



Written Descriptions for: Section 2, Lesson 7

Feeling the Qi

1) Preparation: Letting go of weight/Allowing weight to fall

This is a very relaxing meditation, and is used as a preparation exercise for the exercises that follow.

(i) Begin with breath and awareness

- Start by taking deep breath in and then with the outbreath, allow all the weight in your body to fall.
- We surrender to gravity – the force that takes anything heavy downwards. With each exhalation, allow weight to fall.
- Keep your attention on the sense of the weight falling, even as you are breathing in. And then, at the end of the inhalation, feel into what is holding, or anything heavy, within your body and let it drop.
- Keep watching the weight fall, even as you inhale, and then on the exhalation, allow all weight to fall.
- Keep doing this for several breaths.

(ii) Releasing the Upper Body

- Now let's go through the body with this: First, take your attention to your shoulders. Feel deeply into your shoulders, and with each outbreath, allow any heaviness you feel within your shoulders to fall.
- Spend a few breaths with your shoulders, allowing their weight to fall completely.
- Then take your attention to your shoulders and elbows – and with each outbreath, allow the weight of the shoulders-to-elbows to fall.
- Continue for several breaths.
- Then, expand your attention to include the wrists and fingers as well, so that you are aware of your whole arms from the shoulders to the tips of the fingers.
- With each exhalation, allow the weight to fall. Keep watching the weight fall, even as you inhale.

(iii) Releasing the Lower Body

- Then take your attention to your hips, and with your outbreath, allow the weight of your hips to fall.



- Spend a few breaths here, and then expand your attention to include your knees as well. Allow the weight of your hips-to knees to fall.
- Keep watching the weight fall as you inhale, and keep letting go of any sense of holding in that region with each exhalation.
- Then widen your attention to include the ankles and feet, so that you are aware of your whole legs.
- With your exhalation, allow their weight to fall. Give up any holding, any weight, any sense of resistance.
- Spend a few breaths with your legs relaxing with each exhalation (and keep watching the weight fall, even as you inhale).
- Then take your attention again to your hips, and with the outbreath, allow its weight to fall.

(iv) Releasing the Spine and Core

- Then take your attention to the hips and shoulders and the whole area of your body between them (including the spine), and with the exhalation, allow the weight to fall.
- Feel deeply into the area around the spine, sensing what is holding or tight and let it go with the exhalation.
- Spend some time with the spine, allowing each exhalation to help you drop more weight. Don't push, just let go.

(v) Integrating the Whole Body Below the Neck

- Then let your attention expand to include your shoulders, hips, knees and elbows and spend a few breaths letting go of the weight.
- Then expand your awareness to include your shoulders, hips, knees, elbows, feet and toes and hands and fingers – your whole body below your neck. Allow all weight to fall. Spend some breaths here.

(vi) Releasing the Neck, Head and Face

- Then include your neck and head. Spend some time relaxing your head and neck in the same manner – with each exhalation, feeling the heaviness fall.
- Then attend sequentially to the features of your face – the eyes, and around the eyes, the ears and around the ears, the mouth and around the mouth, the jaw, the cheeks, the forehead and eyebrows, the scalp and the head.
- With each exhalation let all tightness, heaviness, discomfort or resistance fall.

(vii) Full-Body Release

- Then attend to the whole body as one unit, from the head to the toes, including the arms and fingers – feel deeply into any heaviness or holding, and with each exhalation, surrender it all to gravity, let all its weight drop.



Why is this exercise important? Tight muscles are felt as heavier than relaxed ones. We can therefore use this difference to find and release that which we are holding within the body by simply paying attention to what is heavy inside ourselves and letting it go. This letting go has a profound effect on well-being. This is because tight muscles restrict circulation of the blood; as we let weight go, thereby relaxing muscles and connective tissue between the muscles, we take pressure off, and provide more room for, blood vessels and nerve fibres to fulfil their functions – allowing them to work more effectively. This gives a boost to the whole system of healing and repair within the body. Relaxation is medicine.

2) “The lightness of the breath”/ “Full-body breathing”

This technique energises the body, and initiates healing within the body too.

(i) Establish the Foundation

- Start with the exercise in section 1 above, and get to the culmination of that exercise, namely, with attention on the whole body (feeling each part of it) and allowing all weight to fall with each outbreath.
- As you breathe out, feel all heaviness within the body falling. Go all the way to the end of the outbreath, utilising the outward energy of the outbreath to drop all weight down into the ground. Do this for a few breaths. The focus is on the outbreath.

(ii) Introducing Lightness with the Inbreath

- Then, as well as our attention on weight falling with the outbreath, we begin to also pay attention to the inbreath, in particular to the ‘quality of lightness’ within the inhalation. By ‘quality of lightness’, I mean the sense of expansion within the inbreath – the part of it that is buoyant.
- Feel that as you breathe in, there is a quality of lightness/expansion that comes into the body with the breath, makes the body rise, pushing outwards; and then, as you breathe out, continue as in section 1, feel how there is a moment now to drop all weight; all heaviness, all tensions can fall.
- So, with the attention on both phases of the breath, witness this: the inbreath brings a sense of lightness and the outbreath takes away heaviness.
- Do this for several breaths until the in-lightness/out-dropping-weight is felt easily and clearly.
- Then breathe in and begin to feel how the lightness of the breath spreads around the body... and that the outbreath takes away all heaviness. With each new inbreath, feel the lightness of the breath spreading within the body.
- Watch how, with the inbreath, the lightness of the breath spreads within, and fills, the body.



(iii) Spreading Lightness Through the Body: Upper Body

- Now take your attention to your shoulders. As you inhale, feel the lightness of the breath spread to, fill and saturate the shoulders, and then with the outbreath, feel the weight of the shoulders fall. By 'saturate', I mean, feel the whole shoulders saturated by the lightness of the breath; every tiny cell within the shoulders can feel the lightness of the breath touch it.
- Continue with a few breaths in this way: watch the lightness of the inbreath spread to, fill and saturate the shoulders and watch how, as you breathe out, any heaviness within the shoulders falls.
- Then take your attention to include the shoulders and the elbows. As you inhale, feel the quality of lightness within the inbreath spread to, fill and saturate the shoulders and elbows and everything in-between (the whole upper arms). As you exhale, let any heaviness within that region fall.
- Continue for a few breaths.
- Then expand your attention to include the shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingers – meaning the whole arms – both arms. As you inhale, feel the lightness of the breath spread to, fill and saturate the arms. As you exhale, let all and any heaviness fall.
- Fill the arms with the lightness of the breath as you inhale, and keep watching the 'play' of the lightness within the arms as you exhale, even as you are letting any heaviness go.
- Repeat for several breaths.
- Note how there are no muscles needed for this exercise – only our watching is needed. There is no physical effort needed at all for this – the only effort is within our attention.
- Then take your attention to your shoulders again for a single breath cycle of filling with lightness on the inhale and letting go with the exhale, also watching the play of the lightness within the shoulders as you exhale.

(iv) Spreading Lightness Through the Body: Lower Body

- Then take your attention to your hips. Watch the lightness of the breath spread to, fill and saturate the hips, letting go of any tension there as you exhale.
- Keep watching the play of the lightness as you exhale.
- Repeat for a few breaths.
- Then expand your attention to include the hips and knees, and everything in between (the whole upper legs), again watching the lightness of the breath fill and saturate that region on the inhalation, and allowing all heaviness to fall on the exhalation, and keep watching the play of the lightness even as you exhale, letting go.
- Repeat for several breaths.
- Then let the attention expand to include the hips, knees, ankles and toes – the whole legs – both legs – watching the lightness of the breath spread to, fill and saturate the legs, and with the outbreath, letting all heaviness drop.
- Keep watching the play of the lightness within the legs as you exhale, even as you are letting go.



- Repeat for several breaths, until you have the sensation of the lightness of the breath filling the whole legs.
- Then take your attention to the hips again for a single cycle of filling on the inhale and letting weight go on the exhale.

(v) Spreading Lightness Through the Body: Core and Spine

- Then expand your attention to include the hips and shoulders, and everything in between.
- Watch the lightness of the breath spread to, fill and saturate that whole region as you inhale, and let go of any heaviness on the exhale; keep watching the play of the lightness within the body as you are exhaling, even as you are letting go.

(vi) Spreading Lightness Through the Body: Full Body Integration

- Then let your attention expand to include the hips and shoulders, knees and elbows, filling with lightness on the inhalation and letting go of heaviness on the exhalation, also watching the play of the lightness as you exhale.
- Then allow the attention to expand to include the hips, shoulders, knees, elbows, ankles and toes and wrists and fingers – that's the whole body beneath the neck.
- Watch how the lightness of the breath fills that whole region as you inhale.
- There is no physical effort at all needed in this exercise – only our watching is needed.
- We watch the lightness of the breath spread to, fill and saturate the whole body beneath the neck, and then watch how any heaviness there lets go as we breathe out, also watching the play of the lightness in the body as we are exhaling.
- Repeat for several breaths.
- Then allow the attention to also include the head and neck, so that now we are aware of the whole body, from top to toe.
- We watch how the lightness of the breath fills and saturates the entire body on the inhalation, and we watch how any heaviness falls on the exhalation, also watching the play of the lightness within the body as we exhale, while letting go.
- Continue breathing in this way. This is what is called a “full body breath”, meaning that the entire body participates in the breath. We can feel every cell in the body touched by the lightness of the breath.

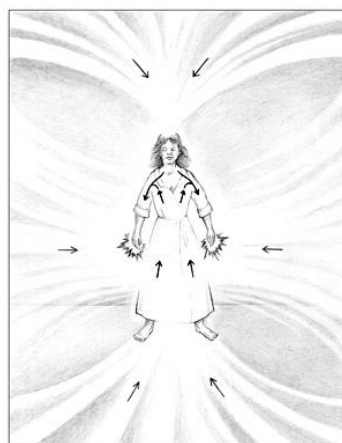


Figure 1: Fill the body with the lightness of the breath



How/why does this exercise work? When we feel the lightness of the breath spreading to different parts of the body, what is moving (what we are feeling) is actually *qi* or *prana* – the life-force energy inherent in nature. It is abundant in the air around us, and although carried in the air, can be split off from its carrier once in the body by our minds. And then our thought can guide it within the body. This is a fundamental principle of all martial arts – that the fundamental energy of nature can be commanded by intention and attention: first we feel it, then we desire it to do something (intention), and then we watch while it does that which we have said (attention).

This energy is constantly coming into the body with every breath, however, we ordinarily do not notice it because it happens beneath the level of our awareness. Our attention acts as an amplifier of *qi* – when we attend to it, it amplifies it so that we can then feel it. When we feel it, we can begin to work with it, and that's where the fun begins!

3) Energy flow breathing: guiding the energy with the mind

In this exercise, leading on from the previous one, we begin to work with the energy. If you can feel it, you can work with it, so let's begin to work with it.

(i) Establish Full-Body Lightness

- Begin with exercise (1), and then (2) above, in exactly the same way, until you can feel the lightness of the breath filling the whole body.
- As you exhale, drop the heaviness in the body, but keep watching the play of the lightness throughout the body, even as you exhale, letting all weight go.
- Do this for several breaths.

(ii) Exhaling Lightness Through the Feet

- Then, with the next outbreath, breathe the lightness out through the soles of the feet.
- Feel how that lightness can leave the body through the soles of the feet.
- Inhale, filling the body with the lightness of the breath (“full-body breathing”), then exhale through the soles of the feet.
- Exhale the lightness at least 5 metres away. If this lightness were water, it would be like watering the garden 5 metres away with the lightness.
- Repeat for 5 more breaths.
- Remember, there are no muscles needed for the exercise, only our watching is needed. We watch the lightness of the breath go to 5 metres away.

(iii) Inhaling Lightness Through the Feet, and Exhaling Through the Fingers

- Then inhale the lightness *in* through the soles of the feet, and exhale through the fingers – as if you were “watering the garden” at least 5 metres away, through the fingers, with the lightness of the breath.
- Repeat for 5 breaths.



(iv) Reversing the Flow

- Then reverse the flow and inhale the lightness through the fingers, and exhale through the soles of the feet – “watering the garden” with the lightness at least 5 metres away.
- Repeat 5 breaths.

(v) Exhaling Through the Shoulders

- Then, inhale through the soles of the feet, and exhale through the shoulders.
- Feel the lightness of the breath coming in through the soles of the feet and exhale that lightness out through the tops of the shoulders.
- Continue doing this for 5-10 breaths.

(vi) Reversing the Flow Again

- Then change directions: inhale the lightness of the breath in through the shoulders and out through the feet, feeling the lightness go to 5 metres away.
- Notice how there is a different feeling within the body depending on the direction.
- One of these directions will feel better to you at any one moment – so now continue for a further 5 breaths with the direction of flow that feels better for you.

(vii) Exploring Different Pathways

- After you have established yourself in breathing in and out through the soles of the feet and the fingers/shoulders, then begin to experiment with different pathways:
 - In through the crown of the head, out through the soles of the feet; in through the soles of the feet, out through the crown of the head.
 - In through the crown of the head, out through the perineum; in through the perineum, out through the crown of the head.
 - In through the crown of the head, out through the fingers; in through the fingers, out through the crown of the head.
 - In a right/left orientation: in through the right fingers and out through the left fingers; in through the left fingers, out through the right fingers
 - Or any directional flow of your choice.

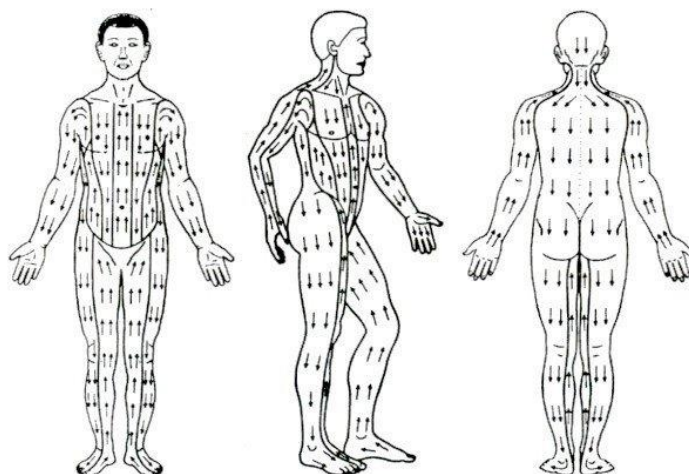


Figure 2: create longitudinal flows of energy by making the lightness move



What's happening here? The *Qi follows the command of the mind*. So when you intend to breathe out through the soles of the feet, the *Qi simply does it*. When this happens, it utilises *Qi* pathways that are already in the body. When we attend to the flow of energy in this way, we are actually increasing the flow of energy through these pathways, and stripping stuck energy away from the tissues and cells that lay in the path. So you may have noticed during the exercise the muscles relaxing as the flow went through – this is a sign of stuck energy (stuck energy holds muscles tight) being forced to leave, resulting in a better flow of energy.

The direction of flow has different effects in the body. The downward flow (breathing out through the feet) has a grounding effect – calming and softening. The upward flow (breathing from the soles up and out through the fingers) is more energising and uplifting. Feel free to do more breaths in the particular direction that you need to balance how you are feeling. People who are over anxious or stressed will benefit from more downward-flow breathing; people who are depressed will benefit from more upward-flow breathing.

4) Skin breathing: Utilising our Whole Potential to Absorb Qi With Every Breath.

- Start with exercise (1), then exercise (2), and then exercise (3) above. Once you have established yourself in the feeling of flow breathing (exercise (3)), then notice that you are not limited in terms of where in the body you can breathe in from.
- Notice that you can breathe in through *every skin cell*.
- Inhale through the skin, exhale through the skin.
- Feel free to breathe in and out through the entire skin, or if that is too difficult at first, just concentrate on small patches of skin. For example – just breathe in and out through the skin of the forearms, or face or palms. Ultimately, we want to be able to breathe in and out of our entire skin surface.

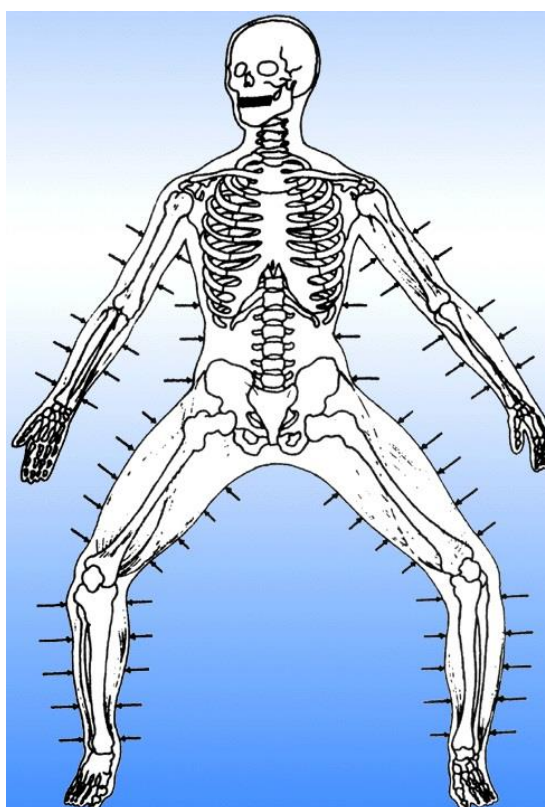


Figure 3: Skin breathing



We notice with this exercise that the lightness does not enter the body only in the breath, but also enters through the skin! In fact, our skin absorbs *Qi* every moment of the day, but when we attend to it in this way, we amplify the current to the extent that we can feel it, and then with that feeling acknowledgment, can begin to utilise the mind to guide it.

This exercise can also be done walking. It is a very vitalising practice to do.

5) Bone breathing & packing

In this exercise, we channel the breath deep into, and pack it in, the bones. It is a tremendous way to energise ourselves, which has to be felt to be believed. This exercise requires you to have become firmly established in exercise (1), exercise (2), exercise (3) and exercise (4) above.

(i) Turning Inward

- Start by closing the eyes, taking your attention internally.
- To begin, go through the stages as above. As you breath in, feel the lightness of the breath throughout the entire body (“full-body breathing”); as you breath out, feel all heaviness falling down.
- Feel how the inbreath brings lightness and the outbreath takes away heaviness. Breathing in, watch how the lightness of the breath spreads through the entire body. Breathing out, allowing all heaviness in the body to fall down with gravity.
- Spend a few breaths following the flow of lightness in the body, and letting go of all heaviness as you exhale.

(ii) Skin Breathing

- Then, begin skin breathing.
- As you inhale, feel the lightness of the breath coming directly in through the skin. As you breathe out, feel the lightness of the breath going out through the skin.
- You can choose to focus on any one part of the skin, or you can focus on the entire surface of the skin (ultimately, however, we want to be able to do this with a focus on the entire surface of the skin).
- Continue “skin breathing” for several breaths.

(iii) Breathing into the Bones: Upper Limbs

- Then, bring your focus entirely to your upper arm on one side of your body. Breathe in through the skin of the upper arm. As you breathe in, feel the lightness of the breath coming in through the skin and right into the bone of the upper arm on one side of your body (see figure 4).



- Send the breath deep, deep into the bone; as you breathe out, feel the breath going further into the bone.
- Take another breath, feeling the lightness of the breath again going into the bone of the upper arm, layering the new breath on top of what has remained there in the arm as a result of the previous breath.
- As you breathe out, pack the new breath down on the last again.
- With the next inbreath, breath again into the same bone, compressing the new breath deep in the bone, adding to the breath-energy that is already there.
- Keep on doing this for 5 more breaths, and then move your attention to the bone of the forearm on the same side, and continue doing the same thing for 8 breaths. Then bones of the wrist and fingers (see figure 5).
- Then move your attention and do the same exercise, successively for 8 breaths each, with the bone of the upper arm of the other side of your body, then the forearm, then the wrists and fingers.
- Remember, the idea is to breath directly in through the skin, directly into the deep marrow of the bone, and as you breathe out, to send the breath further down into the depths of the centre of the bone, layering and packing down each new breath on the layer that was there from the last breath.

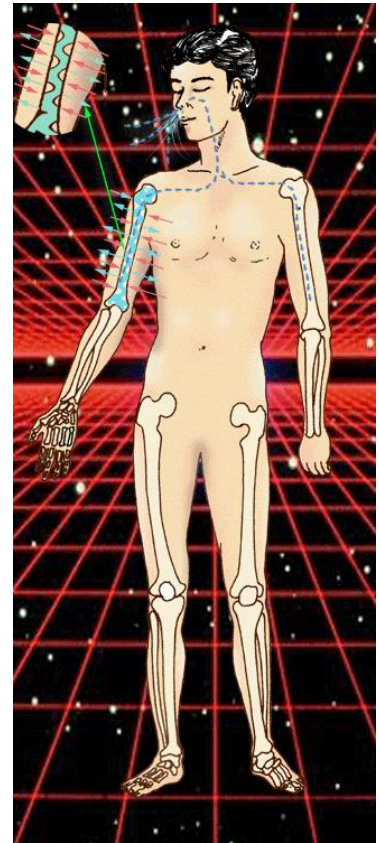


Figure 4: Bone breathing

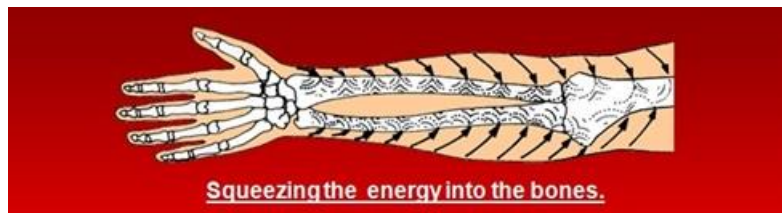


Figure 5: Bone breathing

(iv) Breathing into the Bones: Scapulae and Shoulder Joints

- Then do the same with, both scapulae, including the shoulder joints – both sides at once.
- Breathe into these bones for 8 breaths, allowing the breath's lightness to permeate and strengthen them.

(v) Breathing into the Bones: Spine and Core

- Direct your breath into the bones of the spine, feeling the breath's lightness saturate the vertebrae (8 breaths). Remember to layer the breath into the bones,



adding each breath layer to the one that was there before, effectively packing the previous layers down further.

- Move downward into the sacrum (8 breaths), sensing the breath deepening into the structure of the lower back.
- Shift your focus to the hips, filling them with breath-energy, and packing the breath in there (8 breaths).

(vi) Breathing into the Bones: Lower Limbs

- Breathe into the bones of the upper legs (femurs) (8 breaths), feeling them absorb the breath's lightness, packing there.
- Move to the knees (8 breaths), then to the lower legs (tibias & fibulas) (8 breaths).
- Continue with the bones of the feet and toes, fully infusing and packing them with breath-energy.

(vii) Breathing into the Bones: Skull & Head

- Finally, direct your breath into the bones of the skull, feeling the breath permeate the entire cranial structure (8 breaths).

(viii) Breathing into the Whole Skeleton

- Now, expand your awareness to include the entire skeletal system as one unified structure.
- With each inhale, breathe into the entire skeleton at once, filling it with breath-energy.
- With each exhale, press the breath deeper into the bones, strengthening their structure.
- Repeat this for 8 full breaths, allowing the entire skeleton to feel alive, light, and energised.

After you have completed this round, you should be feeling very energised, and fresh within the body. It really is a fantastic exercise that can be done anywhere at anytime – even standing or walking.

With this exercise, we have begun here by working with individual bone locations separately, but when you become practices with it, you should be able to breathe into the entire skeleton at once. So it becomes “full-body bone breathing”.

Why/how does this work? Our bones are the hardest part of our physical body, composed of minerals, arranged in lattices that resemble the structure of crystals. As a result they are, actually, crystals. It is the inner arrangement of the lattices inside the crystals that is responsible for their various properties – they serve as conductors, amplifiers and storage facilities for energy. When we direct our breath into our bones, we activate this crystalline function of theirs. The bones store and amplify energy. They provide a place where we can pack energy into. When we do that we also greatly assist



our circulatory and immune systems – it is in the marrow of the round bones of the body that our red-blood-cells are produced, and it is in the marrow of the flat bones of the body that our white blood cells are produced. Packing breath and energy into these places, therefore, greatly energises these systems.

This exercise also increases *Qi pressure* within the body. We'll revisit this, and other similar practices, in Section 11 of the Course.

A variation on this exercise is to channel different coloured light into the centre of the bones. According to Taoist theory, blue light will clean the bone marrow, white light will energise the bones, and gold light will strengthen them.