

SHADOW STRENGTH

Internal Training Methods for
Building Superhuman Strength



by Jon Haas, The Warrior Coach

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Disclaimer:

You must get your physician's approval before beginning this exercise program. These recommendations are not medical guidelines but are for educational purposes only. You must consult your physician prior to starting this program or if you have any medical condition or injury that contraindicates physical activity. This program is designed for healthy individuals 18 years and older only.

The information in this e manual is meant to supplement, not replace, proper exercise training. All forms of exercise pose some inherent risks. The author advises readers to take full responsibility for their safety and know their limits.

Before practicing the exercises in this e manual, be sure that your equipment is well maintained, and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training and fitness.

The exercises in this book are not intended as a substitute for any exercise routine or treatment that may have been prescribed by your physician.

See your physician before starting any exercise or nutrition program. If you are taking any medications, you must talk to your physician before starting any exercise program. If you experience any light-headedness, dizziness, or shortness of breath while exercising, stop the movement and consult a physician.

Shadow Strength Program Introduction

Welcome to Shadow Strength!

As far back in my martial arts career as I can remember (over 30 years and counting now...), I have always sought out the esoteric and little-known methods of building power, becoming stronger and unbreakable as a martial artist.

Once I discovered these methods, there was no going back to ordinary training.

Shadow Strength stands alone as a unique program within the martial arts world. This type of training of body skills transcends all martial arts and preceded, and supersedes, technique.

Why Body Skills Are Critical to Martial Arts...

Body skills are the foundation of ALL martial and athletic movement.

In fact, in my mind, they are the foundation of all good, powerful, pain-free human movement!

What are body skills?

They are the qualities that connect, support, mobilize, and strengthen the body from the inside out. They create a highly resilient, dynamically stable body that underpins all other skill acquisition. In short, you want to get better at the specific skill sets within your martial art, quickly - train the body!

Shadow Strength contains a unique set of exercises drawn from traditional martial arts designed to utilize breath, posture, and movement to build superhuman levels of strength and resistance to injury

About the Modules

Although each of the 3 Modules can stand on its own as powerful ways of connecting the body, building internal power, and increasing the resilience of tendons and other connective tissues, the true power of the system lies in the interconnectedness of the Breath, Mobility, and Posture.

In this sense, the whole program trained together is vastly greater than the sum of its individual parts. The magic in the system lies in taking each powerful practice and stacking them one on top of the other to create maxim results.

Breathing Module Introduction

For millennia breath control exercises have been the secret weapon of advanced yogis, qigong adepts, master healers, and warrior-monks to forge phenomenal strength, super human body control, and extraordinary vitality.

When disciplines such as yoga, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Internal Martial Arts, and Qigong have been successfully used over thousands of years to heal the sick, strengthen the weak, and bring energy to the depleted, you don't question them – you study them!

While obviously these disciplines have their own unique modalities and practices, working with the breath is the common thread that runs through each of them. And there's a very specific reason why each have evolved sophisticated breathing exercises that are used with such a high degree of success.

Breathing is the only function of the human body that bridges both the autonomic and the voluntary nervous systems. You can breathe on complete autopilot all day long without ever consciously thinking about, and yet you can also choose to take a deep breath, exhale sharply, or even hold the breath at any time.

Herein lies the secret of breathing exercises – because it spans both sides of the nervous system specific breathing techniques are able to influence things such as heart rate, blood pressure, muscular tension, and stress levels.

Over the centuries, adepts of these disciplines (and others) have created literally hundreds of breathing exercises that have been consistently shown through practical experience to

- Enhance whole body strength
- Increase lung capacity
- Reduce stress
- Improve endurance
- Fire up the body's bioenergy
- Increase flexibility and range of motion
- Improve pain tolerance/reduce pain
- Build resilience and resistance to disease
- Improve performance under stress
- Not to mention relax, revitalize, and rejuvenate the body through meditation and relaxation exercises!

Breathing Principles

- 1) Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. If you are pushing too hard in an exercise (cardio or otherwise) and are forced to breathe in through your mouth, slow down the pace until you can maintain your breathing.

Remember – every exercise (and technique) is made up of 3 essential parts: movement, structure, and breathing. If one of these 3 is off, then the technique is wrong.

- 2) Breathing should be constant with natural pauses between breath cycles, no unconscious holding of the breath (unless specifically working on a breath holding exercise)

- 3) Always exhale on effort. In every exercise there is both a yin and a yang phase, an effort and a returning or releasing. For example, in the push-up the effort phase is the pressing up from the bottom position, therefore tighten your core and exhale to connect the body and strengthen your effort.

- 4) Certain actions will naturally favor an inhale or an exhale. In those cases, then yes, follow the path of least resistance. Normally when the body contracts air is expelled from the lungs by the movement; allow it to happen. When the body expands, air is naturally sucked into the lungs; allow it to happen.

- 5) Out of breath in an exercise? Breathe faster! Catch your breath by increasing the pace (over and above your body's heaving) and then consciously slow it down. The mind navigates the body, so tell yourself you are calm and guide yourself back to a normal breath rhythm.

- 6) Stress busting breathing exercise. Stand in a natural position or sit comfortably on the floor with spine straight to perform this exercise.
 - Begin by exhaling through the mouth for 5 seconds.
 - Do not inhale. Try to extend the breath pause for 5 seconds.

- Before tension begins to creep in, inhale for 5 seconds.
- Hold the breath on the inhale for 5 seconds.
- Repeat the cycle 10 times.
- As this becomes easier, and your capacity expands, try increasing each side of the square to 6, 7, 8, 9, or even 10

7) Keep your spine straight. Good posture is essential for unimpeded breathing. Never hunch over when out of breath. Instead stand tall and focus on moving the air unimpeded in and out of your lungs.

8) Breath permeates the entire body. Breathing never stops at the lungs but flows through and brings energy to every cell in the body.

Martial Mobility Module Introduction

All movement skills, especially martial movement skills, must be built on a foundation of both stability and mobility. Today we will cover mobility.

A complete mobility practice moves each joint in the body through its complete range of motion bathing it in synovial fluid.

Movement is the only way your joints get nutrition!

Many trainers and coaches tend to look at the current rage of joint mobility protocols as recent innovations in sports science and training. Everyone is talking about mobility for health, mobility for

prehab or injury prevention, mobility for warm-ups, mobility for fending off the ravages of aging.

Everyone is talking about the benefits of increased range of motion for sport performance and martial art training enhancement. And, just to be perfectly clear, this is a good thing. They are all correct. Mobility training is the rage for a reason.



However, as with many “new” types of training methods, mobility work is an ancient idea come full circle.

This is not a new idea. In fact, Hua Tuo (2nd century AD), one of the patriarchs of Chinese Medicine and creator of the famous qigong set, The Five Animal Frolics, once said:

“Just as a door hinge will not rust if it is used, so the body will attain health by gently moving and exercising all of the limbs.”

Hua Tuo's The Five Animal Frolics model movements from the crane, bear, monkey, tiger, and deer. Each animal emphasizes different health benefits and you can choose a specific animal for specific results. The movements form arcs, spirals, waves and spins, in order to accommodate all ranges of motion for the body.

Now what does that sound like?

Health by moving and exercising all the limbs... hmm... reminds me of a certain new exercise protocol called joint mobility. And this quote from Hua Tuo is just one example. There are many more within Chinese Medicine as well as Indian Yoga that all point to the same idea – mobility is essential for health. Or, more crudely but succinctly put, move it or lose it.

Each session can range from a quick 5-minute recharge to a 30-minute in-depth deep practice. It's up to you and how your body feels on a particular day.

For example, did you do a ton of heavy lifting or a super intense metabolic conditioning session the day before?

Maybe a longer, deeper mobility session is required to aid in restoration and recovery.

Or, did you just get out of bed and maybe only have 5 minutes before you have to get ready for work? A 5-minute quick-n-dirty mobility session will charge you up and get your body moving (literally!).

Daily Practice

I have been performing my mobility practice almost every day for over 15 years now. However, there have been a few times when I decided to forego it for several days in a row just to see if I could notice a difference. After 3-4 days without it I began to

notice. Muscles were tighter. Movements were less fluid. Joints were crunchy. When I finally stopped my no mobility experiment on day 5, the contrast was amazing!

In my experience, mobility training and [breathing exercises](#) are the biggest bang for your buck daily practices that will only reward you more and more with each passing year.

Benefits of Mobility Training

In no particular order, here are some of the benefits of mobility training:

- Lubricates joints and allows them to receive nutrition through synovial fluid
- Aids in removal of toxins
- Reduces joint pain and inflammation
- Increases range of motion (flexibility in motion)
- Increases energy by reducing unconsciously held tension
- Prehab for injury prevention
- Mobility is foundation of all sport, athletic, and martial movement
- Decreased mobility leads to increased pain and stiffness

For your daily training, here is my own personal full-body joint mobility routine. Implement this first thing tomorrow morning and feel amazing all day long!

Primal Postures Module Introduction

Internal Power Training Theory

As discussed previously, the method of Internal Power training has been handed down for thousands of years. The approaches are comprised of detailed step-by-step instructions that must be specifically taught. It is not possible (okay, maybe 'highly unlikely' is a better turn of phrase...) that they can be stumbled upon by accident or figured out by some sort of haphazard trial and error process. They cannot be reverse engineered simply by watching one's teacher closely, nor can they be "stolen". Now that we've got that out of the way...

Internal Power Model

Our model is based on In-Yo Ho: "The method of the union of opposites".

The pairs of opposites we will use to create internal power within the body are: up/down, left/right, front/back.

This is commonly known as 6 Directional Training.

Of note is the fact that the founder of Katori Shinto Ryu once remarked – "Once I understood 6 directions, my ken was unstoppable."

Yi → Chi → Li

As the maxim above states, Yi (intent) leads Chi (energy) leads Li (strength). Thus we see that intent is the primary driver, the prime mover of internal power.

Intent is the Bridge Intent is the connection between the thought to act and physical movement. It is the way we will begin connecting and uniting the entire body together to create intent-fueled movement.

The Body Must be Re-wired.

The focus of Internal Power training is on changing the body. We utilize specific exercises to connect, strengthen, and condition the tissues to remove slack from the body. This process strengthens the body in a new way that is vastly different from conventional training. It changes the way outside force acts on the body creating an unusual power within martial arts training.

However, this is a slow and time-consuming process since we are working more with tendon and fascia rather than just muscle tissue. Overtime, with correct application of training, the body will change.

It is a process, just like following a recipe – follow the steps precisely and get the results!

Zhan Zhuang

Zhan zhuang, or standing meditation exercise, has been used as a method of relaxation and health cultivation for thousands of years. The earliest known reference to standing appears in *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Chinese Medicine*.

Martial arts master Wang Xiangzhai wrote the following in his book on zhan zhuang:

"It is said that already 2000 years ago there existed the book Internal Canon, the gem of Chinese medicine, which even today is a guide for medical practice. The chapter Simple questions concentrates on cultivating health. For example we can read there: "In ancient times great masters stood on earth, supporting heaven, controlling yin and yang, breathing with essence of qi, standing alone, guarding spirit, with body being as one." Before the eastern Han dynasty many scholars and warriors knew the methods of "tranquil cultivating." The exercises could be done walking, standing, sitting, lying. It was popular form of cultivating health. Later, during reign of Liang dynasty's emperor Wu, Damo came to China to teach. He transmitted methods of "washing marrow" and "changing tendons."



The health preserving and sustaining effects of zhan zhuang have been documented in hospitals and medical clinics across China. The reason this practice has such a profound impact on health and recovery from exercise is that the standing meditation acts like a system-wide reboot for the whole body. It stimulates the nervous system, increases circulation, and raises energy levels, while providing deep relaxation for both mind and body.

Aches, pains, old injuries, muscular tensions, and imbalances are highlighted and brought to the forefront by this method and then slowly dissolved over time and completely released. The practice provides a way of completely relaxing and letting go of the muscular tensions in the body, while the correct alignment of the bones delivers support, creating a profound neutral and relaxed, almost buoyant state. As the whole body and mind are exercised, both relax and stimulate the nervous system, increase circulation, open the joints, and raise energy level for a feeling of overall well-being.

This exercise looks easy from the outside. After all, you're just standing there and not moving. However, inside, there is a lot going on – the breath and the qi (energy) are moving. This exercise is a challenging, sometimes frustrating, yet highly beneficial and rewarding practice. The only way to truly appreciate it is to experience it for yourself.

How Do We Stand?

In practical terms, how should we stand? Let's start with the head and work our way down.

- Begin by standing in a natural stance. Feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent.
- Lift upward slightly with the crown of the head, as if being pulled up by a string, allowing the chin to lower. This straightens the vertebrae at the back of the neck.
- Shoulders are back and down sitting on the spine.
- The back should be flat. Do not tuck the pelvis. The spine should be suspended from above like a skeleton hanging in a science classroom.
- Hold the arms in front of the body, level with the solar plexus, as if hugging a tree. There should be a golf-ball sized space under the armpits.
- The bottom of the spine pulls straight down from the tailbone, as if there is a weight attached to the sacrum. You should feel like you are sitting on a high stool yet trying to stand up at the same time.
- Allow the knees to bend slightly. Feet should be shoulder width apart and pointed straight forward as if on railroad tracks.

- Legs should feel like they are squeezing a beach ball. Remember, though, the ball puts outward pressure on the legs as they squeeze in, so there is pressure both directions, not just one.
- The weight is carried in the hollow behind the balls of the feet. In Chinese medicine, this is known as the *yongquan* or bubbling well point.

All of the above points must be maintained to have a truly “natural” standing posture.

Maintaining a relaxed posture is key to beginning your standing meditation.



Supercharge Your Standing Practice

Now that you have the external mechanics down, **let’s talk about how to supercharge your relaxation process.**

1. Mentally scan the body for areas of tension. The usual suspects will be the neck, shoulders, low back, and quads.
2. Begin to actively release each area of tension one by one with your mind. For example, think of the tightness in your shoulders and relax it by telling yourself, "The tightness in my shoulders is letting go and relaxing." Then proceed to the next area until you have systematically gone through them all.
3. If one particular area is giving you trouble, then work on breathing into it. Inhale into the area, hold for a few seconds, and then exhale from the area to release it. Use this process over and over again until all the tension has let go.
4. Once you have removed all the residual tension in the body, continue to stand holding that relaxed feeling. Think of your body as a drop of ink dissolving in the ocean, spreading out in all directions.
5. Start with ten minutes of zhan zhuang standing. Work up to thirty minutes. In Chinese medicine, it is said that it takes approximately 28 minutes for the blood to complete one full cycle through the body, thus the recommendation to stand for thirty minutes. This can be increased to sixty minutes over time to allow for two full cycles of blood to be completed.

How to Practice Shadow Strength

OK. There's a ton of information and years of training within Shadow Strength. What's the best way to make use of all these exercises and put it all together?

First things first. Watch all the videos in order as each one builds on the previous set of exercises. Begin working your way through Module 1 then Module 2, and finally Module 3.

Breathing is essential and will be an incredible power add-on for everything you do.

Martial Mobility will enhance your practice and injury proof your tendons, ligaments, and joints.

Primal Postures will tie it all together and take your tendon strength and structure to the next level.

Second – practice all the exercises as shown. Take the time to work your way through each video and make sure you understand what each exercise is teaching you and how it is changing your body.

Third – Train every day. How long is up to you.

Why? Because we all have different schedules and demands on our time from many different directions.

My advice? Carve out 30-60 minutes per day where you can train in uninterrupted blocks. This is the best way to progress.

Second best option? Train in small, 5-15-minute increments throughout the day. No matter how busy you think you are, all of us are able to spare 5 minutes several times a day to train.

Make your training a priority and make it happen. No one ever said being masterful was easy!

What is Shugyo?

Shugyo (修行) may be defined as “conducting oneself in a way that inspires mastery”. These periods of severe training were usually undertaken by warriors to achieve a type of enlightening experience which opened their minds by destroying their concept of previously perceived limits.

In addition to the typical training period where one removed oneself from society to train in the mountains for a period of days or weeks, there is another form of Shugyo that is much more accessible for us living in the modern world - Daily Shugyo.

Daily Shugyo is where one acts in a way that inspires mastery on a smaller scale, but on a consistent basis. Daily Shugyo requires that you set up your life so that training is your default method. Most people have a default setting of sitting on the couch and watching TV when nothing else takes precedence.

The warrior is different! Our default setting is to train!



“Intermittent training, no matter how intensive, is utterly useless. You must practice every day for your entire life. That, and only that, is true training, or shugyo.” - Yuki Yoshi Sagawa, Daito Ryu

Daily Shugyo Training

I do not want to overly complicate this section. Practice is they key!

Throughout history a few exceptional martial artists have stood out from the rest of the budo landscape.

Millions of people from every country and culture on the planet have trained in innumerable styles and arts across the centuries, yet we only know a small number of them by name.

These men distinguished themselves and rose to the very uppermost levels of physical, mental, and spiritual skill in their respective arts and in some cases even took their talent to such heights as to create an entirely new martial art.

Looking back at them today, we are awed and inspired by the levels they achieved through their single-minded determination in reaching a goal, dogged pursuit of excellence in their craft, and amazing amount of self-sacrifice.

Why are They Different?

What made these men different?

What pushed them to greatness?

What did they do differently or more productively that propelled them to prominence?

Why were their names and storied passed down through the years, sometimes centuries?

What one factor do all great martial artists have in common regardless of style, country, or culture?

And, more importantly, how can we learn from them and apply it to our own training?

Remember, we stand on the shoulders of giants, not to imitate them, but to be able to look farther.

The difference common among all of them? SHUGYO!

The way lies in the training, my friends!

Daily Shugyo Training Examples

Daily Shugyo Training 60 Minutes

1. Breath Awareness Drills – 5 minutes
2. Power Breathing – 5 minutes
3. Zhan Zhuang Standing Practice – 20 minutes
4. Fascia Mobility – 20 minutes
5. Breathing Push-ups and Squats – 10 minutes

Daily Shugyo Training 60 Minutes

1. 4 Gates Breathing – 5 minutes
2. Holding the Tiger and Dragon Standing Practice – 20 minutes
3. Fascia Mobility – 20 minutes
4. Breathing Push-ups and Squats – 10 minutes
5. Stick Mobility Drills – 5 minutes

Daily Shugyo Training 30 Minutes

1. Breath Awareness Drills – 5 minutes
2. Power Breathing – 5 minutes
3. Fascia Mobility – 10 minutes
4. Breathing Push-ups and Squats – 10 minutes

Daily Shugyo Training 30 Minutes

1. Breath Awareness Drills – 5 minutes
2. Power Breathing – 5 minutes
3. Zhan Zhuang Standing Practice – 10 minutes
4. Fascia Mobility – 10 minutes

Daily Shugyo Training 20 Minutes

1. Power Breathing – 5 minutes
2. Zhan Zhuang Standing Practice – 5 minutes
3. Fascia Mobility – 5 minutes
4. Breathing Push-ups and Squats – 5minutes

Daily Shugyo Training 25 Minutes

1. Power Breathing – 5 minutes
2. Fascia Mobility – 10 minutes
3. Breathing Push-ups and Squats – 10 minutes

Daily Shugyo Training 15 Minutes

1. Breath Awareness Drills – 5 minutes
2. Fascia Mobility – 5 minutes
3. Breathing Push-ups and Squats – 5 minutes

These are just a few examples of how to put together your daily training from the Shadow Strength Program.

But these are only examples...

You must make the training your own!

Additional Recommended Resources

Sledgehammer Domination

Sledgehammer Domination is the ultimate low-tech, high yield training program for forging elite functional fitness.

Vital Force: The Yin of Strength

Vital Force: The Yin of Strength is an easy-to-learn health maintenance program combining dynamic mobility with age-old Qigong energy work, and breathing exercises.

It is specifically designed to increase your body's vital energy, open up the joints, enhance recovery from exercise, and reduce stress. This program can be used by anyone regardless of age, health, or physical ability.

WarFit Combat Conditioning Program

An 8-Week Combat Conditioning Program That Will Forge A Warrior's Whole-Body Strength, Endurance, and Toughness

The Strong(er) Over 40 Program

The exact fitness, nutritional, hormonal, and mindset blueprint that you need in order to get stronger, build more muscle, have more energy, and increase flexibility and mobility after the age of 40.

Integrated Strength Program (Video and Manual)

Ever wonder if you could have it all in your training? Integrated Strength combines the best of Unconventional Strength training exercises with Internal Power Building training for a unique and comprehensive way of building whole body strength.

Minimalist Bodyweight Warrior Program

Finally, a stripped down 30-day program with nothing but the bare essentials to get you rapid results. Since this is minimalist, these workouts will take you just 30 minutes or less. All you need is your own bodyweight.

Ninja Mission Program 1 (Video and Manual)

You will train like the ninja of feudal Japan preparing body, mind, and spirit through rigorous physical training and martial practice.

Martial Power Program (e-book and video)

The Martial Power Program is for those traditional martial artists committed to taking their body, mind, and spirit to the next level! This program is for people who are serious about learning how to functionally integrate high level fitness training into their martial arts practice!

Evolve Your Breathing (e-book and video)

Essential Techniques for Optimal Performance! Learn unique and powerful breathing exercises drawn from martial arts, qigong, and yoga that will teach you how to Adapt AND Perform Under Stress!

Dad Strength Program (e-book)

A full 10 week program to go from Dad to Super Dad! A Three-Phased approach to Recover and Sustain Strength. Awesome for men in their 40's, 50's, 60's, and beyond!

Combination

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