

Feel the Joy to Heal with Joyous Breath

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Inspired by Daniel Pienciak's article titled "Grounded in Joyous Breath" published in the Vital Force Journal in August 2014, I have prepared this writing. Daniel is one of four teacher trainers of T'ai Chi Chih and under his guidance I received my accreditation.

During a previous lesson, I discussed the area on the bottom of the foot centered between the two points on the ball and the heel. It is known in Chinese as the "bubbling spring" and is used as a pressure point during acupuncture treatment. In T'ai Chi Chih, this area is where Justin Stone, T'ai Chi Chih originator, teaches students to focus. Accredited teachers use the principle when they instruct students to "keep your awareness in the soles of the feet." This is the fourth principle listed on the handout I shared in week one titled, "Principles of How to Move in T'ai Chi Chih®." It is this principle that helps us to ground with the earth.

The power of grounding, which includes making a strong root-like connection and feeling centered, has rewarded many students with well-being benefits. Students, including myself, have reported better balance, less vertigo/motion sickness, relief from anxiety, increased energy and better sleep. While there are many practices that promote this feeling of grounding, Joyous Breath is an easy grounding technique to learn and can be done on its own to assist you with feeling grounded. In my classes, Joyous Breath is taught in lesson one. Today, I wish to guide you on how to expand your awareness of this movement to bring forth the feeling of being centered and encourage its use throughout the day.

As you practice Joyous Breath,

- Notice when the connection of the feet to the earth feels the strongest.
- Pay attention to the Tan T'ien with each exhale as it pulls toward the spine and strengthens your centeredness.

- Play with the feeling you have as your feet rise up and softly land back to the earth offering to you both connection and balance. Notice on this downward movement how the feet accept the weight of the body with each exhale.
- Feel the center of the body as it lowers toward the ground.
- Allow the exhale of the movement to extend downward through the “bubbling spring” releasing all the tension that is within you.
- With each inhalation and exhalation expand your awareness:
 - As you inhale, notice how the cool air moves in through the nostrils and passes through the bridge of the nose
 - Then rest, holding the breath slightly, before releasing through the nose focusing on the bridge of the nostrils.
 - Release, with force and control, the toxic exhale of warm air in four equal breaths.
 - Allow the back of the throat to mimic the sound of the ocean.

Because this movement involves the breath and is done with vigor, it can be used to energize you when you feel sluggish during the day.

By allowing yourself to let go of tension and anxiety, you are open to receive the grounding and centeredness benefits of this movement. In this way, Joyous Breath supports our mental well-being and allows us to sleep peacefully.

Daniel shares in his article an old Eastern saying, “the ones who keep their concentration in the soles of the feet throughout the day will heal a thousand ills.”¹

May you, too, heal your ills by concentrating on the soles of your feet.

During my initial years as a teacher, I recall not feeling the “joy” of this movement. In my Perfect Health Lifestyle Education training, I learned the how and why breathwork grounds. My perspective and interpretation of Joyous Breath shifted and I began to experience this movement in a more open, joyful way. I hope in time you can, too.

¹Pienciak, Daniel. “Grounding with Joyous Breath.” The Vital Force - Journal of T’ai Chi Chih® Community. August 2014:7. Albuquerque. Good Karma Publishing. 2014