

**Simple Practices for Rejuvenation**  
**alleyCat yoga, March 17, 2007**  
**2-4pm**

**Breath**

Qi first enters the body with the breath through the lungs. The lung channel is considered the beginning of the cycle of energy through the body. The job description for the lungs, according to the ancient Chinese medical texts, is to take in pure qi from the heavens.

To breathe well: allow the ribcage to expand 360 degrees with each inhalation. This releases tension in the ribs that prevents full and easy movement of the lungs. Release the shoulder blades down the back to relax the chest open. Feel the primary movement of the breath in the space below the navel – the breath need not be big – simply allow the breath to move into the bottom of the lungs.

Exercises: three-part breath, kapalabhati

*The quality of your breath determines the quality of your energy and your mind.*

**Posture**

When you stand or sit, remember that

*You are a unique meeting point between Heaven and Earth.*

Good posture allows good breathing, minimizes muscular strain and improves joint mobility. Posture also projects our self-image.

- Feel the soles of your feet and notice if your weight is distributed evenly.
- Relax tail bone and sense it as a dinosaur tail or as a third leg of a stool to center breath, feel grounded, and access large muscles of the legs.
- As tail drops to earth, allow crown of head to buoyantly release to heaven.
- Initiate breath below navel, from the Seq of Qi, the center of your physical and energetic body.
- Broaden shoulders by allowing collar bones to blossom out from sternum.
- Release the shoulder blades down the back.

Exercise: Mountain pose

*What is your posture telling you about yourself? What is your posture telling the world?*

**Movement**

*Movement oils our joints and nourishes our muscles.*

Exercise deepens and invigorates our breath so diaphragm massages our internal organs, warms muscles, lubricates joints, improves sleep, improves posture (if we balance flexibility and strengthening in our exercise), prevents injury by strengthening muscles that can be easily strained.

Exercise: joint openers for ankles, knees, hips, shoulders, neck.

TURN OVER

## **Sleep**

In Chinese medicine, poor sleep is considered a sign of shen disturbance. Shen refers to the spirit of the heart. So any practices that calm the heart or spirit will promote good sleep.

- Avoid caffeine and sugar
- 15-20 minutes of cardiovascular exercise before bed can release tension
- Rituals to cue body to relax: hot baths, quit work and turn off TV at least one hour before bedtime
- Relax mind with inspirational reading, gratitude list
- Environment for sleeping: free of clutter, soothing colors, sounds, smells, no TV or computer
- If you awake, use the time to rejuvenate with meditation, prayer, inspirational reading, restorative yoga.
- Eat your most protein-rich meal in the morning.

Chinese medicine also tells us that our capacity for dreaming and visioning our future is supported by sleeping well between 11PM and 3AM.

*What calms your spirit?*

## **Diet**

The quality of energy in our body is dependent on the quality of energy in the food we eat. The energy, or qi, of our food is dependent not only on the vitality of the ingredients, but the manner in which it was prepared (angry or joyful) and our relationship to the cook, our own attitude and manner of eating (standing or sitting; hurried or relaxed), and the environment in which we are eating.

The recommended diet for a beautiful complexion, cancer prevention, alleviation of anxiety and depression, support of immune system, and to counter any inflammation, including arthritis: Whole grains, whole fruits, whole vegetables and an avoidance of processed flour, sugar, fried foods and processed foods. If eating fresh is not feasible, frozen food maintains the integrity of food better than canned.

Cravings may indicate a nutritional deficiency or a reaction to stress. If craving sweets, ask if you need more water (8-12 eight ounce glasses a day, depending on body weight, activity level and moisture of home and work environment) or protein (two to three 2-ounce portions of meat each week is sufficient for most adults). High-chlorophyll foods (blue-green algae, cereal grasses, spirulina) can counter sweet cravings. Omega oils helpful for anxiety and stress. If cravings are due to stress, improve breathing and posture. Tai Chi or yoga are useful tools for improving breath and posture.

Eating at regular mealtimes helps the body learn to create digestive enzymes in preparation for meals so that assimilation of nutrients is maximized and overall digestion is less stressful for the body.

Over eating is exhausting for the body.

Exercise: Keep a food journal for two weeks noting what you have eaten each day and how you feel.

*What food would you like to increase in your diet? What foods would you like to decrease?*