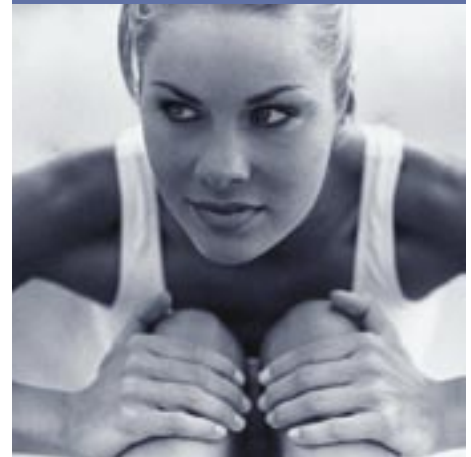




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Dance of the dragon – for weight loss and wellbeing

with the healing art of Qi Gong

'In Qi Gong we believe that we are constantly being charged with energy, This energy comes from the earth and the sky, our workplace and home, even other people. It also comes from the things we eat, our activities, and even our psychological state. The combination of yin (passive) and yang (active) energy is Qi. The practice and study of Qi is Qi Gong' - Mastering Miracles, by Dr Hong Liu

Qi Gong is an internal practice that uses breathing, concentration of the mind and physical movement to regulate the internal functions of the human body. Qi Gong exercises dissolve blockages of energy, stimulate the circulation and correct internal imbalances. Regular practise results in increased physic abilities, physical wellbeing and a significant strengthening of the immune system.

The purpose of regular Qi Gong practise is to:

- Regulate the breathing with specific breathing techniques
- Regulate the body through dynamic exercises
- Regulate the mind and emotions with mental exercises for concentrating chi in the meridians and organs.

This article focuses on the regulation of the body through dynamic exercises, specifically using the Dance of the Dragon. Refer to the online version of this article at www.fitnessnetwork.com.au for more information on regulating the breathing, mind and emotions.

Regulating the body

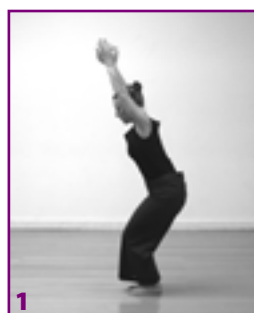
The body is regulated by performing a series of movements that relax, stretch, strengthen and energise the body, stimulate circulation, open the energy channels (called meridians) and massage internal organs. Movements that flex, extend, rotate and laterally stretch the spine and torso have a tonifying, energising and massaging effect on particular organs and systems.

The internal organs are caretakers (in traditional Chinese medicine) for the muscles, tendons, ligaments, heart, lungs, digestive, hormonal and endocrine systems. The comment from Oriental exercise masters is that Western exercise places too much emphasis on the cardiovascular system, which depletes energy or chi particularly in the other vital organs. In addition to promoting flexibility, agility, strength and fluidity Tai Chi and Qi Gong exercises aid detoxification of the entire body, right down to a cellular level.

Ancient Eastern exercise forms such as Dance of the Dragon have been used in China for 2,000 years or more to cure obesity, arthritis, low libido, lethargy and some forms of cancer. The Dance of the Dragon movements are gentle and graceful, yet challenging and effective. Each movement is practised with mindful attention to ensure maximum benefits. Following are some Dance of the Dragon movements.

1. The Dragon awakens her spine

Benefits: Massages the diaphragm, harmonises and balances chi, causing it to flow within and not outside the body. Meridian channels are stimulated that begin and end in the feet. It also promotes internal stability, strength and concentration, firms and tones buttocks and abdominal muscles.



continued on page 6



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Dance of the dragon – for weight loss and wellbeing

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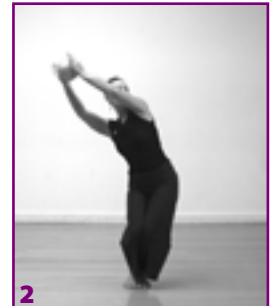


Action: With your feet and knees together, hold the ChiBall opposite your chest. Inhale and raise the ChiBall above your head and fully stretch your arms and draw the breath into your kidneys. Exhale with your arms still stretched and slowly bend your knees, half way through your exhalation, begin lowering the arms to the chest. Repeat three more times.

2. The Dragon gazes at the moon

Benefits: stimulates and regulates breathing, stretches entire spine, improves circulation to the abdominal area, stimulates the lungs and kidneys, relieves back pain and neck problems.

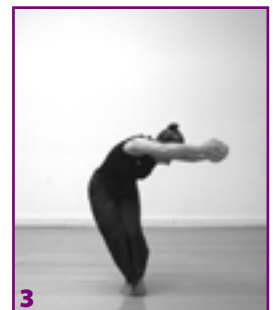
Action: Inhale and extend your arms out to the left side, keeping the tailbone descending downwards, the navel drawn into the spine and knees bent and pressed together and pushing over the little toe side of your foot across to the right. Exhale and return the ChiBall to the chest and fully relax. Repeat to the right.



3. The Dragon breathes fire

Benefits: gives gentle massage to the kidneys, improves flexibility of the spine, strengthens the spine and lower back, stimulates whole vertebral column, opens the 'three doors' along the spine, promotes circulation of blood and chi, dispels over-heated or negative emotions.

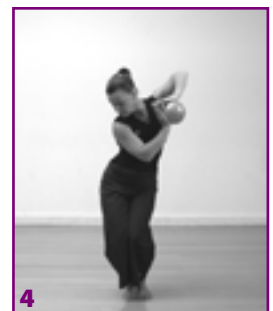
Action: Inhale then exhale, bend your knees, round your lower back and extend the ChiBall out to the left side. Circle it across to the right and return to your starting position with legs straight and feet and knees together to inhale. Exhale and repeat going from right to left, exhaling through the mouth emulating the dragon's fire breath to release stress and excessive emotions.



4. The Dragon looks at her tail

Benefits: Tones the waist, improves mobility of the ribcage, hips and pelvis, stimulates the kidneys and adrenals, gives deep massage to the stomach and liver organs, regulates the breathing.

Action: With knees together, inhale, bend and drop them across to the right as you draw your navel to your spine, descend the tail-bone and lift your left elbow, keeping the arms at a 45 degree angle, look over your shoulder to your right foot. Exhale, return to a neutral position and fully relax. Repeat to the right side.



5. The Dragon twists down

Benefits: Improves mobility of the ribcage, hips and pelvis, stimulates the kidneys and adrenals, gives a much deeper massage to the digestive system. Strengthens and tones thigh muscles and knees.

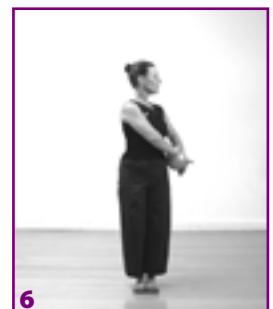
Action: With knees together, inhale first then exhale, bend your knees, draw your navel to your spine, descend the tail-bone, round your lower back, bend down and place your elbow between your knees. Inhale to stand up, exhale to repeat on the other side.



6. The Dragon rolls the ball

Benefits: Strengthens pelvic floor, lifts all the internal organs particularly liver and spleen, energises the kidneys, relieves stiffness in the neck and shoulders, promotes the circulation of blood and chi especially to the prostate gland for men.

Action: With your legs fully stretched, navel to spine, tail bone descending downwards, heart lifted. Place your right hand on top of the ChiBall and the left hand underneath. Inhale lift your toes, keep your shoulders evenly balance and rotate the spine to the left. Exhale, soften the knees, roll the ChiBall in your hands to bring the left hand on top and the right hand underneath as you return to the front. Inhale and repeat to the other side.



7. The Dragon dives into the sea

Benefits: Gives a deep and thorough massage to the kidney, bladder and reproductive organs. Strengthens and tones the thighs and knees. Aids peristalsis and detoxifies the body. This movement particularly moulds the character, boosts self-confidence and promotes determination, persistence and inner strength.

Action: With fingers in the pyramid position on the ChiBall, inhale, bend your knees, descend the tail bone, draw the navel in, round the lower back and bend deeply as you rotate your shoulders to the left side and dive down to the outside of your left ankle. Inhale to stand up, pass the ChiBall across the chest and repeat the dive to the other side.

8. The Dragon strokes her tail

Benefits: promotes yang energy, gives deep stretch to the legs, strengthens and tones thigh muscle, knees and buttock muscles. Opens three doors, strengthens kidneys.

Action: Bend your knees, lift your left heel and step your feet apart. Balance your weight evenly and bend both knees into 'horse riding stance'. Transfer your weight across to your left leg and straighten your right. Inhale and exhale, drop your tail bone, draw the navel to the spine hollowing the abdominals, round the lower back and extend your arms along your straight right leg. Inhale to draw the ChiBall back along the leg, bringing the spine back to an upright position. Exhale, return to horse riding stance. Inhale, transfer your weight across to the right leg, exhale and repeat the stretch over your left leg

9. The Dragon Stretches Her Wings

Benefits: beneficial for heart and diaphragm, stimulates the lungs, stretches entire spinal column, relieves stiffness and tension in the shoulders and neck and re-centres the body in the upward stretch.

Action: Inhale, raise the ChiBall above your head and allow the left hand to extend up and beyond the ChiBall. Exhale, with the arm remaining straight, drop your shoulder. Inhale and extend the right hand up and beyond the ChiBall. Repeat six times.

10. The Dragon Fans Her Wings

Benefits: Balances Yin and Yang energies, relieves tension in the shoulders, regulates the breathing. After the strenuous internal actions, the smooth, fluid, weightless quality of this movement opens the meridian pathways and re-centres the body.

Action: With arms still fully stretched, exhale, bend your left elbow and draw the ChiBall down the side of your body, and bend your knees. Inhale, extend your arm and reach the ChiBall out to the side and with a light scooping action, push off your feet and straighten your legs as you lift the ChiBall up again to place it into your right hand. Repeat to the right side then lower your ChiBall with both hands and return it to the Dan Tien. ♦

The online version of this article at www.fitnessnetwork.com.au contains more information.



Monica Linford

Monica has a background in classical ballet, is the author "Awaken Your Body, Balance Your Mind" and creator of the ChiBall Method™. Monica is a former recipient of UK's Fitness Professional's Award of Excellence 2000. She divides her time between the UK and Australia. Dance of the Dragon teacher training begins in September. Phone International Fitness Promotions on 08 8370 9158 for details or log onto www.chiball.com

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