

## THESIS STATEMENT

### *BREATHING EARTH QIGONG*--INSPIRING THE BODY—EMBODYING THE SPIRIT

SINCE MUCH SUFFERING CAN BE ALLEVIATED BY UNITING BODY AND MIND, THIS PROJECT PROVIDES RESOURCES FOR THEIR INTEGRATION THROUGH MOVEMENT, GESTURE, POSTURE, BREATH PRACTICES, AND VISUALIZATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF BUDDHIST CHAPLAINS AND THEIR CLIENTS.

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## INTRODUCTION

This final project of my chaplaincy training at Upaya Zen Center is an offering of gratitude to the program, to Roshi Joan Halifax, Maia Duerr, Roshi Bernie Glassman, Sensei Fleet Maull, and to the many inspiring teachers, staff, and students associated with Upaya. The Dharma to me is a living organism whose evolution and diversification is accelerating as it deepens its exposure to the cultures of the West. As these changes occur in the individualized manifestations of its many practitioners, this offering is meant to enhance the Upaya Chaplaincy Training Program, and in some small way to contribute to the evolution of the Dharma in the West.

This project is presented in a way that makes the contents accessible through text, CD's, and DVD's. It is a creative expression as well as a research paper. Although it is rooted in a deep history of Qigong, meditation, and other contemplative forms, its usefulness relies on the

**chaplains** who use it to alter it as needed for their purposes. It presents possibilities for its continued expression in many situations and through other modalities, and relies on the feedback of future **chaplains** to test its efficacy. I give thanks to the many chaplaincy students who have given me their honest feedback in the course of the program, to the clients with whom I have had the honor to interact, and to the teachers who have guided and sustained me in this work of fundamental joy.

As a Qigong and Tai Chi teacher of sixteen years, I encountered many forms of what is being called “Meditative Movement” (MM) in the current literature. (Jahnke 2006) At the Tai Chi center in Madison, Wisconsin, I studied and taught Yang Style Forms with Master Tricia Yu and others. The teachings and practices were from a recognized lineage. The benefits of Tai Chi are varied and profound, and the Tai Chi Center in Madison continues to thrive after twenty-five years. Master Yu has benefitted countless people by exposing them to her teachings. She has broken new ground with her development of the *Tai Chi Fundamentals*, which are widely utilized by physical and occupational therapists and other health professionals in North America (Yu, 2005)

It became increasingly clear to me, though, that the great majority of students did not continue Tai Chi after their first courses. Tai Chi requires at least one full year of study and practice just to master its basic choreography. The deeper aspects of the art can be approached only after additional study and commitment.

After a few years, I began teaching more Qigong classes and fewer Tai chi classes. Qigong can be used for healing, wellness, martial arts, or as a spiritual path, Tai Chi being one of its martial forms. I focused on teaching Qigong for wellness and as a spiritual practice. In these contexts, Qigong does not require the same dedication and attention to details as Tai Chi. It can be learned more readily and practiced in less time. But I still noticed that many students took only one class and few practiced at home or applied the principles in their lives.

I began by teaching Qigong the way it had been taught to me by various teachers. There would be sets of movements to be repeated, and practices such as the *Eight Brocades*, the *Fourteen Cranes*, and so on. I began to search for a way to teach Qigong that would be immediately accessible and useful to the students. I wanted them to be able to internalize at least one basic practice, and to have access to it regularly and permanently. To this end, I sought out the most basic practices of Qigong—movements, postures, gestures, breath practices, and visualizations that could be seamlessly and effectively integrated into daily life.

This exploration developed along with my chaplaincy training at Upaya Zen Center. In the winter of 2010, meditation teacher Gregory Kramer asked me to lead Qigong while I was attending his week-long *Insight Dialogue (ID)* retreat. (Kramer, 2007) This led to my

development of two DVD's for *ID* students based on movements from the retreat. He later asked me to offer Qigong to his *ID* teachers, which generated another DVD of movements to augment the *ID* process. When I returned to Upaya for the first chaplaincy training intensive in March of 2010, I was asked to lead Qigong with various teachers throughout the 28-month-long program. In addition to Mr. Kramer, these teachers included Roshi Joan Halifax, Joanna Macy, Laurie Leitch and Elaine Miller-Karas, and Merle Lefkoff.

Inspired by the many possible applications of Qigong for **chaplains**, two stages emerged for me as a teacher. First was the formalization of my idiosyncratic brand of Qigong, which I named *Breathing Earth Qigong (BEQG)*. I organized and wrote down the practices and teachings I had been offering for sixteen years, as well as new ones. As a result, in January of 2011 I was able to offer my advanced Qigong students extended workshops in *Breathing Earth Qigong Facilitator Training* at the Tai Chi Center. Each student was encouraged to create and develop *MM* practices out of the basic teachings of *BEQG* which they could apply to their areas of expertise.

The second stage is what I am contextualizing under the heading of *Meditative Movement (MM* or applied *BEQG)*. The intention was to develop movements, postures, gestures, breath practices, visualizations, and teachings that can be applied to a wide variety of situations encountered by Buddhist **chaplains**, and which can be readily learned, taught, and practiced by **chaplains** and their clients. Although these are based on Qigong and other traditions, they do not claim to be Qigong. They can be adapted by facilitators to each situation, the **chaplain** or teacher does not have to be in a Qigong school or lineage, and the practices can be applied in various spiritual contexts. The *BEQG* practices would simply be folded into the **chaplain's** offerings because of their simplicity and intuitive nature.

In sitting with a cancer support group, for example, a **chaplain** might offer a series of gentle movements or gestures in the course of a meeting, based on basic *BEQG*. They might then facilitate the creation of *Body Poems* by each participant, or offer appropriate movements or teachings. If asked, they would reply that they offered meditative movement without going into explanations of qi or Qigong.

Perhaps a **chaplain** would be working one-on-one with a client suffering from trauma, or facing a difficult life situation, using the *Trauma Resiliency Model (TRM)* as taught in the Upaya Chaplaincy Training Program (Leitch and Karas, 2010). They could use the *BEQG Body Poems* extension to *TRM* to give the client a daily routine to work with to help deepen and strengthen the healing process on his own.

If a **chaplain** is a facilitator in a council circle (Halifax, 2010) he may elect to lead the group in some basic grounding, centering, and opening exercises to bring harmony to the group before,

during, or after council. Knowing physical movements to do in the context of a lot of verbiage can be a welcome relief and can point to an out-of-the-box approach to a problem when people are feeling “stuck” (Zimmerman, J., 2009)

For self-care, most Buddhist **chaplains** practice some form of sitting meditation. *BEQG* practices can be valuable in helping to embody the meditation. By doing even a few minutes of movement, or other *BEQG* practices prior to, during, or after sitting practice, the meditation can become much deeper. The first of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is “awareness of the body.” (Nhat Hanh, 1998). The same practices can be used in centering prayer, chanting, recitation, and other religious forms.

***BEQG* movements can be explored in detail by accessing links to the CD’s and DVD’s in the Appendix of this document.**

*BEQG* begins with the most basic elements of practice. These include: posture in sitting and standing; awareness of and movement of the hands, the fingertips, and the eyes; awareness of breathing; supine practices; internal manifestation of images and sounds; smiling; large motor movements, and simple relational practices. It involves practices in “grounding” (Leitch, Miller-Karas, 2010) “centering” (Yu, T. 1993) “opening” (Yu, T. 1993) and relating to people or to things outside of oneself. We do not use complicated series of movements which must be done in sequence, nor are we making claims to be healing anyone. We are simply using awareness of the body to bring harmony and understanding to difficult situations, allowing the client to access her own resiliency, energy, and wisdom.

These basic areas of practice lead to movements that are slow, graceful, fluid, and stable. Physical benefits include flexibility, increased proprioception, balance, and strength, lower blood pressure and heart rate, increased immune function, and an application of the “relaxation response” (Austin, et. al. 2010). Benefits to the practitioner include oneness of body and mind, a sense of inner peace and spaciousness, a sense that one is greater than the physical body, increased ability to listen deeply and to speak from the heart, greater empathy and compassion, and more.

Populations to whom I have taught the applied principles of *BEQG* include: cancer support groups, school teachers, meditation teachers, incarcerated women, corporate employees, nursing students, **chaplains students**, people in recovery, the elderly, Tai Chi students, men’s groups, and at meditation retreats including Vipassana, Zen, Mindfulness, and others. I have also worked one-on-one with hospice patients and family members, children, patients with terminal diagnoses, energy healers, dancers, and **chaplains** and Qigong students. *BEQG* is extremely flexible and useful in a wide variety of settings and situations, and is in my view worthy of further application and study in all areas of **chaplains**.

There is extensive interface between *BEQG* and Zen Buddhism. The historic roots of both are shared, in that Qigong originated in prehistoric China and was merged with Zen (Chan) practices around the time of Bodhidharma (Grigg, R., 1994). Qigong has Taoist roots, which later informed Buddhism to create the Zen lineages. So the principles of Qigong are intrinsic to Zen Buddhism via Taoism. In modern applications we look to engaged Buddhism as put forth by Roshi Joan Halifax, Roshi Bernie Glassman, the Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh, and others. If we view some of the practices of Buddhism as traditionally cloistered, and others as engaged in the everyday world, *BEQG* is a middle way, informing both. By adding the physical, energetic dimensions of *BEQG* we are practicing "...body, speech and mind in perfect oneness..." (Nhat Hanh, T. 2006). *BEQG* calls this "*Inspiring the Body and Embodying the Spirit.*"

*BEQG* directly embodies many of the teachings and practices of Buddhism. The menu of *BEQG* practices correlates and cross-references its contents with Buddhist concepts. These include the *Four Divine Abodes* (Lovingkindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity) with their associated movements and postures. Also included are the elements of the *Five Buddha Families (Energies)* of Vajra, Ratna, Padma, Karma, and Buddha (Rockwell, 2002). If a **chaplain** wanted to call upon one of these characteristics before meeting with a client, for example, he could access the quality through the menu, and with intention and subtle movement, gesture, posture, or visualization, could offer these to the client.

Concepts intrinsic to *BEQG* include the *Three Tenets of the Zen Peacemaker Order*, which are the guiding stars of the Upaya Chaplaincy Program. The "*Attentional-Emotional-Balance-Axis*" (Halifax, 2011) has correlates in *BEQG*. Also included are the *Four Upayas* (skillful means) (Maull, F. 2011).

The next section reviews some scientific studies of Qigong. Many of the practices and teachings of *BEQG* are better viewed as an art form than as the basis for scientific research, in that they point towards spiritual unfolding at least as much as towards measurable physical wellness. We can clearly see how Qigong and similar modalities reduce blood pressure, heart rate, and increase immune system function by perusing the relevant studies. As **chaplains**, however, we are usually more interested in the efficacy of these practices in empowering the client to experience and sustain states of peace, harmony, compassion, acceptance, relationality, and similar benefits, while integrating body and mind.

We may view these *BEQG* offerings as more akin to dance, or as moving body sculpture, than as practices which need to be validated through scientific study. For instance, when practicing the *Microcosmic Orbit*, one visualizes energy moving in a circular direction up the spine and down the front of the body. This can be experienced directly whether it is taken metaphorically or literally. Although there is much scientific and anecdotal evidence supporting the effectiveness

of acupuncture, for example, studies proving the physical existence of the meridians through which qi flows are only in the earliest stages of development.

Qigong is the study and practice of the cultivation of subtle energies moving within and around the body. Qigong movements and postures do not arise out of the energy of fight, flight, or freeze. (Hanson, 2011) Their natural grace and fluidity enlivens the parasympathetic nervous system, catalyzing deeper, higher states of consciousness. We could perform *Standing Mountain* and feel rooted to, and part of, the earth itself without trying to prove anything scientifically about that posture compared to some other posture. We are intentionally focusing body, mind, and spirit on the fact that the body and the earth are made up of essentially the same elements. We are literally embodying a concept which is metaphysically profound and simultaneously obvious here and now. It can be taken literally or metaphorically.

By first *embodying the spirit* through slow and graceful movement, we come to sense and understand that the gross body is an expression of energy and consciousness. We are then free to *inspire the body*—to explore ways in which the body is temporary, ever-changing, and part of all-that-is. It becomes not an isolated object, but a relational system of energy that goes all the way from the atoms of the Earth to the highest reaches of divinity, and is interconnected to the entire cosmos via the “Net of Indra” (Glassman, B. 2011). These are essential truths to sense into and to understand in a unique and personal way for a hospice patient, for example, when facing death, or for one who is encountering suffering due to change, and for the **chaplains** who serve them.

It is basic to *BEQG*, to Buddhist meditation practices, and to the healing, relational work of a **chaplain** that we understand the difference between pain and suffering (Kabat-Zinn, J.,1990) . Pain, whether physical or emotional, causes aversion to arise. The mind then contracts around the sensation and constructs stories around the pain, which compound it. With these stories we construct our imagined lives, shutting ourselves off from true perceptions of reality.

Many clients with whom I have worked have difficulty distinguishing the physical sensations of pain from their emotional reactions to it. In using the *TRM*, **chaplains** are taught how to enable a client to tease apart these co-dependent arisings. A fundamental practice of *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)* is to recognize the body-based nature of pain—that it is rooted in sensation. *BEQG* has been very useful in augmenting both these modalities. It helps those who are mainly tactile learners to grasp concepts experientially, through their sensate awareness. It provides grounding for such ideas as “I am not my thoughts...” (Bonus, K., 2011) and “I am more than this body.” By increasing gross body awareness, students realize that the mind is not separate from the body. Indeed, our thoughts bundle to form emotions, which are sensed in the body. The system is a feedback loop, or what Thich Nhat Hanh calls “habit energy” (Nhat Hanh, 2006).

Once we understand this difference, “all pain becomes workable” (Halifax, 2010). If we recognize that pain has arisen, and investigate the qualities of the pain, we see it as an event arising in the field of awareness. We can then recognize our aversion to it--“when will this stop?” for example, and see the aversion as one event arising in the field of awareness. We do not deny the pain—we accept that it is there. We in a sense become bigger than the pain.

This process is clarified and enhanced with the introduction to grounding and resourcing practices (Leitch, 2010). These practices can include such *BEQG* offerings as *Trembling Mountain*, *Breathing the Stars*, or *Opening the Seven Gates*. By clearing the energetic body, the pain is revealed as a constantly changing element in an energetic stream. When the gross body is perceived in this way, it is contextualized as one element of consciousness which we access through the doorways of the sense organs, which are monitored by the mind. Internal arisings are seen as not separate from the outside world. Just as “objects of sight” are visible through the eyes, and “objects of sound” are perceived with the ears, “objects of mind” arise and are perceived by the mind, which is considered by Buddhist psychology to be a sense organ (Travis, 2008). Everything in the manifest realm arises, lingers, and passes away (Wilber, K., 2003). This awareness of impermanence can be of great comfort to a suffering individual.

Through the practice of *BEQG*, we can remind ourselves of our experience of our expanded nature with a simple gesture, or even a breath. This makes for a useful, portable set of practices which can help us to relieve suffering in ourselves and in others with grace and focus. We can stand in line at the supermarket and call to mind expanded states of awareness by relaxing our posture, sensing our groundedness, and returning to our breath. We do not need to practice in obvious ways once we have begun to integrate *BEQG*.

The next section will be an inventory of *BEQG* practices and teachings. To be of use to **chaplains** and to others, entries are cross-referenced to DVD’s, CD’s, and written documents. Movements, for example, are named and ordered, and can be accessed in the appendix in DVD form. Visualizations and Breath Practices may be accessed via a link in the appendix to a CD. For example, if a **chaplain** wishes to find resources for grounding, either for herself or for a client, she can go to the category listed as “Grounding” in the body of this paper. In this grouping she will be referred to the master list where the resource is listed.

There are at least three main ways to read this paper. For a **chaplain** who has a general interest in embodied practices, but not in using them personally or with others, pages 8-11; 17-25; 36-46; and 49-56 are recommended. For those wishing to explore *BEQG* for their personal use, I recommend these pages along with watching *DVD #1 and/or DVD#2*, and listening to at least one of the two CD’s. For a **chaplain** wishing to use *BEQG* in relation to others, I recommend practicing along with all the discs, cross-referencing the Master List in order to explore areas of

personal interest, and reading the whole paper, paying close attention to the sections describing the teaching of *BEQG*.

### **A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SELECTED SCIENTIFIC STUDIES OF QIGONG**

A new category of exercise has come under scientific scrutiny in order to determine its efficacy in treatment of a variety of medical conditions. This category is being called Meditative Movement (*MM*) (Larkey, et. al. 2009). It includes Qigong and Tai Chi, although it does not yet discriminate between the two. Since Tai Chi is a form of Qigong, and *BEQG* is a type of Qigong, we can look to the findings in the Tai Chi and Qigong research to inform us regarding *BEQG* practices as they relate to physical and mental health and well-being. *MM* is defined by including, "...some form of movement or body positioning, a focus on breathing, and a cleared or calm state of mind with a goal of deep states of relaxation." It is also clear that these are categorized as "mind-body practices" (Larkey, et. al.). Body movements are slow, relaxed, and flowing. The mind is in a meditative state of present moment awareness, of the body, or in "quiet emptiness."

These practices are increasingly used as complementary approaches to health and healing (Wolsco et. al 2003), and focus the mind on the body and on breathing, in contrast to traditional forms of body-based exercises. Body movements include dynamic practices, both choreographed and spontaneous, static postures, and gestures. All are informed with a focus on breathing, which often brings about increased oxygenation and/or added energy to the body. The breathing may be passive, with simply a relaxed awareness of it, or intentional, as when inhaling as the arms rise, and exhaling as they fall, for example. And, finally, attaining a deep state of relaxation is essential to *MM*, whether this state is attained while moving or immediately upon the cessation of movement.

The growing evidence from research on the health benefits of Qigong and Tai Chi can be found in over seventy randomized, controlled trials (RCT) (Jahnke, et. al. 2009). Three studies of the efficacy of *MM* on reducing blood pressure in older adults suggest that it is "probably as beneficial as aerobic exercises in reducing blood pressure" (Verhagen, et. al. 2004). Other studies of similar quality have shown that blood pressure is significantly reduced for those practicing Tai Chi as compared with no-exercise control (Thornton, et. al. 2004). This reduction is similar to the effects obtained from practicing aerobic exercises. Additional evidence for Qigong effects on blood pressure parallels the findings for Tai Chi (Lee, et. al. 2003).

Four RCT's have demonstrated that *MM* can have positive effects on mood. Tai chi was found to reduce depression, anger, and anxiety symptoms over time, and to improve overall mental health. (Irwin, et. al. 2007). Emotions have been found to be significantly improved after practicing Qigong as compared to wait-list controls (Lee, et. al. 2003). In patients with fibromyalgia, and in patients with hypertension, the practice of Qigong was found to be efficacious in reducing depression (Astin, et. al. 2003).

Wang, Collet, and Lau (Wang, et. al. 2004) provide an extensive review of eleven studies examining the effects of Tai Chi on balance and fall prevention. All of these studies demonstrated great benefits deriving from the practice of Tai Chi in improving the stability of those who are prone to falls, especially the elderly (Jahnke, et. al. 2009). The potential for Qigong for preventing falls has just begun to emerge. In a RCT study of elderly patients with coronary artery disease, balance and coordination were significantly improved in the groups practicing Qigong (Stenlund, et. al. 2005). It is likely that the studies showing the efficacy of Tai Chi in improving balance will also apply to Qigong (Jahnke, et. al. 2009).

There have been several studies on the impact of Qigong on immune system function (Irwin, et. al. 2007). Qigong practice has been shown to influence circulating members and functional activities of white blood cells (Manzaneque, et. al. 2004). Other studies involving lymphocytes indicate that Qigong is effective in enhancing immune function (Jahnke, et. al. 2009). A recent study found that participants randomized to the intervention receiving influenza vaccine showed a significant increase in the magnitude and duration of antibody response compared with wait-list control (Yang, et. al. 2007).

The growing body of evidence suggests that both Tai Chi and Qigong demonstrate similar outcomes in studies of blood pressure, mental health, functional balance, and immune system function. There are many additional studies, mostly in Chinese, which do not meet the quality requirements of modern scientific methodology. These also demonstrate the efficacy of *MM* on human health and well-being, as do innumerable anecdotal references. It has certainly been the experience of this teacher that Qigong and Tai Chi have numerous beneficial effects, both for those who are ill and those who are well.

At the core of Qigong practice is cultivating and monitoring the flow of qi, or vital energy. Measuring qi is challenging because most western scientists are not sure what it is or even if it exists. Measurement tools are currently being developed to assess qi. One such tool is the measurement of electrical conductivity along the qi meridians of the body using electrodermal response scales. An increase in conductivity along acupuncture channels has been shown in response to Qigong practice (Yoshida, et. al. 1999). Conductance of electrical energy is higher between known acupuncture points than between points not on the map of traditional channels (Lee, et. al. 2005).

Other methods of qi measurement include the Gas Discharge Visualization (GDV) device, which measures the strength of each qi channel. The GDV is used to photograph biophoton emissions from the fingertips. These can then be compared and traced back along various channels to the corresponding organs to detect balance of qi flow. This balance has been shown to be obtained after only a single session of Qigong practice (Larkey, et. al. 2005). Similar results were found for both healthy and chronically ill participants practicing Qigong, showing improvements in total density of emissions and balance (Rubic, et. al. 2005).

Clearly more research needs to be done in the areas of qi cultivation and the efficacy of MM for both healthy and ill subjects. It is expected that someday soon measurements will be obtained which will corroborate the flow of qi in established channels, validating the energy map of the body, and reinforcing the growing body of evidence that Qigong is extremely useful in enhancing wellness and curing illness.

### ***BREATHING EARTH QI GONG* MASTER LIST WITH CORRELATIONS AND CROSS-REFERENCES**

Following is an inventory of the BEQG practices which are referenced in this paper, as well as additional practices which can be used by **chaplains** in their work. When a specific practice is of interest, it may be referenced below and observed on the appropriate DVD or CD, or researched more fully in the text of the paper. The cross-references are meant to enable the reader to find the appropriate DVD or CD when they wish to do personal practice or to focus attention on a particular concept, such as one of the Buddha families, for example.

Key: **Buddha Family=BF; 1=Vajra; 2=Ratna; 3=Padma; 4=Karma; 5=Buddha**

**Four Divine Abodes=DA; 1=Lovingkindness; 2=Compassion; 3=Sympathetic Joy; 4=Equanimity** Ex: (DA-3)

**CD or DVD** = this practice is available on a *BEQG* disc. **DVD's** are **numbered (DVD-2) or lettered (DVD-ID, for Insight Dialogue discs)**

**(Text)** indicates this is in the body of this paper **(B)**

**THE CD'S AND DVD'S CAN BE DOWNLOADED VIA LINKS IN THE APPENDIX OF THIS THESIS.**

**EXERCISES—WARM-UPS (BF 2, 4, 5)**

## A. BALANCE

1. Tai Chi twist and variations (DVD 1) (DVD-ID)
2. Hands on counter palms down—wt. shift on one leg, then the other
3. Crane walks the riverbank
  - a. Slo-mo
  - b. Hold
4. C crane
5. Open-hands-kick—front; hold
6. Circle Arm and Leg—L and R
7. Golden Pheasant Stands on One Leg—L and R
8. Wave hands Through Clouds
9. “Walking” (in place)
  - a. While doing various arm movements
  - b. Slo-mo Segue into “walking” with other movements
10. Bouncing—slo-mo—segue into integrating with other movements

## B. FLEXIBILITY

1. Backwash—twist/squat (DVD 1)
2. Tree in Spring (DVD 1)
3. Boat Rowing in a Stream of Air
4. Open Heart (Ta-Da) (BF 3); (DA 2)
5. Palms Together to the Seven Directions (DVD-ID)
6. Untying the Shoe—L and R
7. Circle Arms—L and R
8. Turning the World—L and R
9. Head—Neck (DVD-ID)
  - a. Rolls and Stretches
  - b. Crane—Turtle
  - c. Richard Nixon Drop—3x—self; compassion for self; compassion for others (DVD-ID)
  - d. Shoulder Circles
10. Pelvis Rock and Circle/ Torso Shift
11. Picking the Apple—L and R
12. Turning the body to Look at the Moon (DVD-ID)

## A. STRENGTH (BF 1,5)

1. Holding Postures—silent—breathing--music
  - a. Holding the Moon (Pine Tree) in Horse Stance, arms “around tree”

b. Holding Tai Chi postures

1. One-legged
2. Two-Legged (70-30)

2. Holding Postures in Pairs (BF 1,3)

2. ENERGETIC PRACTICES

A. MOVEMENTS (BF 2,4)

1. Standing Mountain—body relaxed—soft front, strong back—tongue to roof of mouth—arms straight—hands al dente—contemplations (BF 5) (DA 4) (DVD 1) (DVD-ID)

a. Lower Dan Tien—contemplations—balloon hands—cradling the womb

b. Middle Dan Tien—contemplations—Cradling the heart (BF 2,3); (DA 1,2)

c. Sky Cone—Columnar Embrace—Embracing the Light—contemplations—Opening the Rainbow—Return (BF 1,5)

d. Heart—Relational—Palms to Neighbor—Palms Together (Touching--Separated)—Bowing to All Present (BF 3) (DA 3)

e. Bowing to the Seven Directions (BF 2)

2. Morning Qi Gong (BF 2) (DVD 1)

a. Earth's Fragrance Drifts Up

b. Sunrise on the Horizon

c. Parting the Clouds

d. Washing With Rainbow Dew

e. Flipping Away the Fog

f. Gathering and Raising Earth Qi

1. Lower D.T.

2. Middle DT

3. Upper DT

4. Return to Heart

g. Uniting Heaven and Earth (DVD-ID)

3. Opening Seven Gates (BF 4) (DVD 2) (DVD-ID)

a. Trembling Mountain

b. Filtering the Body

c. Opening Seven Gates—Salve (BF 2)

- d. Flying crane—(segue into sitting) (BF 5)
- 4. Heart Meditation ( Master Li Jun Feng, 1996—Wuji Yuan Gong) (BF 2, 5)
  - a. Zhong-Tien Movement
  - b. Love Descends on Me
  - c. Opening (Unraveling) the Heart—Visualizations
  - d. Supreme Truth—Prayer Position—Meditation
  - e. Closing—Zhong-Tien
- 5. Rainbow Clouds (To Heart)—side-to-side; segue into Ni Kung practices (Inner Smile, etc.) (BF 2) (DVD 2) (DVD-ID)
- 6. Just This—Left—to—Right (BF 1)
- 7. White/Black—Standing—dive hands down from waist into Dark Water—DNA Spiral up into Light—prelude to listening to and speaking from the voice of the body (BF 1, 3) (DVD-ID) (DA 2)
- 8. Drawing the Bow—Left and Right (BF 1)
- 9. Offering Fruit to the Gods (Gratitude) (BF 2) (DVD-ID)
- 10. The Inner Flute (Auditory Rainbow) (DVD-ID)
- 11. Cranes—Breathing—Flying—Walks Riverbank—One—Legged Flying—Walking in a Circle—C—crane—L and R (BF 1, 5) (DVD-ID)
- 12. Cicada—both hands unzip from bottom up over head—step forward, “out” (BF 4)
- 13. Expelling Unhealthy Qi—punching L and R—Dragon Palms L and R and “Wet Hands”—bodywash—Cleansing Breaths (BF 2)
- 14. Trees—Autumn—Spring (BF 2) (DVD-ID)
- 15. Turning and Bowing to the Seven Directions (DVD-ID)
- 16. Mudra Practice—while sitting (BF 1,5)
- 17. Picking Fruit and Planting It
- 18. Deity Embodiment—sitting, standing, or supine

- a. Avalokiteshvara—Compassion for self, other, all-that-is; renewing Karma in the present moment (DA 2)
- b. Ksitigarva—Embodying the doorway to liberation in all realms of darkness—patience, perseverance, “the doorway in the very center of the pain” (BF 4)
- c. Samantabhadra—the constant action in and around the body—present moment awareness exists in the constant stream of impermanence (BF 4)
- d. Manjushri—The wisdom of the Body—manifestation and arising of the Inner Teacher(s) (BF 1)
- e. Maitreya—Freshness with every breath—new life everywhere always—evolution (BF 2)

## B. INTERNAL ENERGETIC PRACTICE (NI KUNG)— (BF 1, 4, 5)

### 1. SEVEN LEVELS

- a. Level #2--Vertical Axis (ULFE) (Standing)—Elements—column—Heaven/Earth—Hands up—flip—down—Lightening Rod Posture—segue into hand gesture posture—into sitting
  - b. Level #3--Microcosmic Orbit (Sitting or Supine) (CD 2)
    - 1. Two Stations—up back down front—one-hand—two-hand—side-to-side—with breath
    - 2. Twelve (Fourteen) Stations—Spiraling the Eyes—Looking Up—With the Breath
  - c. Level #4—Opening the Heart—Breathing the Stars—pixilation—Visualization in the Heartspace (DA 2) (DVD-ID) (CD 1)
  - d. Level #5—Using ULFE Column to connect to upper DT—to Crown and Up—Perineum and Down—Using Mudras—Breath
  - e. Level #6—Deity Practice—Radiating Energy
  - f. Level #7—Boundlessness and Hint of Pixilation and Segue into Higher Realms
2. INNER SMILE—Visualize Smile—Heart=red; Lungs=white (clear); liver=green; kidneys=blue; spleen=gold; stomach, sm. intestine=pink; lg. intestine—out—focus on each light, then on all. (BF 2) (DA 3)

3. Focusing Energy to the Palms—Grounding; Lower DT; Middle DT; Upper DT; Cosmos; down to Heart; Open Heart; Bring up—down into Heart; out arms and palms.

4. Supine Energetic Body Scans—Focusing on the sensate, physical body, Visualizing light and movement in the centers, fostering spaciousness in the centers, expanding beyond the gross body—segues into Breathing the Stars, Vertical axis connection to earth and sky, and finally into Indra’s Net. (CD 2) (see also *visualizations* below)

### C. BREATH PRACTICES (BF 4)

1. Breathing the Stars—with Hands and Arms—Gesture—Stillness—Supine—Ea. Cell= a Flower—Vase Breathing (For Grounding)—Expansion of the body beyond the Infinite (BF 1, 5); (DA 1, 4) (CD 1)

2. Following Breath—Beyond the Exhale; With Arms and Hands—Gesture—Stillness—Resting in the space between Breaths—With Arms and Hands circling (BF 1, 5)

3. All Crane Movements with Breath—Standing, Breathing, Walking the Riverbank, C Crane, Flying—segue into sitting practice (BF 1, 5)

4. Each Breath is a Life—With Hands, side-to-side; birth, rising, opening like a leaf, drifting down—repeat—contemplations in harmony with all babies being born (inbreath) alt. with all people dying (outbreath)—compassion practice (BF 1, 2, 3, 5); (DA 1, 2, 3, 4) (CD 2)

### D. POSTURES

1. Mudras—Yin—Yon—(Curled, Straight); Buddhaic; Palms Up, Down; Heaven/Earth; Zazen; Thich Nhat Hanh; Crane’s Beak and Variations (BF 1, 5)

2. Holding and Form—Breathing into It; Body Scan: feet-to-head; bringing softness to tense areas; Whole Body Breathing; Slow Bouncing; Cleansing with Tree in Spring between Postures (BF 5); (DA 4)

3. Body Poems—Tree in Spring alternating with creating postures for emotional states—postures may subtly change during the holding, and from set-to-set; starting with pleasant/neutral emotional states and progressing into difficult emotional states—creation of a body vocabulary, stringing together postures into a personal sequence for daily or informal practice—individually or in a group (BF 2,3) (Text—B under MBSR)

### E. GROUP PRACTICES

1. Laughing QiGong—In a Circle, Looking Up (BF 2, 3); (DA 3)

2. Creating the Cylinder—Passing Ball of Light; Men=Tree in Spring/Women=Tree in Autumn; Alternate; Crane Movements Together; Rainbow Palms and Around the Circle; Swoosh Up, with Sound or Silently (BF 3); (DA 1, 3)

3. Healing Circle—Healee in the Center—Group Grounding and Breathing into the Center (BF 3); (DA 1, 2)

4. Cicada Qigong—Stepping Forward—Ice/Glass Falling; “Opening Our Shell—Stepping into Freedom”; Bringing New Light as a Group

5. Walking Cranes, “Ta-Das”; Opening Hearts

6. Mindful Walking in a Circle, as an Organism—Moving From the Lower Dan Tien; Weightless Front Foot; Hands Suggestive of Crane Wings

7. Couples Practices

a. Sensing Qi with Palms; Mirroring Movements;

b. Passing a Ball of Light

c. “I come in peace” and other Body Poems

d. Holding Arms down and letting them Rise—to sides and front to sense the involuntary movement similar to Qi Flow

8. Discussion in dyads, triads, and in the large group—council format or popcorn—deep listening/speaking from the heart

#### F. SELF-MASSAGE AND CLOSINGS

1. Tapping (DVD 1)

2. Master Lin Closing= clap; circle eyes; massage ears; comb hair; smooth face; down body; tap kidneys; massage kidneys (Lin, 2003) Prayer Position; Bowing to Friends on the Path (DVD-1)

3. Bubbling Wells Massage—press and rotate thumb in the center of the ball of the foot

#### 3. VISUALIZATIONS (Selected)—Supine or Seated

A. This Body is Not Me (CD 1)

B. Breathing the Stars (CD 1)

- C. Open Heart (Metta) (CD 1)
- D. Energetic Body Scan (supine) (CD 2)
- E. Five Elements of the Body (CD 2)
- F. Microcosmic Orbit (CD 2)

### **PRINCIPLES OF *BEQG* RELEVANT TO CHAPLAINCY**

The following essay is offered to provide structure to the vast ocean of energetic awareness. It uses the metaphor of a map to discuss various levels of practice and the concomitant awareness which arises with each. It can be useful as a context for the practices, and can help to identify movements of mind and body in terms of “subtle energies” (Wilber, 2003) *BEQG* is a coherent system of subtle energy cultivation embodying the physical and spiritual dimensions of experience, and is potentially very useful to **chaplains**.

#### **1-- THE SEVEN LEVELS OF BODY**

We have all been embodied--born into this space-time continuum we call “the world”. As the Tibetan Buddhists say, we have been fortunate to experience a “precious human birth”. Ramana Maharshi tells us it is only in human form that we can attain enlightenment. (Wilber, 2003) We are in a sense more powerful than the angels, deities, and non-physical beings because we embody the spirit, and therefore have the potential to elevate it and to ground it. This experience of physicality is the contact between consciousness and form. What is consciousness without form? We cannot answer that question in words because in this world of opposites there must be subject and object. Robert Monroe, the scientist who literally wrote the book on “out of body” experiences, creates detailed, extensive maps of worlds beyond ordinary reality. (Monroe 1977) But Qigong teaches that every world needs a body of some kind in order to perceive it. Taoism, Qigong, and Zen are all deeply embodied practices.

*Breathing Earth* means that there is breath, or consciousness, in all form. So in a way the world of forms—of space and time—is no different from Boundlessness. When we practice *BEQG* we can use the physical body as a gateway to deeper realms of reality. We can explore the impermanent nature of the senses through *Trembling Earth* practice, seeing the *pixilated* field in which forms appear, hearing the *pixilated* field in which sounds appear, and sensing the *pixilated* field in which physical sensations arise.

In Buddhism, there are said to be six senses. (Travis, 2008) These are the five ordinary senses and the mind. The mind is a sense organ in the same way the eye is a sense organ. The mind can perceive objects of mind, such as thoughts and emotions, just as the eye can perceive objects of sight. So we can also apply the technique of *seeing into the field of perception* to the

field of consciousness in the mind. In meditation we can focus on the field in which thoughts and feelings arise. The field is what Zen calls “a formless field of benefaction” (Halifax 2010). The feeling texture of the more subtle fields is lovingkindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. That’s how we know we are there, and those are the mind streams out of which we can act.

We are now going to map **seven levels of “body”**, starting with the physical and becoming progressively finer. There are many systems mapping the energetic aspects of the body. (Wilber 2003) Some say there are four levels: body, mind, soul, and spirit. Mantak Chia says there are three bodies: physical, soul, and spirit (Chia, 1993). Some systems say there are seven, relating to the chakras. All of these are just maps, not the real territory. The levels *segue* seamlessly into each other, so it is really only a matter of convenience how many bodies we postulate. For *BEQG* we will investigate **seven levels of energy**, or bodies. They can be visualized like a Russian doll—bodies within bodies, all contained within the physical. They can also be seen as beginning with the center of the gross body and becoming progressively finer as they spread throughout and beyond the physical body into space.

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh names the five elements as earth, water, fire, air, and space (Nhat Hanh 2006). Our physical world, and our bodies which are an extension of it, are said to be composed of these five elements. The **physical**, or gross body gives us the impression of separateness, giving rise to notions of individuality. It is the vehicle for travelling in our world of space and time. Some religious systems have held that the body is the antithesis of the spiritual—that the goal is transcendence of the physical body to reach “heaven”. Taoist thought which is the basis of Qigong says that there is no separation between the spiritual and the physical. When we place our palms together in the prayer position we deeply feel into the physical. Our palms are very sensitive, and doubly so when placed together. Our consciousness is focused in the **physical body**. This gesture grounds our awareness firmly in the physical world. Roshi Halifax calls this “strong back.”

When we do a practice like *Breathing the Stars* we are moving energy through the pores of the skin and into the area around the gross body. This area is **the second body**, the etheric body. We have sensed it as moving, *pixilated* dots. Here there is heat, spaciousness, electromagnetic fields, and energetic, relational sensitivity. We can sense this area around the body, and we can sense the fields of other people. After practicing Qigong for just a little while, it is often not comfortable to place the palms together, or directly on the body. We have sensitized ourselves to the point where we are feeling beyond just the physical. We are sensing the qi body, so it is too energized for us to want to actually touch our palms together. They remain a few inches apart, held in the sensations of the qi—the heat, the tingling, the feeling like trying to press two like-poled magnets together. The main energetic channel associated with this level is the big, enlivened, central channel. It is the vertical axis of the body. Emotions are sensed in the

physical body and held in the etheric body as well as in the physical body. Dwelling too much in the **second body** can bring on feelings of overwhelm and vulnerability, as it is by nature very sensitive and receptive. **Second level** awareness must be grounded deeply in the physical in order to be in balance. Roshi Halifax calls this “soft front.”

The **third body** is the qi body, or “internal energy body.” Herein lies the mapped-out acupuncture system, as well as the many flowing channels accessed by the microcosmic orbit. (Grey, 2001) When we connect with *Earth and Heaven* in many Qigong positions, we are activating this body. It is interactive--connected to all-that-is within and around the body. It is an embodiment of what Thich Nhat Hanh calls “Interbeing.” From this level we can project and receive qi. The moving, *pixilated* dots are here, too, and on every level up to number **six**. They become finer, move faster, are able to take on forms more readily, and increase in their variety with every successive level of body. The acupuncture point system cannot at present be mapped by modern science in the way of other systems, such as the circulatory or endocrine. It was discovered by the ancients intuitively by practicing Qigong and Taoist meditation until their awareness became so focused they were able to perceive this structure clearly, even though it does not have obvious physical components. So there exists a body which is able to perceive within itself. There are sense doors finely tuned to the subtle energy flowing in the body. The way to sense this is by inhabiting a more subtle body with sense doors capable of perceiving these subtleties—a **level three body** within the gross body.

**Number four** is the “dream body.” This is the body we are “in” when we are asleep and dreaming. It is the vehicle with which we navigate the non-physical world of dreams, the realms the Tibetans call the “bardos”, and what Robert Monroe called “out-of-body levels.” (Monroe, 1977) Here, “objects of mind” have their own reality which lies outside the limitations of space and time. We know that dreams operate by their own rules which are not bound by space and time. Objects can suddenly appear and disappear. We can fly, or shape-shift. We can read minds, travel to distant destinations instantly, and do all sorts of “impossible” things. All this happens as perception, meaning that there is a body there with which to perceive. It is a subtle body, indeed, but a body nonetheless. Alex Grey calls this the “psychic body” (Grey 2001). The qi of this realm can instantly morph into any form dreamed up by the mind. It is a realm of infinite possibility. The slightest suggestion can create entire castles, only to have them dissolve in an instant. It is of the element of air, or wind: of karma. (Rockwell 2002)

This realm is defined by the limits of the dream body which perceives it. Dreams can be thought of as events enacted in “stage sets” that are roughly spherical, dissolving at their boundaries into nothingness. Most dreams are dependent upon the notion of “self” and “other.” “I” am in a dream--separate from events and dream objects. It is still an adventure being experienced by a separate self. But there is a greater reality beyond the theater of the

dream and the sense of separateness of the dreamer. There is qi, or energy, *out of which the dream is made*. By tuning into the “field of dreams”—the moving, *pixilated* dots of this realm, we can focus on boundlessness instead of on the rapidly changing forms appearing and disappearing on the stage set. We can move beyond the imitations of the senses of the dream body into the greater realm in which the dream occurs. We can then move through it to the next level of body. In changing levels, we move from the object into the field in which the object arises. The object becomes the subject. (Wilber 2002)

The **fifth body** is the “light body”, or the “spiritual body.” There is a sense of a much greater “self.” The limits of the **level four** dream body and dream theater are infinitely expanded. The body appears only as radiance. Our perspective is vast, encompassing cosmic views of the world and our place in it. We are still individuated, but aware of a much greater whole. There is ease and a sense of peace—that all is well no matter what happens. The narrowly defined self has yielded to an expanded sense of awareness more deeply rooted in the body, and far beyond its limits. Jack Kornfield describes this and higher streams as “the particle physics of consciousness.” (Kornfield, 1993) The *pixilation* becomes extremely fine, rapid, and profound. Reality is more the field than the forms arising within it—more energy than object. The overarching feeling tones are of the *Divine Abodes*.

At the **sixth and seventh levels**, words become thin. The “self” becomes space. There is liberation, awareness of Universal Mind, freedom from birth and death, completion, enlightenment, and a great smile of Nonself. Zen calls this, among other names, “wisdom beyond wisdom” (Halifax, 2010). These states become at once more and more rarefied and subtle, and commonplace and ordinary. (Wilber 2002) We realize that enlightenment only exists in the present moment, whatever is happening. More and more we carry higher consciousness into our daily lives. Our thoughts, words, and deeds arise increasingly out of the ethical basis of our practice. Again and again we find ourselves trying to maintain a harmony in the midst of the confusion, conflict, and overwhelm of daily life. We are aware of all bodies and all levels as interpenetrating realities.

Since all of these **levels of body** exist at once, they are readily available through *BEQG* practice or even via spontaneous events. We do not have to leave the body to experience higher states—they are already here, *in the body*. There is no separation between the cosmos and the body. Qigong teaches that the space between the galaxies is the same as the space within every atom of our physical selves.

*BEQG* is a very useful, complementary practice for sitting and walking meditation. By aligning, balancing, grounding, and opening the gross body we make deeper meditative states more readily available. (Yu, 1993) As we practice *BEQG*, many of our internal blockages are softened or dissipated. Our meditation practices are enlivened. We may then recognize some of these

**seven bodies** in our lives and our practice. Ten or fifteen minutes a day is sufficient to maintain our *BEQG* practice. Of course, more can be better, and it is worthwhile to practice for longer periods.

Once we have tasted the benefits of *BEQG*, it is simple to integrate it into everyday life. Just stopping for a moment to consciously breathe in and breathe out immediately grounds us. Just *Breathing the Stars* for one inbreath and one outbreath can make a huge difference in how we then go about our business. We can practice the *Mona Lisa Smile*, or correct our posture while sitting. We can feel gratitude, joy, and connection, consciously bringing to mind uplifting, positive aspects of life. Before falling asleep we can gently place one hand on our heart and the other on our belly, remembering who we really are.

Master Tricia Yu reminds us that Qigong is “the way of nature.” (Yu 1993) We need to spend time in nature every day, looking at the moon, the stars, the clouds. We need to love the flowers and trees just as we love our own bodies, and to practice Qigong outdoors whenever possible. In staying connected with the natural world, we stay connected to the flow of energy within and around us. We are supported by it, and we find our place more deeply in the greater whole. (Lin, 2003)

## **2--PRINCIPLES OF *BEQG*--THE *SEGUE***

We can intentionally move our awareness from one level of “body” to another. For instance, when we touch hands by placing our palms together in the “prayer position”, we are reinforcing awareness of the gross body level. When we place our palms near each other in this position, or near our torsos, we are activating perception of the subtle bodies.

When we move our gross bodies, as in *Tree in Spring (TIS)*, we are activating physical body perception. As we continue the movements we may make them more and more subtle. In this way we are shifting awareness, perception, and activation into more subtle realms of “body.” We accompany the lessening movements with increasingly vivid visualizations of these movements. We are able to feel as if the gross body is moving even though we have slowly replaced large movements with subtle ones. This is the *segue*. Neuroscience has demonstrated that the visualization of a movement activates the brain in the same way as the actual physical movement. (Hanson, 2011)

In our practice we first increase the arm movements in *Flying Crane*, enjoying the sensations of stretching the arms, fingers, toes, etc. After a while, we decrease the movements. As we do so,

we “take up the slack” with our minds, imagining big movements even though we are only moving our hands, then only the fingers, then only the qi with the mind. Just as we can see moving *pixilations* in the external, blue sky, we can also see the same thing internally, on the insides of our closed eyelids.

This process of the *segue* activates our awareness of increasingly subtle levels of “body.” *Breathing the Stars* merges perceptions of the gross body into the energetic body. We visualize the body as a network of light, with the breath acting like a cosmic wind moving through the now very porous physical body. The stars light up the central channel, which is basic to the structure of the level two body. Then, we radiate out from the central channel in all directions, moving past the limits of the purely physical.

The *segue* is one of the bones in the structure of *BEQG*. It is what makes this system so adaptable to other practices and areas of work. The energy practices can *segue* seamlessly into many different forms and situations. Our awareness is trained to move fluidly from one level to another, depending upon the intention, concentration, and experience of the practitioner. The fluidity lies in being one with the flow of qi.

### 3—PRINCIPLES OF *BEQG*—*PIXILATION*

When we stare into the bright, blue sky and notice what we are seeing, people report “moving dots of energy”, “a vibrating field”, “constant motion”, “a pointillist painting of various shades of light”, and the like. Similarly, when we practice *Trembling Mountain (DVD #2)* for five minutes our whole body tingles intensely. The first is an example of *visual pixilation*, while the second is *tactile pixilation*. *Pixilation* is the way in which we sense information—either in the body or in the mind. Buddhism calls this the “field of energy”, or the “field of awareness.”

Sensei Beate Genko Stolte holds up a cup, stating that we are perceiving an object when we look at it. She then asks us to continue focusing on the cup, and takes it away. We are left staring at the empty space, or the field where the cup once was. This teaching is a metaphor for perception in the mind. Perceiving the mental field in which objects of mind (thoughts and feelings) arise is at the core of mindfulness meditation. We can do this practice with *BEQG* using the gross body, and directly experience the *pixilated* nature of perception.

The brain works in this same way, with neurons firing from five to fifty times per second. (Hanson, 2011) All perceptions arise as *pixilated* information, whether physical or mental. *BEQG* uses this readily-verifiable information as a means to move from one level of body into

another. For instance, when an image arises in the mind, we can remember that it is *pixilated* and focus on the *pixilation*, which is the field, rather than on the image itself. When pain arises in the body, we can focus on its *pixilated* nature, giving space to the sensations in the larger context of the energetic field. Becoming aware of a dream, we can focus on the atmosphere in which it is being enacted, thereby moving up a level of body and becoming aware of the *pixilated* nature of the dream images.

In the *BEQG* model this awareness all begins with the bodily senses. By sensing the *pixilated* nature of all reality directly through the senses, we begin on the path to being able to *pixilate*, or contextualize, internal arisings at increasingly subtle levels of body, all the way up to the *pixilation* of awareness itself. This enables us to become vertically integrated through the practices, able to live in spacious awareness.

#### **4--PRINCIPLES OF *BEQG*--ATMOSPHERE**

A Tibetan man in the final stages of esophageal cancer lies in a hospice bed. Born in Tibet, he escaped to India in 1960 as a young boy. As I held his hand, he smiled. “How are you doing?” he asked. “I’m doing fine. And how are you doing?” His smile broadens. “I’m doing fine.” he says.

In the “comments” section of the patient intake sheet, a caregiver wrote, “The patient is extremely stoic.” But the patient felt he really was “doing fine.” What was called “stoicism” I would name “equanimity.” Although his body was filled with cancer, his legs grossly swollen, he could smile with a clear heart and declare that he was fine.

This quality, in this case around the dissolution of the body, is referred to in *BEQG* as *atmosphere*. It is the feeling surrounding the event or the object—the overarching sense, in this case, that everything was ok. In *BEQG* we willingly enter into the dissolution of the body in order to gain the perspectives of various levels of energetic awareness. We do this through the practices of *pixilation*, *segue*, *relaxed-and-alert*, concentration, meditation, and other means. During this whole process of the *Seven Levels of Body* we must pay careful attention to the *atmosphere* accompanying the various states.

We proceed from the gross physical into the energetic in a carefully determined path so that we maintain the atmosphere of joy, or bliss, or freedom as we move through the levels. This is crucial, because if we are not physically and emotionally stable as we begin the processes of dissolution, we can encounter fear, confusion, and suffering. Whenever we are confronted by

overwhelming pain or confusion, the *atmosphere* can darken. This state is impermanent because it is emotional, but when we're in it, it feels permanent and isolating. When practicing *BEQG Seven Levels of Body*, we can become confused or disoriented if we are not grounded.

We must take care that the *atmosphere* surrounding our practice of *BEQG* is positive and healing. It does not help to do the practices correctly and often if the *atmosphere* is one of compulsion, seeking gain, or spiritual bypass. We must be kind to ourselves in the pain and suffering of our bodies and our minds. If there is an *atmosphere* of lovingkindness to ourselves and to others this is of great benefit to everyone.

### 5--PRINCIPLES OF *BEQG*—RELAXED AND ALERT

One of the commonly reported sensations of “qi” in the body is the hands feeling swollen and warm. This is a vibrating sensation when looked into carefully, and is similar to that which is sensed in the entire body with the *BEQG pixilation*-through-movement techniques. “Swollen” means there is tension with a membrane, and implies discomfort. By *pixilating* the membrane (the skin of the body), the expanding quality of “qi” is allowed free rein to penetrate the perceived boundaries of the physical body, releasing the pressure sensed as “swollen.” We are then able to discover that these limitations are just perceptions; ideas which trap us in the notions of permanence and separateness, so the tension is released.

In order to move through these various body/mind states, the practitioner must become deeply relaxed, and simultaneously, keenly alert. As the body and mind relax, wider awareness grows naturally out of the alert mind investigating what is occurring. In teaching I describe this state as pasta--uncooked is too rigid, while overcooked is too relaxed. What we want is “al dente!”

In Qigong, the mind is aware of sensations within and around the body. The awareness becomes increasingly finely tuned through practice, *segueing* into a larger awareness of what a body *is*. *BEQG* is “vertically integrated”, meaning being able to focus attention on any of the *seven bodies* at any time. It means knowing that, as the Buddha said, “there is a body here” in any state of absorption during meditation. There is an inherent absence of duality, but oneness is not a homogenous soup. It is closer to an awareness of all that arises, including awareness, which naturally includes the body. As Tai Chi Master Tricia Yu puts it, “It’s silly to think of the mind as being superior to the stomach--where would the mind be without the stomach?!” (Yu, 1993).

Looking into “alert”, we may ask, “What is the *atmosphere* here?” We can be alert or even hyper-vigilant due to fear, like a prey species, or to aggression, like a predator. Alertness arising from these states is not sustainable, however. The *atmosphere* which arises with alertness in an awakened state is one of the four *Divine Abodes* of lovingkindness, compassion, joy (or

sympathetic joy), and equanimity. If alertness is accompanied by such an *atmosphere*, it is said to be authentic. The alertness is keen because it exists in a context of relaxation.

We may apply the term "relaxed" to the body and the mind. There can be a relaxed body and a busy, distracted mind that is tense and contracted. What we are looking to describe is body and mind *together* in relaxation. There are many well-known relaxation techniques for the body, and *BEQG* aims to create that relaxed state in motion and in stillness.

Relaxation of the mind is not sleepiness. If we are slipping into dreaming, objects of mind rapidly appear and change, so the *atmosphere* is charged—not in a *Divine Abode*. Relaxation in the mind is a letting go of identification with the objects of mind and a movement into the flow of energy in the mind/body system. The *atmosphere* that arises in this state of spaciousness is blissful. There is great joy in exploring the various levels of body—a true sense of freedom. The deeper value arising out of *relaxed-alert* awareness of energy is not just in the *atmosphere* of bliss. We're looking for the transformation of suffering, not its avoidance. The lasting value is in the insights and transformations that arise while experiencing the "vertically integrated" states of awareness. This awareness arises out of a clear intention to be *relaxed and alert*.

In performing *BEQG* movements and postures, there is awareness of the physical body moving, relaxing, feeling warm, tingling, and so on. *Segueing* into sitting meditation, the awareness can move to the light (radiance) within and around the body. ("Light" is awareness "seeing" itself. It is the visual perception of a subtle body seeing into the grosser, physical body.) Body and mind become more synonymous, so that spaciousness in the body is also available as spaciousness in the mind. Fewer thoughts arise. The *atmosphere* surrounding these states is one of ease and well-being. There is a distinct vibrating quality in the physical body as sensed in the heartbeat, pulse, breath, and more subtly in every sense impression of the body, inner and outer. There is a gradual "letting go" of the limitations of forms. (Li Jun Feng 1996)

One could explore all "objects of mind" surrounding any issue, including thoughts, images, feelings, memories, and so forth. One could then perform some of the practices of *BEQG* in order to *pixillate* these "objects" and move into a greater perspective on the issue at hand. This leads to an understanding that no pain is really personal. It is all due to the causes and conditions of being incarnate, and is universal. These practices transform the perception of pain and suffering from a closed, contracted sense of the separate self into an open, boundless awareness of the universality of human life on this earth. This insight gives rise to compassion and equanimity, the highest of the *Divine Abodes*.

## APPLICATIONS OF *BEQG*

The first set of applications applies to *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)* courses. As mindfulness meditation is a cornerstone of Buddhist practice, and as *MBSR* is being taught in over 250 medical centers in the U.S. alone, the introduction of *BEQG* into the *MBSR* curriculum seems timely and efficacious. Many **Buddhist chaplains** are involved in individual mindfulness practices, as well as in teaching meditation in various settings. These include schools, prisons, churches, and hospitals, to name a few. The *BEQG* offerings here are relevant for practitioners of *Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)*, and to the many **chaplains** engaged in this and similar modalities. The suggested practices to follow also apply to other styles of meditation and to other settings to which **Buddhist chaplains** may apply them.

## **1--MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION (MBSR) AND BREATHING EARTH QI GONG—INTERWEAVING PRACTICES**

A Pilot Program for UW Hospitals in Madison, Wisconsin

The Eight-Week Basic *MBSR* Course

I was assigned 30 minutes per 2-1/2 hour class to offer Qigong which would be relevant to the course work presented at each weekly gathering. There were fifteen students along with the teacher, Ms. Bonus, a student teacher, and myself. The *MBSR* program has been running for over thirty years, and is widely used, especially in hospital settings. Many of the students had been referred by their physicians or therapists, or were accompanying their spouses who were referred. The coursework was set out clearly, encompassing sitting, walking, and yogic meditation, as well as small and large group interaction, lecture, and discussion. Each student was asked to practice 45 minutes daily for six or seven days per week, and to keep a log of their practices and experiences.

The students had not signed up for Qigong, were not Buddhist practitioners, or even necessarily experienced in meditation. Many of them were in active treatment for cancer or other serious illnesses, experiencing physical and emotional pain. Ms. Bonus' willingness to integrate Qigong into *MBSR* came out of her sense that offering other "doorways" for students could make the course more effective. She was willing to experiment with *Breathing Earth Qi Gong*, which I renamed "Mindful Movement", in the *MBSR* program at both entry and advanced levels.

As *MBSR* is a mind-body practice, there are many junctures for *BEQG* to interweave with its teachings and practices. The first week I was asked to lead some basic grounding, centering, present-moment, and warm-up type movements. I was careful to give permission, for participants to do the practices in ways that are appropriate for their bodies. We practiced *Standing Mountain*, *Sitting Mountain*, *Backwash*, *Tree in Spring*, *Boat Rowing*, and associated movements and postures. These were meant to enhance the mindfulness meditation practices of the *Body Scan*, *Breath Awareness*, and to begin to create a group consciousness. We also experimented with mudras and subtle shifts in awareness which arise through small, simple movements of fingers and hands. The second meeting's *BEQG* segment included teachings on the nature of the body, along with *Crane Movements* and *Breath Awareness* movements and postures.

The third meeting focused on emotions and their manifestations in the physical body. After warm-ups and grounding, I led the class in the practice of *Body Poems*. We used the body to strike poses indicating various mind-states. These included peace, acceptance, stability, sadness, anger, and joy. Between each series of three repetitions of the postures, we *segued* into *Tree in Spring*. This session was quite powerful for many participants. In the group discussion, the following comments were offered. "These movements really helped my mind to stop spinning." "In holding the hands at the chest and belly, I was reminded of holding my children and grandchildren. It was very comforting and brought up feelings of peace." "It was surprising how quickly the emotion changed with body movement."

One student told how she had worked as a prison guard, and was constantly standing in the job, feeling fearful all day. These memories made her feel very uncomfortable standing. When asked to assume the position of fear, her memories of this job came flooding back. By *segueing* into *Tree in Spring* she was able to sense the emotions immediately dissipating. She expressed relief that now she had a way to release her mind from such troubling emotions, simply through body posture and movement.

Ms. Bonus asked me to come to the next *MBSR* teachers' meeting to lead them in this practice. (See the following chapter on *Body Poems*). She mentioned a possible pitfall of this practice--that people could mistake mindfulness for grasping after bliss, or relief, rather than just being present for whatever arises. We agreed that while it is true, the practice also encourages one to face the emotions, feel into them, and return to them again and again with the knowledge that they can temporarily dissipate them through movement.

For the final twenty minutes of the fourth class, we practiced grounding in the body, in the lower dan tien (belly), in the middle dan tien (heart), and in the breath. We *segued* into *Trembling Mountain* for three minutes, followed by *Belly-and-Heart Hands*. This was intended

to help practitioners discover ways to feel grounded, which enables one to pause before being pulled into habitual reactivity.

*MBSR* meditation practice is presented with clarity in the course, and some of those present are experiencing pain, illness, and other difficulties around which they need to gain some space. At the same time, I feel there needs to be a clearly stated and experiential component of bliss in meditation practice. Through movement and other elements of physical body practice, such as gesture, posture, breath enhancement, visualization, and so on, students can experience their natural joy and openness. This is not to say they should avoid looking deeply into their shadows—into their suffering and pain. It just gives groundedness to the practice of mindfulness—reminding us that our true nature is one of joy, liberation, and transformation. Using the physical body to bring on joy is a revelation in itself for many.

In the fifth class I offered thirty minutes of movement involving the sensate aspects of emotional states. I taught that, while the mind operates at up to fifty synapses per second, the body moves much more slowly. (Austin, 2010) This makes it much easier to be mindful of the body than of the mind. I elaborated that our society trains us in school to perceive ourselves as living somewhere inside our heads. I led movements which would help to “bring down” the presence of the students into their bodies. These included *Standing Mountain* with contemplations, and *Picking Fruit and Planting It*. At Ms. Bonus’ request, we then experienced the *Body Poems* segment again. I closed in the traditional way, using eye-socket massage, scalp massage, “smoothing the energy body”, finishing with ways to release “excess qi.”

Midway through the sixth class, Ms. Bonus asked me to lead in creating postures which embodied “resistance.” I simply called attention to the body postures of the students in that moment. Virtually all of them were seated in positions suggesting resistance, stress, discomfort, and so on, so I asked the circle to be aware of the positions around them. I invited them to offer a word describing some of these positions. I then invited them to assume a position which was particularly cumbersome, and to feel into it. We repeated this exercise with another posture, which clearly felt “armored”, in the words of some of the students.

After these exercises, all were again seated in their places in the circle, but by this time their positions suggested relaxation and alertness. Clearly, the movement helped to relieve stress in their bodies and minds. I felt it was a helpful counterweight to all the mental exercises and discussion around mindfulness of thinking. One theme which has emerged is the interplay between the exploration and acceptance of one’s darkness in mindfulness, and the creation of wholeness and energy through Qigong practices. I feel that both are different sides of the same coin. The radiance instilled by the energetic movement practices creates spaciousness in body and mind. Then, through the process of *segue*, the mindfulness of habitual patterns and other unconscious contents of the mind can come more clearly into focus through the *MBSR*

practices. We can touch into joy and light, and then bring added energy into touching into difficult emotions and hidden content. Too much darkness can lead to overwhelm and despair, while too much lightness can lead to denial and spiritual bypass. When they inform each other, acceptance, investigation and transformation of darkness *segues* naturally into states of spaciousness and light, which then empower one to re-enter the darkness.

The final class focused on embodiment—how the sensations in the body reveal emotional states, and on seeing thoughts as objects—two main themes in the *MBSR* program. When participants were asked to name the practices most useful for them, each had a different favorite. Some responses were, “I am handling my anger by turning towards it...”, “...thoughts are not me...”, “...everything is workable...”, “...trust the process...”, and “...non-striving....”

When requested to offer a final wrap-up of *MM*, I chose the experience of one of the participants. She had weeks ago described a process wherein she pantomimed wrapping herself in her grandmother’s quilt as a way of bringing compassion to herself. I asked her to re-tell her story, which she did beautifully, with hand gestures. I then requested she magnify and slow down these gestures so we could mimic them and discover their meanings. This evolved naturally into a brief “body poem” type of Qigong which we named *My Grandmother’s Quilt!*

It became clear through this process how Qigong grows naturally out of the gestures and postures of one’s own body. The wisdom of the body is to speak its truth without words so that the meaning is embedded in the body, the emotions, and, finally, in the conscious mind. We closed with circle Qigong to unify the group and express our gratitude to each other for the path and our interwoven journeys.

## **2--MBSR and BEQG—BODY POEMS**

This application of the (*BEQG*) *Body Poems* Practice was developed especially for the eight-week *MBSR* course offered at the Research Park Clinic of the University of Madison Hospitals under the direction of Katherine Bonus in June of 2011. It represents a small portion of the *BEQG* curriculum, and only a portion of the *Body Poems* segment. It is designed in this application to offer a gentle, body- and movement-centered approach to the exploration of emotional states. By using the body to express various emotions, the practitioners are able to sense the emotion in the body, and how changing body positions affect emotional states.

Time allotment for the entire segment is 35--45 minutes. The group can be arranged in a circle, being sure that each person has enough space to move their arms freely. The students move in

harmony with the leader. We begin with grounding practice, including *Standing Mountain*, and which could include *Trembling Earth*, *Backwash*, *Breathing Hands*, etc. We then continue with five minutes of centering practices including *Tree in Spring (TIS)*. Begin *TIS* in *Standing Mountain* and touch into it between each posture. The feet are rooted, knees are soft, backs of hands face each other, fingers pointing to the centerline of the body. We follow the hands up with the eyes; inhale up, exhale down. The tongue touches the roof of the mouth. When the arms are out to the sides, this is “embracing all-that-is.” The arms describe a circle moving downwards and touching into *Standing Mountain*. We repeat at the rate of one’s breath.

**Body Poem I**—The leader demonstrates and the students follow. Beginning in *Standing Mountain*, the leader offers a pose which is verbalized as “acceptance”, with the arms extended horizontally. All hold and sense into the pose, which is narrated by the leader. The narration can include “opening the heart to Universal Life Force Energy”, Thich Nhat Hanh’s sense of “Interbeing”, “touching everyone in this circle, and through it to all other circles”, “exchanging oxygen and Co2 with the plant world”, and so on. All are gently requested to note sensations in the body and feelings in the heart/mind. After a minute or two, the leader segues the pose into *TIS*, touches briefly into *Standing Mountain*, then repeats the pose, perhaps modeling it slightly differently. The pose may be static or active—that is, subtle changes could be made in the pose as time passes. The practitioner continues to monitor the effects of the pose and/or movements on the body/mind/heart. The leader gently encourages the students to relax into each pose, suggesting focus on breathing, attention, and/or relaxation. All then segue into *TIS*, then repeat once more for a total of three poses per emotional state.

**Body Poem II**—Repeat the sequence for *Body Poem I*, using a pose embodying “stability”, “strength”, “wakefulness”, “fully present”, “relaxed and alert”, or a similar state of being. Segue each pose into *TIS* before going into the next pose. *Tree in Spring (TIS)* may be referred to metaphorically using the image of an “Etch-A-Sketch”. The pose is “drawn” on the screen, then erased by *TIS* each time so a new pose can then be drawn. The vital energy flowing up the trunk of a tree in spring is symbolic of the Qi, or Life Force Energy flowing through the bodymind system as well as through all-that-is. So while it does erase the past and allow a moment of freedom for the invocation of the future pose, it also brings in fresh energy with which the next pose can be created.

**Body Poem III**—Repeat the sequence for *Body Poem I*, using a pose embodying “kindness”, “gentleness”, “grace”, or a similar emotional state. Each pose is explored three times, using *TIS* in between each one.

For the next set, the leader tells the group they will next explore three more challenging emotional states. The leader gently suggests that participants may wish to turn away from the center of the circle in order to have privacy in their self-expression. It should be very clear that

no one will be looking at anyone else in order to ensure the privacy of each person. All are reminded that the postures may change in the process of feeling into them.

**Body Poem IV**—The posture is “*fear*”, in a sequence of three with *TIS* in between each pose.

**Body Poem V**—The posture is “*anger*”, in a sequence of three with *TIS* in between each pose.

**Body Poem VI**—The posture is “*sadness*”, in a sequence of three, with *TIS* in between each pose.

**Body Poem VII**—The posture is “*compassion*”, especially for oneself, in a sequence of three, with *TIS* in between.

**Completion**—All return to the circle, facing inwards, and assume the *Standing Mountain* pose. Together, the hands are moved to *Heart—Belly Position*, not touching the body. *If appropriate*, hands can then segue into prayer position, slightly apart or touching. Participants may then bow slightly to one another—their “friends on the path.” If not appropriate, the group may ground and center themselves. Either way, a brief period of sitting or standing meditation is helpful for integrating the practice.

This **Body Poem** practice may be followed with dyad or triad, and/or group discussion. For further practice, students may be encouraged to repeat any or all of these sequences formally on a regular basis. They may be encouraged to “play jazz” with these offerings as their body or mood dictates. They may practice informally, for instance, with *Tree in Spring (TIS)* whenever they feel the need to refresh their outlook or general energy. Many participants are surprised how instantaneously *TIS* transforms, or temporarily “erases” their emotional states. This can be very useful, even liberating, for some students who instantly understand that their feelings are impermanent and subject to alteration by giving attention to their own body posture.

*BEQG*, and similar energetic awareness practices, are capable of quite readily producing states of liberation, even bliss, in practitioners. While this is very useful in one’s healing process, there is another aspect of the psyche which it does not easily penetrate. Our “darkness”—the unconscious underpinnings of our minds, cannot be evaporated simply by applying practices which induce feelings of joy, liberation, and so on. Our “habit energies” must be approached with mindfulness, investigation, compassion, and an ocean of patience in order for them to completely transform into awareness.

*BEQG* and *Qigong* in general can be used as “spiritual bypass” which brings on sometimes profound states of awareness, but usually must, in my view, be augmented with some form of mindfulness practice in order to be complete. Certainly there is great value in getting in touch with our inherent joyful nature. When we experience the oneness of body and mind, the small

mind is liberated and flows with *Universal Qi*. Feelings of spaciousness and joy naturally arise. I feel it is essential to experience oneness in order to avoid the traps related to wallowing in our own suffering. Without joy, there is no energy for practice, and we become stuck.

*BEQG* in the context of *MBSR* training can give clarity to the interrelatedness of body and mind (emotions, in this case) for some students. It can easily be used to *segue* from one mindfulness practice to another, such as between sitting meditation, lecture, mindfulness exercise, group discussion, and so on. Sitting can be preceded by body-loosening practices, and could be followed with one of the *BEQG* visualization practices. *BEQG* can be seamlessly integrated into the *MBSR* program, or used for “graduate courses” or for general enrichment.

It may be helpful to mention to students that the ***Body Poems*** can be very powerful. One may experience deeper emotions as a result of the postures. Emotional content may arise in surprising ways as the body is awakened. When this occurs, one will need to practice mindfulness in order to process the feelings as they arise. *TIS* may be used as a way to regain one’s confidence and groundedness to be able to further explore and accept one’s emotions.

### 3—*MBSR GRADUATE COURSE AND BEQG APPLICATIONS*

The following are four outlines of 1-1/2 hour-long classes I offered to graduates of the *MBSR Eight-Week Course* described above. They are designed for those who have experienced mindfulness meditation, and are also applicable to many different groups which may be facilitated by **Buddhist chaplains**. These could include medical condition support groups, students, prisoners, the elderly, children, or a **chaplain’s** personal practice, to name a few. Since they do not follow the *MBSR* course syllabus, they stand alone as *BEQG* offerings which can be used as-is or altered to meet a **chaplain’s** needs.

#### CLASS ONE—GROUNDING

Chairs/cushions are arranged in a circle.

Picture: Mona Lisa

Center of the Circle: Russian Dolls

Introductions around the circle—Name and what brings you here.

Explanation of Qigong, *BEQG*, and the interface with *MBSR*

“Do not hurt yourself. Adjust the movements. You do not have to remember anything. There is a free DVD. Feel free to practice any and all, as needed.”

*Standing Mountain and Contemplations:* Earth/body are one; Vertical Axis; Abdomen—connection through time; Heart Center—connection to all-that-is; Above head; Heart of the Universe; Embracing oneness; Opening the Rainbow

Warm-ups: Head-neck; Shoulder circles; Richard Nixon x3 (fun, compassion for the tense body, compassion for all tense people); *Tai Chi twist*—weight shift; *Walking Crane*; *Standing Mountain*

*Trembling Earth—5 minutes—Stop—Standing Mountain*

*Trembling Earth Half Speed, Half again*, connection to body rhythms of breath, heartbeat, to natural cycles; slow further—connection to internal and external cosmic rhythms; slow further—*Segue* into Sitting Meditation.

Sitting Meditation for about 10—15 minutes.

*Standing Mountain; Tree in Spring; Heart Hands; Bow to the Circle*

Discussion—Q and A

Give out DVD's, collect emails.

## CLASS TWO--OPENING

Center—Russian Dolls

Pictures—Impressionists—objects/space...matter/energy..."objective realism"/light

*Standing Mountain with Contemplations; Backwash; Tree in Spring; Boat Rowing in the Stream of Air; Opening Heart; Weight shifts*

*Bowing to the Seven Directions with Weight Shifts*

*Standing Mountain and Teachings on Pixilation*—Looking deeply into "solidity"; "opening...to what?"

*Trembling Mountain*—true nature of "objective mountain"

*Filter*

*Opening the Seven Gates*

*Segue into Subtlety; into* Sitting Meditation

Sitting Meditation for about 15 minutes

*Breathing the Stars* (focus on sensations in the skin; breathing through the pores; breathing light of the sun; breath body; breathing the stars,; body as a constellation; free breath among points of light; appearance of Buddhaic smile; smile, breath, light; smile appears in heart; on lips of face in breathing body; sensations on the skin; pixilation; open eyes

*Segue into Standing Mountain*

*Crane Qigong*

Closing—Bowing to the Circle

Discussion—Q/A

### CLASS THREE—ENERGETIC CHANNELS

Pictures—Convection Current, Magnetic Field, Kandinsky—Energy.....latter part of class—Acupuncture Meridians

Center—Russian Dolls

Handouts—Daily Practice Sheet, DVD #2—complete Eval. if you'll miss the final class

Warm-ups: Head/Neck; Hips; Wt. Shift; Backwash; TIS; Boat Rowing; Open Heart

Teaching—Light bulb/electricity as metaphor for death— identification with the bulb, we think we die; identification with the energy, it's always alive...separateness=fear, death, defendedness, contraction; over-identification with energy=ungroundedness.....INSPIRED BODY, EMBODIED SPIRIT

*Central Channel—Standing Mtn.; Sky Cone; segue into breath bouncing—heartbeat—breath; TIS; TIA; Parting the Clouds; Inhale up/Exhale down with arms and hands; Heaven/Earth; Inhale up, Exhale Down, then reverse; Fingers pointing to midline. Central channel is Tree-Like—basic energetic structure with energy flowing up and down simultaneous; L R Convection Hands*

*Segue into Sitting Meditation*

*Segue into visualization of Microcosmic Orbit (use eyes and breath)*

*Segue into standing; into hands, then arms, then side-to-side Micro Orbit—Reduce*

*Bone Marrow Wash—Starlight in bones=structure of the cosmos in the structure of the body.*

Closing; Bowing to the Circle

Discussion and Q/A

## CLASS FOUR—INTEGRATING

Pictures—Quan Yin, Avalokiteshvara, Mary, Jesus

Center of the Circle—Russian Dolls

Teachings—Matter—body—mind—heart—soul—spirit=evolution/refinement of energetic forces, from forces of nature to forces of the heart, soul, spirit (*TIS*) it is a circle as well as a vertical line gross to subtle microcosmic orbit embodies this concept/flow.

*Standing Mountain with Contemplations*

*Hip swivels, TC Twist, Crane Walks the Riverbank*

*Backwash, Tree in Spring (TIS), Boat Rowing, Open Heart*

*Bowing to the Seven Directions*

*Standing Breath Meditation* with arms and hands, side-to-side, relax into end of exhale

*Segue into Sitting Breath Meditation—Birth and Death with Every Breath*

Myself, those nearest to me, others, all beings

*Crane Qigongs*

*Heart Meditation—seated—Heart as Stage—Bring in Images*

Self as child, adolescent, adult, now, very old—speak to her and listen

Let appear image of Love and/or Compassion and/or Transcendence in the heartspace

*Segue into sitting meditation for about 10-15 minutes*

*Segue into Breathing the Stars (optional)*

*Flying Crane*

Closing—Bow to Circle

Discussion/ Q and A

Fill out and hand in anonymous evaluations

Gratitude to All

#### 4--APPLICATION OF *BEQG* IN CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS

The following are some examples for **chaplains** of exercises performed in support groups using *BEQG* techniques and protocols which have proven effective.

*Stage Five* is a cancer support group in Madison, WI, led by Karen Dennis, who is a ten-year survivor of “terminal” stage four cancer. The first group was composed of eight patients, Ms. Dennis, two medical doctors in the role of observers, and myself as *BEQG* facilitator. I offered Qigong for two of the course’s ten weekly sessions, leading the group through movements, postures, and meditations designed to bring them into a state of deep awareness and relaxation. Following introductions and a brief explanation of Qigong, I coached the group in relaxation while sitting and grounding. As the participants were able to stand as well as to sit, we moved into standing *BEQG* to facilitate large motor movements. These induced feelings of confidence in the participants in that they could still move their bodies even with their diagnoses. It also got them “out of their heads” so much, where they experienced a lot of worry, providing a break in their usual routine of sitting and discussion.

We practiced warm-ups, including shoulder rolls, neck stretches, and backwash. We performed *Trembling Mountain* for two minutes, followed by stillness to awaken sensations of qi moving in the body. We sensed into our energetic flows and fields in order to introduce a sense of self that is larger than the physical body. We practiced *Rainbow Hands* to bring up feelings of joy, expansiveness and group connection. We went into “...just for this moment, everything is ok...” several times, with the introduction of the *Mona Lisa Smile*. We then moved into breath awareness exercises, including *Flying Cranes*, which is always a favorite. My intention was to bring about feelings of joy and bliss in the body as a relief from their often negative attitudes towards their bodies due to illnesses. This was followed by *Tree in Spring (TIS)*, which segued into increasingly smaller movements, into stillness, and finally into seated meditation.

We then continued moving qi through visualization, breath rhythm, and movements of the eyes. We focused on the breath, *segueing* into *Breathing the Stars*. A deep stillness enveloped the circle as each experienced the expanded state of spaciousness engendered by this practice. We returned to just sitting quietly and breathing consciously. After a pause, I gently requested that we go around the circle and each person offer a word or phrase for whatever they had experienced in the exercises. Each response was accompanied by a natural gesture, arising out of the body’s experience of the Qigong.

Examples of responses included “gratitude”--moving the hands so both palms faced upwards; “freedom”, with hands raised, fingers pointing up; and “peace”, with both hands covering the heart, palms towards the body. Once the circuit was completed, I began again, requesting each person repeat their word or phrase *and their gesture*. Most were not even aware that they had

made gestures, so I mirrored the gesture for each to repeat. In unison, the group repeated the word or phrase and together we expanded each gesture, creating individualized *Body Poems* for each, and for the group as a whole. The verbal offerings along with the expanded gestures formed individualized capsules of the sensations, emotions, and overall psychological states of each person. These then became resources out of their own experiences.

I explained how Qigong arose directly out of experiences such as these, so that each person had simultaneously discovered and created Qigong for themselves. I even told them the formal names for the movements which had spontaneously arisen. Examples included *Offering Fruit to the Gods* (“gratitude”); *Sky Cone* (“freedom”); and *Heart Hands* (“peace”). Each person had a personal movement to use whenever they felt the need. The basic practice of expansiveness (*Breathing the Stars*) was meant to empower them to counteract the tendency to contract around pain and worry. I mentioned that by looking up, with the eyes either open or closed, we can bring on a sense of expanded awareness if we feel we are falling into self-absorption, which is augmented by looking down.

Finally, we “downloaded the experiences to the hard drive” (Leitch, 2011) by placing hands on heart and belly and reentering the experiences of *Breathing the Stars*. I reminded the participants they could assume this position of gentle support every night just before going to sleep—one hand connecting to all-that-is, and the other connecting through time via the womb.

Another cancer support group was composed mainly of women who had varying stages of breast or reproductive cancer. We practiced *Each Breath is a Life*, which was particularly effective for the mothers and grandmothers, as it focused on welcoming newborns taking their first inbreaths in each moment. It put the practitioners in touch with the rhythms of life and death, offering a context for their present situations. One of the *BEQG* practices that was particularly effective for the breast cancer patients focused on bringing awareness to the chest area and to the breath as experienced in the chest.

One 34 year old mother of three young children reported in discussion that she realized that for her whole life she breathed very shallowly due to a childhood trauma to her neck. During the Qigong practice she was able “for the first time to breathe deeply and freely.” She felt her lungs filling with air and with light, expanding beyond her physical boundaries into spaciousness. With tears in her eyes, she expressed her gratitude for these practices, particularly those enhancing breath, and vowed to continue them informally on her own whenever she felt constricted in her breathing. Although she did succumb to cancer eighteen months later, the liberation she experienced with her expanded sense of self was of great comfort to her and to her family.

Practices which bring a sense of spaciousness and an expanded sense of the body are particularly useful for those who are experiencing pain or emotional difficulties due to a medical diagnosis. The tendency to contract around the issue, falling into aversion, worry, despair, dread, hopelessness, self-pity, and so on can be instantly counteracted by practices which invoke spaciousness. Simply moving the body can bring one out of depression and into a more relaxed, accepting state. Sometimes it required a bit of courage for cancer patients to even get up from their seats. The postures of *Standing Mountain*, *Earth Cone*, and *Sky Cone* brought up confidence in their stability as each experienced with deep awareness something as taken-for-granted as standing up.

For those facing their own mortality, it is very useful to come into present-moment awareness of the gross body because the sense of time literally expands. The sense that there is little time left dissipates, if only briefly, allowing a sense of spaciousness and hope to enter the field of awareness. It is important for a **chaplain** to say we are not trying to cure cancer, nor are we trying to passively accept it. There is no goal—there is only the present moment in the context of the awareness of mortality. This helps people to pay attention to what it is like to stand, to move, to breathe. It usually brings up feelings of gratitude and even joy to taste the fullness of life even for a few moments.

### **ONE-ON-ONE—BEQG, CHAPLAINCY, AND A CLIENT WITH A TERMINAL ILLNESS**

**INTENTION:** This project developed bodymind practices with and for a person with a diagnosis of terminal cancer who cannot stand. Bill was 59 years old and was living at home with his wife Linda. We met once weekly. The first meeting was a one-hour visit during which we three talked about Bill's situation, his goals and needs, and how *BEQG* might be of use to him. We did no experiential practices. I preferred to keep the first visit friendly and informal so we could proceed without rigid roles. I made it clear to him that we would be co-creating this process for our mutual benefit and for the benefit of future practitioners. I then conducted an interview. The results appear below.

What is his overall aim or goal in wanting to develop and practice movement?

He states that he wants to find ways to relax, open, deal with his worries and physical pain, and deepen his awareness of his body. He does not have a regular spiritual practice.

What is his level of physical pain, range of motion (rom), strength, and flexibility?

R.O.M. of upper body is normal. He cannot stand without support. His muscles he describes as “weak due to lack of use”. Right now he is not in serious pain.

Is it helpful for me to model the gross body movements for him to follow with smaller movements? Yes.

Caveat: do not do anything which hurts. Adapt all movements, postures, and gestures to your body as it is in the moment. He heard and understood this. He did all reclining in a Lay-Z-Boy-type chair.

After some discussion of the nature of body and mind and their interface, we began with a practice of clenching the fists and sensing the body for ten seconds. We then released the fists and sensed again. We repeated this exercise three times. He verbalized his bodily sensations each time. He needed some coaching to come to a better understanding of the difference between feelings/stories and basic sensations, and how this awareness can inform his approach to physical and emotional distress.

Next we went into a *Trauma Resiliency Model (TRM)* protocol. He responded well to grounding and selected two powerful resources which brought smiles to his face. We then slowly and carefully approached and touched into sensations in his torso, which is the general location of the cancer. As he spoke, he made subtle hand gestures, describing the presence in his abdomen as a round, inflated mass, with accompanying sensations described as “blocked, tight, and cold.”

We returned to one of his resources. He relaxed into the resourcing images and into his breathing. He soon indicated a willingness to return to the blockage. He sensed into his body again, this time reporting that the mass was now deflated, and that his torso felt more open and spacious. These reports were accompanied by subtle gestures. We worked with the gestures, expanding and slowing them down. The first was a gesture of opening by circling the wrists in the abdomen area. The second was a delicate grabbing gesture with the fingers towards the centerline, followed by a letting go away from the body.

We discussed these two gestures, which I repeated along with him to activate the “mirror neurons”. (Austin, 2010) We oriented the speed to his breathing rhythm. We expanded the “opening” and “grabbing” gestures to the full extent of his r.o.m. When asked what he notices in the body as the movements progress, he reported the following: sinking deeper into the chair, awareness of movement—a flow in a circular motion up the spine and down the front, general intensification of all sensations, including breath and heartbeat, and an affective sense of bliss and peace. He continued practicing his individual *Body Poem* for several minutes in silence as Linda and I accompanied him in the movements. We completed the session with a discussion of how to ground and resource oneself when pain or difficult feelings arise.

### Week Three

Bill will be having hip replacement surgery on his left side in about two months. The oncologist did not want him to have the surgery because it interrupts the chemotherapy treatments. Bill is happy about the coming surgery as he is looking forward to having mobility, and to being able to travel, work, and live a more normal life, even if it means he will be sacrificing longevity. His deep desire to feel and act healthy seems very much in synch with his body strength and energy level. He stated that he has great confidence in his body's ability to heal. We discussed this attitude as a Dharma door into the transpersonal nature of the body and the wisdom of the body regarding healing. We agreed that we were accessing this deeper aspect of the physical body through our explorations of *BEQG* energy awareness.

He practiced his *Body Poems* in the previous week, reporting that the "movements calm the interior" and "reduce busyness in the mind, bringing me back to a good place." When he awakened in the night with worries about death, he found that grounding, such as breath awareness, heartbeat awareness, or movements, instantly bring him out of his worried state. We discussed the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems and how they operate. The key is to recognize that worry has arisen, sense into it in the body, and to move attention into the body through the breath or some other modality, creating groundedness. When worries arise again, one just repeats the process with grounding or resourcing or both. This ability to self-regulate requires an increasing awareness, or "witness consciousness" which observes whatever arises without getting caught in it. (Wilber 2002)

Bill practiced his *Body Poem* of "pulling stuck energy out of the belly with the hands" and gracefully cycled it into a sitting version of *Tree in Spring*. These movements seem to be increasing his confidence in his ability to recognize subtle energies in his body, and to regulate his moods. He reported that when he places his hand on his heart, he senses its beating and has a fear reaction to it. We agreed that this would be a good area of inquiry for him, using innate curiosity ("what is this?") to explore the heartbeat and the feelings and thoughts surrounding it. He agreed to focus on this practice and to discuss it the following week.

For practice next week we agreed to focus on lifting the eyes up and dropping them down, moving energy with the fingertips, visualizing the energy as light, and to do all in conjunction with the breath: in=up; out=down. The purpose of these explorations will be to enhance the body/mind connection and to expand the notion of the body beyond the physical into the energetic. We are hoping to come up with some protocols for those who are bedridden to help them engage with the body, and also to see themselves as more than just a body. This is an extremely important realization for those who are faced with terminal illnesses and/or are bedridden—one which a skillful **chaplain** can facilitate.

## Week Four

Bill was happy to report that he experimented with looking into his emotional reactions to his heartbeat. While holding the posture of *Hand-on-Heart*, he gently asked, “What is this?” It had always been for him a sense of “time passing”, of “fragility and fear that life is slipping away, bit-by-bit”. He noticed this *atmosphere* surrounding the physical sensation, named it, and went on to explore it with fresh curiosity. He felt strength in the heartbeat, and said to himself, “I am strong”, rather than “I am fragile.” He was reminded of a poem by Dylan Thomas, “*The force that through the green fuse drives the flower... Drives my green age.*”

He felt buoyed-up by this reframing of the sensation, and no longer felt his heartbeat with a sense of dread. We discussed how to hold the two perceptions of the sensation (fragility and strength) in spacious awareness. Each one contains the truth of the other, and both are necessary to attain full awareness of heartbeat, and of life. We discussed the transpersonal nature of heartbeat, of the force driving the heartbeat, and of the energy in the body which at once gives rise to the body and transcends it (*BEQG Seven Bodies*). The spacious awareness of both the fragility and the strength of life is the field in which all manifest nature arises.

Ironically, the treatment for his metastasized cancer creates symptoms worse than those of the disease itself. Bill is scheduled to have chemo treatment tomorrow, and is already experiencing symptoms of the treatment. He concentrates on telling his body, which is in such aversion, that it is for his (and his body’s) own good. At a gut level he never wants to receive another treatment. However, the 80 chemo treatments he has received since the year 2000, when he was first diagnosed, are what he feels have kept him alive. (He was pronounced cancer-free in 2004, but the cancer metastasized in 2008).

He was very tired one night but could not fall asleep, so he did his *Body Poem* practice. After just one round, he found himself wide awake, and very energized! He was surprised, but realized how effective *BEQG* practice is for bringing up energy. He had been practicing and now knew the power of Qigong. I suggested to him that he repeat the practices to “see where they go.” He stated that he was afraid of “letting go—of losing control.” I replied that we all were afraid, and that the letting go is not the problem--we let go every night when we fall asleep. The problem is the fear, which would be absent in the energetic practice because fear relies on constriction, while the practices reinforce openness. He smiled, and now looks at the whole process as an exploration.

## Week Five

Bill is now almost fully recovered from his chemo session. He has been practicing with the heartbeat at the center of his awareness. He begins formal practice with mindfulness of breathing, then *segues* into sensing his beating heart with his hands. He contemplates the

sensations and concomitant arisings in his mind. Informally, he goes to his heartbeat meditation when he begins to worry, “...when things are closing in and I’m fixating on the negative...” He augments this practice with his *Body Poem* hand positions, including *Holding the Tree*. I contextualized this gesture that as he senses more deeply into his physical body by focusing on heartbeat, his awareness simultaneously expands outwards to include his energy body, which he embraces with his palms in *Holding the Tree*. We discussed how the practice of *BEQG* moves awareness into increasingly subtle bodies--that the energy he senses at the limits of the palms is *pixilated*, or porous. His “body” actually extends out infinitely in all directions.

I showed him how to sense the pulse in his wrist. We agreed that pulse practice is of the water element, just as breath practice is of the air element. I explained the Buddhist concepts of the five elements: earth (physical body), water (blood and all fluids), fire (heat), air (breath), and space, which is common to all. (Nhat Hanh 1998) For Bill, heartbeat indicates oceanic presence, the womb, dissolution, melting, letting go, and relaxation. We agreed to work with the heartbeat practice in the week to come in order to explore its potential for providing comfort and expanded awareness for him, and potentially for others.

He mentioned that at night, in the midst of “things falling apart”, he “requested a phrase.” What arose for him intuitively was “Live to the last moment.” This has become his mantra. He feels uplifted by these words, and accepting of his life as it is.

## **Week Six**

Bill reports that he now uses awareness of heartbeat as a comforting resource, having reframed it as his resiliency and his transpersonal nature. He described the unsettling symptoms of his body trying to “purge itself of the chemo.” He stated, “I have no idea what’s going on with my body.” He admits to becoming fearful, frustrated and angry at times, occasionally going into a “cursing tirade” about his condition.

I reinforced that releasing emotions in this way was fine. We discussed his increasing ability to create awareness (or mindfulness, or spaciousness) around whatever arises. I suggested that trying to figure things out is like trying to cross a river with a car. It just leads to frustration and despair--what is needed is another vehicle. We explored the texture of the field of awareness, which I described as the four *Divine Abodes*. He could rest in his expanded awareness, taking refuge in universal compassion for his body, and for himself. This came as a real surprise to him, as he thought compassion was something directed towards others, not to oneself.

He practiced resting in compassionate awareness, naturally moving his hands and arms out from the elbows in a circular, “embracing” gesture. This, along with *Heart and Belly Hands*

became additions to his *Body Poem* sequence when he needed to surround himself with compassionate awareness. He will continue to use the gesture to invoke self-compassion, along with requesting a phrase, as needed.

Linda expressed her sense of helplessness—that she just couldn’t do anything to change her husband’s condition. Bill expressed great gratitude to Linda for all she does to care for him, but mostly for her presence through all the difficulties—her abiding “being”, so that he never felt alone. I gave Bill a CD which I had made (*BEQG CD #1*) which contains three visualizations. He said he would try them out and offer feedback at our next meeting.

### **Week Seven**

Bill was very moved by the three visualizations on *BEQG CD #1*. He commented that *This Body Is Not Me* was very powerful and a bit challenging for him. He said its message ran counter to the societal training that this body *is* me, these thoughts *are* me, and so on. He felt it offered a deeper alternative to identity than he had been exposed to in his education. He further connected the teachings on the CD with the energetic practices of *BEQG* that expanded his sense of the body.

He found *Breathing the Stars* to be “very peace-inducing”, with its use of breath and light to invoke an expanded sense of body and of mind. He listened to it after *This Body Is Not Me* and found it to be “relaxing and beautiful.”

*The Open Heart* was his most profound emotional experience of the three. The envisioning of himself as a small child and through stages of growth was for him very vivid. He intuitively knew exactly what to say to himself at every level by instantly accessing his deep wisdom. He was brought to tears on several occasions. His wisdom mind informed him that “It’s all worthwhile—even the suffering.” In the final episode of the visualization, he learned that “Nothing (in my whole life) needs to be different.” He felt great compassion for his own suffering and for the suffering of his family of origin, especially his parents.

He said to Linda and me, “The challenge of living is much greater than the challenge of dying. I am not fearful. I only become sad when I think of the things I’d like to experience that I’ll miss, like times with Linda and seeing my daughter grow up.”

Bill is content with “Not Knowing.” In fact, like a good **chaplain**, he embraces it.

**FUTURE**—At the time of this writing, this connection is ongoing. For the purposes of this project the description stops here, at week seven. Future interactions with Bill, Linda, and *BEQG* teachings and techniques will create additional resources for **chaplains** due in part to the

valuable feedback from Bill. Lessons learned by this **chaplain** will be put to good use in future meetings with clients. I wish to express my deep thanks to Bill and Linda for their cooperation and insights.

### ***BEQG AND THE TRAUMA RESILIENCY MODEL LEVEL TWO TRAINING***

I was very fortunate to be given the opportunity to experiment with a number of different ways to bring energetic body awareness and movement into the *TRM II* training process. I led the group in grounding and resourcing *BEQG* practices, coached the development of *Body Poems*, and worked with those who wished to explore applications of *Meditative Movement (MM)* for their professional activities. I will now discuss these three aspects of the interfacing of *BEQG* and *TRM*, and how they relate to the *Buddhist Chaplaincy Training Program* at Upaya.

The *TRM* facilitator needs a solid grounding in personal practice to be effective over the long run. Since *TRM* practice puts one in the presence of those who have experienced trauma, the **chaplain** must herself be able to process trauma through her own system. In order to act as a mirror for the client, the facilitator needs clarity and a grounded presence. *BEQG* is an excellent regular practice for a *TRM* practitioner/**chaplain**. The movements are useful in maintaining body flexibility and overall wellness. The energetic practices interface easily with other meditation practices such as regular sitting. After training for some weeks, the energetic benefits of *BEQG* can be internalized so they can occur through visualization, giving rise to benefits throughout the day.

For instance, once formal *BEQG* grounding practices become internalized, they can be informally brought up whenever needed during a *TRM* session. This not only serves the **chaplain**, but the client as well through the “mirror neurons” phenomenon. (Austin 2010) By taking a deep breath, for example, integrated *BEQG* breath practices would be remembered in the body, resulting in a sense of spaciousness, relaxation, and groundedness. The gross body movements of *BEQG* implant the experiences of visualization, relaxation, and well-being into memory through the senses. Eventually the same benefits can accrue through subtle movements and, finally, through visualizations alone. This process of internalizing body awareness into moment-to-moment, ordinary experience is the *segue*.

The line can then become blurred between *grounding*, which has been defined in the *TRM* training as “sensing our connection to the earth”, and *resourcing*, defined as “using positive or neutral factors to create non-traumatic sensations.” Being grounded itself becomes a resource which we can return to by bringing attention to the breath, for instance. Conversely, by attending to sensations brought on by resourcing, one’s sense of grounding arises. This interplay in and of itself can bring on an overall sense of well-being which expands the resiliency zone incrementally and often.

By noticing a gesture—even a truncated one, a **chaplain** can suggest that the client expand the gesture in order to more deeply sense into it. Emotional and cognitive content can be gleaned from an expanded and slowed-down gesture, or series of gestures. Gesture universally evokes emotions, sensations, and ideas as the body speaks its language. By stringing together client-originated gestures, we can create a *Body Poem*--a series of signature movements which can be formalized into a routine.

In applying the principles of *BEQG* to gestures and gestural series, the movements can *segue* seamlessly into each other. These not only help the client with relaxation, proprioception, fluidity, and flexibility, they contain the elements of the *client's own* grounding, resourcing, and healing processes. In this way they remind the client of their *TRM* process and enable them to creatively change the movements as needed to meet their changing needs. Through repetition, the *Body Poem* itself becomes embodied. It is memorized, and can be brought to mind anytime--when lying in bed, for example.

In feedback from the *TRM II* training sessions, several **chaplains** expressed that *Body Poems* were helpful to them in some of the ways described above. For those who thought of themselves as ungraceful or unable to move beautifully, *Body Poems* were a clear message that they were indeed able to express themselves through movement. The meanings of the gestures became immediately apparent to many. When paired with phrases such as “I am grateful for life”, a gesture of “opening” took on an even broader meaning. In the evening sessions, several of us worked with more formal movement series which could be altered to meet individual needs.

A psychologist worked in a hospice setting with children who were grieving the loss of a family member. We used her *TRM* gestures to create a *Body Poem*, combining it with gestural work she was already doing with the children to expand and deepen the practices. She was using a “fist of tears” to represent grief. We worked with that gesture to open the fist, move with the breath, and repeat the expanded gestures in a children’s circle. This created a group ritual experience for them which could unite them in their grief—a useful project for **chaplains** working with children.

Another student was a psychotherapist and a dancer. Instead of basing *Body Poems* on Qigong, we based them on her flowing movements of modern dance. There is no particular reason for Qigong to be the basis of the *Body Poems*, as style could vary with culture. If a **chaplain** is familiar with a certain style of movement, *Body Poems* can be based on his movements.

*Body Poems* can be enacted privately or in a group. Although speaking can be helpful, there does not need to be any language with the movements. This renders them cross-cultural, as the body is allowed to speak in its own way.

## **BEQG RESOURCES FOR CHAPLAINS**

### **PERSONAL PRACTICES**

“Not being attuned to the body makes compassion impossible. Introceptive awareness is reflected in the same neural networks activated by empathy.”(Halifax, 2011) The following are offered to the community of **chaplains** of the Upaya program to be used to embody some basic concepts of the **chaplains** training. These practices may be freely adapted by the user to meet their needs in the moment. By practicing these embodiments, the concepts will quickly take root in the mind/body system and be available whenever needed.

#### **EMBODYING THE THREE TENETS OF THE ZEN PEACEMAKER ORDER NOT KNOWING; BEARING WITNESS; COMPASSIONATE ACTION**

These skillful means can be employed when facing a challenging situation in the role of **chaplain**. They are offered in order for the **chaplain** to practice or to facilitate. One can use these to ground oneself in the tenets through the Dharma Door of the physical body. So one not only remembers these basic teachings, one actually ritualizes them—acts them out—so they are accessible at a very deep level.

**Not Knowing:** Begin with *Standing Mountain*, then inhale as the arms circle up into prayer hands above the head—pause—then down like water (palms facing the body)—into *Standing Mountain* again, with the release of outbreath-- (Contemplation: “I release my roles into the earth,” or “I release all that I think I know,” or whatever phrase arises). Repeat three times with the breath. *Segue* into progressively smaller movements, increasing the visualization component if desired.

**Bearing Witness:** Begin with *Standing Mountain*, then inhale, bend the knees as the hands move up the centerline—exhale into *Opening the Heart* position (horizontal axis)—hold the posture and breathe with awareness--(Contemplation: “I open to whatever arises in this moment,” or “I open to the flow of life,” or whatever phrase arises). Bring the hands back into prayer position, pause, then return to *Standing Mountain*. Repeat three times with the breath. *Segue* into progressively smaller movements, increasing the visualization if desired.

**Compassionate Action:** Begin with *Standing Mountain*, then inhale, drawing the hands up the centerline, fingers pointing towards the spine. Circle the wrists as you go (pointing first down, then center, then up) when they arrive at the heart area. Pause, breathe, and at the next exhalation, move both hands forward, away from the heart, with palms up in the gesture of *Generosity*. Softly focus the gaze forward, not down or up (Contemplation: “My deepest self

moves into the world”, or “I do my best without attachment to outcome”, or whatever phrase arises). Turn the palms outwards and circle the arms around to return to *Standing Mountain*. Repeat three times with the breath. *Segue* into progressively smaller movements, increasing the visualization if desired.

### **EMBODYING THE FOUR UPAYAS OF BUDDHIST CHAPLAINCY:**

#### **PACIFYING; ENRICHING; MAGNETIZING; DESTROYING**

As above with the Three Tenets, these skillful means can become “second nature” to a **chaplain** by grounding the concepts in the movements and postures of the body.

**Pacifying:** (“It’s OK”) (Karma)—Use any grounding postures or movements, especially *Standing (or Sitting) Mountain* (p. 11), *Breathing Crane* (p. 14), *Tree in Spring or Autumn* (p. 12), and *Trembling Mountain* (p.11). Any Warm-ups (p. 10) will be effective in bringing the person back into the body, as will any Breath Practice. Massage of the “bubbling wells” of the feet (p. 15) is very useful for treating hysteria. Virtually any Qigong practice is effective for pacifying.

**Enriching:** (“You’re lookin’ good.”)(Ratna)—Use resourcing movements and postures, especially the *Trembling Mountain—Filtering—Opening Seven Gates* (p.11) series. Also *Rainbow Clouds* (p. 12) , *Sky Cone* (p. 11), any *Ni Kung* practices, especially *Inner Smile* (p. 13), and the *Heart Meditation* (p. 12).

**Magnetizing:** (“I love You!”)(Padma) (Affirmation of the Divinity of the Other)—All *Crane Movements* (p. 12), *Deity Embodiments* (p. 12), *White/Black Standing* (p. 12), all *Breath Practices* (p. 14),and *Uniting Heaven and Earth* (p. 11).

**Destroying:** (“Enough, Already!”)(Vajra) (Creating boundaries, clarity, fearlessness grounded in Lovingkindness)—*Opening Seven Gates* (p. 11), *Breathing the Stars* (p. 14), *Each Breath is a Life* (p. 14), *Cicada* (p. 14), *Tree in Spring* (p. 12), *Holding the Moon* (p. 11).

### **EMBODYING THE ATTENTIONAL-EMOTIONAL BALANCE AXIS**

The *attentional axis* is vertical, including evolution through stages of consciousness from the earth itself up through the body, out the crown of the head, and into the universe. The nature of Bodhicitta is included here. The *emotional axis* is horizontal, including expansion from the small self into care for others, connection to all beings, and to all-that-is. The Buddhist Precepts are included here. The juncture of these two is the heart center of the body, which is the *Buddhaic Energetic Center* of the *Five Energy Mandala* (Maull, 2011) It is the center of

relational connection, the place where “the rubber meets the road” in engaged Buddhism, and the location of the “Heavenly Gate” of Qigong to the higher levels of awareness. (Chia, 1993) Doing this physical practice embodies these concepts into the marrow of the bones.

Begin with *Standing Mountain*, envisioning connection with the earth as a beam of light up the center of the body and out the crown of the head and into the night sky. Arms are straight, fingers pointing down with attention. Tongue is touching the roof of the mouth. Arms move towards centerline, hands rotate so fingers point to the midline as they rise, pointing to the central column of light in the body. Inhale up. Backs of fingers face each other. Look up as they pass the face, with eyes open or closed. Arms continue up to the zenith, palms facing but not touching. Pause, relax, and breath naturally, connecting earth and sky.

On the outbreath, reverse the movements down to the heart level. Form the hands as if holding a ball a couple of inches in front of the heart. Pause and breathe. Inhale, then exhale, sending the arms out to the sides with the palms facing forwards. Pause, relax, and breathe naturally, embracing all-that-is.

On the outbreath, reverse the movements to return to holding the ball at the heart. Repeat the vertical movement, then the horizontal several times. One can silently say phrases appropriate to the movements or to the situation, such as “I am one with all-that-is”, or “I am a vessel for Lovingkindness”, or “I am a bridge between Heaven and Earth.”

### ***SUPINE BEQG PRACTICES ESPECIALLY FOR THE BEDRIDDEN***

Supine practices are part of many Qigong traditions. Some include gestures with the arms and/or hands, and some are visualizations or internal cultivation of qi which do not involve gross motor movement. The arm movements of sitting and standing versions of *BEQG* can be translated for supine practice by adapting them to the abilities of the practitioner. As all gross movements can *segue* into very subtle forms, most can be done by a patient lying in bed. A **chaplain** need only determine to what extent the patient is able to do any given movement, and work within those limitations. Here is one example:

Posture and gesture for the infirm, the dying, and/or those present with them, as offered by a **chaplain**:

***One hand pointing up, the other pointing down.*** Contemplation—from all my past generations to my great grandparents, to my grandparents, to my parents, and to me--and from me to my (or “the”) children, to my (or “the”) grandchildren, to my (or “the”) great grandchildren, and beyond...I accept my place in the flow of life. (time)

**Hands pointing left and right.** Contemplation= With the earth and the hills and the lakes and the clouds...with the sky and the stars and the sun and the moon—with the trees and the flowers and the plants—with the insects and the fish and the birds and the animals—with all people everywhere--I accept my place in the flow of life. (space)

**One hand on the heart, the other on the belly.** Contemplation=I am one with the past, the present, and the future. I am one with all life in the universe. These practices can then segue into the supine visualizations listed immediately below.

Once a **chaplain** has had some experience guiding practices like the above, it is natural and intuitive to create similar experiences for clients based upon individual need. Once the basics of *BEQG* have been understood and applied, there is no end to creative ways to implement them in ways that will be effective for each client.

### **BEQG CD'S FOR SUPINE MEDITATION**

A **chaplain** should preview each visualization before to using it with a client to determine its appropriateness. She could then give the client a CD to listen to, or transcribe it and read all or parts of it to a client. What follows are very brief descriptions of the offerings on the two CD's which accompany this thesis. They are by no means only appropriate for the bedridden. They are extremely effective for any practitioner, and especially for **chaplains**.

On **BEQG CD#1** there are three offerings appropriate for supine meditation: *This Body Is Not Me*; *Breathing the Stars*; and *The Open Heart*.

*This Body Is Not Me* was originally taught by the Buddha. (Nhat Hanh, 1991) I have modernized it and added sections which have proven useful to practitioners, especially those experiencing medical pain, illness, and terminal diagnoses. It is meant to bring on awareness that one is more than the physical body, and that the body is a luminous manifestation of the Divine.

*Breathing the Stars* is a visualization based on Taoist breath practice and is very useful for invoking a sense of spaciousness beyond the physical. It often creates states of peace and bliss accompanying awareness of breathing.

*The Open Heart* is a condensation of *Tonglen*, a Qigong practice called *The Heart Meditation*, (*Li Jun Feng, 1996*) which involves movement, and visualizations taught by Thich Nhat Hanh. It brings in compassion for the self and others, and a sense that one is supported by great forces in the universe.

On **BEQG CD#2** there are three visualizations, two of which are most appropriate for supine meditation: *Energetic Body Scan*, and *The Five Elements of the Body*. The third visualization is *Microcosmic Orbit*, which is usually practiced while seated upright, and is most effective for more advanced students.

The *Energetic Body Scan* is a complement to the ancient practices of physical body scan (Travis, 2009). It is a useful adjunct to the body scan taught in *MBSR* (Kabat-Zinn 1990). It is useful after one has practiced with *This Body Is Not Me* as it goes deeper into what a body is.

*The Five Elements of the Body* is a much gentler version of the dissolution of the body in death as described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, (Trungpa, 1975) and *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (Sogyal Rinpoche, 1992)

The *Microcosmic Orbit* is an ancient Taoist Qigong practice of Ni Gung which is widely taught as a way to increase interoception (Hanson, R., 2011) and to sense the flow of qi in the meridians of the body. It can be more vigorously studied through the works of Mantak Chia and Chunyi Lin (see references).

**The CD's (and DVD's) can be downloaded via links in the Appendix .**

### **BEQG PRACTICE GUIDE FOR INCARCERATED MALE YOUTH**

The following are some samples of practice for clients who are not allowed to have CD or DVD players in their cells, where they spend several hours per day. The drawings and brief descriptions are meant to supplement trainings given to them by a **chaplain** practiced in *BEQG*. These movements are offered as an addition to an existing mindfulness meditation program in their facility.

The **chaplain** should use his own judgment in adjusting any or all of these exercises to suit the individual needs of each participant. He should trust his intuition as to ways to change the wording, pacing, or the movements themselves. Practitioners will alter these movements over time to suit their own changing needs. This collection of six is by no means comprehensive, and may be augmented with other *BEQG* practices.

#### **1. STANDING MOUNTAIN AND THE SEVEN DIRECTIONS: Figures A—J**



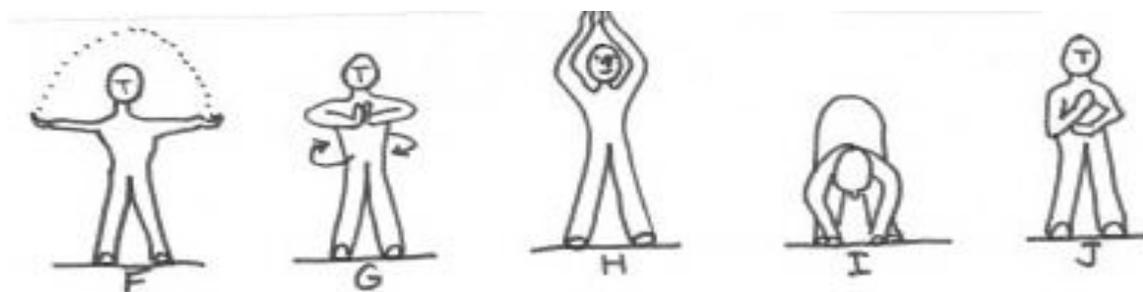
A. *Standing Mountain*—Be sure you know which direction you’re facing. Body upright; knees soft; hips relaxed; shoulders down; arms straight but relaxed; fingers pointing down; belly soft; head as if suspended from above; uplift at the nape of the neck (the Jade Pillow); tongue touching the roof of the mouth; eyes closed or downward gaze. Feel and imagine light in the center of the earth; a laser beam coming directly up through the soles of the feet and the perineum; continuing up through the center of the body, out the crown of the head, and extending infinitely into the night sky. Every atom, molecule, and cell in this body has come from the earth. There is no separation between this body and the earth. My mind and spirit are one with the energy of the universe. Air and light enter this body with each and every breath. In this moment I am one with all—that-is. Smile.

B. Move the hands up opposite the belly, palms facing the body, either touching the body or an inch or two away from it. Feel and imagine warm loving light coming up from the earth and filling the belly. Remember the connection through the naval to the womb of our mother, and through her to our grandmother, and of on, all the way back into the mists of time to the beginning of life itself. Sense warmth and energy in the palms as if holding a ball of light.

C. Bring the hands slowly up, palms facing the body, to the heart area. Feel and imagine warm, loving light in the heart region. Sense the rise and fall of the chest with each breath. Breathe in the air the plants breathe out, and breathe out the air the plants breathe in. Sense the beating heart, and know that hearts are beating everywhere, in people, foxes, birds, fish...The hearts have been beating for millions of years—all by themselves. Tune into the energy of all these beating hearts. Sense your connection to every other living thing, throughout space and time.

D. Move the hands up slowly, palms facing the body, lighting up the neck, face, head, crown of the head, and on up to send light out to all the stars. Connect to the cosmos through the hands and the forehead.

E. Bring the hands slowly together until you sense a ball of warm light between the palms. Gently hold this ball of white light above the head, being one with the laser beam of light from the center of the earth, up through the middle of the body, through the hands and out into the universe. Breathe the light of the stars in and out.



F. Now slowly open the hands by lowering the arms to rest at shoulder height, opening the ball of white light into a rainbow of colors held between the palms. This is your life that you are holding in your hands. Breathe and relax your shoulders and arms, sensing the light moving from the palms through the heart center and up and down the centerline of the body. Rest in this position and consciously breathe.

G. Slowly move the hands into the “prayer position”, compressing the rainbow into a ball between the palms at the heart level. Next, seven times from the waist, *Bow to the Seven Directions*: north, east, south, west, above, below, and within.

H. Look up as the hands rise, and bow to the direction “above.”

I. Bending the knees, bring the hands down to touch the earth, bowing to the direction “below”.

J. Finally, bring one hand in to touch or rest in front of the heart, and the other over the belly region. In your mind, bow to the seventh direction, which is within your own body and mind— to your soul.

## 2. TREMBLING MOUNTAIN and FILTERING THE BODIES: Figures K—Q



K. Begin this and all movement series with *Standing Mountain* for a minute or two to get in touch with your weight, your feet, your breathing, and the laser beam of light from the center of the earth, up through the body, out the top of the head, and into the universe. Remember that your body and your life are connected to everything.

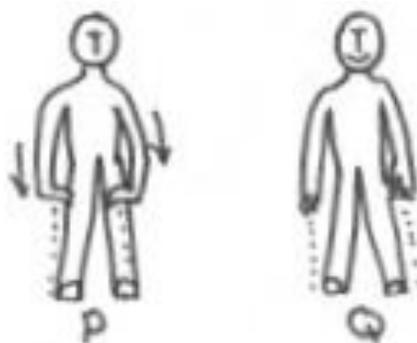
L. Begin *Trembling Mountain*. Bounce up and down by bending, then straightening your knees, keeping your feet flat on the floor. Get your whole body vibrating. Become very loose and enjoy the bouncing. You may notice yourself going faster or slower sometimes, as your body shakes out any stuck energy. Keep on bouncing for about four minutes. Then, continue bouncing more and more vigorously for another minute. Bounce as intensely as you can in the final few seconds. At exactly five minutes, suddenly stop and resume the *Standing Mountain* position. Notice all the sensations in the body. This is the feeling of life-force energy. Enjoy the stillness for a minute or so before beginning the next step.

M. Slowly raise the hands up the centerline of the body, extending them above the head. Imagine a kind of “filter”, or “screen” made of light coming out of each fingertip. This is an energy screen to filter out pain or any “stuckness” in the body.

N. and O. With the breath, slowly lower the hands, and the visualized “filter” down the front of the body. As it goes down, imagine the filter of light moving through the body like a comb through hair, clearing away any chunks of stuck energy.

P. Move the filter all the way down through the body and out the bottoms of the feet, into the earth as compost.

Q. Pause, and on the next inbreath, circle the arms up the sides of the body to the top of the head, and repeat the filtering. Each time imagine the filter to be finer and finer, cleaning and clearing out any painful memories, emotions, or sensations in the body. Pause and smile at the end of each filtering movement. Repeat at least four more times, or more if you need to.



### 3. LOOSENING THE SHOULDERS

Stand and hunch up your shoulders as high and tightly as you can. Hold this position for 30 seconds. While you are holding, notice your breathing and the overall feeling in your body. Then, suddenly let out a breath and drop your shoulders. Now, notice your breathing and the overall feeling in your body. Notice the difference between being relaxed and being up tight. Repeat this at least two more times, noticing if each time you become even more relaxed when your shoulders drop. Finish with *Standing Mountain*, then do a few shoulder rolls to loosen up.

Think of all the people you see every day who are walking around with this kind of tightness in their bodies—even of yourself when you are feeling stressed. The next time you notice feeling tight and stressed, hunch up your shoulders for a moment, then drop them down to bring yourself into a more relaxed position.

#### **4. HOLDING THE MOON, OR HOLDING THE TREE**

Begin in *Standing Mountain*. When you feel calm and grounded, slowly raise your arms up as if you are hugging a very large tree. “Sit down” as if there were a high stool just an inch below your butt. Form your hands as if you are lightly holding a large banana between them. This is the crescent moon between your hands. Relax and breathe. When parts of your body become strained or tight, breathe relaxing light into them and sink down a bit lower. You can imagine resting your elbows on a table. As time goes on, breathe more deeply. Hold the posture as long as you can, then a bit longer. Try to hold the position even longer the next time you try. Become very, very relaxed in the position, paying close attention to your posture and your breathing. Imagine you are surrounded by loving light which supports you in your attempts to stand on your own.

#### **5. BUBBLING WELLS MASSAGE**

To relieve tension you can massage one foot at a time while sitting. Place your thumb, or thumbs, in the center of a foot just behind the ball of the foot. It’s the same place on the foot as on the hand when you bend your middle finger and touch your palm. Press firmly and circle the thumb in this place, which is called the *Bubbling Well*. It’s one of your main connections to the earth, and can get blocked-up by stress. Massage each foot carefully, not being afraid to press pretty hard while making tiny circles with the thumbs. This massage works very well for a person who feels ungrounded or hysterical, bringing him quickly back into touch with the energies of the earth, and his connection to it.

## 6. HEART AND BELLY HANDS

When lying in bed before going to sleep, simply place one palm on the heart and the other on the belly. Feel deeply into your breathing as your hands gently rise and fall. Remember that your breath comes and goes without you doing anything to make it happen. This breathing is the force which has created your life, and all life. It is sacred, you are sacred, and you are loved always by something much bigger and older than you can possibly imagine.

Forgive yourself for anything you may have done wrong, and let go of any hatred or anger which you are holding in your heart. Remember your connection to the womb of your mother, and to the womb of all life, for a moment knowing true peace.

## CONCLUSION

*Breathing Earth Qigong* has been shown to be effective in creating feelings of harmony, peace, well-being, and compassion in **chaplains** work in a variety of settings. It is a coherent energy practice appropriate for people of any body type and in almost any state of health. Its teachings and practices dovetail beautifully with Buddhist practices and teachings, especially when applied in the relational work of a Buddhist **chaplain**. The offerings in this project are only a sampling to the possible applications of *BEQG* to chaplaincy in the realms of wellness, meditation, and spirituality. It is my sincere hope that this paper will be of some use in helping to alleviate suffering in the world, and to bringing in a greater sense of joy and liberation. There are countless applications for these practices and teachings, limited only by the imaginations of **chaplains** who may use them. There is a whole world of possibility out there!

--Steven Spiro, November, 2011

## APPENDIX—RESOURCES FOR CHAPLAINS

To download video content from **BEQG DVD #1** (*Standing Mountain, Warm-Ups, Backwash, Morning Routine, Qi Closing*): <http://www.box.com/s/gv37tcnc6sz2ecb3f4k9> .

Click on this link. This will take you to Box.net. You should be able to press “Play” below the image to view the video. If this does not work, or you prefer to save it on your computer, take the following steps: 1. In “Box”, click the “download” button. 2. Choose “Save”. 3. Tell it where you want to save it on your computer. (This will generally be “C” for “computer”). Then choose your “Video Library” or create a new folder with a name you will recognize. The DVD

files will take up to five minutes to download. Please do not close the window until you are sure it has finished.

To download video content from **BEQG DVD #2** (*Trembling Earth, Filtering, Opening Seven Gates, Sitting Meditation, Rainbow Clouds, etc.*): <http://www.box.com/s/toi8a0xt28k6rhg2ziay>

To download audio content from **BEQG CD #1**:

*This Body Is Not Me*: <http://www.box.com/s/neymo0tsheaknd77d11e>

*Breathing the Stars*: <http://www.box.com/s/nf7kik70u4eesmji8sf6>

*The Open Heart*: <http://www.box.com/s/quomnjlj7dh42lo71dz2>

To download audio content from **BEQG CD #2**:

*Energetic Body Scan*: <http://www.box.com/s/z8qtvpnzeynz4dcve088>

*Microcosmic Orbit*: <http://www.box.com/s/9y03josh1j5pmipxfz76>

*Five Elements in the Body and Mind*: <http://www.box.com/s/i9x80c6qoyzyav20l8d5>

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