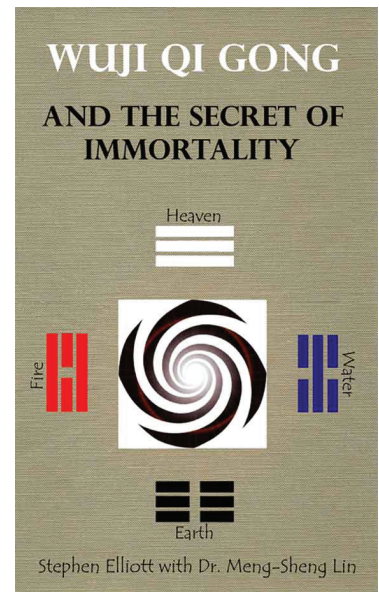
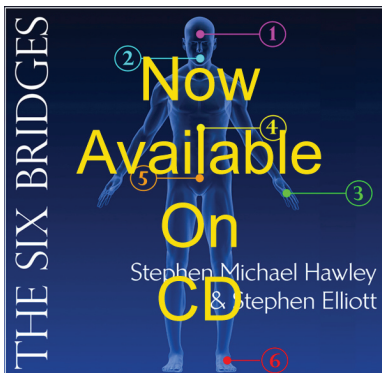


*Hello all,*

And welcome to the February 2010 **COHERENCE Newsletter**. This month I'd like to bring your attention to a landmark recommendation by The U.S. Department of Health And Human Services (DHHS) titled *The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*. It was published in November, 2008 but I've not talked to a single person that knows of it. I found out about it toward the end of 2009 in Chris Fisher's BMED Report. Its important because it makes some *very strong* recommendations regarding the need for exercise. In a nutshell *it recommends that adults exercise 45 minutes every day and do muscle strengthening activities at least 2 times a week*. The health benefits that they report are both numerous and extensive. But, before we dig in, I'd like to bring your attention to a few things:



**Wuji Qi Gong And The Secret Of Immortality** is now available. If you're wondering what Wuji Qi Gong has to do with breathing, it is the primordial method of *breathing in harmony with Heaven and Earth*. Its practice was very instrumental in my own understanding and development of Coherent Breathing. Click on the image above to find out more.



Second, I'll be presenting 2 one day workshops in Seattle on March 17th and 18th. The first day is **The Art & Science of Coherent Breathing**; the 2nd day is **Wuji Qi Gong And The Secret Of Immortality**. The workshops are being hosted in a private home and attendance is limited so if you'd like to attend please sign up soon. Click here for more info.

[Click here for audio summary](#)

The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (PAG) is the first-ever comprehensive recommendation on exercise by the federal government. It is pre-dated by the lesser *Surgeon General's Report On Physical Activity And Health* issued in 1996, which states, "Underpinning such recommendations is a growing understanding of how physical activity affects physiologic function. The body responds to physical activity in ways that have important positive effects on musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, respiratory, and endocrine systems. These changes are consistent with a number of health benefits, including a reduced risk of premature mortality and reduced risks of coronary heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and diabetes mellitus. Regular participation in physical activity also appears to reduce depression and anxiety, improve mood, and enhance ability to perform daily tasks throughout the life span." Chapter 4 of the Surgeon General's report presents this discussion.

The “guidelines” go on to make clear the health advantages of adequate exercise as well as recommendations on the type and frequency of exercise for people of different ages. It is intended to serve policy makers, health care professionals, educators, and the general public in moving America toward a more active lifestyle. The findings are possibly best summarized by this from the Secretary’s of Health and Human Services opening letter, “*We know that sedentary behavior contributes to a host of chronic diseases, and regular physical activity is an important component of an overall healthy lifestyle.*” And from the summary, “*All Americans should avoid inactivity.* Some physical activity is better than none, and adults who participate in any amount of physical activity gain some health benefits.” (Emphasis added.)

If you’re familiar with my writing, you know that I consider Coherent Breathing, at its simplest, to be nothing more than *a specific form of exercise*. I also believe that many of the physical and psychological health advantages ultimately accrue from its “exercise effects”, i.e., more robust blood flow, gas exchange, energy production, etc. The bottom line in my mind - *breathing* is a form of exercise that we can and should be engaged in all the time, circumstances permitting. ***Breathing is the most basic exercise.***

Its an interesting fact that the diaphragm (and intercostals) are the only muscles we can consciously exercise without the engagement of other skeletal muscles. This “isolation” allows us to just sit and breathe if we wish. However, if we try to exercise any other significant muscle or muscle group to any degree what happens? The diaphragm must begin working harder, and the harder we work other muscles, the harder the diaphragm must work. Why? Because the diaphragm is the mediator of gas exchange and circulation, gas exchange and circulation are the mediators of energy production, and energy production is the mediator of work.

Returning to the 2008 guidelines, I was hopeful that they would expound on the Surgeon General’s “growing understanding” of the physiological mechanisms that yield the many health benefits that accrue from regular exercise, but the recommendation is completely devoid of such information. Instead, it focuses almost exclusively on statistical outcomes that justify the exercise recommendations, which of course is excellent and necessary, but I am left needing to know more...

The development of the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines* was an outcome of a 2006 initiative by the DHHS to determine if there was sufficient evidence to create a such a comprehensive set of guidelines in the first place. It culminated in an October 2006 workshop of the Boards of Food and Nutrition, and Population Health and Public Health Practice, both of the Institute of Medicine, titled “*Adequacy of Evidence for Physical Activity Guidelines*”.

The goal of the workshop was to conduct a review of all relevant evidence relating to physical activity and the general population where (to be consistent with the FDA) the 5 areas of evidence are: efficacy, effectiveness, dose, potential adverse events, and *mechanisms of action*, recognizing that there may be more than one mechanism relating to a single health benefit. Yet in this document there are only 4 instances of the use of the term with no supporting discussion.

In summary, the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines* present strong evidence that exercise is critical to health and well-being, and it presents equally strong recommendations for every American to engage in physical activity. In other words, it offers us pretty clear advice on *what* the health benefits of exercise are. It also offers recommendations on *what* types of exercise we might engage in to realize these benefits. But alas, we are left completely in the dark as to *why* such benefits are realized.

Thank you for your interest and consideration,

Stephen Elliott - COHERENCE

Links to documents:

<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/default.aspx>

<http://helix.od.nih.gov/nihradio/20090220PAG.mp3>

[http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=11819](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=11819) (free ebook)

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/pdf/execsumm.pdf>