

## Qigong Massage for Your Child with Autism: A Home Program from Chinese Medicine

**Louisa Silva**

Singing Dragon (June 2011)

Softcover \$24.95 (144pp)

978-1-84819-070-2

Complete with step-by-step instructions and an accompanying DVD with visual demonstrations, *Qigong Massage for Your Child with Autism* takes a relatively unconventional practice and provides a practical tool for parents and caregivers. Backed by multiple studies and developed by the director of the Qigong Sensory Training Institute, the book will give parents the confidence to embark on a new practice that will hopefully make for happier, healthier families.

Starting with ideas on how to begin training, the book also gives a basic explanation of *qi* and how the energy flow in an autistic child is often blocked. As the book ventures into the specific movements of the specially designed qigong massage, the author also provides “troubleshooting” advice and explanations for particular reactions and behaviors that might arise during the massages, including an emotional breakthrough, humming, and movement of legs.

The reactions described and the frequently asked questions are all taken directly from observations of the parents and children who participated in the author’s studies. Likewise, the discussions of positive changes in behavior and developmental improvements are pulled directly from the same studies, a method that gives the reader a sense of assurance.

Silva excels at keeping her message realistic and never loses sight of the fact that she’s addressing actual parents. She clearly lays out expectations for and limitations of the program, and provides the necessary tools to track progress and behavioral changes. She refutes skeptics by simply saying “seeing is believing,” instilling the confidence so vital for motivating parents to stick with the program. The difficulties of having an autistic child and parenting in general are openly acknowledged without judgment, and she offers a truly empathetic, yet encouraging voice. Alongside her open invitation for questions at the end, Silva comments, “As much as we love the children, we did this for the parents.”

The book’s structure also seems to be designed for parents, with the intention that they can easily pick up the book and find what help they’re looking for, as common troubles and solutions are reiterated in multiple chapters. While the first read-through may seem repetitive for some, people unfamiliar with the concepts of moving energy will find the elaboration on earlier topics helpful. Other times, the author introduces issues that her audience might not understand until reading further, which is generally not confusing, although slightly disjointed. These occurrences are rare, however, and ultimately reinforce ideas.

A few specific movements or parts of movements may also seem a little confusing at first, and understanding the intentions of the acts are likely aided by the accompanying DVD; however, once the reader becomes familiar with the concept of energy movement and its connection to physical being, the massage technique is actually very logical.

Educational, realistic, and reassuring, *Qigong Massage for Your Child with Autism* offers parents a non-invasive, prescription-free supplement to managing autism, and with further studies being conducted now about the effects of qigong on children with cerebral palsy and Down syndrome, tradition Chinese medicine will hopefully become helpful to an even wider population.

ALICIA SONDHI (August 17, 2011)

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