

**Health Reboot:**  
**Qigong, Nutrition, and Mindfulness to change your life**  
*By Master Lisa B. O'Shea, published Qi Journal Winter 2019-2020*

Stagnation of the energy in the liver is at the root of the most common illnesses: cardiovascular health problems, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, autoimmune problems, digestive problems like acid reflux, high cholesterol, anxiety, and depression. So, what makes the liver such a key player?

There are two factors that undermine our liver health: stress and diet. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) teaches us that the liver energy is utilized every time we make a decision and take action on it. We see a situation and the liver energy mobilizes to help us take a decisive action. If we can take an action immediately and then relax upon its completion, the liver can recover. If we can't immediately take action, then the liver becomes pressurized, and our desire for action escalates. The liver urges us to take the action by creating feelings of frustration and anger in an attempt to force action. If the action still isn't taken at this point the liver stagnation settles in.

In a simple world our actions would be straightforward, like picking something up and moving it, gathering food, or progressing through confrontations that resolve quickly. But, in our modern world, decisions are very complex. How do we care for an ill family member, navigate politics at work, or handle complicated relationships? Simultaneously, we are being bombarded by electronic devices that are giving us even more information and asking us to decide and click the button now! Liver stagnation is the natural consequence of stressful situations that cause us to think too much, feel frustrated or angry, multitask and make rapid-fire decisions.

Liver stagnation isn't created overnight, it comes from a lifetime of daily practices. To transform our body to a healthy state requires us to look at our life with new eyes and be open to walking a new path.

**The “70-30” effect-**

Our health picture is affected by our lifestyle and the interventions we choose, with lifestyle having the biggest effect (70%) and interventions a smaller effect (30%). If both our lifestyle and our interventions are heading us in the right direction, we will become healthy very quickly. If they are going in opposite directions, lifestyle will always dominate.

**Lifestyle-**

Lifestyle represents the things we do all day, everyday - nutrition, movement, mindset. The repetition of these lifestyle habits sets a pattern for our energy flow that becomes very difficult to change.

Each cell in our bodies needs abundant circulation of energy through it in order to be healthy.

Master Lisa B. O'Shea  
Qi Gong Institute of Rochester 595 Blossom Rd. Ste. 307 Rochester, NY 14610  
(585) 377-2044 Toll Free: (877) 346-4017 [www.Qigongrochester.com](http://www.Qigongrochester.com)

The cells are like little factories. With the right energy flow, they can make the products they are supposed to make and self-repair reliably. Energy flows through our bodies all day, every day in a pattern set by our biology in conjunction with our environment. The pathways energy flows through are called meridians, which act somewhat like wiring in a machine. But, unlike a typical machine, the wiring in our bodies can change over time, like the course of a river can change over time.

The activities we do every day reinforce those changes in our energy, making them stable or semi-permanent. If our activities are good for us, then the energy patterns will be good, supplying all our cells with the energy and circulation they need. If our activities are bad for us, then the energy patterns will be disturbed, the cells will be deprived of energy flow, stagnation forms, and the health of the body deteriorates.

The more established our energy patterns become, the harder and harder they become to change. If the patterns are good, then it becomes difficult to throw us out of balance but if the patterns are not good, then it takes consistent effort over time to rewire them into a good pattern.

### **Interventions-**

Interventions are the things we do occasionally - healing treatments, medications, herbs, going to the gym. Interventions have a limited effect because they only temporarily change your energy pattern. Without the multiple repetitions throughout a day, day after day, the shift in energy just can't stabilize. It doesn't matter how miraculous an intervention is, its impact is still limited to 30%. You could travel the world over to find the best healer or the best medication or supplement money can buy, but it won't be enough if your lifestyle is heading in the opposite direction.

### **Create a healthy life-**

Anything we do three or more times per day qualifies as lifestyle. We need our daily life to be filled with activities that improve our circulation. The three aspects of lifestyle are movement, nutrition, and mindset. All three of these aspects need to be addressed in some way and none of them can be ignored if you want to feel better.

In this article, some helpful suggestions will be presented for each of the three aspects of lifestyle specifically for improving the liver energy,.

### **Movement-**

In general, we need to move throughout the whole day, not just go to the gym a few times a week. Of course, walking, housework, and yard work play an important part in this daily movement. Qigong exercise is a very practical and simple way to greatly increase circulation through the body. These exercises train the energy to flow through the proper pathways within the body and bring that energy to each and every cell to optimize health.

The following exercises focus on improving the energy flow through the liver to help with the most common health issues facing people. There are many other good Qigong exercises to help

Master Lisa B. O'Shea ·(585) 377-2044 ·Toll Free: (877) 346-4017· [www.Qigongrochester.com](http://www.Qigongrochester.com)

the liver. These specific exercises have been chosen because of their simplicity and effectiveness. Do each movement as many times in a row as feels good. Each repetition should create a relaxed feeling within the body. Resist the urge to turn the movements into an athletic exercise.

Keep the breathing slow and steady, completing each inhale and each exhale without rushing. Try to relax all the muscles as you move and use the minimum amount of tension necessary to hold the stretches. If you feel good during the movements and good after completing them, then you did them correctly. If there is any increase in discomfort, then there was too much tension. Adjust the postures and the range of motion with each exercise to keep the body relaxed and comfortable.

Repeat the exercises three times per day. This level of repetition brings us into the “lifestyle effect” that reinforces the new, optimal, flow pattern to create lasting change in our health.

### **Liver Sound Qigong**

From a seated position, place your palms facing up on your lap, elbows out slightly and away from your body. Keep your back straight and relaxed and your chin down slightly. You can have your eyes closed or opened slightly.

Begin the posture by bringing your hands out to the sides of the body in a big circle, keeping the elbows bent slightly and the shoulders relaxed. Continue to raise the hands up until they meet over the head. Interlock the fingers and turn the palms over to face the ceiling. Stretch slightly up with your right shoulder and lean to the left side. This should allow you to feel a gentle pulling on the right side of your body where your liver is. Look up and **open your eyes wide at this point in the posture.**



Liver Sound  
“Tshhh”

Exhale and make the following sound. “Tshhh” like water hitting a very hot frying pan. As you breathe out and make the sound, picture the liver deflating like a balloon. As the liver deflates, imagine anger coming out of your liver with the sound. Anger is not a bad emotion, it is just the desire to take action. Our liver becomes stagnant from stress and anger is the result of this stagnation. By releasing the anger, we can clear the stagnation.

When you have finished the sound, relax and inhale. Release your hands, turn them palm down and lower them slowly in front of your body down to your lap and place them palm up on your lap. The eyes can be open or closed for this part of the exercise. Continue to breathe naturally and imagine the liver expanding and filling up with a bright green color. As it expands, visualize kindness growing within your liver. Kindness helps the trapped anger and frustration transform back into action, which is the liver’s true nature.

Relax as long as you want and continue from the beginning to repeat the exercise as many times in a row as feels good.

### **Spleen Sound Qigong:**

Continue from the last exercise with the palms facing up on your lap. Begin the exercise by placing your hands on the left side of your body, just below where the ribs are. Push in gently as you exhale and make a sound like you were going to say the word “whoooo” but just blow out without speaking the word. If you can, make the sound more guttural, like you were going to spit. This sound is like the sound of canned whipped cream (like Ready Whip) coming out of the plastic spout or the sound of a cappuccino machine. Doing the sound in this manner creates a vibration through your whole mouth.



Spleen Sound  
guttural “Whooo”

As you make the sound, picture the spleen and stomach deflating like a balloon and imagine worry or thinking too much coming out of the organs. When you have finished the sound, relax and inhale and slowly lower your hands back to your lap. Continue breathing normally. Picture the organs expanding and filling with a golden yellow color. As the organs expand, imagine a sense of openness growing there. Relax as long as you want.

The spleen and stomach energy often becomes damaged when the liver is out of balance. Clearing out these organs helps the whole body return to optimal health.

### **Eight Pieces of Brocade Qigong, #3**

Start with your feet shoulder width apart. Your hands move so that you are holding an imaginary ball in front of you with the right hand on top and the left underneath with the palms facing each other. (Picture #3a)



Next, inhale and raise the left hand up, palm up to ceiling and push the right hand down to waist on center line of body, palm down. (Picture #3b).

Feel a good stretch in ribs on the left and compression in the ribs on the right like you were gently squeezing out a sponge. Relax the wrists. Exhale and inhale again. On the next exhaling, palms turn to face each other, relax left arm down and hold the ball again, left hand on top, in front of stomach. Relax completely.



Inhale and raise right hand up to ceiling, push left hand down to waist on center line of body. Feel a stretch in ribs on right and compression on the left. Exhale and inhale again. Exhaling again, palms face each other, relax right arm down and hold a ball, right hand on top, in front of stomach. Relax. Repeat this exercise as many times in a row as feels good.

## **Nutrition-**

Most people eat food three to five times or more throughout the day. The foods that we eat have a direct effect on our energy patterns and the foods we eat all the time have the biggest effect due to the repetition. Proteins and starches are important for us to eat but they do not create circulation. These two food groups create the substance of the body and stabilize us physically and emotionally. They make us solid and steady.

To be healthy, our food choices need to focus on creating circulation within the body. The food group most affective for creating circulation is vegetables. Strive for half your diet being vegetables (fruit doesn't count towards the total because it doesn't improve circulation) and you will be doing yourself a great service.

Changing your diet is probably one of the hardest things to do. Our diet is a product of our culture and we eat the way we were raised. For most people food is a celebration, a comfort, and a refuge and for some, it is a last-minute thought. To change our relationship with food we will have to be persistent.

The easiest way to begin changing your diet is by adding foods in before you try to take your favorites away. Pay attention to how you feel. As you begin to change your diet, please keep in mind that when you eat right you will feel better. Also, every step of the way, you should feel better if you are eating the foods that are right for you.

Basically, food is fuel. You should feel energized and rejuvenated after you eat. If you eat food and you feel tired afterwards, you ate the wrong thing or too much. If you burp a lot afterwards and continue to taste the food later, your diet isn't right for you. If you feel tired all the time, something needs to change.

We become so used to feeling exhausted and uncomfortable that we don't think to question what we are doing or not doing that could make us feel better. If you expect to feel good when your diet is heading you in the wrong direction, you are going to be disappointed with your progress.

### **Some specific diet suggestions for improving the circulation for liver health:**

To clear out and prevent further stagnation, people need to eat less at any given meal (except in cases of low body weight) and avoid late night eating. Use a diet based on whole grains and vegetables with plenty of fiber. Eliminate or greatly reduce foods high in saturated fat (lard, mammal meats, cream, cheese, eggs), hydrogenated and poor quality fats (shortening, margarine, refined and old/oxidized oils), excess nuts and seeds, chemicals in food and water, unnecessary pharmaceuticals, intoxicants, and highly processed, refined foods.

**Typically, pungent and bitter foods work well to cleanse the liver.**

The foods listed below are not the only helpful foods for the liver. Any pungent and bitter foods are helpful. Add moderate and satisfying amounts of any of the foods listed below into your diet. You may mix them together or alternate between items, eating them 4-6 times per week.

Legumes: Mung and soybeans and their sprouts, aduki bean, tofu, tempeh, and most other legumes such as peas, beans, and lentils.

Grains: Whole grains especially rye, oats, and amaranth. Also rice, sprouted wheat, and buckwheat.

Vegetables and fruits: Pungent foods- radish, horseradish, hot peppers, and the onion family (garlic, onion, leek, scallion, shallot, chive), leafy greens, cabbage, rutabaga, turnip, spinach, carrot and carrot greens, mint leaf, nasturtium leaf, dandelion greens, kale, wheat and barley greens, broccoli, kohlrabi, parsley, asparagus, bell pepper, rose hip, tomato, citrus, celery, banana, persimmon, seaweeds (esp. Arame, Kombu/Kelp, Nori, Irish Moss), chlorella, cucumber, and mushrooms.

Other foods that disperse stagnation: Turmeric, vinegar, basil, rosemary, nutmeg, sweet rice, spearmint, peach seed, eggplant, white pepper.

Nuts and seeds: Almond, hazelnut (filbert), chestnut, flax seed, chia seed, pumpkin seed, poppy seed, walnut, and sunflower sprouts. Use oily nuts and seeds in small quantities only.

Note: Use spicy foods sparingly if you feel hot or dry since they can make these conditions worse.

**Mindset-**

What goes on between our ears is as important to our health as anything we could possibly do. When we practice mindfulness we can truly prevent stagnation from occurring because we minimize the frustration in our daily lives.

Many people think that meditation is the answer to shifting the mind, but meditation is more like an intervention that happens separate from our daily activities. For the moment we are meditating, there is a shift, but then we go back to the multitasking and the shift doesn't hold. The true lifestyle change with regard to mindset is achieved through mindfulness that is practice many times throughout the day while living your normal life.

**The Brain is an Optimizing Machine-**

The human brain is an amazing thing. It is constantly on the lookout for ways to optimize things. Everything it looks at it picks apart, decides what is lacking, and starts thinking up possible improvements. This is our genetic legacy and what is responsible for us having remote controlled vehicles on Mars and gene therapy to correct blindness. It is a wonderful miracle of luck/evolution/divine intervention but completely overbuilt for most of our daily human needs.

Master Lisa B. O'Shea ·(585) 377-2044 ·Toll Free: (877) 346-4017· [www.Qigongrochester.com](http://www.Qigongrochester.com)

Much of our brain power is spent thinking about the past and the future. When you get into bed at night, are you aware of the feel of the sheets on your skin, the pillow under your head, the comfort of the blanket? Instead, are you endlessly revisiting every action you took that day and every word you said? Are you arranging all of these thoughts like so many ceramic tiles, into a mosaic picture only to pull it all apart and lay them out again and again?

Perhaps you do this all day long as well. In the middle of some one talking to you, your mind sneaks back to chew on some juicy thoughts. It is as if there were a team of miniature copies of you (mini-me's) all working simultaneously on different projects. As your energy gets divided up to run all these mental activities, your stress increases. This happens to everyone - driving the car, working on a project, playing with your children, eating a meal. Our minds are so far away, so distant from what is in front of us. Decades of thinking in this manner create a pattern that is as relentless as the tides of the ocean.

### **Layered Thinking Creates Adrenaline Overload and Liver Stagnation:**

The result of all this layered thinking (thinking on top of thinking) is an adrenalin overload. The body is in a constant fight or flight mode with increased respiration, heart rate, blood pressure, and your immune system on red alert. This chronic hyperactive state has a lingering effect on the human body resulting in serious life limiting disorders - anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, diabetes, autoimmune disorders, exhaustion, etc. This pressurized state results in liver stagnation.

Many people mistakenly think that they need to change "how" they are thinking in order to correct this. However, you cannot "think" your way out of thinking. It is like paying off credit card debt with another credit card. The only way out is through cessation of layered thinking. A person needs to cultivate the ability to focus on what they are doing, one action at a time, with awareness. When you are at home you put down the thoughts of work and at work you are not carrying the thoughts of home. And, as you are thinking, you are aware of yourself and your body as connected to the actions and thoughts. This is called being present.

### **Getting Present-**

Getting present literally means that when you are doing something, you are aware and doing only one thing. It is not per se a "spiritual practice", i.e. related to development of compassion or betterment of the person although it is practiced by many spiritual people. This means you do not already have to be in a relaxed and balanced state to get present. Getting present is what will help you to be in a relaxed and balanced state.

Getting present is not a philosophical concept. It just means that when you are eating an apple, you are actually aware of yourself and the apple (taste, texture, smell, movement of your jaw) not simultaneously driving the car, talking on the phone, planning your future, evaluating and grading your performance of your day. Getting present is a simple task but requires lots of practice.

Although our ultimate goal is to be present doing normal daily activities, it is helpful to start out with an easier task. Step by step we can build the skills for being present like any behavior we have learned over the years.

### **Techniques for Getting Present**

The following exercises are in increasing levels of complexity. Start with level 1 and work your way up. Practice the exercises throughout the day, at least 4-6 times. As we reach this level of repetition, we are creating a stable, new pattern for how our mind works. It is not that important how long we stay in a mindful state, it is much more important that we practice transitioning from the usual mental chatter into a mindful state.

1. Mindful Touch: Place your hand on any object within reach. Notice its texture, temperature, size. If it is a small object, pick it up and feel its weight in your hand. Note all tactile sensations. "I am aware that this is cold..." Continue this for as long as your attention will comfortably hold.

2. Mindful Breath: Become completely still. Begin inhaling. Be aware of the beginning of the inhale "I am aware that I am breathing in." Be aware of inhaling all the way until it is completed, "I am aware that I am done inhaling." Begin exhaling. Be aware of the beginning of the exhale, "I am aware that I am exhaling." Follow the exhale until it is completed, "I am aware that I am done exhaling." Tune into the feeling of each part of the breath. Notice physical sensations within the body as your body expands with the inhale and gently deflates with the exhale. Pause for a moment to notice the stillness before beginning the next inhale. Repeat as long as your attention will comfortably hold.

3. Mindful Walking: Stand for a moment and breathe mindfully. Begin to slowly take a small step forward. It is helpful to keep your foot touching the floor in some way, perhaps the toe continues to touch the floor as you step forward or your whole foot can slide forward with the step. As you finish moving your foot forward, let the heel come to rest with the other portion of your foot lifted off the floor.

With your heel touching the floor, be aware of the feeling of contact on your heel. Slowly shift your weight forward onto the front foot as you roll the rest of your foot down onto the floor and be aware of the feeling of contact with each part of your foot as it touches the floor. Be aware of the other foot behind you as that heel starts to lift off the floor. Be aware of the transfer of weight to the front foot as the back foot becomes weightless. You can keep the back foot touching the floor in some way as you slowly move the back foot in front for the next step. Continue taking small steps with awareness for as long as your concentration will comfortably hold. Each step is very slow: 2-3 times slower than normal walking pace.

### **Small steps, lasting change-**

As you invite change into your life, keep it simple and add new things in before trying to remove old habits. Focus on repetition, not duration. Tiny changes repeated throughout the day will shift your energy patterns to solid, healthy circulation. This is the way to heal and prevent illness.

Master Lisa B. O'Shea ·(585) 377-2044 ·Toll Free: (877) 346-4017· [www.Qigongrochester.com](http://www.Qigongrochester.com)



Bio-

Lisa B. O'Shea is a Certified Qigong Master through YMAA and founder of the Qi Gong Institute of Rochester (in NY - Est. 1998). She has maintained a private practice in Qigong Therapy since 1995 and offers classes and online programs in Qigong, Tai Chi, Nutrition, and a certification program in Qigong Therapy.