

2019 International Conference on Ageing & Spirituality, Canberra, Australia

## The Mindful Way of Falun Gong



**For Graceful and Positive Aging**

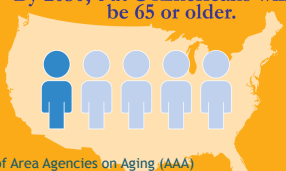
**Margaret Trey**  
Doctor of Counseling  
Author/Researcher  
Center for Psychology & Mind Studies

## Aging Population

### UNITED STATES

Over the next two decades, the proportion of the U.S. population over age 60 will dramatically increase as the baby boomers reach this milestone. By 2030, more than 70 million Americans will be 65 and older, twice the number in 2000.<sup>1</sup>

By 2030, **1 in 5** Americans will be 65 or older.



Source: 2017 National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)

### AUSTRALIA

In 2017, over **1 in 7** are aged 65 and above (15%; 3.8 million)  
*Older Australia at a glance from Australian Institute of Health & Welfare*

## Role of Exercise for Graceful Aging

“Lack of activity destroys the good condition of every human being, while movement & methodical physical exercise save it & preserve it.” - Plato

- Using exercise to optimize aging - Fiatarone Singh
  - ✓ Reduce physiologic changes linked to aging
  - ✓ Boost mental health & well-being
  - ✓ Increase longevity, reduce risk of common chronic diseases
  - ✓ Primary or adjunct therapy for chronic diseases; counter side effects of medical care
  - ✓ Aid in prevention/treatment of disability

## Aging: Mind-Body-Spirit Way

“Body and spirit are twins: God only knows which is which.” - Charles Swinburne, English poet

- Mind (or consciousness), body, & spirit approach takes center stage
- Meditation & spiritual practices widely used for chronic problems & other issues
- Older people can embrace this

## Meditation, Spirituality, & Elderly

- Reviews show meditation can be taught to elderly, even those with dementia
- Positive link between spiritual experiences, meditative practices, & health
- Meditation helps reduce acute anxiety & depression in elderly; Studies by Deberry show improvements with 30 minutes of daily meditation
- Institutionalized elders benefit more than community-based seniors from psycho-social effects of meditative practices, even if practiced for only brief periods each day
  - Lindberg. (2005). Integrative review of research related to meditation, spirituality, and the elderly. Geriatric Nursing, (26/6)

## Overview: The Mindful Way



**Practicing Falun Gong: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?**

**Learning Falun Gong: MEDITATION & EXERCISE**

**Health Benefits: SIMPLE & EASY RELEVANCE to Aging & Spirituality**

### FALUN GONG

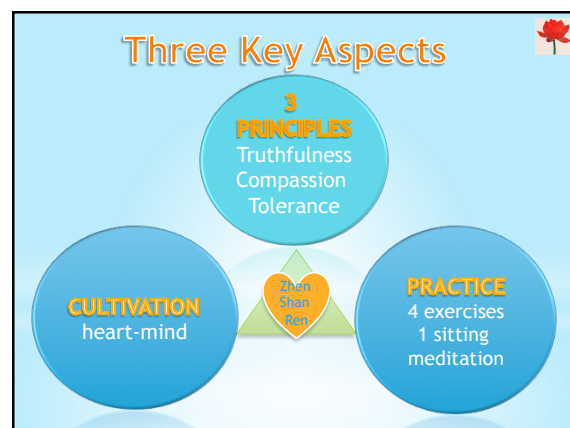
- Ancient Chinese spiritual discipline
- Self-cultivation, grounded in Buddhist & Taoist philosophies
- Also known as *Falun Dafa*
- Consists of moral teachings & exercises
- Truthfulness, Compassion, Forbearance
- Mind, body, & spiritual improvement
- Brings improved health & well-being to over 100 million people

### The Mindful Way of Falun Gong

- Apply principles (heart-mind activity)
  - Looking within, living one's life closer to the universal principles in daily life
- Find answers
  - Everyone's understanding unique
  - Applies principles his/her own way
  - No set of 'standard beliefs' to adopt
- Meditate & do exercises
  - 4 sets of gentle standing exercises
  - 1 sitting meditation

### The Mindful Way ...

- Study the teachings
  - Cultivate the heart & mind (*xinxing*)
- Discover meaning in life
  - Insights into mysteries of life
  - New wisdom, resilience to challenges
- Cultivate oneself, improving step by step
  - Deeply personal—freely chosen, practiced, & free to be understood
  - No temples, churches, memberships, or fees
  - Meet to share experiences



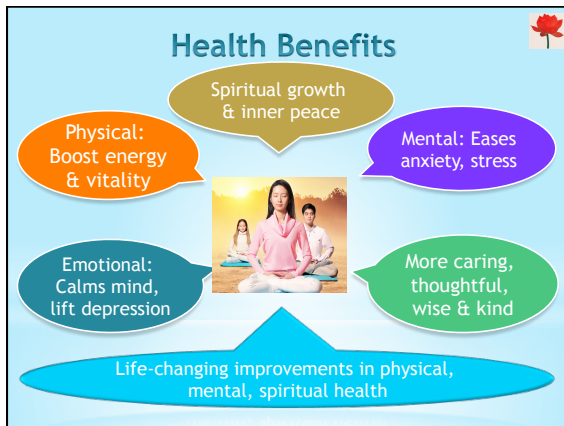
### Open Door Policy

- Free of charge
- Free for ALL ages
- Free of dietary restrictions
- Free of time restraint, frequency, & place of practice
- Free of rituals/worship
- Free to practice alone or in group
- Free to stop any time

### Learn To Meditate

CHOOSE...

- Learn the exercises
  - Taught by volunteers
- Read the book *Falun Gong* or *Zhuan Falun*
  - Free online or buy book
- Attend a lecture series
  - Learn exercises & watch video lectures in major cities



**Empirical Evidence - Australian survey**

- ✳ Excellent health; **Little/No** medication use;
- ✳ **Better** health-wellness status; Life-Changing experiences
- ✳ 91%\* stated improving moral character led to better health for them
- ✳ 50 years & above 30%\* Tertiary education 16%\*
- ✳ Retired: 19 out of 109, 17%\*\*
- ✳ Artists, accountant, dentist, doctors, journalist, nurses, professors, managers

\* Percentage is based on total sample size of 360  
\*\* Percentage based on 109 respondents

**Congruency**

- ✳ It is **feasible** to practice Falun Gong and **reap benefits**, “without invoking a strictly religious framework,” - Retired Professor of psychology Dr. John H. Court (Trey, 2016, p. xii).
- ✳ Dr. Court identifies in Falun Gong essential values – like “knowledge, love, meaning, peace, hope, transcendence, connectedness, compassion, wellness, & wholeness” as qualities “**congruent with healthy human adjustment & widely espoused in all spiritual traditions**” (Trey, 2016, p. xii).

**Relevance for older people**

- ✳ **PRACTICE**: 5 exercises—easy & simple to learn & perform
- ✳ **CULTIVATION**: Read teachings/books or listen to lectures at home
- ✳ **ASSIMILATE** principles & take them as guide in daily life

**Five Recommendations**

1. Check it out online: [www.falundafa.org](http://www.falundafa.org)
2. Get started; Never too old or too young to learn
3. Strategy for overall mind-body spiritual growth
4. Self-care strategy, self-regulation, community
5. Join practice site/reading group/lecture series

**References**

Dipietro, L., Fiatarone Singh, M., Fielding, R., & Nose, H. (2012). Successful aging. *Journal of aging research*, 2012, 438537. doi:10.1155/2012/438537

Li, Hongzhi. (1993). *Falun Gong* (7th Translation Edition, 2016). Retrieved from <https://en.falundafa.org/falun-dafa-books.html>

Li, Hongzhi. (2014). *Zhuan Falun*. Retrieved from <https://en.falundafa.org/falun-dafa-books.html>

Lindberg, D.A. (2005). Integrative review of research related to meditation, spirituality, and the elderly. *Geriatric nursing* (New York, N.Y.), Vol: 26, Issue: 6, Page: 372-7

Minghui.org. (2004). Answers to commonly asked questions about Falun Gong. Retrieved December 30, 2015, from <http://en.minghui.org/html/articles/2004/9/1/20070.html>

Minghui.org. (2016). Research finds Falun Gong practice improves cancer survival rate. Retrieved June 30, 2016, from <http://en.minghui.org/html/articles/2016/6/16/157437.html>

Fiatarone Singh, M. (2004). Exercise and Aging. *Clinics in geriatric medicine*, 20, 201-21. 10.1016/j.cger.2004.03.003.

Trey, M. (2016a). The study of the health-wellness effects of Falun Gong: Applications to counseling. In *Spirituality and counseling issues: VISTA 2016*. Retrieved from <http://www.counseling-and-knowledge-center.vista2016.org/>

Trey, M. (2016b). *The Mindful Practice of Falun Gong: Meditation for Health, Wellness, & Beyond*. Turquoise Publishing, Inc. New York, USA

Trey, M. (2017a). With wings, will fly: A spiritually integrated approach with Falun Gong. Paper presented at the International Conference on Spirituality and Psychology, Bangkok, Thailand.

Trey, M. (2017b). Falun Gong and its applications to counseling: Case examples. In *VISTA 2017*. Retrieved from <http://www.counseling-and-knowledge-center.vista2017.org/>

Trey, M. (2017c). Changing perceptions: An integrated approach with Falun Gong. Paper presented at the 2017 International Conference on Social & Behavioral Sciences, Singapore.

Trey, M. & Olatunji, C. (2019). Use of Falun Gong to Address Traumatic Stress Among Marginalized Clients. Presented at the International Conference on Spirituality and Psychology, Bangkok, Thailand.

**Falun Gong Resources**

- ✳ <http://www.falundafa.org>
- ✳ <http://www.faluninfo.net>
- ✳ <http://en.minghui.org/>

For exercise music & video

<https://en.falundafa.org/falun-dafa-video-audio.html>

Introduction to Falun Gong Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJ-A6xY47jc>

Download my articles/PPT notes

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Margaret\\_Trey2/contributions](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Margaret_Trey2/contributions)

✉ [me@margarettrey.com](mailto:me@margarettrey.com)