

GENTLE CHI™

Progressive Movements Into Balancing Your Life

Includes

***A Progressive Movement Program to Help Support Twelve Step Treatment
and Rehabilitation***



<http://www.gentlechi.org>

© pkeller/ ASKA Press 2007

May the pure light within you, guide your way on...

From The Incredible String Band's "Sunshine Song".

NOTICE

Any material expressed in this booklet including the section Philosophy, Principles and Practice is not to be taken as an endorsement or denial of any religion or religious practice. The progressive movements, meditations, philosophy, principles and practices are intended to complement, support and enhance the beneficial work of established 12 Step treatment and rehabilitation programs. These movements can be experienced as mentally calming and physically invigorating, in and of themselves, regardless of one's spiritual beliefs. The author, ASKA and any affiliated organizations incorporating this program do not make any claims or assertions with regard to its practice or benefit as results can vary with each individual. All participants are encouraged to proceed slowly and to moderate activity as appropriate upon one's individual ability or limitations.

In appreciation to Calista Jayne

Table of Contents

Section One

Philosophy (Principles and Practice)	4
Progressive Movements	6
How the practice complements and supports the 12 Step Program	7

Section Two

The 70% Percent Rule	8
Standing postures	8
Centering	9
Deepening the Breath	9

Section Three

Connecting Meditations with Step 11 and 12	9
Mindfulness Training (Meditations 1-5)	10
Scan-Release-Revitalize	13
Physical examples (tightness-relaxation)	
Mental-emotional (anxiety-trigger event)	
a. Asking for internal guidance	
b. Stepping back and looking	
c. Releasing to your higher power	

Section four

Appendix	14
Definitions	14
Viewing the body energetically	16
Additional Meditations (6-10)	18
Suggested Readings (and partial source material)	23
Journal/Notes/Questions	24

Philosophy Principles and Practice

Gentle Chi™ draws energetically upon several movement arts including chi gung, t'ai chi ch'uan, aikido, yoga and karate-do. The aim of Gentle Chi™ is to reach a state of mind in which the external world does not affect your inner peace. It is a state of mind, which has been described as becoming un-self-conscious. To be present in the moment, in the Tao is to process the world spontaneously.

The journey toward inner peace is a process of **undoing the blocks** to your inner self and reaching a quiet still point within. The idea is that you have already within you a part of your mind that can awaken as if it had been sleeping. Negative emotions such as anxiety, anger and fear are part of the blocks that keep us emotionally shut down. Undoing these blocks involves letting go of your need to be right and your need to find others wrong. From this inner connection, the external world is seen without judgment. Seeing without judgment closes the perceived gap between you and others. As this gap is closed feelings of separation, fear and anxiety diminish into the background and what surfaces into the foreground is a feeling of connectedness. Experiencing the world from your quiet inner still point allows for an internal shift in your perception, as you are **not necessarily changing the world, but changing how you perceive the world.**

When we teach kids and adults karate we sometimes role-play to illustrate how they are 100% responsible for their reaction to a situation. How they react is seen as a choice they make. It can be very empowering. For example, if they get angry and upset we want them to see that they allowed themselves to become angry and upset. From an internal perspective it brings being a victim into a different light. You have choices in how to deal with a bully; you do what you normally do to take care of yourself in any particular situation. You have a choice about being angry as well. Important to understand is that anger is a choice, and that you have the ability to make a different choice. Anger is the result of an interpretation you have made of the bully's actions and your anger is a reaction to what the bully did. However, you can deal with the bully the same way you normally would externally without having any internal anger. Instead of thinking, you made me angry; you look at it as I allowed you to make me angry. I will stop this bully from bullying me, but I can do this without anger. Anger and fear are blocks to energy flow.

Coming to the idea that you have a choice about your feelings is a process. When your house is on fire you get out of the house. If you are in an abusive relationship or recovering from one, you want to make sure the abuse is stopped and you are protected and in a place of safety. Once you feel safe and secure, at some point, when you are ready, you can let go of the past and mentally and emotionally move on. Taking responsibility for your feelings, you can move past your anger and past any judgment. You will want to do this for your own benefit and well-being. Ultimately, your feelings, positive or negative, are your feelings, and how you feel can be seen as a choice you make.

In karate-do we teach respect and courtesy. The underlying idea is that **ideas do not leave their source**, which is in the mind. In fact, in order to experience respect you must give it to others. In giving it, you also receive it. Unlike material possessions, where the more you give the less you have; the more you give, the more you have. Such virtues are abundant and draw upon an unending supply. Chi needs to flow in the

same way. As you open the energy gates within you, you become a vehicle for expressing the energy. Like a river or stream you release the blocks as if they were dams holding back the flowing water. As the blocks are removed, the water flows freely. As the energy flows within, you connect to the abundant energy or chi that is all about you.

In order to experience the connection to the quiet still point within, one technique is to practice being in a state of **mind like still water** (*Mizu no kokoro*). Nishiyama in his work, Karate, refers to the need to make the mind calm like the surface of undisturbed water.

“Smooth water reflects accurately the image of all objects within its range, and if the mind is kept in this state, apprehension of the opponent’s movements will be immediate and accurate, and one’s responses, both defensive and offensive, will be appropriate and adequate. On the other hand, if the surface of the water is disturbed, the images it reflects will be distorted, if the mind is preoccupied with thoughts of attack or defense, it will not apprehend the opponent’s intentions, creating an opportunity for the opponent to attack”.

Becoming un-self-consciousness results in the release of fear. Depending on your perception and interpretation of your circumstances, fear can be more or less acute, whether you are a warrior or not, this applies to everyone. Nevertheless, as your fear lessens so does your tension and stress both of which interfere with spontaneity and can cause hesitation and perceived loss. The goal is to develop the ability through self-discipline and practice to remain calm, fully aware and connected to your inner self no matter what external chaos is happening. Your practice involves your deeper instincts to trust your inner voice and be guided by your higher wisdom.

The un-self-conscious state of mind is called no mind or Mushin. Mushin would allow you to be spontaneous as you are coming from a deeper place, a place without form, a place without time, a place that is not a place. It is beyond the normal mind to grasp. There is no conflict because there is no resistance. In nothingness there is nothing opposing to bang up against. Spontaneity can flow naturally. This would be a state of mind without judgment, in the present moment, in the now as there is no past to feel guilt, nor future to fear. There is only now.

“(Modern Man) is completely modern only when he has come to the very edge of the world, leaving behind him all that has been discarded and outgrown, and acknowledging that he stands before a void out of which all things may grow”

C. G. Jung

Progressive Movements

“May I be Mindful this day, this hour, this minute, always”.

Rolling/Active Stretching/Muscle Activation

Movement Preparation (Pulsing/Standing/Shaking/Scan-Release/70% Rule/Right-Left Nostril Breathing)

Core Body Work (Stabilization and Balance)

Pushing, Pulling, Rotation, Substantial-Insubstantial, Seamless Integration (Flow)

Visualization exercises

Yin-yang principle /expansion-contraction/lighter-heavier/brighter-darker/intensity (+ or -).

Shaking Leaf Chi Gung

Ba Duan Jin (Eight Pieces of Brocade)

Pressing the Heavens with the Hands

Drawing the Bow and Letting the Arrow Fly

Separating Heaven and Earth

Tilting Side to Side

Wise Owl Gazes Backward

Punching with a Fierce Gaze

Pressing the Earth with Two Hands

Bouncing

Longevity (chi gung)

Energy Gates

Dragon-Tiger (Chi Gung)

Heaven and Earth (chi gung)

Playing in the Clouds

Movements from Yang Modified Short Form (24)

Quiet Standing/Wild Horse Parts its Mane

White Crane Spreads its Wings

Brush Knee Twist and Step

Playing the Lute (Pipa)

Step Back and Repulse the Monkey

Grasping the Sparrows Tail (ward off, roll back, press and push)

Single Whip/Wave Hands Like Clouds/Single Whip

Pat the High Horse

Scoop and Kick with Right Heel

Box Ears with Both Fists

Turn and Kick with Left Foot

Snake Creeps Down Left Foot

Golden Rooster Stands on Left Leg

Snake Creeps Down Right Foot

Golden Rooster Stands on Right Leg

Fair Lady Plays the Shuttle

Seek Bottom Needle

Fan Through the Back

Turn and Back Fist/Parry and Punch

Clearing, Scoop and Back to Quiet Standing

How the practice complements and supports the 12 Steps

Connecting to the 12 Steps¹

There have been many studies and research reports that support the calming benefits of t'ai chi ch'uan and chi gung practice. Gentle Chi™, which includes t'ai chi and chi gung practices, can enhance and complement the 12 Steps. I believe they can be seen to connect in the following ways:

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

1: The goal and purpose in the practice of Gentle Chi™ is to move from being out of balance to being in balance. When your energy is out of balance your life is difficult to manage and maintain. The movements are structured to help achieve balance physically, emotionally and mentally.

Step 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

2: You recognize and understand that Chi or life force is a reflection of this Greater Power, a Power that is greater than your self.

Step 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

3: You make a decision to accept this greater power by not fighting it, non-resistance (the yin principle of yielding).

Step 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of our selves.

4: You scan and release physically, mentally and emotionally as you progressively work the movements. This is an ongoing process of stepping back and honestly looking at yourself. This process of self-observation looks at the underlying thoughts you believe to be true.

Step 5. Admitted to God, to our selves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

5: You strive to be honest with yourself and to the best of your ability with others.

Step 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

6: You are ready to give up all resistance.

Step 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

7: Maintain a willingness to connect and to ask for help and guidance.

Step 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

8/9. You connect to your inner self, to your higher wisdom and from there extend compassion, love and kindness to yourself and to others.

Step 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

10: You maintain a vigilant mindfulness always and everywhere.

Step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His Will for us and the power to carry that out.

11. You practice actively and energetically to be in touch with your inner quiet still point, connecting with your higher self or God, as you know Him.

Step 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

12: Once awakened and in touch with this Power you move from this center and connectedness helping others directly to the best of your ability and by example.

¹ Alcoholic Anonymous, Fourth Edition, Copyright 2001. Alcoholic Anonymous World Services, Inc.

70% Rule

We become conditioned to put a great deal of effort into our work and our performance standards and expectations are high. There is a drive to go 100% plus. The 70% Rule is to reduce that effort by 30%. Within the remaining 70% you can energetically go safely and gently full out. Relaxed and without the tension that would be part of a 100% plus effort you would go through the movements. The Rule would apply if you were injured too. If your injury causes a 50% reduction, then you move within 70% of the 50%. As your range of motion increases you would increase accordingly following the 70% Rule.

Standing Postures

There are many but we will practice with three or four variations. They all share some basics. Hold the feet parallel and about shoulder distance apart. Be comfortable. Keep the tongue in the roof of your mouth as this completes an energy circle in the body (microcosmic orbit). Relax the knees slightly. The space under the armpits is slightly open. Bring your back straight with the tailbone pointed downward, palms face backward. Let the head gently rise upward (Alexander Technique) and the spine will follow and stretch slightly upward too as you sink into your stance feeling rooted by extending your awareness down through your feet. Eyes can be shut, partially shut or open. The chest opens and shoulders round slightly. The stomach muscles relax too. Breathe from the belly and soften the body. Relate to the lower tantien located central to the body. Dissolve any tension as if ice to water and water to steam.

Centering

The concept includes integrating your whole being physically, mentally and emotionally. With these movements you are moving from the ground up through to your legs, up the spine and out your hands. Think in terms of spiraling energy. Your whole being is

engaged in the movement. You can stop and look at different components by zooming in and zooming out, but come back to feeling the entire movement. You can hold your center and still be yielding or non-resistant. The tree that bends in the wind survives with its roots intact. You can be flexible and maintain your core body stability and its relationship to the ground (grounding). In t'ai chi you balance opposing forces, pushing and yielding as needed to maintain your center.

Deepening the Breath

The breath is an important key to energy work. We want to deepen it naturally without strain. Without forcing the breath and with a continued smooth uninterrupted pattern of inhaling and exhaling try to add another half of a second to the inhale and do the same with the exhale. Like any muscle, we can with practice, expand our lung capacity by lengthening the breath. For example, if you timed your average breath from inhale to exhale at rest it may be about 15 seconds, 7.5 seconds inhaling and 7.5 seconds exhaling. Deepening it would add an additional half to 1 second to each side of the breath. Now your average breath would have increased to 16 or 17 seconds. This would be a significant benefit to oxygenating the body and thereby increasing your energy.

Connecting Meditation Practice with Steps 11 and 12

Step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His Will for us and the power to carry that out.

As mentioned earlier in connecting Step 11:

“... practice actively and energetically to be in touch with your inner quiet still point, connecting with your higher self or God as you know Him.”

Use the meditations to reinforce your commitment to the 12 Steps, particularly Step 11.

Step 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

One basic principle to understand in prayer and meditation is to see the connection that **giving and receiving are the same**; they occur simultaneously. This would be true for judgmental thoughts that blame or loving thoughts that heal. What you give you receive. You don't have to wait to get it, as it is reinforced the instant you give it. You do not have to bargain or make any deals. On the positive side, you can picture, visualize, and feel that you already have spiritual abundance and with an open and sincere heart rejoice knowing it is there. As your mind accepts, trusts and believes, it changes and consequently how you experience the world can change.

For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he...Proverbs 23:7

Mindfulness Training (Meditations)

“May I be mindful this day, this hour, this minute, always”.

Meditation exercises to calm the mind are useful. Understanding your fierce resistance is helpful. Yielding and merging your will to your Higher Power and allowing this Higher Power to guide you are essential to your spiritually awakening.

Meditation exercises are practiced with three objectives:

1. To calm your mind (preparation) and to bring the **problem from outside to inside**. The idea is that the world is viewed as an **outward reflection of an inward condition**. Any trigger event of anxiety and fear is viewed in terms of its opportunity to employ mindfulness, to work internally, as long as this can be done safely without danger to your physical being. You are not trying to change someone else. You are looking at your part. You are working on yourself.
2. To look at your fierce resistance without judging, just looking. Here is where you need to step back and self-observe. Look at yourself as if you are watching your twin or someone in a play or on a movie screen. You are not perfect; you are human and that is ok. We have defects; and these can be modified, changed and even transformed. They are empowered by your mind, your thoughts and beliefs. These thoughts and beliefs may be true or not true. We make assumptions and opinions about it. Keep an open mind and honestly look at yourself, free of judgment. Understand that you cannot know everything there is know to make a valid judgment. This is true for you or for anyone else. Self-observe how much resistance you have to give up your opinions, assessments and judgments. See the price you pay energetically to hold on to blaming others. “If only I had this.... If it wasn't for so and so.... If only he or she would...etc.
3. To let it go (healing level-detach your investment from any specific outcome, forgive and be forgiven). This is much easier to say than to do. Who would you be without your judgmental thoughts? If you stopped blaming yourself and others what would that feel like? There is freedom in letting go of grievances and you will feel better, happier.

It is easier often to forgive than to be forgiven; yet it is fatal to be willing to be forgiven by God and to be reluctant to be forgiven by men. To forgive and to be forgiven are the two points of holy magnificence and holy modesty; round these two centers the whole doctrine of largesse (generosity) revolves. (from a review in “Time and Tide”, 1941 by Charles Williams.)

Selected Meditations

There is value in calming the mind and going within. There are many helpful meditations. You can always start with breathing and posture. A single focus with eyes closed or opened or partially opened. Watching the breath, scanning the physical body, noting how you feel and looking at your thoughts or thought pictures, listening to sounds and chanting all can have great value in this process of settling. You can build on your success in calming yourself and anchor in the ability to get relaxed more quickly. You can do this while sitting or during movement.

Meditation One (5-15 minute sitting)

Alpha Omega

Sit (zazen) with your back straight in a chair or on some cushions with the legs crossed (lotus or semi lotus) or in seiza, tongue in the roof of your mouth. Hand mudra in front of the belly (lower tantien) fingers and thumb touching. Be comfortable. Begin breathing and slowly deepen your breath. On the inhale think Alpha and on the exhale Omega. Literally feel and watch the breath as you inhale and exhale. If your mind drifts, as it will, don't worry about it, as it is natural. Just recover your breathing, watching, feeling it enter and leave the body and thinking Alpha on the inhale and Omega on the exhale. One benefit in sitting meditation is that when something seems to want attention, physically, mentally or emotionally you can just watch it and not do anything. In time it generally passes. To gain freedom over your desires and aversions has great value. You can use other words if you prefer. For example, Sat Nam, in Sanskrit, Sat means Truth and Nam means Identity.

Meditation Two (5-15 minute sitting or standing)

Golden Light

Sitting as in Meditation One or using one of the Standing Postures breath in as if you are *breathing in through the top of your head a golden light. Picture that light filling every cell in your body from head to toe and radiating out from your body 6-12 inches. Mentally picture bringing in with the breath everything you need for healing and energizing. On the exhale breath out through the bottom of your feet down into the earth mentally letting go of whatever you don't need. Then breathe from the earth as if breathing through the bottom of your feet again visualizing filling your body from the feet to the head with a golden light. Mentally picture bringing in with the inhale everything you need. On the exhale breathe out through the top of your head and again mentally picture letting go of what you don't need. In this exercise you trust your higher wisdom to know what is needed when you inhale and what you don't need on the exhale.

Meditation Three (5-15 minute sitting, standing or on your back)

5 Star Breathing

Mentally bring your awareness to the lower tantien (about 2-3 inches below the navel and more or less centered in the body). Inhale as if breathing from your hands and feet to the lower tantien and exhale out from it. After a few breaths add the top of the head so that you are visualizing breathing through the top of your head (crown) and both hands and feet, inhaling and exhaling through the arms, legs and spine to the lower tandien and out from the lower tandien through the arms and hands, legs and feet, spine and head. Deepen the breath, feeling the energy in every cell of your body. Think of bringing in what you need on the inhale and letting go what you don't need on the exhale. Eventually, as you relate to being in complete balance there are no needs or wants and consequently no distinction between inner and outer. The goal is to feel balanced and connected.

Meditation Four (3 -5 minutes sitting or standing)

Cord Cutting

Start with one minute of Shaking Leaf with hands relaxed. Then take three full breaths, mentally relaxing and calming your self. Silently establish and affirm your intent to cut-the-cords. The cords represent energy depleting negative emotions such as worry, fear, anxiety or anger. Imagine gathering these cords that are attached to you (front) and with both hands; from your head to your toes gather them in front of your solar plexus. With your dominant hand, cut them with a karate chop type motion. Make three sweeps in front of the body. Visualize tossing them into an imaginary fire bucket, full of leaping burning green flames to be rendered into cosmic compost. Do the same above the head after gathering the cords from your sides, above your head and bottom of your feet. Repeat the third and final cutting by gathering all the cords attached to your back and cut them at your rear middle back opposite the solar plexus. It may be a little hard to physically bring your hands behind you, so go as far as you can and the rest of the way extend mentally to get the job done. Stand for another minute and visualize cleansing

yourself mentally, emotionally and physically under an imagined mountain waterfall or picture diving in and out a mountain lake or familiar shower.

Meditation Five (5-15 minute sitting)

Revitalizing

After cord cutting (Meditation Four) standing, sitting or walking deepen your breath. One by one awaken all three tantien centers. First, breath in through your third eye center between the brows, a golden blue light, after some 3-9 breaths imagine you have built up a ball as an energy bank of golden blue light and distribute that light throughout every cell in your body, mentally healing yourself. Then move down the central channel and start breathing as if you are inhaling and exhaling from your middle tantien (solar plexus-heart) a golden-green light (another 3-9 breaths). After you have completed the 3-9 breaths feel a ball as an energy bank of golden green light and distribute that light throughout every cell in your body healing yourself emotionally. You can still maintain some partial attention or awareness of the upper and middle tantien and move down the central channel to your lower tantien. Breathe here a golden orange light for 3-9 breaths. After you have completed the 3-9 breaths feel a ball as an energy bank of golden orange light and distribute that light throughout every cell in your body healing yourself physically. Just to repeat and clarify, after each set (upper, middle and lower) feel that you are being revitalized mentally, emotionally and physically as you allow the light to flow in and go to every part of you on the inhale and release what you don't need on each exhale. Feel all three, upper, middle and lower, connected and revitalized with healing light and energy. Let it move to any part of you as needed, allowing yourself to be soothed and healed as if basking in the sun. You can use any part of this exercise and meditation any time you feel it will be helpful and in any sequence. The steps are meant to cleanse in some way mentally or literally (cord cutting, shower), revitalize with the breath your whole being, mentally, emotionally and physically. Include your etheric body 6-8 inches beyond your skin and you will have an added buffer of protection from anything that would drain your energy.

Note: With all the meditations you can anchor both before and or after your intent with this affirmation, which can be said by thought mentally or verbally out loud, or with a soft whisper.

“May I be mindful this day, this hour, this minute, always”.

Meditation exercises are useful tools to:

- Quiet the mind.
- Calm your desires and aversions.
- Observe your resistance.
- Soften your attachment to a specific outcome.
- Understand that you have choices about your emotional reactions.
- See what you can learn about yourself when something or someone upsets you.
- Reach a place of equanimity or balance.

Scan-Release-Revitalize

Physically

As an example, raise and tense your shoulders and tighten your fist. Then observe and feel the tension by bringing your attention and awareness to your arm, shoulders and fist. Once you notice the tension with your awareness, you can release it by relaxing. You can release any unnecessary tension as you methodically scan the body from head to toe. Muscles behind the eyes, shoulders, jaw and stomach muscles are often held with tension unnecessarily. Relax them and let the energy, blood and circulation move more freely. Deepen your breathing while you maintain standing posture or your movements if so engaged.

Emotionally and Mentally

1. A trigger event occurs. This is any event that makes you upset or anxious. This can be viewed for our purposes as a "battle" involving an internal conflict. You can think of yourself as on a battleground, although this fight is an emotional-mental one and in a real sense from an internal perspective, you are fighting with yourself.
2. When you are able to calm down enough via counting, posture, breathing, walking, for example, then bring the outside situation back to you, back inside, inside being the source or cause due to one's own thinking, own thoughts, own projection and perception. It is valuable to spend time looking at your thoughts, to get them out in the open. Taking an honest inventory of your self, (using Step 4 and Step 10). Follow Step 3 by asking for internal guidance and let yourself be guided by God as you understand Him.
3. Again, look at the outside situation that made you upset and bring it back to the cause, which is always inside you. There is no exception to this. It is 100% about you and your perception. You look at it with a mind like still water, like a mirror image when you can. That is, **the world in this sense is an outward reflection of an inward condition.**
4. When journaling you may see that some of your deeper inner thoughts are not very kind. It is common to have a very high standard of perfection and that for a human being will often fall short, so be forgiving and gentle with your self. It is ok not to be perfect. You can still strive for perfection without an attachment or investment in the outcome. Step back as much as you can and look at whatever upsets you as if you are looking together with your internal guide. You may believe you are alone in this, but you are not alone. Remember you are never alone; help is always there when you are ready to accept it.
5. Going within is an ongoing process to help you achieve a state of mind of inner peace. Your goal will be reached when nothing external can take your inner peace from you. That is, you don't let the external trappings of the world have that power over you, which only you really have. You can see it as a choice to reclaim that power with the help of your inner guide (higher self), rather than giving your power away. Once you give it away, it is difficult to remember you even had a choice. This exercise is designed to remind you that **you do have a choice and that you can choose again.** With practice you may experience the birth of the thought in which you can say "no" to and choose to see the triggered event in a different light. Either way you choose, it is your choice, as are the consequences that follow. Remember, we are talking about what is happening on the inside. Knowing that you are 100% responsible for your feelings is a huge help. If you are ultimately the cause of what you feel, you can, when you are ready, change it by making a different choice, a better choice, by deciding to humbly trust in your Higher Power and follow as best you can Step 3.

Appendix Definitions

(Wikipedia Partial Source)

Chi, Qi, also commonly spelled *ch'i* or *ki* is a fundamental concept of traditional Chinese culture. Qi is believed to be part of every living thing that exists, as a kind of "life force" or "spiritual energy." It is frequently translated as "energy flow," or literally as "air" or "breath."

Chi Gung, energy work and energy focus/power

Tao, Dao or Do is a Chinese character often translated as 'Way' or 'Path'. A common theme in Taoist literature is that fulfillment in life cannot be attained by forcing one's own destiny; instead, one must be receptive to the path laid for them by nature and circumstance, which will themselves provide what is necessary. Lao Tsu taught that the wisest approach was a way of 'non-action' ("Wuwei") – not inaction but rather a harmonization of one's personal will with the natural harmony and justice of Nature. 'The World is ruled by letting things take their natural course. It cannot be ruled by going against nature or arrogance.' (Tao Te Ching; Verse 48). It also means that the individual should do things natural to him and appropriate to do in his circumstances, thus serving as an instrument of the Law rather than doing the things as individuals. That is why no one need take any credit for things done. Nature is stabilized by order, and humans along with all other natural phenomena exist within nature. Attempting to force one's own path is arrogant, futile and self-destructive.

Mushin is a state into which very highly trained martial artists are said to enter during combat. The term is shortened from **Mushin no shin**, a Zen expression-meaning mind of no mind. That is, minds not fixed or occupied by thought or emotion and thus open to everything. Mushin is achieved when a fighter feels no anger, fear or ego during combat. There is an absence of discursive thought, and so the fighter is totally free to act and react towards an opponent without hesitation. At this point, a person relies not on what they *think* should be the next move, but what is felt intuitively. A martial artist would likely have to train for many years to be capable of Mushin. This allows time for combinations of movements and exchanges of techniques to be practiced repetitively many thousands of times, until they can be performed spontaneously, without conscious thought.

The legendary Zen master Takuan Sōhō said: *The mind must always be in the state of 'flowing,' for when it stops anywhere that means the flow is interrupted and it is this interruption that is injurious to the well-being of the mind. In the case of the swordsman, it means death. When the swordsman stands against his opponent, he is not to think of the opponent, nor of himself, nor of his enemy's sword movements. He just stands there with his sword, which, forgetful of all technique, is ready only to follow the dictates of the subconscious. The man has effaced himself as the wielder of the sword. When he strikes, it is not the man but the sword in the hand of the man's subconscious that strikes.*

Mushin is not just a state of mind that can be achieved during combat. Many martial artists, particularly those practicing Japanese martial arts such as aikido, karate-do or iaido, train to achieve this state of mind during kata (forms) so that a flawless execution of moves is accomplished - that they may be achieved during combat or at any other time. Once Mushin is attained through the practicing or studying of martial arts, the objective is to then apply this same level of complete awareness in other aspects of your life. Mushin is closely related to the teachings of Zen Buddhism.

Tai chi ch'uan is an internal Chinese martial art often practiced with the aim of promoting health and longevity. Tai chi ch'uan' s training forms are well known as the slow motion routines that groups of people practice together every morning in parks around the world, particularly in China. Some medical studies support its effectiveness as an alternative exercise and a form of martial arts therapy. Tai chi ch'uan is considered a *soft* style martial art - an art applied with internal power - to distinguish its theory and application from that of the *hard* martial art styles. There are many different styles of tai chi ch'uan, but most modern schools can trace

their development to the system originally taught by the Chen family to the Yang family starting in 1820. The Mandarin term "tai chi chuan" literally translates as "supreme ultimate boxing" or "boundless fist". The concept of the "supreme ultimate" is the t'ai chi symbol meant to show the principles of Yin and Yang duality of Taoist philosophy. Thus, tai chi theory and practice evolved in agreement with many of the principles of Chinese philosophy and Taoism in particular. While the image of tai chi chuan in popular culture is typified by exceedingly slow movement, many tai chi styles (including the three most popular, Yang, Wu and Chen) have secondary forms of a faster pace.

Tai chi ch'uan was created as a form of traditional Chinese martial arts of the soft or internal branch. Since the first widespread promotion of tai chi's health benefits by the early twentieth century, it has developed a worldwide following among people with little or no interest in martial training for its benefit to health and health maintenance. Some call it a form of moving meditation, as focusing the mind solely on the movements of the form purportedly helps to bring about a state of mental calm and clarity. Besides general health benefits and stress management attributed to tai chi training, aspects of Traditional Chinese medicine are taught to advanced tai chi students in some traditional schools. The physical techniques of tai chi ch'uan are described in the tai chi classics (a set of writings by traditional masters) as being characterized by the use of leverage through the joints based on coordination in relaxation, rather than muscular tension, in order to neutralize or initiate attacks. The slow, repetitive work involved in the process of learning how that leverage is generated gently and measurably increases and opens the internal circulation (breath, body heat, blood, lymph, peristalsis, etc.).

The study of tai chi ch'uan primarily involves three subjects. Traditional schools cover these aspects of tai chi practice simultaneously, while many modern schools focus on a single aspect, depending on their goal in practicing the art.

These subjects are:

Health

An unhealthy or otherwise uncomfortable person will find it difficult to meditate to a state of calmness or to use tai chi as a martial art. Tai chi's health training therefore concentrates on relieving the physical effects of stress on the body and mind. For those focused on tai chi's martial application, good physical fitness is the first step in effective self-defense.

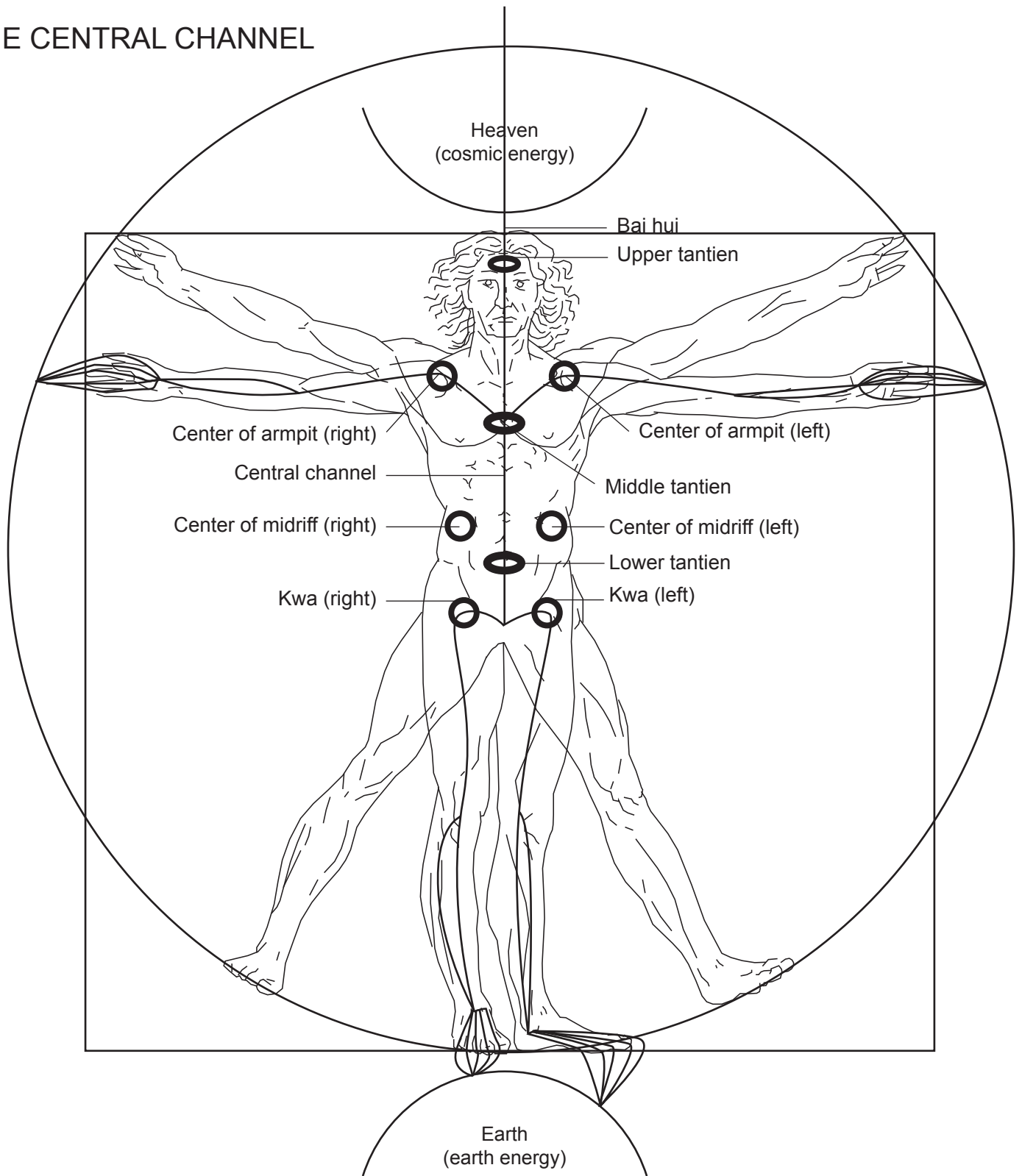
Meditation

The focus and calmness cultivated by the meditative aspect of tai chi is seen as necessary in maintaining optimum health (in the sense of relieving stress and maintaining balance) and in application of the form as a soft style martial art.

Martial Art

The ability to use tai chi ch'uan as a form of self-defense in combat is said to be the most effective proof of a student's understanding of the principles of good tai chi. The study of tai chi ch'uan martially is the study of appropriate change in response to outside forces; the study of yielding and blending with outside force rather than attempting to meet it with opposing force becomes a study and practice in non-resistance.

THE CENTRAL CHANNEL

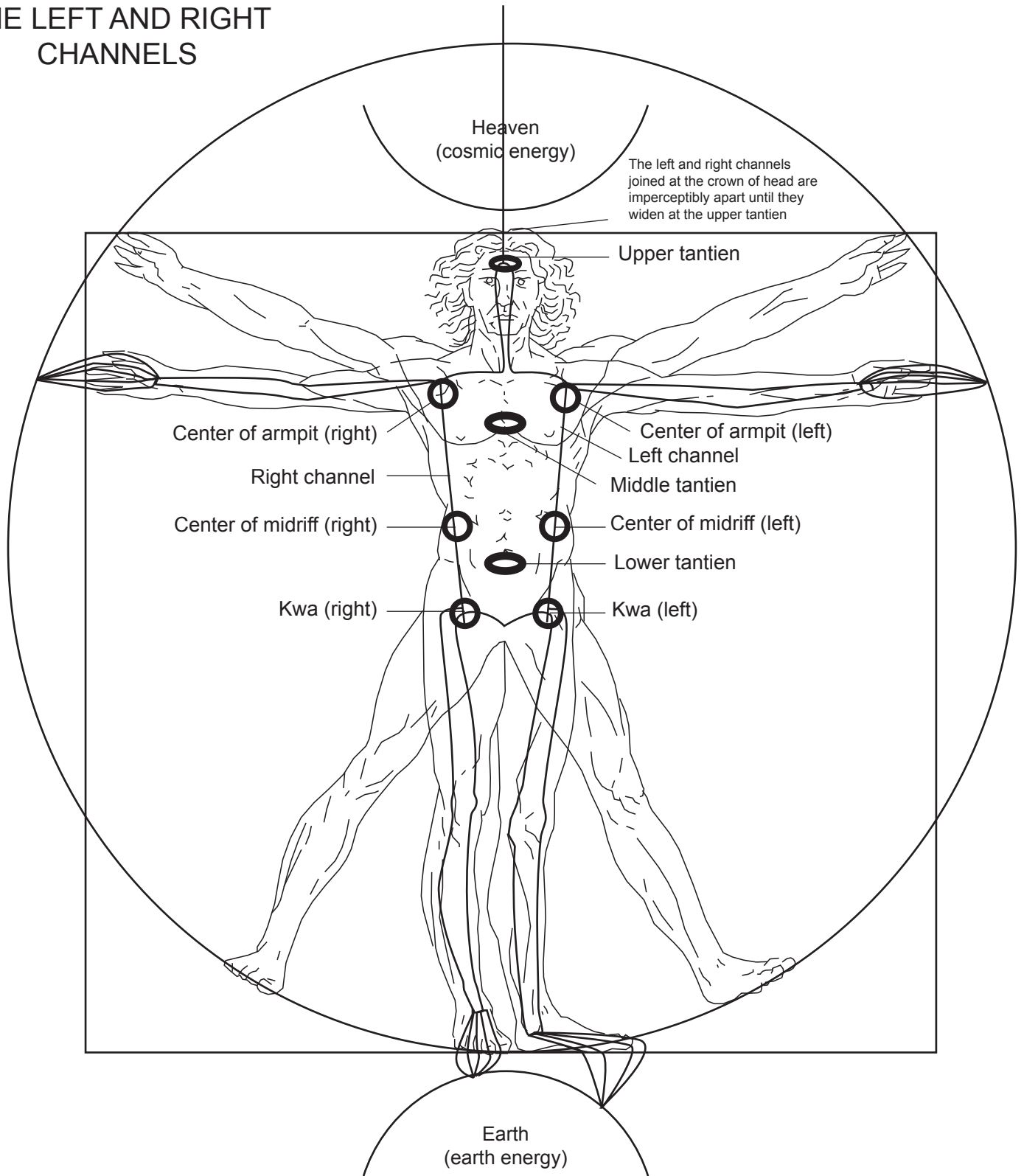


The central energetic channel runs through the center of the body up through the bai hui point at the crown of the head. It moves through the bone marrow and out the fingertips, same with the legs through the toes.

Note 1: For a more detailed explanation see B.K. Frantzis' s book *The Power of Internal Martial Arts, Combat Secrets of Ba Gua, Tai Chi and Hsing-I*. Berkeley CA: North Atlantic Books, 1998 (p. 318-321).

Note 2: Figure based on Leonardo da Vinci, *Vitruvian Man*, 1513, dim. 25 x 19.2 cm

THE LEFT AND RIGHT CHANNELS



The right and left energetic channel runs through the right and left side of the body from the bai hui point at the crown of the head where they merge with the central channel and run parallel widening slightly at the third eye point, down the center of the eyes, branch off at the shoulders, join with the central channel at the center of the armpits, through the bone matrix (calcium), merging at the fingertips and same with the legs merging out the toes.

Note 1: For a more detailed explanation see B.K. Frantzis' s book *The Power of Internal Martial Arts, Combat Secrets of Ba Gua, Tai Chi and Hsing-I*. Berkeley CA: North Atlantic Books, 1998 (p. 318-321).

Note 2: Figure based on Leonardo da Vinci, *Vitruvian Man*, 1513, dim. 25 x 19.2 cm

Additional Meditations

Meditation Six (5-15 minute sitting)

Expanding Consciousness, Form to Formlessness and Back Again

Picture your self sitting in a perfect lotus form, relaxed, back straight and just breathing through the third eye point. After several breaths begin expanding the image to fill your etheric body about 6-8 inches beyond your skin. Continue visually expanding until you fill the room you are in. Hold that form mentally for a few breaths and then expand to take in the building, the grounds and the city that contains all the comings and goings of people in it with each persons joy, pain and sorrow. Just look at it, without judging it one way or another. Then expand further to mentally take in other cities and states, other countries and eventually the entire planet, as if you are looking at it from space and your consciousness can capture it as if it is all inside you with all its comings and goings, all its wonder, joy, sorrow and pain again just watching without any judgment one way or another. Hold the image of our blue planet Earth for a moment and continue to grow your awareness to take in our solar system and beyond until your consciousness has no particular form, just expanding awareness into infinity, limitless and formless. After a few deep breaths, begin to reverse the process of expanding to contracting into form, retracing your steps back, back to our solar system, back to Earth, back to the countries and states within, back to the city, to the grounds and building, back to the room you are in, back to your etheric body, back to fit perfectly in your own skin, take a few deep breaths and continue now going smaller visually until you are just a small inch or two in a perfect sitting form near your heart to be called on whenever needed.

Meditation Seven (practiced throughout the day)

I am not the victim of the world I see

Today's idea is the introduction to your declaration of release. Again, the idea should be applied to both the world you see without and the world you see within. In applying the idea, we will use a form of practice which will be used more and more, with changes as indicated. Generally speaking, the form includes two aspects, one in which you apply the idea on a more sustained basis, and the other consisting of frequent applications of the idea throughout the day.

Two longer periods of practice with the idea for today are needed, one in the morning and one at night. Three to five minutes for each of these are recommended. During that time, look about you slowly while repeating the idea two or three times. Then close your eyes, and apply the same idea to your inner world. You will escape from both together, for the inner is the cause of the outer.

As you survey your inner world, merely let whatever thoughts cross your mind come into your awareness, each to be considered for a moment, and then replaced by the next. Try not to establish any kind of hierarchy among them. Watch them come and go as dispassionately as possible. Do not dwell on any one in particular, but try to let the stream move on evenly and calmly, without any special investment on your part. As you sit and quietly watch your thoughts, repeat today's idea to yourself as often as you care to, but with no sense of hurry.

In addition, repeat the idea for today as often as possible during the day. Remind yourself that you are making a declaration of independence in the name of your own freedom. And in your freedom lies the freedom of the world.

The idea for today is also a particularly useful one to use as a response to any form of temptation that may arise. It is a declaration that you will not yield to it, and put yourself in bondage. (ACIM, WB Lesson 31)

Meditation Eight (practiced throughout the day)

God goes with me wherever I go

Today's idea will eventually overcome completely the sense of loneliness and abandonment all the separated ones experience. Depression is an inevitable consequence of separation. So are anxiety, worry, a deep sense of helplessness, misery, suffering and intense fear of loss.

The separated ones have invented many "cures" for what they believe to be "the ills of the world." But the one thing they do not do is to question the reality of the problem. Yet its effects cannot be cured because the problem is not real. The idea for today has the power to end all this foolishness forever. And foolishness it is, despite the serious and tragic forms it may take.

Deep within you is everything that is perfect, ready to radiate through you and out into the world. It will cure all sorrow and pain and fear and loss because it will heal the mind that thought these things were real, and suffered out of its allegiance to them.

You can never be deprived of your perfect holiness because its Source goes with you wherever you go. You can never suffer because the Source of all joy goes with you wherever you go. You can never be alone because the Source of all life goes with you wherever you go. Nothing can destroy your peace of mind because God goes with you wherever you go.

We understand that you do not believe all this. How could you, when the truth is hidden deep within, under a heavy cloud of insane thoughts, dense and obscuring, yet representing all you see? Today we will make our first real attempt to get past this dark and heavy cloud, and to go through it to the light beyond.

There will be only one long practice period today. In the morning, as soon as you get up if possible, sit quietly for some three to five minutes, with your eyes closed. At the beginning of the practice period, repeat today's idea very slowly. Then make no effort to think of anything. Try, instead, to get a sense of turning inward, past all the idle thoughts of the world. Try to enter very deeply into your own mind, keeping it clear of any thoughts that might divert your attention.

From time to time, you may repeat the idea if you find it helpful. But most of all, try to sink down and inward, away from the world and all the foolish thoughts of the world. You are trying to reach past all these things. You are trying to leave appearances and approach reality.

It is quite possible to reach God. In fact it is very easy, because it is the most natural thing in the world. You might even say it is the only natural thing in the world. The way will open, if you believe that it is possible. This exercise can bring very startling results even the first time it is attempted, and sooner or later it is always successful. We will go into more detail about this kind of practice as we go along. But it will never fail completely, and instant success is possible.

Throughout the day use today's idea often, repeating it very slowly, preferably with eyes closed. Think of what you are saying; what the words mean. Concentrate on the holiness that they imply about you; on the unflinching companionship that is yours; on the complete protection that surrounds you.

You can indeed afford to laugh at fear thoughts, remembering that God goes with you wherever you go. (ACIM, WB Lesson 41)

Meditation Nine (practiced throughout the day)

Note: Reflected in your higher wisdom and connected to the deep still point within is the idea that this part of you is beyond time and space. It is as it was before, it is as it is now, and it is as it always will be, eternal, timeless and changeless. This part of you is perfect, innocent, holy and fully connected to perfect oneness, in truth, has never been not connected. Awakening is awakening from the dream of separation into oneness. A Course In Miracles calls that part of you the perfect Son of God. You are gently called by your higher wisdom and asked to awaken from a dream of separation.

Forgiveness is the key to happiness

Here is the answer to your search for peace. Here is the key to meaning in a world that seems to make no sense. Here is the way to safety in apparent dangers that appear to threaten you at every turn, and bring uncertainty to all your hopes of ever finding quietness and peace. Here are all questions answered; here the end of all uncertainty ensured at last.

The unforgiving mind is full of fear, and offers love no room to be itself; no place where it can spread its wings in peace and soar above the turmoil of the world. The unforgiving mind is sad, without the hope of respite and release from pain. It suffers and abides in misery, peering about in darkness, seeing not, yet certain of the danger lurking there.

The unforgiving mind is torn with doubt, confused about itself and all it sees; afraid and angry, weak and blustering, afraid to go ahead, afraid to stay, afraid to waken or to go sleep, afraid of every sound, yet more afraid of stillness; terrified of darkness, yet more terrified at the approach of light. What can the unforgiving mind perceive but its damnation? What can it behold except the proof that all its sins are real?

The unforgiving mind sees no mistakes, but only sins. It looks upon the world with sightless eyes, and shrieks as it beholds its own projections rising to attack its miserable parody of life. It wants to live, yet wishes it were dead. It wants forgiveness, yet it sees no hope. It wants escape, yet can conceive of none because it sees the sinful everywhere.

The unforgiving mind is in despair, without the prospect of a future which can offer anything but more despair. Yet it regards its judgment of the world as irreversible, and does not see it has condemned itself to this despair. It thinks it cannot change, for what it sees bears witness that its judgment is correct. It does not ask, because it thinks it knows. It does not question, certain it is right.

Forgiveness is acquired. It is not inherent in the mind, which cannot sin. As sin is an idea you taught yourself, forgiveness must be learned by you as well, but from a Teacher other than yourself, Who represents the other Self in you. Through Him you learn how to forgive the self you think you made, and let it disappear. Thus you return your mind as one to Him Who is your Self, and Who can never sin.

Each unforgiving mind presents you with an opportunity to teach your own how to forgive itself. Each one awaits release from hell through you, and turns to you imploringly for Heaven here and now. It has no hope, but you become its hope. And as its hope, do you become your own. The unforgiving mind must learn through your forgiveness that it has been saved from hell. And as you teach salvation, you will learn. Yet all your teaching and your learning will not be of you, but of the Teacher Who was given you to show the way to you.

Today we practice learning to forgive. If you are willing, you can learn today to take the key to happiness, and use it on your own behalf. We will devote ten minutes in the morning, and at night another ten, to learning how to give forgiveness and receive forgiveness, too.

The unforgiving mind does not believe that giving and receiving are the same. Yet we will try to learn today that they are one through practicing forgiveness toward one whom you think of as an enemy, and one whom you consider as a friend. And as you learn to see them both as one, we will extend the lesson to yourself, and see that their escape included yours.

Begin the longer practice periods by thinking of someone you do not like, who seems to irritate you, or to cause regret in you if you should meet him; one you actively despise, or merely try to overlook. It does not matter what the form your anger takes. You probably have chosen him already. He will do.

Now close your eyes and see him in your mind, and look at him a while. Try to perceive some light in him somewhere; a little gleam which you had never noticed. Try to find some little spark of brightness shining through the ugly picture that you hold of him. Look at this picture till you see a light somewhere within it, and then try to let this light extend until it covers him, and makes the picture beautiful and good.

Look at this changed perception for a while, and turn your mind to one you call a friend. Try to transfer the light you learned to see around your former "enemy" to him. Perceive him now as more than friend to you, for in that light his holiness shows you your savior, saved and saving, healed and whole.

Then let him offer you the light you see in him, and let your "enemy" and friend unite in blessing you with what you gave. Now are you one with them, and they with you. Now have you been forgiven by yourself. Do not forget, throughout the day, the role forgiveness plays in bringing happiness to every unforgiving mind, with yours among them. Every hour tell yourself:

Forgiveness is the key to happiness. I will awaken from the dream that I am mortal, fallible and full of sin, and know I am the perfect Son of God.

(ACIM, WB Lesson 121)

Meditation Ten (practiced throughout the day)

Note: Reflected in your higher wisdom and connected to the deep still point within is the idea that this part of you is beyond time and space. It is as it was before, it is as it is now, and it is as it always will be, eternal, timeless and changeless. This part of you is perfect, innocent, holy and fully connected to perfect oneness, in truth, has never been not connected. Awakening is awakening from the dream of separation into oneness. A Course In Miracles calls that part of you the perfect Son of God. You are gently called by your higher wisdom and asked to awaken from a dream of separation.

Forgiveness offers everything I want.

What could you want forgiveness cannot give? Do you want peace? Forgiveness offers it. Do you want happiness, a quiet mind, a certainty of purpose, and a sense of worth and beauty that transcends the world? Do you want care and safety, and the warmth of sure protection always? Do you want a quietness that cannot be disturbed, a gentleness that never can be hurt, a deep abiding comfort, and a rest so perfect it can never be upset?

All this forgiveness offers you, and more. It sparkles on your eyes as you awake, and gives you joy with which to meet the day. It soothes your forehead while you sleep, and rests upon your eyelids so you see no dreams of fear and evil, malice and attack. And when you wake again, it offers you another day of happiness and peace. All this forgiveness offers you, and more.

Forgiveness lets the veil be lifted up that hides the face of Christ from those who look with unforgiving eyes upon the world. It lets you recognize the Son of God, and clears your memory of all dead thoughts so that remembrance of your Father can arise across the threshold of your mind. What would you want forgiveness cannot give? What gifts but these are worthy to be sought? What fancied value, trivial effect or transient promise, never to be kept, can hold more hope than what forgiveness brings?

Why would you seek an answer other than the answer that will answer everything? Here is the perfect answer, given to imperfect questions, meaningless requests, half-hearted willingness to hear, and less than halfway diligence and partial trust. Here is the answer! Seek for it no more. You will not find another one instead.

God's plan for your salvation cannot change, nor can it fail. Be thankful it remains exactly as He planned it. Changelessly it stands before you like an open door, with warmth and welcome calling from beyond the doorway, bidding you to enter in and make yourself at home, where you belong.

Here is the answer! Would you stand outside while all of Heaven waits for you within? Forgive and be forgiven. As you give you will receive. There is no plan but this for the salvation of the Son of God. Let us today rejoice that this is so, for here we have an answer, clear and plain, beyond deceit in its simplicity. All the complexities the world has spun of fragile cobwebs disappear before the power and the majesty of the extremely simple statement of the truth.

Here is the answer! Do not turn away in aimless wandering again. Accept salvation now. It is the gift of God, and not the world. The world can give no gifts of any value to a mind that has received what God has given as its own. God wills salvation be received today, and that the intricacies of our dreams no longer hide their nothingness from you.

Open your eyes today and look upon a happy world of safety and of peace. Forgiveness is the means by which it comes to take the place of hell. In quietness it rises up to greet your open eyes and fill your heart with deep tranquility as ancient truths, forever newly-born, arise in your awareness. What you will remember then can never be described. Yet your forgiveness offers it to you.

Remembering the gifts forgiveness gives, we undertake our practicing today with hope and faith that this will be the day salvation will be ours. Earnestly and gladly will we seek for it today, aware we hold the key within our hands, accepting Heaven's answer to the hell we made, but where we would remain no more.

Morning and evening do we gladly give a quarter of an hour to the search in which the end of hell is guaranteed? Begin in hopefulness, for we have reached the turning point at which the road becomes far easier. And now the way is short that yet we travel. We are close indeed to the appointed ending of the dream.

Sink into happiness as you begin these practice periods, for they hold out the sure rewards of questions answered and what your acceptance to the answer brings. Today it will be given you to feel the peace forgiveness offers, and the joy the lifting of the veil holds out to you.

Before the light you will receive today the world will fade until it disappears, and you will see another world arise you have no words to picture. Now we walk directly into light, and we receive the gifts that have been held in store for us since time began, kept waiting for today.

Forgiveness offers everything you want. Today all things you want are given you. Let not your gifts recede throughout the day, as you return again to meet a world of shifting change and bleak appearances. Retain your gifts in clear awareness as you see the changeless in the heart of change; the light of truth behind appearances.

Be tempted not to let your gifts slip by and drift into forgetfulness, but hold them firmly in your mind by your attempts to think of them at least a minute as each quarter of an hour passes by. Remind yourself how precious are these gifts with this reminder, which has power to hold your gifts in your awareness through the day:

*Forgiveness offers everything I want.
Today I have accepted this as true
Today I have received the gifts of God.*

(ACIM, WB Lesson 122)

Suggested Readings and Partial Source Material

A Course In Miracles Foundation For Inner Peace
Glen Ellen, CA: 1975
(Ideas taken from ACIM have been highlighted in bold letters)

Alcoholic Anonymous, Fourth Edition, Alcoholic Anonymous World Services, Inc., 2001

Budd, Mathew, and Rothstein, Larry. You Are What You Say
Random House, 2000

Clarke, Christopher M., Gittes, Fredrick T. and Keller, Paul D.
American Shorin-Ryu Karate Association. A Manual for Instructors and Students
Canton, OH: ASKA Press, 1975. (quote from p.18)

Douglas, Bill. The Complete Idiot's Guide to T'ai Chi and Qigong
New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1999

Frantzis, B.K. Opening The Energy Gates of Your Body, Gain Lifelong Vitality
Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1993.

Frantzis, B.K. The Power of Internal Martial Arts, Combat Secrets of Ba Gua, Tai Chi and Hsing-I. Berkeley
CA: North Atlantic Books, 1998

Frantzis, B.K. The Big Book of Tai Chi, Build Health Fast in Slow Motion
London: Thorsons, 2003
(Source of the 70% Rule p.35-37)

Gendlin, Eugene. Focusing
Bantam Books, 1982

Herrigel, Eugene. Zen In the Art of Archery.
New Your: Pantheon Books, Inc. 1953

Helmstetter, Shad. What To Say When You Talk To Your Self
New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982

Jahnke, Roger. The Healing Promise of Qi, Creating Extraordinary Wellness Through Qigong and Tai Chi
McGraw-Hill, 2002

Jampolsky, Gerald G. Love is Letting Go Of Fear
Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts, 1979

Jung, C.G. Modern Man In Search Of A Soul
Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1933
(quote from p.197)

Katie, Byron., Mitchel, Stephen. Loving What Is
Random House, 2003

Mercati, Maria. The Handbook of Chinese Massage, Tui Na Techniques to Awaken Body and Mind
Rochester, VT: Healing Arts Press, 1997

The Song Of Prayer (Prayer, Forgiveness, Healing) An Extension of the Principles of A Course in Miracles
Foundation For Inner Peace, Mill Valley, CA, 1978

Wapnick, Kenneth. Videotape of his lecture: Healing: Hearing the Melody
Workshop on A Course in Miracles August 9, 2003 Part 1 & Part 2
Temecula, CA: Foundation For A Course In Miracles

Journals/Notes/Questions

THE CENTRAL CHANNEL

