

Benefits of Tadasana, Zhan Zhuang and Other Standing Meditation Techniques

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ABSTRACT

A large majority of practitioners prefer to sit cross-legged on the mat/carpet or on a chair for doing their meditation. Standing meditation posture has been found to be more convenient and hence more beneficial as compared to the 'sitting meditation' by some people, particularly those practitioners who are suffering from physical ailments like arthritis, blood pressure, numbness in the body, or have tendency to feel sleepy while sitting for a long duration. The techniques for sitting meditation, like focusing on breathing, chanting mantras, mindful-meditation etc. can be adapted to 'standing meditation' as well. Most of the standing meditation techniques like Qigong, Zhang Zhuang, Wuji, and Yiquan are popular in Chinese tradition. The closest Indian/Hindu equivalent posture for the standing meditation is 'Tadasana'. We compare some these standing meditation techniques and also describe their benefits in this paper in order to highlight this form of meditation posture as an effective alternative.

Keywords: Tadasana, Qigong, Zhang Zhuang, Wuji, Yiquan, Standing Meditation, Benefits of Standing Meditation

1. Introduction

The word 'Meditation' comes from the Latin root "meditatum", which means "to ponder". Meditation is a technique for resting the mind and attaining a state of consciousness that is totally different from the normal waking state, a sleeping state or a dreaming state. It is a transcendental state of consciousness. During and after the meditation the mind reaches a state of restful alertness. Meditation is a practice of focus or relaxed attention or contemplation upon a thought or a sound or an object or on visualization or on the breath, in order to increase awareness of the self at the present moment, reduce stress, promote relaxation, and enhance personal and spiritual growth. The regular practitioner of meditation performs the journey towards peace, happiness, bliss, and self-realization [1].

There are various kinds and postures of doing meditation. Majority of the practitioners throughout the world do meditation in the sitting posture, either cross-legged or on a chair or stool [Reference [1], for example]. Those who cannot sit comfortably for meditation for a reasonably long duration due to the problem of blood pressure, certain physical ailments or psychological problems (like laziness or falling into sleep while sitting) can opt for 'walking meditation', as an effective alternative [2]. A third posture for meditation could be the 'lying meditation' [3], and the fourth posture for the meditation technique, which is the subject of discussion of this paper, is the 'standing meditation'.

2. Standing Meditation

Standing meditation is an ancient practice that has many different aims and benefits. For some people, with sports injuries, arthritis or conditions that prohibit lengthy sitting, standing meditation is a better way to achieve mindfulness. Sitting meditation might be too painful and the obstacles too great and walking meditation requires extraordinary concentration [4].

Much of the anxiety, stress, restlessness, and depression that plague us today are caused by being disconnected from our bodies. If you would like to meditate but sitting is uncomfortable, try standing meditation. Standing meditation encourages you to tune into your body—and the present moment—while standing up or holding a specific standing yoga or tai chi posture. Some trainers of standing meditation may ask you to focus on the physical sensations of standing while tuning into the world around you. Others may

ask you to focus on your breathing and/or an internal visualization. Yet other spiritual teachers may instruct you to take the help of certain mantras while standing similar to what you do during mantra-based sitting meditation.

Standing meditation can also be practiced in the context of meditative martial arts, such as tai chi, and during yoga practice in postures like tree pose or mountain pose [5]. Standing meditation comes with many of the same benefits as the sitting meditation practice. It also helps release tension and strengthens core muscles. When you first get the impulse to stop the meditation, stay a few minutes longer, remembering that many trees stand tall for decades.

In some traditions standing meditation is considered superior for aligning the chakras (energy centres) and for the smooth flow of spiritual energy. In the standing posture, there is a definite benefit in terms of focus, since it is easy to remain mindful since drowsiness is rarely an issue. The standing and sitting meditation are nearly equal in terms of technique and results, with standing requiring less concentration than sitting but more effort physically. Standing meditation is a moderate form, and can be used to calm you down or wake you up.

Standing meditation is the fastest way to develop a strong foundation. It may seem so simple, but that is only if you are looking at the posture and have no understanding of what is happening within the body and mind. Standing postures offer the most direct entrance to cultivating chi and establishing a solid foundation.

Each posture is related to different energetic channels in the body. Bringing out the innate power of the body and uncovering latent abilities in people that may have never surfaced before. Most of us have different understandings of relaxation. Some people have difficult time trying to let go and be at piece in their mind. If your mind is not peaceful your body will not be rooted or relaxed. Through standing you will learn how to settle the mind. The communication between the mind and body will become smoother and lighter even under stressful situations.

Standing meditation opens energy channels in the body and will make you aware of current blockages in your body. This will enable you to address the problem. Standing will also correct any alignment problems you may have. You will notice after only a few minutes of meditation, soreness or imbalances that will need to be corrected in order to continue to practice. If your body is out of alignment it will need to work to maintain your posture. This will cause stress which can start to aggravate the mind initially but you will get accustomed to it with the passage of time.

After you understand the correct alignment and can stand for a half an hour or longer, you will start to see the potential benefits from this posture and practice. When standing, use your skeleton to support your weight as much as possible. When your muscles are relaxed and your mind is calm you will reach deeper levels of practice. Once you have learned how to store your energy, you will become healthier and stronger. It is possible to be healthy and not strong and you can be strong, but not healthy. With this training you will develop both a strong and healthy body and mind. As your practice grows you will find that there is no limit to the amount of energy you can store.

3. Types of Standing Meditation Techniques

There are many types of standing meditation techniques but we shall discuss only the important and the popular ones in this paper.

In yoga, Mountain Pose (*Tadasana*) is the foundation for all the other asanas, especially the standing poses [6]. When we align our structure in integrity, we become like a mountain—stable and solid. It may seem superfluous to spend time describing such a simple, basic pose—one that we do every day—but many of us have had natural, well-aligned posture taught out of us. Rather than nurturing our natural spinal curves, what many of us have been taught as correct posture actually flattens the curves. When we stand in Mountain Pose, as in sitting meditation, our spine rests in its natural curves and is able to move force easily, giving the posture both grounding and lightness. Mountain Pose is not only the basis for all the vertical postures in yoga practice, but it is also the best pose for standing meditation.

A mountain is a symbol of beauty and strength. Its beauty lies in its towering granite peaks, solid brown earth, fields of wild flowers, and cobalt-tinted snow. A mountain's strength comes from its ability to meet with grace whatever comes its way. In a typical year, a mountain weathers everything from the glaring, high-altitude sun to gale-force winds and many feet of snow. In the spring, the mountain becomes permeable, absorbing much of the snowmelt and collecting the rest in crystalline lakes. A mountain absorbs all that is visited upon it while maintaining its essential integrity.

In ancient China, Taoism was the dominant philosophical system based on a text titled *Tao Te Ching*, which translates to "The Classic of the Way and the Power (or Virtue)." The Taoist system of practices is called *Qigong* (or Chi Gung), meaning "life energy cultivation". There are thousands of practices within the Qigong system (3,600 is often the number given). It is made up of specific stretching, movements, stances, forms, and breathing techniques [7]. Qigong uses various standing postures to promote energy flow and help the body get strong and healthy. Just like any other type of meditation, standing meditation also quiets the mind. Standing meditation properly will lead to a long and healthy life of vitality and energy.

Wuji is another form of standing meditation technique popular in China. *Wuji* (or Wu Chi) is a classical Tai Chi posture known in many styles of Tai Chi Chuan. *Wu Ji* means 'seeking void or emptiness' [8]. *Yiquan* is one of the Taoist meditative arts in the same family as Tai Chi Chuan, Qigong, Bagua, and Hsing-i. It translates to Intent – Fist (or grasp) and focuses on the strengthening of one root, qi and intent through standing meditation postures [9]. *Zhan Zhuang* (pronounced "Jan Jong") is a method of standing meditation, which gained recognition as a powerful chi cultivation method through the efforts of the famous Hsing Yi master Wang Hsiang Chai, who designed this ancient practice around his new creation, *Yiquan* or *Da Cheng Chuan* in the mid- twentieth century [10]. *Zhan Zhuang* is also a dynamic form of standing meditation from ancient China. According to Chinese history, hunters and gatherers would use the art of standing like a poll while hunting — this would bring animals closer.

4. Tadasana and Samasthiṭḥ Standing Meditation

Tādāsana is from the Sanskrit words *tāḍa*, meaning "mountain" and *āsana* meaning "posture" or "seat". *Samasthiṭḥ* is from *sama* meaning "equal", "level", or "balanced"; *sthiti*, "stand".

Tadasana posture was unknown in hatha yoga until the 20th century but it appears in the 1896 *Vyayama Dipika*, a manual of gymnastics, as part of the "very old" sequence of *danda* (Sanskrit for "staff" or "stick") exercises. It is one of the postures adopted into modern yoga in Mysore by Krishnamacharya and forming the "primary foundation" for his vinyasas with flowing movements between poses. *Tādāsana* is a basic asana; it is the basis for many standing asanas.

4.1 Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga

In Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, Tadasana is performed on the toes, while Samasthiṭḥ is flat footed. In this style of yoga the two āsanas are different. In the standing sequence, the final asana of the series (before Savasana or the lying posture) is Tadasana, performed on the toes. In Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, Tadasana is the beginning and ending asana in the Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) sequence which is used to warm up the body and is sometimes interspersed throughout the entirety of all Ashtanga Series if performed with full vinyasas, in addition to being a foundational pose for all standing poses. The Nasagra Drishti at the tip of the nose is considered the correct drishti for Tadasana in the Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga style. Sushumna drishti is encouraged to draw the awareness inward.

Tadasana is like the base or the mother of all asanas, from which the other asanas emerge. It can be practiced any time of the day. It is not mandatory that this asana must be done on an empty stomach. But if you are preceding or following it up with yoga asanas, it is best to have your meals at least four to six hours before you do this asana. Also, make sure that your bowels are clean.

4.2 How to do the Tadasana (Mountain Pose) Meditation



Figure 1: Tadasana Standing Meditation Posture

- (i) Find a quiet, pleasant place to practice standing meditation. Initially; it is best to practice this inside, though facing a window to see inspiring natural beauty is better.
- (ii) Stand with your feet hip-width apart and parallel (toes pointing straight forward). Soften the backs of your knees just enough to feel your pelvis relax downward, and feel the weight come into your feet. It should feel as though you just mounted a horse.
- (iii) Gaze straight forward, with your head aligned right on top of your spine so the muscles of your face, head, neck, and throat can be relaxed. Smile gently, and float the tip of your tongue up toward the roof of your mouth, just behind your upper front teeth. Your tongue can be touching your teeth or just hovering really close.
- (iv) Now, float your hands up eight to ten inches in front of your lower abdomen, palms facing your lower dantian (a couple of inches below your navel), and the fingertips of your two hands pointing toward (but not touching) each other. You should be positioned almost as though you were hugging a small tree. Let your fingers be extended, with space between them, and your elbows slightly lifted so your armpits feel hollow.
- (v) Take a couple of deep inhales and complete exhalations. As you do this, make whatever small adjustments you need to your stance so that it feels comfortable. Imagine that you are a mountain or an ancient redwood - something profoundly stable and serene.
- (vi) Now let your breath return to its natural rhythm, and come to a place of stillness in your physical body.
- (vii) Hold this position for ten minutes or longer. Increase the amount of time over the weeks, months, or years that you practice.
- (viii) As you hold your physical body still, become aware of more subtle aspects of your being. As you practice, simply let your attention notice what it notices, with a child-like curiosity, without necessarily trying to make sense of it conceptually.
- (ix) If you experience physical discomfort in a particular place in your body, send the energy of a smile into that place.
- (x) As the qi finds and moves through blockages in the meridians, you may experience spontaneous movements. If this happens, know that it is a natural part of the process, and simply come back to the basic stance after the movement has completed itself. Please note: this doesn't happen for everyone, and such movements should in no way be induced.
- (xi) It takes the qi about thirty minutes to complete a single cycle through the body. Make it an aspiration to work up to meditating at least this long as you practice this technique.

4.3 Precautions in doing Tadasana

It is best to avoid this asana if you have the following problems [12]:

- (i) Headaches
- (ii) Insomnia
- (iii) Low blood pressure

4.4 Benefits Of Tadasana (Mountain Pose) Meditation

These are some amazing benefits of the Tadasana:

- (i) This asana helps improve body posture.
- (ii) With regular practice of this asana, your knees, thighs, and ankles become stronger.
- (iii) Your buttocks and abdomen get toned.
- (iv) Practicing this asana helps alleviate pain affecting the back, hip, and outer side of the leg, caused by compression of a spinal nerve root in the lower back, often owing to degeneration of an intervertebral disc.
- (v) This asana reduces flat feet.
- (vi) It also makes your spine more agile.
- (vii) It also helps improve balance.
- (viii) Your digestive, nervous, and respiratory systems are regulated.
- (ix) By incorporating various meditation techniques what you normally do during sitting meditation; you can get all the benefits of this standing meditation at the physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual levels.

4.5 Analysis behind the Benefits of Tadasana

They say that if there was ever a blueprint pose, it was the Tadasana. This asana works on your muscles so that your posture is not only better, but also pain-free while you are at your sedentary desk job. It works to align your skeleton and bring it back to a neutral stance. When this happens, your body comes in to the start point for all the other asanas to follow. However easy this might sound, owing to our excessive Smartphone usage and unhealthy sitting postures at work, there is always a tight muscle or an alignment amiss. This asana corrects them all. It is the muscular effort that it takes to get into this asana that helps strengthen the core and straighten rounded, weak backs.

5. Qigong Standing Meditation

5.1 How to Practice Qigong?

Qigong, qi gong, chi kung, or chi gung is a holistic system of coordinated body-posture and movement, breathing, and meditation used for the purposes of health, spirituality, and martial-arts training. With roots in Chinese medicine, philosophy, and martial arts, qigong is traditionally viewed as a practice to cultivate and balance qi (pronounced approximately as "chi"), translated as "life energy".

Qigong practice typically involves moving meditation, coordinating slow-flowing movement, deep rhythmic breathing, and a calm meditative state of mind. People practice qigong in most parts of China and worldwide for recreation, exercise, relaxation, preventive medicine, self-healing, alternative medicine, meditation, self-cultivation, and training for martial arts.

With roots in ancient Chinese culture dating back more than 4,000 years, a wide variety of qigong forms have developed within different segments of Chinese society: in traditional Chinese medicine for preventive and curative functions; in Confucianism to promote longevity and improve moral character; in Daoism and Buddhism as part of meditative practice [13]; and in Chinese martial arts to enhance fighting abilities. Contemporary qigong blends diverse and sometimes disparate traditions, in particular the Daoist meditative practice of "internal alchemy" (the ancient meditative practices of "circulating qi" (Xing qi) and "standing meditation" (Zhan zhuang), and the slow gymnastic breathing exercise of "guiding and pulling". Practitioners of qigong range from athletes to the physically challenged. Because it is low impact exercise, qigong is accessible for disabled persons, seniors, and people recovering from injuries.

With your physical body aligned in a particular way and held mostly still, qi (chi), or life-force energy, is encouraged to find its natural rhythm as it flows through the meridian system. This gently dissolves any blockages that may have been preventing this natural rhythm. This meditation should typically take from 10 to 30 minutes, but you can meditate for longer if desired [14].



Figure 2: Qigong Standing Meditation Posture

- (i) The first step is to find a quiet and peaceful place. Being around nature can keep you inspired, and add to your peace of mind.
- (ii) Start by warming up before getting into the posture. You can do a few light stretches and body movement beforehand.
- (iii) Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and toes pointing forward, firmly grounded. This will initiate proper energy flow arising from your grounded position.
- (iv) Your head is straight up above your fully erect spine. While gazing straight in front, touch the roof of the mouth with your tongue. With your shoulders relaxed, bend your knees slightly to support the natural weight of your body.
- (v) Keep your hands and arms loose and relaxed by your sides. Tuck your chin inward and roll it up toward the top of your head. This opens the area where your spine meets your skull.
- (vi) Take deep slow breaths in through your nose, imagining the breath reaching deep into your lower body before exhaling through the mouth. Try to remain stable, and focus on the energy of your body.

For most people, the first day of practicing standing meditation is not simple. You may start with ten minutes during the first few days. Increasing the length of your standing meditation will be easier as you practice. You can add a few more minutes to your session every time until you achieve a good balance. Qi Gong experts suggest standing in this position for at least thirty minutes to allow the qi (chi) to make a full balanced cycle throughout your body.

5.2 Benefits of Practicing Qigong Standing Meditation

(i) After spending time sitting or going about your daily activities, so much pressure is exerted on your back. One of the benefits of standing meditation is that it can help improve your overall posture, which will also enhance the quality of your energy throughout the day. Taking a few minutes to practice standing meditation can help to balance out the tension of your muscles.

(ii) Apart from the physical benefits of standing meditation, the practice has psychological benefits too. For instance, it can help ease stress and anxiety.

(iii) By learning how to bring awareness to your body, this type of active meditation is a great way to send positive signals of tranquil confidence from your mind to your body, helping raise your energy and filter out negative thought patterns. This is a great way to clear the mind before sleep.

(iv) People who regularly practice standing meditation report feeling more confident and in control of life. They also report feeling better equipped to deal with stressful situations better because they know how to detect the signs of tension. When tense, Qi Gong practitioners can dig within, even for a few minutes, and find their points of relaxation.

6. Wuji Standing Meditation

Wuji (or Wu Chi) is a classical Tai Chi posture known in most styles of Tai Chi Chuan [8]. The literal translation means “nothing, nothingness, or empty” for Wu and “limits, end, extreme boundary” for “chi or ji (the “chi” is the same life force of “chi” but it has a different connotation). The two words used together mean emptiness in any movement, thought or activity; “nothing separates me from my surroundings”. Some people refer to Wuji as the quiet time before a form starts and after the form ends. It is the ultimate state of relaxation. Standing in a meditative state of mind with the body properly aligned can help increase chi circulation and open up energy channels.

Despite its seeming simplicity refining Wuji proves to be an evasive and difficult accomplishment. Practicing Zhan Zhuang (“Standing Like a Tree” or “Standing Post”), which is explained in the next section, incorporates the very essence of Wuji through body-mind connection while standing in a meditative posture.

Wuji Posture: Below is a detailed illustration of the physical aspects of the Tai Chi Wuji posture, coinciding with the classic principles of Tai Chi Chuan.



Figure 3: Wu Ji Standing Meditation Posture

6.1 Procedure for Wu Ji Standing Meditation

(i) Hold head erect as if suspended vertically; the neck is relaxed.

(ii) Drop the shoulders and the elbows point downward, hands are relaxed at the sides, slightly engaged with some energy.

- (iii) Knees are slightly bent and pushed out; hips are relaxed, with the sensation of pushing downward into the floor with no tension; tailbone is tucked in.
- (iv) Feet are Shoulder width apart.
- (v) Spine should be vertical, with little of the “S” curve showing, holding no tension.
Waist: Soft and supple and able to move freely.
- (vi) Tongue slightly touching the soft palate on the roof of your mouth.
- (vii) Mind should be clear of any extraneous thoughts and staying in the moment, concentrate on sinking the breathing.
- (viii) Eyes gaze straight ahead, not focusing on anything.
- (ix) Be aware of any tension or discomfort in parts of your body. Acknowledge it and make small adjustments to improve the comfort of the posture.

Adding standing meditation 10-20 minutes a day will not only enhance your rooting in Tai Chi forms, but also increase chi flow in the body. Contemplating a Wuji posture during your busy life can also help you relax your mind and body.

7. Yiquan Standing Meditation

A few key points to be aware of when practicing yiquan are:

- (i) The feet are shoulder width with the outside of the feet parallel.
- (ii) Sit down with the tailbone, as though sitting onto a high stool
- (iii) Relax your shoulders out and down to the sides.
- (iv) Press up lightly with the crown of the head.
- (v) Even with these alignments there may be some discomfort. Remember this: “If you focus on pain, great or small, it becomes unbearable. If you focus on releasing your body into the posture, the discomfort becomes insignificant.”

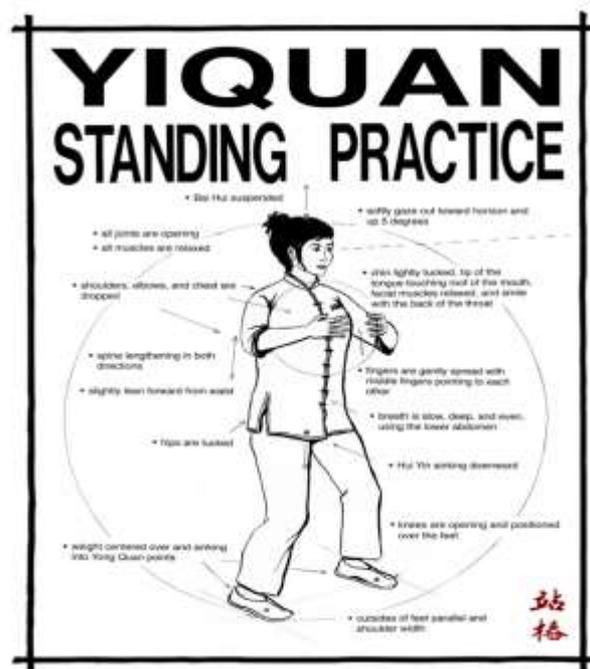


Figure 4: Yiquan Standing Meditation Posture [9]

(vi) Align your body and breath. Settle into the stance, focusing on each breath. Hold the pose for 10 minutes to begin with. You may begin to tremble. This is fine. After a few weeks of ten minutes a day the posture becomes pleasant.

(vii) Your intent is of vital importance. It is not enough to simply grit your teeth and endure holding the posture to 10-20 minutes. In fact, it is counterproductive. Do not fixate on discomfort. Choose your focus and purpose. Continually direct yourself to relax while remaining active in the stance.

(viii) For your standing meditation to be effective it is also vitally important to breathe deeply and freely. Breathe into the abdomen so that the stomach and small of the back expand in both directions on the inhale. Control your exhale, like you are letting air slowly out of a balloon. Each breath gets your full attention. Any time the mind wanders, turn it back to your practice.

(ix) To work out deeper issues, stand longer. How far you go is determined only by how intense your need.

8. Zhan Zhuang Standing Meditation

Zhan Zhuang is a simple yet powerful exercise to enhance energy, mental clarity, and internal strength. It is an excellent standing meditation technique for improving your productivity and bringing more aliveness to everything you do [10, 15].

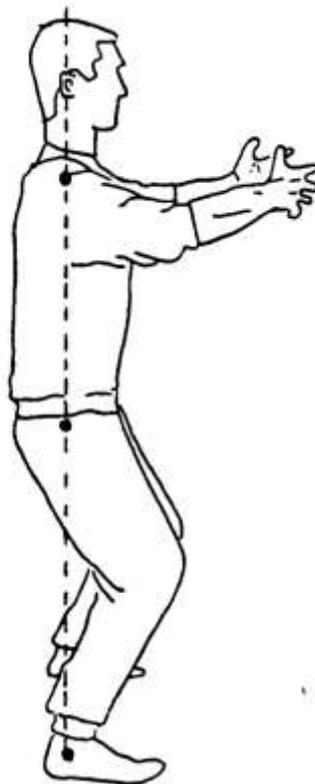


Figure 5: Zhan Zhuang Standing Meditation Posture

Although there are thousands of forms of Qigong, most of them use a derivative of Zhan Zhuang as a foundational practice. Zhan Zhuang means “standing like a tree,” “pile standing,” or “post standing.” The tree metaphor is apt as your legs and torso form the trunk of the tree. Your head and limbs form the branches. And your feet, sinking and extending down beneath the ground, establish the roots.

8.1 Zhan Zhuang Standing Meditation Posture Guidelines

- (i) Stand with feet pointed straight ahead, parallel to each other, and firmly on the ground at shoulder width. Grasp the ground with your feet while keeping them elastic with the tip of the toes slightly extended.
- (ii) Extend upward from the crown of your head into the sky. You want your head to feel like it is floating above your neck, effortlessly suspended above your spine.
- (iii) Roll your hips slightly forward as if you were sitting at the edge of a high barstool. This will straighten the spine in your lower back. Most people have a natural “s” curve in their spine. One of the primary aims of this standing posture is to reduce the curvature of the spine as much as possible to open the flow of energy. This occurs over time by maintaining the correct posture.
- (iv) Keep your knees bent slightly. Your knees should never be “locked” (too straight) and should never go beyond your toes (too bent).
- (v) Relax your shoulders. Don’t arch your back like in a military posture. Instead, do the exact opposite by rounding your upper back and making your chest slightly concave.
- (vi) Let your arms rest comfortably at your sides. Imagine a small pea-sized ball under each armpit to create a small space. Zhan Zhuang has 200 postures with different arm and leg positions, but in the beginning, you need not concern yourself with your arms. Just keep your hands and arms relaxed and loose, as they hang to your sides.
- (vii) Let the palms of your hands face toward your hips. Because of the small space under your armpits, your hands won’t touch your hips; instead, they will hang about two to three inches from your hips.
- (viii) Tuck your chin inward. Roll it inward and up toward the top of your head. This opens the area where your spine meets your skull.
- (ix) Keep your eyes slightly open with a soft gaze ahead of you. Keeping your eyes open can lead to distractions and closing them can lead to tiredness. A soft gaze with eyes almost closed provides the optimal conditions when you’re first learning this or any other meditation.
- (x) Place your tongue gently on your palate. Your lips are barely closed. Relax your jaw muscles.
- (xi) Breathe comfortably, slowing, and quietly through your nose. Feel your whole body relax deeper with every exhale. Avoid forcing your breath; keep it calm and steady. Eventually, you will not pay attention to your breath.
- (xii) Avoid using physical strength. Rest yourself on your skeletal structure instead. Be gentle with yourself. “Trying” to stand will increase tension. Your first aim is to sink all of your muscle tension into your feet and into the ground below them. To assist you in this effort, try placing all of your attention on your feet first.
- (xiii) Once you feel that you are in the correct standing posture, you can turn your attention to the various parts of the body where you are having tension. Start at the top of the head and scan your body downward. Notice any tension in your forehead, jaw, mouth, neck, shoulders, and so on. When you locate an area of tension, breath into that area and allow the tension to dissolve and sink downward. If the tension doesn’t release after breathing into it several times, move on to the next area.
- (xiv) In the beginning, getting your skeletal structure in proper alignment can take time, so be patient with yourself. Once you are familiar with this basic standing posture, it will become second nature to you. When you’re first starting out: Practice in front of a mirror from several angles to get a better sense of your body positioning. You can use this posture when you’re waiting in a line, pumping gas, or any time you’re standing.

8.2 How Long to Practice Standing Meditation?

To gain the optimal health benefits of standing practice, 40 minutes per day is prescribed. However, many teachers and practitioners suggest starting with only 1 or 2 minutes of practice. You'll frequently build new tension over time as your body falls out of proper alignment. If you know you will stand for only 2 minutes, your mind is less likely to drift its attention from the practice. Just standing in this manner for a few minutes when you're stressed, can calm your mind and shift your level of energy and mental clarity. In 10 minutes of practice, which you can build to over time, you can recharge and gain a new perspective on whatever you're doing.

8.3 Benefits of Zhan Zhuang Standing Meditation

(i) It provides a dramatic increase in physical energy. This increase in energy is the result of correcting your body's posture. Improper posture is "normal" for almost all modern people. It creates fatigue by slowing or stopping the flow of energy in the body.

(ii) Our chi flows freely throughout the body's energetic pathways, called vessels or channels. In Chinese medicine, there are eight vessels, twelve primary chi channels, and thousands of secondary channels branching out from the primary ones. In chi theory, energetic blocks (stagnant chi) are the root cause of most physical and mental ailments. The goal of Zhan Zhuang is to unblock stagnant chi and open all the body's energetic pathways.

(iii) Health benefits derived from this standing practice include: (i) Increased red blood cells; (ii) Increased hemoglobin production; (iii) Better nerve excitation; (iv) Increased oxygen in the body; (v) Higher quality cerebral cortex excitation; (v) Improved sleep.

(iv) Zhan Zhuang helps rebalance your energy from your head to the centre of your body. The Chinese call this centre the lower Dantian; the Japanese call it the Hara. This center point is below the navel, down the width of two or three fingers. By learning to bring some of your awareness to this region, you begin integrating your body with your mind. This helps you reconnect with your instincts and your gut feelings, leading to clearer thinking to make effective decisions. You gain more energy, improving your focus, concentration, and effectiveness at whatever you do.

9. Conclusion

In this paper we have discussed that for some people, with sports injuries, arthritis or conditions that prohibit lengthy sitting like numbness, standing meditation is a better way to earn physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional and spiritual benefits. Sitting meditation might be too painful and the obstacles too great and walking meditation requires extraordinary concentration. Standing meditation also helps release tension and strengthens core muscles. Most of the standing meditation techniques like Qigong, Zhang Zhuang, Wuji, and Yiquan are popular in Chinese tradition. The closest Indian/Hindu equivalent posture for the standing meditation is 'Tadasana'. We have compared some these standing meditation techniques and also described their benefits in this paper in order to highlight this form of meditation posture as an effective alternative.

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