

## *The Internal Exercises*

### TWELVE NERVE EXERCISES

2,000 years ago during the Han Dynasty, a man from the West went to China and devoted his entire life to the study and practice of Taoism and a form of Buddhism. His name was Dharma and he lived in the White Horse Temple in the capital of the Han Empire.

His book, *The Text of Altering Nerves*, was the result of his lifework. It contained only a few pages of complex verses which obscured vital information for increasing the practitioner's longevity. (In those days, such information was hidden from those who would make light of it.)

In his book Dharma stated that all human problems were caused by problems within the nervous system and that human beings could live

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longer if they “altered” (renewed) their nervous system. In so doing, Dharma furthered mankind’s comprehension of the nervous system.

The nerves are an intricate and elaborate network of “communication cables” connecting our brain to our organs and our organs to our organs. One break in your “cable” will cause your body to suffer. For example, if tension chokes a nerve in your finger, your finger will soon atrophy, and you will be forced to cut it off. Nerve cells need chemicals produced by interaction with other cells to survive, and the functions of other cells are dependent upon the nerves. Sadly, our nerves shrink and harden after we reach twenty years of age. When nerves deteriorate, impulses are conducted at slower rates. When nerve impulses are slow, mental and physical processes are slow. This is aging. Young people below twenty years of age have nerves that are soft and expandable.

To remain youthful, we must exercise our nerves to reverse deterioration and to preserve softness and expansibility. Dharma developed twelve exercises, called Twelve Nerve Exercises, which soften and expand our nervous system. Their movements recall those of T’ai Chi Chuan, although the theoretical basis of the nerve exercises differ from those of T’ai Chi Chuan. Although T’ai Chi Chuan may have stemmed from the nerve exercises (it was developed by Taoist master Chang San-Fung 1700 years later than the nerve exercises), it is used for combat purposes, whereas the Twelve Nerve Exercises are used for removing stress and tension and preserving the nervous system.

The Twelve Nerve Exercises unite the mind and body in order to bring about relaxation. If you have ever tried to relax your entire body with your mind—a concept employed by biofeedback machines—you will find that relaxation of the body is difficult to achieve. Relaxing the body with the mind involves clearing your mind of all thoughts. This in itself is a difficult feat because your mind is always cluttered with thoughts. Dharma, acknowledging the fact that the mind is always active, made the mind follow series of body movements that would lead both mind and body to a state of relaxation, as relaxation is the first step to preservation. If we can preserve our nervous system by renewing a deteriorating nervous system, we can live longer and preserve our youth.

Each exercise leads to the next; therefore, all twelve exercises must be done in their proper order. The exercises, in their original order, are as follows:

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Direct toes inward.

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(Do not face south when doing the exercise.) Place palms on breasts so that the middle three fingers of each hand meet over the thymus gland. Feel the heart beat. Smile and imagine you are humble and polite. (This action relaxes the body by removing the spirit of contention.)

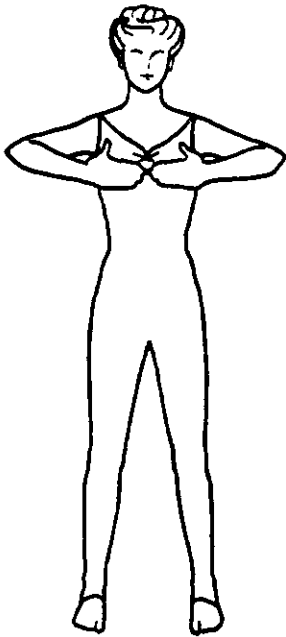


Figure 30. First Pose.

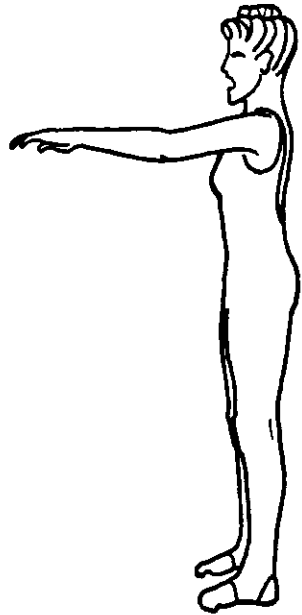


Figure 31. Second Pose

2. While holding the first pose, spread your toes apart and dig them into the ground as if they were claws clutching at something. Open your mouth and look blankly ahead, as if you were a fool. (A fool does not seek knowledge or betterment and is therefore relaxed.) Then move the hands outward with palms down and fingers bent loosely. Hold them there.

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3. Continuing from the previous pose, stand on your toes. Then clench your teeth. Then lace your fingers and lift them, palms up, as high as you can stretch. Then lower yourself until you are standing with your feet flat on the ground.



Figure 32. Third Pose.

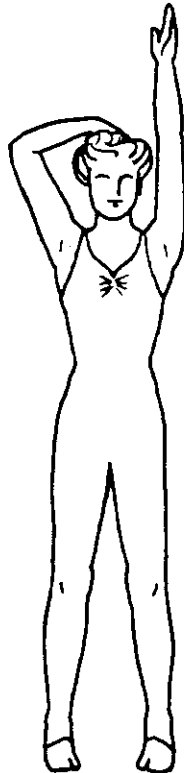


Figure 33. Fourth Pose.

4. While holding the previous pose, put one hand on your head to prevent it from moving (keep the other hand up) while the eyes move forcefully from side to side. Now repeat this exercise using the other hand to prevent the head from moving.

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5. If the hand held straight is the right hand, move the right leg forward; if the hand held straight is the left hand, move the left leg forward. The hand held straight moves down and makes an overhand fist. (All fists should be made with the thumb hidden inside the fingers.) The hand from on top of the head moves to the side and forms an underhand fist (while doing so, bend the elbow). Your eyes should be fixed on the overhand fist. Switch arm positions. Switch arm positions again and again. The movements made should be similar to karate arm movements.

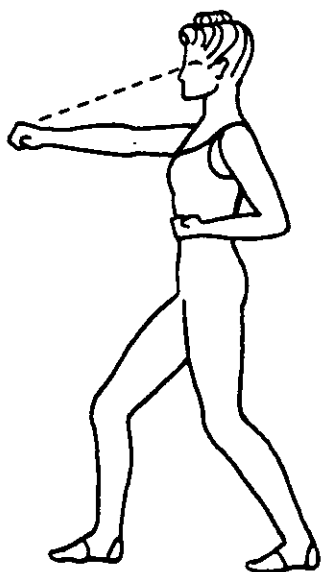


Figure 34. Fifth Pose.

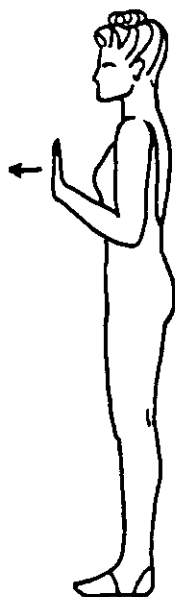


Figure 35. Sixth Pose.

6. Adopt the first pose, but make underhand fists at your side. Bulge out your eyes as if you were angry. Bring the fists up. Now they are in an overhand position. Push, but slowly as if you are pushing somebody. Your right eye should be fixed upon the right fist and the left eye should be fixed upon the left fist. Then quickly and forcefully pull the arms back so that fists are underhand again. Then repeat the exercise seven times. Then relax the entire body, including the eyes.

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7. Put one hand under your chin and one hand over your head and turn your head to the right and left sides. Switch hand positions and turn the head again. Do this three or four times.



Figure 36.  
Seventh Pose.

8. Adopt the first pose. Now stoop down, while pretending that your arms are pushing something down. As you sink, pretend you are pushing yourself down. Stand up and sink again. Do so seven times.

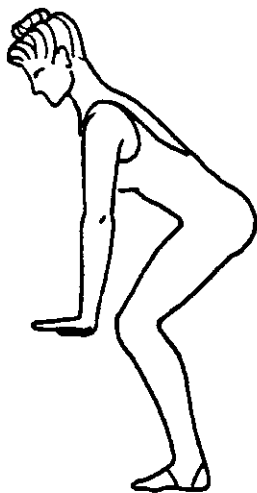


Figure 37.  
Eighth Pose.

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9. Adopt the first pose. Follow the instructions for exercise number five, only this time the fingers are rounded (no fists) and the arms are close together. Move the arms out and in and feel the effects on the arm and back muscles. Then relax. Repeat exercise.

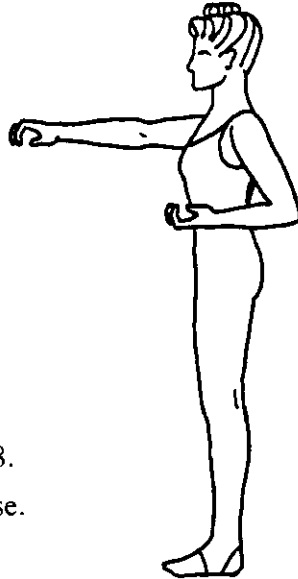


Figure 38.  
Ninth Pose.

10. Begin with the first pose. Then relax and bend over and walk forward on your fingers until you are on your toes. If you cannot do this, walk on your hands. Hold this position until you can no longer hold it. Later, you may try walking on your middle three fingers.

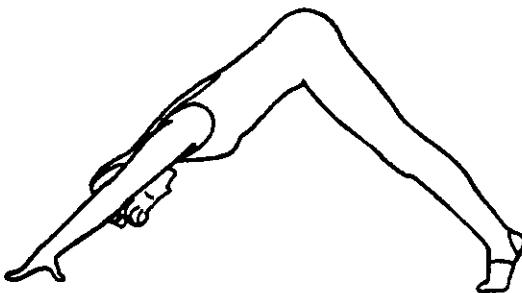


Figure 39. Tenth Pose.

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11. Move to the first pose. Lace your fingers and place them behind your head and bend down. Close your eyes while doing this. Then raise your upper body to return to the original position.

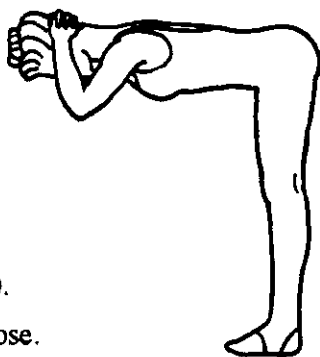


Figure 40.  
Eleventh Pose.

12. Keep holding your hands behind your head and bend the upper body forward, pushing one leg back. Keep one leg forward and bent. Then use your bent leg to push the body into a standing position. Then sink down again, pushing the other leg back. Then return to center position and adopt the first pose. After you have placed your hands in the heart position, you will have finished the exercise series.

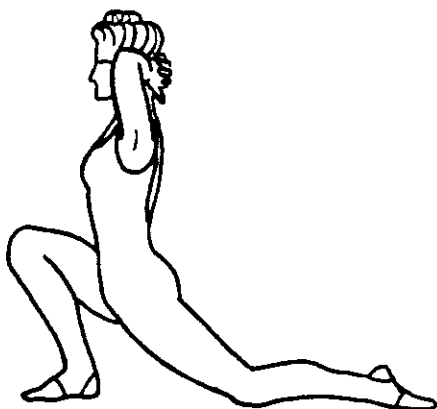


Figure 41.  
Twelfth Pose.