

Standing Meditation Theory and Exercise

Background:

Standing Meditation is also known by the terms: Zhan Zhuang, Standing at Stake, Zhuang Gung, or Pole Skill.

Zhuang gung instills the virtue of patience. It roots you to the earth, which is vital to preserving your root and center. It develops balance and arm and leg strength, and helps Qi circulation. It allows the practitioner to develop and maintain a clear mind and a relaxed state.

Purpose of the Training

1. To develop a solid root. This means being able to take any posture out of your forms and remain stable in it even if someone pushes or kicks you and even in one footed stances. You must reach a level where you automatically and immediately become rooted in every posture. Rooting is not practiced to become immovable; but to be able to generate power through the legs and waist to effectively move with whole body power.
2. To improve posture in every stance. Only through stance training can we make those postures precise.
3. To temper and control the mind, and to learn how to keep the mind fully focused on training or combat.
4. To cultivate the Qi. Stance training is one of the most effective ways of doing so. Pay attention to correct posture, proper rooting, relaxing the mind and body, and breathing naturally and correctly. If you follow these guidelines, an increase in Qi will come naturally and in time will spread throughout the body of its own accord.
5. To help enhance the muscular strength of arms, back, and hips as well as the flexibility of the joints.
6. All this will to varying degrees contribute to curing certain chronic diseases, such as heart troubles, hypertension, neurasthenia, tracheitis, hepatitis, rheumatism, and gastrointestinal ailments.
7. Standing meditation builds strong bones. Like quartz crystals, the piezoelectric properties within the marrow of the leg bones are activated with the pressure

exerted in standing meditation. The longer you stand, the denser your bones will become.

How to Practice Standing Meditation

Standing meditation can be done in any of the stances of the Taijiquan form, including Wuji Bu, the opening stance, and the one-footed postures of Golden Rooster. You can invent a routine involving shifting through a series of stances for your training.

The amount of exercise can vary from a few minutes to an hour or more. The exercise Embracing the Moon on the Chest is reported to have benefits in relieving chronic and acute diseases when done for long periods several times a day.

Pay attention to the following points when practicing the postures.

- Relax yourself from head, neck and shoulders down to arms and hands, and from chest, back, abdomen, waist, and hips down to the legs and feet. Cast away all distracting thoughts and keep a tranquil mood. Relaxing before taking standing exercises is the key to success.
- Focus your mind on the Dan Tian. Breathe deeply into the Dan Tian. Breathing must be deep, even, and slow.
- Learn to take each posture correctly at the very beginning, with the whole body relaxed. Keep the head and trunk erect, chest and chin drawn in, mouth gently closed, and tip of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth. Do not protrude the buttocks.
- Practice with a high degree of concentration and with a natural expression on your face. Always be in a cheerful mood.
- Control the amount of exercise properly. For a beginner, a half an hour will do for each workout. Aches in the waist, legs, or knees are quite normal at the initial stage of training, and will gradually disappear as practice continues. Lower your stance stage by stage. Do not start with too low a stance, trying for quick results.
- At the end of a session, cool down by massaging muscles, limbering up knees, and swinging legs to remove fatigue.
- Exercise in a quiet place where the air is fresh.
- Do not practice within a half-hour of a meal.

Arcing the Arms or Embracing the Moon on the Chest¹

Beginners' Version: Stand in a comfortable stance. Hold your arms in a horizontal circle at shoulder level, palms facing in, fingertips almost touching. Hold your tongue at the roof of your mouth to complete the circuit between the Governing and the Conception vessels. After three minutes, switch to the other leg without lowering your arms. After three more minutes, gradually lower the arms and feel the Qi flow into the hands. Beginners should be able to sense Qi by moving their hands in front of their face or moving them close to one another. The Qi should feel like heat or an electrical charge.

Advanced Version: In the posture described above, perform two visualizations of leading the Qi in coordination with the breathing. Visualize a horizontal circuit leading the Qi to your fingertips as you exhale. The Qi moves across the gap and returns to the center of your chest as you inhale. [Yes the Qi moves in both directions at once.] At the same time, visualize a vertical circuit. As you inhale, take in Qi through your Bai-hui point at the top of your head and lead it downward to the lower Dan Tian. On the exhale, lead Qi downward and out through the Yongquan (Bubbling Well) points on the soles of the feet.

This exercise can relieve serious illnesses such as cancer when performed for several hours a day.

¹ Dr. Yang Jwing Ming, *Tai Chi Chi Kung*, pp. 80-82.