

Practice of the Inner Smile: Simple and Powerful Way of Cultivating Chi **Taoist Tools for Emotional Transformation - Master Mantak Chia**

Chinese Medicine recognizes that negative emotions are a form of chi that can be caused by blockages in our normal chi flow. If an often or is channel should become blocked due to injury, poor posture, pollution, poor diet, prolonged stress, or illness, that organ may get too much or too little chi. Then the negative emotion associated with that organ may tend to increase, Our life chi then becomes transformed into negative emotion chi, a lower level frequency of chi. Similarly, chronic outbursts or bouts of negative emotions can cause energy blockages in an organ or its associated channel. For example, it is well known in Western medicine that chronic worry can cause indigestion or stomach ulcers. It is equally well known in Chinese medicine that chronic frustration is the primary cause of Liver Chi stagnation. So, it can work both ways: negative emotions can cause energy blockages and imbalances, and blockages can cause a rise in our negative emotions.

Your Smile Will Help Cultivate Good Chi

In the Universal Tao System, we start the practice of bringing to the body, Chi, and emotions into balance with the Inner Smile. We often get so out of touch with our bodies and our emotions that we do not notice inner disharmony developing until it finally manifests as a serious illness. There are well over 500 different forms of Chi Kung that were developed in China. Many people think that Chi Kung has to involve moving the arms and leg. But the most important part of Chi Kung is actually being aware of the chi flow in our body. Practicing the Inner Smile daily gives us a regularly scheduled time to look inside, to keep in touch with the state of our inner organs, with our chi, with our breath, and with our emotions. We can then spot problems at their inception, making it easier to make adjustments when they first arise and "nip them in the bud." Low self-esteem is becoming endemic in our society. If we are not taught or encouraged to love ourselves, we cannot have a healthy loving relationship with other people, or with our Mother Earth; witness the state of the society and environment today as proof of this imbalance. The Inner Smile teaches us to recognize our inherent positive qualities, and not just our negativity. With regular practice, we get to know ourselves as we really are; we can discover our virtues as well as our afflictions. This helps us to form a truer and healthier self-image, one that stays in close touch with reality. The Inner Smile exercises our ability to love, starting with ourselves, with our own bodies. As we learn to love and accept ourselves, it becomes natural and easy for us to extend this love outward and to begin to love and accept other people, creatures, places and things.

Your Best Tool for Stress Management and Self Healing

The Inner Smile has been recognized as one of the best exercises for stress management and self-healing, easily inducing a state of deep relaxation. Deep relaxation dissolves physical and mental tensions that can cause energetic blockages and unhealthy chi. For this reason, the Inner Smile is always used as a preparation or warm-up in other meditations and chi kung exercises that circulate the chi.

Your Eyes: Source of your True Smiling and Healing Power

A smile is an incredibly powerful tool of communication. If we arrive in a foreign land, or are in a group of strangers, a sincere smile from another person helps us feel at ease immediately, almost as if we are with old friends instead of in a sea of unfamiliar faces. For a smile is familiar; it gives us the message of acceptance, of love and understanding, appreciation, and safety. As a result, when we receive a truly warm and loving smile, we relax and let down our defense. It activates our parasympathetic nervous system's "relaxation response," producing distinct physiological changes in our endocrine glands, our nervous system, our musculature, our circulatory system, our respiration and our digestive tract; in fact, nearly every system in the body can be dramatically affected by the simple act of receiving a smile. Just as a smile is effective in communicating with other people, it is also an amazingly powerful healing tool in communicating with ourselves. For we are always communicating with ourselves, consciously or sub-consciously, and unfortunately the message is not always positive. Self-loathing and low self-esteem are all too common in modern society, and aside from the psychological and sociological effects of fostering a negative self-image, our own health may suffer as a result. Many serious illnesses, such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, are often preceded by long periods of chronic negative emotions. By contrast, smiling inward helps us to feel a sense of self-respect, and gratitude for our organs and glands; as we contemplate and observe our anatomy and physiology, we can marvel and feel joy that our bodily parts are each doing their job to keep us alive and healthy. When we turn our awareness inwards and smile to our organs with love and appreciation, it sets into motion a chain reaction of positive physiological changes associated with the relaxation response. It is hard not to feel a sense of awe and wonder as we pay attention to the marvelous design of our bodies, to the intricate network of systems working together to keep us in balance.

Practice of the Inner Smile is Divided Into Several Levels:

1. Opening the Heart Fire to burn out the Negative and Grow Good Virtue
 2. Smile to the Front Line - The Organs and Glands
 3. The Middle Line - The Digestive System
 4. The Back Line - The Brain and Spinal Cord
- In this issue, we will focus on the first level of the Inner Smile: Opening The Heart. In later issues, we will introduce the other levels of Inner Smile Practice.

Opening The Heart Fire To Burn Out the Negative and Grow Good Virtue

1. Sit comfortably near the edge of your chair with your feet flat on the floor. Keep your back straight, but not stiff. Stay relaxed, and clasp your palms together in your lap, left palm on bottom, and right palm on top.
2. Close your eyes, and become aware of the soles of your feet. Feel their connection to the ground and the

energy of the earth.

3. Become aware of yourself sitting on the chair with your hands together and your tongue pressed against the palate of your mouth. Create a source of smiting energy three feet in front of you. This can be an image of your own smiling face, or of someone or something whom you love and respect.
4. Become aware of the mid-point between your eyebrows through which you will draw the abundant smiling energy. Let your forehead relax, and allow the Third Eye to open. As the smiling energy accumulates at the mid-eyebrow, it will eventually overflow into your body.
5. Allow the smiling energy to flow down from the mid-eyebrow through your face, relaxing the cheeks, nose, mouth, and all of your facial muscles. Let it flow down through your neck. You can roll your head slowly and gently from side to side as you do this.
6. *The Thymus Gland:* Let the smiling energy continue to flow down to your thymus gland, which is located behind the upper part of your sternum, and picture it glowing with vibrant health. Feel your thymus gland become warm as it begins to vibrate and expand like a flower blossoming.
7. *The Heart:* To help activate the heart's energy, you can raise your clasped palms, and place both thumbs lightly against the heart's center. Let the warm, smiling energy spread from your thymus gland into your heart. Draw more smiling energy from the source you created in front of you through your mid-eyebrow, and let it flow like a waterfall down into your heart. When you smile inwardly to your heart, it will generate the virtues of joy and happiness. Spend as much time here as you need to feel the heart relax and expand with loving energy. This expansion will feel like a flower blossoming. Try to remember your best experience of love, whether it was emotionally or divinely inspired, and fill your heart with that same feeling again. Love your heart. The heart is associated with the negative emotional energies of hastiness, arrogance, and cruelty. When you smile into the heart, these energies will be dissipated, thereby creating the space for the virtuous energies of love and joy to expand.
8. *Do the Heart Sound.* When you exhale out, do the sound **"Hawwwww,"** and direct your breath down to the heart. Feel a small flame or fire burning in your heart. Let it start to burn out any hastiness, impatience, arrogance, hatred or cruelty, the negative emotions of the heart. Feel this energy burn out all these negative emotions.
9. *Be aware of the Heart.* When you exhale, feel a cloudy dull dingy-red energy exhaled out. Let any negativity that you found in your heart ride out on this breath. At the same time, retain the red essence of the heart in the heart.
10. *Be aware of a red mist, the forces of the cosmos that correspond to the positive energy of your heart.* Breathe in this red healing and nourishing essence to your heart. Feel the heart grow a deeper and deeper red, like a ruby, as it is moistened and strengthened. Gradually feel your heart starting to open like a red tulip, generating a pure fresh fragrance out that you can really smell. Open your palms and fingers outwards like a flower opening.
11. *Be aware of the small flame in your heart.* Feel its heat and light and let it gradually activate the loving chi of the heart, joy, happiness, respect and humility.
12. Repeat these affirmations to yourself. "With respect, you lose nothing. Eventually you will gain everything: With Disrespect, you gain nothing but eventually you will lose everything. With humility, you lose nothing. Eventually you will gain everything. With arrogance, you gain nothing, but eventually, you will lose everything.
13. *Feel the flame of love, respect, and happiness gradually spread out to the other organs, relaxing and nourishing them.* Then let it continue to spread out to the rest of the body.
14. *Remember the feeling of this practice.* Any time in your daily life, if you should feel down or depressed, impatient, or hasty, anxious or afraid, frustrated or angry, you can recall this feeling and experience from your practice. Be aware of your heart, and feel the flame burn out any impatience or hastiness, and generate joy and happiness. In just a few minutes, you will feel that you have more energy and chi. The success of this method of recalling depends on your daily practice. The more you practice, repeat, enhance and remember it, the easier you can get into a good loving state. This is the most important way and the easiest way to cultivate chi.
15. *Conclude With Collecting Energy at the Navel:* Behind your navel is the area called the "lower tan tien" or cauldron. This is the area of the body where your Original Chi, the chi that you inherited from your father and mother is stored. The Inner Smile helps to release chi that had become blocked, so when you finish you can conserve and build your overall chi by adding it to your Original Chi at the cauldron. To finish, you can smile into the navel and collect the energy by covering the navel with your palms and spiraling outward 36 times (clockwise for men, counter-clockwise for women) within a 3-inch diameter circle, and then spiraling inward 24 times (counter-clockwise for men and clockwise for women). This gathers the chi that you have released and generated during this exercise to the lower tan tien, the field of your Original Chi, strengthening and nurturing your basic constitutional energy.