Animal daoyin

Exercises of the BUQI System

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Introduction

The famous philosopher Confucius once said that one in every three people could be his teacher. Following this line of thought, I believe that we can learn something from every being – this does not only apply to humans – we can even learn from animals. Already in the past, observation and study of animals have led to the discovery that our furry and feathery friends can teach us something about health and healing.

More than 2000 years ago in ancient China, Daoyin Shi (loosely translated as Daoyin specialists) who were teaching Daoyin exercises already practised exercises that were derived from the movements observed in different animals, e.g. walking like a bear or stretching the body like a bird stretches itself when opening its wings. Later, these practices developed into the various Animal Daoyin, emulating some typical movements of different animals. Just look at a dog shaking out his fur after a swim, a cat stretching and arching her back, a rooster crowing while stretching and elongating his neck. These exercises were commonly and effectively used as preventative measures as well as in the treatment of bodily ills.

Over the many dynasties that have gone by many different ways of interpreting and practising the Animal Daoyin have evolved, and today these exercises are still of great value to our health and well-being, maybe even more than ever. The movements of the Animal Daoyin can improve and treat many modern-day physical ailments. One key benefit of the exercises is that they are highly effective in loosening tense muscles and ligaments and stiff joints. Especially today, with many of us being desk-bound, suffering from office syndrome, mouse arm, stiff neck, headaches etc., this is of great interest. In fact, it is often a faulty body-
posture over a long period of time that lies at the root of many health problems. Bad body posture causes tension in different body parts and gives rise to mis-alignment of the spinal vertebrae; this is not only a pain in the neck, the back or in the head (particularly if the neck-vertebrae are affected) but can lead to much more serious disease – there is a direct link between every part of the spine and other body parts and organs.

**How can the Animal Daoyin help?**

The primary aim of the exercises is to loosen tense muscles, open stiff joints and stretch the ligaments for more flexibility. Creating more space within the joints and between the spinal vertebrae, is the first step to dislodge and remove any accumulated negative factors (Binqi = pathogenic or disease causing factors) from the inter-vertebral spaces and from the tissues, muscles and ligaments surrounding the spine. This will allow the spine to realign and the intervertebral discs to heal; the spine can then regain its suppleness and strength, helping us to improve body posture so that we can walk tall again.

**The Shaking Factor**

Shaking is very effective for the elimination of Binqi. Shaking really is low frequency vibration. Specific exercises can give rise to different frequencies in the body. Every frequency has a different effect on the body and it is possible to develop the ability to produce and use a whole spectrum of frequencies. For the purpose of healing and regenerating our spine, a frequency rate at the lower end of the spectrum is most useful. Therefore in the exercises of the Animals we use shaking which originates in different areas of the body. This shaking helps to create internal low frequency vibration.
Stretch yourself

The word Daoyin is composed of two words: Dao and Yin (originally spelled Ying). Both words mean “guiding” or “leading”. The exercises will allow you to stretch different body areas to different degrees – stretching opens the joints, lengthens the muscles, loosens the ligaments. It is through this stretching that we can “guide” any negative factors out of the body; as more space is created in the joints, in-between the spinal vertebrae, in the inter-muscular spaces, etc., any debris that has become “stuck” can be dislodged and removed.

News in the fields

The idea of actually eliminating pathogenic factors through exercise is a new element in the consideration of the Animal Daoyin. Low frequency vibration helps to dislodge Binqi; this needs to be combined with the use of body movement, together with the force of the mind and the breath, to guide or lead the Binqi out of the body via the limbs to the hands and feet. This is detailed and subtle work. Therefore it is important to not just “imitate” any animal’s movement but to try and understand the internal working and pathways of the movement – then you will be able to gain greater ‘insight’ into your body’s functioning and surprise yourself with outstanding discoveries and results.

Dr. Shen Hongxun, February 2005
Tiger daoyin

The tiger lives in the wild, struggling for survival. When he is about to pounce on his prey he leaps skyward, his entire being poised, ready for that pounce which, if successful, means lunch.

Using the movement of the tiger, fill the length of your body with his determination and fierceness. Imagine you are a tiger: use your mind and body and feel the power. Stretch upward with all your might and allow the vibration to shake your spinal column free.
Deer daoyin

The deer characteristically turns the head and stretches round to look behind herself. When imitating the deer we twist the body and stretch it, like wringing out a wet cloth. The twisting movement helps many joints to become mobile again, especially in the groin where people often feel blocked and heavy.

After looking round for your tail, you can also look up and away into the distance, stretching the arm up. This can help with shoulder problems. If one shoulder is lower than the other, focus on stretching that one up more.
Bear daoyin

The bear is a very heavy animal. He often moves on all fours, so when he lifts his arms to walk upright, they hang like weights in front of him. He moves slowly and his legs are so heavy that they shake as he walks.

With the arms lifting up and one leg hanging free, breathe in and shake the leg, letting it hang a little behind and out to the side. You will feel that the spine is stretched open and there should be a downward movement, through the leg and out, into the ground.
Monkey daoyin

The monkey is a playful animal. His body is supple and he has no cares in the world, therefore he brings joy.

With one hand he feeds himself, while the other grips a branch above. His face is cheeky and he laughs easily.
Bird daoyin

The bird stretches outwards from her centre to the tips of her wings. Pulling the wings up with great force, and then pushing down into the ground, breathing deeply, she is filled with air and becomes light.

When the joints become free her wingtips meet above her head and move freely as if at any moment she will take flight.
In most of us penguins evoke a comical image as the little funny guys shuffle around clumsily on the ice. But the gentlemen in their coats and tails are much more elegant and lithe when moving about under water. Their spine is supple and bendable and their bodies glide through the sea with the speed and precision of mini-torpedoes.
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