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Cultivating Ki Flow and Mindfulness, Manifesting Mind

By Charlie Badenhop

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Starting Line

This article is the second in a three part series. In my first article in this series I talked about "Energy, Spirit and Mind" and introduced how these terms are used in Seishindo. In this article I am going to talk about how to cultivate "ki" the energy that is the source of all life. If this is the first article in this series you are reading, you might want to first read my last article, so you have a better understanding of how we think about "ki" in Seshindo.

No one has absolute knowledge (except through faith) of where ki originates from and no one knows where our personal ki goes to after we die. Ki springs from the depth of the universe as well as from the depth of our soul. The way of ki is a gigantic and fascinating mystery, and one that is well worth exploring. In studying ki we can come to a deeper understanding of ourselves, our relationships, and the world we live in. Our study of ki can help to liberate us as we become better attuned to the music and poetry of our heart and soul.

Having an experiential understanding of the nature of ki leads us to encounter a natural, creative intelligence, that far transcends the abilities and powers of any one human being. Ki is the common denominator we share with all of life. I believe that ki is essentially, expansive, mutable, and supportive of life, and that it can adapt to an endless variety of forms and functions depending on how it is received, shaped, and utilized by our system.

I wrote above that ki is "supportive of life" and I want to explain this a bit more here. Ki supports life when our system is able to let it flow unimpeded, like when when our immune system spontaneously heal wounds or illnesses. Ki also has the potential to be destructive in nature when it's flow becomes either stagnant or blocked, as in the case of the body being ravaged by cancer. Noguchi Sensei, the man that developed "Noguchi Sei Tai" (a Japanese system of health management) used to say "Illness is due to excess energy being trapped in the body. The stronger the illness, the more energy there is trapped." One of the main purposes of Noguchi Sei Tai is to facilitate the release of excess energy held in the body so that the body can operate freely, and without impediment. This is also one of the main

functions of Seishindo. When the body is stable and able to move freely, our thoughts patterns and emotions will be stable and flowing, and health and emotional balance will be fostered. In my first article I wrote "The quality of our life is not dependent on the circumstances we encounter. The quality of our life is dependent on what we learn from the circumstances we encounter." In this issue I will say, "The quality of our life is not dependant on the quantity of ki available to us. The quality of our life is dependent on our capacity to maintain a free flow of ki throughout our system." Our belief system, as well as the way we facilitate the generation and flow of ki within our system are the major determinants of the quality of our life. Free flowing ki energizes and nourishes the body. Blocked ki can damage us and weaken our ability to adapt. The cultivation of free flowing ki is thus an important activity to explore because the manner in which we cultivate, use, and expend ki, is what determines our health and well being, and who and what we become over time.

One of the main functions of Seishindo is to help people cultivate the ability to be calm, fully present, and feeling one's emotions and bodily sensations, without the need for internal dialogue. When we are at one with our self and our experience there is no need for internal dialogue, for there is no "other one" to talk to. Present in one's body, present in one's brain, and aware of and connected to one's emotions and the environment, but not requiring or engaging in internal dialogue. This is a very special way of being. A way of being that can help us to fully actualize our self in the world. This is a way of being that can help us to deeply connect to our ability to respect, love, and heal, self, other, and the world around us.

Main Course

At every moment in time the ki within your system speaks to you via a somatic language that is as refined, systematic, and complete as your verbal language. This transformation of ki into somatic language is the basis of the non-cognitive wisdom that we call "intuition." Becoming fluent in this language can help you maintain your health and well-being, foster more heartfelt relationships, and assist you in expressing your creative and healing gifts when working with others in various contexts. When you do "just enough" and nothing more or less, you will create the context for your body to be structurally balanced, flexible, and free to move. This is the way you are designed to be, and at such times your ki flows freely. Structurally balanced, flexible, and free to move and change, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

We have a chemical-electrical-muscular response to events, other people, circumstances, and the intake of energy via food, sunlight, water, and other sources. People further react to: presently occurring events, thoughts about possible future events, memories of past events, and internal dialogue. To a large extent, the responses we have to the energy we encounter and generate are dependent on:

1. The way we use our body (structure, movement, flow).
2. Our system of beliefs, and
3. The default neuromuscular biochemical pathways that we have developed over time due to a tendency towards habitual reactions.

The changes that take place in our body and brain are highly systematic in nature, and these changes determine the quality of our emotional responses, and our ability to think in a creative manner.

Something occurs, and we spontaneously feel, think, and react in a specific manner, all of which leads to our somatic–emotional experience. For the most part we have limited awareness and understanding of what actually changes within our system, to cause a change in our somatic–emotional experience. We generalize the "feeling tone" of our experience and we give these generalized feelings rather unspecific verbal labels such as "happy" "in love" "ill" "hungry" "depressed."

You can think of our various somatic–emotional reactions to life as "recipes". Increase the blood pressure ever so much, restrict the flow of blood to the extremities a certain amount, increase the speed of your heartbeat, induce certain chemicals into the bloodstream, breathe more shallowly, and think about what could go wrong, and you have created the recipe for "fear." We each create these somatic–emotional recipes outside of our conscious awareness, and without the conscious knowledge of what the "contents" of each recipe are. Most of this activity is coordinated by what in Seishindo we call "somatic intelligence," the intelligence of the mobile brain within the body. The task we face when wanting to live a balanced creative life, is to heighten our ability to sense the components that make up our various somatic–emotional recipes, so that we can continue to adapt and maintain a system that is expansive, balanced, and free flowing. When our system facilitates the free flow of ki, we maintain a

state of health, well being, and creativity.

1. There is a dynamic life force (ki) which pulsates through each of us. Most people have developed a tendency to inhibit the flow of energy and movement created by ki when presented with challenging situations. When the natural flow of ki is inhibited, the natural flow of information available (images, sounds, feelings, and "solutions") is also inhibited. Allowing a free flow of energy and movement throughout our system facilitates a free flow of information and thus high quality learning and adaptation.
2. Ki flows best in a system that is balanced in structure, porous, flexible, expansive, and well oxygenated. Therefore in Seishindo we suggest any and all physical exercises and mindfulness training that helps you to accomplish just such a state. This is the kind of state that increases your resilience, adaptive and healing powers, and energy flow. Aikido, Yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, Gyrontonics, and various Seishindo practices are excellent for this. The idea in all of these practices is to increase your awareness of what is taking place in the moment, while entering into an experience where you "stop stopping" yourself, and your thoughts and reactions transcend the limitations of your habituated "everyday" pace and rhythm. When we use more of all of our self and less of any one part of our self, our system will tend to be healthy and highly responsive.
3. Breath moves ki and delivers oxygen to the system. Oxygen and ki are highly supportive of health, well being, and the formulations of solutions. Every thought we have and every emotion we experience, affects the flow of breath and thus ki, within our system. When we are able to maintain a relaxed breathing process appropriate to the situation at hand, we maintain a free flow of ki, our emotions tend to be balanced, and our thinking tends to be solution oriented. There are many different disciplines that offer various breathing exercises. Any well conceived breathing exercise will be extremely helpful in "training" you to maintain sufficient amounts of oxygen in your system. In my last article I presented the Heartbeat Breathing practice. You can find this practice here.

4. Under normal life conditions, when a system receives a "shock" it adapts and rebalances. Extreme life conditions such as trauma result in extreme adaptations, and quite often the rebalancing part of our recovery does not take place. Usually during times of trauma the person's energy, musculature, and thought patterns "lock" part way through the cycle of experience, and the natural and necessary rebalancing back to center, does not occur. When we block the natural flow of ki in our system, we block the flow of the "river of life." Meaningful and lasting change requires shifts in the autonomic, peripheral, and enteric nervous systems, to occur. Such change requires a provoking of the natural wisdom of the body and its capacity to re-balance so that we release the locking of our musculature, and a new higher level of systemwide organization can be allowed to unfold.

The Noguchi Sei Tai exercise of "Katsugen Undo" offers an excellent method to help release the system so that you can once again open up to the possibilities of life, and facilitate the free flow of ki within your system. (More on this later.)

5. The response of "dissociation" or numbing our ability to feel can be quite helpful as an anesthetic under conditions of pain and extreme helplessness. Such responses however become detrimental to our overall health and well being when they are adopted as a generalized response to potentially painful or frightening situations. It is natural for our system to release the anesthetic of an operation after an hour or so, as our system comes "back to life." It is also natural to release the dissociative patterns learned when feeling helpless or in pain, so that we can enter back into a life of pain AND pleasure, sorrow AND joy. We need to discover a path for entering back into the flow of life so we can

regain access to the full range of emotions that are available to a healthy emotionally balanced individual. When the sensation of flowing ki is anesthetized we lose our ability to feel into the ebb and flow of our experience. Heartfelt supportive relationships are of great benefit here in helping us to trust that it can be safe to feel again.

6. Whatever we avoid, whatever we are unable to feel and bring our awareness into, does not change. When our system does not change, our ki becomes stagnant, and our life force is weakened. When working to re-claim parts of ourselves we have lost contact with we will do well to begin by gently feeling each and every part of ourselves, so that we can eventually come to know that we are whole. Every part of our self is worthy of loving attention and when we bring loving attention to injured or neglected parts of our self, we foster the flow of ki, a softening of the body, and the opening of our heart. Various mindfulness exercises such as meditation, Tai Chi, Yoga, and Aikido, can be very helpful in this regard.

The challenge of living a heartfelt healthy life is threefold:

- 1) Gain conscious awareness of how you generate your somatic-emotional experience.
- 2) Recognize the ingredients of the somatic-emotional "recipes" you generate as a result of your experience.
- 3) Change the recipes you create, and thus change your relationship to your experience and your life "story".

If you are able to change the habituated and highly specific somatic-emotional reactions you have to events you will transform the way you express your emotions, think, and react.

In order to assist each person in being able to change their consciousness we have developed various practices. These practices are designed to make the transparent aspects of your experience more obvious. The practices help you to notice and effect changes in various aspects of your experience that were previously outside of your conscious awareness. By taking part in these practices you will learn how to intuit and react to the seed somatic–emotional experience that forms the foundation of your verbal explication of life. In order to cultivate ki, cultivate mindfulness. In order to cultivate mindfulness cultivate a love for all that lives, and all that you are and aren't.

Over a period of time by performing mindfulness practices, you will also be more likely to understand how to help others change their experience as well.

Charlie Badenhop is the originator of Seishindo, an Aikido instructor, NLP trainer, and Ericksonian Hypnotherapist. Benefit from his thought–provoking ideas and a new self–help Practice every two weeks, by subscribing to his complimentary newsletter "Pure Heart, Simple Mind" at <http://www.seishindo.org/anger/index.html> .

The Art of Conscious Living

By Yvonne Chiarelli, PdD

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Mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist practice that has profound relevance for today. It is relevant because mindfulness is a practice of being consciously awake, experiencing the fullness of the present moment, and living in harmony with yourself and the world. The practice of mindfulness allows you to cultivate an appreciation for experiencing your life as you are living it. One of its effects is an increased ability to see the extraordinary in the mundane. Mindfulness has to do with being in touch and seeing what is so.

Practicing mindfulness is simple but not easy. Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally. It requires a mental discipline to wake up in each moment, and to keep waking up for each oncoming moment. This kind of extraordinary quality of attention requires effort. It requires such effort because you are almost programmed to forget, or you succumb to unawareness, or wish to become deliberately unaware. The use of medicants of all kinds is prevalent in our culture ranging from drugs, over busi–ness, TV watching, and other activities that tend to narrow our attention.

The power of mindfulness is in its practice and everyday

applications. Applying mindfulness as a strategy can have significant positive outcomes on the job. How many times have you wasted time because you forgot to take something with you? How many times did you respond just a bit inappropriately because you weren't fully listening? Did you actually experience your lunch? How many times did that tiny forgotten detail cause more effort than necessary?

Mindfulness is empowering because it cultivates greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of the present moment reality. Mindfulness as a work or life strategy:

- > Saves time
- > Increases memory retention
- > Preserves integrity
- > Improves performance
- > Improves perception.

Who wouldn't like that? Successful people are highly skilled in using their focused attention on their activity, even if they spend little time on that activity. They can efficiently absorb, process, and discern and at very high rate when focusing their deep and mindful attention.

I challenge you to be fully awake, aware, focused in the present, and see the extraordinary in the mundane for the next two hours. Be ever vigilant that you are paying attention.

There are many resources on mindfulness at your local or virtual bookseller. Here are two that I can recommend:

1. *Wherever You Go, There You Are : Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn
2. *The Miracle of Mindfulness : A Manual on Meditation* -- by Thich Nhat Hanh, Mobi Ho (Translator)

Having a personal support team is a great way to keep you on track. You can also use a coach to help you reach your goals on personal growth and your desire to handcraft a life of choice.

By Yvonne Chiarelli. Yvonne is a professional coach providing personal support, clarity, and strategy through collaborative relationship. For more information, visit her website at: <http://www.goalminderplus.com> Free subscriptions to e-Letters are available. ©2002 Yvonne Chiarelli



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