



Conscious Life presents

# ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

## QiGong to ground and heal

Guest: Mimi Kuo-Deemer

*Disclaimer: The contents of this interview are for informational purposes only and are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical or psychological advice, diagnosis, or treatment. This interview does not provide medical or psychological advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical or psychological condition.*

### **[00:00:10] Jaia Bristow**

Hello and welcome back to this conference all about anxiety. My name is Jaia Bristow, and I'm one of your hosts. And today I am so, so pleased to be welcoming, Mimi Kuo-Deemer.

Welcome, Mimi.

### **Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Thank you, Jaia. Thank you for inviting me on to the conference.

### **Jaia Bristow**

Thank you for joining us. I'm really excited to know more about you and your work.

So Mimi is an author and a teacher of QiGong, internal martial arts, yoga, meditation.

And so do you want to start by telling us a little bit more about your work, what QiGong is, what internal martial arts are, and then we can talk about how they relate to anxiety?

### **Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Great. Thank you, Jaia.

So QiGong is a Chinese energy cultivation art. Sometimes it's defined as energy work, QiGong.

Internal martial arts is a deep love of mine. It goes very well as a compliment to a lot of the QiGong practices that I do. The two work symbiotically.

Let me tell you just a little bit about QiGong, though, because a lot of people don't know how to pronounce it, first of all. They say, is it QueGong? Because it's spelled QiGong more conventionally these days, but sometimes C-H-I. But it is pronounced ChiGong.

And as a practice from China, the word QiGong is quite modern. It was developed in the late or starting to go into use in the late 19th century, beginning of the 20th century. But it canvases and includes thousands of years of China's energy practices.

This can include meditation, movement and breathing visualization practices. I really like the word QiGong because in the past, people would say, oh, but there's Tai Chi or there's martial arts or there's

meditation or there's breathing. And this one term galvanized all of these practices into one more unified concept of working with one's life energy.

### **[00:02:21]**

And Qi has the ideas of life energy. It's in Chinese language. It's so commonly used in the language that you can refer to someone's complexion as their qisè. You can refer to the weather as tiānqi. You can refer to getting angry as shēngqi.

So Qi is ubiquitous is sort of this force in life. But the characters are made from rice and steam. So it's beautiful because it looks at something that is a transference, a creation. And that's what energy is, as we know from physics. The first law of thermodynamics says that no energy can ever be created or destroyed. It's only transferred.

So Qi is the transference of heat to rice to create water vapor and then something that we can eat. So this is giving us life.

And then gong is often misunderstood in the West. QiGong the second part of life energy and working with it. Sometimes people misunderstand it and define it just as work. And I've been guilty of this. It's easier to describe it just as work.

But gong means meritorious deed or accomplishment. And Kung Fu is the same character for gong. And gong originally, etymologically had the radical, which are pictographs in Chinese characters that combined to make words. It had the radical for a carpenter square, like something that a carpenter uses to make right angles, but it's to refine and to shape and to create out of woodwork something more precise and designed. It's a beautiful image.

And then it also has the radical for a plow. And humans used to pull plows before animals did. And this was time consuming, hard work, but one had to do it patiently, otherwise one would exhaust oneself as a farmer.

So if you combine these ideas of a carpenter square that shapes and creates with artistry and skill and then plow, the patience and perseverance and inner strength and Qi, like energy, we're looking at taking the energy of the universe, which sounds lofty, but it's just true. Energy that's been created since the universe began or the multiverses began, and looking at how that transference of energy can support our health through shaping and creating and patiently and steadily working with it.

### **Jaia Bristow**

Beautiful.

### **Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

That's QiGong, and QiGong can be martial. It can be the foundation of martial arts. It can be medical, it's one of the five pillars of Chinese medicine, the others being acupuncture and herbs, geomancy, massage, and then movement. And it's also meditative and spiritual. It's the foundation of Taoist and Buddhist practices.

So a lot of people often ask, well, what's the difference between Tai Chi and QiGong? And first of all, the Chi in both of these words, completely different characters. QiGong is like life energy. It's steam and rice. But Tai Chi is actually pronounced Tai Chi in Mandarin and Chi means polarity, and the

symbol of Yin and Yang is of polarity. Tai means great. Chi means polarity, and Tai Chi is the great polarity and the moment at which the forces of Yin and Yang come into complete balance.

### **[00:06:50] Jaia Bristow**

Wow.

### **Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Yeah. Tai Chi is an internal martial art. And internal martial arts, they include many, but mostly it's Tai Chi, something called Baguazhang, which is my lineage, and Xingyiquan.

I practice Xingyiquan, Baguazhang, and I also have a different Tai Chi teacher. And people say, well, QiGong, okay, that's energy work, Tai Chi is an internal martial art, but it's still classified as part of the umbrella term or classified under the umbrella term, QiGong. So Tai Chi can be considered one of the 7000 forms of QiGong. QiGong points to the history of energy work in China.

So the external martial arts are really focused on developing external power, muscular strength, combat. You land a punch, you throw a kick, things like that.

And internal martial arts is really focused on the cultivation, generation, and circulation of Qi. It's very closely related to concepts from Chinese medicine. They're looking at health as a primary goal and not just combat or development of finesse and agility and power. They're looking at soft power. So a lot of it is tenderness and strength. And they're looking at really supporting the organs and their associated meridians and the health of the organ meridian system.

They're also looking at meditation, and they see equal value and the application of martial practice with longevity in health practices and spiritual meditative development.

I'm really a big fan of internal martial arts because, A) I can do the applications and I somehow end up feeling really internally strong and more badass. It's a lot of fun.

But then I also have my teacher's voice reminding me in Chinese, (Chinese audio), which means never do anything to the excess. And that you always finish the training or practice of internal martial arts, ideally with more energy than you began.

### **Jaia Bristow**

I love that. The more energy than you began is really wonderful and it's not what people associate often with either martial arts or physical activity or movement practices. So that sounds really beautiful.

And it's such a wonderful introduction to the world of QiGong and internal martial arts. I've just learned so much from that. I knew a little bit already. I'd come across a lot of these terms. I've done a little bit. I've once done even a class with you, but understanding more holistically what QiGong is and the difference between QiGong and Tai Chi, for example.

And the fact that to the Western ear, it sounds the same, that word Qi, and that actually they mean two different things. One's life force and one's around the Yin and the Yang. It's fantastic.

**[00:10:24]**

So just for the purposes of this conference, can you tell us a little bit about how these practices relate to anxiety?

**Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Yeah. So for anyone who's ever felt anxiety, and I doubt there's a human being walking this Earth who hasn't felt it before, some of the physical manifestations of it are things like breathlessness, restlessness, fatigue, feeling it's hard to concentrate or you're irritable. It can result in muscular and joint pain. It can relate to digestive issues or breathlessness, headaches.

And in Chinese medicine, all of these symptoms, physically, are the result of what's called excess or deficiency in the body's Qi. And anxiety would result from these physical symptoms manifesting, or the physical symptoms would manifest from the anxiety, but both of which would be caused by an excess in heat and fire and a deficiency in water.

**Jaia Bristow**

Why would these, like you said, excess in heat and fire and a deficiency in water, why might something like that come about? How does that, to a Western brain who doesn't quite understand, how would that all work?

**Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

So in Chinese medicine, in QiGong, there are main organs, your heart, your spleen, your lungs, your liver, your kidneys. And these govern the physiological functions of the body, but they also govern our psychological and emotional and spiritual states.

And when you think about just the transference of energy, energy is always moving. And even each of our cells is relying on a chemical to electrical transforms of energy from the air we breathe or the food we eat, Adenosine Triphosphate, ATP. And that's the fuel of life. It's what lets every cell do what it needs to do.

And when we're experiencing stress, the flow of that energy transfer can be disrupted at the cellular level. And what QiGong is doing is, and Chinese medicine is doing, is trying to support the optimal unbroken flow of Qi, of energy and energy transference in the body.

If, say, you've got a stream that's flowing from the mountains to the sea, it eventually meets the rivers, joins up and goes to the sea. And then suddenly someone comes and dams it, part of it. And you get an excess of water on one end and a trickle of water on the other end. And that's what's happening in the body sometimes, is that either stress, trauma, some sort of imbalance, maybe caused by lifestyle or diet, has started to erode the flow and block the water and the flow of energy.

So that's starting to create excess on one side and efficiency on the other. And they looked at nature really for cues. They looked to what's happening in the garden, what's happening in the river valleys. When are things working beautifully and in harmony and in balance? And when is this balance disrupted?

And so all the things they describe in the body are just things that they observed happening in nature. And so they look at the body as the same way we might look to tend a garden. And we want the

roses to be in a place where there's enough sun and not too much shade. To not have too much wind, so they're more protected. We want our crops to get good fertilized soil and rotated regularly. We want enough rain. And if there's not enough of one of these components, then the crops will struggle or the flowers will struggle.

**[00:15:06]**

So it's very similar in the body. And anxiety, if you look at flowers out there, they're just not getting enough water or sun. They're just like either like this because they haven't gotten enough sun or nutrient, or they're like, they're leggy because they're yearning for the light. It's the same in us. We get anxious because something isn't being fed to us and we're not getting what we need. And it's causing this imbalance of flow in our energetic body.

And I say energetic body very loosely, but you could break that down to a scientific understanding. Again, energy is not some esoteric concept. It's governing every transaction happening in our blood.

And then anxiety is also, if there's a disturbance to something, especially in Chinese medicine, to our kidneys, and the kidneys are right below the adrenal glands in our body, and adrenal glands are producing adrenaline, which is a stress hormone, which can be one of the main triggers for, if it's elevated at high levels, unreasonably, or for too long, that it can cause chronic stress.

And if the kidneys are really not getting enough rest or nutrients or flow of Qi, then there's not enough and they're cooling. That's what I mentioned before, like water, the water element. They relate to rest and wisdom and quiet and stillness. And if there's not enough of that, then they're struggling.

And all the body is trying to do is take care of the kidneys, but at the expense of the heart, which is the heat and the fire. And so because the kidneys are deficient or they have maybe excess, then the heart will either have excess or deficiency.

And all of these symptoms, physical symptoms that we often find with anxiety or panic attacks are this inability for the heart to feel safe. It's like struggling, oh no, what's going to happen? Or not enough space or anxious about the future or concerned about whether someone is really loving me or am I able to love them? Or do I feel loved or am I measuring up? All of these narratives that can really trigger difficulty for the heart. And the heart is that fire that needs warmth and stability and quiet and care and steadiness.

**Jaia Bristow**

And you've talked about fire and water, are all four elements represented in the body in this Chinese system, or is it just heat and water?

**Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

So there are actually five phases that, sometimes it's referred to elements, and I often use the word element because it translates more readily in English speaking vocabulary. But it's actually phase, and there are five phases and they all influence each other.

But there's water, which relates to the kidneys. There's fire, which relates to the heart, primarily. But then there's Earth, which relates to the spleen and worry or excess empathy, which results in worry. Joy relates to the heart. Fear relates to the kidneys.

**[00:19:14]**

Then there's wood, which is the liver, and that relates to anger. And then there's also the lungs, and that relates to the metal elements, which are like precious gemstones, the rocks, the mountains. And that relates to our grief as an emotion.

**Jaia Bristow**

Amazing. And I think that's an incredible explanation and introduction. And I really love the imagery I have around the river and the stream. It helped me understand it a lot more.

And I love what you were talking about about how they looked to nature and to what was happening in nature and finding balance in nature and what worked and didn't work and then applied that to our body.

And I interviewed Mark Coleman as well, who talks about the healing benefits of nature and natural meditation. So meditation in nature is helping anxiety. So I love that idea of nature in us as well.

And I've really enjoyed all of this, but I'm also curious about practical tips. So how does this actually work when someone's having an anxiety attack or a panic attack? How do we use all this beautiful imagery to actually apply it in a very practical way?

**Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

This is where I think QiGong becomes this antidote to the fast fix modern dilemma of wanting to change our problems and fix our problems right away.

It's an antidote because it's a slow medicine, actually, that's what we need to gradually work with something as insidious and as unshakable sometimes as anxiety. It doesn't just go away with a pill, unfortunately, for most of us.

Because it's drawn from nature, a lot of the really practical and immediate practices that one can do are just to look to something like trees and anything that grows in the Earth, like all the plant life. The first thing that seed does when it germinates is it goes, eek. It goes a little bit up towards the soil and the sun, and then it goes down and it grows deep, long roots.

So before we see any growth above the ground, its root systems, through early spring and winter and early spring are just really going down into the Earth. Then that supports the upward growth, and that is seeking water. It's going down and it's cool, it's dark. The Tao Te Ching, it says darkness within darkness, the gateway to all understanding. But it's roots.

And QiGong as a practice, and internal martial arts as a practice, really focuses on roots. It's grounding. Like, you're invited to do things like sink and immerse the Qi, like sink the Qi down. Any energy, Qi that's coming up will tend to exacerbate an already challenged mental or heart state. And so there's this invitation to first just drop the Qi down.

**Jaia Bristow**

And how would one drop the Qi down, for example?

### **[00:23:04] Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Feel into the feet. Imagine your legs like the roots of a tree. Using visualization, that can be really nice. Imagining that the energy actually just pulls down to the lower abdomen. If it's up here, you visualize it just slowing down like a waterfall and pooling down into the belly. You use imagery from nature.

I recently just learned this form of lotus flowers floating on water, but the wind blows and the lotus flowers kind of move from side to side on the surface of water. But what's anchoring it is the roots. So you feel your legs as the roots of the lotus flower, and then the head and the arms moving on the surface of the water.

I can see you doing it, and you can really get into your body that way. And the invitation to be in your body is one of the most immediate ways to counteract panic attacks and high levels of stress or anxiety.

And more than just being embodied, because you can be embodied doing practices like yoga, you can be embodied doing practices like dance, but with QiGong, the powerful practice, or internal martial arts, the most powerful and unique aspect is that it works with our intention to create anchors and bring in a visualization and intention into how the body moves.

And I can talk about this all I want but just try this. Take your hands and then just move them forward. Breathing in. Move them back. Breathing out. Yes. Feels good. Feels nice. Natural.

Now move your hands forward as though they're moving through clouds. Move your hands back like they're moving through clouds.

Move your hands forward like they're moving through a river. Move your hands back like they're moving through a river.

Now, it gets soggy in the winter here in the UK. So, soggy mud. Move your hands through soggy mud. And then back through soggy mud.

Same movement, four different intentions. One without intention, one intentionless movement, three intentional movements.

### **Jaia Bristow**

Wow. And I could really feel the difference and notice the different pacing. But even the visualization, suddenly I was not thinking about anything else because I was really visualizing mud or clouds or river, and I could feel it on my fingers as well. So it's amazing how powerful it is, just that simple exercise and being able to visualize it.

### **Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

And that's the beauty of the immediacy that QiGong can give to people to be embodied and to connect to the natural world. And nature is not apart from us, it's outside of us. Water is flowing within us. We are 70%+ water. We're alive because of water. We're actually just reconnecting and reestablishing these connections and appreciation as to what is here, what we are a part of and what is a part of us.

**[00:27:03]**

And then the other aspect that I think is really interesting, and this is more from a neuroscience perspective. There was a woman named Catherine Kerr who unfortunately passed away, but she was a mindfulness practitioner, a neuroscientist working, I believe, at the Davidson Institute in the US. And she was a QiGong and Tai Chi practitioner, and she was looking at embodied cognition, along with a number of other researchers.

And neuroscience has been so exclusively focused on the brain and then the brain's impact to the body. And she was reversing that along with others and looking at the impact of the body on the brain.

But in Chinese medicine, there's a really common equation of sorts that says, our mind affects the Qi and the Qi affects and directs the blood. And mind is intention. We can kind of measure that now in neuroscience. We can't quite decide and come up with a cohesive or consistent definition of Qi yet, but neuroscience and science now can also measure blood.

So they were doing studies on people doing regular exercise and then a control group with people then doing QiGong and Tai Chi. And because it's a very intentionally based practice, they were noticing significant difference in the levels of inflammatory cytokines in the blood with people who were doing QiGong and Tai Chi.

### **Jaia Bristow**

That's incredible.

### **Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Inflammatory cytokines are what leads to inflammation. It's heat, so going back to what we started with, too much heat. But not only does it cause elevated levels of stress hormones to circulate in the body that can lead to anxiety, but long-term, there's a lot of disease that's a result of elevated inflammatory cytokines in the blood.

So it's really impactful just on doing intentional movement. It's really impactful on stress and inflammation.

### **Jaia Bristow**

And so you were talking about these buds in spring and how they peak up and then they go down and plant their roots. And you were saying how we can do that for ourselves. When the energy is up here, which it usually is with anxiety, when we're feeling anxious, we're in our head, there's lots of racing thoughts, to visualize it's like a waterfall, the energy falling down.

And to sense our feet and our lower body to bring the energy down and to really feel the roots of our cells. And to think of the roots of a tree or the trunk of a tree or the roots of this lotus flower, so that even if there's some movement and some flowing at the top, there's the grounding.

So what would be like, I don't know if it would be the next phase or the next step, what would come after that? What are some other things you can bring in?



### **[00:30:28] Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

There are lots of classical QiGong set forms. And then, of course, there's many schools of Tai Chi, if people are interested in internal martial arts, it does take a little more discipline to learn them, but QiGong is a really good launching pad and a very accessible practice.

And the beautiful thing about QiGong is that you don't have to think about I've got to reduce my anxiety by doing this practice, or I'm going to do this practice so that I can reduce my anxiety. It's more that if you do the practices steadily and regularly, the body just wants to find equilibrium. Plants want to thrive and grow. We want to thrive and grow. And it's just about gradually creating the conditions for that to happen.

And through regular practice, if you do some of the classical forms out there, the Eight Brocades, Eight Silk Brocades, the 18 Forms, the Muscle Tendon Changing Classic, the Five Animal Frolics. These are some just really classical forms that have been around for a long time. Very different variations of them. They all work on helping balance the flow of energy through the body.

And so just by practicing them, you're nourishing the organ system and the meridian system. You're doing something which I love, which is circulating the blood without taxing the lungs. And for me, I've never liked aerobic exercise. I've never liked running or doing anything that kind of taxes me. And I was so happy to learn with QiGong that the intention is never to tax your lungs. They're the second in command to the heart. You don't want them depleted.

But my teacher always says, (Chinese audio) which means the sweat pours, but the breath never quickens. So you can work hard but not stress your lungs and it doesn't have to be pushing yourself that hard. In fact, that would be counterproductive.

But if you just do these practices, the body naturally circulates the Qi better through the blood. And the cells, as a result, will be benefiting from just the ease of oxygen and glucose traveling through your fluid systems to be absorbed through your cells. And then your cells will also do their metabolic process and mitochondria will produce its ATP and send it out back through the cell as energy for growth.

And hopefully that energy will soften the tendency of anger, anxious heart and mind and naturally help your body just recalibrate.

### **Jaia Bristow**

And so what I'm really hearing in what you're sharing is something that you mentioned earlier about how QiGong is like a slow medicine. So it's not just taking a pill and then everything is fine.

And as you say, that kind of regular practice, it helps not just in a moment of crisis, but it helps balance the body, balance the mind, balance energies, so that hopefully there are less moments of crisis, less moments of anxiety or panic.

But I'm curious as well if you do have any other skills you want to bring in for those moments of crisis or panic?

### **[00:34:14] Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

The moments of crisis and panic are really what you described just earlier in what I suggested of finding roots, breathing down into the lower belly, which is the pool, the lower down tip energy center. But I cautioned against quick fixes, because again, if you look to the garden, you can't just expect the soil tomorrow to start being ready to grow good crops. If it's been caked, dried, neglected, polluted, it needs time.

And more than anything, QiGong is a preventative medicine and it's slow. And these days we do want immediate remedies. And I have a lot of empathy and compassion for people going through the immediacy of a panic attack or of heightened anxiety.

So finding root, finding a way to cool, taking that moment of just moving your hands through water, that could be another really beautiful image. Just like we did earlier, just moving your hands forward and back and imagine imagining that they're moving through water, that could really cool.

But on the whole, it is difficult for me to endorse anything that's a quick fix because it is preventative medicine. The Tao Te Ching again, prevent trouble before it arises, put things in order before they exist. A giant pine grows from a tiny sprout. The journey of 1000 miles begins from beneath your feet.

So it's really this invitation to go slow. And typically, especially, I've taught yoga for a number of years and everyone used to come in feeling so stressed and they all wanted to leave feeling not so stressed, but they want to feel better after 1 hour or 75 minutes.

And then if you look to some of the classics of QiGong like the Muscle Tendon Changing classics, they describe a 5 year plan.

The first year is something like, you train to get your physical vitality and mental vitality back. And then the second year enhances your blood circulation and your meridians. The third year, it gives you flexibility in your muscles and organs. The fourth year is then really giving vitality to your body as a whole. And then the fifth year, finally, your brain is nurtured.

### **Jaia Bristow**

And what I will say, I think it's wonderful everything you're sharing around QiGong, and that we can't always do everything with a quick fix. And that this is a slow medicine and a preventative medicine and how fantastic it is to have this resource and the importance of practicing regularly.

And I can imagine that people who have long-term anxiety or depression or other things, doing a regular daily practice can really help in the long run.

And I will say that for some people, preventative it's a little bit too late. And some people are in panic in their life. They have a lot of stress, a lot of burnout, the whole system is already very jangled. And in that situation, sometimes we do need both. We do need a quick fix, and we do need to make some lifestyle changes so that it doesn't keep happening.

And I'm talking very much from personal experience in this. I noticed I have a 4 year burnout cycle where I burn out, everything gets too much, I crash, I create lots of space in my life, and then I gradually build up my schedule so much until I burn out and crash again.

**[00:38:23]**

But I know that for a lot of people, we joke that QiGong isn't a magic pill, but for lots of people who suffer from anxiety, they do need to take pills. They do need to take medicine to support.

And so I just don't want anyone listening to this thinking that we're saying that that's not okay or that that's not allowed in some way. And we're just saying that that's not what QiGong is. And that absolutely.

And I think that, as far as I'm aware, there's nothing wrong with doing both. With taking pills, taking medicine, supporting yourself in the immediacy and adding these practices that can create more spaciousness in the long run.

### **Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Yeah. And just also say, it goes without saying that sometimes the anxiety and the tendencies towards panic attacks is genetic. It's nothing that we can actually work with through QiGong or Chinese medicine.

It's really important to, I think, also recognize that sometimes things like meditation and things like movement practices, which are moving meditation, they do take a certain amount of robustness to actually undertake, and they're not suitable for everyone.

But sometimes one needs that kind of medical intervention first, therapy, counseling, antidepressants, anti anxiety pills to help support the ability to feel that robustness first, before they actually can undertake something that is slower and more long-term.

### **Jaia Bristow**

And that's why often these kind of different methods go so well together, hand in hand. Often I really believe in therapy and meditation and QiGong, and if you need the pills as well, the pills as well.

And I have lots of other health conditions, so I take lots of supplements and I look at diet and I look at lifestyle. So often in Western society, we try and look at just one thing. It's such an individualistic society, so we all focus on ourselves.

But even within ourselves, we look at one area, we go to the doctors and they send us to specialists for just one symptom, one area. And that so often we don't have that holistic approach. And that's what I love in everything you've shared and how holistic it sounds like QiGong is.

### **Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

And QiGong really sees the human being as a manifestation of nature. We are nature manifesting in human form or the microcosm of macrocosm. And so it's not at all selfish to take care of yourself because you're just part of everything that is around you and within you. Taking care of your plant, taking care of a pet, taking care of the garden, we do that without really thinking about it, but it's much harder to actually do that for ourselves.

**[00:41:34]**

And if we can see ourselves as so beautifully a part of the same matrix and connectivity of everything else, then it doesn't become narcissistic or self indulgent. It just becomes a way of caring for planet, of caring for the environment as part of the environment.

### **Jaia Bristow**

I love that. And would you like to share a little bit about how these practices have helped you on a personal level?

### **Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Where did it begin? I think they've transformed me significantly from my youthful days of smoking and drinking and partying and not taking care of myself and depleting myself. And I had asthma, I had digestive issues, I had a lot of anxiety. That anxiety has not gone away completely, but it's so much less of a monster in my daily life.

It's improved my foundational relationships with family and my partner and my community. I have the utmost appreciation for these teachings because they've really given me a way back into taking care of myself and looking after myself. And I feel, I'm going to be 50 this year, but I can safely say that I feel healthier than I've ever felt in my life.

I just went through Second Spring, which is what the Chinese term is for menopause, and touch wood, I'm done, but I had one day where I had a hot flash and it was so gentle. But I really want to credit luck, and I want to think that some of the things that I've come to understand and brought on board for taking care of myself have really made a difference for me. And I'm really appreciative of that.

I can't go into it too much because there's not enough time in this format, but I've seen what I read about and what I've learned, play out in so many situations.

Quick example, my parents, they lived in Beijing, my father's passed away, but they used to live in Beijing when I was there. And every May, toward the late end of spring, they wanted to get divorced. And this is because they were cooped up all winter, not getting enough rest, working too hard.

And then in spring, just like in nature, things want to expand and express and grow. And when the two of them, having been married for nearly over 50 years, wanted to express and grow, they just came up against each other. And this is wood energy relates to anger and frustration. When you're trying to grow and you can't and they just would rub heads.

And I reminded them after a couple of years of seeing this happen, like every spring you want to get a divorce. That's not true. And then by the third year, I pointed it out again and they're like, oh, yeah, actually.

But it was just nature and we are part of and we're affected by the seasonal shift and changes. And I saw that happening in my parents' relationship so clearly year after year.

And once I could point it out to them, then they could work with that better. They understood like, oh, they don't have to take it so seriously. It's just the energy of wanting to grow and expand, which is happening, and then not being able to. And they just had a little bit of a laugh about it from then on.

**[00:45:45] Jaia Bristow**

Fantastic. And one of the things I'm really hearing in what you're sharing, both around the story around your parents, the impact these practices have had on you, how you said that you used to have a lot of anxiety, and it's not completely gone away, but it's less of a monster.

One of the things I'm realizing and hearing is that all these practices, they don't magically make life super easy. They don't get rid of all the anxiety and all the problems, and we don't suddenly live in utopia by doing these practices. But what they do is they give us so much more resourcefulness, so many more tools, so that when life is difficult, then it feels so much less overwhelming.

And again, A) it reduces the anxiety triggers, it sounds like, by suddenly there's less fear around, A) because if we have more resourcefulness and there's less fear of not being able to deal with the situation. B) You were saying that just having that inner balance, like your menopause, was so much more easeful, so there's less unbalance in ourselves. And then when things are difficult, it's just less intense, I think it sounds like.

And I think that that's an important reminder, because sometimes we look to these like, we've been talking about these magic fixes, and we think, oh, if only I meditate more or do more QiGong or eat more healthy, then everything will be okay. And it's like, no, these practices are all fantastic, and we are encouraged to do them, not to make life magically better, but just to create that kind of inner support for when things get hard.

**Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Yeah, that's so concisely summarized. Thank you.

And maybe it's a closing thought, QiGong and internal martial arts, the meditative traditions of China, they are all inspired by this idea of dao.

And doo often is translated clumsily into English as, the way or the path, but it points to much more than that. It can be far beyond that. But what path or road is straight?

If you wanted to get from where you are to where I am, how would you do that? We don't know. It takes a lot of planning, but then ability to adjust and the ability to recognize that things aren't just very straightforward. Life is not straightforward. Experience is not straightforward. It changes. It's uncertain.

And a lot of anxiety and triggers to anxiety are caused by a lack of control, feeling like things aren't going the way we want them to, or we're worried about how they're going to go.

But what these practices have taught me is that if I'm going to be aligned with dao, that there is no straightforward path, and all I can do is be open to the uncertainty and the change and then harmonize with that.

And when I feel out of alignment with that, then I struggle because I want things to be a lot more clear and easy and straightforward. But life is, and experience is just not doing that.

**Jaia Bristow**

It's interesting when you talk about that, the direction, the path and things aren't just straight, and how would I get from here to you, for example. And I remember I had this map app on my phone, and

when I look for directions, it would tell me all the different ways I could go, buses and trams and tubes and trains or walking or cycling or whatever.

**[00:49:58]**

And then there was always one at the end which looked really quick and really great and it was called catapult. It was like, if you can find a giant catapult, it would be less than 2 minutes.

And I'd always be stressed and running late, and I'd always look and try and hope that there was somehow one of these options would be quicker because I had to get from A to B in 20 minutes, and the route was at least 30 minutes.

And then I'd look, I'd see 2 minutes, I'd be like, fantastic! There'd be a part of my brain which would always think, this is going to work. And then I'd be like, oh, I don't have a giant catapult that can just fling me there to arrive bang on time. And sometimes they had other machines, but catapult was always my favorite, but it just reminds me of that.

Mimi for those of us, including myself, who are inspired to start practicing QiGong more regularly, how can we find out more about you and your work and any classes that you offer or online resources that you might have?

**Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

I think the most immediate and concise way is my website. It'll just have updates to what I'm doing and courses I'm offering or online downloadable programs.

And that's just [mkdeemer.com](http://mkdeemer.com). So it's [mkdemar.com](http://mkdemar.com).

And then the usual suspects of social media I am on also the same handle [@mimikuodeemer](https://www.instagram.com/mimikuodeemer).

**Jaia Bristow**

Fantastic. And I believe you have a YouTube channel as well?

**Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Yes I do. And that's also [youtube.com/MimiKuoDeemer](https://www.youtube.com/MimiKuoDeemer).

**Jaia Bristow**

Brilliant. Thank you so much for your time today, Mimi. I really appreciate this conversation. I've learnt so much more about QiGong in general, about internal martial arts versus external martial arts, about the five phases in the body and in nature.

And I feel very inspired in slow medicine and in these practices that don't make life magically better, but do really create a lot of inner support and are a fantastic resource to create more balance. And hopefully if I start now, then by the time I get to menopause mine will be as easy as yours.

**Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

I was a mess when I was 30 so you've got a lot of potential.

**[00:52:31] Jaia Bristow**

Thank you. Take care.

**Mimi Kuo-Deemer**

Thanks Jaia. Really great to be in conversation with you and thanks for having me.