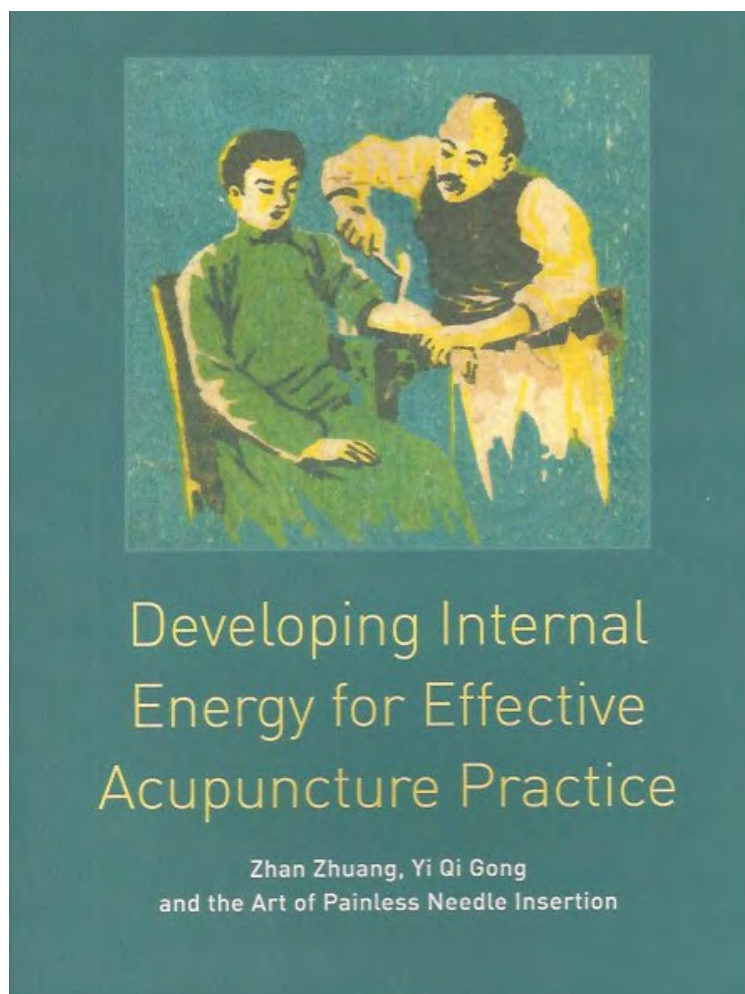




# Ioannis Solos

## Developing Internal Energy for Effective Acupuncture Practice



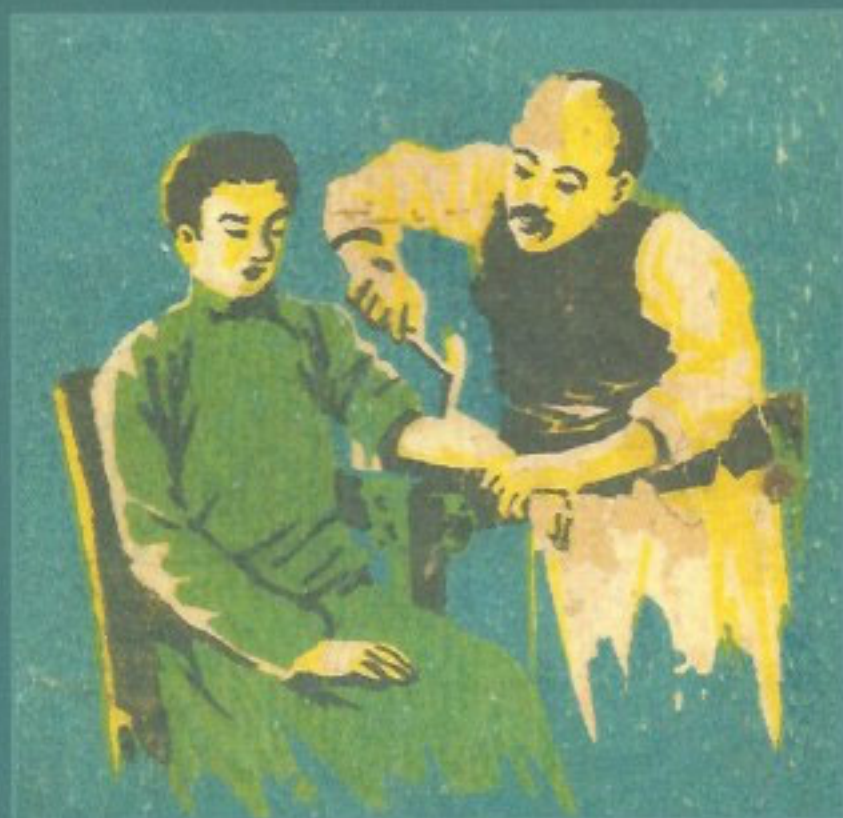
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Aidenbachstr. 78, 81379 München

Tel.: + 49 89 7499-156, Fax: + 49 89 7499-157

Email: [info@naturmed.de](mailto:info@naturmed.de), Web: <http://www.naturmed.de>



# Developing Internal Energy for Effective Acupuncture Practice

Zhan Zhuang, Yi Qi Gong  
and the Art of Painless Needle Insertion

SINGING  
DRAGON

IOANNIS SOLOS

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## Achieve great things through hard work

Acquiring Nei Gong skills differs from other disciplines, because it doesn't come from reading numerous books, cross-referencing and classroom teaching with discussion. Instead it derives from meticulous hard work, step-by-step self-realization, and correct focus on the skill that you seek to develop. Guidance and learning require a teacher, but unfortunately even the best instructor cannot replace hard work and daily training, without which the skill will never flourish.

The ancient Chinese used the expression 劳苦功高 (láo kǔ gōng gāo), literally to describe someone who achieves great things through hard work and bitter experience. Keep this in mind, especially if seeking to develop any skills through Internal Cultivation.

## How to use this book

If you have just started learning acupuncture and you have no Chinese Internal Martial Arts training, I suggest that you begin by contemplating the theory of Zhi Shen (Controlling the Spirit) and discover how to approach each patient. Energetically, I strongly advise that the best way to learn is through seeking a real teacher who can instruct you properly in the basics of Cosmic Orbits, Tranquil Sitting and also Zhan Zhuang. When you understand the important principles, you can try performing the rest of these exercises.

People with previous Chinese Internal Martial Arts training, or Zhan Zhuang meditation experience, can start directly with the Zhan Zhuang exercises.

When performing the Zhan Zhuang exercises with a needle, always be aware that you train for puncturing a patient. Never perform extremely large movements, and always be aware that the needle should not move too much. Visualizing having a patient in front of you will make your training more realistic and applicable.

Always be careful and keep in mind the words of the *Huang Di Nei Jing*:

## Regulating the spirit while inserting the needle (Tiao Shen 调神)

Before inserting the needle, you should be able to control and regulate the spirit. This not only means regulating your own spirit, but additionally you should assist the patient to regulate their own too. This process ensures that the hearts of both you and the patient are calm, your breathing even and your muscles relaxed in order for the qi and blood to flow as unobstructed as possible. Under your initiative, you should both build and maintain some kind of rapport or synchronization in terms of posture, breathing, mutual attention and understanding. After such a link has been established, where trust has been built and both you and the patient feel at ease, it is more likely that the treatment will yield positive results.

The classic texts advise on this as follows:

If using acupuncture to treat, you should assist the [patient's] spirit to focus and then needle. [This procedure does] not only [apply] for needling but [you should] also allow the [patient's] spirit to become stable before moving the qi. If the spirit is out of focus, then don't needle. If the spirit is stable you can treat [by both needle and moving the qi]. (*Biao You Fu*)

When needling, the patient's spirit qi must be stable (focused), and his breathing even. The doctor should also do this (i.e. focus and adjust his breathing), and not be hasty. (*Zhen Jiu Da Cheng*)

While administering acupuncture your spirit and the needle should become as one 针神合一. This means that your entire existence and intention 意 should—at the moment of needling—focus on the tip of the needle, and the needle should become an extension of your hand.

The *Ling Shu* says:

The spirit should focus on one point, and the [spirit] mind concentrate on the [tip of the] needle. (*Ling Shu—Jiu Zhen Shi Er Yuan*)

## Training of the Wrist Force and Discussion on Other Needling Skills

The acupuncture needle is a very thin, wiry and flexible medical instrument. Inserting it in the body of the patient is by no means an easy feat, and acupuncturists usually spend years before they are able to effectively, accurately, steadily and safely administer acupuncture treatment.

As we have explored in the chapter about Zhi Shen (Controlling the Spirit), a correct mindset and concentration is vital before one is able to provide effective treatment. On the other hand, realistic training should also focus on the connection of the internal with the external skills 内外合一, which also include possessing the correct finger force, having good control over the depth, direction and angle of the insertion, and proficiency in the various reinforcing or reducing techniques, with the needle being an extension of the whole body.

In most of the exercises presented earlier in this book, the requirements were that both the left and the right sides of the body are trained evenly. However, in practical administration of acupuncture needling, there is a fundamental difference. Usually in the classics, the right hand is described as the "puncturing or needling hand," while the left hand is termed the "supporting or

## Training of the Fingers

**Zi Yun Shang Ren said:** Besides cultivating the qi, one must also train the finger [strength]. The most important [factor] in inserting the needle painlessly is the strength of the fingers. Use a book, and hang it up, suspended on the wall. While doing the “tranquil sitting” [exercise] move the qi to insert the needle. The heart (i.e. intention) is concentrating on the needle. The eyes focus on the paper. Each day you should insert the needle one thousand times. After lengthy and persistent practice, the finger strength will be full and then you can use it.

**Cheng Dan-an's comments:** Painless needling pays much attention to the finger force. People with extraordinary skills pay much attention to the fingers. Force (strength) and also qi can bestow one [with the ability to control] metal and stone. However, if the qi is not trained enough, the finger force will also be insufficient. If the qi is full, it can transform to force. Therefore, one must first cultivate the qi, and then practice the finger [force]. Practicing both for a long time will certainly help to develop this skill. Zi Yun Shang Ren used paper [suspended] from the wall, something that is frustrating. After 2–3 months of training and [through adopting] several adjustments, [I derived] the following exercise which is relatively easier. Take a 2-inch-thick square wooden plank, and fashion a square frame [on top].



## Handling the Needle

**Zi Yun Shang Ren said:** If you wish to succeed in this skill, you must have a sharp instrument. If the qi cultivation is sufficient, the finger force adequate, but the needle is blunt, it will not be of any assistance. The needle must be rounded and whole. [It must be] shiny, smooth and sleek. The top is thick, the shaft is thin, and the tip is sharp. You should sharpen [the needle] and boil it in medicine. Do not allow this [inconvenience] to irritate you; this is a skill of superior practitioners.<sup>1</sup>

**Cheng Dan-an's comments:** The advanced preparations include sharpening of your tools. [Because you are] using the needle to treat the people [you] should be very careful when selecting the needle wire. [A] damaged, very thin and uneven [needle], with the tip being blunt or hair-like, will cause much pain. In addition, the breaking of the needle is dangerous, and therefore one should be careful in selecting [it]. Thin or thick, the body of the needle should be relatively uniform, and the tip of the needle sharp. The body of the needle should be rounded and whole. [It should] not [be] rusty, nor bent or flexed. After careful selection, you should always prepare the needle through boiling [with medicine]. Then rub [it] with coarse paper a few times every day. When it becomes rounded, smooth, sleek and sharp, you can use it.

1 Today, safety laws and regulations dictate that all acupuncturists should handle the needles according to the information provided in the latest edition of the *Clean Needle Technique Manual for Acupuncturists: Guidelines and Standards for the Clean and Safe Clinical Practice of Acupuncture* as published by the National Acupuncture Foundation.

Developing internal energy allows acupuncturists to become more effective practitioners, able to project their intention (Yi) more accurately and effectively during the acupuncture session, and shield themselves from the negative energies that they may encounter during treatment. Drawing on ancient Chinese knowledge and practice, the author provides a complete training regime of Yi Quan and Nei Gong exercises to help acupuncturists refine their skills, increase their internal energy, and improve their practice in a truly effective way. The book also includes the translation of two ancient internal cultivation texts focusing on the best attitude and mental training for effective acupuncture practice.

"Solos recognizes that it is the practitioner's own level of cultivation that forms the foundation of efficacy and that all technique and theory is in service to that. Supporting this perspective with sources from the primary literature, he offers practical exercises that help us cultivate proper intention."

—Lonny Jarrett, M.Ac., author of *Nourishing Destiny: The Inner Tradition of Chinese Medicine*

"Highly recommended to anybody wanting to learn qi gong, tai chi chuan, meditation and energy healing, and especially to acupuncturists."

—David Twicken, DOM, L.Ac., author of *Eight Extraordinary Channels—Qi Jing Ba Mai* and *I Ching Acupuncture—The Balance Method*

"Solos has written a book that deserves to become required reading for anybody embarking upon a study of Chinese medicine."

—Damo Mitchell, author of *Daoist Nei Gong: The Philosophical Art of Change and Heavenly Streams: Meridian Theory in Nei Gong*



**Ioannis Solos** studied Traditional Chinese Medicine at Middlesex University and the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, and is the author of *Gold Mirrors and Tongue Reflections*, also published by Singing Dragon.



SINGING  
DRAGON

73 Collier Street  
London N1 9BE, UK

400 Market Street, Suite 400  
Philadelphia, PA 19106, USA

[www.singingdragon.com](http://www.singingdragon.com)

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