

The Eight Healing Sounds of Yin-Style Bagua

By David Parker, CMT

The Eight Healing Sounds are one of the sets of Dao Yin health building exercises of Yin Style Bagua (YSB), a large system of martial, medical and qi cultivation arts originally developed by Dong Haichuan in the mid 1800's. These "healing without medicines" exercises are based on the principles of the Yi Jing, or book of changes, and allowed people without medical knowledge or access to doctors to strengthen and heal themselves.

Sound is all around us, and affects us in different ways. The ancient Chinese understood this and endeavored to distinguish between sounds that were beneficial and disruptive to people's well being. Everyone has experienced feeling uplifted or calmed by the sound of moving water, birdsong or pleasant music. On the other hand, who hasn't been irritated by mechanical noise—a screeching subway, or a jackhammer?



The 8HS are all in the beneficial category, and their theory rests on two main points. The first is that sound/vibration actually enters into the organs, and second, that sound helps to move qi. So, while the sounds physically vibrate the organs and cavities (cranial/nasal, abdominal, etc.), they also open and flow qi in the associated meridians and vessels, strengthening and regulating them. A practical application of this is singing or chanting while performing hard labor. This not only passes the time more pleasantly, but the coordination of certain exclamations with strenuous movements reduces the risk of injury. The sounds make our system more integrated and powerful. Approached and refined from a medical perspective, specific sounds can be added to Qigong to amplify and direct the movement and action of qi.

The 8HS include forms for the five yin organs, the stomach, and to connect heaven

and earth's qi. They are practiced standing, walking, sitting, or lying down depending on your condition and needs. Each repetition contains one complete breath cycle. Inhaling is entering, bringing qi into the organs and dantian, and sealing the apertures—closing in and guarding qi. Exhaling is exiting and opening the gates, flowing qi throughout the body as you make the sound. Each exercise has its characteristic posture or movement. The qi that is developed and moved is precious and is kept contained in the system by a quiet inward listening mind, and by closing in areas such as the yongquan points and the perineum.

The **Ah** sound, for the lung, is first. Make it quietly with or without a tone. It helps the lung "take in the new and expel the turbid", as well as smoothing qi in its meridian. There is a simple upward and downward, opening and closing, circling motion with the arms that accompanies this sound. It is important to realize that the organs are affected on the physical, energetic, and emotional levels with this work, so the sound can be used to clear phlegm in the lung, tonify its qi, or help process grief.

The **Ha** sound is next, for the heart, it is quiet and untuned. This sound regulates the yin and yang of the heart and clears heat. Its motion brings water energy up through the body to balance the heart's fire and then expels heat out through the mouth with the exhale. It's very useful to combine the Ha with the next sound, Heng (kidneys), to balance these two most important systems. The **Heng** sound is short and sharp. It creates a strong downward movement of qi, to fill the kidneys and lower dantian, building the essences. Inhaling from the beginning posture, the arms fold up, palms covering their opposite collarbones. The body is sealed and you "Heng" forcefully, dropping in your stance and arcing the arms down and outward. There is a slight recoil at the end of the movement, as the qi enters the dantian.

The **Hu** and **Mer** sounds belong to the stomach and spleen respectively. These organs work together to transform food into acquired (post-natal) qi and make it available to the other organs. The Hu sound is toned or silent and involves a stretching open of the middle dantian and then a fold-



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ing down motion to descend qi to the stomach. The spleen dislikes moisture, and the mer sound should be strong, deep, and resonant (it sounds like a cow!) to literally "shake the dampness from the spleen" and ascend and spread its qi.

The liver sound is **Xu** (shhh). It is fine, smooth and soft, lowering and clearing heat. Liver qi tends to rise, become stagnant and disrupt the body's free flowing when it is unbalanced. The hands first carry energy up the front, separate and pass under the armpits and descend along the spine as you sound, spreading across the buttocks and returning to the dantian.

This leaves the **Yi** and **Hong** sounds. Inhaling, raise your arms up over your head, palms back to back while sinking the shoulders and pelvis. This creates both upward and downward qi movement. Holding this posture as you make a clear tone (yeee, a long e sound) you create a vibration that reaches head to toe, opening the spinal passes and entering the brain and kidneys. Lower the hands and pause before repeating. The Hong sound creates a strong shaking and vibration through the whole body, opening and flowing all the meridians and connecting with earth's qi. The sound is a low guttural rumbling, and the movement is a rotating/shaking around the vertical centerline of the torso, extending from the center to the extremities. It is very invigorating, and the hardest sound to make correctly.

I hope this brief introduction to sound in Qigong gets you interested in investigating this fascinating and useful practice further.

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