

Overview of Bone Breathing [read warnings on last page first]

Bones are extremely porous, and they are always “breathing.” (Fig. 2.3) The pores allow the passage of oxygen, blood, and nutrition through the bones in the same way a sponge absorbs and releases water. Bone Breathing draws external Chi in through the skin, muscles, and tendons to be combined with sexual energy and compressed into the marrow of the bones through the Bone Compression practice. This process uses the combined energies to create the heat necessary to bum the fat out of the marrow.



Fig. 2.3 Bones are extremely porous and are always “breathing”.

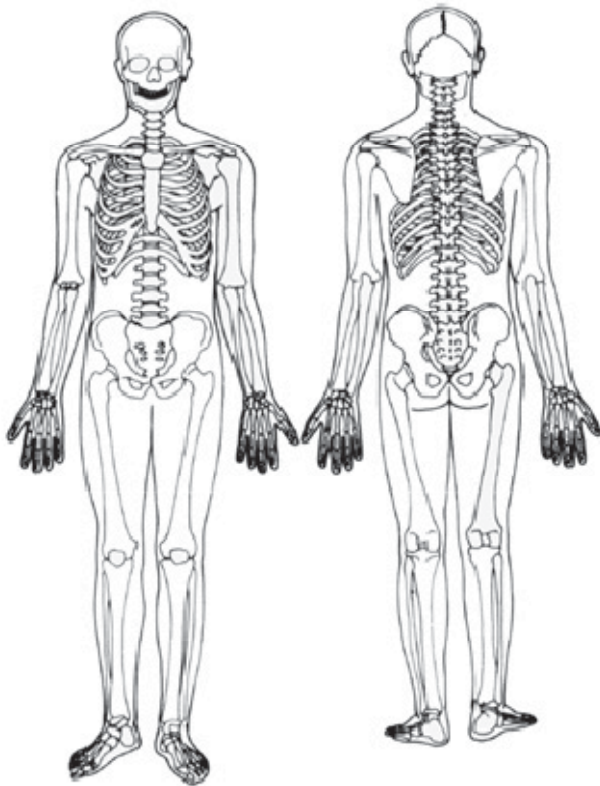


Fig. 2.5 Skeletal Structure

1. Bone Breathing

Look closely at the skeletal structure illustrated in Fig. 2.5. Prepare to draw in external Chi through the tips of your fingers and toes as you breathe in and out through them. (Fig. 2.6)
Energy can be drawn



Fig. 2.6 Bone Breathing

Using the mind breathe in external energy through the fingertips and toes.

in through the hands and feet by fostering a sense of coolness in them. This imagined cold will actually attract warm external energies. When you inhale through the fingers, the feeling is usually cool. When you exhale, the feeling is warm. Once you have established the feeling of the energy in your fingers, use your mind to guide the Chi upward into the limbs and the body as you inhale. Each time you exhale and release the Chi, you can draw it back further into each limb with more force like a battering ram. This opens the channels of the arms and legs so that more energy can be drawn into the body. By the time the energy passes beyond your elbows and knees, however, you may not feel that you can expel the energy as your limbs may seem longer than your breath cycles. A physical feeling will indicate that the energy is being retained.

Note: These techniques should initially be practiced from a seated position until you are able to draw the energy while standing in the “Embracing the Tree” posture. If possible, try to keep your feet bare since shoes and socks impede the drawing of energy through the lower limbs.

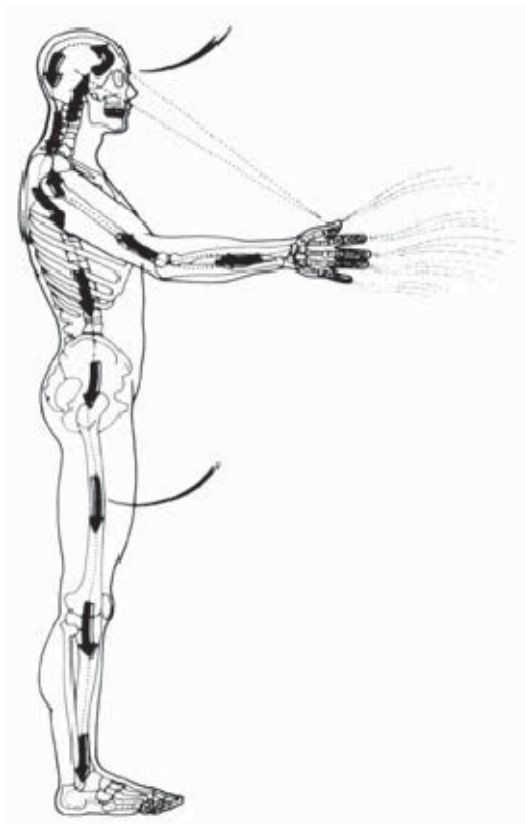


Fig. 2.7 Stage One: *Respiration through the Fingers*

(1) Using the mind and eyes, breathe in through the fingertips.

(2) Direct the energy to the head, then bring it down to the middle back. With practice, you will direct it all the way down the legs to the feet.

In the beginning stages of Bone Breathing, the mind and the eyes are used to draw and absorb the external energy.

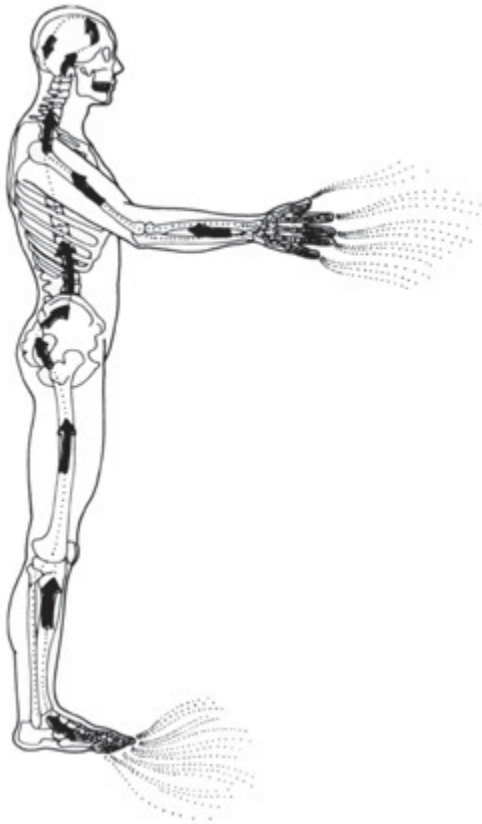


Fig. 2.8 Stage Two and Three: *Respiration through the Toes and simultaneous practices.*

(2) In the third stage, simultaneously breathe in through the fingers and toes.

(1) In the second stage of Bone Breathing, inhale through the toes up into the thigh bones, sacrum, and up the spine.

a. **Respiration through the Fingers:** In the first stage of Bone Breathing, use lower abdominal breathing to draw energy in through the fingertips. Then gradually move the Chi up through the hands, arms, shoulders and scapulae, up to the skull, and then back down the spinal column to the middle back. (Fig. 2.7) Mentally create a cool feeling in the hands to attract the warm external Chi. Briefly hold each breath before releasing the Chi as you exhale. Draw the energy in further with each new breath as you continue to open the pathways for its travel.

b. **Respiration through the Toes:** When your feet feel cool, inhale through the toes, and then by degrees into the thigh bones, hips, and sacrum. Most people feel the breathing sensation very powerfully in their legs. Each time you inhale, hold your breath--but not so long that you experience discomfort. Then, exhale down and out through the legs and toes. You may feel the energy surge from the sacrum up the back and circulate throughout the nervous system as you breathe up the spine. (Fig. 2.8)

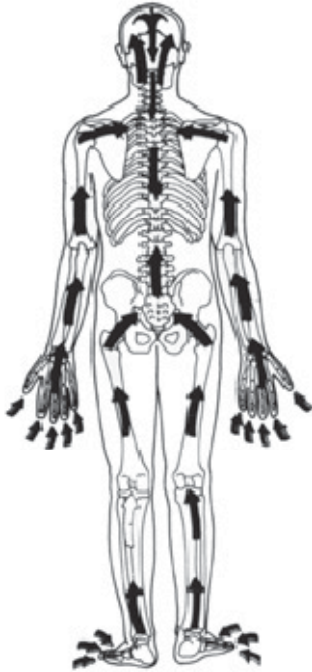


Fig. 2.9 *In the Third Stage of Bone Breathing: Energy is breathed in through the fingertips and toes, gradually moving up and connecting at the spine.*

c. Simultaneous practice: Eventually, practice both of the previous stages together. With experience, there will be no need to work the arms and the legs separately. Breathe up through the toes, the legs, and up the spine in one direction as you simultaneously breathe in through the fingers, into the arms, the shoulders and scapulae, up to the head, and return down the spine from the opposite direction. (Fig. 2.9)

d. The energy connects the upper and lower halves of the body near the middle of the spine. The combined energies then travel back up the spine to your skull. The Chi spirals through the facial bones and returns down the spine to the point at which the two sources connect.

e. After the Chi from both sources has returned to the upper spine, the energy will spread out through the rib cage and recombine at the sternum. The Chi travels from the back of the rib cage to the front. The sternum is filled with the spiraling Chi from all twelve ribs simultaneously.

Bone Breathing Process

Step By Step

Note: The following is a detailed analysis intended for reference.

1. Preparations

You should be certain that the Microcosmic Orbit is clear of any blockages before starting. Regulate your breathing, then circulate your energy through the Microcosmic Orbit for several cycles. (You may wish to do this from the Iron Shirt posture so that your body will feel like an integrated unit.) Look at the illustration of the human skeleton. (Fig. 2.12) Notice

the size, shape, and placement of the bones. Then, one arm at a time, trace your way up from the fingertips, through the bones of the hand and wrist, the radius and ulna of the forearm, the humerus of the upper arm, the collar bone (clavicle) in front, and the shoulder blade in back. Trace the legs in the same manner. This illustration should help as a guide for the energy flow in your practice.

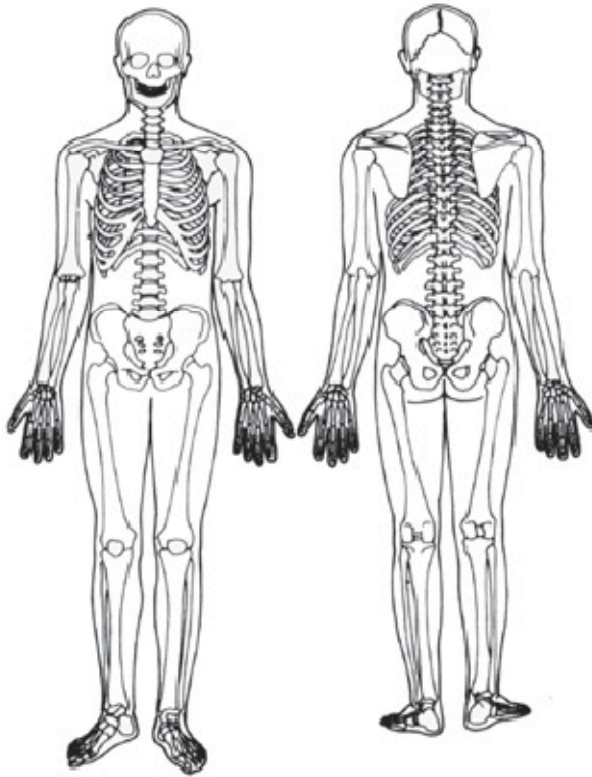


Fig. 2.12 *Observe the skeletal structure.*

Initiate Bone Breathing with the fingers of one hand until you feel energy, moving in and out of that hand. Continue breathing up into each section of the arm. Begin your practice with the fingers of the right hand if you are right handed, or with the left hand if you are left handed. Practice using the fingers of the opposite hand, and then both hands together, moving up both arms, and so on. Similarly, practice on the right (or left) toes, and then the toes of the opposite foot, and then continue up the legs.



Fig. 2.13 Sink the elbows, face the palms down, and relax the fingers. Gently pull up the sexual organ and the anus.

Some people find it useful to extend the hand they intend to breathe into, palm down, pointing outward horizontally, at chest level. (Fig. 2.13) This aids in concentrating on the fingers of that hand. Between each step, rest for as long as you feel the need to do so. Place your hands on your legs, palms up, and close your eyes during each testing period.

2. Initiating Bone Breathing: Breathing through the Fingers

With your hand raised gently pull up the sexual organs and anus with each breath. Draw the energy in as you inhale; push the energy out as you exhale. As you inhale, sink the elbow down, and draw the energy in. Then exhale, extend your hand out slightly from the rising elbow and release the energy. As you watch with your mind's eye, see the fingers beginning to breathe. Breathe through your nose in long, deep, but gentle cycles.

a. Start with the Index Finger

The bones in the tips of the fingers are pointed and can draw in energy. Begin the Bone Breathing process from the index finger, which offers the most sensation of the energy entering and leaving. (Fig. 2.14) Bend and sink the elbow while holding the, lower arm up. Relax the wrist, hands, and fingers.

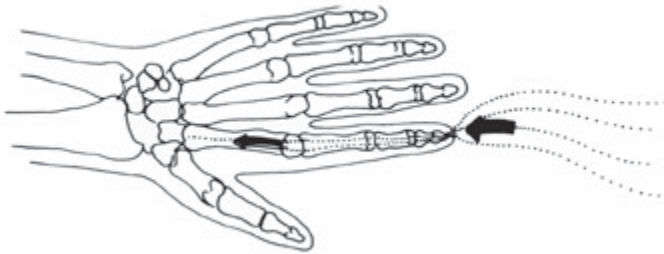


Fig. 2.14 Begin Bone Breathing through the index finger.

Note: If it helps you to become more aware of your index finger, press its tip with a fingernail from the other hand until you feel a sharp pain indicating the bone.

b. Draw warm energy into the cool fingertip.

Sense a cold feeling in the tip of your index finger. Sink your elbow, and slowly pull in the entire hand--finger extended--with a long, gentle breath. Be aware of the energy as it enters into the tip of that finger only.

c. Release the energy with the breath.

Exhale, permitting the elbow to rise slightly as you slowly extend the hand. Feel the sensation of the energy leaving the extended finger.

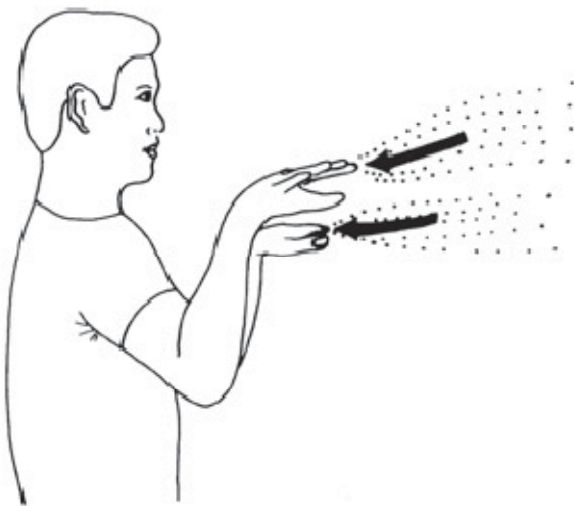


Fig. 2.15 Draw the energy simultaneously into all the fingers of both hands.

d. Breathe into the Fingers individually.

Next, breathe into the second, third, and fourth fingers, and finally the thumb. These need not be done individually every time you practice. This is intended only to help you to isolate the feeling of energy by concentrating on one small area at a time. Eventually all fingers will be used to draw energy simultaneously into both hands. (Fig. 2.15) The finger bones do not have much fat; hence, there is little resistance to the energy. Once you bring the energy past the finger bones into the ulna and radius bones of the arm, you will encounter more fat; therefore,

breathing into them may require more practice. Now compare the fingers of the hand that have experienced Bone Breathing with the fingers of the hand that you have not yet worked on. You should notice a difference.

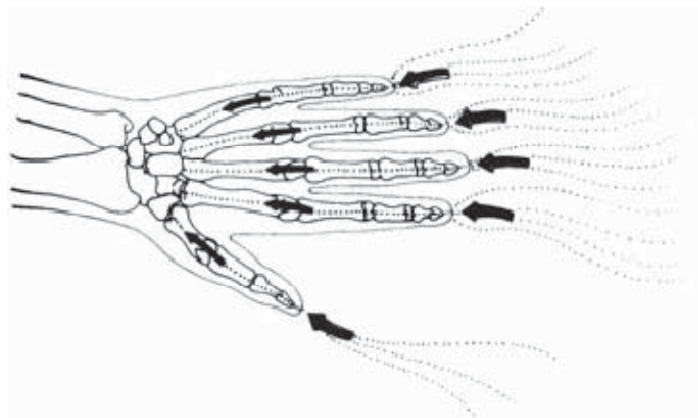


Fig. 2.16 Breathe into the entire hand at once, and visualize all the bones.

3. Breathing into the Entire Hand

At this point you should be able to inhale through all of your fingertips, filling the knuckles with Chi. Pull up slightly on the sexual organs as you draw energy in through your fingers. Then inhale, and hold for a while, feeling the energy as an increasing fullness, or swelling, in all fingers. Exhale, and rest. Now breathe into your entire hand, visualizing all the bones you observed in the illustration of the skeleton. (Fig. 2.16) Then exhale, releasing the energy. From this point on you will always breathe into the whole hand when you begin the exercise.

Note: Use the Bone Breathing illustrations as reference guides. Although your objective is to learn how to feel the shape and size of each bone, the beginning stages often require more visualization.

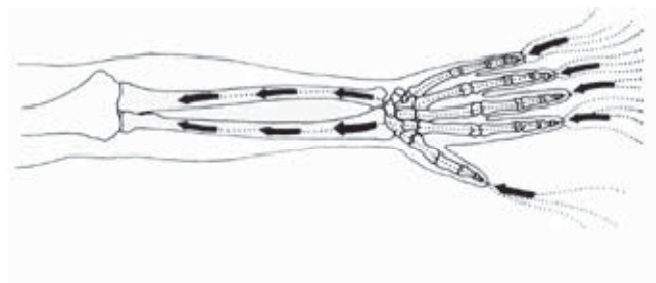


Fig. 2.17 Breathe into the ulna and radius bones of the forearm.

4. Forearm and the Ulna and Radius Bones

This time send the Chi up through your hand to the wrist, and into the many small bones there. Inhale as you pull the energy up from the fingertips through the hand all the way to the ulna and radius bones of the forearm. (Fig. 2.17) Hold each breath and feel the ulna and radius start to expand. Allow your eyes to close. Exhale, releasing the energy. Continue to breathe in and out of these bones several times in the same way. Exhale, and rest. Now practice breathing into the fingertips of the opposite hand, then the hand itself, and finally, into the forearm.

5. Breathing into the Upper Arm and the Humerus Bone

By now you have a good idea of the Bone Breathing process, and you should be able to expand it to the upper arm. Now you can breathe into the humerus bones of both arms simultaneously. Inhale, relax the fingers, draw energy into the bones, sink the shoulders and the humeri. Breathe through the fingers, hands and forearms into the humeri. (Fig. 2.18) Exhale and continue breathing into and out of the bones. Drop the elbows and shoulders and breathe in through the arms to the humeri again. Exhale, regulate the breath, and rest.

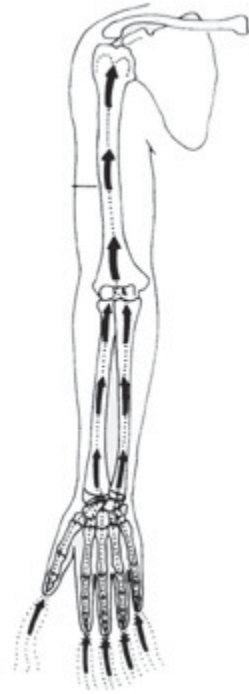


Fig. 2.18 Breathe into humerus bone of the upper arm.

6. Scapulae, C-7 Point of the Neck and the Head

Begin the exercise again. With eyes closed, breathe energy into the bones through the hands, arms, and humeri. Be certain to maintain dropped elbows and shoulders. Exhale, and then inhale again to draw energy up to both scapulae (shoulder blades) and to the C-7 point on the neck. Hold the energy there, continue breathing in and out, and then rest. Again draw the energy through the fingertips, hands, arms, humeri, scapulae, C-7, and continue to bring it all the way up into the head. Hold it there at the base of the skull. (Fig. 2.19) Exhale, regulate your breathing, and rest.

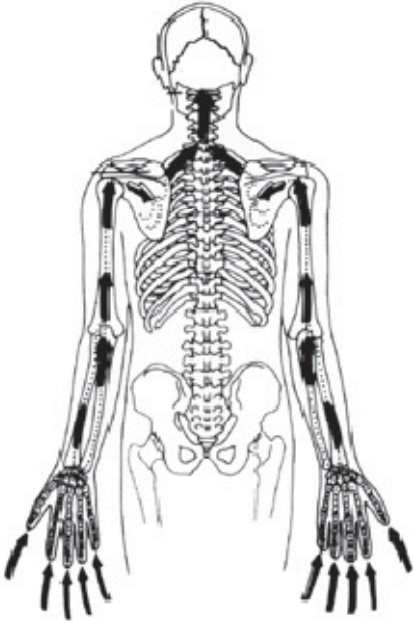


Fig. 2.19 Breathe into the scapulae and the base of the skull.

Note: If for some reason you should stop at this point, do not leave the energy in the head. Press the tongue up to the roof of the mouth, and bring the energy down to the navel. When you are ready to combine the procedures for the arms and legs, you will not draw the Chi directly to the skull from the arms. You will first combine the energy from the two sources at the center of the spine, and then move it upwards into the skull.

7. Breathing into the Toes

Breathe into the toes one at a time. Start with the big toe of either foot, then move to the second, third, fourth and fifth toes. Finally inhale as you draw energy into all five toes simultaneously, then exhale, allowing it to be released. (Fig. 2.20) Breathe in this manner for a minute or two, then inhale strongly, drawing the energy in more forcefully--like a battering ram--to open the channels of the foot.



Fig. 2.20 Inhale, and draw the energy through all the toes.

Note: Do not pull your feet up with the breath. Let them remain flat on the floor. Remember that keeping your feet bare is the best way to absorb energy into your legs. Wearing synthetic materials on your feet will impede this process.

8. Breathing into the Feet

Inhale, and draw energy through all of the toes into the entire foot. (Fig. 2.21) Exhale, and release the energy. Continue breathing energy in and out. Then begin breathing through the toes of the opposite foot, in the same manner described above, until you can breathe into that entire foot.

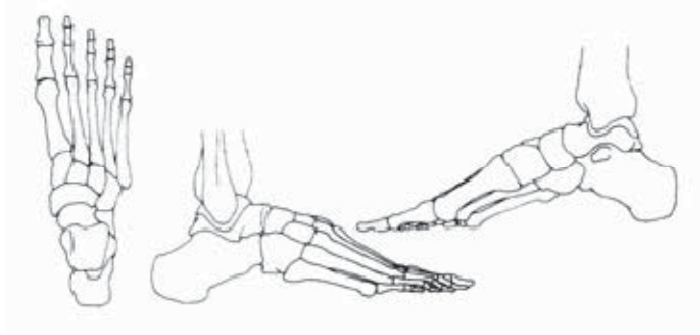


Fig. 2.21 Bones of the feet and ankles.

Concentrating on both feet, inhale, and bring the energy up into both feet simultaneously. Feel breath enter through all of the bones, hold it for a while, and then let the energy flow out. Inhale the energy again, close your eyes, and feel all of the bones of both feet, up to and including the small ankle bones, as they become more alive with each breath. Return to regulated breathing, ending with an exhalation, and then rest.

9. Tibia and Fibula Bones of the Lower Legs

With your eyes closed, draw energy into the tibia and fibula bones of both lower legs. (Fig. 2.22) Hold it for a while, then release your breath and the energy. Inhale, and pull the energy up through the lower legs with more force. Exhale, and release it. Continue to breathe in and out of these bones, drawing in more energy with each breath while preparing to travel further into the upper legs.

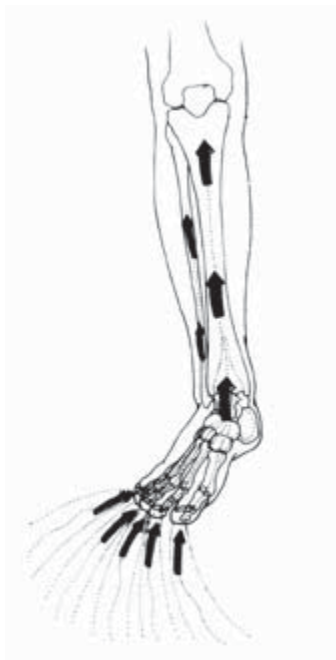


Fig. 2.22 Bones of the feet and ankles.

10. Thigh Bones, Hips, and Sacrum

Inhale from the tips of the toes all the way through the feet, ankles, tibia, and fibula bones of both legs, and draw energy up to each leg's femur or thigh bone. Hold your breath and the energy there, and then exhale. If you cannot feel the connection between the thigh bones and the hips, look at the illustration to avoid any confusion. Also note how the hip bones connect to the sacrum. Breathe up the entire length of both legs into the hip bones and into the sacrum. (Fig. 2.23) Exhale, and rest.

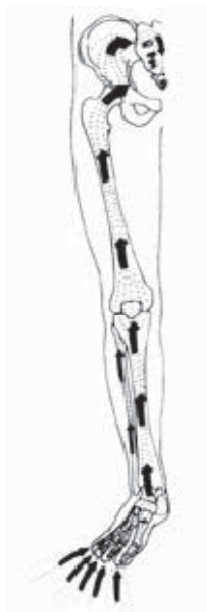


Fig. 2.23 Inhale, and draw the energy all the way into the sacrum.

11. Breathing into the Hands and Feet Together

In the next step of Bone Breathing, breathe into both hands and feet simultaneously. Inhale all the way up to the shoulders and scapulae through the arms, and up to the thigh and hip bones through the legs. Hold your breath, then exhale. With practice you will learn to divide your concentration between the absorption points of the feet and hands. Combine the energy at the middle of the spine. (Fig. 2.24)

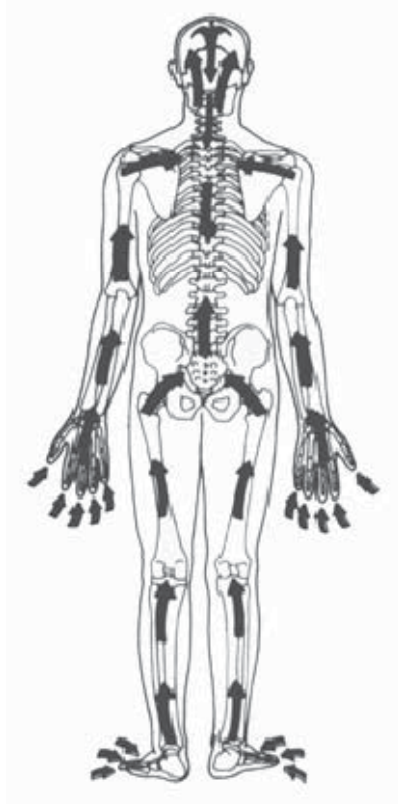


Fig. 2.24 Breathe in through the hands and feet simultaneously, and combine the energy at the middle of the spine.

12. Breathing into the Sacrum and Spine

You may wish to stand during this step of the exercise. This will help energy travel up the spine. The “Embracing the Tree” posture of Iron Shirt I is useful here. The next point to breathe into from the legs is the plate-like structure at the base of the spine referred to as the sacrum. Feel the sacrum with your fingertips. As you breathe in again up through the legs and hip bones, draw the energy from the legs together at the sacrum point. When energy reaches this point it may take off on its own, travelling the length of the spine. If the energy does not travel up the spine spontaneously, continue to breathe up the back until the spine receives energy from the sacrum. Then include the breathed-in Chi from the length of the arms. The two energies of the arms and legs should meet beneath the shoulder blades on the spine at T- 11. Combine the two energies, sending them to the shoulders, to C-7, and into the head. (Fig. 2.25)

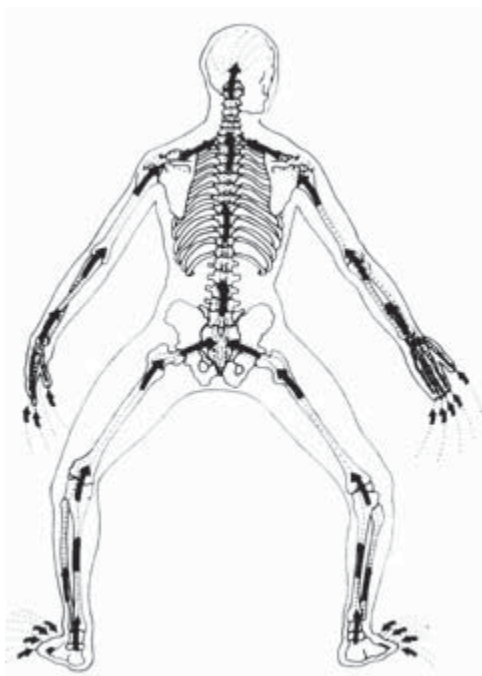
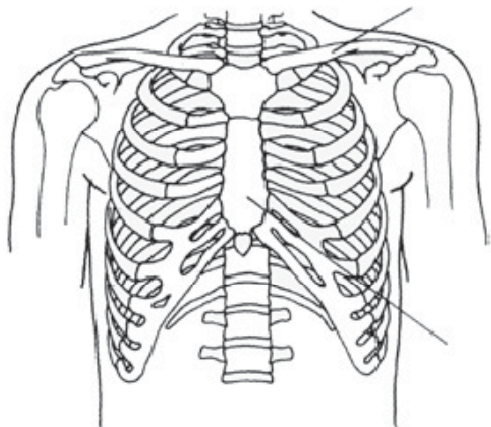


Fig. 2.25 Breathing into the sacrum and spine.



*(b) Breathing into the Collarbone, Sternum, and Ribs
Fig. 2.26 Bone Breathing in the Chest*

13. Breathing into the Collarbone, Sternum and Ribs

Locate the collarbone at the front of the body and the sternum, or breastbone, at the middle of the chest where the ribs are attached. (Fig. 2-26(a)) Feel the way the ribs arch away from the sternum in the front and connect to the spine in the back. These are difficult structures to breathe Chi into requiring your utmost concentration. The combined Chi from the legs and the arms is first breathed into the cranial area before it is sent back down the spinal cord to the point at which the ribs extend. Spiral Chi throughout the head and facial bones. From there, bring it into the spine and collarbone, spreading energy throughout the ribs, finally reaching the sternum. (Fig. 2.26(b))

1. Bone Breathing in Practice

- a. Create a sensation of coolness in the fingers of either hand. Inhale, and draw warm external energies into that hand through the fingers. Apply this to the opposite hand. Exhale, and release the energy.
- b. Pull up your genitals slightly as you breathe Chi further up into the ulna and radius bones of the lower arm. Practice first on each arm, then on both together. Exhale, and release.
- c. Apply the same procedure to the upper arms, drawing Chi to the humerus bones. Exhale, and release the energy. Remember to draw energy in with more force with each new inhalation, thereby accessing further points within each limb.
- d. Draw Chi up through the scapulae and collarbone to reach the C-7 point and the cranium but do not leave it there. Either combine it with the energy drawn from the legs or store it in the navel.
- e. Create a sensation of coolness in the toes of either foot. Inhale and draw the warm external energies into that foot through the toes. Apply this to the opposite foot. Exhale, and release the energy.
- f. Pull up the genitals slightly as you breathe Chi further up into the tibia and fibula bones of the lower legs. If necessary, practice on each leg individually, and then draw Chi into both legs together. Exhale, and release.
- g. Draw the Chi further up with each breath into the femur bones of the upper legs, into the hips, and then to the sacrum. Exhale, but retain the energy you have breathed into these areas.
- h. If you choose to combine the procedures for the arms and legs, do not draw the energy to the skull from the arms directly, but instead recombine it at the center of the spine. First breathe into both hands and feet simultaneously. Inhale Chi all the way up to the shoulders and scapulae through the arms, and up to the thigh and hip bones through the legs. Recombine this energy at the middle of the spine after it has reached the sacrum and the scapulae from their respective sources. From the center of the spine, move the energy up to the head, and then back down the spine to where the ribs begin. Exhale as needed.
- i. Breathe the energy outward through the twelve ribs, encompassing the rib cage from the front to the back, and recombine the Chi at the sternum. Breathe into the sternum. Exhale.

General Features of Training

1. The Inner Smile is the most important aspect of early Taoist training because it draws positive energy to the internal organs and glands. It is taught as part of the Microcosmic Orbit meditation, but it is also distinct in that the Inner Smile makes new energy accessible through the mid eyebrow and the eyes. The Microcosmic Orbit is actually the pathway through which the associated meditation circulates internally stored energy while distributing new energy absorbed from the Inner Smile.
2. The Microcosmic Orbit Meditation should be used as part of the Bone Marrow Nei Kung regimen as well as being practiced regularly by itself. In this meditation energy is circulated

through twelve stations located along two major pathways of the body. The first extends from the palate to the perineum, and the second extends from the perineum to the crown, returning to the palate through the mid eyebrow. With the Inner Smile, this meditation should be practiced in the morning before your day begins and, along with the Six Healing Sounds, in the evening to decelerate the body.

3. The Six Healing Sounds should complete the training in order to release trapped tension and excess heat from the body. These sounds are practiced from a seated posture after the Microcosmic Orbit meditation. They serve to decelerate the body since its metabolic rate will be extremely high by the end of a Bone Marrow Nei Kung training session.

Note: The Microcosmic Orbit meditation still takes precedence over all other facets of this regimen. If you have little time for meditation, spend less time on each discipline; otherwise, do not practice until you can make the time for both the practice and the meditation.

Sample Training Schedule

This summary is intended to help you assimilate what you have learned into your practice.

1. Inner Smile

- a. Sit on the edge of a chair with your hands held together and eyes closed.
- b. Re-create a happy emotional state, and express it with your best smile. Also smile by lifting the outer corners of your eyelids to enhance the process.
- c. Picture a radiant smile of energy on the face of a glowing sun directly in front of you.
- d. Sense a coolness in your eyes to attract and absorb the warm energy.
- e. Mentally enhance the radiance and any color, or perceptions of warmth, until your eyes are filled with it.
- f. Let the smiling energy spread down to the organs as you smile to your heart, lungs, liver, spleen, and kidneys. It is your smile that will give the energy its positive charge.
- g. Draw in more energy through the mid eyebrow and the eyes to stimulate the entire system. The process can take up to fifteen minutes before you are ready to circulate the energy in the Microcosmic Orbit.

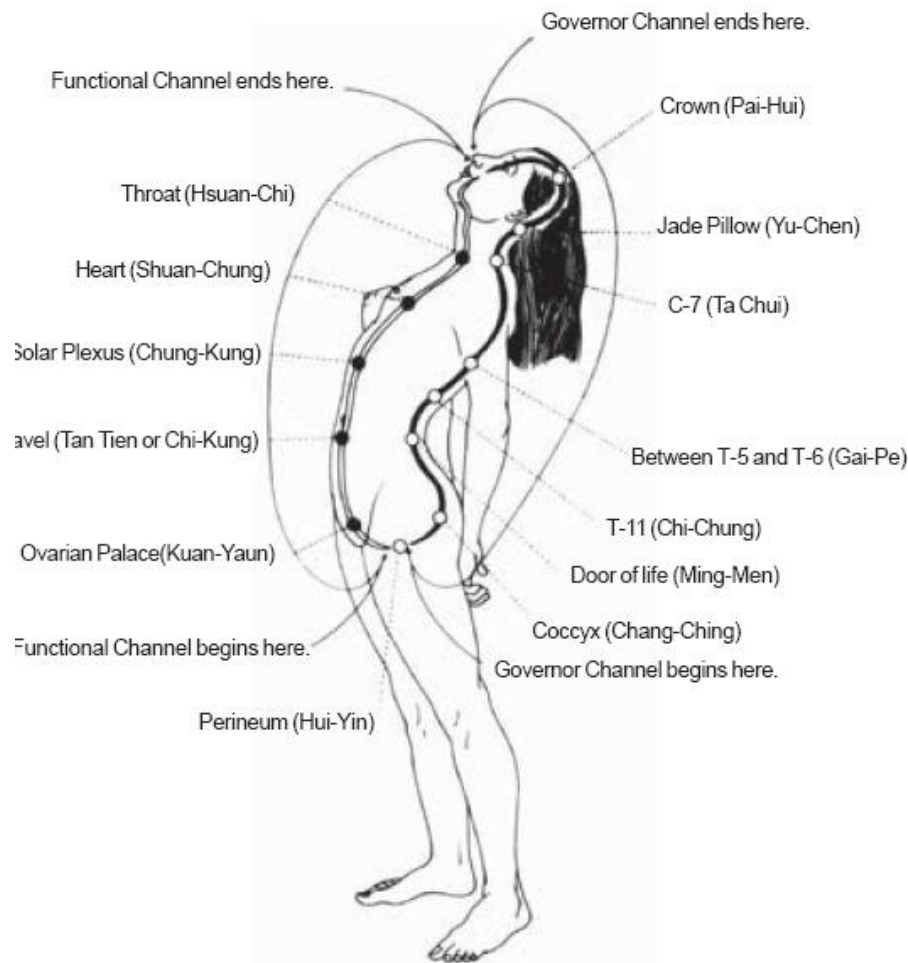
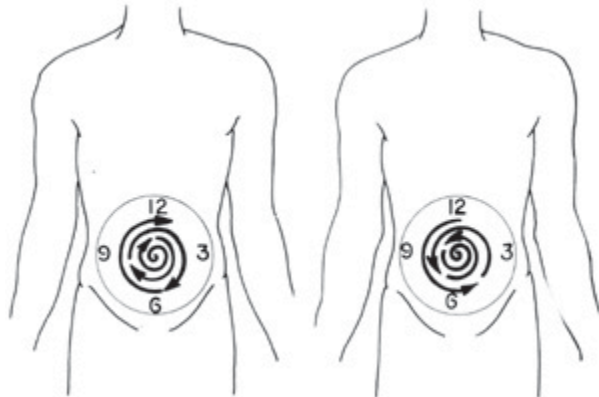


Fig. 6.1 Functional and Governor Channels of the Microcosmic Orbit

2. Microcosmic Orbit

- a. After smiling down, collect the energy at the navel.
- b. Let the energy flow down to the sexual center.
- c. Move the energy from the sexual center to the perineum.
- d. Draw the energy up from the perineum to the sacrum.
- e. Draw the energy up to the Ming Men, opposite the navel.
- f. Draw the energy up to the T-11 vertebrae.
- g. Draw the energy up to the base of the skull.
- h. Draw the energy up to the crown and circulate it.
- i. Move the energy crown from the crown to the mid eyebrow.
- j. Pass the energy down through the tongue to the throat center.
- k. Bring the energy down from the throat to the heart center.
- l. Bring the energy down to the solar plexus.
- m. Bring the energy back to the navel.
- n. Circulate the energy through this entire sequence at least nine or ten times.
- o. Collect the energy at the navel.

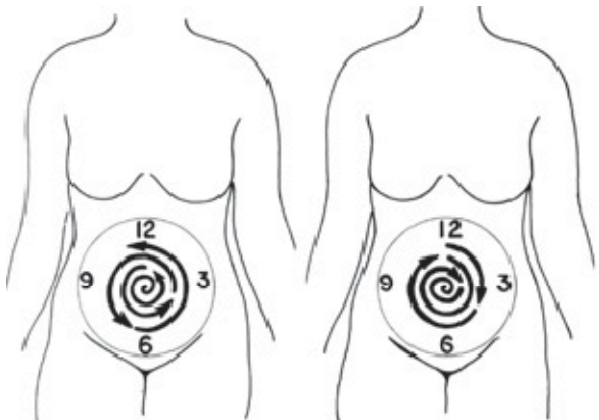
Men: Cover your navel with both palms, left hand over right. Collect and mentally spiral the energy outward at the navel 36 times clockwise, and then inward 24 times counterclockwise. (Fig. 6.2)



1. Collect the energy by spiraling outwardly from the navel 36 times clockwise.
2. Then spiral inwardly 24 times clockwise, finishing at the navel.

Fig. 6.2 Men's collection of the Energy

Women: Cover your navel with both palms, right hand over left. Collect and mentally spiral the energy outward from the navel 36 times counterclockwise, and then inward 24 times clockwise. (Fig.6.3)



1. Collect the energy by spiraling outwardly from the navel 36 times counterclockwise.
2. Then spiral inwardly 24 times clockwise, finishing at the navel.

Fig. 6.3 Women's collection of the Energy

Embracing the Tree Posture

Use this posture for practicing Bone Breathing and Bone Compression, Iron Shirt I techniques, weight lifting, and so on.

- a. Stand with the feet parallel at a foot-to-knee distance from each other.
- b. Dig firmly into the ground by slightly turning out the balls of the feet.
- c. Rotate your pelvis back until the thigh tendons can relax.
- d. Feel that the sacrum is pulling the spine down.
- e. Relax the chest and ribs.

- f. Keep the back as straight as possible. The neck is gently, but firmly pushed back at the C-7 point.
- g. Pull back the lower jaw towards the Jade Pillow of the skull.
- h. Hold the hands vertically at shoulder level with the fingers spread and the elbows dropped beneath them. Point the fingers towards those of the opposite hand.
- i. Position the arms as if they were encircling a tree. Hold the thumbs outward slightly, with the pinkies directed inward, and relax the other fingers.
- j. Drop the shoulders, round the scapulae, and sink the chest.
- k. Relax the neck, and feel the Chi connecting the hip joints with the knee and ankle joint, and feel their energy connecting with the ground.

Bone Breathing and Bone Compression

- a. From either a seated position or the posture outlined above, draw in external energy through the fingers as you inhale; release it as you exhale.
- b. Inhale and exhale through the lower and upper arms successively. Begin to spiral the energy as you draw it in.
- c. Breathe into the toes in the same manner.
- d. Continue to breathe into the legs, the pelvis, and spiral the energy.
- e. Combine the draw of external energy from both sources and allow them to meet at the spine.
- f. Draw the combined energy, up to the head, and spiral it.
- g. Breathe the energy into the ribs and sternum from the spine, and continue to spiral it.
- h. Inhale, spiral, pack, and squeeze into all sections simultaneously; hold your breath as you compress the energy into your bones; then exhale.

Six Healing Sounds

Do the Lung Sound and the Heart Sound

- 1. The other four sounds and related postures are optional, but they are useful in helping the body to decelerate at the end of this regimen. You may wish to begin any of the higher level meditations, or else practice the Inner Smile and Microcosmic Orbit again.

Time for Practice

The best time to practice as previously, mentioned, is in the morning after you have eliminated body wastes and bathed but you can also practice in the afternoon. You are advised not to practice in the evening because you are creating a great deal of energy and you may have difficulty sleeping. Try to maintain a specific schedule until you are proficient.

Important Warning

The practices described have been done successfully for thousands of years by Taoists under individual instruction. Readers who undertake Bone Marrow Nei Kung without personal training must realize that certain of these practices, if improperly done, may cause injury or result in health problems. The use of common sense is necessary, and you must strictly follow the instructions and heed the notices and warnings that accompany each exercise and practice.

If you have not had previous experience with moving energy in the body through meditation, you must realize that this process is real and necessary for your safety. Adverse health effects can be caused by leaving excess energy in the organs or head; therefore, it is particularly important

to move this energy through the Microcosmic Orbit and to store it in the Tan Tien as prescribed in the instructions. We urge every reader to study the exercises carefully before beginning any practice. Do exercises which must be done together and in proper sequence, and strictly follow the instructions, notes, and warnings.

If the reader undertakes any exercise without strictly following the instructions, notes and warnings, the responsibility must lie solely with the reader. People who have high blood pressure, heart disease, or a generally weak condition, should proceed slowly in the practice. If there is a medical condition, a medical doctor should be consulted.

