

Creating More Energy in Your Day

by Lisa Dunsdon

If you could create more energy in your day, where would it come from?

We would all like to have more energy. Have you ever sat in a park, been at the shopping centre or any other public place and seen the energy small children display? It seems boundless, the running, jumping, squealing seems to tire only the observer not the child. Their tiny bodies are flexible, their eyes bright as buttons and everything is funny and amusing to them.

If you think about it for a moment, their body is only new, all the organs are working at their best, brain, tissue and skeletal are young, vibrant and working at optimum.

As we grow older we start slowing, the body starts wearing, we rejuvenate, however environmental and genetic factors start creeping in. What we breathe, drink and eat takes its toll on our body systems and over time our energy seems to decrease.

So what is energy? and how do we increase our own?

In Western society energy has been defined as – the ability to do work; the capacity for work or vigorous activity; vigor; power, a source of usable power, and the capacity of a physical system to do work.

In the East the meaning of energy is quite different. Eastern philosophy thinks of energy as a universal force that is within all things including the human body. In Chinese philosophy “Qi” (pronounced “Chee” and commonly spelt “Chi”) means “energy” or “universal energy”, the natural energy within all things, including the human body.

“Taoism” an ancient Chinese philosophy embodies nature to help achieve interior harmony. “Taoism” means “the way” and the Taoist's main focus was to observe the ways of the natural laws governing the universe as a method to understand the unseen inner world of our physical body.

According to the Chinese and other eastern philosophies similarly, everything in the universe is composed of two complementary energy forces known as Yin (female) and Yang (male). Even though those two forces are complementary they are also opposing energetic forces (similar to how magnets work). Yin (female) is composed of water and

represents earth. Yang (male) is composed of fire and represents heaven. These two forces together are responsible for all creation by uniting the 'water' energy of earth with the 'fire' energy of heaven. It is this energy or life force, of Yin and Yang that combined is known as "Qi".

Qi and the human body.....

It is believed we all have Qi affecting our bodies in two separate ways. We have "inherited Qi", the energy we received from our parents when conceived, and "acquired Qi", the energy we accumulate throughout our life which is directly affected by the quality of life we lead. Someone may become ill when the Qi channels of the body are blocked or slow in the absorption of Qi.

Similarly how blood flows through our body's circulatory system the Chinese say "Qi" flows through our system of meridians or channels. There are two systems of meridians, primary and secondary. It is the primary 12 meridians that enables "Qi" to pass through our internal organs. They flow through the 12 organs of our body and are named after the organ they pass through eg. the lung meridian. Of the 12 organs, six are Yin and six Yang. Each Yin organ is associated with a Yang organ by a special Yin/Yang relationship.

For health to be maintained, yin energy and yang energy must be balanced within the body. The medical arts such as acupuncture, shiatsu, and Qigong (Chi Kung) seek to restore this balance.

Yin Organs

The Liver (wood)
The Lung (metal)
The Spleen (earth)
The Heart (fire)
The Kidney (water)
The Pericardium

Yang Organs

Gall Bladder (wood)
The large intestine (metal)
The stomach (earth)
The small intestine (Fire)
The urinary bladder (water)
The triple warmer

Traditional Chinese medicine separates the body's organ meridians into five separate but interrelated elements, namely Fire, Water, Earth, Metal and Wood. This is known as the "Five Element Theory" which is used to understand how energies related to these elements, which are associated with organs, interrelate, balance, nurture or regulate each other.

There are also *8 extraordinary channels* that are considered to be reservoirs supplying Qi and blood to the twelve regular channels. These are believed to have a strong connection to the kidney.

The following organs share a Yin/Yang relationship and are therefore paired together:

The lungs, Yin (metal) & the large intestine, Yang (metal)

Functions of these two organs are excretion and inhalation. They preside over skin and hair and the "Qi" energy is believed to enter through the opening of the nose. The lungs are therefore responsible for extracting "Qi" from the air. The large intestine extracts water from the waste material received from the small intestine and then sends it on to the urinary bladder for emission. The solid material left is then excreted as stool. A sore abdomen can indicate a blockage of "Qi".

The spleen, Yin (Earth) and the stomach, Yang (earth)

Functions of these two organs are "storage". These organs control the flesh and the limbs and the "Qi" energy is believed to enter through the opening of the mouth. The Stomach is the storage hold when first receiving the food and the spleen is responsible for transferring the nutrients throughout the body.

The heart, Yin (Fire) and the small intestine, Yang (Fire)

These organs control the blood vessels and responsible for the "quality of the blood". Energy enters through the tongue. The heart is responsible for moving blood around the body. In Chinese medicine it is believed that the heart is the centre of the spirit as it supplies Fire "Qi". The small intestine is responsible for our metabolism and the body's management of water. It separates the nutrients from our food and sends waste to the large intestine for elimination.

The kidneys, Yin (Water) and the urinary bladder, Yang (Water)

These organs "purify" and control the brain, bones and marrow. Their sensory organ is the ear and "Qi" enters through the urethra. If these organs are healthy you will see it reflected in the hair on the head. The Chinese believe the kidneys hold our "original essence", they hold the body's primary Yin and Yang. The kidneys are responsible for our

body's water metabolism and control of fluids. The urinary bladder is responsible for turning fluid into urine and dispelling it from the body.

The liver, Yin and the gall bladder, Yang

These organs "distribute" energy. Energy enters through the eyes. They are responsible for the muscles and joints, and if healthy you will see it reflected in the finger and toe nails. The main function of the gall bladder is storing and excreting the bile produced by the liver. The liver is responsible for dispersion of "Qi" throughout the body and regulation of this. One of the most important responsibilities of the liver is the storage of blood.

The pericardium, Yin and the triple burner, Yang

The pericardium has no separate physiological functions however is related to the disorientation created by a high fever. The purpose of the pericardium in Chinese medicine is to regulate the "Qi" in the heart through the Laogong cavity (In the art of Qigong (Chi Kung) the Laogong cavity is one of the five gates the body uses to communicate with the surrounding environment and therefore help regulate Qi levels in the body).

The triple burner's purpose is to coordinate all the functions of water metabolism in the body. The burners are the three regions of the body that group all organs. The upper burner consists of the chest, neck, and head, and includes the heart and lungs. The middle burner is the area from the chest to the navel, and includes the stomach, spleen, and liver. The lower burner covers the lower abdomen, and includes the kidneys and urinary bladder.

Creating more Energy - The cultivation of "Qi"

Now we know a little more about how our organs relate to each other and the movement or flow of energy in our bodies, how do we then increase our energy levels and therefore vitality? How do we "balance" the relationship between paired organs to encourage "Qi" to flow more easily? We know that "Qi" is energy, it flows through our 12 meridians but how do we increase this flow and therefore increase our energy?

Qigong or Chi Kung (pronounced *chee gung*) is in Chinese society the science and practice of cultivating "Qi". Qigong literally means *energy cultivation*. Qi also means breath or gas in "mandarin" Chinese, and, *gong* means work or technique, the energy produced by breathing that keeps us alive;. Qigong is therefore "breath work" or the art of managing the breath to achieve and maintain good health.

As mentioned when we talked about the organs the Chinese believe that all our "original essence" is held in the kidneys. Only when our kidneys are strong will we be able to keep our "original essence" at its residence. Therefore, keeping the kidneys healthy has become one of the most important subjects in "Qigong", the cultivation of Qi in our bodies.

Most western practitioners share the belief of the traditional Chinese medical practitioners that "Qigong" is also a set of breathing and movement exercises that have benefits to health through stress reduction and exercise. We may be more familiar with "Tai Chi", which can be best thought of as a moving form of yoga and meditation combined.

In "Qigong" there are five centers (called gates) where the Qi of the body is able to communicate with the surrounding environment, and, consequently, regulate the Qi level in the body. Two of these five centers are the Laogong cavities; two are the Yongquan cavities which are used to regulate the Qi in the kidneys. The fifth one is your face and in Chinese medicine the face is connected and related to many of your organs. Therefore if any of your organ Qi energy is not normal it will show on your face.

So there you have it! Creating and maintaining energy is the on-going process of cultivating and strengthening the Yin and Yang of our overall being.

Creating balance with our internal and external worlds is a combination of maintaining good health and understanding the relationships between our body, mind and spirit or soul.

Understanding our own internal energies and how the energy of the universe is a part of our essential being through the practice of "Qigong" can be a powerful tool in harnessing and increasing energy in our daily lives.

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