



Ahh! Happy Hands and Happy Feet!

*with Sheila Leonard, Accredited Tai Chi Chih
and Chow Medical Qigong Instructor*

*Let's cultivate that Inner Smile
keeping it strong and deep ...
cultivating at the same time
a softer, deeper Tai Chi Chih practice ...*

In the teachings of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Energy, our Life Source or Force, flows through our bodies from tip to toe through energy pathways called meridians. Blockages in these energy pathways, whether at a physical, mental, emotional or spiritual level, are believed to be at the root of most (95% ?) of the discomfort, dis-ease, and eventually disease we experience body/mind/spirit. The more freely our energy flows, the more fully alive and healthy we are.

These pathways amazingly connect deeply with each of our organs as well as the major energy pathways and energy centres up and down the centre of our bodies from the base of our spine to the top of our head, our spine being seen as our major "energetic highway". These meridians have their starting or ending points in the energy portals at the tips of our fingers and toes. Each of the corresponding connections is indicated in the following diagrams of the hand and foot. As with 6 Healing Sounds, we need not remember which is which! We only need to do the practice! Our bodies intuitively know and do all the rest!

Hand:

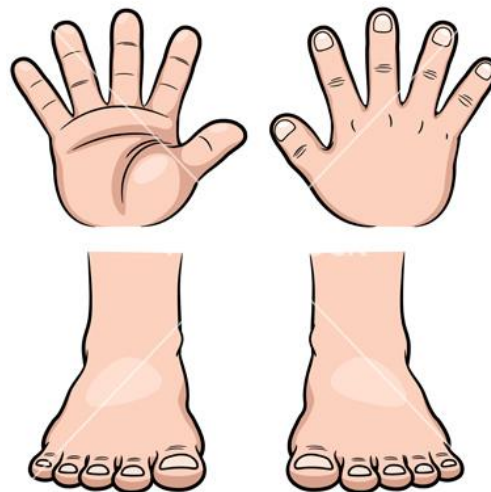
Thumb: Lung

Index: Lg Intestine

Middle: Pericardium

Ring: Triple Warmer

*Pinky: Sm Intestine(Back)
and Heart (Front)*



Foot:

*Big Toe: Spleen (Edge)
Liver (Inside)*

Second Toe: Stomach

*Middle: Circulation
Kidney*

Fourth: Gall Bladder

Fifth: Bladder

*Any place that bends has a particular potential for blocking the flow.
WoW! Imagine what else that could mean for caring for our hands and feet!*

T'ai Chi Chih is done primarily with the wrists and waist, with a focus in the soles of our feet. Gifting ourselves on a regular basis with a simple yet powerful hand and foot massage can profoundly enhance the aliveness of our hands and feet and the flow of energy throughout our body during practice. It can also deepen our awareness, and that, as Justin says, is "the root of T'ai Chi Chi which is essentially inner-oriented". To quote S. Antonia, "Actually it is quite simple: know the form, be aware of how you move and feel every part of it". (Both quotes from Aug/2011 VFJ article: "It Takes a Lot of Effort to Get to No Effort")

One such delightful massage practice is outlined below and is borrowed from a form called Chow Medical Qigong, after Qigong Grand Master, Dr. Effie Chow. I invite you to taste it mindfully, aware that the ancient Chinese practice of Qigong is said to be the Mother of all T'ai Chi forms and of so many other energy modalities we find ourselves surrounded by today, all having made their way in essence from the East.

Chow Qigong - Foot and Hand Massage (Similar pattern for both)

So many of our energy meridians pass through the hands and feet that massaging them is a simple way of massaging all of our organs, stimulating, circulating and balancing the energy through our entire body, through every body system, at the same time resulting in happier, healthier hands and feet. Gotta love it!

For foot massage: (maintaining a straight spine as much as possible, mindful of breath)

Females start with right foot, males start with left. For self-massage, position the foot on opposite knee, level with lap, supporting leg and ankle so that foot is free to move while the leg remains stationary. Holding the ankle lightly with the same hand as foot, use the opposite hand to rotate the foot from the ankle as you hold the tip of the foot and the toes in your palm. Circles are as slow and wide as you can.

1. Rotate foot 9x inward to point of resistance, or "comfortably uncomfortable", in one direction 9x and then the other, bending the toes forward and curling them back as you rotate the foot.
2. Holding each toe at the top, and starting with the big toe, rotate each toe from the base, 9x in one direction and then the other, bending it and curling it back. Then with thumb and index finger, pull up on the toe from the base and pull off at the end of the nail to make a "snap" sound.
3. Repeat with each toe, doing 9 rotations in each direction.
4. Starting at the base of each toe, one at a time stroke the tendons on the top of the foot all the way towards the instep, using a gentle pressure, starting with big toe and ending with the little toe.
5. Slap Bubbling Spring or Kidney 1 point on sole of foot 3-4 times ... located 1/3 from top.
6. Repeat on other foot.

For hand massage: (maintaining a straight spine as much as possible, mindful of breath)

Females start with right hand, males start with left. Holding just above wrist, use opposite hand to shake hand for a few seconds to loosen wrist. Rest arm on lap pillow or table so it is level to the floor. Massage Hoku energy point in web part of hand briefly. Then follow only steps 1 – 3, then 6 above as with feet.