

THE BIG IDEAS

Qigong

Science of cultivating Life Force.

Stopping Clocks

With your Qi.

Spiritual Development

#1 goal? Happiness.

The Four Golden Wheels

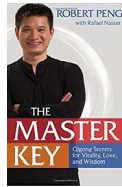
Three dantians + central meridian.

How Do You See World?

What does that make you?

A Sense of Destiny

Is aided by spiritual practice.



The Master Key

Qigong Secrets for Vitality, Love, and Wisdom

BY ROBERT PENG W/ RAFAEL NASSER · SOUNDS TRUE © 2014 · 328 PAGES

“Now picture two versions of yourself. In one, you are perpetually confused, unable to love, and chronically unmotivated. In the other, you are eminently wise, loving, and brimming with vitality. Realistically, your current condition lies somewhere between these two extremes. Wise at times and confused at other times, capable of loving some people some of the time and vital under certain conditions. Wherever you stand in this spectrum, wouldn't it be nice to begin a journey from your lesser self to your greater self? Wouldn't it be nice to become spiritually wealthier?”

As it turns out, there is a vast ocean of energy teeming within your body, and with the right key, this potential energy can be liberated and used to enrich your life with more wisdom, love, and vitality—a lot more than you might even imagine.

Xiao Yao's (*shao-yaow*) core teachings consist of a series of awakenings, empowerments, and exercises designed to liberate the hidden potential of your true self. I refer to this collection of Qigong practices as the master key. The material I present in this book is literally the key to higher wisdom, deeper love, and buoyant vitality. When these three qualities are developed and integrated into a seamless whole, you will experience true happiness.”

~ Robert Peng from *The Master Key*

Robert Peng is one of the world's leading Qigong masters.

I have been meaning to do a book on Qigong for awhile. The authors of [The Healing Power of the Breath](#) recommended some of his practices and mentioned this book and here we are.

I was familiar with Robert and his work via my friend Michael Gelb. Michael is the author of [How to Think Like da Vinci](#), [Brain Power](#), and [Creativity on Demand](#) (which is about applying Qigong energy/practices to creativity!). Michael is a Qigong master in his own right.

In fact, I actually created [a little YouTube video with Michael](#) in which he teaches me a Qigong practice called “The Three Treasures” that was inspired by his friend, Robert Peng.

If you've been looking to get into Qigong this book is a great place to start. (Get a copy [here](#).)

In addition to some powerful Qigong practices and an overview of how it all works, Robert shares his utterly fascinating and captivating personal story about how he met and trained with his master as a boy in China. I felt like I was reading [Dan Millman's Way of the Peaceful Warrior](#). But Robert's master, Xiao Yao, is a) real and b) even more powerful than Dan's fictional Socrates. :)

Qigong is obviously meant to be practiced and we'll only scratch the surface of this great book but I'm excited to share a few of my favorite Big Ideas and hopefully inspire you to learn more about Robert and Qigong if you're feelin' it!

(btw: You can check out samples of instructional videos [here](#) and buy them [here](#).)

“Xiao Yao used to say that we are all like beggars begging for scraps with a golden begging bowl—meaning that each of us can access a priceless treasure that lies within reach of our fingertips. We simply don't realize it. The treasure my master was referring to is happiness.”

~ Robert Peng

" Qigong improves our performance in any domain of human activity as much as an operating system upgrade improves the performance of any program installed on a computer."

~ Robert Peng

THE SCIENCE OF CULTIVATING LIFE FORCE (AKA QIGONG)

"The word *Qigong* (pronounced *chee-gung* and sometimes spelled *Chi Kung*) is made up of two Chinese characters: *Qi* and *gong*. 'Qi' refers to our Life Force, an invisible but discernible type of energy that permeates our bodies, much like an electromagnetic field, and powers our vital functions. We all have both *high energy* and *low energy* days and the difference between them depends of the quality of our Qi. The second word, 'gong,' means work or practice.

Qigong, then, is the science of cultivating our Life Force through specific practices as well as the art of applying this energy in the service of the Dao, or the greater good. When we practice Qigong, *every day can become a good day.*"

Qigong.

Qi is for Life Force.

Gong is for "work or practice."

Put the two together and we have the science of cultivating our Life Force plus the art of applying this energy in service to the greater good.

Hard to imagine something more powerful to master, eh?

STOP A CLOCK WITH YOUR QI LATELY?

"We followed up with a few more demonstrations. Finally I asked for a volunteer from the audience to take down the large round clock hanging up on the wall. I held it between my hands while facing the audience and then asked them to count down from ten to one.

They began, "Ten, nine, eight, seven . . ." and as they reached 'one' I strongly projected my Qi into the clock and made the second hand stop. Their applause continued for a long time. Afterward a swarm of people surrounded to shake my hand and ask questions.

That evening Dean Huang burst through my door without knocking.

'Robert, that was amazing!' He grabbed my hand and shook it vigorously. 'I didn't realize that my department was a lair for crouching tigers and hidden dragons.'

'Thank you, Dean Huang,' I said.

'You don't understand—my whole life I've dreamed about learning Qigong, but I could never find a teacher. Please accept me as your student.'

'I'm happy to teach you, but Qigong requires an ongoing commitment.'

'I'll do anything I have to do.'

'All right then, you're welcome to join our practice group.'

Dean Huang became one of my most enthusiastic Qigong students. He practiced daily for two hours. The following year the Qigong club entered the talent show again and Dean Huang's stellar performance stole the show."

That's from a chapter called "University Days" in which Robert walks us through his experience as a student and then as a professor of English literature at a university in China.

Think about that for a moment.

Robert STOPPED the second hand on a clock with the power of his Qi.

rubs eyes

Can you believe it?

" Once you master the technique, you will be able to boost the energy levels of your Three Dantians dramatically and liberate at will the Wisdom Qi, Love Qi, and Vitality Qi energies that they each hold in reserve. Ramping up your energy levels stacks the odds in favor of any day becoming a good day. And that is a worthwhile goal!"

~ Robert Peng

"The practice won't be complete until you move through all the fear you encounter. You must overcome whatever challenges darkness throws your way. Transform your heart into a sword of purity and slay any fear you experience. And whatever you do, don't retreat."

~ Master Xiao Yao

Robert shares a number of truly astonishing stories to capture the power of mastering our Qi via Qigong. He tells us: *"Many of the events I describe in the early chapters might sound surreal because they defy the laws of physics. For a long time I refrained from sharing these stories publicly, but I eventually discovered that people who heard them became profoundly inspired to study Qigong. Therefore, I decided to include them, for I trust these stories will expand your vision of your own human potential and inspire your practice."*

In addition to the clock-stop, Robert can also slice a chopstick in half with a "Qi-energized" dollar bill. He and his Qigong club buddies could also press a chopstick against their throats and break it in half. Oh, and, perhaps most impressively and importantly, they can heal people with the force of their Qi.

As astonishing as those feats are, they're nothing compared to what his Master could do.

Quick backstory on his Master: Xiao Yao. When Robert was 8 years old, he had a heart condition that kept him out of school. He wandered into a high-end resort's boiler room where he met a kind, older man known as Mr. Nan. That boiler room attendant had a secret identity.

In 1966, China went through its Cultural Revolution. During this time, all religious temples were forcibly closed as the government attempted to eliminate all hints of traditional elements of Chinese society and capitalism.

It wasn't safe to be associated with any religion during that time. As it turns out, Robert's new friend Mr. Nan was, in fact, Xiao Yao—a renowned Qigong master and senior monk of a Buddhist temple.

Xiao Yao healed Robert and taught him the martial and healing arts. Robert trained with him for 2 hours every morning before school and 2 hours every day after school. For years. Then the Cultural Revolution ended and Xiao Yao headed back to his temple. Robert visited during his breaks and experienced even more profound teachings.

In addition to being able to withstand axe blows to his chest with no blood or wounds and perform incredible healings, Robert tells us his master could also walk on water. I kid you not.

I'm sold. Qi is pretty powerful.

THE PRIMARY GOAL OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IS...

"The goal of this entire process is to initiate your transformation into becoming a Qigong master—a genuinely happy individual. We all possess that potential within us."

~ Robert Peng

"But, ultimately, altered states of consciousness and supernatural powers do not constitute the primary goals of spiritual development. There is one spiritual accomplishment that prevails over all the others, just as the sun outshines all the stars in the daytime sky, and that is the attainment of happiness."

What do I mean by happiness?

Genuine happiness is a condition of constant well-being that doesn't depend on any external cause or circumstance. For example, getting a raise makes you feel temporarily happy. But after the initial excitement wears off, do you still feel particularly happy? Not always.

Genuine happiness doesn't need an excuse to be. It just is. Whether being promoted or fired, a genuinely happy person is able to maintain an even, steady sense of self-contentment that flows undisturbed, just like an underground freshwater mountain stream that continues to flow even as the sky clouds over and a rainstorm appears."

All those astonishing feats of Qi are amazing.

But what's the real point of Qigong and any spiritual development?

Happiness.

Stable, enduring happiness that needs no external reason. Happiness that just is.

"However, there is one important prerequisite to practicing Qigong: being able to smile and enjoy yourself. Having fun doing the exercises is the key to progress. And adopting an easygoing style is the secret to spiritual success. Incidentally, 'easygoing' is the meaning of my master's name, Xiao Yao, so when practicing Qigong, be xiao yao."

~ Robert Peng

Reminds me of Marci Shimoff's book [Happy for No Reason](#) where she tells us: "Happy for No Reason isn't elation, euphoria, mood spikes or peak experiences that don't last. It doesn't mean grinning like a fool 24/7 or experiencing a superficial high. Happy for No Reason isn't an emotion. In fact, when you are Happy for No Reason, you can have any emotion—including sadness, fear, anger, or hurt—but you still experience that underlying state of peace and well-being... When you're Happy for No Reason, you bring happiness to your outer experiences rather than trying to extract happiness from them. You don't need to manipulate the world around you to try to make yourself happy. You live from happiness, rather than for happiness."

The ephemeral nature of the happiness that follows a promotion reminds me of Sonja Lyubomirsky's [The Myths of Happiness](#) where she walks us through the science of "hedonic adaptation" and tells us: "One of my primary scientific interests is in the area of hedonic adaptation—namely, the fact that human beings have the remarkable capacity to grow habituated or inured to most life changes. A hot topic today in the fields of psychology and economics, hedonic adaptation explains why both the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat abate with time. What is particularly fascinating about this phenomenon, however, is that it is most pronounced with positive experiences."

Indeed, it turns out that we are prone to take for granted pretty much everything positive that happens to us. When we move into a beautiful new loft with a grand view, when we partake of plastic surgery, when we purchase a fancy new automobile or nth-generation smartphone, when we earn the corner office and a raise at work, when we become immersed in a new hobby, and even when we wed, we obtain an immediate boost of happiness from the improved situation; but the thrill only lasts for a short time. Over the coming days, weeks, and months, we find our expectations ramping upward and we begin taking our new improved circumstances for granted. We are left with 'felicific stagnation.'

We want to be happy for no reason.

To see that things outside of us will never completely satisfy us once and for all as we embrace the deeper spiritual truths of life. Qigong is one powerful way to cultivate this awareness.

Let's look a little more closely at what's going on.

THE FOUR GOLDEN WHEELS

"The Four Golden Wheels' refers to an integrated network of subtle energy centers located inside the human body that are directly connected to your capacity for genuine happiness. When your wheels are awakened and packed with Life Force—or Qi, as I will refer to bioenergy from now on—your life automatically becomes a healthier, more energy-rich, enjoyable, and meaningful adventure in which you can actualize your dreams."

The Four Golden Wheels.

Helping us optimize these primary centers of Life Force is what the book is all about. Here's a super quick look at the basic idea:

We have three *dantians* (pronounced *dan-tee-en*)—which means "elixir field" in Chinese. Essentially, these dantians exist in your head, your heart, and your solar plexus: Behind your midbrow, under your sternum and three finger widths below your belly button.

These dantians correspond to different virtues. The Midbrow dantian corresponds to Wisdom Qi. The Midchest dantian to Love Qi and the Midriff dantian to Vitality Qi. Therefore, the essence of these first three "Golden Wheels" is Wisdom + Love + Vitality—the foundation of a healthy, happy, wise, loving human.

The fourth Wheel is called our "Central Meridian." It runs from the crown of our head down to our tail bone and is connected to "Heaven" and "Earth."

"There is a Qigong saying: where the mind goes, Qi follows."

~ Robert Peng

"Wisdom, love and vitality—these are the three spiritual qualities that you tap into whenever you access the three reservoirs of energy inside your body."

~ Robert Peng

As Robert says: "The Essential Practices presented in this section will considerably increase and refine your energy reserves. Each practice exercises all Four Golden Wheels by repeatedly pumping in fresh Qi and pumping out stagnant Qi. And just as physical exercises like aerobics and weightlifting will improve your circulation and strength, the Essential Practices will improve your Qi circulation and boost your Qi power."

Over the course of the day you constantly draw on your Qi reserves, especially when you interact with other people. These energetic flows take place invisibly, and at this stage of your Qigong development, you are going to start to notice them more and more. For example, while exploring a visionary idea with a colleague at the office, you might notice that you are both exchanging Wisdom Qi; while hugging a loved one during a tender moment, you might notice that you are exchanging Love Qi; while watching a basketball game with a group of friends, you might notice that you are all exchanging Vitality Qi; in the midst of contemplating your future, you might notice that you are channeling Heaven Qi; and while exploring practical ways to increase efficiency at a budgeting meeting, you might notice that you are whipping up Earth Qi. ...

After working with the Essential Practices for some time, you will begin to realize that you are projecting more wisdom, love, vitality, excellence, inspiration, practicality, and peacefulness each time you express yourself."

Check out the book and videos (samples [here](#) and full program [here](#)) for all the practices for activating these Four Golden Wheels!

(And, again, if you want a little jumpstart to your Qigong practice, check out the [mini-lesson from Michael Gelb](#).)

TWO QS: HOW DO YOU SEE THE WORLD? WHAT'S THAT MAKE YOU?

"I once asked Xiao Yao about the benefits of this meditation practice, and he replied by retelling the popular story about Master Foyin and the crafty scholar Su Dongpo.

Su Dongpo prided himself on his wit and liked to debate Master Foyin.

One day, over tea, he challenged the master. 'Foyin, people think you are an enlightened monk, but to me you just look like a big, stinking pile of worthless dung sitting on your pillow all day long.'

Su Dongpo leaned backward and crossed his arms slyly.

Master Foyin placed his hands in prayer position. 'My dear Su Dongpo, to me you look like a Buddha.'

Su Dongpo grinned and bid Master Foyin farewell.

When Su Dongpo got home, he was wearing a triumphant smile. His sister asked him what happened.

'Today I outsmarted Master Foyin,' Su Dongpo replied, then recounted the events to her.

'Oh no, brother! I'm sorry to tell you this, but you lost badly,' she said.

'What do you mean?'

'Don't you realize that the world mirrors the heart? Master Foyin sees you as a Buddha because he is a Buddha. You see him as a pile of dung. What does that make you?'

Su Dongpo turned beet red, and then, all of a sudden, became enlightened."

Two quick questions:

1. How do YOU see the world?
2. What does that make you?

"As soon as you embrace a meaningful task assigned to you by the treasure of Heaven, you are offered the resources to make it happen by the treasure of Earth, and the capacities to manage the process by the Three Dantians—your Human treasure."

~ Robert Peng

A SENSE OF DESTINY

"Of all the species on the planet, only one can claim existential anguish as one of its defining characteristics: human beings. Elephants don't suffer sleepless nights contemplating their purpose in life. Birds don't need to read self-help books to discover their rightful place in the natural order. Crocodiles don't require years of therapy to heal their broken hopes and dreams.

At its low point, the human condition becomes like Greek tragedy in which the protagonist is blessed with a gift that is also a curse. That gift is our higher consciousness and the promise of the meaningful, fulfilling life that it can bring. But when we lack a sense of destiny or the energy to pursue it, then life becomes an unending nightmare from which we can't wake up. That is the curse of being born human. Despite the high hopes we place on finding happiness at some point in the future, the sad truth is that many of us leave this Earth still waiting to find it. But having a spiritual practice can help you avert that dismal fate. Your life can become a joyful, meaningful journey—if you understand the rules of the game."

[Rollo May](#) tells us: "The acorn becomes an oak by means of automatic growth; no commitment is necessary. The kitten similarly becomes a cat on the basis of instinct. Nature and being are identical in creatures like them. But a man or woman becomes fully human only by his or her choices and his or her commitment to them. People attain worth and dignity by the multitude of decisions they make from day by day. These decisions require courage."

These courageous decisions are aided by spiritual practices. Two more questions: What decisions do you need to make and what are YOUR spiritual practices?

Here's to optimizing our Life Force as we live with more Wisdom + Love + Vitality and give ourselves most fully to the world!!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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[Happy for No Reason](#)

About the Author of "The Master Key"

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Robert Peng is an internationally renowned qigong master capable of generating healing energy through his hands with power equal to a potent electrical charge. He has used his extraordinary ability to help countless people regain their optimum health and vitality, and to demonstrate to the world the incredible spiritual potential human beings possess. Connect: robertpeng.com.



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Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at optimize.me.