

My name is Maggie Bame and I have been practicing Daoyin for about 5 years. When I took my first class I had no idea what it was or how it would change my life, or me as a person.

About 15 years ago I really began a journey of healing from past issues that I hadn't been able to deal with. Through counseling, group therapy and acupressure treatments I was able to process a lot of issues that had been troubling me. But, it wasn't until I started practicing Daoyin that I really felt like I was able to understand and integrate the feelings that I had about my past issues, and how they affected how I felt about myself and how I had managed my life up to this point. Before that, I had pretty much turned off all emotions in order to survive, and when they started coming back I had no means of understanding or controlling them.

Doing Daoyin has given me the skills to process, understand and integrate how I feel about issues that arise. It has given me a way of releasing emotions that I have stuffed for a really long time. So to speak I have been cleaning out the closets. In cleaning out the garbage that has been stored inside me I feel stronger and fear is not my first response to life.

On a more basic level doing Daoyin daily helps me feel calm and peaceful. I feel more organized, and I am better equipped to handle situations as they arise during the day.

Maggie Bame
Yuba City, CA 10/30/04

I took a four day workshop in the Daoyin Process with Steven Alpern in the Fall of 2003. I have worked in the field of Body/Mind for thirty years and have explored many modalities that have as their central focus discovering how to move toward our essential nature. I was interested in this training because I had been experiencing chronic sciatic pain in my right leg and, as a result, considerable fear about the effect this condition might have on my ability to continue teaching movement and doing bodywork with clients. I had been recently diagnosed with an L5/S1 disc degeneration. Following this diagnosis, I began regular acupuncture treatments with Steve and training in the Egoscue Method of Postural Alignment. I found that both of these approaches were helpful in reeducating my body. When I added Daoyin, I discovered a means to further integrate these two systems.

What happened for me during the class was a wonderful sense of deep peace that came with the slow repetition of these graceful circular and elongating somatic movements. I was so grateful to continually be reminded, quite gently and without judgement, to let go of any strain that I might notice after doing a series. I loved being encouraged repeatedly to let go of effort. This reminder helped to interrupt my strong conditioning in both body and mind to move on to the next "thing" without pause to experience what had happened--be it a quiet experience or one that was strongly stirring me. I value this reminding highly because this philosophy is so compatible with my training in the Trager Approach which always encourages a "pause" to feel and notice what's

occurring in the moments between the active movements. I found myself weeping quietly during one afternoon session when I became acutely aware that my habit both in my thinking and in my body attunement was to anticipate what's next and to be preparing to "do" it. This strong belief was so compelling that it masked a very tender experience of presence—that of simply being with myself.

What I am discovering as I incorporate Daoyin with my Egoscue Exercises and other movement practices is that I move into a place of discovery and exploration. I feel when I do the Daoyin Process before I begin with a practice that has more form and requires more effort that I am better able to perform and integrate those more demanding practices. Following Daoyin, I find nuances and a more subtle creative inquiry into the movements and exercises that follow. I feel intimately connected with myself both physically and spiritually. With the slow cycling of the Da movements Daoyin has become a contemplative practice. I recognize my growing capacity to drop "agenda" in order to be with myself simply and directly. My body has responded very favorably to combining Acupuncture, Daoyin and The Egoscue Exercises—for me, a positive meeting of East and West.

Sheila Gradison
Vallecito, CA 2/3/05

How Has Daoyin Affected My Life

My experience of Daoyin is all about fluidity. These exercises increase the fluidity of my body, spirit, and emotions.

One starts with learning to open the chest by deep breathing. This is a major challenge of mine. I am a "short" breather, and doing Daoyin brings me back into my body, and consciously slows me down.

Next, one moves into a "neo-natal" position of helplessness. We lay flat on the floor; and it is only through experimenting – reaching out – that one can learn to grow and experience what is beyond. My challenge has been to find a rhythm, and smoothness in reaching out to the world. The stretch leaves me feeling taller, more mobile, and more fluid.

The shoulder and hip rotations show the struggle of moving in my life. The pain, the "pops", and the tightness have all indicated to me how much I hold onto. The weight of the world can be on my shoulders, and taking one more step forward is torture, and my hips lock up. Consciously working the rotations loosens all this up, and I feel the fluidity of life, and can "go with the flow" instead of fighting upstream all of the time.

When I am consistent in doing these exercises, I find my balance is more stable, an increase in fluidity, and smoothness in my movements. This is why Daoyin is fluidity to me.

Beverly Ginn
Sonora, CA 3/6/05

I am a 49-year-old woman who has had several bouts with both acute and chronic illnesses over my lifetime. These would include year-round allergies, gastro-intestinal complaints, sciatica, Epstein-Barr, Graves' disease, ovarian cysts, one spontaneous miscarriage, and an ongoing parade of seasonal illnesses, such as asthma, bronchitis, influenza, pneumonia, and strep throat. Acupuncture treatments changed my health so dramatically that I thought I was very open to other aspects of Chinese Medicine.

Yet when I attended my first Neo-Natal Daoyin retreat in July 2004 I tended to be a little skeptical. I had only a vague idea of what to really expect from this class. It seemed very far-fetched to think that a few floor exercises could have any impact on me whatsoever. But having been challenged all my life by illnesses, I wanted to explore different ways to support my own health.

This mini-retreat consisted of eight 1½- to 2-hour sessions of progressive exercises. Imagine my surprise to discover that I had impacted my own health in just this amount of time. During each session, several physical manifestations occurred. I experienced wandering aches, momentary nausea, many random thoughts, and unexplained irritability which seemed, from a lay-person's point of view, totally disconnected from the gentle-nature of the exercises that we performed. I even experienced some dark discoloration which was very tender to the touch. (A bruise?) I was also surprised that such easy exercises would fatigue me, mentally, physically and emotionally. Immediately after each session I would feel vaguely uncomfortable with myself yet at the same time disconnected from the world outside myself.

The effect of the exercises were disconcerting. And the many physical manifestations seemed adverse at the time. But it was soon evident that these quixotic symptoms were indicative of process work. Because every evening, after returning home, I would have larger and darker bowel movements than was usual for me. I also slept soundly throughout the night which also was not part of my normal pattern. After the fourth and final day of exercise, I realized that elimination was also very frequent and well-formed.

Weeks afterwards, the many free-associations and random impressions began to take a pattern and a picture of the issues that were causing blocking in my life became quite clear. The problem areas in themselves were not news to me. But after the process work, I was able to look at these areas with a calmer heart and mind. I was also more aware of my bodily responses from moment to moment. I began to notice a correlation between what I was thinking and feeling emotionally and how my body was responding. I was learning to pay attention to what my body was saying to me.

I must stress that the process work was not a matter of ruminating over any of my life issues. During the exercises, I was very conscientious about being focused solely on breathing and movement. Feelings about several incidents and situations in my life surfaced spontaneously during the exercises. I didn't fight these memories or the feelings attached to them. Instead I would just try to focus again on breathing and movement. I didn't use any mantras. Nor did I try to direct my thoughts or imagery onto any predetermined path. Yet while trying to stay mindful of my physical self, these other

thoughts and memories just seem to float through the mind. And it still seems a wonder to me that mindful breathing and movement and a sort of calm acceptance of my own reactions and free associations have actually helped my own body to function smoother.

At the present time, I continue to do these same gentle exercises, increasingly mindful of the dialogue between my mind and my body. And I continue to become increasingly aware of the areas of blocking, the unconscious, habituated responses that cause a non-harmonious response from the physical body. As a result of this processing of old material, I find myself more able to engage new experiences and even old ones with less fatigue and irritability. I have surprised myself by being more thoughtful during situations which have always unhinged me in the past. I pay attention to how my body processes the food I eat, how I sleep at night, how much energy I have during the day. All said and done, I find myself with fewer physical, mental, or emotional complaints, and I feel I have at least one new and very effective tool for handling these areas of my life without drugs or professional intervention. Learning these exercises was an empowering experience with very long lasting results.

I look forward to another facilitated experience with these simple exercises that I might gain more insight into the interaction between the body and the spirit.

A. Urquhart
Sonora, CA
November 2004

It has been an honor to work with Steven as his patient, co-worker, and personal friend. Steven is able, through the Daoyin process, to guide us on a path of the possibilities for inner growth. These exercises are intriguing, and they open me up to explore my true authentic self.

Since my early 30's, I have been plagued with obesity, chronic pain, constipation, joint pain, gall bladder disease, frequent bladder infections, miscarriages, a serious kidney infection, and the inability to concentrate and receive information. Life, for me, was a fog of dull pain with little joy. I have attended several Daoyin workshop series over the past eight years. Daoyin brings me into a state of awareness of old blockages and injuries. I am able to release stagnation of qi in my body, as well as mental stagnation. This allows me to move with more fluidity, with less and , and to engage information quickly with more clarity.

Daoyin is a self-help healing tool that is available to me 24-7!

Cindy Brewer
Sonora, CA April, 2005