

Small Circulation Sitting Meditation

Why do it? We practice Small Circulation to increase the quantity of bioenergy (Qi) in our bodies and to improve the quality of its circulation. There are at least two reasons to do that. One is to strengthen the body to increase martial power. The other is to improve health and retard the aging process.

As we age, we accumulate fat in the body and fat accumulation reduces electrical conductivity in the body. The paths (vessels and meridians) that our bioenergy follows become narrower and we weaken physically. We practice Small Circulation to reopen those paths. Building up Qi and circulating it through the vessels will widen the paths again. Two vessels—the Governing Vessel and the Conception Vessel-- are responsible for the quantity of Qi in the 12 meridians. The 12 meridians are responsible for supplying and circulating Qi to the body's organs. Building up the quantity of Qi in the two vessels will allow you to regulate the Qi in the 12 meridians and thus make the physical body stronger.

When to do it? Ideally, meditate three times a day. From one-half hour before sunrise until sunrise. At two PM, but not too soon after eating lunch. The third time is sunset.

Things to be aware of.

There are three gates that can cause problems along the path of the Small Circulation: Weilu, Lingtai, and Naohu.ⁱ The problem with Weilu is that it is narrow and difficult to pass Qi through. The other two gates are not difficult to pass Qi through, but they are dangerous if you allow Qi to stagnate there.

The Weilu is located at the bottom of the tailbone where there is little conductive tissue and thus the gate is narrow. Muscles, tendons and nerve fiber are the most conductive tissues in the body. In areas like the tailbone, there is not a lot of muscle or tendon tissue; and it is difficult to sense the passage of Qi there. The feeling here is more like static.

The second gate is Lingtai. Through Lingtai the path to the heart is wide open so when you practice the Small Circulation some Qi will unavoidably go to the heart and cause the heart to beat faster. When the heart beats faster, people naturally bring their mind to the heart, which makes the situation worse and can cause a heart attack. As long as you ignore the Qi that goes to the heart, you won't have a problem.

The third gate is Naohu, which is dangerous because Qi can enter the brain through this gate and damage the brain. To prevent that problem, tap the skull to lead the Qi to the surface of the skin where it will dissipate through the meridians.

Dr. Yang Jwing Ming's Training Process. Following the step by step process developed by Dr. Yang for training the Small Circulation can make it easier for the beginner to learn the

exercise and can avoid the potential problems with the three gates cited above. Before you begin this process, you should be familiar with the basics of sitting meditation.

Dr. Yang's process differs from the traditional training process. In ancient times, practitioners spent months building up their quantity of Qi before beginning to circulate it. Starting the circulation with such a large quantity of Qi was dangerous if the Qi took the wrong path. Dr. Yang's process teaches first to circulate the Qi and then to build it up. Thus his students have had no problems during the last 20 years. But, this process takes a long time to build up enough Qi to widen the paths. You have to pay very close attention to feel the Qi circulate because you haven't built up much more Qi than you normally have circulating. Dr. Yang suggests practicing normal abdominal breathing for six months and then Reverse Abdominal Breathing for six months before you begin to circulate the Qi. If you do, you will be able more easily to feel the Qi circulate.

Step 1. Lighting the Fire

Each session of Small Circulation practice should begin with a few minutes of relaxation to calm down the mind and relax the body and breath. Then, using Reverse Abdominal Breathing technique, you begin the process of "Lighting the Fire" that is to say, building up the quantity of Qi in your Real Lower Dan Tian. As you move the abdominal muscles in the process of Reverse Abdominal Breathing, the movement creates heat that converts fat stored in the front of the abdomen into Qi. You hold your mind in the Real Lower Dan Tian because the Qi flows where the mind leads it. In this case, the Qi flows to the Real Lower Dan Tian where it can be stored.ⁱⁱ

Beginning the Qi Circulation

Remember that you should be sitting erect, in a cross-legged position with the tongue touching the roof of your mouth. Crossing the legs is important because we don't want the Qi to divert down the vessels in the legs. In ancient times when practitioners build-up a large quantity of Qi before circulating, the diversion of Qi down the legs could overload the nerves in the legs and cause paralysis.ⁱⁱⁱ Even though we are following Dr. Yang's process of circulating the Qi before building up a large quantity of it, we still don't want the Qi to divert down the legs because that will diminish the quantity of Qi available for our goal of improving Qi circulation in the Governing and Conception vessels.

You use the mind to lead the Qi and ignore the three problem gates. The more your mind focuses on one of the problem gates, the more likely it is that your Qi will stagnate there. In Dr. Yang's process, before we can complete the entire circulation, we have turning points where we stop the Qi circulation and lead the Qi back to the RLDT. It is important to use the correct turning points and not mistakenly use any of the three problem gates.

Once you feel comfortable with a step, you go on to the next step. You do not have to repeat the previous step during your meditation session. Just start your session with Lighting the Fire and

then go to the step you are currently practicing. Do not hurry. Do not set goals in qigong meditation because that will involve the ego and lead to a situation where the Qi can easily be misled.

Steps 2-3: Small Small Circulation. Exhale to Huiyin^{iv}, inhale back to Real Lower Dan Tian. Follow this step for several days until your mind can control the process smoothly. Then go to step 3. Exhale to Huiyin, and then inhale back to Real Lower Dan Tian through Ming Men.^v Ignore the Weilu. Practice for several months until the energy feels strong and solid.^{vi}

Step 4: Jizhong. The next step is to lead the Qi to Jizhong located between the Mingmen and Lingtai. Exhale to Huiyin, inhale to Jizhong. Then turn back. Exhale to Huiyin, inhale back to Real Lower Dan Tian through Yin Jiao. Practice this step until you can feel the Qi circulate clearly and easily.

Step 5: Dazhui. The next step is to lead the Qi to Dazhui. Ignore Lingtai. Practice until you feel very comfortable with this step.

Step 6: Yamen. The next step is to lead the Qi to Yamen, which is at the center of your neck. .

Step 7: Baihui. The next step is to lead the Qi to Baihui. Many people find that once they lead the Qi to Baihui, it easily continues on to Renzhong. Because the path down the front of the body is wide open. Do not fight it if the Qi drops down to Renzhong, allow it to happen. But if the Qi stops at Baihui, then lead it back to Huiyin.

Step 8: Completed Small Circulation. Once you complete the Small Circulation, more Qi will flow into the circulation with each circuit.

Step 9: Recovery from Meditation. When you finish meditating, always bring your Qi back to the Real Lower Dan Tian by placing the mind there and holding it there for several minutes after you finish circulating the Qi.

It is very important to remove any Qi stagnation in the body. Stretch your torso. Turn to sides while stretching. Twist to side using hands on knees for leverage. Move the spine section by section. Put your hands on knees for leverage. Circle the shoulders to remove Qi stagnation in the upper back. Circle about 20 times each direction. Move the head from side to side to eliminate any Qi stagnation in the neck. Using tips of fingers tap the head, inside out, front to back for about 30 seconds. Then rub the hands up the face and over the scalp while inhaling and then down the front of the chest centerline and the inside of the legs while you exhale for several repetitions.

Potential Problems

Numbness. Numbness is a very common experience in Qigong training. Your legs may get numb in sitting meditation. When this happens do not try to continue your meditation session

because the numbness will disturb your mental concentration. Stretch your legs, and massage your feet, especially the Bubbling Well points on the bottom of the feet. Over time, your body will adjust to the sitting meditation posture and you will be able to sit longer without experiencing numbness.

The wrong posture in sitting meditation can cause back pain.

Warm and Hot Sweat. This is normal in Qigong exercise because you are increasing your Qi circulation and the Qi will move to the surface of your skin and cause sweating. This can happen even in sitting meditation because even though you are not moving externally, you are exercising internally. Reverse breathing can increase sweating.

Small Circulation Geography

Real Lower Dan Tian—in the center of the lower abdomen on a level about two inches below the navel. Don't confuse it with the point Qihai on the front of the abdomen, which is the false Lower Dan Tian.

Yin Jiao (CV7) on the center front of the abdomen about two inches below the navel...

Huiyin (CV1) on the bottom of the torso between the anus and the sex organ.

Weilu (GV1) at the tip of the tailbone.

Mingmen (GV4) on the center of the back on the same level as the navel.

Jizhong (GV6) on the center of the back midway between Mingmen and Lingtai.

Lingtai (GV10) on the center of the back on the same level as the Solar Plexus.

Dazhui (GV14) on the center of the back just below the collar bone.

Yamen (GV15) in the depression below the spinous process of the first cervical vertebrae.

Naohu (GV17) just above the occipital protuberance.

Baihui (GV20) on center of the head at the midpoint of the line connecting the tops of the two ears.

Renzhong (GV26) on the center of the lip, just below the nose.

ⁱ Pictures and diagrams of the locations of the acupoints can be found on the Internet by Googling the name of the point or the name of the vessel or meridian.

ⁱⁱ Here the abdomen has six layers of muscle and fascia. Other places in the body have only one or two layers. Fat is deposited here as well because fasciae are poor conductors which cause the Qi circulation to slow down, and

when the Qi circulation slows down, fat is deposited there. The Fat is food essence, which can be converted into Qi. You can convert the fat into Qi by moving the abdomen.

ⁱⁱⁱ In this case, the solution is to beat the legs with a stick to draw the Qi to the surface of the skin.

^{iv} The Huiyin presents no problems as a turning point because any Qi that stagnates there can go up the Thrusting Vessel (the Spinal Cord), which is highly electric conductive tissue.

^v The Ming Men (between L2 and L3) is also a good turning point because it is connected to the Real Lower Dan Tian.

^{vi} Sometimes there is a problem with the Qi moving faster than the mind. Slow down the breathing and the movement of the perineum to coordinate with the mind to relieve the problem and get your mind back in control of the Qi.