

Awakening to Energetic Parenting in the Cycle of Life: Qigong

by Damaris Jarboux



Birth and death are the natural bookends of the human life cycle. Those who observe this process closely, such as midwives and hospice workers, can perceive the transition from the world of spirit into our world at birth and then back again at death.

From a Taoist perspective, birth and death are expressions of the polarity of yang and yin or expansion and contraction, a cycle expressed everywhere in our world. As our energy-body contracts in the yin state, it expands in the yang state, as in a natural breathing rhythm. Five major principles of yin-yang describe their interactions: Everything has a yin and yang aspect; every yin and yang can be further divided; yin and yang create each other; yin and yang control each other; yin and yang transform into each other.

We experience this every night as we sleep (if our energy-body is fluid enough) when our consciousness moves out of the physical third dimensional body (*jing*), which becomes yin, and gathers into the emotional fourth dimensional body (*chi*) in the dream state, which becomes yang and may even proceed on into the continuum of mind or fifth dimensional body (*shen* or spirit). We bring back our nighttime experience into the chi/soul body before settling back into the physical body upon awakening. If we are conscious enough in the middle state, we can gently gather at the edges of the dream state and bring it down into our waking consciousness in the material world.

These different levels, all part of our individualized nature (our personality), are not separate but are connected through our energy-body; indeed we always live in all three realities, whether we are aware of it or not. The only difference at death is that the “cord” connecting the chi and shen bodies is severed from the physical. Our consciousness then lives in the chi/soul level until our process there is complete

when it moves on into the shen/spirit level and on into the “great mind” of Oneness. If one accepts reincarnation, then one can appreciate that the journey back into the world of substance is the reverse of the journey out, gathering back together our energy-body. This cycle is called “Jacob’s Ladder” and is common to many religious or spiritual philosophies, viewed from different cultural perspectives.

If one sits in a centered, aware state with a dying friend, one can perceive the life-forces gathering into the chi body. As we feel the physical body becoming more yin (contractive), we also perceive the energy-body becoming more yang (expansive). That is why the most helpful therapeutic we can offer is energy—not physical—work. Indeed many dying people prefer energy work to massage or other physical therapies. This preference signals this ongoing transition. The other loving service we can offer a dying person is helping her review her life story, which is happening on an inner level. This review is most helpful to her soul and spirit. In fact, she is practicing living in her other body, and the observant helper can tell when her consciousness leaves and then falls back into the physical body. If you ask her where she was immediately when she returns, she will often remember that she had been in a different place (spatially), often saying good-bye to someone living far away. This is similar to “false labor” as a woman’s body prepares for the process of birth.

Children naturally embrace the process of birth and death if their parents do. *How* the parents go through these transitions is the strongest determinant to *how* the children will do so because the response of a child to anything in the environment or any new experience is based on his perception of the parents’ experience. A child (infants to about age 12) will look at the eyes of the parent to immediately *know* the “survival value” (healthy or unhealthy) of anything he is experiencing; we are biologically encoded to do this

from birth. Science tells us that thoughts in the head express directly into the body, affecting the self on all levels and continuing beyond us to influence anyone in our field. All facts of life and death are a direct download from parents to their children. The participation of children in the process of death (and birth) requires parental discretion because it is important not to expose a child to aspects of these experiences that he cannot yet understand (and may misinterpret), especially if a parent is struggling to cope herself. If there is a great deal of pain, bleeding, physical symptoms, or bodily distortions, the child can be traumatized if the parent is not accepting, at peace or coping well with the experience. If the parent is not coping well, it is better to remove the child from the field until she can regain ground. If the parent is coping well, then the child will also be at peace and will experience it as part of life and part of nature. I have witnessed both birth and death as profound learning experiences for children whose parents have found an inner confidence in their natural relationship to these life portals.

My 3-year-old daughter provided wonderful, sweet, and gentle help to me when we were hanging out in our backyard redwood hot tub during the first stage of my second labor, but when the labor started to become more intense for me, I knew her best place was with her grandmother. The next day, having participated to the degree that was appropriate for her, she patiently stood by the window for 2 to 3 hours, waiting for her little brother to be brought home.

During labor, a fully dilated mother in the transition stage is very exposed because a lot of her consciousness is out of her physical body and gathered into her fourth dimensional body for the purpose of generating enough chi there to push the baby out. If we consider that this woman is also very connected to her child—who is participating—then we might see that she could inadvertently draw that child



Hogan Caldwell

Damaris teaches William Goldman to do the solar plexus eye practice on daughter, Joselyn

out of the physical with her. In fact, if one gets close *behind* a woman and hugs her while she is struggling with this last stage of labor, it is possible to channel one's own chi from the middle *tan tien* (heart energy center) straight into hers to provide support. This is usually best achieved accompanied by the single word, "ppppuuussh," full of vitality and will.

The same principle applies if a child is really close to the dying person. I have seen children who were very close to a grandparent become too affected energetically from the drawing out of the grandparent's energy-body from the physical into the chi body. Children are trying to incarnate, not exarnate. As caring adults, we are trying to help them slowly awaken in the physical without losing too many of their mystical-magical qualities.

The questions to ask are: "Should my child participate in this?" and "To what degree?" If we are willing to accept yes or no, then we know that our ego is not too involved in the decision.

Babies and young children have naturally good energy if nothing interferes with it before or after birth. Children do a lot of natural Qigong.* They do, however, rely on the general energy field of their parents and extended family to protect their energy-body and keep it strong. Often the best Qigong for the young child is to reinforce that general field they are held in and fed from; to make gentle, small adjustments to their energy-body to keep it as open and strong as possible; and to give them a good baseline to return to as they get older.

All children experience some stress, trauma, and shock to their energy systems as they grow up. Their reaction to it is reflective of their constitution, temperament, and character, all of which are expressions of their energy-body. While some wounding is inevitable—

and thinking holistically may even be desirable—they can still come through it with their systems clear, open and strong. This positive response has a lot to do with what the young baby and child do *not* do, since, left to themselves and given good choices, they stay very healthy. Children have an abundance of free physical energy and, as documented in Chinese research, until about 18 months, the energy center in their forehead is relatively open, so they can actually see past the material world. After that it is thought to close until about age 12 to allow them the opportunity to get well grounded in the material world. How can we best support them?

In the womb, the developing child is held tightly and protected; his whole world consists of that sense of ultimate closeness. After he is born, things change quickly. The physical umbilical cord to the mother is cut, an energetic one remains to feed the baby from the mother's energy field. The father holds his own larger sphere of protection and direct heart connection for the entire family field—a role that is vitally important in today's world. The energetic cord to the mother is fully intact until the child is in his teens. It is the job of the teenager to thin the cord and the job of the mother to let him. The cord should be totally severed by the mid-twenties or there will be an unnatural overdependence. The young person relies on this energetic nourishment and protection until he is 12 to 14 years old, by which time his personal energy field has grown much stronger. The parents cannot project a balanced field to the child if they don't have one. Qigong (energy cultivation) of some kind for parents is of great benefit to children and might be considered part of a healthy lifestyle.

Every spring there is birth in nature, fullness in summer, death in the fall, and rest in winter—the great wheel of the seasons—and children naturally learn from this if their parents are attuned. There are also many deaths in life to allow the birth of something new: new siblings, friends moving away, pets dying, changing houses or towns. Change is the only constant in life. “Letting go” is one of the five great themes of humanity and nature as understood in Taoism, but it is the hardest for the Western world, as our motto is more likely to be “just do it” than “just let go” or “just cry it out.” Tears are the natural help our body provides. The biochemistry of tears changes depending on what is moving through our emotional body: joy and laughter, tender-hearted

sadness, abject grief. One should never stifle tears that help a child learn not to suppress this natural expression of letting go. There might be much less depression in our world if people simply cried when they felt like it.

In conclusion, the best energy work for the child is the personal development of each parent and the relationship between them. Also important is early bonding with both parents (even if there is not a lot of play) and a constant loving, touching, caregiver, when the parents are absent. Some natural and gentle energy practices can help in any situation, no matter what the stress or trauma, because they can also calm the parent. A child who grows up with energy consciousness will naturally incorporate it into play and daily activity.

Energy Practices for Parents to Help Their Children

Harmonizing the field

It is a common practice among indigenous mothers to put their children to bed after smudging them with copal sage or cedar to clear the day's events. Parents can do this with the energy of their hands by slowly moving them down the child's field (3 to 6 inches above the body) from head to foot. Use both hands—one hand if you are holding the child—and do it front and back. This smoothes out the energy field; it is very relaxing, good for any stress, and children love it.

Tummy rock

For stomach upset in newborns or small children, move your hands side to side over the abdomen, 3 to 6 inches above the body.

Solar plexus eye

On all babies and children, moving your hands clockwise (up their right, down their left) over their solar plexus will greatly relieve common stress or the shock of any trauma or sports injury. You can even do this with your mind if you don't have access to the child.

Natural regulation

Move hands clockwise over the belly of a constipated child and counterclockwise over the belly of a child with diarrhea.

Western science, through EEG studies, also gives us invaluable insight into the world of children when considering their experience of death and birth and how we might best teach, hold, nourish, and protect them. From 0–2 years old they experience delta brain waves (considered

deep sleep for an adult), meaning they are not connected to the outer world in the same way as adults. From 2–6 they experience theta brain waves, mixing an imaginary state with the outer world (in adults theta brain waves are associated with our magical abilities). From 6–12 children experience alpha brain waves, signaling the centered, meditative state of consciousness that bridges our inner and outer worlds. Then from 12 years and older, they are developing the conscious mind through the many levels of beta states: focused, linear, logical. This explains why babies and children under 12 learn by modeling parents and caregivers, because they are in a hypnagogic trance state observing and downloading directly into the subconscious. Science has proven the subconscious is a million times more powerful at processing information than the conscious mind. This is why a child under age 3 can learn three different languages and keep them completely separate, as they are downloaded directly into the subconscious habitual mind, a feat that is nearly impossible once the conscious mind is fully developed. Therefore, if a parent wishes to help a child under age 12 experience death in the most balanced way, he or she will not treat the child as a small adult but as a child, with an open mystical magical subconscious. Comprehending these aspects of consciousness and the energy-body provides deeper understanding, not only about the process of birth and death, but as a blueprint on how to live life.

*Qigong or Chi Kung (energy cultivation) is an ancient Asian healing art that has always been both a personal practice (energy cultivation of many kinds) and a clinical practice (treatment by a practitioner that is based on an assessment of the individual's energy-body). Qigong is the grandparent of acupuncture, Tai Chi, and the martial arts.

As a registered nurse, Damaris Jarboux moved from the world of high-tech medicine to hospice, where she worked during the early days of the movement in the US. She is internationally recognized as a master Qigong practitioner and teacher and has undertaken a deep study of Western and Eastern medicine. She is a founding member of The National Qigong Association and has created an advanced Qigong healing program. For more information about Damaris Jarboux and Qigong, visit www.thecenterplace.com, or the National Qigong Association at www.NQA.org.