

“Stroke of luck” leads to a new life

One August morning in 1999, J. Michael Wood woke up almost blind. He was as baffled as he was concerned.

It took four days to discover that a stroke had affected his right optic nerve. Over the following nine months, Michael suffered 12 more transient ischemic attacks (“mini-strokes”), endured \$25,000 worth of tests, and spent 10 days in the hospital. Yet he was sent home without answers.

Michael realized that traditional medicine could only diagnose the problem, so he considered alternatives. He was at a conference in August of 2000 when he approached Chunyi Lin, a master qigong practitioner and educator, to ask for help with his blindness.

An ancient discipline

Qigong is an ancient discipline that focuses on accumulating and circulating “qi,” or energy, in the body. Many Westerners are familiar with “tai chi,” a form of meditative physical exercise. In addition to tai chi, the practice of qigong also includes other components such as massage, herbal therapy, and breath work.

Of these, breath work is the most fundamental discipline. (The “qi” in qigong means “breath” or air in Chinese, and “gong” means “work applied to a discipline.”)

Learning to breathe – and seeing the light

Michael’s initial meetings with Chunyi Lin provided some relief from his blindness. They also opened his eyes to a startling realization: That, after four years in military intelligence and 30 years in the financial services industry, his body had finally said “enough.”

But now, for the first time in his life, Michael was learning to breathe. His vision was continuing to improve, and he found himself feeling much more “centered” and relaxed, too. He decided to become a student of qigong.

From student to master

Michael studied at the International Institute of Medical Qigong, where he earned a master’s degree in medical qigong in 2004 and did doctoral-level work in oncology in 2005.

Since then, Michael has traveled to China twice. Last November, he trained in Beijing with Master Duan Zhi-Liang. “This 100-year-old man could play linebacker for a small college football team. He was quick, strong, powerful. He was inspirational,” Michael said.

Michael’s visit with Master Duan was the highlight of a wonderful journey that, ironically, started with a stroke.

Coming full circle

Today, Michael has almost fully regained his vision. He hasn’t suffered any strokes since 2000, and feels a renewed sense of purpose and balance.

He continues to study and train, and sees patients of his own four days a week in the afternoons. He also teaches classes three nights a week.

Although he keeps a full schedule, he’s found that qigong provides the energy – and motivation – he needs to carry out his work. It’s also brought a perfect balance to the mornings he spends as a DSP for Questar Capital.

At the end of the day, it’s all about helping people.

Learn more

J. Michael Wood is a Questar Capital DSP who lives and works in Tennessee. If you’d like to know more about his story or qigong, he’d welcome your comments at jmichaelwood@comcast.net.

For more information about medical qigong, visit <http://www.medicalqigong.org>. ?