

Gentle Tai Chi and Qi Gong

Developed by LEAP

(Living Engaged and Actively with Pain)

Before you start, you will need to find a firm backed chair without wheels, put on comfortable loose-fitting clothes, and have some water nearby.

1. Breathing Space

Feel your feet firmly on the ground, like the roots of a tree reaching deep into the soil and the top of your head lengthening upwards like the branches of the tree reaching to the sky. Breathe deeply here and feel the gentle movement of your lower belly as you breathe in and out. Relax any obvious areas of tension throughout the body.

2. Rolling the Ball

Begin by imagining you're holding a small ball the size of a tennis ball. Begin to roll this ball between your hands, breathing in deeply and breathing out deeply. Go at your own pace and speed following your breath. Switch directions.

Now grow your ball slightly bigger like a basketball or a volleyball. Breathing in and breathing out. Change directions. You can move through your shoulders and shift your weight side to side as you feel safe. Continue rolling and breathing.

Pause, and grow the ball the size of a large beach ball. Change directions.

3. Rhino Looks to the Moon

With arms by your waist, look down to your belly button. Breathe in. Begin to rotate your head, looking up over your shoulder as if turning to look up at the moon. Breathe out and slowly bring your head back down to look at your belly button. Breathe in – look the other way. Continue to gently rotate your head in each direction, following the breath. Imagine the horn of the rhino pointing one way and the other way. Breathe in and look up. Breathe out and bring the head down. Come back to center.

4. Raise Arms to Pluck Fruit

Begin by placing your right hand at your lower belly, and your left hand behind your back or at your side. Breathe in – bring the right hand up as if reaching up to pick a fruit off a tree that is in front of you. Breathe out – gently place the fruit in the basket that is either behind you or at your side. Breathe in – lift your left hand up to pluck the fruit,

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and breathe out – place the fruit behind you in the basket. Continue to breathe with the movement. Relax the muscles in the face and let a small smile touch the corners of your lips.

5. Lotus Sways in the Wind

Place your arms at your side and begin to turn your hips in a circle. Breathe in one circle and breathe out on the next circle. Sit tall and rotate your trunk over your hips. Make the circle small or big. Switching directions when you're ready.

6. Pushing the Stone Tablet

Starting with both hands in fists at your hips, breathe in – open your right palm facing away from you and imagine you're pushing a heavy stone tablet forward. Inhale as you bring your right hand back at your side in a fist. Exhale – push with your left hand, inhale as you bring the left hand back. Exhale as you push and inhale as you bring the hand back by your side. Use the breath as your guide for each movement. Breathe smoothly through the entire sequence.

Repeat Exercise **1. Breathing Space**

Check in with how your body is feeling. Allow your body to relax as you breathe in, and breathe out.

7. Waving the Hands like Clouds

Take a slightly wider stance if that is available to you and turn to your left. Bring your right hand up as if reading a book. Gently bring the book to cross your body towards the right, and gently let it down. While still looking towards the right. Inhale – lifting the head up as if reading a book and allow the left hand to float to the left like a slow-moving cloud across the sky. Repeat with your right hand and the left. Waving the hands like clouds. Shift your weight side to side if that is available to you. Allow your body to move with the breath and listen to your body. Keep breathing and floating the hands across the body.

8. Embracing the Moon

Place your right hand above your left hand as if holding a very large ball. Inhale – open your arms as if to hug a large tree. Exhale – bring the arms back. This time left hand is over the right, embracing the moon. Repeat. Inhale – open, and exhale – embrace the moon. Right hand over left. Inhale – open, exhale – left hand on top. Continue, following each breath.

9. Parting the Wild Horse's Mane

Pause while **Embracing the Moon** with the left hand on top. Turn to the right, take a small step to the side. Right hand reaches out as if to give some thing to your neighbor. Left hand come down to the side. Step back, **Embracing the Moon** – right hand on top. Turn to the left corner. Take a small step. Left hand reaches out as if to give something to your neighbor, right hand down to the side. Step back, **Embracing the Moon** – left hand on top. Repeat. Finish up your last one and come back to center.

10. Dangling Tree

Now bend at the hips and allow your head, shoulders and arms to dangle as if like the branches and leaves of a willow tree. Let everything go. And breathe 5 deep breaths. In and out. Swaying side to side if you like. If this is not comfortable, feel free to do a **Breathing Space** instead. Slowly roll back up to an upright position, let your head and neck be the last thing to come up.

11. Taking a Step

Inhale – turn to one side and as you exhale, take a small step to the corner and gently shift your weight onto the front leg by bending the knee. Inhale – step back. Change sides. Breathe deeply. Lift the leg and bring it back to center. Repeat on each side at your own pace. Breathe deeply.

12. Drawing the Bow

Place your hands in front of you creating a triangle with your thumbs and index fingers. Inhale – pull the elbows back as if drawing a bow with an arrow. Exhale – allow the hands to come forward, creating a triangle. Inhale – drawing the bow, while keeping shoulders down and away from the ears. Exhale – hands forward, creating a triangle. Inhale – drawing the bow, pulling your shoulder blades back, feeling a stretch in the body. Exhale – rounding the back creating a triangle with your hands. Let your movements follow the breath. Feel the stretch in the front body as you pull back and a stretch in the back body as you form the triangle.

13. King Lifts the Tripod

Bring your hands up to your shoulders as if holding a bar or stick behind your head. Inhale – lifting the bar or stick up. Exhale – bring the arms back down and relax the shoulders. Inhale – **King Lifts the Tripod**. Exhale – lower the arms down. Inhale – push up; exhale – lower down. Relax the neck and face.

Repeat exercise **1. Breathing Space**

Take a few breaths and check in with the body. Relax your muscles.

14. Inserting the Palm into the Hua Shan

Inhale – now stepping to the left. Bring your right hand across your body as if slicing something or karate chopping with your entire right arm. Exhale as you chop twice and inhale – step back. Step to the right. Exhale – chop twice with your left hand and inhale – step back. Bring the hand back to the waist or hip. Continue to do this on each side following your breath as guide. Breathe smoothly through the entire sequence.

15. Ankle Rotations

Shift the weight to the left leg, lift the right leg up and begin to do gentle rotations with the right ankle. Switch directions. When you are ready, shift your weight to your right leg and begin to circle the left ankle. Switch directions.

16. Nestlings Receive Food

Stand or sit with your feet apart. Place the back of your hands together with the fingers pointing down in front of you. Inhale – draw the hands up towards the face and open the palms up towards the sky. Exhale – bring the hands back down to the starting position. Inhale – the hands come up like baby birds rising up from their nest to capture food from the mother’s beak. Exhale – draw the hands down. Inhale – up. Exhale – down. Inhale – up. Exhale – down.

17. Friar Squats on his Haunches

Inhale – your arms by your side and Exhale – create a gentle bend in the knees. Rise up and lift your arms – breathe in. Then bend the knees and glide arms down as you breathe out.

18. Our Hat Subdues the Tiger

Inhale – take one step out to the side and as you exhale, shift your weight on to that leg by bending the knee. Repeat on each side. Exhale – to step forward. And Inhale – as you step back.

Repeat exercise **1. Breathing Space** to close.

Find a comfortable position. Feel free to close your eyes and settle your body into the chair if you’re sitting. Take a deep breath in and as you exhale release any obvious areas of tension from the body. Let your breathing be effortless and relaxed. Inviting a sense of stillness into the body. Feel the tension drain away. Feel the warmth of the muscles now that they’ve been worked. Notice whatever sensations are present. To close, open your eyes, turn your left hand into a fist – representing strength. And place your open right hand on top as a sign of respect. Bow for mutual respect and friendship.