

Qigong Research: a subjective approach...

by Cassia Berman

Scientific research can give us objective facts and statistics to prove that Qigong helps people, but it can't document the inner transformation and sense of wholeness, joy and connection with all life those of us who practice Qigong experience. My teacher, Master T.K. Shih, always emphasizes that Qigong is not mysticism or imagination, but science; I would add that it is science from a more expansive and wholistic perspective than our western science. He also often says that he is teaching us principles and techniques, but we must research them ourself and put them through the crucible of our own practice, experience and understanding. So this is my personal account of subjective research...witnessing Qigong's effects on myself during 24 years of practice.

The Qigong Research Association of China issued the statement that if everyone in the world did Qigong, we would truly have peace, because people would feel good, and not want to hurt each other or take anything away from each other. This has been my experience, and as I've done the practices, I've been grateful to have a physical practice through which to ground these and other high spiritual principles that, as history sadly illustrates, have been so difficult for humanity to embody. I think it's only natural, that when you're given a gift as great as this, to want to give it to others. I had never thought I would teach T'ai Chi and Qigong, but now that's how I make my living. What better work than to help people feel well and discover the infinite source of all goodness inside themselves! With every student who discovers how to relieve a chronic discomfort, with

every patient who is happy and relaxed after a Qi Healing treatment, the energy in me glows more brightly. It's the rare job you come home from feeling more energized than when you went in. How can anyone quantify that feeling in a lab?

And there continue to be other objective (but not easily measured) results of my practice. When I listen to women my age going through complaints about aging, menopausal symptoms, insomnia, joints wearing out from stress and harsh exercise, I feel like I'm living in another reality. I went through menopause with none of the physical symptoms women are taking hormones to correct, and my body keeps getting more comfortable and healthier the longer I practice, the older I get. While some women I know are experiencing real angst about losing their youthful appearance, I'm enjoy-

ing growing older in this tradition in which the older you are, the more mastery you can achieve. What a wonderful adventure growing older becomes! How many researchers factor that into their equations!?

I know I won't get osteoporosis, because every day I lengthen my spine by attaching my headtop to heaven and do the most natural weight-bearing exercise of all, bearing my own weight by relaxing it down through my feet, which are rooted deep in the earth. The joy that comes from that most basic Qigong preparation is one of those results not measurable by any research.

Aside from the physical benefits of aligning the body and relaxing it downward, by learning to have roots, I've developed a deep relationship with the trees and flowers in my garden, and everywhere. Wherever I walk, it's like making love with the earth, something indigenous people must know about, feeling like the earth is massaging my feet, and through them my whole body refreshing all my internal organs through the meridian points in the feet. Try measuring that feeling in the lab!

Another thing not measurable by scientific research is the wonder of having in my hands, and in every smiling cell in my body, the seeds of a tradition that truly transmits the mystery and joy of being alive. And knowing it can only get better.

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