

Geoff Pike's Pa Tuan Tsin: The Eight Precious Sets of Exercise

Information for this handout was taken from this website:

<https://johndixonacupuncture.wordpress.com/2019/09/15/geoff-pikes-pa-tuan-tsin-the-eight-precious-sets-of-exercise/>

This article shows a version of the Eight Precious Sets of Exercise, also known as the Eight Pieces of Brocade, from Qigong Master Geoff Pike. His books are *The Power of Ch'i* and *Chi: The Power Within*.

The Eight Precious Sets of Exercise are a simple form of eight different qigong exercises, which take around 10-15 minutes to carry out. If practiced daily, they will help develop a smoother flow of Ki/Qi (energy) in the body, gently strengthen your joints and muscles, and have a positive impact on your health.

Over the centuries, different variations of the exercise have been developed and practiced, but fundamentally, the exercises are all based on 8 specific movements. Usually the exercises are carried out in a gentle manner with an awareness of energy flow in the body, making it ideal for people of all ages and states of health. But some versions can be carried out in a more physical way with emphasis on stretching the muscles and tendons.

There is more information and links to videos of each exercise at the link above.

Exercise One: Scoop the Stream

The first exercise is one of the simplest and most pleasant to perform. It is so named because the second movement gives the impression of scooping the water from a stream and drinking from the cupped hands.

The Benefit

It is excellent for expanding the lungs and stretching the ribcage. It also circulates the dormant Chi from the lower abdomen to the tip of the spinal column and to the forehead. It gives you a general lift and generates immediate alertness. A good way to wake up and get started.



Relax. Take up your position standing with feet together and hands loosely at sides, fix your eyes on a chosen object. Empty the lungs. Inhale as slowly as you can while raising the hands (palms down) until the fingertips touch above the head (palms now up). The time required for the movement should coincide with the length of your breath. Stretch the body upward to its fullest extent without raising the heels. Imagine that you are supporting a great weight with your two palms. Hold for the silent count of three. Exhale slowly and steadily while reversing the movement and lowering the hands in time with the exhalation until they are gently back at your sides and the lungs are drained of air. Pause for the silent count of three.

Intertwine the fingers, forming a scoop, palms uppermost. Inhale slowly and deeply while raising 'the scoop' to the lips, bent arm in line with shoulders, elbows raised as high as possible.

To the silent count of three, turn the scoop over (palms down) and exhale steadily while reversing the movement.

Stretch the arm downward to their fullest extent as though pressing the palms down on a spring-loaded weight. Hold for the silent count of three. Return the relaxed hands to the sides and repeat both movements eight times.

Exercise Two: Press the Sky

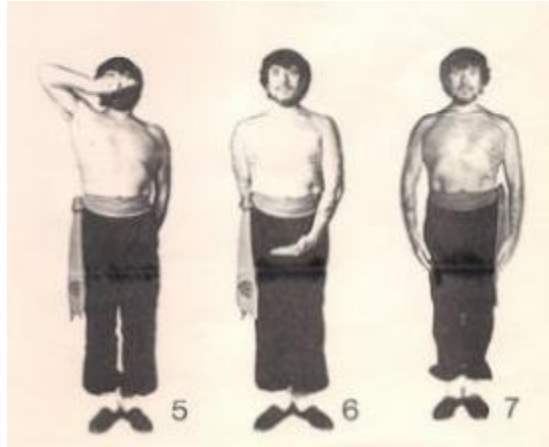
The second exercise is so-called because of its ultimate stretching power. The uppermost hand and flattened palm really seem to be supporting the sky.

The Benefit

A variation of Scoop the Stream, in which the active points are the liver and the shoulders. Chi is circulated from the liver to the shoulders alternatively, conditioning the liver, stimulating its function while relieving the shoulders of strain, and stretching the entire body to its fullest extent.

Relax. Remain in position with feet together.

Reach behind with the left hand and firmly clasp the back of the thigh just below the left buttock.



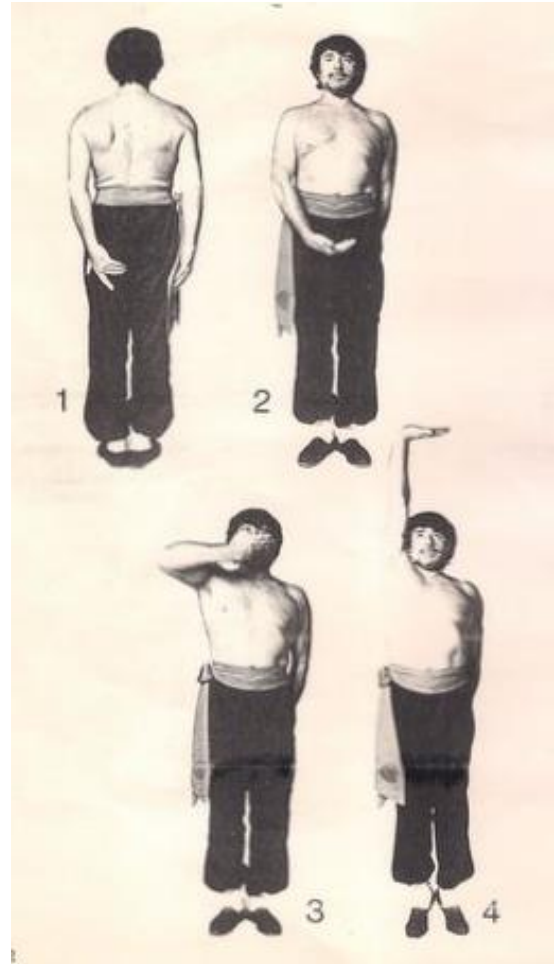
Drain the lungs of air. Form a 'cup' with the right hand hooked at the wrist.

Inhale slowly and deeply while raising the cup to the lips, elbow in line with

shoulder.

Without pause, turn the cup outward and over, rise on your toes and continue inhaling until the right arm is 'pressing the sky'. From toes to upturned palm, your body is stretched to its absolute utmost and full of air. Hold for a count of three.

6. and 7. Exhale slowly and steadily and reverse the action exactly: lower the upturned palm to the lips while lowering the heels. Form the cup at the lips, lower to the groin, relax with both hands at the sides. Reach behind with the right hand to grasp the right back thigh below the buttock. Repeat the movements exactly with the left hand. Complete four times with each arm.

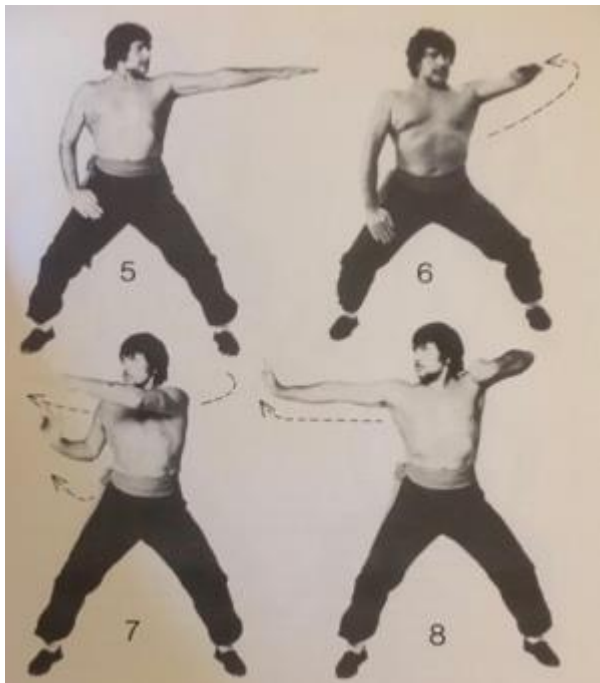
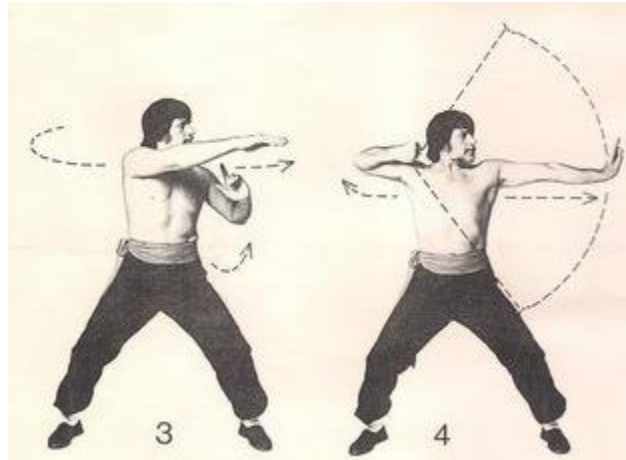


Exercise Three: The Shaolin Archer

The third and much revered exercise is perhaps the most 'beautiful jewel in the crown of the Precious Eight'... at least that is how it was once described by a Shaolin priest.

The Benefit

This exercise can be used alone when time does not permit the full sequence, it being considered the most beneficial of the set. Its primary purpose, because of its separate (left and right) stretching, is to exercise alternate lung power. At the same time its twisting motion under pressure relieves and strengthens the liver. Executed from the Half-horse (or full Horse, if you feel like it), it also brings into play the leg, hip and spinal exercise explained under Horse Stance, plus the stretching and strengthening of sinew and joint in the arm, developing unexpected power.



Relax. Drop into a Half-horse stance (high seated, knees half-bent). Settle comfortably, checking your stance for perfect balance; move your foot a centimetre or two to find it. Take a long, silent breath while raising the right arm and holding it at shoulder level. The left hand is on the left thigh. The right hand is relaxed from the wrist, the right arm firm but not tensed. Keep your eyes, half-closed, upon the outstretched hand. Think of nothing else but the hand. It is a beautiful thing. It is your hand. It has many times saved you as it moves to your will.

Swing the hand in its gentle state slowly across your body just below eye-level, keeping the arm locked but relaxed. Watch its progress as though it were a bird in flight, until it is across your chest and pointing left. During this flight, you are gently exhaling, emptying your lungs quietly but completely.

Before it has finished travelling, bring up the bow (left hand).

Your lungs are now empty and ready to draw breath. Raise the forefinger of the left hand as though its tip were a target (or a gun sight).

Inhale slowly, quietly, steadily, as you push out the bow to full arm's length, keeping your eyes fixed on the raised finger tip. Straighten the left arm to its fullest extent, locking the elbow until the full breath has been drawn. At the same time, the 'arrow hand' has been slowly drawn back to its fullest extent. All motion should cease with the peak of your inhalation. In other words, your movements last

as long as your slowest inhalation and exhalation. Hold the pose for the silent count of three. During that period of three seconds, with lungs fully extended, concentrate through willpower your entire bodily strength into your raised fingertip. Stretch that extended right arm to its absolute maximum and a little bit more. The elbow and wrist should tighten like a stretched rope, just the way a cat puts every ounce of power into the awakening stretch of its forelegs.

On three, begin to gently exhale and repeat the exact procedure in reverse, lowering the right hand slowly to the thigh and relaxing the taut left hand at the wrist.

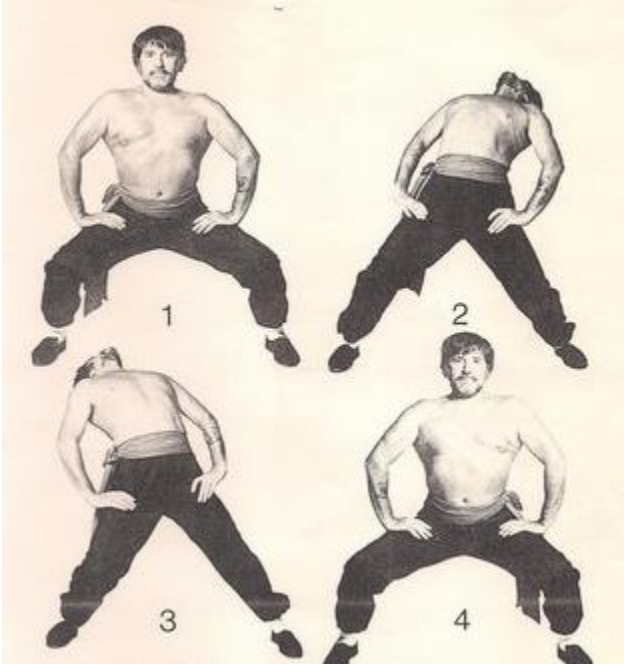
The left hand has now become the arrow hand and the right will raise the bow. Exhale as the left hand swings slowly into position and draw the bow to the right. This may sound complicated but you will find that it is not. Just imagine the fitting, drawing and releasing of an imaginary bow, drawn first to the right and then to the left. Repeat four time on either side.

Exercise Four: Search the Clouds

The fourth exercise is referred to in Wu Shu circles as 'a very essential health dose'. This may be an added incentive to practice it correctly as it appears quite awkward to perform and calls for considerable physical application. It is called Search the Clouds because the movements command attention upwards.

The Benefit

Its benefit can be seen after internal injuries such as bruises or contusion caused from heavy sparring or actual combat. This indicates its internal effectiveness. It is also accepted as a pick-up for fatigue and over-exertion 'especially after sexual intimacy'. 'Sexual exhaustion or tiredness can interfere with bodily functions, in particular the digestive system. Searching the clouds hardly seems a recuperative procedure for a bruised or weary body, but with careful and regular practice you will find it is.

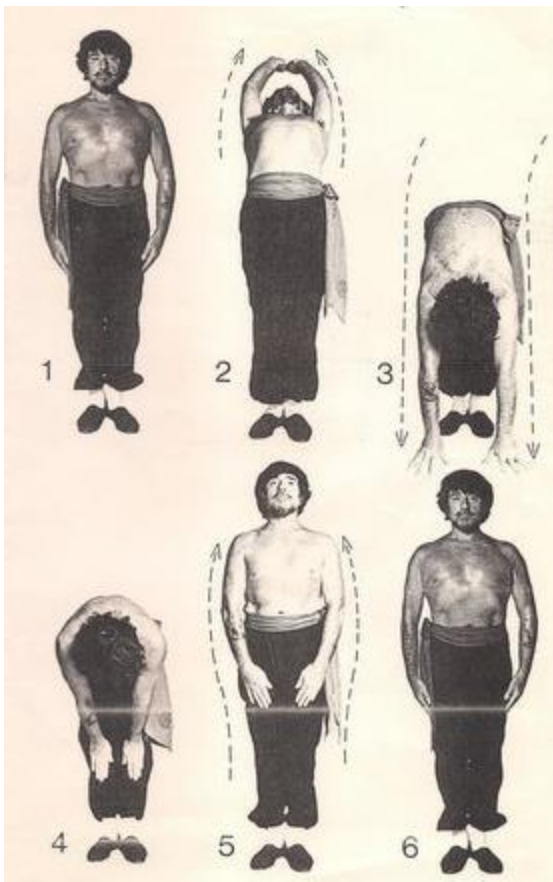


Relax. Remain in the Half-horse Stance (or rest your legs for a moment if you must), then lower into the full Horse Stance.

Place the hands on the thighs, fingers spread inwards. Slowly inhale, while bending the upper body backwards and to the left as far as you can go. The lungs and body should be filled with air by the time you have reached the full extent of your backward bend.

Hold for the silent count of three, pressing back to gain another centimetre. Exhale steadily as you bring the upper body to its central position, by which time the lungs and body are drained of air. Relax. Hold for the count of three.

Repeat the movement to the right. Complete four times on each side. Close the Horse Stance and stand erect.



Exercise Five: Lift the Rock

The fifth exercise is a combination of exercises one and two: scooping and pressing. The basic movement is that of taking the weight of a rock or nearby object in the hands, lifting it to the chin and raising it as high above the head as possible.

The Benefit

It offers all-round internal benefits while bringing about the utmost in upward stretching. We have all observed the animal stretching habits, particularly feline, upon waking or rising. No authority on physical energy control and bodily relaxation could deny that stretching has considerable restorative effects.

Relax. Stand erect with feet together. Empty the lungs of air.

Entwine the fingers, palms uppermost (to accept the rock). Inhale slowly and deeply while raising the joined hands level with the chin.

Continue the upward press without breaking the finger grip, turning the palms outward and upward as you continue to press above the head. Follow the movement of your hands with your eyes until your flat, upturned palms have reached

their utmost height. Strain to gain an extra fraction, to the silent count of three. Relax.

Exhale steadily while reversing the movement exactly.

Back to the beginning position. Press down for the silent count of three. Repeat eight times.

Exercise Six: Touch the Sky Press the Earth

The sixth exercise combines maximum upward stretching with maximum forward and downward stretching, hence the name.

The Benefit

Maximum stretching and bending combines arm and shoulder loosening, chest expansion, abdominal, back and leg exercise whilst greatly benefiting the kidneys and spleen.

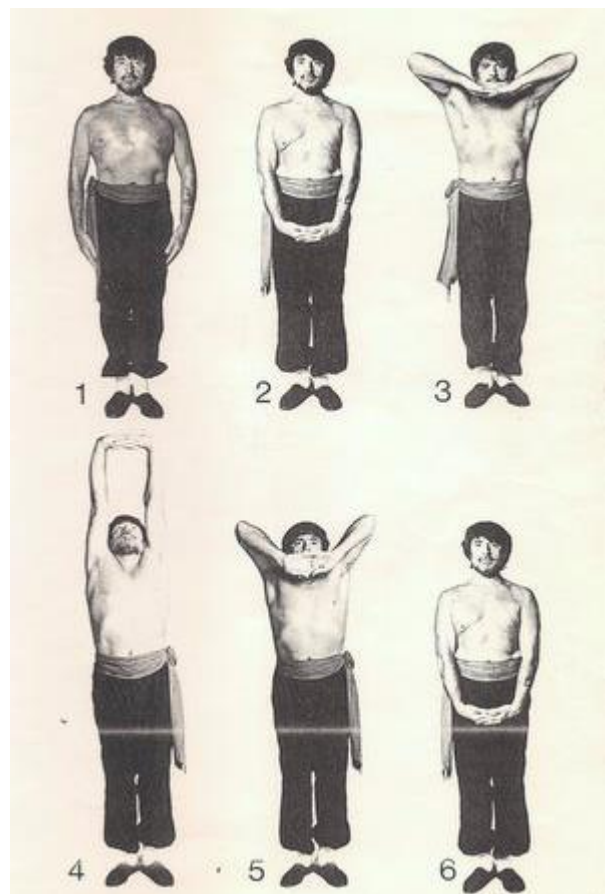
Relax. Stand erect with feet together, hands loose at sides. Empty the lungs of air.

Inhale slowly and deeply while raising the hands above the head and continuing a backward bend as far as possible. Hold for the silent count of three.

Exhale steadily while reversing the movement forward and down until the fingertips are pressed on the ground as far ahead of your toes as possible. Pause for the silent count of five.

Inhale slowly and deeply while straightening, drawing the hands up the legs to the thigh.

Hold for the silent count of three. Repeat eight times.

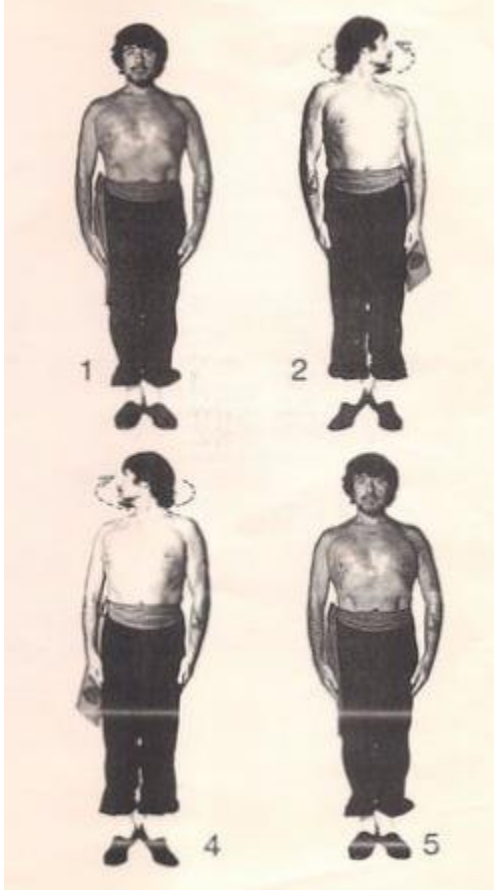


Exercise Seven: Eye of the Tiger

The seventh exercise is perhaps so named because of the tiger's ability to look directly behind it while keeping its body poised for a frontal spring. We have all seen a cat stalking some unsuspecting prey, only to be disturbed by a sound of movement behind it. It will stop dead in its tracks, front paw raised, every muscle and sinew frozen in the direction of its chosen path, while turning its head to look directly back over its tail. Apparently, tigers do this also.

The Benefits

Whatever the origin of its name, this seems as good an explanation as any, for it is just this action that the exercise calls for. It loosens neck sinews, develops neck muscles, exercises the vital organs of the throat and promotes excellent balance while working calves, ankles and feet.



Relax. Stand erect with feet together, hands loose at sides. Empty the lungs of air.

Inhale slowly and deeply while gradually rising on the toes and turning the head as far to the left as possible. Do not turn the shoulders or upper body. When the breath is complete, you should be fully raised on the toes, head twisted as far to the left as possible in an attempt to look behind you. Hold for the silent count of three.

Exhale steadily while reversing the movement back to the starting position.

Repeat movement to the right. Complete four times on either side.

Exercise Eight: Grip the Swallow's Egg

The name of this eighth exercise is derived from the unique way of closing the fists. Each fist is fully formed yet leaves a hollow in its centre as though protecting a delicate object from being crushed. The fist, tensed to its full power when outstretched, must control the energy that surrounds the inner palm. This exercise develops a formidable hand grip, greatly strengthens the arm while demanding passive control. It is one of the classic restraining movements, which, when released with full speed and impact after long practice, can unleash unbelievable but easily controlled force.

The Benefit

To increase power in the arms, from shoulder to elbow, to wrist, to fingers, is the main purpose; at the same time exercising the legs and lower trunk. It is in fact the slow 'motion' performance of the 'kung fu' punch with strict control on pressure and the restraint of energy. It is a little difficult to master and should be practiced patiently and diligently from one stance at a time until ready to progress to the next. Pa Tuan Tsin only teaches the frontal punch, but I have included punching from the Right and Left Bow.



Relax. From the Horse Stance, empty the lungs of air. Inhale slowly and deeply while extending the right fist in a frontal punch. The movement should begin from a relaxed shoulder, gradually increasing pressure as it turns and extends. When the fist is fully extended (imaginary swallow's egg safely shielded inside), tensed as if in a strike, the arm is also locked at the elbow, exerting full pressure. Hold for the silent count of three.

Exhale steadily as you reverse the movement, withdrawing the fist and slackening pressure as it returns to the waist and complete relaxation. Hold for the silent count of three.

Repeat the movement with the left fist. Repeat eight times.

Without rising from the Horse Stance, twist into the Left Bow position and repeat the exact movement, aiming the restraining punch at an imaginary target on your right. Four punches with each arm. Twist into the Right Bow position and repeat two punches to the left. Close the Horse Stance, stand erect. Relax and lower the hands to the sides. Inhale. Exhale. Bow to the light that is in you.