

Survey of Benefits of Qigong Practice with a Drug Rehabilitation Population:
Extract

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Overview: The problem of addiction is a huge one causing breakdown of family and community structure, disruption to work, crime and civil disorder. Research suggests causes lie in childhood abuse, parental alcoholism and neglect, resulting in a downward spiral of low self-esteem, powerlessness, violence and self-harm. Addicts are therefore often individuals in a state of extreme imbalance, physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. When they decide to address their substance abuse, changing themselves, their attitudes and habits, is a struggle.

The ancient practice of Qigong has long been known in China and increasingly in the west as a means of increasing health and well-being. Over the past twelve years Qigong Master Simon Blow has been leading classes in Ba Duan Jin Standing Form Qigong in several drug rehabilitation groups in Sydney, Australia. The practice of Qigong as taught by Simon Blow utilises the elements of self-healing and balance of the internal energy with the external environment. The results suggest that the practice of Qigong gives beneficial aid to recovering addicts in gaining relaxation skills, body awareness and confidence as well as lessening frustration and regaining balance of body and mind.

The survey was taken continuously over six months from June to December 2003 after each 45-minute class of Qigong, held twice weekly, in a residential, drug rehabilitation group. We Help Ourselves (WHOS), is a drug-free therapeutic programme lasting three months incorporating the fostering of personal growth and life skills with a view to participants returning to the community. The context of these Qigong classes is therefore a therapeutic one of groupwork, counselling, support and education, stress management and relapse prevention.

Two groups of males and females were surveyed over two consecutive three-month periods with the intention of a qualitative assessment based on subjective evaluation on whether their on-going Qigong practice was helping in their recovery.

Results: Of a total of 634 surveys over this period, 89% found an overall benefit. Specific qualities were measured 85% said they felt stronger physically. 86% said they were able to accept others more and 87% felt that their self-acceptance had increased. 88% felt the practice of Qigong enabled them to concentrate better and felt more confident and better able to control anxiety. 88% felt they were deepening spiritually. 89% felt stronger emotionally and less frustrated. 90% felt Qigong practice was an important routine and that they were more aware of *qi*. 92% felt Qigong was an important part of their recovery. 93% said they felt more peaceful since learning Qigong and that their future would be a better one. 95% felt Qigong helped them to be calm and relaxed.

Individual comments include:

'I feel more centred on the days that we practise.'

'I have slowed down a lot and my thoughts are not so chaotic.'

'(After practice I feel) calm, peaceful and clear of mind. (I find it) amazing.'

'I have struggled with substance abuse and when I came into a rehabilitation programme that practised Qigong I was extremely reluctant in the beginning and negative about Qigong. I decided to give it a go with a positive outlook and now I enjoy it. I feel better after the session and also it is a good form of exercise which I enjoy.'

'I am learning to relax on my own.'

'Qigong has helped me to relax more on a daily basis and go more within myself to find inner happiness. It has helped give me a nice balance between body, mind and soul. Qigong has been a stepping stone for me to introduce more exercise and meditation into my daily programme.'

'I can concentrate more on the days we practise.'

'I feel calmer. I like it when we throw the bad energy out. (It) feels good.'

'A sense of peace, more balanced and (I have) a better understanding of myself.'

'I feel that I can relax and get to sleep a lot easier. Also I know what my body is telling me. Thank you.'

'I'm more willing to be embarrassed.'

'(I've developed) more motor skills and (am) centred.'

'I find the movements easier to do and become more relaxed and focussed after our session.'

'I find I have slowed down a bit.'

'It makes me feel good about myself.'

'I feel more peaceful about myself and also feel good and happy about life.'

'(I am more) calm, peaceful and aware.'

'(I am) stronger, more courageous, more serene, more calm.'

'(I am) more willing to try. I felt more relaxed and warm. Not so embarrassed.'

'I feel more connected to myself and my higher power.'

'(After practice I feel) relaxed, yawning, hungry.'

'When doing Qigong I can feel the hair on my upper body stand up. It is really relaxing. I find myself looking forward to the classes and talk to my peers about it. I find myself easy to be with the day I do it. I feel my body in a way I never have before.'

'(I find it) good to stretch. I am learning patience (with Qigong). (It) keeps my mind open.'

'(I am) more relaxed and it helps with my aches and pains.'

'(I am) more self aware and more aware of my body. I have learned to recognise my feelings and be less stressed about them more often.'

'I feel Qigong is balancing my two sides – female and male. I have noticed I have resistance to just letting go, my right side is more energetically activated. Now it is more balanced.'

'(Qigong is) very good for my recovery, to calm myself down.'

'I am able to feel my emotions a lot more.'

'I am more aware of what is happening in my life.'

The first step to changing oneself is awareness. In helping these participants become more aware of themselves and their bodies, as well as in helping them relax and become less stressed about the emotions they are discovering, the practice of Qigong is demonstrably a method for helping people change. It is a significant aid to this rehabilitation programme.