

RECLAIMING CALM, CLARITY, & CENTERED PRESENCE

Sunday, June 14th 2026 | 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Spirit Rock Community Meditation Center | In-Person & Online
With Roshi Teja Fudo Myoo Bell

QIGONG & DHARMA FOR THE RESPONSIVE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Welcome, everyone, those here in the meditation hall, and those joining us online. Though we are gathered through different doors, we are entering one field of practice. One body of practice. One shared intention.

The theme for our day is **reclaiming calm, clarity, and centered presence**.

The word *reclaiming* is important. We are not trying to manufacture calm as a special state. We are not trying to force clarity into the mind or impose centeredness upon the body. These qualities are not foreign to us. They are part of our original capacity. They are part of the deeper intelligence of body, heart, mind, breath, and awareness.

But in the conditions of modern life, with all its speed, pressure, uncertainty, conflict, grief, and stimulation, these natural capacities can become obscured. The body becomes braced. The breath becomes shallow. The heart contracts. The mind becomes scattered or vigilant. We may find ourselves living from reactivity rather than responsiveness.

So today we practice not becoming someone else, but remembering and restoring what is already present beneath the layers of tension and momentum.

A calm body does not mean a body without sensation. It means a body that can feel itself without being overwhelmed by what it feels.

A clear heart does not mean a heart without sorrow, tenderness, anger, love, or concern. It means a heart that can remain open enough to know what is happening without immediately collapsing, defending, or hardening.

A radiant mind does not mean a mind without thoughts. It means a mind that is not completely captured by its thoughts, a mind that can rest in awareness itself.

In QigongDharma, we begin where life is actually happening: in the body. Not the body as an object we manage from the outside, but the body as a living field of intelligence. The body is always communicating. It tells us when we are safe enough to soften. It tells us when something needs care. It tells us where attention has become stuck, and where life wants to flow again.

The nervous system is not an obstacle to awakening. It is part of the path.

Sometimes spiritual practice is misunderstood as rising above the body, rising above emotion, rising above the ordinary human condition. But embodied Dharma asks something more intimate. It asks us to come all the way here. Into this breath. These feet. This spine. This heart. This moment of contact with the ground.

Calm begins with contact.

Feel the ground beneath you. Whether you are standing, sitting on a cushion, sitting in a chair, or practicing from home, let the ground be included. The ground does not ask anything from us. It receives us completely. Before we try to calm ourselves, we can allow ourselves to be supported.

This is the first gesture of practice: **letting support be real.**

From support, the breath begins to find its way. We do not need to command the breath. We begin by listening. The natural abdominal breath is not a technique imposed from the outside; it is a way of returning to the body's own rhythm. As the belly softens, the diaphragm moves more freely. As the breath deepens naturally, the body receives the message: there may be enough safety now to settle.

Not perfect safety. Not total control. Just enough safety.

Enough safety to feel the feet.

Enough safety to soften the jaw.

Enough safety to let the shoulders drop a little.

Enough safety to notice what is here without needing to fix it all at once.

This is a very compassionate threshold in practice. We do not demand openness. We invite it. We do not force relaxation. We create conditions in which relaxation may reveal itself.

In the language of qi, we might say that when the body is braced, qi becomes constrained. When attention is harsh, qi becomes agitated. When breath is shallow, qi remains near the surface. But when posture, breath, and awareness begin to harmonize, qi can circulate. Life begins to remember its own movement.

In the language of Dharma, we might say that mindfulness allows us to know what is present without becoming lost in it. Investigation helps us discern what is skillful and what is causing suffering. Energy awakens, joy may arise, tranquility becomes possible, concentration gathers, and equanimity matures. These are not abstract qualities. They are embodied capacities.

The body knows the Dharma in its own language.

Today we will practice through movement and stillness, through standing and sitting, through breath and silence, through listening and inquiry. At times we will move gently. At times we will rest. At times we will sense activation, numbness, ease, fatigue, tenderness, or clarity. All of it belongs.

For those practicing online, please let your own room become part of the retreat space. Your chair, floor, wall, window, and screen are not interruptions. They are your monastery for the day. Feel free to adapt, to turn the camera off if needed, to sit, stand, lie down, or pause. Practice is not measured by outward form. It is measured by sincerity, sensitivity, and presence.

For those in the hall, let the community support you without needing to compare. Each body has its own history, its own rhythm, its own dignity. We are not here to perform qigong. We are here to listen through qigong.

The movement is simple, but not small.

When the arms rise, we are studying effort.

When the hands descend, we are studying release.

When the spine lengthens, we are studying dignity.

When the knees soften, we are studying humility.

When the breath moves through the belly, ribs, back, and heart, we are studying interdependence.

When we pause, we are studying trust.

This is how we reclaim centered presence: not by withdrawing from life, but by discovering a center that can meet life.

The center is not a fixed point. It is not a defended position. It is a living relationship with the ground, breath, awareness, and the world. When we are centered, we can be moved without being thrown off our center. We can feel without drowning. We can respond without needing to react so quickly.

This is especially important in times like these. The world gives us many reasons to contract. Practice gives us another possibility: not denial, not passivity, not spiritual bypassing, but a deeper capacity to remain human, awake, and available.

A calm body becomes a refuge.
A clear heart becomes a compass.
A radiant mind becomes a lamp.

And these are not only for us. When one person becomes a little less reactive, the field around them changes. When one person learns to pause, breathe, and respond with more wisdom, that pause enters the world. When one person softens without collapsing, strengthens without hardening, and becomes clear without becoming cold, this is already a blessing.

So today, let us practice gently and sincerely.

Let the body settle.
Let the breath return.
Let the heart clear.
Let the mind brighten.
Let the center remember itself.

Not as an idea.
As a lived experience.
As this very breath.
As this shared field of practice.
As the way home.

By afternoon, the teaching might turn toward integration:

The question is not only, “Can I feel calm during retreat?” The deeper question is, “Can I remember a pathway back to presence when life becomes difficult?”

Practice gives us pathways.

A hand on the hara.

Feeling the soles of the feet.

Letting the exhale lengthen.

Softening the eyes.

Turning toward the heart with kindness.

Asking, “What is needed now?” rather than “What is wrong with me?”

This is how embodied practice enters daily life. Not as another demand, but as a remembered refuge. In the middle of stress, fatigue, family life, conflict, illness, uncertainty, or world sorrow, we may not be able to change everything. But we can often change the way we meet the next breath.

That is not small.

One conscious breath can interrupt a chain of reactivity.

One moment of grounding can restore dignity.

One gesture of kindness toward the body can reopen the heart.

One clear pause can allow wisdom to enter.

The responsive nervous system becomes a Dharma gate. The body becomes a teacher. Breath becomes a bridge. Qi becomes the felt movement of life returning to balance.



The Body Remembers the Way

Before the mind finds the right words,
before the heart knows whether to open
or protect itself,
the body is already listening.

The feet listen
to the patience of the earth.

The spine listens
to the old instruction of trees.

The breath listens
for the door that was never locked.

We come here
carrying the weather of our lives
the unfinished sorrow,
the bright thread of hope,
the fatigue of holding too much together,
and the quiet wish
to be whole again.

And the practice says: Begin here.

Not in some perfected future.
Not in the version of yourself
you think you should have become by now.

Begin with the weight of the body
meeting the ground.

Begin with the hands
softening to open.

Begin with one breath
received without argument.

Calm does not arrive by command.

It comes when the body learns
it is safe enough to stop defending
against the moment.

Clarity does not mean
that the sky has no clouds.

It means the sky remembers
that it is wider than the clouds.

Centered presence
is not stillness without movement.

It is the mountain inside the river,
the root inside the swaying branch,

the radiant lamp that remains lit
even when the world
shakes the room.

So we move slowly,
not to escape the world,
but to feel how life moves
when nothing is forced.

We breathe gently,
not to control the heart,
but to give the heart
a place to rest.

We sit together,
near and far,
seen and unseen,
one field of listening.

And perhaps, just for one clear moment,

the body calms,
the heart opens,
the mind brightens,
and we remember:

that the way back was never far.

It was waiting
in the soles of our feet,
in softening the center,
and in the breath beneath the breath,
in the simple mercy
of being here.