

Zhan Zhuang (pronounced Jan Jwong)

What is Standing Meditation

Zhan Zhuang (Post or Pile Standing) is an ancient Chinese standing meditation that provides many of the same benefits of Tai Chi and is thought to highly benefit the practice of Tai Chi. The stillness of standing can make it easier to focus on abdominal breathing, slowing and calming the mind, and feeling Chi or Internal Energy. Standing meditation uses the idea of breathing to the lower Tan Tien, mental imagery, and awareness of your body to develop more skillful, healthy relationship to internal and external energy (gravity, other people, and the world around us).

The Benefits of Standing Meditation

Standing meditation prioritizes harmonizing the mind and the body. The body is used to help calm and slow the mind and settle the emotions. Standing also aids in opening the entire body for internal energy flow and understanding our relationship with gravity.

In addition, standing reveals areas that need attention and relaxation. Therefore, beginners often feel the need to shift or move or stop altogether. They may even experience shaking for a short period when first starting the practice.

Try to resist moving, shifting or stopping, unless you're feeling actual pain. These unpleasant feelings or sensations are just areas of old injury, energy blockages that need to be gently worked through, or the mind needing to be slowed and calmed.

If feeling actual pain, try to make minimal adjustments to alleviate the pain and continue standing, if that alleviates the pain. Over time you'll be able to hold the postures in their optimal form and stillness of the body will help bring the mind closer and closer to stillness. This brings about better mind/body harmony and internal and external energy awareness.

Qigong & Neigong (pronounced Chee Gung and Nay Gung)

Qigong - Energy cultivation

Qigong coordinates the breath with movement and uses it to mobilize the qi to promote health and well-being.

Neigong - Internal Work or Skill

Neigong focuses on our deepest awareness of energy and mobilizing the qi directly by the “Intent”.

Breathing

All breathing during these exercises, both inhales and exhales should be long, slow, soft, relaxed and natural without force or tension.

Inhale through the nose and exhale either through either the nose or the mouth through pursed lips, whichever feels most natural to you.

Imagine breathing to the lower Tan Tien (lower abdomen), not to the lungs. The upper and lower abdomen should be relaxed and the lower abdomen should expand on each inhale and deflate on each exhale without force. Your chest should not inflate and deflate noticeably with the breath.

Since Qigong requires coordination of breath with movement, in the beginning or when someone new joins a practice, I may call out the breath patterns with the sounds of “Sheee” for inhales and “Hooo” for exhales. This is only a guideline. Follow these patterns but don’t force yourself to exactly match them. You don’t want to force or change your natural inhale and exhale to artificially match someone else’s. This will create unwanted tension.

Practice Period

Practices will follow this approximate outline.

Please hold any questions to the question periods in the middle and at the end of the practice. This is to maintain a meditative focus during the practice. As we progress and questions become fewer, we'll adjust to allow for more practice time.

General guidelines will be provided at the beginning of the first practice and whenever a new exercise is introduced. Instructions will be held to a minimum to maintain a meditative focus to the practices, and because part of the learning and assimilating process is through practice, awareness, and adjustment.

The benefits of these exercises are not lost with less than ideal technique. But are enhanced as techniques are refined. All of these exercises (including Taiji) evolve over time, offering infinite opportunity for advancement.

1. (10 -15 min) Foundational Exercises & Qigong Warm up
2. (10 min) Wuji Meditative Standing
3. (5 min) Question period (skipped if no questions)
4. (20 min) Alternating Zhan Zhuang Standing & Moving Neigong
5. (10 min) Question period