

**Body Relaxation and Health Promotion:
Stress Reduction Exercises for Social Service Professionals and Family Caregivers
Professor Monit Cheung, PhD, LCSW, University of Houston
mcheung@uh.edu (Updated 9/23/2016)**

For future update, please go to: http://www.uh.edu/socialwork/New_research/cwep/title-iv-e/
Demonstration videos: UH-GCSW Self-Care Center <http://self-care.wixsite.com/exercises> (click Level II)

“Qigong”: A Chinese traditional healing technique:

Qi means “air” or “breathing”; **Gong** means “mastery of techniques”

- For body-mind-emotion connections; For relaxation and natural healing;
- For therapeutic applications and group exercising

Warning: Do not do these exercises if you are pregnant or have body injuries. Consult with your physician if you have questions about the suitability of these breathing exercises to your health condition.

POSTURE

Posture 1: Straighten Your Back

Function: Relax and straighten your back.

1. Place one hand on each side of your waist.
2. Move and extend your thumbs to touch your back.
3. Focus on the pressure points on the outside next to your spine.
4. Press up and down on the five groups of pressure points besides your spine; breathe in, press gently with your thumbs, and breathe out while relaxing.

Posture 2. Hand Pose

Function: Straighten your back

1. Inhale slowly through your nostrils and raise your right hand over your head and bend your right elbow. Reach behind your back with your left hand and clasp together the fingers of both hands.
2. Hold the posture as long as you can comfortably hold with the inhaled breath.
3. Exhale slowly and then repeat the posture with your left hand. Repeat 1-3 times.

Posture 3. Hand Prayers

Function: Straighten your back

1. Close your hands in front of your body.
2. Put your hands to your sides with palms facing outward.
3. Move your hands to your back and rotate them with the little fingers on both hands being next to each other while moving your hands up.
4. Move both hands as far up as possible. Move down and relax.

Posture 4: Tree Pose

Function: Balance the body system

1. Stand with your feet together and your arms by your sides.
2. Bend your right leg at the knee, raise your right thigh and bring the sole of your right foot as high up the inside of the left thigh as possible.
3. Balancing on your left foot, raise both arms over your head, while keeping your elbows unbent and joining your palms together. Hold the posture while breathing through your nostrils for about 5-10 complete breaths.
4. Lower your arms and right leg; return to standing position with your feet together and arms at your sides. Pause for a few moments and repeat on the opposite leg.

QIGONG EXERCISES

Qigong#1: Qi Stretches

Function: Relax body muscles

1. Move your arms to your sides and slowly move up.
2. Move your arms down in front towards the floor.
3. Hold both hands onto your legs.
4. Shift your right hand around your left leg and hold tightly.
5. Raise your left hand up straight and rotate your head to follow left hand's movement.
6. Move down your left hand and hold left hand onto your right leg.
7. Repeat 5 & 6 with your other hand.
8. Repeat 1 to 7 three times.

Qigong#2: Open-and-Close

Function: Re-gain energy

1. Sit down or stand up.
2. Place your hands to the front, all fingers pointing outward vertically, palms facing each other.
3. Open your hands to both sides quickly (about 8" apart) 10 times and close them until they are almost touching.
4. Open your hands to both sides slowly (about 36" apart) 3 times.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 for 5 times.

Qigong #3: Left & Right

Function: Re-gain energy

1. Place your hands to the front with your palms facing each. Palms should be 8" apart as if holding a small ball.
2. Move both hands at the same time to the right, then to the left, then to the right, and then to the left repeatedly 10 times.
3. Feel the air and breathe naturally. Place your hands to the side and relax.

Qigong #4: Elbows and Hands

Function: Prevent tendinitis (tennis elbow), carpal tunnel syndrome (hand stiffness), and bursitis (torn rotator cuff or other shoulder pains)

1. Take both hands up (like the surrender's position, right angled; abs in).
2. Slowly move elbows to the front until almost touching (palms facing each other).
 - Move to position 1 and return to position 2 five times.
 - Put hands down (rest position).
3. Move your left hand up (palm up) to the front of your body and make it straight.
4. Use your right hand to hold the left and bend it down without moving your arm downwards.
5. Hold and take deep breaths.
6. Return to rest position.
 - Repeat 3-6 with your other hand.

Qigong #5: Treating "3 Anxieties"

Functions: Take care of digestive system; straighten back; tighten abdominal muscles

1. Stand up with your feet apart comfortably.
2. Join fingers of both hands in front of your body.
3. Take a deep breath.
4. Slowly move hands up and hold your breath until hands are straight and abdominal muscles tightened.
5. Release hands to your sides while exhaling.
6. Energy concentrating at your finger tips.
7. Imagine holding a big watermelon when your hands are back to your front
8. Join your fingers and repeat 10 times slowly each day

Qigong #6: Single-Hand Holding

Functions: Reduce anxiety; re-gain energy; straighten your back

1. Place both hands in front of you, right hand fingers pointing left and left hand fingers pointing right, palms facing each other; right hand up and left hand down
2. Rotate both hands so now your left hand's up and right hand's down (palms are facing in opposite directions).

3. Move your left hand up until reaching the top and right hand down slowly so that both hands are moving at the same time to form 2 points of a straight line (so that your palms are pressing in both directions).
4. Turn both hands so that your palms are facing each other.
5. Concentrate the power on the palms while moving them down until they almost meet each other.
6. Rotate hand positions so now right hand's up and left hand's down (palms are opposite)
7. Repeat with the same procedure for the other side.

Oigong #7: Feet Down

Function: Restore body functions

1. Pull up your hands while stepping down with your feet.
2. Turn your hands at the same time your heels step on the floor with force so that your palms are facing downwards.
 - Do 10 times a day.

Oigong #8: Arrow and Bow

Function: Increase concentration power

1. Ready position (feet shoulder-width apart).
2. Squat lightly down in a comfortable and firm position.
3. Move your head to the right while moving your right hand (w/ thumb and index finger up) to the right and your left hand to the left (mimicking the pulling-a-bow action).
4. Rotate your hands to the left and repeat the same action on your other side.

Oigong #9: Balancing Act

Function: Balance body

- Take one foot up in a straight angle while holding your hand on the same side up and pushing your opposite side hand down.

Oigong #10: Big Circles

1. Find your space.
2. Put your hands in front (horizontal height) of you and then move both hands up.
3. Move your right hand down to your back (don't overextend it) and then move your left hand with your right hand back to its original position. Repeat 10 times.
4. Move both hands up, then to the right, the left, and upwards, and then right in circular motion (5 times), then reverse the circle (make sure your hands are straight with flexibility).
5. Stop and slowly move both hands back and forth until relaxed.

Closure: Oigong Meditation

Functions: Meditate and re-gain body-mind connection

1. Move your hands in front of you by placing your palms toward each other (10" apart).
2. Feel the energy between your palms by slightly moving your hands a few times.
3. Stay in this position for about 2 minutes.
4. Move your hands toward your stomach area, one hand covering the other and at the same time pressing on your stomach.
5. Feel the energy go into your body and heal your body psychologically.
6. Open up your hands to the earlier position and move them back to the stomach area with the opposite hand covering the other hand while breathing air in.
7. Take a deep breath and relax your hands to your sides.
8. Concentrate when you move your hands toward yourself.
9. Think positively.

Prescription for Self Care

- Pick 3 techniques that suit you and practice them in slow motion.
- Practice these techniques 10 times a day.
- Can practice anytime (even when you're watching TV but make sure your head is not facing downward).
- Can practice at three separate times, but each technique must be performed 10 times at the same time to achieve its fullest effect.
- Use slow motion and engage in deep breathing.
- The environment does not have to be completely quiet, but full concentration will achieve best results.