

LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
COMMUNITY BUILDERS  
MEET THEORY U AND  
CHINESE QIGONG (CHI-GUNG)



5 SIMPLE MINDFULNESS EXERCISES TO HELP  
USE AND ENERGIZE OURSELVES AND OUR  
COMMUNITIES

**By David C. Tebo, Photos-Libby Sievert**

# PREFACE

In October 2017 after 25 years of consistent public service as a municipal administrator with 18 of the most recent years managing in one community, I lost my job. I found myself at age 63, unemployed, too young to retire, and wondering what my best next career move should be. Was there something new and interesting waiting to be born?

With some time on my hands I signed up for two ed.x Massive Open On-line Courses (MOOC's) focused on Theory U. In the fall of 2017 I participated in a semester long course titled **Leading From the Emerging Future** sponsored by MIT's Presencing Institute. Please see [Presencing.org](http://Presencing.org) for much more information on Theory U.

Theory U helped me re-discover a focus and direction for my work and public service. I recognized throughout the Theory U courses a similarity to strategic planning processes that I had used when co-creating public projects during my career as a municipal administrator.

I loved the transformational language employed by Theory U and the new opportunities it seemed to open to deeper dialogue and generative listening for local communities, with both employees and citizens.

I appreciated its internal focus and the emphasis on first creating interior space within ourselves for transformation before we can expect any space for change outside of ourselves.

I enjoyed the non-confrontational, non-divisive, non-violent and patient process of the U allowing each individual or collective to reach their own conclusions without pressure for compliance.

I totally identified with the meditative and mindfulness aspect of the U change management process and saw great similarity with the practice of qigong (pronounced Chee-kung), which I began in 2007 to help my body and spirit heal after several cancer surgeries and

radiation treatments. Qigong is translated literally from the Chinese as “energy work”. It is an ancient Chinese meditation practice for cultivating energy and maintaining health that has survived for thousands of years. It is often called “Chinese Yoga” for similarities to its Indian counterpart, but movements tend to be much simpler and easier on the body. More on qigong to come in the following chapters!

I sensed an opportunity to connect qigong with Theory U that might benefit local government administrators as they worked in their communities. This brief booklet is a first attempt to adapt a few seeds from traditional Chinese qigong to help create a valuable and simple meditation tool for local government community builders of any stripe but especially those familiar with Theory U.

# INTRODUCTION

In my opinion anyone engaged in a social change process like Theory U, or a similar effort to try and transform our communities, must also be constantly involved in what U practitioners call "turning the camera back on ourselves" . In other words, a lot of self-examination, self-discovery and self-transformation.

All local government administrators must find the internal energy, compassion, love, and perseverance to remain "present" in a world where it seems more and more choose to be "absent".

We need to seek harmony in the face of conflict and hope in the face of fear.

I believe we as individuals must have an internal practice,, or multiple practices, that strengthens our heart, mind and soul on a daily basis if we are to win over the ignorance, anger, fear and closed-mindedness that Theory U calls "absencing".

Traditional qigong can offer a centering opportunity for local government community builders that not only employs U language but also allows the chance for silent meditation as well.

Traditional qigong is a non-confrontational, non-violent and non-divisive activity that can help organizations and communities introduce the language and possibilities of Theory U and social change in a very non-threatening manner.

With strong emotional content and intention the simple qigong exercises and movements in this booklet can symbolize our vision and visualization of a community filled with courage, compassion and respectful curiosity. I hope the content and pictures displayed will help you join me in the energy creating practice of qigong.

# SOME IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS INTO THE POTENTIAL ENERGY AVAILABLE THROUGH QIGONG PRACTICE

While local government community builders new to Theory U will have an opportunity to focus on some very interesting, intellectual concepts as they practice the traditional qigong movements presented here, it is important not to lose sight of the real and substantial energy creation possibilities available through the physical practice of qigong. This energy potential has been recognized and documented by the Chinese for thousands of years.

The qigong movements shared in this booklet have been passed down as Chinese healing and health practices, helping practitioners to connect with the universal energy all around them, and are respected for their special power to fill the energy meridians and channels of the body with new power and life. Being mindful of this experience of energy development and health, improvement of the physical body should be a key aspect of qigong practice for local government community builders as they face the challenges, stress and conflict of co-creating new realities in today's political environment.

My own practice and research into qigong started in 2007 while I was desperately searching for innovative ways to help my body heal from numerous cancer surgeries and radiation treatments.

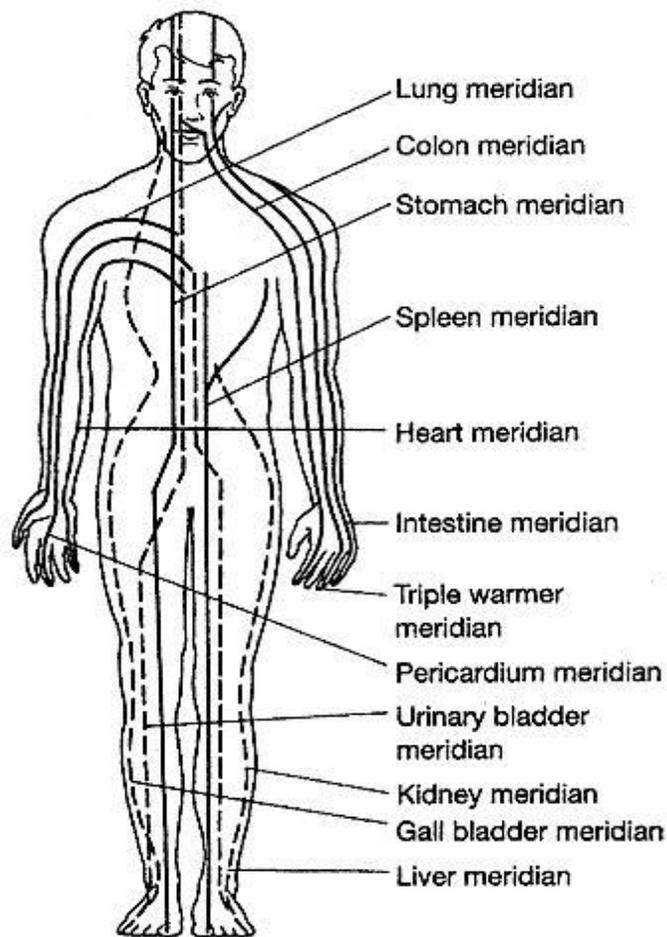
I started qigong practice to help support the health and survival of my physical body as it dealt with cancer, yet one of the reasons I continued doing qigong after cancer remission was to support my political survival as a Town Administrator, and to improve relationships with my local body politic/community and those I served.

The insights of qigong helped me see more clearly the similarities between a healthy physical body and a healthy public organization and political body/community. While Qigong relies on disciplined, daily practice to move healthy energy to every part of the body from head to toe, the success of our public organizations and communities rely on the daily flow of good

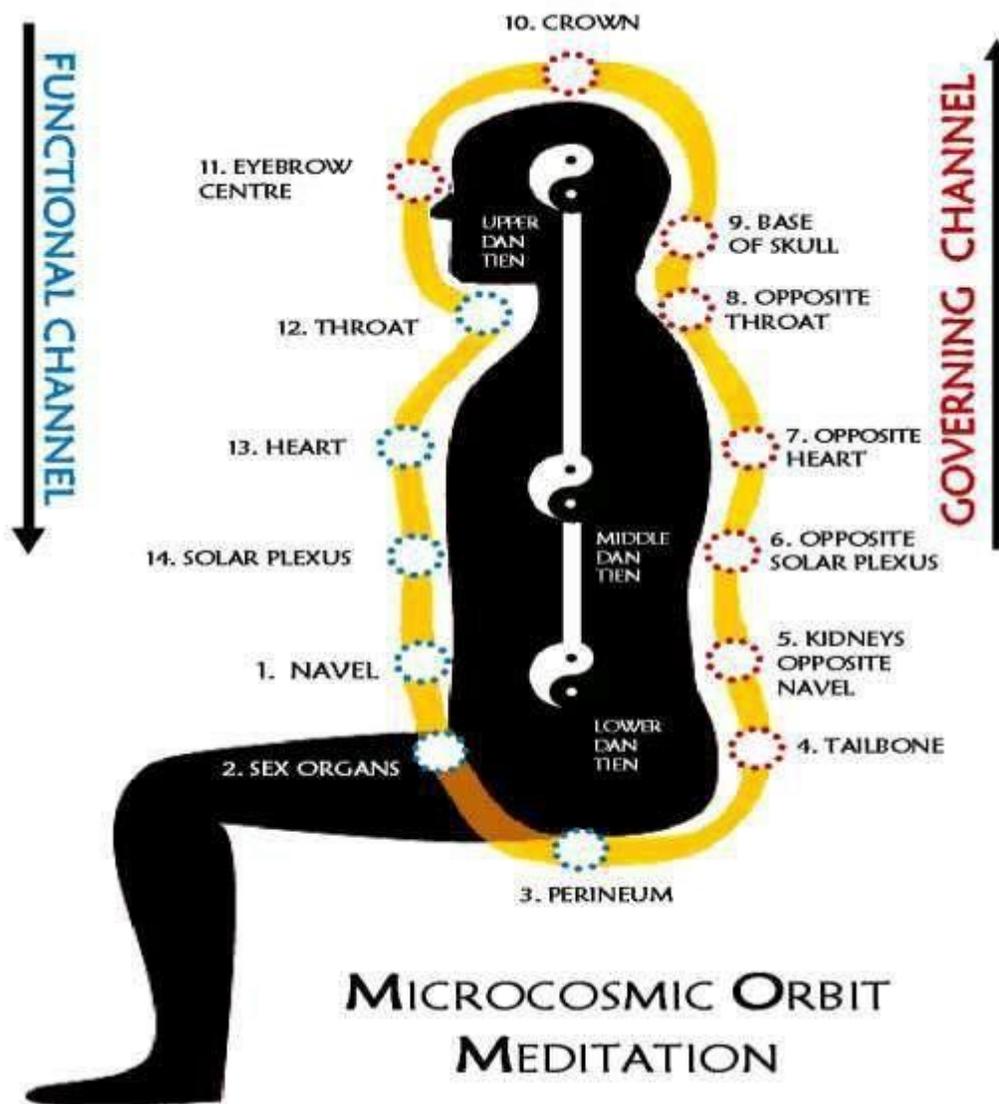
communication to employees or citizens to allow for aligned and educated decision-making and action. Just as the physical body deteriorates without the movement of energy to all its parts, so does the organization and community without regular communication and quality relationships.

Beginning practitioners should understand a few basic points about the practice of qigong as they learn the simple movements described in this book:

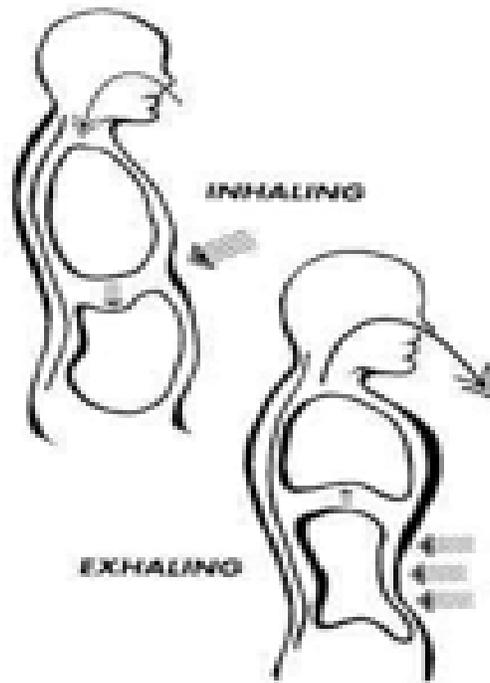
1. Though there are many variations of Qigong (Medical, Taoist, Buddhist, Confucian, Martial) , most are based on the precepts of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and the belief that there are channels, meridians and reservoirs of energy within the physical body that connect and sustain well-functioning organs and our overall health. The field of acupuncture utilizes this well documented and complex system of energy channels when treating pain and disease in the body (See the very basic picture below);



2. Many Qigong movements have been systematically designed over the centuries to stimulate key meridians, reservoirs and organs and help a physical body maintain health and well-being;
3. One key component of qigong is deep abdominal breathing which in a way acts like a bellows to push new and vital energy to parts of the body where it may be lacking. The picture below of the Microcosmic Orbit displays the circular pattern of breath and energy flow which is used in sitting meditation, but can also be duplicated in standing and moving meditations.



Deep Abdominal Breathing (Inhale through the nose with tongue on roof of mouth and fill the belly. Exhale through the mouth and contract the stomach.)



4. Qigong practitioners believe they have access to an unlimited supply of universal energy surrounding them in nature and that there are key “gates” that can allow significant entry points for this prime energy on the physical body. The feet, hands and crown of the head are seen as major energy collectors to be focused on in qigong practice. Qigong, however, should never be regarded as some kind of magic pill or quick fix for a health issue. Success is based on daily, disciplined “energy work” together with the mind and body, and results are meant to be recognized over the long-term as supporting the natural harmony and balance already present within us.
5. Chinese qigong has recently become more well known in the U.S. and outside of China.. The most recognized form of qigong in the US is likely Tai Chi. Some of the classic qigong movements are said to have been created by the Buddhist Monk Bohdidharma in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD as special exercises to heal and energize his fellow monks and help them deal with long hours of sitting meditation.

TRADITIONAL QIGONG POSTURE:  
EMBRACE THE TREE, HOLDING  
THE BALL STANDING  
MEDITATION

**Theory U: THE PRESENCING POSITION  
Embrace Your Best Self and Future by  
Attending and Listening to the Universe**



Traditional qigong practitioners stand and meditate in the **Embrace the Tree Position**. There are other names given to the position and some call it **Holding the Ball** with slight variations in hand positions. My qigong focus is on deep abdominal breathing and internal energy as I envision creating rootedness like a tree, with toes dug into the floor or ground. Energy gates in my hands and head are opened to new life and power from the natural environment and surrounding universe. I visualize stability, balance and security to face the day. I imagine myself as a Tree of Life or pillar of power, creating life and family around us centered on the highest ideals, sending out energy from my roots to the extended family and community I serve. Though winds may blow this tree will not be uprooted!

I suggest as local government community builders we expand the understanding of the **Embrace the Tree/Holding the Ball Position** and name it **the Presencing Position-to Embrace the Best Potential Self and Future Position**. **The Presencing Position-to Embrace the Best Potential Self and Future** asks community builders to **Listen to the Universe** from a position of **Attendance**.

## **A Presencing Meditation for Local Government Community Builders**

**We gather the seed of hope for a truthful, beautiful and good future and embrace it, lead with it every day-allowing it to grow and develop and move with us. We symbolically hold our purest optimism, idealism, nobility and desire to touch our true, emerging selves like a large ball in front of us, a shield against absencing, negativity and insecurity and the voices of judgement, cynicism and fear.**

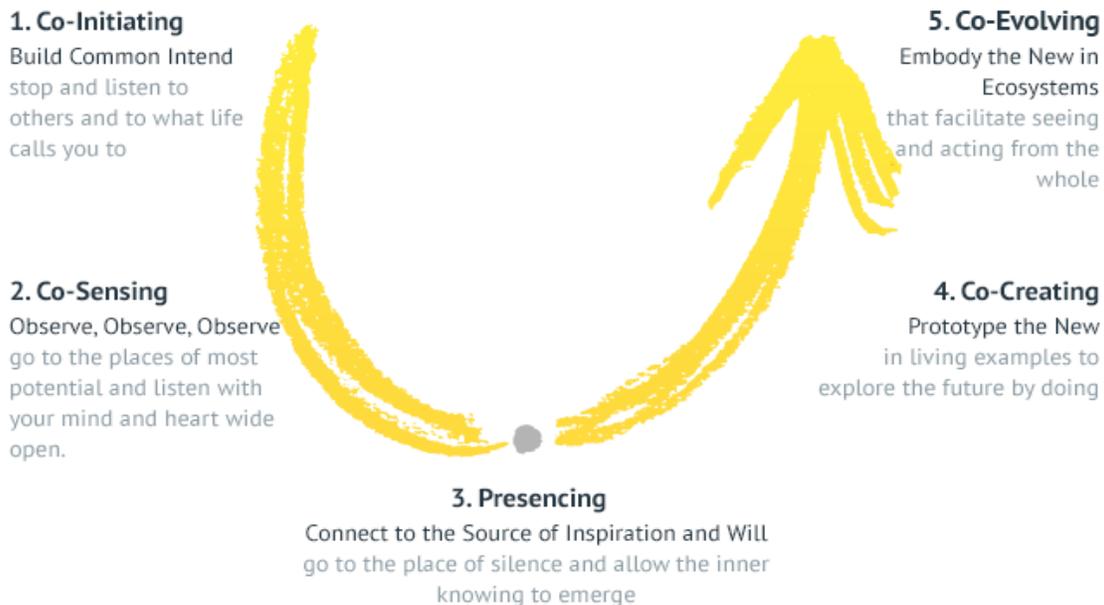
**Local Government Community Builders can also use the presencing position during group mindfulness and visualization practice-rooted in will to the earth and connected with the roots of so many others in the community or around the world. We can be rooted in heart and similar purpose with even a global community, and connected in mind vertically in attendance. We listen together for our emerging future both individually and collectively.**

## A Meditation on Theory U: One Process, Five Movements

As the diagram below illustrates, Theory U practitioners move down one side of the U (connecting us to the world that is outside of our institutional bubble) to the bottom of the U (connecting us to the world that emerges from within) and up the other side of the U (bringing forth the new into the world).

On that journey, at the bottom of the U, lies an inner gate that requires us to drop everything that isn't essential. This process of letting-go (of our old ego and self) and letting-come (our highest future possibility: our Self) establishes a subtle connection to a deeper source of knowing. The essence of presencing is that these two selves—our current self and our best future Self—meet at the bottom of the U and begin to listen and resonate with each other.

Once a group crosses this subtle threshold, nothing remains the same. Individual members and the group as a whole begin to operate with a heightened level of energy and sense of future possibility. Often they then begin to function as an intentional vehicle for an emerging future.



# TRADITIONAL QIGONG MOVEMENT: MERGING HEAVEN AND EARTH

## **Theory U: THE PLANTER EXERCISE** **Cultivating the Social Field with New Seeds of** **Inspiration**

Traditional qigong students practice the movement described below as **Merging Heaven and Earth**. For me it is an exercise to balance yin and yang, heaven and earth-an opportunity to visualize my highest expectations becoming reality. Energy from the earth is drawn up from the feet and celestial energy is drawn down from the crown. The two merge at my core and the energy of that fusion is pushed deeply into my body. It is a great exercise for synchronizing the breath with a simple relaxing movement, and can help with its smooth and swaying movements to create emotional calm and stability.



To give this movement even more meaning to us as local government community builders, I suggest we call it **The Planter Exercise-for Cultivating the Social Field with New Seeds of Inspiration**.

Starting in the **Embrace Your Best Potential Self and Future Position for Attendance and Listening to the Universe**. Briefly allow your arms to hang loosely in front of the thighs palms down. Then raise arms straight up to height of the chin with palms still down, bent slightly at the wrist and relaxed. At the same time take a deep abdominal inhale. Then bring palms back to the body at about chin level during inhale

then push down with hands toward ground bending knees and back straight in a squat position during deep abdominal exhale. I call this motion **Pushing Down to Nourish the Roots** as I visualize the highest energy gathered at the head, then heart level, being pushed down willfully to the deepest core of my being, my roots, to nourish and fertilize my vision. If physically able try to widen your stance and squat deeply to strengthen your legs.



Finally, return to original position **Embrace the Best Potential Self and Future for Attendance and Listening to the Universe** with a scooping motion of hands I call **Scoop and Store at the Core**. I visualize created energy from my practice being collected and stored at my power point just below the navel, and listen. The Chinese call this power point the dan tian, literally meaning heaven.

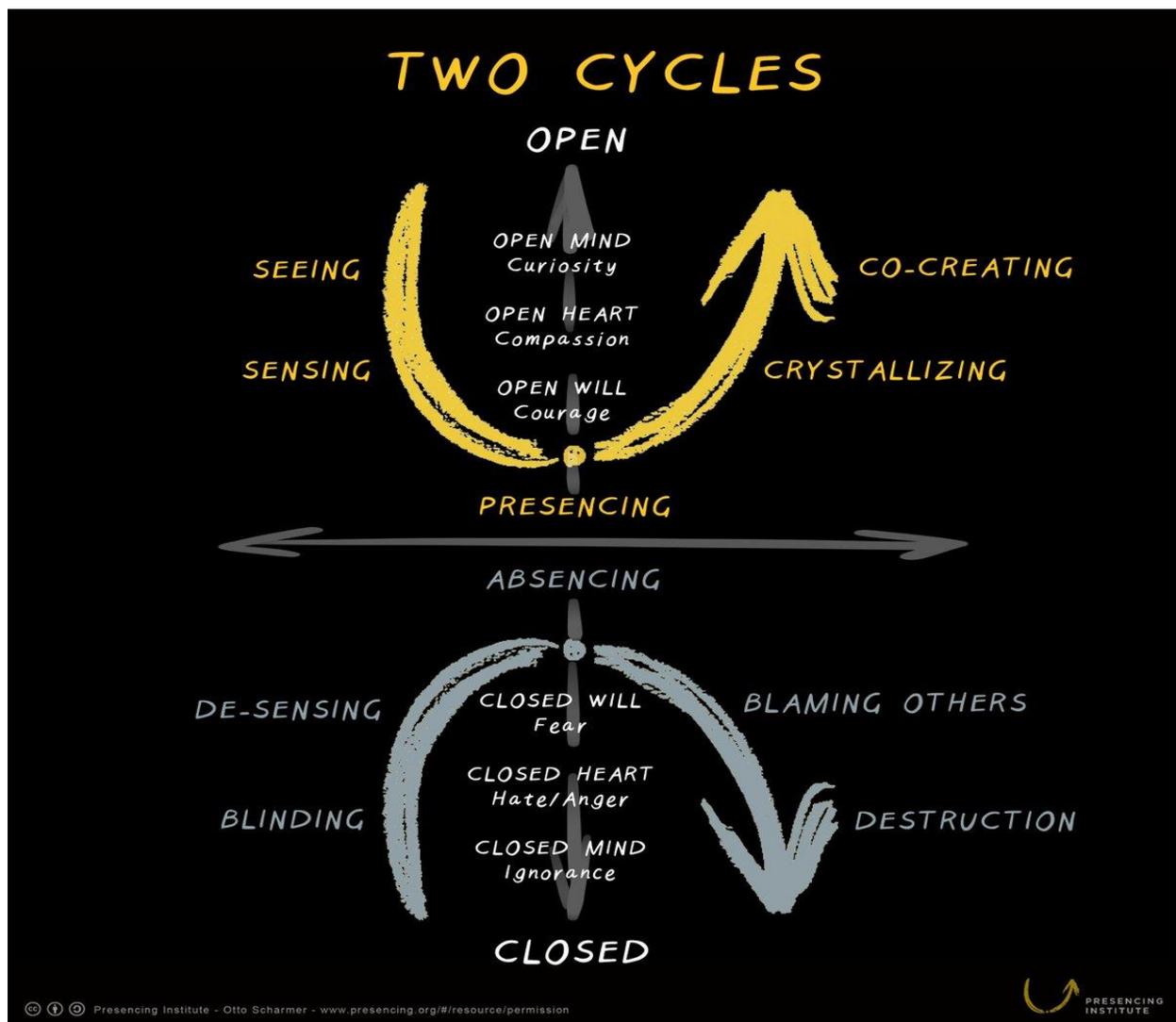


## **A Planter Exercise Meditation for Local Government Community Builders**

**As Local Government Community Builders we can, with the deep breath and slow movements of this traditional qigong form, visualize ourselves as gardeners cultivating the social field for the planting of new seeds of change and the nurturing process of protecting and nourishing the sprouts of innovation that are being formed in the fertile soil of community.**

**We plant ourselves firmly and activate the possibilities of the generative social field, again and again and again....**

# A Meditation on Theory U: Clear Recognition of two Possible Directions Presencing or Absencing



# TRADITIONAL QIGONG MOVEMENT: GREAT TAI CHI CIRCLE OR EMPEROR'S DELIGHT

## **Theory U: THE HARVESTER EXERCISE Learning and Growing From Our Experiences**

One of the most valued and respected movements for traditional qigong practitioners is the **Great Tai-Chi Circle, also called the Emperor's Delight** described below. It is said to have been taught to Chinese emperors to protect health, prolong life and enhance vitality. It is a great exercise to balance and straighten the body and allow for the real experience of energy flow from the tip of the head to the feet with a strong stretch of the shoulders, rib cage, chest and abdomen.

To make this wonderful movement even more meaningful to local government community builders I suggest we call it the **Harvester Exercise-Learning and Growing from Our Experiences.**

Start from the **Embrace the Best Potential Self and Future Position for Attendance and Listening to the Universe.**





Arms are brought up straight from the side with palms up to as high as you can reach, symbolically harvesting all the energy around us and the energy associated with our learning journey growth experiences. A slow and deep abdominal inhale accompanies this movement. At the top of our reach flatten out palms, capturing the energy and together with slow deep abdominal exhale bring it down through our entire body and then **Pushing Down to Nourish Roots** into squatting position.

From the final squatting position **Scoop and Store at the Core** motion to **Embrace the Best Potential Self and Future Position for Attendance and Listening to the Universe**, with cultivation of energy and storage at the dan tian.



## A Harvester Exercise Meditation for Local Government Community Builders

**The natural world exemplifies the process of growth from seed to harvest and teaches us to have patience in our endeavors. Our growth experiences, and challenges faced trying to create a new and different world, become fertilizer for our deeper understanding and next level of accomplishment.**

**Local Government Community Builders understand the importance of harvesting growth learning experiences and climbing to new levels through vertical development. Upgrading how we pay attention and listen, upgrading the way we converse, dialogue and think, in order to upgrade the way we organize and coordinate for the emerging future.**

**With a sincere intention to learn, love and harvest experience we can create our own unique and personal interior sacred space filled with new understanding and knowledge. This personal and unique sacred space develops an authentic grounding for our actions as we seek to activate the social field surrounding us in our family and communit**

# TRADITIONAL QIGONG MOVEMENT: PALMS RAISED TO HEAVEN TO REGULATE THE TRIPLE BURNERS

## **Theory U: THE UNIFIER EXERCISE Leading to Eliminate Absencing and Build Harmony**

As mentioned earlier many qigong movements are based on the precepts of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The **Palms Raised to Heaven to Regulate the Triple Burners** exercise is done to open up the valves and gates of what TCM calls the Triple Burners of our body's energy system.

The **Upper Burner** is believed to govern the movement of energy and blood from the top of the throat to the entrance of the stomach, including lungs and heart. The **Middle Burner** is said to regulate vital functions of the major digestive organs the stomach, spleen, pancreas, liver, gall bladder, kidneys and small intestine. The **Lower Burner controls** excretory orifices and their functions and distributes energy to the bowels and and bladder. Qigong practitioners believe that this exercise helps to balance these three energy systems and regulates vital functions of the organs.

As local government community builders I propose we give this qigong movement broader meaning and practice it as the **Unifier Exercise-Leading to Eliminate Absencing and Build Harmony**.



Start from **Embrace the Best Potential Self and Future Position for Attendance and Listening to the Universe.**

While inhaling lift your hands straight up above your head. As your hands begin to reach above your head turn hands so that they are facing upward with palms pointing toward the sky and stretch as high as you can.





While exhaling keep arms extended and slowly bring them down on your sides until returning to **Embrace the Best Self position**. This **Unifier Exercise- Leading to Eliminate Absencing and Create Harmony** can be repeated as many times as you feel necessary to create a sense of unifying energy and deep intention within yourself to reach out and develop connective relationships with your community.

## **A Unifier Exercise Meditation For Local Government Community Builders**

**Local government community builders realize that traveling the U process is not easy. When seeking our best possible self as individuals (presencing) we must not only contend with voices of judgement, cynicism and fear in our heads but also our tendency to stay stuck in old mental models and destructive patterns of downloading (absencing).**

**We also recognize when seeking organizational or community change, those same type of stuck absencing patterns emerging in others, who may try to create separateness (an us vs. them mentality), inflexibility (my way or the highway), or absolutism (my truth or no truth).**

**Local government community builders recognize we are called to become unifying leaders in our communities. A new kind of leadership is required (See summary below). Theory U does not request a political leadership necessarily, in fact many different political positions might be taken based on the broad principles espoused by the U.**

**What is needed is a common ground of understanding, trust, tolerance and respect that opens a gateway for relationship and unity and creates the possibility of compromise, agreement and co-creation.**

**We need the transformative visionary language of the U but we also need the transactional practical genius of local government community builders as they actively apply their knowledge and act, searching for solutions to real-world problems in every community.**

## **Theory U- A Call to Authentic, Transformational and Transactional Leadership**

The journey through the U develops seven essential leadership capacities:

- 1. Holding the Space of Listening**-The foundational capacity of the U is listening. Listening to others. Listening to oneself. And listening to what emerges from the collective. Effective listening requires the creation of open space in which others can contribute to the whole.
- 2. Observing**-The capacity to suspend the “voice of judgment” is key to moving from projection to focused and peripheral observation.
- 3. Sensing**-Seeing the system from the edges. The preparation for the experience at the bottom of the U requires the tuning of three inner instruments: the open mind, the open heart, and the open will. This opening process is an active “sensing” together as a group. While an open heart allows us to see a situation from the current whole, the open will enables us to begin to sense from the whole that is wanting to emerge.
- 4. Presencing**-The capacity to connect to the deepest sources of self—to go to the inner place of stillness where knowing comes to surface.

**5. Crystallizing**-When a small group of change makers commit to a shared purpose, the power of their intention creates an energy field that attracts people, opportunities, and resources that make things happen. This core group and its container functions as a vehicle for the whole to manifest.

**6. Prototyping**-Moving down the left side of the U requires the group to open up and deal with the resistance of thought, emotion, and will; moving up the right side requires the integration of thinking, feeling, and will in the context of practical applications and learning by doing.

**7. Co-Evolving**-A prominent violinist once said that he couldn't simply play his violin in Chartres cathedral; he had to "play" the entire space, what he called the "macro violin," in order to do justice to both the space and the music. Likewise, organizations need to perform at this macro level: they need to convene the right sets of players in order to help them to co-sensing and co-create at the scale of the whole.

# TRADITIONAL QIGONG MOVEMENTS: COSMIC BEING, BEAR RISING UP, ROCK PUSH

## **Theory U : The OPENING EXERCISE Connect Open Mind, Open Heart, Open Will to Co-Creation**

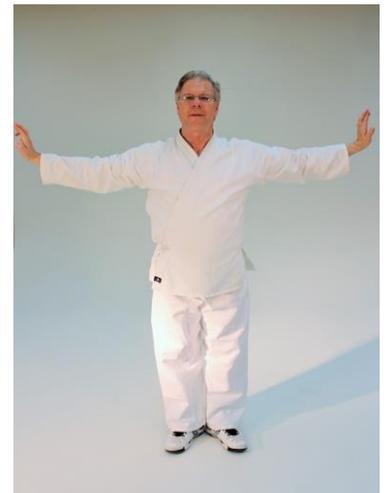
The Five Animal Frolics is one of the oldest traditional qigong systems that is still practiced today. It is a dance-like set of exercises modeled after the Crane, Bear, Monkey, Deer and Tiger. Creation of the set is attributed to Hua Tuo (A.D. 110-207) often called the Father of Chinese Medicine. The movements are said to increase the circulation of qi (internal energy) in the body and improve health, build martial and fighting skills, and also teach harmony with animals and all of nature. The **Bear Rising Up** exercise described below is one of the animal frolics and **Rock Push** asks practitioners to imagine a rock wall in nature and the energy force needed to move it. The **Cosmic Being** movement is believed to strengthen the immune system, increase the strength and density of the bones, help store qi in the body and stimulate the flow of internal energy through the skin.

I propose as local government community builders that we combine these three traditional qigong movements into **The Opening Exercise-Connect Open Mind, Open Heart, Open Will to Co-Creation.**

1. With heels together make a fist with the left hand and cover with right hand and raise above your head representing **Open Mind (Curiosity)**.



2. With a deep inhale slowly lower two fists together to just above the position of the heart representing **Open Heart (Compassion)**. Then exhale deep and slow and perform traditional Qigong movement **Cosmic Being** by pushing out both right and left arms with palm heel strikes (palms pulled back vertically as close to 90 degrees to wrists as possible) on a horizontal plane. Push your love and energy into the world with **Open Will (Courage)**. Imagine your body is filling the universe: head touching the heavens, feet reaching to the center of the earth, right and left arms extended out infinitely. Visualize the pores of your skin opening and there is a lightness and porosity to the entire body allowing for a universal healing energy to enter in.



3. Inhale and drop arms slowly to the side. Slightly widen stance and perform twin upper outer forearm blocks while exhaling, slowly raising your arms like a standing bear, this is the traditional Qigong **Bear Rising Up** position. While the Cosmic Being movement takes us outside of the body the purpose of the bear movement is to keep us heavy and rooted, grounded, anchored and immobile like a mountain. From this position of authentic strength and bear-like power we can begin our learning and co-creation process.



4. While inhaling step forward with your right foot and form a left **Cat Stance** and **Rock Push** while slowly exhaling with left hand above right at about chin level. This movement symbolically represents the shaping of an idea, crystallizing our vision, pushing it into the world and generating opportunities for co-creation.



**5. Return to the Embrace Your Best Self and Potential Future Position for Attendance and Listening to the Universe.**



**Meditations to Exercise an Open Mind,  
Open Heart, Open Will to Co-Creation**

**We want to consistently touch, sense and be aware of the current reality of the inner place from which we operate as individuals. Truly observe ourselves and begin to visualize a shift in our attention to insure we are moving from I-in-me (habitual thinking), I-in-it (open mind), I-in-you (open heart) to I-in-we and I-in-now (open will).**

**As local government community builders we hope to live lives of action, accomplishment and competence, making our ideas real by tapping into the transformational love and energy available to our best potential selves. Whether our impact is small or large as we are passionate about our goals, and approach life with an open mind, open heart and open will, opportunities to serve and co-create will emerge in our daily activities.**

**I have studied the following books for years and learned from them during my traditional qigong practice. I have also relied on their expertise when trying to explain the movements shown in this booklet. If interested in qigong I highly recommended these books for review:**

Kenneth S. Cohen. *The Way of Qigong: The Art and Science of Chinese Energy Healing*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1997.

Daniel Reid. *The Complete Guide to Chi-gung: Harnessing the Power of the Universe*. Great Britain: Simon and Schuster, 1998.

Dr. Jwing-Ming Yang. *The Root of Chinese Qigong: Secrets for Health, Longevity and Enlightenment*. Massachusetts: YMMA, 1997.

Lam Kam Chuen. *Chi Kung: Way of Power*. London: Gaia Books, 2003.

Dave Tebo. *Way of Harmony Qigong Based on Tong-il Moo-Do the Unified Martial Art: Helping You Cultivate the Energy and Wisdom Needed to Live Well and Love in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Oklahoma City: CSP. 2016

