

## Daoyin Process: A Statement of Purpose by Steven Alpern, L. Ac.

The purpose of (neo-natal) Daoyin process work is to allow participants the opportunity to slow down sufficiently to engage their essential beings. Rather than reflexively reacting according to habituated conditioning, individuals may thus learn to express their spontaneous (authentic) beings. Regular Daoyin practice increases the individual's awareness of unconscious patterns of holding and moving that developed in support of survival when the individual was very young. Awareness allows the choice to let go of habitual holding patterns and patterns of activation, and the challenges they inspire. How an individual holds the body creates his or her living (physical) disposition toward the world. It provides the context for assimilating and understanding experience, and the medium for expressing one's individuality.

Daoyin literally means "measuring internal movement." It is a practice of bringing mental focus to coordinating physical movement with the movement of the breath. It is a practice that integrates the "Three Treasures." Jing-essence is the physical being, Qi is the vital breath which provides the capacity to interact, and Shen-spirit provides awareness for mental focus. Daoyin is a form of internal (Daoist) alchemy, which provides a conduit into one's essential being. It gives the individual a structure for plunging into the "chaos of possibilities." Beneath the "socialized" being that each of us has learned to present to others, and even the world of experience, there is a natural and spontaneous "essential being" that represents the pure yearnings within each individual. Regular Daoyin practice is a systematic investigation into that ideal state of embodiment that Daoists (following the words of Chuang Zi) have referred to as "the uncarved block." In practicing Daoyin, we are trying to probe, stimulate, and release the intrinsic responsiveness of life (from our habituated conditioning) to encounter PURE BEING.

An individual's disposition toward the world creates the nature of his or her experience. Awareness provides the opportunity to release one's central conflicts with life, and allows one's relationship with the present to deepen. The changes probed through regular Daoyin sessions may be sublime or volatile. At times each participant will likely experience wonderful periods of tranquility and clarity. At other times each may struggle with something that has emerged into the internal space created by withdrawing (even for a few days!) from habitual entanglements in the "post-natal" world of interactions to consciously probe the essential being. Daoyin practice dredges unconsciously held (somatized) conflict through the individual's focus on noticing (physical) binding and attachment that restrict the smooth articulation of movement. Release is more than a concept; it is somatically expressed in breathing (especially exhaling) to soften and release (ourselves from) habitual holding patterns.

Most of these "neo-natal" Daoyin exercises are done while lying on the floor. They focus on exploring movements that precede standing, both developmentally and experientially. The patterns of response, interpretation, and movement that develop while individuals are too young to stand reside near the essential being, anatomically around the major articulations between the torso and extremities (hips and shoulders). They create the interface between the individual's essence (physically represented by the torso), and the post-natal world of inter-actions (implemented through the extremities), between the foundation of life and the living functions that depend upon and sustain it.

Thus, regular mindful Daoyin practice brings focus to releasing (therefore resolving) patterns of habituated conflict located close to an individual's essential being (jing). Releasing

these holding patterns in how an individual articulates and expresses his or her essential being can have a pervasive influence on one's life. Such release of habituated conditioning probes the evolution of being, and calls forth the willingness to trust the intrinsic process of an individual's life.

Resistance to change inspires struggle with process. Resolution relies on the willingness to release. When individuals are unable to accept what actually happens, and maintain attachment to points of view on what should happen (unconscious projection), we invite struggle and pain into our lives. While the capacity to grasp & hold (breath, food & water – internally to process, and tools, ideas) is a necessary survival tool, the limitations of individual understanding, and attachment to points of view, create the necessity for suffering. When an individual is willing to release habitual reactions to experience, and assimilate the present moment, he or she may taste liberation (by releasing into the flux of Dao).

Old struggles return to our lives because they are rooted in unresolved attachments. They exhibit the entanglement that keeps individuals from both complete repose, and unimpeded expression of their essential beings. Why do people often revisit variants of the same struggle? Survival depends on the ability to hold on; we are all learning to let go. That is an aspect of our spiritual quest. If you struggle with this process, focus on the breath and movement – to soften and release habitual (and unconscious) holding patterns. **Release the breath, open the body, liberate the spirit.**

Daoyin classes, workshops, and retreats provide participants the opportunity to cultivate release from habituated conditioning during sessions of Daoyin practice. Repeated engagement with one's "essential being," through the slow rhythmic movements of Daoyin, probes the foundations of an individual's orientation in life. Many participants in Daoyin classes initiate emotional releases within a couple sessions of practice. The classes and retreats allow individuals to continue the process of uncovering, and bringing awareness, to their unconsciously held interpretations, and choose new ways to orient toward experience. The fundamental alchemy of transforming one's relationship with experience is not something that happens quickly. Many people who engage Daoyin practice have found that repeating the structure of a class series or retreat can be valuable.