



EASE ENERGY EQUANIMITY



TWIN RIVERS ~ ONE SOURCE

Qigong and Meditation for Ease, Energy, and Equanimity
Spirit Rock Meditation Center February 8, 2026

Overview

On this winter day of shared practice, the twin rivers of Qigong and meditation flow together as one living stream. Through periods of stillness and gentle movement, we restore balance to the nervous system, soften unnecessary effort, and rediscover the natural ease and vitality of embodied presence.

Held within the supportive embrace of Spirit Rock, this retreat invites you to explore how ancient contemplative traditions illuminate modern understandings of resilience, regulation, and well-being. Meditation steadies the mind and opens awareness; Qigong nourishes the body and supports the free flow of energy. Together, they form a single, integrated path, two rivers flowing from one source.

Throughout the day, we will cultivate three interrelated qualities: **ease**, the release of unnecessary tension and effort; **energy**, the natural vitality that arises when body and breath are in harmony; and **equanimity**, the spacious balance of heart and mind that allows insight, compassion, and joy to arise naturally.

The practices offered emphasize accessibility, kindness toward the body, and respect for individual pacing. Whether you are recovering from illness, navigating life transitions, or simply seeking restoration, you are welcome to participate at your own level of comfort.

Our day will unfold through guided and silent meditation, restorative Qigong and Dao Yin, mindful breathing, Dharma reflections, meditative soundscapes, and opportunities for inquiry. Whether you are new to these practices or deepening a long-established path, you are warmly welcome.

Whether joining us in the meditation hall or participating online from your own space, you will leave with practical tools and embodied insights you can carry directly into daily life, supporting balance, clarity, and ease amid change. Online participants will find the movement practices easily adapted to smaller spaces.

With warmth and in practice,

Teja

A Word of Welcome

Welcome to this day of practice together.

Whether you have arrived at the meditation hall at Spirit Rock or are joining from your own space via the screen, you are part of this circle. However you come to this day, rested or weary, curious or seasoned, hopeful or uncertain, you are welcome exactly as you are.

This is not a day for striving or achievement. We are not here to perfect our posture, master our breath, or attain some special state. We are here to remember something simple: that the body already knows how to settle, the breath already knows how to flow, and awareness already knows how to rest in its natural clarity. Our work is not to create these things but to stop interfering with them.

The practices I share today draw from ancient streams, including the meditation traditions of Buddhism and the energy cultivation practices of the Daoist sages. Though they arose in different landscapes and spoke in different vocabularies, they point to the same source: the luminous, responsive awareness that is our birthright, and the ease that becomes possible when we align with the natural way of things.

Some of you may be new to Qigong or meditation. Some of you may have practiced for many years. Some of you may be navigating difficulty in the body or heart, illness, grief, transition, or uncertainty. While everything is vital in our experience, all of these are conditions of this moment, and all are welcome here.

The practices we explore are designed to meet you where you are, not where you think you should be.

Throughout this day, I invite you to listen to your body, your breath, and the quiet voice of your own knowing. Let ease be your teacher. Let kindness be your guide.

The Theme: Twin Rivers, One Source

In the classical traditions of East Asia, stillness and movement were never seen as opposites. The great Daoist sages taught that stillness contains movement within it, like the calm surface of a lake beneath which currents flow. And movement, when aligned with natural principles, reveals a deep stillness at its core, the unmoving center around which all motion turns.

This is the meaning of our theme today: *Twin Rivers, One Source*.

The two rivers are meditation and Qigong: practices of stillness and movement. In meditation, we settle the body and allow the mind to rest in open awareness. In Qigong, we move the body gently and allow energy to circulate freely. These practices may seem different, yet they arise from the same source: the wish to return to our natural state of ease, vitality, and presence.

When we practice them together, something beautiful happens. The stillness of meditation deepens our sensitivity to the subtle movements of breath and energy. The gentle movements of Qigong help release the tensions that make stillness difficult. Each supports the other. Each complements the other.

By the end of this day, you may begin to sense that there is no rigid boundary between sitting and moving, between being and doing. There is only awareness, sometimes still, sometimes flowing, always present, always responsive, always whole.

Opening Practice: Entering the Flow

We begin by simply arriving.

This may sound obvious, but actual arrival is rare. Most of us live slightly ahead of ourselves, already thinking about what comes next, already rehearsing, already elsewhere. The body is here, but the heart and mind are scattered across time.

So our first practice is the simplest and perhaps the most profound: we gather ourselves back into this moment, this body, this breath.

Standing and Seated Qigong

We begin with gentle standing postures, not to build strength or endurance but to reestablish our relationship with gravity and the ground. The feet find the earth. The knees soften. The spine lengthens naturally, not through effort but through release. We let the weight of the body pour downward, and in response, something rises, a subtle buoyancy, a sense of being held.

For those who prefer to sit or find standing difficult, these principles apply. The sitting bones root into the chair or cushion. The spine floats upward. The shoulders release. Wherever you practice, the essential gesture remains the same: yielding to support, allowing the body to be held.

Mindfulness of Breathing

Once the body has settled, we turn our attention to the breath. Not to control it, not yet, but simply to notice. Where do you feel the breath most vividly? The nostrils? The chest? The belly? The whole body breathing as one?

The breath is a bridge between the voluntary and the involuntary, between conscious effort and natural rhythm. When we attend to it with gentleness, the nervous system begins to recalibrate. The ancient fight-or-flight responses soften. The body remembers that, in this moment, it is safe to rest.

This settling is not something we force. It is something we allow. The breath knows how to deepen on its own when we stop interfering. Our task is simply to offer kind attention and then get out of the way.

Guided Meditation

From this settled place, we open into spacious awareness. The breath continues, but we no longer focus on it exclusively. We let awareness expand to include the whole body, the sounds in the room, and the felt sense of simply being present.

This is ease, not the absence of sensation, but the willingness to be with whatever arises without grasping or pushing away. Ease is not something we achieve; it is what remains when unnecessary effort falls away.

A Note on Honoring Your Own Pace

Throughout this session, and indeed throughout the day, I invite you to practice at your own pace and within your own capacity. If a movement doesn't feel right in your body, modify it or let it go. If sitting still becomes uncomfortable, shift your position mindfully. If emotions arise, let them be held in the same spacious awareness we bring to breath and sensation.

These practices are designed to be restorative, not demanding. The body carries its own wisdom, its own timing, its own needs. Part of our practice is learning to listen to that wisdom with respect.

For some of us, the nervous system has learned to be vigilant, to brace against difficulty, to hold tension as a form of protection. This is not a flaw; it is the body's intelligent response to life's challenges. But in a setting like this, where safety and support are present, we can gently invite the body to experiment with softening. Not forcing relaxation, but offering the conditions in which relaxation becomes possible.

The Two Rivers: Stillness and Motion

Having arrived and settled, we now explore the relationship between stillness and movement more fully.

Guided Qigong Sequences

The Qigong forms we practice today are drawn from classical traditions but adapted for accessibility. They emphasize:

Relaxed flow: Movement arises from the center of the body and ripples outward, like waves spreading across water. The limbs follow the torso; the torso follows the breath; the breath follows intention. Nothing is forced.

Energy circulation: In Daoist understanding, vital energy (Qi) flows through the body along specific pathways. When this flow is open and unobstructed, we experience vitality and well-being. When it is blocked, we experience fatigue, tension, or dis-ease. Gentle movement helps open these pathways, inviting energy to flow freely.

Coordination of breath and movement: The breath guides the movement. As we inhale, the body opens and expands. As we exhale, the body gathers and settles. This simple rhythm creates a natural massage for the internal organs and a gentle pump for the circulation of blood and lymph.

Breath Regulation Practices

Beyond the natural coordination of breath and movement, we also explore specific breath practices designed to:

Balance the nervous system: Slow, smooth breathing activates the parasympathetic response, signaling to the body that it is safe to rest, digest, and restore.

Build resilience: Our breath practices do not require holding or retaining the breath. In QigongDharma, we practice with the 4 phases of the breath: Inhalation, natural pause at the end of the inhalation, Exhalation, and natural pause. That's the cycle, and it can strengthen the body's capacity to remain calm under mild stress, a kind of training for equanimity.

Cultivate calm vitality: The goal is not sedation but a quality of energy that is both settled and alive, what the tradition calls 'calm vitality' or 'relaxed alertness.'

Meditation with Healing Soundscape

During this session, Gary Muszynski will offer meditative handpan music, a contemporary instrument whose resonant tones support deep relaxation and inner listening.

Sound has been used for healing and spiritual practice across cultures and centuries. The handpan's harmonics interact with the nervous system in subtle ways, helping to entrain brainwaves toward states of calm focus. You may simply rest in the sound, letting it wash through you without needing to do anything at all.

Discovering the Unity of Stillness and Motion

As we move through these practices, I invite you to notice: where does movement end and stillness begin? When you stand in a Qigong posture, is the body truly still, or is there subtle movement, the breath rising and falling, the heart beating, energy circulating beneath the surface? When you move through a form, is there a center that remains unmoving, a stillness around which the movement turns?

This inquiry is not philosophical, it is experiential. Let the body teach you what the mind cannot figure out.

One Source: Ease, Energy, and Equanimity

On the Integration of Practice and Daily Life

There is a traditional teaching that practice occurs in two arenas: on and off the cushion, in the retreat hall, and in the marketplace, in stillness and in the midst of activity. The great challenge and the great invitation are to let these two arenas become one.

What we cultivate here today is not meant to stay here. The ease we discover in standing meditation is meant to infuse the way we stand in line at the grocery store. The breath awareness we develop is meant to be available when difficult news arrives or when conflict arises. The equanimity we touch in sitting practice is meant to support us when life becomes turbulent.

But how does this transfer actually happen? How do we carry the cushion into the world?

Three Qualities, One Practice

The subtitle of our retreat names three qualities: ease, energy, and equanimity. Let us look at each briefly.

Ease is the release of unnecessary effort. Notice: I say *unnecessary* effort. Life requires effort; we must move, act, respond, and engage. But so often we add layers of tension that serve no purpose. We grip when we could hold lightly. We brace against difficulties that haven't arrived. We carry yesterday's worries into today's tasks.

Ease is not passivity or collapse. It is appropriate effort, enough to meet the moment, no more. The Daoist sages called this *wu wei*, often translated as 'non-doing' but better understood as 'non-forcing.' It is action aligned with the natural flow of things, like water finding its way downhill.

In daily life, ease might look like pausing before reacting. It might feel like your shoulders dropping away from your ears in the middle of a stressful meeting. It might sound like a slower exhale when frustration arises. Small gestures, but they accumulate.

Energy is our natural vitality, the aliveness that animates the body and brightens the mind. This energy is not something we manufacture; it is something we inherit simply by being alive. But it can become depleted or stagnant through illness, stress, lack of rest, or chronic tension.

The practices of Qigong and mindful breathing are designed to restore and regulate this energy. When the breath is smooth and deep, when the body is relaxed and aligned, when the mind is calm and present, energy flows freely. We feel resourced, capable, present.

In daily life, energy is supported by adequate rest, nourishing food, meaningful connections, time in nature, and practices like those we explore today. It is also supported by attending to what drains us and, where possible, setting boundaries that protect our vitality.

Equanimity is the quality of balance, the capacity to remain steady in the midst of change, to meet pleasant and unpleasant experiences without being swept away by either. The Buddha called equanimity one of the four divine abodes, alongside loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy. It is not indifference or detachment; it is a deep steadiness of heart that allows us to remain present and responsive even when life is difficult.

Equanimity arises naturally when ease and energy are present. When we are not exhausted, not gripping, not fighting against reality, there is space for balance to emerge. We can meet what comes with clarity rather than reactivity, with compassion rather than fear.

In daily life, equanimity might look like the pause between stimulus and response. It might feel like a willingness not to know, to let things be uncertain for a while. It might sound like the inner voice that says, 'This too, I can be with this.'

The Body as Teacher

One of the gifts of practices like Qigong and embodied meditation is that they give us direct, physical access to these qualities. We don't have to think our way to ease; we can feel the shoulders drop, feel the belly soften, feel the breath deepen. We don't have to believe in energy; we can sense warmth in the palms, tingling in the fingers, a subtle current moving through the limbs. We don't have to understand equanimity philosophically; we can touch it in the moment when the body is settled, the breath is smooth, and awareness rests in simple presence.

This is why practice matters. Ideas are helpful, but the body teaches what the mind cannot learn alone.

Integration: Meditation, Qigong, and Dao Yin

In this afternoon session, we bring together the threads of the day in an integrative practice that weaves seated meditation with gentle movement and the principles of Dao Yin, the ancient Chinese art of 'guiding and stretching' that is the ancestor of modern Qigong.

Dao Yin practices emphasize:

Listening to the body: Rather than imposing movement from outside, we follow the body's own impulses toward opening and release.

Self-massage and meridian awakening: Gentle tapping, rubbing, and pressing along the energy channels to stimulate circulation and release stagnation.

Coordination with intention: In Daoist practice, where the mind goes, energy follows. We learn to guide awareness through the body, inviting opening and flow.

Throughout this integrative practice, let kindness be your guide. There is no perfect posture, no correct amount of stretch, no right way to feel. There is only this body, this breath, this moment, met with presence and care.

Closing Circle

As we draw the day to a close, we take time to integrate what we have explored and to prepare for the transition back into ordinary life.

Seated Practice

We return to stillness, not as something separate from the movement we have practiced, but as its natural completion. The body has moved, the breath has flowed, and energy has circulated. Now we simply rest in the fruits of practice, allowing everything to settle.

Carrying the Practice Forward

The invitation, as you leave today, is simple: take one thing with you. Not everything, just one thing.

Perhaps it is a breath practice you can do at your desk or in your car. Maybe it is a simple Qigong movement you can practice for two minutes each morning. Perhaps it is the memory of how the body feels when it is truly at ease, a reference point you can return to when tension accumulates.

Small practices, done consistently, transform our lives more reliably than grand efforts done once and forgotten. Find what works for you and make it part of your day.

Dedication of Merit

In the Buddhist tradition, we conclude practice by dedicating whatever benefit has arisen to the well-being of all. This is not a mere formality; it is a practice of generosity and connection. Whatever ease, energy, or equanimity we have touched today, we offer it outward, trusting that our own peace contributes in some small way to the peace of the world.

May the benefits of this practice extend to all beings.

May all beings know ease in their bodies.

May all beings know the vitality of life flowing freely.

May all beings rest in the great equanimity that embraces all things.

With warmth and in the Dharma,

Teja

A Note for Those Who Carry Difficulty in the Body

These practices are offered with awareness that many of us carry unresolved stress, grief, or trauma in our bodies. For some, turning attention inward can feel uncomfortable or even activating. If this is your experience, please know:

- You are always invited to modify, pause, or step back from any practice.
- Keeping the eyes slightly open, feeling the feet on the floor, or orienting to the room can help maintain a sense of safety and grounding.
- It is not necessary to relax deeply to benefit from these practices. Simply showing up and practicing within your window of tolerance is enough.
- Gentleness is not a preliminary stage on the way to 'real' practice. Gentleness *is* real practice.

The body heals at its own pace, in its own way. Our task is to create conditions of safety and support, and then to trust the process.