

The Five Regulations (Wǔ Tiao 五調) in QigongDharma: A Refined Approach

Introduction to the Five Regulations

The Chinese word Tiao (調) means to regulate, tune, adjust, and harmonize. Similar to tuning a musical instrument, QigongDharma practice serves as a tuning process that aligns us with the Dao.

The character Tiao combines two radicals: Yan (言), which signifies the language or voice of the heart, and Zhou (周), which conveys wholeness and completion.

Within the context of the **Five Regulations**, Tiao represents "Attuning with the Dao by listening to the Voice of your Heart and bringing your whole being into Harmony." Engaging in QigongDharma with these regulations transforms your inner world, cultivating a radiant presence and peace.

Regulation #1: Body (Tiao Shen 調身)

Regulating the body involves attuning to five essential qualities: relaxation, alignment, balance, centeredness, and rootedness. A relaxed body promotes a relaxed mind, as our biology and emotions are intimately connected.

Dynamic Relaxation: This principle balances the natural polarities of tension and ease within the physical structure. "Qi flows freely through a relaxed and aligned body" is a fundamental axiom in qigong. With practice, relaxation evolves from stillness into poised movement, allowing you to guide qi for healing, nourishment, and revitalization.

Integrating Tissues and Fluid Systems: Consistent practice enables you to engage with muscles, tendons, ligaments, and the body's various fluid systems. These physical structures connect with the subtler energetic systems of qi channels, meridians, and reservoirs. Deeper dynamic relaxation arises as qi flows freely and accumulates in the lower dan tian.

Alignment: In QigongDharma, alignment has two dimensions:

1. Physical alignment with gravity, preventing compensatory actions that block energy flow
2. Internal psychological, emotional, and spiritual alignment with the Dao

Alignment is not a fixed state but a vibrant, living presence that flows through our being.

Balance: This represents a dynamic condition of stability and equilibrium, rather than a static state. The QigongDharma practice uncovers compensatory habits developed from physical or psychological challenges and integrates them into wholeness through mindfulness.

Centeredness: This illustrates the harmonious balance of Yin and Yang throughout the body, manifesting as an equilibrium between strength and weakness, expansion and contraction, and like and dislike. An embodied presence helps us center ourselves amid impermanence.

Rootedness: Being rooted means connecting with the Earth in a way that supports upward movement. It offers fluid stability without being fixed or immovable. Rootedness does not imply feeling heavy—Earth energy provides qualities of lightness and fluidity when required.

Regulation #2: Breath (Tiao Xi 調息)

Breath regulation balances intentional cultivation techniques with naturally occurring intuitive adjustments. The Chinese saying "xīn xīn xiāng yì" (心心相印) means "two hearts beat as one" or "kindred spirits," and this reminds us that the heart/mind and breath are interdependent.

Breath, Emotion, and Nervous System: Our breathing patterns reflect our physical, mental, and emotional states. Mindfulness practices help balance the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, creating fluid harmony between them.

Cultivated Breathing Skills: Natural diaphragmatic breathing (NAB) serves as a foundation, while more advanced techniques, such as reverse diaphragmatic breathing (RDB), enhance energetic strength and facilitate deeper qi infusion.

The refined qualities of breath include:

- **Slow:** Improving mind-body connection through slowed breath rhythm
- **Soft:** Developing ease and relaxation in breathing
- **Fine:** Achieving subtle, gentle, barely perceptible breath
- **Quiet:** Natural quietness emerging from softness and fineness
- **Relatively Deep:** Natural depth without forcing maximum volume
- **Relatively Even:** Regular natural rhythm without rigid intervals

Regulation #3: Mind (Tiao Yi 調意)

The Five Regulations form a circular relationship rather than a linear progression. While it is challenging to unify the mind without first harmonizing the body and breath, mind regulation is essential to the practice.

Right View in Mind Regulation: The mind encompasses our bio-neurological sensing and thinking functions. The quality of perception influences these mental processes, aligning with the Buddhist concept of "right view" from the Eightfold Path.

Balance Between Doing and Non-Doing: Mind regulation begins with understanding its capacities and limitations. Recognizing our interconnectedness with all life shifts us from a self-centered mindset to one of altruistic concern. A calm mind transforms into a powerful tool for clear understanding and precise discrimination.

The qigong dictum "Yi Dao, Qi Dao" (Where the heart/mind intention goes, qi follows) illustrates how heart and mind intention directs life force. Regulating the mind unlocks our full potential through meditation practices that clear habitual patterns of overthinking and negative self-talk, facilitating insight, creativity, and trauma release.

Regulation #4: Qi (Tiao Qi 調氣)

Understanding and regulating qi is transformative. This life force permeates the universe in both micro and macro forms, encompassing personal and transpersonal dimensions.

Qi expresses in the body as:

- Vitality or its absence
- Immune system health or deficiency
- Bio-neurological well-being or contraction
- Visceral luminous presence with insight and compassion

Practical Qi Regulation: This involves uniting with qi's inherent intelligence (li), the embedded guiding principle of the Universe. It's about listening to qi with both sensory perception and intuitive awareness. Well-regulated qi leads to smooth circulation, increased strength, and vitality, with qi naturally stored in the lower dantian.

Regulation #5: Spirit (Tiao Shen 調神)

The Essence of Shen: Spirit (Shen) is the ineffable essence that permeates all life forms. It resides within our energetic matrix as a coherent, animating force of presence. Throughout history, spirit and breath have been intertwined concepts in many languages.

Mystical Distinctions: The Five Regulations encompass both the corporeal (body) and the ethereal (Shen). While spirit is a component of the manifest universe, it is neither pure consciousness nor emptiness (śūnyatā). This paradox is both practical and mystical within QigongDharma.

Cultivating Spirit: Regulating spirit involves developing insight through contemplative practice, surrendering to direct non-dualistic knowing, and recognizing the inherent goodness of Universal Life. It's a gathering of body, breath, mind, and qi toward the limitless greater good.

Spirit regulation enhances our intuitive understanding of our non-dual nature. By trusting emergence and utilizing RHQ's embodied contemplative skills, we cultivate essential unity—not as a final state but as part of our deepening desire for love, beauty, and peace.

The Five Regulations can be practiced individually or simultaneously, whether standing, sitting, or moving. They create a complete system for returning to the One that we have always been and never left. Through wise and consistent practice, QigongDharma transforms your inner world into a realm of radiant presence and peace.

