

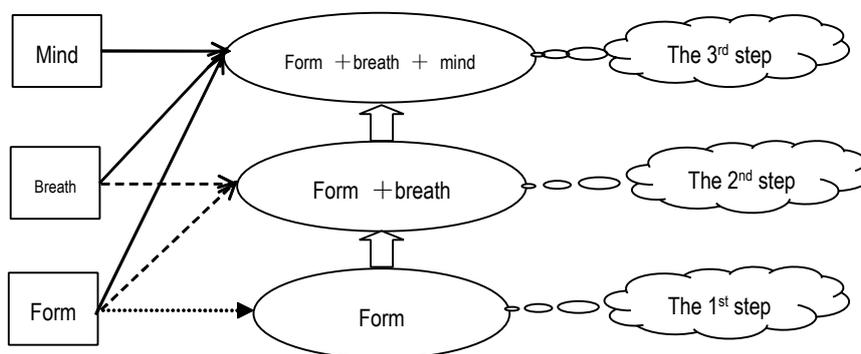
## **“Trilogy” of Health Qigong Exercise**

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In daily exercise, it's easy to be found that a Health Qigong lover was still difficult to grasp the essentials of exercise even though he spent a lot of time in practicing and the main cause was due to his improper practice. I've often wondered how we can help these improper practicing lovers to grasp a kind of practicing technique, so that they can better enjoy the pleasure brought by Health Qigong. I hereby recommend an approach for “trilogy” of Health Qigong exercise to everybody from the essential characteristics of Health Qigong and combined with years of teaching and practice experiment, hope that it could enlighten the beginners and instructors.

### **I. Interpretation of “Trilogy” Exercise**

What are the essential characteristics of Health Qigong? The definition of Health Qigong has given us a definite answer, namely Health Qigong is a traditional exercise of our nation with body movements, respiratory Tuna (breathing in and out) and mental regulation as the major forms of exercise. In accordance with the commonly used terms of Health Qigong, “body regulation” means “body movements”, “breath regulation” means “respiratory Tuna (breathing in and out)”, “mind regulation” means “mental regulation”, and the essential characteristics of Health Qigong can be expressed as a health-preserving exercise with combination of “body regulation, breath regulation and mind regulation”, namely the unity and collaboration of “three regulations”. Further simplified, if used “form, breath, mind” to replace “body regulation, breath regulation and mind regulation”, the essential characteristics of Health Qigong can be further expressed as an exercise with combination of “form, breath and mind” of the human. Accordingly, I proposed “trilogy” of Health Qigong exercise, namely practicing Health Qigong based on the sequence of “form-breath-mind”. The specific practicing contents and steps are shown in the following diagram:



Schematic Diagram of "Trilogy" of Health Qigong Exercise

## II. Sequence Analysis of "Trilogy" Exercise

### (I) The first step exercise – form

As for the Health Qigong beginners, the first step of Health Qigong exercise is to master the practicing methods and essentials of the "form". The "form" herein refers to body movements and adjustment of body posture, namely "body regulation", which is the external manifestation of the movements.

The basic contents of the "form" mainly include three aspects. The first is the methods and the hand shape, such as the "tiger claw, deer horn and bird wings" in Health Qigong • Wu Qin Xi, the "dragon claw, tiger claw, lotus leaf palm, willow leaf palm" in Health Qigong • Yi Jin Jing. As the saying goes, "clever in mind and skillful in hands". Modern brain physiology research indicated that the hand reflex zone also accounted for a large area in cerebral cortex reflex zone. The regular changes of the hand shape in exercise can effectively stimulate the hands' different nerve muscles and enable the cerebral cortex to produce good adaptation variations. The second is the footwork and stances. The moving and transition of the gravity center of the body and the body movements are dependent on the changes of footwork and stances. The general requirement of the footwork is "walking with cat-like step" and changing agilely and flexibly. The third is the body methods, including "chest, back, waist, abdomen and hip". The substance of the "emphasis on extension and rotation of spinal column" mentioned in the essentials of four Health Qigong exercises is the body methods.

Only when one has mastered the “form” methods and essentials can he “guide the waist and body and exercise all the joints” to fight with aging. The Health Qigong beginner is sure to make great efforts to perform well at the first step, distinguish the movements’ routines, directions, angles, vacancy and fullness, laxity and tightness, and achieve neat postures and accurate methods, so as to lay a solid foundation for in-depth exercises in the future.

(II) The second step exercise – form + breath

After being more fluent in essentials of the “form”, the practicers can start the second step and pay attention to the close coordination of body movements and breathing. If the first step is required to achieve “guiding the body into a soft state”, the second step should achieve “guiding Qi into a harmonious state”, to combine “body guidance” with “Qi guidance”, thus to achieve “coordination of form and breath”.

Generally speaking, the coordination between breathing and movements is based on rules of “ascending-inhalation and descending-exhalation, opening-inhalation and closing-exhalation, accumulating-inhalation and releasing-exhalation, and tightening-inhalation and relaxing-exhalation”. For example, the “bird flying” movement in Health Qigong • Wu Qin Xi, an inhalation is taken as the ascending of gravity center when both arms are lifted to complete the movement of “spread wings” and an exhalation is taken as the descending of gravity center when the knees are bended and both hands are folded, that is the coordination of “ascending-inhalation and descending-exhalation”; the “showing claws and wings” movement in Health Qigong • Yi Jin Jing, an inhalation is taken when both hands are changed into willow leaf palms and erected in front of chest, the chest is expanded and the force is accumulated and an exhalation is taken when both hands are changed into lotus leaf palms and reached forward and the force is released, that is the coordination of “accumulating-inhalation and releasing-exhalation”; the “Looking Backwards to Prevent Sickness and Strain” movement of Health Qigong • Ba Duan Jin, an inhalation is taken when “looking backwards” and the neck muscle is tightened and an exhalation is taken when “looking forward” and the neck muscle is relaxed, that is the coordination of “tightening-inhalation and relaxing-exhalation”.

In essence, the rules of coordination between breathing and movements are

consistent, in general, it can be concluded as “opening-inhalation and closing-exhalation”, for example, for the “bird fly” movement, an inhalation is taken when the chest is expanded to complete the movement of “spread wings” and an exhalation is taken when the chest is folded to complete the movement of “folded wings”. Of course, the skillful coordination between breathing and movements requires a process, which cannot be achieved overnight. How can we achieve it? It shall start with the coordination between natural breathing and movements. Natural breathing is a way of breathing going on all the time around us. The practicers are required to slowly combine the movements with breathing at the moment of natural breathing and breathe naturally with the changes in movements. When the natural breathing and movements are coordinated skillfully, the breathing will gradually become deep, slow, even and long, and then the effect of unifying state of mind is achieved to prepare for the third step exercise. If the natural rules of coordination between breathing and movements are violated to pursue unrealistic coordination, it may result in out-of-adjustment respiration, stubborn movements and even suffocation and fail to take effect.

### (III) The third step exercise – form + breath + mind

If making distinction with overall exercise and decomposing exercise, the first and second steps can be considered as the decomposing exercises and the third step can be considered as the real overall exercise. The step-by-step principle is in line with the rules and is also an important principle for performing well in Health Qigong exercise. Based on this principle, the first and second steps are the precondition and foundation for the third step and the third step is the goal and pursuit of the former two steps. Only when the combination between body movements, respiratory Tuna (breathing in and out) and mental regulation was achieved can the essential characteristics of Health Qigong be truly embodied, can the Health Qigong exercise enter the realm of integration of body and mind and the Health Qigong exercise obtain desired effect.

Whether it is the “form”, the “breath”, or the “form + breath”, both of them are “visible and touchable”, and what’s going on about the invisible and formless “mental regulation”? How to fulfill the third step? We first need to figure out the essence and contents of the mentality and the nature of consciousness. What’s the human’s mentality? Zhang Houcan,

the vice chairman of International Union of Psychology, has explained it in plain language in the article of *“Current Situation and Development Prospects of Psychology in China”*. She explained the psychological as “first, it is the function of the brain, it cannot work without the brain; second, it is the reflection of the real world, it can reflect the realities in the outside world; third, the reflection of the human is not negative and reactive but positive and proactive, which can be consciously carried out. The human being not only needs to understand the realities but needs to reshape the realities, and we have to study these issues if the psychology wants to achieve a high level of development”. The three notes of Zhang Houcan about the essence of mentality can be summarized as “mentality is the subjective reflection of the human brain on the objective world.” The nature of consciousness theory of dialectical materialism pointed out that, “consciousness is the subjective reflection of objective existence, which is a reflection process of the human brain on the objective world and a process for continuous processing and production of data input externally”. It is easy to see the consistency between the essence of mentality and the nature of consciousness by linking them together.

According to the conclusion that “the consciousness contains the unity of knowledge, emotion and willpower”, it can be considered that the “mental regulation” contents of Health Qigong include “knowledge, emotion and willpower”. “Knowledge” refers to the theoretical knowledge of “body movements and respiratory Tuna (breathing in and out)” and the theoretical knowledge of how to improve our health and the mechanism of producing healthy effects. For example, the joints, muscles, routines and methods in body movements, the respiratory Tuna (breathing in and out) methods and how to coordinate respiration with body movements. “Emotion” refers to emotional feelings or sentiments. In Health Qigong exercise, the practicers are required to enter the healthy emotional state and enter different emotional states according to different movements. For example, the practicers are required to enter the state of mind of Health Qigong • Wu Qin Xi exercise to act like whatever role they act to achieve the unity of form and spirit. “Willpower” refers to the mental state such as self-control, perseverance, confidence and indomitable spirit of the human being manifested in pursuit of certain goals and ideals. Understanding the essence of mentality and its contents before interpretation of the meaning of the third step

exercise is, after being more proficient in coordination between body movements and breathing and combined with the requirements of different exercising methods and specific movements, to give full play to the imagination based on functions of the brain to enter appropriate artistic conception requirements and gradually achieve the physical and mental state of the “unity of three regulations”.

### **III. Supplemental Instructions of “Trilogy” Exercise**

There are two points need to supplement. First, the purpose of putting forward the “trilogy” exercise is to provide some theoretical guidance for beginners, and more important is to tell the beginners that they must follow the principle of step-by-step practices and always grasp the essential characteristics of combination of body movements, respiratory Tuna (breathing in and out) and mental regulation of Health Qigong. Never start to “imagine or absorb ideas” and even “random thinking” without being proficient in coordination between movements and breathing. This is “aggressive doctrine” in exercise and is totally bad for the practicers; second, there is no absolute boundary between the three steps and it does not mean that the practicing cognitive process of Health Qigong exercise is ended up after three steps exercise. The principle of epistemology of “practice, cognition, re-practice and re-cognition” is also applicable to the practicing process of Health Qigong. As the saying goes, “art is endless”, Health Qigong exercise is always a continuous learning and continuous improvement process. During the practice, only when we continuously improve the state of “form”, “form + breath” and “form + breath + mind” based on understanding and practicing levels at different stages can we gradually improve the level of exercising methods and acquire maximum effective health-preserving effects and more harmonious physical and mental skills.