

Qi Gong: Depression and Loss

This is the first article in a three part series related to different aspects of depression

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We are faced with loss every day. No matter how wonderful and full our life can be at times, life is a process of having to let go of things that we don't want to, over and over again. It is normal and healthy to feel sad with loss. However, physical and emotional problems can occur when a person holds in the sadness and doesn't allow themselves to express it.

Traditional Chinese Medicine looks at emotions as part of the physical body, completely interwoven and inseparable. Each major organ of the body relates to specific emotions. The lungs, for example, relate to the sadness of loss. If a person experiences loss, the Lung energy will be affected and helping the energy to move better through the lungs can help the person grieve easier.

Grief from a major loss can take a long time to process out of the body, from months to years. Very often, people around you will discourage you from continuing to grieve past a point that *they* feel is ok. Everyone grieves differently and if you still feel like crying, it is important to allow yourself to cry, no matter how long this goes on or how inconvenient it is for others. If someone is able to cry, this means that they are still processing and releasing the sadness. Sadness is not the same thing as depression.

Holding in the tears will lock them inside and cause normal, healthy grieving to be turned into depression. If somebody feels sad and they are unable to cry, this is a sign that the sadness has become stuck inside and turned into depression.

If you find that you feel overwhelmed by a loss in your life or that you are unable to cry about it and release it, it is very important that you do something about it. Of course, talking to someone about it is a very good idea, but not the only way to help yourself. Even watching sad movies that make you cry can be helpful in bringing the stuck sadness to the surface and allowing you to grieve in a healthy way. The Lung Sound Qi Gong exercise below is from the 7th century, BC and is a powerful tool to help with grief. By doing this exercise, you will be able to move the sadness out of your body in a gentle and healthy way that honors your loss and the healing process.

Lung Sound Exercise

Sit on the edge of a chair or your bed. Place your palms facing up on your lap, elbows out slightly and away from your body. There should be a small amount of space under your armpits, like you are holding a ping pong ball there. Keep your back straight and relaxed and your chin in slightly. You can have your eyes closed or opened slightly.



“Sssss”

Lung Sound

You begin the form by raising your hands up in front of you, palms facing up. As your hands rise up, slowly turn them toward your chest then down. When the hands get to a level above your head, turn the palms up to face the ceiling. The tips of the fingers of each hand should be lined up and facing each other. The elbows and shoulders should be rounded and relaxed. Feel the lungs expand in your chest.

Take a relaxed breath in and as you exhale, make the following sound. “Ssssss” like a snake hissing or steam coming out of a radiator. Look up slightly as you do this. Only one breath out as you make the sound. While you are making the sound, picture the negative emotions of sadness, grief or depression leaving your lungs. Picture them in any way you like, some people see this as a color or fog coming out of their lungs. When you have finished the breath and the sound, inhale and relax. Turn your hands palm down and slowly lower them down in front of your body to your lap. Place your hands back on your lap, palms facing up. Now, feel the positive emotion of courage growing in your lungs as they fill with the color white. The sadness that gets trapped inside the Lungs causes the body to contract energetically and the feeling of courage helps the body to expand back out. Relax as long as you want. Repeat as many times in a row as feels good and do this exercise two to three times per day.

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