

# Warm up

By Michael Tse



**Train the Body to  
have good Health**

When we wake up in the morning we can usually feel a little bit slow, sleepy and things can be a little unclear. After you have brushed your teeth, washed your face and been to the toilet, maybe had a shower, you start to feel a little better. Then you have your breakfast and are ready to set about your daily work.

This what most people do, however, it is not what I do and also not what many Qigong and Chun Yuen people do. We need to practise before we do our work. I will practise before I have my breakfast, because after breakfast my stomach is full and it feels uncomfortable to move. If I must eat first, then I will eat lighter and have more at lunchtime. So practise is very important before I do my work. If it is raining and too wet then I will put on a coat and go for a walk. Then I will still get some fresh air and feel more awake.

Actually, at home I have a small balcony and so will go outside there for a while, even before I brush my teeth. Getting some fresh air into my lungs is very important. Some people might need a cup of tea or coffee and some people might even need a cigarette. However, we all know that these things are just stimulants and not very good for the body, but fresh air is definitely good.

When I start my practice, the first thing I do is warm up. We have five levels of warm up, and the most important is Level I. No matter how short a time I have to practise, I will always do the Tse Qigong Centre Level I Warm Up. Most of my students will do this was well and we also do this in class as well.

The movements of the warm up are:

1. Iron Ring Around the Waist
2. Wind Blows the Willow
3. Carp Fish Jumps into the Water
4. Alligator Crosses the River
5. Opening Heaven Connecting the Earth
6. Riding the Horse to Observe the Horizon
7. Wild Cat Stretches its Back
8. Opening the Fan
9. Wind Blows the Windmill
10. Rotating the Yin Yang Wheel
11. Wise Old Man Nods His head

In total there are 11 movements. Some of these movements I created and others are common movements in Chinese martial arts training. I put them all together to form the Level I Warm Up to help us before we start any of our exercises.



The most important part of the Level I Warm Up is to warm up the body and the second is to loosen up all the joints. Then we will not easily injure ourselves. I always tell students in my class, "Over 40, take it easy." So, those people who are under forty can do the movements a little stronger. Those people over forty should take a little more care and

listen to their bodies. For example, if you do not feel ready to go down low, then you can stay higher, until you feel looser and stronger. This means that even though you might not be able to do it at first, you might be able to do it later. It all depends on the condition of your body. You often hear of some people hurting their back or neck in the morning, why is this? It is because they move too quickly or use too much strength in certain movement, even when having a shower or brushing their teeth. So hurting or not hurting ourselves is not about things we do, it is the lack of warming up.

Once we have warmed up, then the whole day will feel easier as the body will be more connected and everything will be smooth and natural. So we must do the Level I Warm Up everyday and of course we can do the other warm ups as well as they all help us to develop our bodies to different levels.

### **Working for the Waist, Then the Legs**

The first three movements in Level I works on the waist, these are Iron Ring Around the Waist, Wind Blows the Willows and Carp Fish Jumps into the Water. These cover all different ways to warm up and exercise the waist. In the universe, there is the centre. In the solar system, the sun is the centre, the world has its centre and the body also has a centre and this is at the waist. Once we move with the centre, then the rest of the body will start to open, move better and feel more connected. So we must begin with the waist.

The second part of the warm up, movements 4 to 7, concentrates on our legs and joints. These are Alligator Crosses the River, Opening the Heaven Connecting the Earth and Riding the Horse to Observe the Horizon. These movements work our legs in many ways and are especially good for the ankles and knees and some even relate to the back as well.

Why are the legs important? It is because, when we are older the waist is the first thing to deteriorate and the legs are the second. You often see elderly people have lower back problems and some need to walk with a stick or need to hold onto something when they walk or sit down. This is actually very

natural. All living things are flexible when they grow, but as they get older they become more stiff and fragile. So the back becoming stiff, the knees and ankles developing problems is very common in people over 40.

In order to keep young and healthy we must keep our legs, particularly the ankles and knees, flexible. Actually these are all connected with the waist. We cannot be healthy and flexible and have stiff knees.



A student of mine has always had back problems, even though he has been doing Qigong for a while. This is because he still goes to the gym and trains his muscles to look good. Even though he practises Qigong, he misses the point. Looking good on the outside does not mean that you will be healthier and live longer. When we go to the gym and train the muscles, we might make them stronger, but we also make them stiffer and we also lose some fat. Actually, we need some fat to balance our bodies and as long as we are not overweight and have too much fat, then this is good.

When the muscles are stiff then the joints like the knees and ankles will be stiff as well. So over-strong muscles will cause stiff joints and also a lack of circulation in that area. In the end this will cause pain since pain, since pain comes from blockages and blockages come from stiffness. Laozi said, "The best is to be like water. It can go up and it can come down, it can go anywhere. Water can be used and be respected, but water does not claim the position."

In order to be healthy we must follow nature, particularly Laozi's Dao De Jing. This is the first classic Daoist book. In order to understand it more, we should read it again and again, not just once. Good books should be read a hundred-thousand times and we should be able to recite them by heart and apply it to our lives. This is the old Chinese way and also the Daoist way. We do not need to read a hundred thousand books, just read a few good books a hundred thousand times. This is what people today are missing. They think that more is better, but actually the high level is to go deeper not wider. and profound is only one thing, because the whole universe follows the same principle. Everything else is just external, maybe the process is different, but the principle is the same.

As for the student who goes to the gym and practises Qigong, he is constantly placing his body in contradiction as one set of exercise makes the muscles stiff and the other one makes the muscles looser. In the end, his result will depend on which one he does more. If he does more of the 'stiff' exercise, then the more back problems he will have. The more of the relaxing exercises that he does, then the less back problems he will have. It is the same as blowing up a balloon. If the balloon has a tiny hole in it then the more air we blow into it, it will still get bigger, but if more air leaks out than

we blow in, then the balloon will never get bigger. Although a child will understand this, sometimes as adult we miss the obvious.

## **Upper Body, Chest**

The third part of the warm up concentrates on the upper body, the chest, arms, shoulders and neck. Just because the lower part of the body is loose does not mean we should not have neck, shoulder or chest problems. Unfortunately, it does not work like that. Loose waist, knees and ankles are not weak and thin legs do not mean they are loose. Loose means relaxed and flexible but on the inside there is strength.

The exercises in the third part are, Opening the Fan, Wind Blows the Windmill, Rotating the Yin Yang Wheel and Wise Old Man Nods his Head. Even if our neck and shoulders are stiff we should still do these movements, as they will help us to heal our problems. We should just do in a very relaxed way and not try to force anything.

The upper body is measured from above the waist. When it is loose, then it means that all the internal organs, heart, lungs, kidneys, liver and stomach etc. will be healthier. Also it means that more blood can flow in and out of them and so they will function better. The lungs will breathe better, the stomach will be stronger and able to digest food better, and although it might mean we get hungry quicker, it also means we can enjoy our food more. Because the stomach is good, then the intestines will be stronger and so the mind will be clear. Also our senses will be stronger and our eyesight, taste and smell will all improve.

There are no western drugs that can have that much benefit because in the Western way everything is separated and they do not think all things are connected as a whole. In Chinese medicine, Chinese culture and Qigong, things are all seen as a whole. If you think about it, if your heart has a problem, how can the other organs not be affected? If we have a knee problem, how can this not affect the lower back? If the wife has a problem, how can the husband not worry? Everything is connected and the only question is how strong is the connection - is the connection stronger or weaker? So in terms of movement and the body, if one shoulder is getting better, then the other shoulder, neck and spine will also get better. It all depends of whether we continue to improve ourselves.

The Level I Warm Up is not a high level exercise but it is the beginning of high-level Qigong, Chun Yuen and even Wing Chun, Taijiquan and Hard Qigong training. This is because it is the beginning of a good, healthy life. We should practise every single day so each day we have a good beginning. Then there is no doubt we will have a good ending as long as we keep going and keep practising correctly.