Positively Well

How millions are finding abundant health through Falun Gong

For Carrie Dobson, simply climbing out of bed was a struggle. Much less getting dressed, or making it through the day. Half her body had lost sensation.

The Pennsylvanian's life was being defined by a condition she had never asked for, or even heard of: Lyme disease. For 10 years the rare, fibromyalgia-like disease had grown progressively worse, to the point of being crippling.

"I would have paid anything, or traveled anywhere, to get well. I was desperate," she recalls.

But as fate would have it, Dobson's solution was right in her own backyard—or park, as it turned out. And it didn't cost a cent.

At the recommendation of a Chinese friend, Dobson discovered a traditional Chinese spiritual practice, called Falun Gong. In a matter of weeks, Dobson had her life back.

"Falun Gong was what did it," says the 56-year old flight instructor, looking a decade younger than her years. "It's all about improving one's mind and body," she says.

"The teachings guide you in truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. The exercises bring in the health benefits."

Today, some twelve years later, Dobson remains cured of Lyme disease, healthier—and happier—than ever.

Parks Abuzz

What's perhaps most remarkable about Dobson's story isn't simply it's unlikelihood (Lyme disease is widely considered uncurable).

Most incredible is that her story parallels that of thousands—even millions—of other Falun Gong adherents around the world, particularly in China. Her case is anything but isolated.

Dobson's recovery provides a fascinating window into the health benefits of Falun Gong as well as the explosive growth of the practice in 1990s China—where millions of residents made Falun Gong part of their daily routine.

But why Falun Gong?

"Chinese people are by nature practical," says Zhao Ming, a native of Beijing, who now lives in New York and who witnessed Falun Gong's growth in China up close, practicing it in the park at his university.

"If something works, they'll hear about it and give it a try. If it doesn't work, they'll drop it," Zhao says. "They've learned a lot of harsh lessons under communism, about blind faith in leaders, or ideologies. It's made them more practical, more discerning."

Falun Gong "worked," by that account.

By the mid-90s, in most every park across China, Falun Gong practitioners could be found performing their trademark blend of gentle, rhythmic *qigong* exercises and meditation.

"People found that Falun Gong worked, and worked well," Zhao explains. "Pretty much everyone knew somebody who had tried it and benefitted, physically or psychologically."

People reported everything from better sleep and less stress to increased energy, better moods, better digestion, and even recovery from chronic diseases. Falun Gong's primary text, *Zhuan Falun*, appeared on China's best seller lists.

Word traveled fast and far, and by 1999 the number of Chinese citizens practicing Falun Gong had reached 100 million—eclipsing even the Communist Party's membership.

Deeper Health

But how could a simple program of exercise, meditation, and principled living make for such an impact? What made Falun Gong different? What made it "work"?

In the words of practitioners, Falun Gong works on multiple levels, going deeper, as it were, than typical exercise programs or health protocols.

In a word, it ain't "Yoga Buns."

"It works on an energetic level," says Dr. Jingduan Yang, a medical doctor of both Chinese and Western medicine who has studied Falun Gong. (*See sidebar, "Kicking the Habit"*)

"It's not just about your flesh and blood. It works on the body on a different level, it gets at the deeper roots of illness by working on the mind and the body."

Indeed, a central component of Falun Gong is its moral teachings, which complement the meditative exercises. Many say it is the teachings, in fact, that form the core of the practice and that differentiate Falun Gong.

It's the blend of virtuous living, of aligning one's life with higher principles, and powerful exercises that proves such a winning combination.

"It's more than being free of illness. It's about being well—really well," says Ryan Smith, an educator from New Jersey.

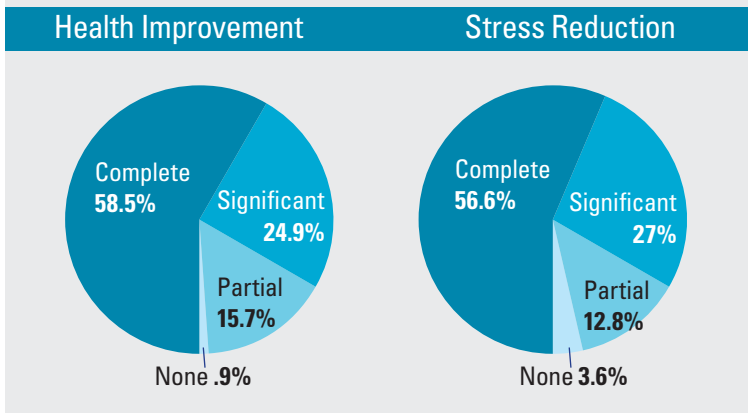
"I can't tell you how amazing it is not to live in fear of all the things that can go wrong with you, trying to prevent this, prevent that," he says.

"With Falun Gong, you're taking such good care of yourself, everything's covered."

Healthy in Beijing

It isn't exactly a city synonymous with good health, being the world's 10th most polluted metropolis. But scores of Beijing residents have found better health through Falun Gong, as reflected in a 1998 survey of some 12,731 adherents in the city.

Two charts provide a glimpse of the remarkable findings.



Kicking the Habit (Without Raising a Foot)

Though his job as an M.D. was to tell people how to live healthy and make good health decisions, John Yang just couldn't quite practice what he preached.

"I was a chain smoker," Yang recalls. "I smoked a pack or two of cigarettes a day—Chinese cigarettes. No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't quit."

All that changed overnight, however, after taking up Falun Gong.

"Suddenly cigarettes just tasted awful," Yang says. "A few days after learning Falun Gong, out of habit I tried to smoke, and immediately I felt like throwing up."

And that was it. Yang hasn't picked up a cigarette since, in fourteen years.

"Something changed when I learned Falun Gong. My body didn't want to smoke anymore, and I managed to quit just like that—without even trying, you could say."

Learn More

To learn more about Falun Gong, visit the following sites:

FalunDafa.org
TiantiBooks.org
en.Minghui.org

A MORNING STRETCH: Residents of Sichuan province perform the first exercise of Falun Gong. Millions in China discovered the powerful health benefits of the practice in the 1990s.