

Hello all,

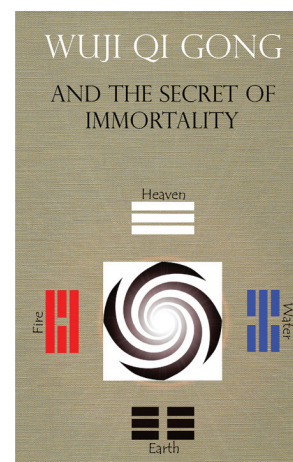
Welcome to the April 2010 **COHERENCE Newsletter**. This month I'm pleased present "**The Sea**", an article by guest contributor Carol Elliott, L.Ac. Before we begin, **Wuji Qi Gong & The Secret Of Immortality**, a new book by Stephen Elliott and Dr. Meng Sheng Lin is now generally available. Wuji Qi Gong is about learning to *breathe in harmony with Heaven and Earth*. You can find it at Coherence, Amazon, and other on-line book sellers. Also, see the recent article **Researchers Examine The Correlation Between Blood Pressure And Heart Rate Variability** in BMED Report. It presents the results of a study by Dee Edmonson and myself, examining the correlation between blood pressure and the degree to which the heart rate varies while breathing coherently. I'm sure you'll find it interesting.



"Qi Hai" - The Sea

¶ In Chinese thought, the sea is considered *the source* of life. In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) the "hai" (the sea) is the name given to the area of the abdomen. The sea is a large body of water affected by the moon - it is tidal. The *hai* is "the sea of qi" or *the source* of vital energy - *life*. It is also tidal, rising and falling with the action of the diaphragm.

A healthy abdomen emulates the sea, undulating in a wavelike motion. When it moves, it "functions" properly. When it is moving as it should its action is easily observed - even from across the room. When the sea is not moving it is not functioning and when it is not functioning one can expect to find related health problems.



Wuji Qi Gong

I find that when some of my patients arrive for treatment their sea is "still" as if their diaphragm is "frozen". Interestingly, when their diaphragm is frozen, their abdomen may be chilled overall or demonstrate cold spots, spots that seem refrigerated! How can one have spots that are seemingly colder than the surrounding environment on an otherwise warm abdomen? You may recall swimming in a lake and running into spots of warm and cold. This is a symptom of a still sea. This lack of abdominal motion is accompanied by other symptoms including an underlying tension throughout the body that is easily felt in the forearms, hips, and calves where, as opposed to softness, it feels like the client is wearing spandex.

I tend to think of this tension as a degree of "freeze", the 3rd potential reaction to stress, the first two being fight, or flight. It seems that we carry some degree of fight, flight, and freeze with us throughout our daily lives. As it relates to the diaphragm, "freeze" causes the range of motion to become less and less until we're using 10% or less of available range (that of the typical adult). The simple truth of it is that diaphragm range diminishes without use. And as diaphragm range diminishes, so does the tidal action of *the sea*.

When you examine the pulse with the patient lying on the massage table with eyes closed, their pulse is choppy, i.e. the pulse changes rapidly in both rate and quality. If you had to guess what this person might be doing, you might surmise that they are walking down the hallway getting ready to vacuum just before company arrives, or doing last minute shopping. When a relaxing person's pulse feels this way, we can be pretty sure that they are not *really* relaxed. And, if we examine their "sea", its probably not moving.

When a client demonstrates this, I often ask if their symptoms are related to *stress*. Often they respond, with "I exercise, I eat well, I meditate..." However, it is clear that their body is carrying tension, a degree of tension to which they seem to have become accustomed.



Carol Elliott, L.Ac., listening for bowel sounds

We begin treatment by listening to the abdomen with a stethoscope, listening for squeaks and gurgles, the sounds made by a sea that is functioning properly. It is most often the case that when the sea is still it is also silent. Biologically, we know that this means that chyme (food) is not moving through the intestinal tract. (For more about the relationship between the diaphragm and digestion, see *The Taiji Diaphragm* (February 2009 newsletter).

The patient also listens with the stethoscope, often finding the silence somewhat striking, and with the stethoscope as a form of biofeedback we work together using acupuncture, Coherent Breathing, and relaxation to restore normal action to the diaphragm.

The client is instructed in "how to move the sea" such that the abdomen rises during inhalation and falls during exhalation.

I use the RESPIRE-1 CD and as the client breathes coherently, their abdomen begins to rise and fall and their body becomes soft and relaxed. In his practice, Steve teaches this with a 2.5 lb weight centered at the apex of the abdomen. He also practices this himself for 45 minutes every morning. The weight is not to provide resistance against the abdomen moving upward (the diaphragm moving downward), but to assist in learning how to "let go" and let the abdomen sink on exhalation (as the diaphragm moves upward). Here we want the diaphragm to "let go", to relax, *allowing* the weight to sink, but not helping it sink, just "getting out of the way".



2.5 lbs at apex of abdomen

At the end of the session, ~40 minutes, both the patient and I re-examine their abdomen. It is now an even temperature and glowing with warmth. We listen again with the stethoscope and a myriad of bowel sounds are now clearly audible, pings, squeaks, creaks, gurgles.....the singing voice of a happy spleen and stomach. The relationship between breathing and bowel sounds demonstrates the fascinating paired action/reaction that exists between the lung and the large intestine as defined by Traditional Chinese Medicine!

Using the stethoscope as biofeedback we can work with the patient to induce bowel sounds via breathing. After you've listened, have the patient listen as you palpate for areas that induce bowel sounds. As you move around your patient, have them give you the "thumbs up" when they hear sounds. I find that the stomach and spleen meridians as well as liver and lung meridians often hold the keys to success.

Over the 40 minute period a transformation in the breather occurs, their bowel sounds change from "silent" to "noisy" and their pulse changes from "choppy" to "slippery". The face takes on a peaceful relaxed composure.

Its often my experience that the "slippery pulse" you would expect to find in very active fit people is not present as anticipated. Does a slippery pulse result from being active and fit or does it result from breathing slowly, deeply, and rhythmically, or both? Without training, do active fit people breathe slowly deeply and rhythmically? If so, once on the table, do they breathe as they normally do? All interesting questions that warrant more consideration.

At the end of treatment the patient often feels deeply relaxed. At other times they express that they are tired, a more honest feeling for a person who has been overworking and is truly exhausted. Here it helps to suggest that they take a moment to feel themselves becoming relaxed and alert before getting up. Conversation helps bring them back to the here and now.

Thank you for your interest,

Carol Elliott, L.Ac.

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Thank you Carol, all, Stephen Elliott, COHERENCE

Please direct inquires to "inquiries@coherencepress.com".