

Taoists Healing Hands - Supachai Jarusomboon

A 'ti-lanchakorn' practitioner claims the ancient palm postures help everything from stress to heart conditions. It was still working hours, but Wanchai took off his suit jacket, loosened his tie and settled back into a chair in the boardroom. Then he held his hands, fingertips together, into the shape of a ball. Along with his colleagues, he was learning a way to reduce stress — with his hands. Put your fingertips together to form something like a ball in front of your chest. Hold them there for a couple of minutes," said a Chinese looking middle-aged man wearing a white T-shirt rather than his signature Mao jacket. "This is a posture that should help reduce your stress." Supachai Jarusomboon, an adviser to the Foundation for Complementary and Alternative Medicine that helps to heal and prevent certain illnesses, said many participants were eager to experiment with the art of hand postures called ti-lanchakorn. "Believe in the power of your body. It is our best doctor, and it produces the best medicine for us. So your health is practically in your own hands," said Supachai. "I'm not a doctor. I've never healed anyone. All I do is give people advice on how they can heal and take care of themselves," he added. Supachai then proceeded to demonstrate other hand postures purported to help alleviate urban health problems such as migraine, high cholesterol, hypertension, heart conditions, allergies, obesity and insomnia. Today, as many ailments derive from our modern eating habits and polluted environment, many people are searching for alternative lifestyles and preventive and healing methods. The urban middle class is taking up everything from yoga to chi gong to energy healing. It's no wonder why this hand healing technique has become part of the hype. Corporations including a transnational oil company, entertainment enterprise and a publishing house have invited Supachai to teach his healing therapy to their employees. Pensri Wilaipanichkit, 59, is among those who have turned to hand healing to relieve her hypertension. "Now I can cut back on modern medicine. I do this hand healing along with music therapy and chi gong exercises — and most importantly, I have to avoid the stress factor," said the retired internal auditor. Like other complementary therapies, ti-lanchakorn can be traced back thousands of years to China, said Supachai. "Look at ancient statues of Hindu gods and goddesses, or those of Mahayana Buddha figures. They all hold their hands in some kind of posture. Those hand postures are more than art— they are postures that work to heal ourselves," said Supachai. He added that some temples in China house some 500 statues of arahant (the enlightened one) with different hand postures. "That's how our ancestors passed down their knowledge to us," he said. "In the past, when people got sick, they would go to the temple, listening to the monks' chanting and press their hands together. That's the way they healed their body and mind," said Supachai. It took years of suffering before Supachai learned about these age-old methods and got in touch with the healing power of his hands. When he was in his early 40s, he suffered from a number of ailments including a heart condition, hypertension, diabetics and allergies. After exhausting modern remedies, he returned to traditional treatments. **"If you were that sick and had to take so much medicine, you would get bored like I did. So I opted for alternative methods," he recalled.** He ventured to China, Mongolia and Tibet to learn traditional Chinese therapies to heal himself. For almost four years, he studied at Chinese traditional medicine universities, worked as an apprentice following local practitioners in Mongolia and studied at a Tibetan monastery learning chanting techniques for healing. Supachai holds himself up as living proof of the effectiveness of these methods, and argued that traditional therapies including ti-lanchakorn are more than just leaps of faith: they are based in science as well. "Modern science is catching up with ancient wisdom. Ancient people knew how our body works," he added. According to Chinese medicine tradition that is largely based on Taoism, our body is made up of life force energy called chi (qi), which can be explained in modern theory as magnetic fields that circulate within our body, Supachai said. To prove his point, he asked participants in his workshop to put their hands together for a while. "Do you feel the heat or the pumping of your blood at your fingertips?" he asked. "Ideally, this energy should circulate well in our body. If there is a blockage or imbalance in the energy in our body, we develop health problems," Supachai explained. Maintaining the balance and flow of this life force energy will bring on or maintain good health. While chi gong incorporates simple meditative movements and breathing exercises to instigate the balance of chi energy, ti-lanchakorn works in a more focused way. It uses still meditative hand postures to tune the chi in the body and balance it in order to promote self-healing, rejuvenation and longevity. "Mainly, one needs to do some of these hand and finger movements —press, fasten, fold and combine them in certain positions. Different hand postures help with different ailments," he explained. Our hands, he said, are like an antenna for energy. When connected, they allow the energy in the body to flow from one side to the other, like electricity running in a full circuit. And the natural energy in the body will heal itself where the problem occurs. Also, when we press or fold our fingers, they work like acupuncture, Supachai said. Our palms have different points that connect to and affect the functions of our main organs, and each hand posture affects those organs. Practicing ti-lanchakorn allows the chi energy to circulate in the body and for the energy in nature to flow into the body. Together, this helps promote 'good health. Our body also absorbs both positive and negative energy in the environment; that is why a dull environment can affect our mood and our health. However, Supachai said, with hand healing postures, only positive energy will be selected from the environment to tune into the body. "We are a part of nature. We have to tune ourselves in to nature. The further we live from nature, the more problems we will have," he said. Supachai advised that people do each Ti-Lanchakorn posture for 15 minutes. There are some 500 ti-lanchakorn postures, but Supachai said doing 12 to 30 postures is enough to keep mind and body in balance. Practicing every day for 45 days should see some results, he said. Supachai said that people have been performing these postures for centuries without knowing it. "It's a wai," he said. "A wai is more than a greeting; it is in fact a way to heal our body and mind. That's why ancient people prayed every night; it was a way to readjust the balance of the body at the end of the day." According to him, the wai position has altered slightly through time from its original healing posture, which was supposed to help

readjust the balance of the yin and yang energy in the body. "The position is all embracing for all health conditions. When the yin and yang energy is in balance, you should be fine," he said. However, he said, when it comes to health, preventive measures are always the best medicine. This includes adopting a healthy lifestyle to keep life energy in balance. (See sidebar.) "The most important thing leading to good health is to have a healthy mind. For example, if you are angry, the negative mood will affect the molecules of your liver. If this continues without cure, then you are likely to have liver or gallbladder problems," he said. Any exercise that is done to strike a balance in our body promotes health, he said, including slow meditative exercises that have been practiced in the East. "The exercises that help promote your health should have three key elements. They should have slow relaxing and repetitive movements, calm your mind, and most of all, help you breathe normally," he said. He added that modern high calorie burning exercises and sports accelerate the alteration of cells, thus leading to premature aging. Supachai added that people tend to hop from one health trend to another without doing it long enough to see its benefit. "Today, people are searching for the cure but they are not serious about going in depth to learn the art. I'd [advise] people to test traditional healing techniques and follow the one you feel most comfortable with. Stick to it, practice it continually and you will achieve your health goal," said Supachai.