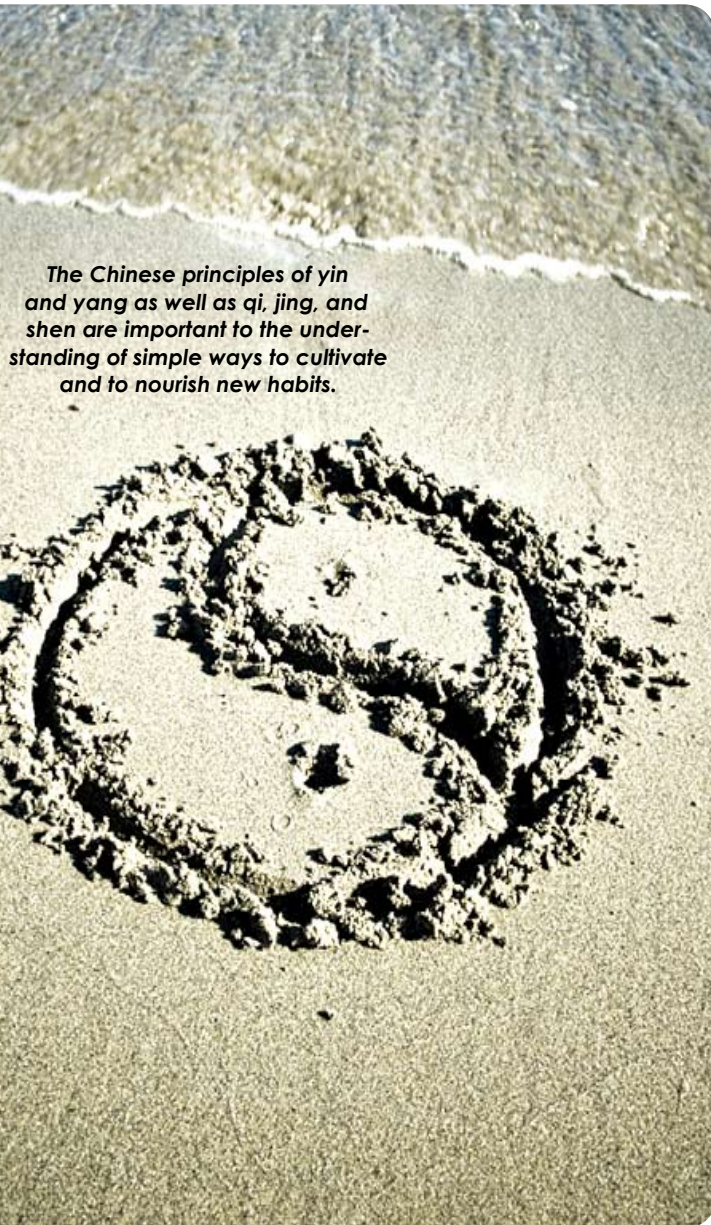


Chinese Secrets for Nourishing New Habits by Ellen Teeter, AP

Since ancient times, the Chinese have understood the principles of nurturing, creating, and conserving energy. The Chinese principles of yin and yang as well as qi, jing, and shen are important to the understanding of simple ways to cultivate and to nourish new habits. Qi can be understood as energy or vitality, while jing is the substrate or "essence" with which we are born. Shen is our mind or spirit. Jing essence can be either more yin or more yang. It is the basis for repair and regeneration of the body and sexual reproduction. Strong bones, good memory, supple muscles, and bright eyes are signs of strong jing essence. As we age, we naturally lose some jing, but stress, poor diet, and not enough exercise or rest can rob us of our vitality and jing as well.

Yin energy can be understood as dark, nourishing, contemplative, and cooling, and yang energy as yin's opposite is bright, active, loud, and warming. For example, cinnamon bark is a warming tonic, which promotes good circulation, so it falls into the yang jing tonic category. Raw rehmannia root is cooling and nourishes fluids, so it falls into the yin jing tonic category.



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Most of us at least consider beginning the New Year by resolving to let go of old patterns and develop new, more positive habits. Chinese insights offer a way to approach this resolve simply, successfully, and with a minimum of effort.

The New Year is the ideal time to set a resolution. The solstice on December 22 marked the complete waning of the yang energy of 2007 and marked the ultimate yin – the longest night of the year. The energy of the season began its barest shift towards light. The yang of 2008 rose, and each day in January, it grows stronger. The seed of activity and light (yang) is growing each day in the nurturing bed of winter's contemplative energy (yin).

Our hopes for new beginnings also grow with the season. By aligning ourselves with the natural flow of winter, burgeoning yang energy, we making the first step toward success by resolving to start anew. Yet we often fail. A parent says, "I'm going to spend more time with my child in the evening," then is so worn out after work that they just watch television. A woman promises she will start exercising every morning, and two weeks into her program, she becomes overwhelmed by her busy schedule and begins skipping her workouts. A diabetic swears he won't eat sugar anymore, and the next day eats four cookies on an impulse.

Rarely do new habits spring forth fully formed, like Athena from Zeus's head. They must be nurtured and supported; they grow slowly like the burgeoning yang. It takes yin, the nourishing substrate, which must be strong to support the delicate growth of new habits. Traditional Chinese Medicine, including qigong, Chinese medicinal tonics, dietary principles, and acupuncture, offer ways to construct the unique balance necessary to encourage smooth and long-lasting change.

What is important is to lay the foundation for positive transformation. Too much yin causes us to become lethargic, weighed down, or even paralyzed when considering positive change, while not having enough leaves us with relatively too much yang, which might cause us to start off with a bang, but without the substance to fuel our activity, we quickly run out of fuel and burn out.

In order to begin with a solid balance of the yin and yang energies, one should consider a jing tonic balanced for one's individual constitution and condition, a diet balanced according to one's constitution, and some energy-creating and -conserving exercise like Tai Chi or qigong.

Jing tonics support our essence. They are used to replace the spent energy and to build up large reserves for future use. The jing is associated with our genetic material our DNA. Jing tonics are designed to ignite primal power at the cellular level.

Successful transformation can be had with much less effort if the conditions for proper growth and change are created. When we develop jing, we get a large amount of qi automatically. When we have a large amount of qi, we will also have strong shen (mind) and will become bright and glowing with radiant health and vitality. When we are full of jing, qi, and shen, we have the will power to implement changes in our lives and will have the energy to do what needs to be done to get where we want in life.

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