

Posture/Alignment

There is a lot of detail that can go into creating good, aligned posture and structure. In Tai Chi and Chi Gong(Qigong) we spend a lot of time with all the minute details involved in the standing posture. In fact, in Chi Gong, standing is a whole study and practice in itself. However, all the details and specifics can be boiled down to simple elements and concepts.

Openness and Spaciousness

Basically, your health is based on and dependent upon a free and smooth flow of energy throughout your body. It is about allowing the free-flow of life-force or chi, through your body as a whole.

If your body is constrained in any way or if your body's structure is misaligned, the chi flow within and around your body will be compromised.

Also, a restricted or misaligned structure will cause your heart, lungs and digestive systems to suffer under the collapsed weight. Many of us, of course, have chronic bad habits as far as posture, and over a period of years this takes a toll on our well-being. Years of restricted blood-flow and inhibited breathing have a cumulative, deleterious effect on all aspects of our health and bodily systems.

If your body structure is open and spacious, your chi flow will naturally be free and unobstructed, your circulation and breath will be naturally optimum. You will not be "standing (or sitting) in the way" of good health.

Don't "Stand" in the Way of Good Health

The basic premise of Taoist health systems such as Chi Gong is that the body naturally knows health. The natural state of the mind/body system is that of health and resiliency. If we can learn (unlearn old habits) to come back to naturalness and the instinctive wisdom of the body, health generally ensues.

So if we don't "stand in the way" of good health by standing or sitting with poor posture or alignment, we are doing one less (major) thing that prevents the body from doing what it naturally can and wants to do. Which is to have an open, clear flow of energy and blood; to bring in new energy and release old, spent energy; to have unobstructed space for the organs to fully work the way they were designed to.

If you are not bringing in a steady stream of energy and oxygen and also eliminating the toxins and waste products ingested and produced by the body, you will run into an oxygen/energy deficit and a toxic overload.

This is a situation that plagues most people because of old physical and mental habits, the food we eat or don't eat and the environments we're in. Fortunately, we can go a long way to tipping the scales in our favor just through developing good habits of structure and posture. We can help the body do what it is designed to do - create and maintain good health - by literally allowing it the space to do so.

Try this experiment:

While sitting down and reading this, deliberately allow your posture/structure to collapse or deteriorate further than it already is. That's right, purposely allow yourself to fall into very poor posture just for a minute. Allow your spine to curve forward, your head to tilt back, your feet to be tucked under your chair and for added measure, let your torso sag to one side. Just simply let your structure collapse.

Now notice what has happened to your breathing pattern and quality. Feel the constriction of blood flow in your entire body. Imagine the oppressive environment all your internal organs are forced to endure.

Feel the discomfort, and recognize the negative repercussions on your health systems such as circulation, digestion, breathing, even the restriction of your glandular system, which relies on movement to flush them clear.

Now, without having to go into any real detail about any specific body parts, simply allow your structure to open, expand and become more spacious. Allow your body to simply take up more space in all directions.

Allow it to open and expand upward, downward, forwards, to the back and out to the sides. Do this without muscular exertion, without trying to do it with your muscles. Just imagine your skeleton expanding tall and clear. Imagine and feel your body open, empty and become spacious.

Now, how does this feel? Do you sense the release from the oppressive state imposed a moment ago? Can you feel the essence of health returning to your body?

Try this process in front of a mirror. Sitting or standing, consciously allow your body structure to condense and collapse. Look in the mirror, notice how this body-state appears. Then simply bring to mind the sense of openness, clearness and lightness and watch your mirror image transform before your eyes.

Doing this in front of a mirror can have a doubly transformative impact on your old habits, since you will be receiving powerful, visual feedback along with your bodily sensations and experience.

An Empty Vessel

The essence of good posture is simply: **openness** or **spaciousness**. You might imagine a balloon. It is open, spacious and yet has structure. A common imagery in the Eastern Arts bestowing the esteemed qualities we want is that of a vase. A vase is also open and spacious, and again, it has a clear structure.

This open, clear structure allows the universe to work through it. It has

structure, yet it does not obstruct nature. It does not stand in its way. The vase has its own distinct shape and qualities, but it is also open enough to stay joined with nature's ways.

This is an analogy for both the mind and body. By remaining open and clear, the vase attains its highest design of being an "empty vessel". An unobstructed space for the workings of nature and the universe. By following this example, we can harmonize with the instincts and health needs of the body.

When you fall into habits of slumping or collapsing, you are in effect, cutting off the Life-Flow from the mind/body. When you catch yourself doing this, notice how it feels and what it does to you. This awareness in itself will be motivation to change and adjust your body-state.

And each time you adjust and open, you will be adding to your health, re-establishing your connection to the Life-Force, becoming a better "vessel" for nature's wisdom and support to work through you.

The body knows health. And if we allow it the 'space' to do what it knows to do, we will naturally receive the benefits of greater health. Just like we need to have an open hand to receive a gift, our bodily structure needs to be open for us to receive the universal gifts that are offered naturally to us every moment of every day.

Keep yourself open to the "river of life" and all its nurturing, supportive health benefits by noticing your body's structure.

Throughout your day, simply ask yourself, "Am I open or am I closed?". Then feel your body and allow yourself to open.

Health itself is based on openness Are you open?

Yours in Health & Harmony,

Brad
abundantpeace.com

