

SOLAR PLEXUS EXERCISE

The ancient Taoists believed that the human body was controlled and operated by two brains instead of one. Besides the familiar brain in the head, there is also a "brain" in the abdomen. We know that the entire body is operated by nerves. But whenever the subject of nerves is brought up, we invariably link in the cerebral brain while never venturing further beyond that point. The ancient Taoists went one step further by linking the nervous system to another "brain" and maintaining that that nervous center existed in the abdomen and was at least equal in importance to the cerebral brain.

The modern anatomical term for this abdominal nervous center is "solar plexus". A mass of nerve cells, the solar plexus is found in the center of the torso, beneath the heart and behind the stomach. Being in closer proximity to the abdominal organs than the cerebral brain, the solar plexus has nerves radiating out directly to the organs. One can say that the relationship of the

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solar plexus to the abdominal organs is even more direct and intimate than that of the cerebral brain. That is why Taoists call the solar plexus the "abdominal brain".

Responsibility for maintaining and balancing internal organ functions lies in the abdominal brain. Its presence can be clearly felt when a person in daily life feels anger, happiness, distress, sorrow, love, hate, and other emotions, all arising from within the internal organs. Feelings arise when an organ is disturbed or dysfunctioning, but they are felt at the solar plexus and later surface as physiological reactions. When a feeling is generated, the solar plexus must reestablish balance among the organs and correct organ dysfunctions—a struggle that can be painfully felt at the solar plexus.

In the minds of Taoists, the generation and sensation of feelings are functions of the abdominal area, not the cerebral brain. The cerebral brain is like a library where all data (life experience, education, knowledge, etc.) is stored. In modern terms, it functions exactly like a computer center.

The function of the solar plexus actually involves every organ in the abdomen. To the Taoist, excitement is related to the heart; anger, liver; worry, spleen-pancreas; sorrow, lungs; and fear, kidney. According to the Five Element Theory, excessive excitement hurts the small intestines, sexual organs, heart and blood vessels; excessive anger, the nervous system, liver and gallbladder; excessive worry or consideration, muscle tone, stomach and spleen-pancreas; excessive sorrow or sadness, the lungs, large intestines, skin and hair; excessive fear, the bones, kidneys and bladder. This is not to say that feelings are bad for the organs. They are God-given antagonists that temper the solar plexus. And when the solar plexus benefits, everything else along the cyclical chain of influence, including the organs, benefits. Therefore, if the internal organs are healthy and balanced, the feelings will naturally be balanced and peaceful. Peaceful feelings cannot be forced by thoughts or reasoning from the cerebral brain. Peaceful attitudes come from internal peace, not thoughts.

When the solar plexus is healthy, organs can immediately recover from stress and tension and resume proper functioning. It is when its balance is lost that the following problems arise: insomnia, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, heart weakness, heart attack, stroke, chronic bronchitis, duodenal infection, ulcer, gastroenteritis, gastritis, constipation, diarrhea, lack of absorption (small intestine), menstruational cramps and related problems, impotence, etc.

How can the balance of the solar plexus be lost? According to the

Two-Brain Theory of Taoism, normal newborn babies have more abdominal brain functions than cerebral brain functions. Their cerebral brains are blank, without information that adults deem critical for survival, yet they hardly ever suffer from the health problems that plague or kill adults. With gradual absorption of living experience and artificial education, their cerebral brains gradually develop. Because some cultures value huge memory stores of facts and subsequently stress continuous cerebral (rational) development over inner development (true feeling), the abdominal brain functions are gradually forgotten or suppressed. Then the results of this direction of emphasis are a great library of recorded information (the cerebral brain gets bigger and bigger) and a great succession of physical and mental problems, the so called modern diseases listed above. In other words, human beings, in denying their true feelings, are misguidedly cutting off the functions of their solar plexus, causing their organs to become inoperative, and shortening their lives. The basic outward sign of an atrophied solar plexus and its associated ailments is a distended belly. The accumulation of dead cells, waste, and fatty tissues indicates that the solar plexus is in one of the various stages of atrophy. The distended belly and its hidden ailments are never seen in lively young children.

True feelings are centered at the solar plexus, not the brain. The brain records only the memory of a feeling. Misguidedly, we are taught to use our powers of reason—that is, cerebral rationality—to suppress our feelings. In suppressing our feelings, we suppress the solar plexus from functioning. According to a law of physics, where there is greatest pressure, there is greatest likelihood of explosion. If we keep suppressing, the physical and psychological time bombs we have set will explode, and all that we have been striving for (a cold rational head and its supposedly attendant successes) will be lost. When the organs that give the body life become inoperative, the facts that have been stored in the brain get jumbled and confused, burying true wisdom and intelligence. Looking at today's society we know that using rational to suppress feeling is useless. In truth it has created more physically and psychologically unhealthy individuals than ever before.

According to Taoism, using rational to suppress true feeling is not the solution. In the *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 55, Lao-Tse said that "in order to attain health and longevity, man must learn to return to his infancy". The salient point is that the abdominal brain must be developed in order to recapture or maintain youth. At least both brains must be developed in balance. This is achieved through the following steps: 1. Balancing the

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organs according to the Five Element Theory, and 2. Strengthening the abdominal brain so that it could handle more emotional pressure. This is most different from most educational and religious teachings, but this is one of the greatest secrets of Taoism.

Most religions and regular educational institutions teach people to suppress feeling with reasoning, logic, and rationality. Artificial reasoning appears to be logical, reasonable, and objective at first glance, and it is easily programmed into the cerebral brain. But when a complicated and complex case occurs, it may not be truly appropriate in subjective situations. So proper guidance cannot be found. Instead, one finds only confusion and frustration. That is why one often hears people speak of the conflict between their hearts and minds. One can only find proper guidance if one looks into one's own deep and true feelings.

According to Taoism, correct feelings—that is, peaceful feelings—always come with healthy and balanced internal organ functions. If one organ is over-active, it can be difficult to reach peace or proper guidance.

In this book, many exercises are provided that provide techniques to develop and balance the internal organs and subsequently the two brains, but the Crane Exercise and its many variations are the most direct in serving this purpose.

Some meditators teach people to slow down the cerebral brain to reduce stress and tension. Meditation has the effect of temporarily stopping cerebral reasoning. Recently, many organizations recognized stress and tension as the great enemy of its members, and recommended meditation programs for saving their health. But there are those who are so overwhelmed by too many attachments and desires—their brains have been programmed to race for too long—that they are unable to slow their brains down. If these people were placed in a meditation program and forced to slow down their brains, the results would be disastrous. Forcing a different direction upon the brain creates more confusion and causes illusions and frustration, finally resulting in worsening conditions of stress and tension. At worst, this can lead to a case of schizophrenia.

Even if meditation were done properly to reduce stress and tension, it would not naturally strengthen the solar plexus, and a two-brain balance can never be reached.

If a side-effect free method for strengthening the solar plexus exists that naturally reduces stress and tension (not by slowing down the cerebral brain) and balances both brains at the same time, then the Solar Plexus Exercise would be the only and perfect answer. The original Taoist term for

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the Solar Plexus Exercise translates into English as, "The Fire Burns the Wheel". The "Fire" means feeling, and the "Wheel" means solar plexus. According to the ancients, this exercise strengthens the true feelings in the abdominal cavity. Building up this "fire" will help "burn out" every disease associated with this area of the body, including diarrhea, constipation, flatulence, diverticulitis, cancer, and other disorders.

To avoid overloading your cerebral brain, it is best to recognize these few early warning signs: headache, stiff neck, stiff shoulder, confusion, illusions, forgetfulness, or spaciness. Headaches indicate mental overload, which in turn indicates that the cerebral brain is out of balance with respect to the abdominal brain. Neck/shoulder stiffness indicates that the nerves closest to the cerebral brain are unable to handle the overload from it. Whenever the above symptoms arise, do the following exercise. It will help temporary as well as long term problems resulting from cerebral-abdominal imbalance.

This exercise can be done anywhere, anytime.

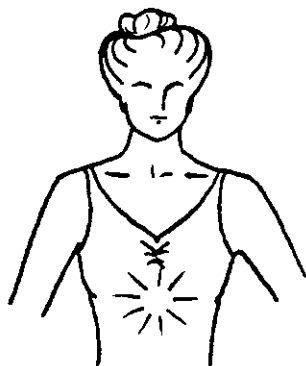


Figure 48. The Solar Plexus. Figure 49. The Solar Plexus Exercise.

1. While sitting or standing, place both hands on your stomach. Face front and inhale and feel the air expand your stomach.
2. Then exhale. As you exhale, use your hands to push in and up your stomach. As you execute these motions, turn your upper torso and head slowly toward your left side as far as possible and look to your left. Meanwhile twist your pelvis to the right.
3. Inhale and bring your entire body back into alignment, facing front. As you do this, let your hands release your stomach slowly until

they are resting gently on the skin surface.

4. Exhale again. But as you exhale, turn your upper torso and head slowly to the right side. Look to your right. Meanwhile push your stomach in and up again as you twist your pelvis to the left.

5. While inhaling, bring your body back into alignment, facing front. Repeat this exercise 4 to 36 times.

NOTE A: How many times you are able to do the exercise depends on the condition of your neck and shoulders. If you experience stiffness and pain at the neck and shoulders, do small repetitions until the condition clears. Then you may increase the repetitions in increments.

NOTE B: When you do the exercise, concentrate on the solar plexus area, which is located under the heart and behind the stomach. The more you concentrate, the more benefits you gain from the exercise.

The placing of the hands on the abdomen helps concentration, and the turning of the neck relaxes the nerves in the neck, shoulder, and cerebral brain. As you can see, the exercise is designed to balance both brains in one movement.

One day the vice president of a famous university came in seeking consultation. His situation correlated exactly with that caused by brain overuse; every ailment listed earlier afflicted him. He had undergone surgery several times for abdominal problems. Half of his liver was nonfunctional. He lived on tranquilizers. And because of the blood pressure pills, pills for heart disease, pills for insomnia, and so on, he became a pill bottle. He was, by his own admission, like a zombie, half dead physically and mentally. I recommended the Solar Plexus Exercise for his afflictions. About a week later he came back. He said he did not trust the simplicity of the exercise at first, because his condition had lasted for many, many years and was lately worsening week by week, but he faithfully practiced it nevertheless for one week. When 50% of his symptoms disappeared, he became a believer, although his doctor could not believe what happened. A few days later, his doctor called me to ask what method, shots or pills I used on his patient to get such results. When I told him what his patient used, the doctor said, "Excuse me . . . I would never believe it." Two months later, I learned that the executive had become like a college student; he had played ball with a few students. To celebrate his

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new life, he held a party. There he introduced me and held up my hand and said, "This is my saviour!" He was still very healthy seven years later, though he "never touched another pill".