with thumbs outside.
2. Circle tongue 18x to left then 18x to right
3. Rinse saliva back and forth 36x
4. Divide into 3 parts and swallow 3x making a loud gulp each time
5. Sink the qi into the lower dantien

Fourth Brocade: Rub the Jingmen (Mingmen)

1. Hold the breath and rub hands together until hot. Exhale when hands are hot. (Or, can hold breath throughout the next step).
2. Rub the low back up and down 36x.
3. Grasp hands into taiji mudra.
4. Hold the breath and visualize the fire from the heart like a flame lowering to warm the lower dantien. Feel the warmth there.

Fifth Brocade: Single Windlass (Pulley)

1. Left palm on lower dantien, right back of hand on mingmen (below L2).
2. Turn to left and wind shoulder in a circle as you turn 36x. The head follows the movement of the shoulder.
3. Come back to center and switch hands.
4. Turn right and wind shoulder 36x.

Sixth Brocade: Double Pass Windlass

1. Backs of both hands rest on low back.
2. Move shoulders like rowing a boat 36x.
3. Inhale a deep breath, hold the breath, and visualize heat rise from the lower dantien up the back, past the area btwn the shoulder blades, up to the brain. - up Dh channel - leave in brain (Qi)

Seventh Brocade: Hands Support the Void/Heaven

1. Stretch feet out in front. Hold breath and rub palms until hot.
2. Palms in prayer position- exhale 5x with "he" sound directing qi out of heart down Ren channel.
3. Interlace palms at chest with palms facing earth. Inhale and raise arms up; twist hands so palms face heaven. Visualize qi rising from huiyin to Du 20 as hands rise.
4. Exhale and lower hands back down to chest
5. Repeat 9x
6. Grasp hands into taiji mudra.

Eighth Brocade: Grasping with Hooks

1. With legs still outstretched, exhale & move hands down outsides of legs to feet.
2. Grab Kidney 1, inhale & hold breath, rub & massage in circles. (4 or pulse)
3. Exhale, then inhale back up to vertical position. → pull hand up yin channels
or 655
4. Repeat 12x

Closing Exercises

1. Return to cross-legged posture. Quiet the mind.
2. Red dragon stirs sea, rinse, then swallow in 3 loud gulps.
3. Cross hands and hold opposite shoulders. Shake body back & forth to disperse & invigorate.
4. Microcosmic orbit or other meditation.

The Seated Eight Brocades

The purpose of my talk is to demonstrate how Daoist inner alchemy exercises, by their incorporation of various therapeutic modalities, are often also inherently medicinal practices. I have selected the Seated Eight Brocades to discuss because they are both powerful and well-known. They are a good representation of many exercises found in Daoist spiritual practice that also possess medicinal effects.

Like most exercise sets, it is difficult to know exactly when the Seated Eight Brocades were first practiced. Some sources say that were first found or mentioned in Dao Hong Jing's *Record on Cultivating Longevity*, dated some time between 452-536 CE. Scholars believe that the earliest text and illustrations of the Seated Eight Brocades was found in the *Xiuzhen Shishu* (Ten Books on Cultivating Perfection) that dates from between the 13th and 14th centuries. There are subsequent mentions of the Seated Eight Brocades in various ancient Daoist texts, ^{as well} such as the *Chifeng Sui*, *Neiwai Gong Tushuo Jiyao*, *Zunsheng Baijian* and *Xiuling Yaozi*.

These exercises alchemically prepare the body for the microcosmic orbit and the immortal embryo, and thus are practiced for health, longevity and ultimately, immortality. This practice is the daoyin of neidan, meaning the guiding and pulling, or stretching exercises that prepare one for inner alchemy practice.

The practice as a whole moves the qi through the body to alleviate qi stagnation and tension, and calms the mind to help with meditative focus. Traditionally it was said to eliminate not just physical illness, but also demonic influences.

The direct purpose of this practice is not to create an alchemical elixir, but rather to use the yi (intent) to guide the qi and breath along specific pathways. The qi is guided to various anatomical locations with the goal of burning away physical, spiritual and psycho-emotional imbalances. Inner alchemy can be achieved once these negative imbalances and/or demonic influences are burned away.

It is clear from the exercises that all three Daoist practice goals, which are physical and psycho-emotional health, then longevity, and ultimately immortality, are all incorporated into the Seated Eight Brocades.

The following is a summary of the physical practice of the Seated Eight Brocades and the purposes of brocade. After this, I will discuss the various therapeutic modalities or benefits that are incorporated in the practice.

1. Clicking the Teeth to Assemble the Gods, aka Beating the Heavenly Drum
The practice begins in a seated meditation position. The practitioner begins to turn his or her consciousness inward and quiets the mind. Clicking the teeth and tapping the fingers on the head summons the internal gods and spirits to let them know that alchemical work is beginning.

2. Shaking the Heavily Pillar

The second brocade involves turning the head to the left and right. This loosens the neck so that the qi can more easily flow up the back of the neck and down the front during microcosmic orbit practice. In addition, it loosens the throat to facilitate the swallowing of qi, in the form of a combination of breath and saliva.

3. Red Dragon Stirs the Seas

The third brocade involves circulating the tongue around the mouth which is said to begin to potentiate and circulate qi in the body in a specific alchemical pattern associated with the "firing times" (huohou), which are considered the times that accelerate the process of the heating of the elixir of immortality. The firing times can be seen as time that transcends time.

4. Rubbing the Jingmen, or Essence Gate

Jing is the body's genetic blueprint that gives rise to one's constitutional strengths and weaknesses. It is also responsible for how quickly or slowly one ages. Jing is stored in the kidneys, and here the adept rubs the low back over the kidney area to stimulate the area and to begin the process of lowering the fire of the heart to meet with the water of the kidneys.

5. and 6. Single and Double Windlass or Pulley

Brocades five and six involve moving the shoulders either singly or together in rotation. The rolling of one shoulder and then the other helps to open up the front of the body to facilitate qi flow up the Ren channel. Alternating the rolling both shoulders helps open the flow of qi up the spine to the head. Thus, these two practices facilitate the flow of qi along the microcosmic orbit.

7. Holding up the Sky, aka Interlacing the Fingers and Pressing Up

This exercise begins with the ancient traditional healing sound "he" for the heart. It is explicitly therapeutic, as dispelling heat from the heart helps calm negative feelings and motions from the mind. The upward stretch with hands interlaced above the head again facilitates the smooth flow of qi up the back and down the front of the body for microcosmic orbit practice.

8. Grasping with Hooks

This exercise is a forward bend that has the adept stick out the legs in front of him or her and reach down towards the Kidney 1 (yongquan, bubbling spring) acupuncture points at the bottoms of the feet. Therefore, the adept has moved from working with heart fire, to stimulating kidney water (the name of the point explicitly refers to water). This balances fire and water, the two quintessential yin and yang qi forces in the body.

To end the practice, the adept swallows a mixture of breath and saliva, which is said to create qi or energy that harmonizes and purifies the energy of the body as it descends to the abdomen. It can be seen as the last internal cleanse before

deep meditative alchemical practices. Swallowing qi in the form of a combination of breath and saliva is a common ancient Daoist alchemical practice.

I was taught that alchemy is the redemption of spirit from matter. This practice begins with ^{the} matter, the physical tissues as its starting point, which is the starting point of the alchemical path.

Breath is life, and therefore breathing into an area is bringing more life to it; is making it or the area a priority. From a health and healing point of view, the body gets rid of what is no longer useful. Therefore, when beginning alchemical practices, we can decide to make something no longer useful if we want to dispel pathogens or perhaps decide to make something useful to strengthen functions. For example, if we are not using our bodies in healthy ways, the body may see something as not useful and begin to allow it to break down. An example is when one loses his or her life's meaning and is no longer "standing for something," osteoporosis or leg muscle flaccidity may set in.

The Seated Eight Brocades feature the following therapeutic modalities:

1.—Self-massage:

Very likely a precursor to acupuncture; people would rub certain areas to alleviate pain, for example.

Balances yin & yang and readjusts internal organ function (including blood pressure, insulin levels, cortisol secretion and heart rhythm).

Stimulates qi and blood in the jingluo (channels).

Regulates & strengthens muscles, joints & synovial fluids.

Activates blood circulation/dispels stasis.

Bringing heat energy to the hands to radiate through an area and bring healing to that area.

Rubbing the "jingmen" area of the low back relaxes the muscles there and brings energy to the kidneys, which are the body's batteries.

Tapping the Jade Pillow area on the skull, which is approximately located at the Gall Bladder 20 points, awakens and opens our senses to reality, to the present—helps us to "see" differently.

2.—Daoyin:

Daoyin literally means "stretching & pulling." Daoyin is often translated as "gymnastics."

While massage helps to open the barriers and smooth the circulation of the qi, blood and body fluids from the outside in, daoyin serves to eliminate blockages and

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coagulations of energy from within the body. Both help to reestablish and maintain health.

Daoyin involves two other therapeutic modalities: visualization and breathwork.

The *Daoyin tu*, from 168 BCE, represents daoyin in its therapeutic aspect. It shows pictures of men and women, with explanations of the therapeutic benefits of the postures they are in.

The *Daoyin jing*, dated to the 4th century, assembles a variety of physical exercises aimed at nourishing life in general, but also deals with specific practices for curing diseases.

The loosening of the limbs and proper guidance of qi is one of the essential functions of daoyin.

The *Huangdi neijing*, (The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic) in the *Suwen*, mentions daoyin in several places. In it, daoyin is a form of therapy in the same vein as acupuncture, massage, and pharmacology.

Daoyin exercises were well established as a form of therapy around the third and second centuries BCE, in the Qin and Former Han dynasties.

The medical value of traditional daoyin exercises has caused them to be classified as part of traditional medical literature and among Daoist "yangsheng" or longevity practices.

Turning the head left and right stimulates the area that traps wind (just below the neck), and thus allows the body to dispel wind, or external pathogenic factors that can accumulate there.

Twisting side to side with the single and double lass (pulley) exercises massages the yin organs and promotes peristalsis in the yang organs.

The double lass stimulates the points on the Urinary Bladder channel that are considered back doors directly into the yin organs (back shu points).

The last brocade, Grasping with Hooks, opens the rest of the back and dispels qi stagnation from the low back and hips, which allows for a more comfortable and longer meditation session.

3.—Breathwork:

Breathing has always been a central feature of cultivation practice. The Zhuangzi may have the earliest mention of breathing practice, dating back to the fourth century BCE. It also sees qi as breath, as demonstrated in the expression: blowing out the old and drawing in the new; wherein we exhale old energy and inhale new energy.

The lungs are the yin organ that connects the internal body with the external environment, and are depicted as a protective canopy for all the internal organs. Sealing in the breath infuses qi energy into the area.

Deep breathing can be seen as lowering the wind of the breath to fan the fire (mingmen) of the kidneys. Keeps the fire burning there rather than the fire rising to cause heated emotions in the middle dantien/chest area.

Deep breathing causes the blood to become more alkaline, and leads to a reduction in the release of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. In other words, deep breathing helps switch off the body's fight or flight response.

Deep breathing is the one conscious link we have to our nervous systems. You cannot breathe slowly and deeply and also have a flight or flight response at the same time.

Holding the breath helps open or dilate the sensory portals for spirit work; helps dissolve mental foginess, and to enhance perception.

4.—Sound:

Sound therapy is an integral part of daoyin, dating back to the time of the Zhuangzi, the fourth century BCE.

Even the Dao De Jing mentions healing sounds. Chapter 29 says "Some puff (xu) and some huff (chui)...for this reason, the sage eliminates all excess, all flourishes and all luxury." Because xu is also the name of a deity said to reside in the heart, some believe that these sounds may have also been used to invoke various body divinities or deities.

The main focus of the well-known Six Healing sounds was medical rather than meditative.

Healing sound practices use breath and sound to cleanse and purify the body via the exchange of old qi for new qi.

Sound vibrates the organ which serves the dual purpose of bringing qi to that organ and moving stuck qi (stagnant qi) from that organ.

One ancient text (the Shangqing huangting wuzang liufu zhenren yuzhou jing) has the creator god of the Daoist religion (called the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Being) teach the Yellow Emperor that sound therapy cures disease by dispersing qi on the exhalation, and tonifying the qi of an organ on the inhalation.

Different sounds require a difference in the positioning of the lips, teeth, throat, chest and abdomen, which therefore leads to a different effect on the internal organs.

Sound is said to strengthen the psycho-spiritual "agents" associated with each organ, such as the hun, po, yi, zhi and shen.

In this exercise set, the heart healing sound is used to balance fire & water.

Loud swallowing is practiced to direct the energy down.

5.—Meditation: Qigong of the Mind:

Includes breathwork and visualization.

Guided qi circulation is a part of many Daoist meditative practices: the yi housed in the spleen guides the qi. In other words, visualization is used to guide healing energy to various places in the body.

Numerous studies have demonstrated how meditation relaxes the muscles and psychosomatic tension, lowers blood pressure, & improves digestion.

6.—Knocking the teeth:

Teeth are connected to jing essence, and reflect one's constitutional energy. Teeth are considered the external extension of bone, which is related to the kidneys. Represent the containment of marrow (like bone). Some immune cells are created in bone. Stimulates the immune system.

7.—Rolling the tongue:

Stimulates salivation to create a pure yin medicinal elixir to heal the body. Saliva also contains immune factors. Boosts moisture and yin unlike most qigong forms. The tongue can represent the heart (and especially the tongue tip for tongue diagnosis), as it is said that the heart opens to the tongue. Therefore, you are stimulating the energy of the heart when you circle the tongue, and as you quench the heart fire with the saliva, you are blending the energies of fire and water. Also when you are under stress, the mouth is dry. The presence and production of saliva represents the parasympathetic nervous system's feed and breed or rest and digest relaxation response throughout the body. Thinner saliva is said to benefit the upper jiao (chest area) and jin or thin fluids, while thicker viscosity is said to benefit the middle and lower jiao (digestive and urogenital systems) and ye or thicker fluids. The saliva can now be used to produce hormones, blood, and body fluids.

Again Plus, rolling the tongue boosts the moistening component that qigong and meditation lack.

8. Proper Posture:

Postural alignment sets the desired energetic frequencies in place. Another way to say this is that posture attracts particular frequencies and helps direct energetic vectors.

The body is an antenna, so we fine tune posture to receive better (to receive spirit, etc) and to open up to vibrations and dimensions not normally available to us. Upright posture will align the three cavities of the body used in alchemical work: the lower, middle and upper dantien. The three dantien are mediated by the spine. Nerve firing changes when you change the curves in the spine. It causes relaxation and changes feedback into the brain, as well as allows better access to regions of the body, ~~Changes the way spinal column, in particular the spinal cord, and nerves fire into the brain~~ and is said to promote better access to other parts of the brain not normally accessed.

In the Seated 8 Brocades: Sitting seals qi in the lower dantien. Creates a receptacle or vessel/basin for the collection of energy there. That basin helps us store enough water to trap the healthy fire for healing.. The spine is like a dowsing rod or divining rod drawing qi up from the earth. Feeling grounded is a prerequisite for qigong and meditation. You are grounding qi in the lower dantien by sitting for qigong practice. If you are grounded, which is sending your qi down, the energy of the earth will begin to rise into you. (Every force has an equal and opposite force reaction).

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