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## **Basic Description of Qigong & Spring Forest Qigong**

The historical roots of Qigong date back at least 4,000 years to ancient China. The underlying principle, established by Chinese scholars of the period, is that everything in the universe is energy or Qi. Qi always has been and always will be. Qi cannot be created nor destroyed but can be transformed. Qi is the fundamental core of the entire manifest universe, the building block of all matter, the basic energy or force that comprises all particles and animates all living things. (Reid, 1998).

In the western scientific tradition, Albert Einstein was the first to establish this same principle: “Everything in the universe is comprised of dynamic relationships of energy.” Energy cannot be created nor destroyed but energy can be transformed.

The word Qigong (*pronounced chee-gong or chee-kung*) literally means the study of transforming or manipulating energy. Qi means energy. Gong means to study to reach mastery, to manipulate, to transform. The first book that contained information about qigong was written sometime during the early 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. This book was titled the *Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine*. (Carnie, 2000).

Qigong principles form the basis of all Chinese medicine. The concept is that all Qi is intended to flow smoothly and continuously; to be in harmony and balance with the universe. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” (World Health Organization, 1948). This definition is in keeping with the concept of balance and harmony inherent in the Qigong approach to human health and wellness.

China scholar Ken Cohen defines Qigong as “a holistic system of self-healing exercise and meditation, an ancient, evolving practice that includes healing posture, movement, breathing techniques and meditation.” (Cohen, 1997).

Specifically, in regard to human health and wellness, Qigong teaches that when the flow of Qi becomes restricted or blocked, physical and/or mental health problem/s will become manifest. Remove the restriction or blockage; restore the flow of Qi, and the problem/s will be resolved. The smooth, continuous and harmonious flow of Qi is necessary for optimum health and wellness.

Qi flows through invisible energy channels in the body called meridians. The existence of these meridians has been verified by numerous scientific studies; including the Menninger Foundation. (Schwarz, J., 1980). The belief is that too much Qi or too little Qi affects the organ/s which intersect the specific meridian/s associated with the organ/s. (Motoyama, 1978)

Acupuncture is based on these same principles. Acupuncture requires the use of special needles placed at the appropriate point/s along the meridian/s by a highly skilled professional. This theoretical base of the meridian system is further supported by the findings of numerous higher density gap junctions which correspond at the acupuncture points and meridians. (Mashansky et. al., 1983; Cui, 1988; Fan, 1990; Zheng et. al., 1996).

Qigong is designed to provide the same relief as acupuncture but without the need for needles or professional assistance. With proper training anyone and everyone can learn to utilize Qigong techniques for their own health and wellness.

There are thousands of different types of Qigong techniques in China. All based on the same underlying principle and all involving certain general practices. These include combining meditation, focused concentration, breathing technique and body movements or postures to activate and cultivate Qi as it flows through the meridians of the body.

The principle difference in Qigong techniques is in the way the information is disseminated to students. The most traditional techniques require rigid adherence to a lengthy and very disciplined regimen. With this approach hours of training are required daily and years of training are required to gain

a broad understanding of the concept and experience the benefits in personal health and wellness. This approach also keeps the student dependant upon the master or teacher.

After years of training with many of the most highly regarded Qigong Masters in his native China, Chunyi Lin was awarded certification as an International Qigong Master. As he continued his training Master Lin determined that the traditional approach was not supportive of the student.

He subsequently created a program for teaching Qigong that has simplified the approach while combining techniques to enhance the effectiveness to the student. As he puts it, “the student can spend less time while receiving greater benefit.” The system he created is called Spring Forest Qigong.

Chicago psychologist Frances V. Gaik chose Spring Forest Qigong as the technique to use for a study of complementary and alternative treatment for patients suffering from major depression, or bipolar disorder.

“The results were most successful in that the subjects reported significant and substantial relief of symptoms connected with DSM-IV guidelines and there were no negative side effects of the treatment. The physical presentation and appearance of the group was markedly different and improved at the end of the treatment period than when they first presented two months earlier,” (Gaik, 2002).

“The three individuals who had a bipolar diagnosis did improve in this experiment and it is suggested that further inquiry be made into the ability of qigong to balance the flow of neurotransmitters in creating greater balance within this DSM category. Research should be conducted with anger management and substance addicted groups, as the increase of alpha in the frontal lobe area and decrease of blood flow in the limbic system suggest that qigong would be an appropriate treatment modality.” (Gaik, 2002).

While Gaik’s study did not address physical concerns, Gaik did note in her final report that numerous participants reported significant “somatic and symptom relief” from their Spring Forest Qigong practice. (Gaik, 2002).

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