“Roger Jahnke is a wise teacher and healer. Here he introduces the healing power of [Tai Chi and] Qigong—a simple yet profound method of achieving wellness of the body and mind.” —DEEPAK CHOPRA

The Healing Promise of Qi

Creating Extraordinary Wellness Through Qigong and Tai Chi

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The Most Profound Medicine

Over thousands of years, the ancient Qi (Chi) masters discovered many treasures that we in the West are only now beginning to appreciate. They knew that the most profound medicine costs nothing—it is created naturally within the human system. We in Western cultures, in a kind of disbelief about such a possibility, have been slow to understand and use this extraordinary medicine.

The effect has been immense and painful. In the final years of the last millennium research revealed that both negative drug interactions and medical errors were among the most common causes of death. At the same time the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced that 70 percent of disease and the associated medical expenses are preventable.

How can this be? How can such a huge percentage of disease be preventable while at the same time several of the most common causes of death are attributed to the health-care system itself? Citizens have panicked, reaching out to sources of alternative medicine and spending billions of dollars. An act of Congress created the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and increased its budget 3,000 percent in ten years. The White House created a special commission to explore options to resolve this confusing challenge. Dozens of agencies and foundations have published reports citing more and more reasons why it is reasonable for individuals to take charge of their own health care.

All the while and almost totally overlooked—in parks, community centers, schools, churches, and certain innovative hospitals—small groups of people have begun to gather to produce and utilize that remarkable inner medicine the Chinese discovered so long
ago. A rapidly expanding group of people has already felt the benefit of taking weekly or daily “doses” of this medicine within, which has no negative side effects. Is it possible that small groups of average citizens have begun to solve some of the health-care problems that Congress, several presidents, and the nation’s health insurance companies have found insurmountable? Not only is this possible, it is very likely happening in your own neighborhood.

You can’t buy this miraculous internal medicine; it is free. You can’t go somewhere and get it; it is produced within you, wherever you are. What about the programs to organize these activities? Surely they must be developed and managed by huge institutions at great expense. On the contrary, the self-healing practice group that I am involved with has been meeting weekly for more than twelve years in a Santa Barbara, California, community center. A group of several facilitators with some good-hearted, community-minded supporters has sustained this process for the entire twelve years. Your nearby opportunity to become involved will usually cost you between five and ten dollars.

A revolution gave birth to this nation more than two hundred years ago. Thomas Jefferson predicted that occasional smaller revolutions would be necessary to resolve problem areas in the future. Until recently no one would have guessed that our healthcare system would be the setting for a very necessary revolution. Fortunately, producing free medicine in the human body is very easy for us to do.

The Promise of This Book

The teachings in this book have been handed to me by an amazing group of teachers. Some have traveled to the United States, but many I met in the hospitals and institutes of China. Others are from temples and sacred sites in China’s mystical mountains. Some of these teachers have passed from this life. In almost every case they have said, “This is a transmission of profound and powerful wisdom that has been refined and then passed down for thousands of years. It is intended for the good of all beings. When it was given to me, I committed to care for this information to assure its transmission into the future. Now, the transmission is passing into your care. Please honor, protect, and refine these methods so that the transmission of healing and empowered Spirit may continue for all time.”

As you will see, the extraordinary innovation of purposefully producing a profound inner medicine for no cost is only the beginning. By the time you have gotten into the heart of it, you will find yourself in a domain that is boundless. In this book, you will find three special “promises of Qi” that will alter your life. But as you progress, you will find promise upon promise. Once you enter the domain of consciously working and playing with Qi, something fundamental shifts and your new life begins. Where there was discomfort or desperation, the power to become new or healed or wise appears. Where there was no path, a pathway opens. I am deeply honored to meet you here.
My intention, in the tradition of those who taught me, is to support you in accessing a life-transforming experience. As you explore these ideas and implement these practices, realize that you are being flooded with wisdom so rich and so ancient that no one knows just how it came to be. As soon as you can, begin to experience that this transmission is coming to you from the mysterious and infinite source of the Qi itself.

**Using This Book**

There are lots of opinions about how the Qi is transmitted and how one “should” learn about Qigong (Chi Kung) and Tai Chi (Taiji). The views expressed in this book, and by most of the teachers that have transmitted their wisdom to me, are to follow the Qi itself. Simply use the book or any teaching as a way to gain direct access to Qi. *The Healing Promise of Qi* is laid out in a logical order, but you certainly don’t have to follow it sequentially. The structure allows you to find things easily.

- Part I is foundation material.
- Part II is an in-depth set of tools and methods of Qi cultivation, from the simple to the sublime.
- Part III supports you in deepening your understanding and practice; it includes the latest science of Qi and explores the deeper meaning of Tai Chi.

If you are new to this territory, begin with Part I and explore the fundamentals and guiding principles underlying Qigong and Tai Chi. If you want to begin with the actual practices, leap ahead to Chapter 3 and Part II. For insights into how to practice and benefit from Qi cultivation methods, explore Chapter 15. If your mind needs to be satisfied with a scientific framework before it can absorb information and experience the Qi, then read some of the science in Chapter 16. Refer to the Recommended Reading and Resources sections for access to additional guidance.

My intent is to inspire and guide you in your practice. This material has been used in lectures, workshops, and professional training for years. The absolute beginner and the advanced practitioner of Qigong and Tai Chi will both find this book useful—but for different reasons.

**Traditional Sources**

There is significant diversity in opinion about most of the origins and traditions of Chinese medicine, Qigong, and Tai Chi. This, in addition to the teaching and encouragement of great Qi masters plus my own personal insight from a life of practice, has given me permission to carefully distill from diverse sources a dynamic and practical view of Qi cultivation, one that is both traditional and contemporary.
The Promise of Qi

There must be some primal force,
but it is impossible to locate.
I believe it exists, but cannot see it.
I see its results,
I can even feel it,
but it has no form.

—ZHUANG ZI, Inner Chapters, Fourth Century B.C.E.

David was living in what many call “the zone.” His work was perfect—it gave him the opportunity to serve the public, be in constant contact with nature, and make a very good living. How many people are that lucky?

In 1994, with so much going his way, David began to experience severe nervous system attacks—unusual for someone working in a natural setting in a relatively low-stress job. Though he sought assistance from a number of health-care professionals, the symptoms progressed. When David suffered a major epileptic seizure, he sought immediate medical attention from a neurologist. The physician’s report after an EEG and a biopsy was catastrophic: brain cancer, an inoperable tumor—stage two astrocytoma with rapidly dividing cells—usually terminal, with negligible chances of survival past two years.
Astrocytoma—literally star tumor—is like a starfish with long slender fingers that wrap around and compress portions of the brain. In David’s case the astrocytoma gripped his motor cortex, the portion of the brain that operates body movement. Given the site and size of the tumor, surgery posed a significant risk of irreversible motor impairment—paralysis. David’s physician informed him that astrocytoma rarely goes into remission. It grows steadily and is eventually terminal. In David’s case chemotherapy was not a reasonable option. Radiation could be used for temporary relief, but could not resolve the case. “If we attempt surgery,” the doctor said, “you will likely never walk again.”

Stunned, David found himself wrenching out of the zone of security and fulfillment into the zone of alarm and imminent death. Although his basic nature was upbeat and positive, he was caught off guard. As he went about his work with the forest service in the beautiful Montana wilderness, he confronted the fact that medical experts were sure he would die.

David recalls being in shock and deeply depressed. “I had based my life on a career where you walk and climb and work in the forest. This was my preference, my choice. The doctor’s diagnosis was devastating.” When this traumatic medical opinion was confirmed by a second neurologist, David reached a turning point. “It may have been rebelliousness, anger, or disbelief,” he explains, “but I actually feel it was my faith that pulled me up out of my chair. I reached out and shook the doctor’s hand, saying, ‘I will be alive when your grandchildren graduate.’ I walked out. It was as if I had declared out loud what my inner sense had been saying all along—that not only the information I was receiving but also the tone in which it was delivered was inconsistent with my intuition and my values. I had a strong inner feeling that it was possible for someone—me—to recover from this disease.”

Believing that there had to be a way to regain his health and his life, David explored many strategies for treatment and personal empowerment. At one point he heard of a form of meditative exercise from China, known as Qigong (Chi Kung). He began to study and practice Qigong and was immediately inspired; this method of personal practice was so much in keeping with his ideals and philosophy. A practice of purposefully accessing the energy of nature to accelerate natural healing seemed more promising than surgery that guaranteed paralysis or radiation that could only postpone death.

Just then he met Karen. She was a total believer in the capacity for self-healing. She had never experienced Qigong but found it to be a wonderful personal discipline that matched her ideals as well. “I had an immediate sense that this was not only a healing practice but a spiritual path. I said, ‘David, if you are going to use this ancient Chinese art to heal this tumor you should go to the heart of Qigong.’ And, just like that, we were on our way to China, the motherland of Qigong.”

David and Karen located a wonderful teacher in Beijing. Dr. Sun, a soulful, positive teacher and doctor of Chinese medicine, taught them Qigong based on a famous system developed in the 1970s by a renowned woman artist who had recovered from
cancer. Guo Lin had developed her Qigong especially to meet her own needs, drawing from traditional Qigong forms that she had learned from her grandfather.

Karen reflects, "We learned and practiced and became very enthusiastic about this Chinese healing art with its ancient roots. The most fascinating thing was that Qigong was not complex, it was actually easy to do the practices. The concept that nature heals is just so reasonable. We learned that through Qigong we can tap directly into the power that operates the entire universe. Just think of that. Given the awesome power of the universe, we understood that a tumor could be healed."

Karen and David were practicing Qigong every day, often more than once a day. On their return from China, David had several MRI scans. When a fourth MRI showed definite reduction in the size of the astrocytoma, the doctors were amazed and a bit confused about how to proceed. But one doctor, a neurosurgeon at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco, felt that the tumor had shrunk enough to be safely removed surgically.

When David had the surgery, in December 1998, everyone was astounded. An inoperable, terminal, class two astrocytoma had converted to an operable, class one astrocytoma. This was a complete reversal at the cellular level; David had gone from having dangerous, rapidly dividing cancer cells to showing absolutely no sign of dividing cells. Amazingly, David had used no chemotherapy and he had had no radiation treatment. The only medical follow-up he had was occasional acupuncture. When David asked what he could do to support his positive progress during his postsurgical recovery, the neurosurgeon answered, "Keep doing Qigong." Instead of the usual medical rehabilitation program, David's physicians agreed that he should follow his inclination to practice Qigong in nature.

A year later, David was able to return to work. He now looks at his illness differently. "This is a quest—a spiritual quest, an opportunity to be of service," he says. "My dream is that people with frightening diseases, and even mild discomforts, will be as lucky as I was. They'll find their way to understanding the Qi [Chi] through Qigong and get swept into a process that leads to a new life. Qigong is not a cure; it is a tool for healing and empowerment. It may seem like a paradox, but I have to give thanks for this tumor also. I am still getting used to being thankful for a life-threatening disease. It introduced me to Qigong and gave me access to the mysterious, vital resource that is Qi."

David's story is not unusual. Many people in China share similar stories of Qigong and its popular offspring Tai Chi (Taiji). In the United States a remarkable revolution is happening in medicine and health care, triggered by people of great conviction and personal fortitude—people like David, Karen, Dr. Sun, and a growing community of innovative physicians and medical providers. The era of the passive patient is over. At the same time, there is a tremendous urge to reduce stress and access inner and outer peace. You, too, can access the healing promise of Qi. For people with health challenges as well as those who simply wish to increase their personal energy and inner calm, ancient Chinese Qigong could be the gift of a lifetime.
The Call of Ancient Medicine

A mysterious vital resource, naturally circulating within us, that we can use for self-empowerment and healing? Surely, we've all wished for this at some level—for a loved one, for a friend, or for ourselves. Many of us have hoped or prayed to uncover such a resource in our lives. Could the formula for healing and personal breakthrough possibly be so simple and yet so profound?

Very early on in my own quest for wisdom and understanding one of my first teachers deeply impressed me with the declaration, “Study and come to know the one essential thing that pervades and surrounds all things.” This person used herbs and talked about and practiced meditation, prayer, breathing practices, and a fresh-food diet—just like an ancient Chinese Qigong master. This woman—my first teacher in the healing arts—was my grandmother. She was a lot like a hermit in a monastery, living alone in several small rooms that smelled of herbal salves. Like a Qigong master she was immensely humble and spilling over with radiant spirit expressed as love and humor.

At a very early age I began to ask myself what one essential pervades and surrounds everything—from the trees, mountains, and stars to life, birth, disease, and death. I asked myself this question as a youngster watching clouds pass over on a summer day, and I asked it when my father passed away before he was forty. I asked again when my children were born, and I asked again when we entered the new millennium. Through this book, I continue to investigate this question with you.

When I was eleven years old my father went into a hospital. He did not return healed as I supposed he would. I never saw him again. As a child I had wanted to be a cowboy or a firefighter when I grew up. Now, suddenly, I wanted to be a doctor. I knew intuitively and through the influence of my grandmother that the primary solution to our diseases is not somewhere outside of ourselves but within us. My whole adult life has been a search for the secrets of healing and personal empowerment that could save people from pain, disease, loss, sorrow, and untimely death. In preparing for a medical career I worked in nearly a dozen hospitals, in numerous departments. At its core, I believe much of my professional journey has been a quest to discover what happened to my father.

In the 1960s, long before the era of complementary and integrated medicine, I became discouraged in my pursuit of a role in the medical profession, sensing that something was missing in the way Western medicine was practiced. Gradually, I shifted the focus of my study to comparative world philosophies, mining the ancient traditions for evidence of the inherent self-healing capacity. As a Christian I found myself resonating with the truths of many traditions, including the secrets of the Native American shamans, Hebrew Kabbalah, Hindu Vedas, Sufi mystics, European alchemists, and the Chinese Daoists. In the basement archives of the library at the University of Cincinnati I found the most amazing collection of rare and ancient books. The volumes on those dusty shelves fed a raging hunger in me; I devoured them.