

7 Qigong Power Tools For Enthusiastic Citizen Practitioners

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Even the most sophisticated medical procedures and pharmaceuticals, including those from Chinese Medicine, are limited in their effect if one's essential life energy is exhausted. One of every ten Americans suffers from chronic diseases — cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), etc. Medical costs for people with chronic diseases account for more than 70 percent of the \$1.9 trillion spent on healthcare annually in the United States. While these health conditions are the most prevalent, they are also fortunately, the most preventable or modifiable through simple changes in lifestyle and behavior.

Ancient Chinese physicians were mindful of the healing promise of inner resources thousands of years before the birth of modern science. They created simple, prevention strategies, Qigong, that magnify the life energy and increase the body's capacity to heal itself. They knew of, wrote about and created methods to produce the most profound medicine naturally within the human body, called the "elixir of longevity", or the "healer within".

These strategies complement medical treatment, speed recovery and are easily incorporated into the lifestyles of all kinds of people older, younger, the sick and the well. Whether you desire healing, healthy longevity, disease prevention, clarity of mind or inner calm, experts will tell you that mastering your inherent life energy is the key to success.

In the West, we are just beginning to understand that value of wellness in health care. In Asia, however, health care and medicine have always been based on wellness, that is cultivating optimal functionality.

The ideals of Asian medicine include:

- Focus on the patient rather than the disease.
- Emphasis placed on body, mind, and spirit.
- Utilization of Mind-Body self-care practices, such as Qigong or Yoga to promote health and enhance quality of life.
- Based on energy -- Qi (China) or Prana (Indian Subcontinent)

We need these ideals more than ever.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, a holistic medical system dating back to 200 BC, health is achieved by balancing Yin and Yang in the body, and that integrates body, mind and spirit. Therapeutic modalities include: acupuncture, herbal medicines, massage and manipulation, and Qi cultivation exercises. Traditionally, Qi cultivation exercises includes four major components:

- Postural adjustment and gentle movement
- Self-applied massage
- Breath practice
- Meditation and purposeful relaxation

Mind-Body Intervention Strategies Target Specific Disease Outcomes

According to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine - National Institutes of Health (from NCCAM Publication No. D329), Mind-Body medicine focuses on intervention strategies that are thought to promote health, that include as relaxation, hypnosis, guided imagery, meditation, yoga, biofeedback, Tai Chi, Qigong, cognitive-behavioral therapies, group support, autogenic training, and spirituality. Disease outcomes that are demonstrating favorable results from the utilization of Mind-Body interventions such as Qigong are:

• Cardiac rehabilitation

There is evidence that mind-body interventions can be effective in the treatment of coronary artery disease, enhancing the effect of standard cardiac rehabilitation in reducing all-cause mortality and cardiac event recurrences for up to 2 years.

• Pain management for arthritis

Clinical trials indicate that these interventions may be a particularly effective adjunct in the management of arthritis, with reductions in pain maintained for up to 4 years and reductions in the number of physician visits.

• Improvement of mood, quality of life, and coping for cancer disease and treatment related symptoms

Evidence from multiple studies with various types of cancer patients suggests that mind-body interventions can improve mood, quality of life, and coping, as well as ameliorate disease and treatment-related symptoms, such as chemotherapy-induced nausea, vomiting, and pain.

Qigong Power Tools

Tools	Purpose/Benefit
1. 3 Intentful Corrections	Triggers relaxation response and immune function, tonifies and settles the Qi, nourishes organs and glands.
2. Flowing Motion	GENTLE MOVEMENT: Triggers relaxation response, opens channels, accelerates Qi and blood, enhances immune function.
3. Earth and Sky -- Front and Back Bending of Spine	GENTLE MOVEMENT: Accelerate elimination system, especially Kidney and Liver, enhance intervertebral disc integrity and neurofunction, helps remove stagnant lymph
4. Tracing the Qi Channels	SELF-APPLIED MASSAGE: Typical to all Medical Qigong, and directly linked to Traditional Chinese Medicine theory, and influences the flow of Qi circulation in the channels of the human body.
5. Energizing the Organs	SELF-APPLIED MASSAGE: Directs Qi and intention to strengthen key organs related to cancer -- Liver, Kidney, Spleen; calms the Heart, deepens the breath and Lung function. Soothes the nervous system.
6. Gathering Breath	BREATH PRACTICE: Triggers relaxation response, calms and tonifies the Qi, directs Qi especially to the torso area and chest, enhances upper body lymph flow.
7. Marrow Washing Visualization	MEDITATION: Triggers relaxation response, immune system function is triggered by relaxation, reduces blood pressure.

1. Three Intentful Corrections

The Three Intentful Corrections are common to all forms of Qigong, and trigger the relaxation response and immune function, tonify and settle the Qi, and nourish organs and glands.

First Intentful Correction -- Adjust and regulate your body posture or movement.

Sit or stand fully upright, or lie outstretched. Visualize a connection lifting the top of your head into the heavens. Next visualize a connection from your sacrum to the center of the earth. The upward lift and downward pull opens the center of the body and fills the body with Qi. Adjusting your posture optimizes the inner flow of blood and lymph in your body.

Second Intentful Correction -- Adjust and deepen your breath.

The breath is the most powerful tool for gathering Qi and is the easiest to practice. Inhale slowly through your nose, and hold your breath for a count of one, one thousand; two, one thousand; three, one thousand. Allow your breaths to be deep, slow and relaxed, but not urgent. On the exhalation, relax even more.

Third Intentful Correction -- Clear your mind.

A Qigong proverb states, “When the mind is distracted the Qi scatters” Briefly, or for as long as you wish, focus your mind on something simple like clouds drifting across the sky, a prairie of grass in the breeze, water moving in a river or as waves against the shore. Smile gently.

2. Flowing Motion

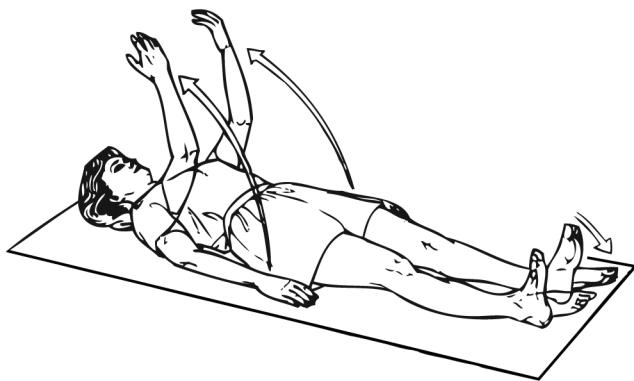
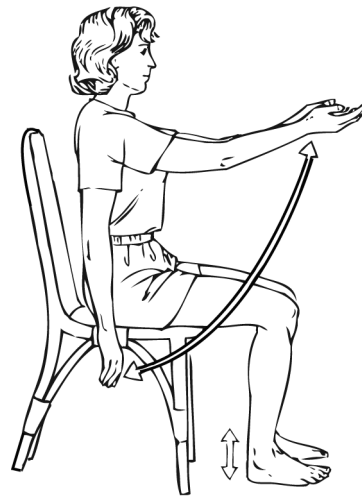
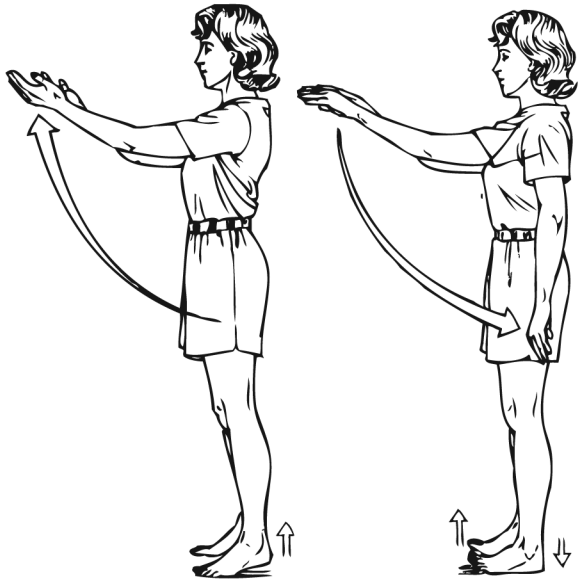
Flowing Motion, from Bu Zheng Qigong or Vitality Enhancement Medical Qigong, triggers the relaxation response, opens the channels, accelerates circulation of Qi and blood, and enhances immune function.

In China, this exercise is a favorite. The Chinese say, “Do this practice a thousand times a day and you will live forever.” They also say, “Do this practice a hundred times a day, and you will be healthy for a long life.”

Standing in the Open Posture, inhale slowly and deeply and turn your palms forward. Gently rock forward, lifting the body weight onto the toes. Swing the arms forward and upward, to the height of your heart or shoulders, with elbows slightly bent. Remember to feel free to do this movement in a way that is comfortable to you, and respectful of your body’s limitations. Let your mind be free of concerns. As you exhale, turn the palms downward, and lower the arms. Slowly sink the body weight down so the feet are flat on the ground. When the hands pass the legs allow them to continue to swing to the back and lift your toes as high as possible, rocking back on the heels if possible. Breathe deeply but do not strain. Repeat movement, building up a gentle rhythm. Once you get the Flowing Motion going, you will notice you can rest in the rhythm and flow.

Flowing Motion Variations: Can be performed sitting or lying down.

Flowing Motion



3. Earth and Sky -- Front and Back Bending of Spine

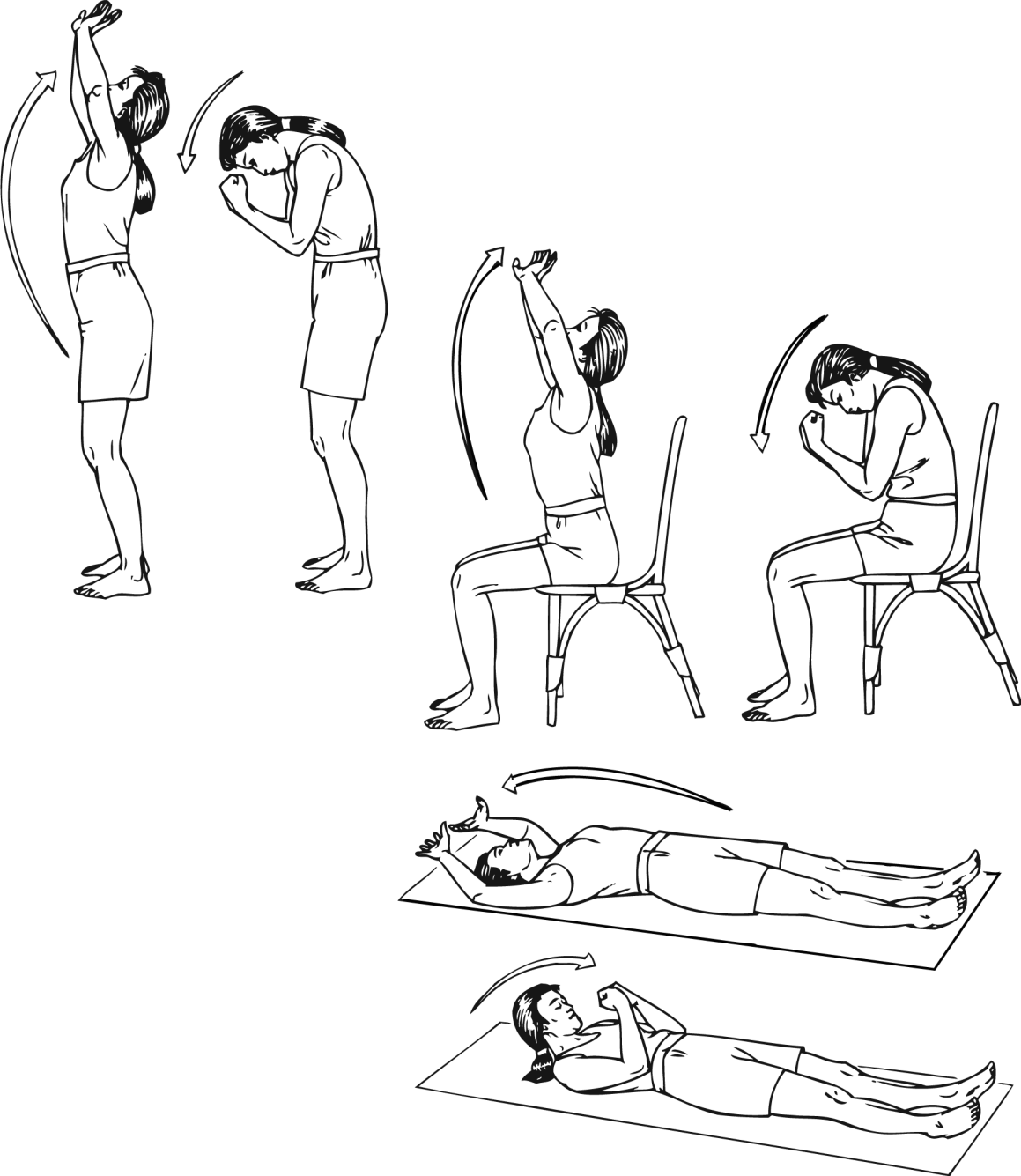
Earth and Sky, from Bu Zheng Qigong or Vitality Enhancement Medical Qigong, accelerates elimination especially Kidney and Liver, enhances intervertebral disc integrity and neurofunction, and helps remove stagnant lymph from arms.

From the Open Posture, inhale and raise the hands upward, with the arms bent at the elbow at approximately a ninety-degree angle. The palms face the body as the arms rise, turn the palms downward when they are chest high, forward at face level, and then upward as the arms reach upward. The fingers are outstretched but relaxed. The chest area stretches and opens. When the arms come above the shoulders, the palms face upward, the elbows still bent as if you are holding up the sky. Look skyward at your hands with your eyes wide open. Allow your tailbone to tilt backward, so that the curve of your spine is like a bow with the belly and chest forward.

On the exhalation, the arms come forward and down, with the palms turning slowly toward the face. Clench your hands into fists that close tightly in front of your eyes. Press your fists together and contract your whole body. Bend your head forward, and round your shoulders forward. Let your exhalation be forceful and full. Repeat. On the inhalation, let your mind, body, and spirit feel calm and open. On the exhalation, contract everything.

Earth and Sky Variations: Can be performed sitting and lying down.

Earth and Sky



4. Tracing the Qi Channels

Tracing the Qi Channels is typical to all Medical Qigong, and directly linked to Traditional Chinese Medicine theory, and influences the flow of Qi circulation in the channels of the human body.

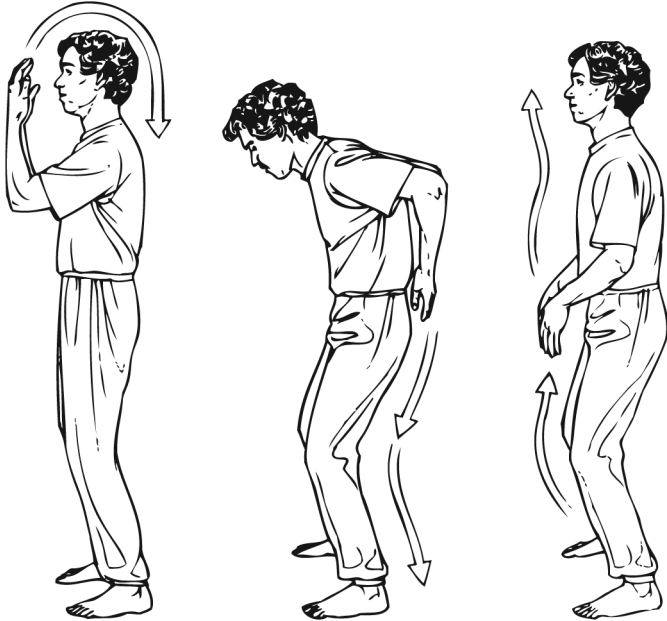
The channels for the flow of vital energy travel up the front of the body, and down the back. When Tracing the Qi Channels lightly stroke the body's surface or run the hands just above the surface of the skin. Start by rubbing your palms together until they feel warm. Then as if you are washing your face, starting at the neck and chin, pass your hands up and over the cheeks, eyes, and forehead. Pass your hands over the top of your head, down the back of your head and neck and shoulders.

Visualize that you are standing in a pool of healing waters. Move your hands around to the front of the shoulders, under the armpits, and reach around your back and as high on your back as possible. Continue down the spine, over the sacrum and down the backs of the legs. As you bend over, take care to stay in your comfort zone. Keep your knees bent if you have back problems. Bring your hands around the front of your ankles, across the tops of your toes and move your hands up the inside of the legs. If you are unable to touch your toes, even with your knees bent, reach down only as far as you can comfortably, and bathe the front of your legs, pelvis, belly, and chest.

When your hands are in front of your heart, rub your hands together again. Allow your breath to be full, and deep and drift deeper into relaxation. If you have thoughts, let them pass like watching clouds pass, and then begin again. After you have done several rounds take a moment with the palms of the hands facing each other, and feel the energy between your hands.

Variation of Tracing the Qi Channels: This method can be easily adapted for a sitting practice.

Tracing the Qi Channels



Energizing the Organs



5. Energizing the Organs

Energizing the Organs is typical to all Medical Qigong, and directly linked to Traditional Chinese Medicine theory. Energizing the Organs directs Qi and intention to strengthen key organs related to cancer -- Liver, Kidney, Spleen; it calms the Heart, deepens breath and Lung function and soothes the nervous system.

Place the hands over the lower edge of the ribs, near the front side of the body. Beneath the right hand is the liver, the gall bladder, and the upper right hand portion of the large intestines. Beneath the left hand are the spleen, the pancreas, the stomach, and upper left hand portion of the large intestines. Rub the open palm against the surface of the body in a circular motion. Eventually you will begin to feel warmth or perhaps a tingly sensation.

Then hold your hands still and feel the warmth penetrating the surface of the body and migrating to the organs. Allow your breath to be full and luxurious. Think a moment about how these organs have faithfully served you for your entire life. Imagine sending your gratitude to them on your exhalation. Move your hands so that one is over the sternum and the other is over the navel. Again rub in a circular motion and build up warmth. Stop and hold the hands still, sensing the warmth and gratitude to the heart, lungs, thymus gland. Take your time.

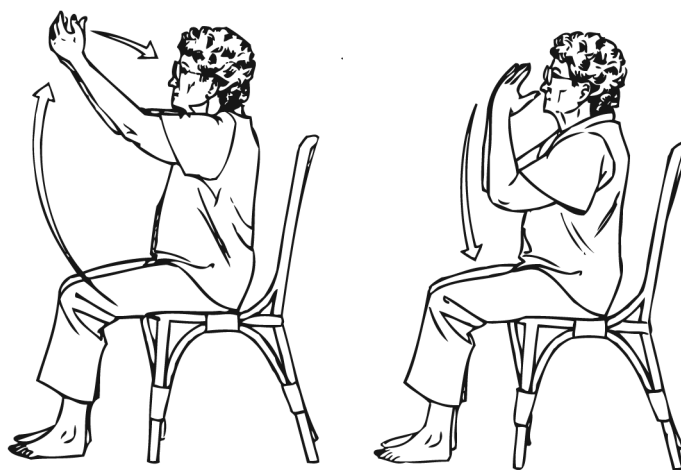
Finally allow your hands to move to the lower back. Build up warmth by rubbing the hands up the back. Allow the inner benefit of your smile of appreciation to travel to the kidneys and the adrenals, considered in Chinese medicine to be the dwelling place of essential life energies. Imagine their delight at having received your gratitude and acknowledgement after all of these years. Complete by bringing both hands to the front, to rest on the belly just below the navel. Remain for a moment longer in a state of deep rest. Allow the mind to be free.

6. Gathering Breath

The Gathering Breath originated from the Marrow Washing Form of the famous Shaolin Temple. The Gathering Breath facilitates the relaxation response, calms and tonifies Qi, directs Qi, especially to the torso area and chest, and enhances upper body lymph flow.

Allow yourself to relax deeply during this practice. In China this movement and breath practice is part of a powerful Qigong method called Marrow Washing, which gathers energy (Qi) from nature and then purposefully stores it in the marrow of the bones, like electrical potential in a battery. As the hands pass over the body, focus intently on the energy penetrating through the surface of the body, through the flesh and muscles, and through the surface of the bones to be stored in the marrow. This stored energy becomes an available resource to vitalize the organs and glands, harmonize imbalances, and heal disease. Allow yourself to float free of concerns and simplify your thoughts. Move toward a state of equanimity where you are simultaneously cheerful and indifferent.

You may want to turn and face the different directions. From the East gather the energy of spring, of awakening and sprouting. From the South gather the energy of summer, of maturing and ripening. From the West gather the energy of autumn, the reward of the harvest. From the North gather the energy of winter, of patience and rest. As you relax in this practice you may feel the warmth of your hands as they pass in front of your face. The Chinese call this “Qi sensation.” Rest in the rhythm of the movement, allowing the breath to be natural as you go deeper into relaxation. Notice that very soon you begin to feel carefree, lighter.



Also try the **Sigh of Relief** as a daily tension tamer. Rather than store anger, worry, or frustration in your body, it is preferable to release these poisonous emotions. Breathe in deeply as you can, and on the exhalation, release with an audible sigh. The sigh can be soft and sweet, expressing peace and happiness, or it can be a loud groan, freeing discordant tensions from the body. Do several times until you experience a shift in your tension or emotion levels.

In many of the classics of Qigong it is noted that “the breath is the handle”. Imagine a hammer without a handle. How do you use the door without the handle? The breath is the handle that makes the tool of Qigong effective.

7. Marrow Washing Visualization

In the relaxation and meditation traditions of ancient cultures, regulation of mind goes beyond simply focusing on the body. In both Qigong (Chi Kung) and Tai Chi, one deliberately draws healing energy and the light of spirit from nature and the universe. Rather than limiting attention to specific body parts, (as in arms legs, organs, etc.), as in the previous practices, creative attention is focused on the visualization of the function of vital resources (vitality, energy), passageways and gateways. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, it is believed that energy can be gathered from water, mountains, trees and the universe through nearly 1,000 acupuncture energy gates (points) distributed over the body's surface.

The energy of Heaven, called Yang, is naturally drawn downward toward the Earth. The energy of the Earth, called Yin, is naturally drawn upward toward the Heaven. These two resources are considered to be the essential energies of life and health as they circulate and interact in the human body. At the surface of the Earth where these energies mix, is the realm of biological life, the biosphere.

Start by standing in the Opening Posture, sitting or lying down. Breathe deeply. With each inhalation, you are gathering the resource of oxygen with the breath. At the same time, imagine, visualize or feel, that you are also gathering in vitality (Qi) from the Heaven, the Earth and the biosphere - through thousands of energy gateways. Life energies react to our thoughts and intentions. Current research from numerous disciplines, particularly on neurotransmitters or “information molecules”, suggests that this is true.

On your exhalation, allow yourself to slip deeper and deeper into relaxation. Visualize the internal healing resources circulating throughout your body in the energy channels. You may feel waves of warmth, tingling or a flowing feeling. It is not necessary to know the channel pathways or directions. This all happens automatically. Just celebrate the flow of vitality throughout your system. Visualize it going to the organs. You can place your hands on the liver, spleen, kidneys, heart or navel, or any area of the body that needs attention. You may feel energy or warmth passing from your hands into the organs.

On your inhalations, you are gathering healing resources. On your exhalations affirm the power of those resources circulating within to increase health and vitality. The internal circulation of vitality is always occurring naturally however, when you turn your attention to fostering the natural process of circulation, there is an increase.

Continue this practice for five to fifteen minutes. Over the period of practice, you will feel deeply relaxed. Use your mind intention to direct and visualize the flow of the internal healing forces to the organs or body parts that need healing the most.

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