

While many athletes generally focus on developing their physical bodies to improve their performance, it can be argued that energetic and mental development are more important aspects of improving ability. For an athlete or a team that's looking to reach a higher level, Shaolin Cosmos Chi Kung is one of the best practices they can incorporate into their daily routine. This is because Cosmos Chi Kung greatly enhances the functioning of the entire mind-body system by boosting overall energy levels and strengthening the mind, bringing them to a level of optimum performance. When Cosmos Chi Kung is practiced correctly, it can help an athlete reach a new dimension in their performance.

As a starting point, Cosmos Chi Kung serves to flush away all the energetic blockages that are stifling a person's body. During a person's lifetime, since most people generally don't do much to keep their energy system clear, they accumulate energy blockages and imbalances. For an athlete, all these energetic weaknesses take a toll on their performance. For example, if a basketball player has an energy blockage that is inhibiting energy flow to their legs, they won't be able to run or jump with the same ability they would if that blockage were not there. If they practice a genuine energy art, like Cosmos Chi Kung, they can clear that blockage, which will improve their running and jumping, and in turn their overall performance.

If an athlete practices Cosmos Chi Kung correctly and consistently, it will not only clear away old blockages, but will also increase the overall amount of energy they have. By increasing the amount of energy in their whole system, they will experience some major changes: an increase in stamina, overall improved performance, they will be out of breath less, they can enjoy their sport for longer with less effort, their muscles won't get tired as quickly and their body simply feels better. Indeed, testimonials from people who play sports and start practicing chi kung commonly state that they feel an increase in their stamina and performance after starting chi kung while making no other changes.

Just the energetic impact of chi kung on athletic performance is remarkable, but the mental benefits are equally as fantastic. In fact, one of my personal favorite benefits of practicing chi kung is how effective it is at reducing mental noise and making the mind sharper. For an athlete who relies on making split second decisions that can make or break their performance, this is a truly invaluable benefit. The result is possible because of two primary reasons.

First, in every session of chi kung, the practitioner spends some time allowing chi to flow freely throughout their system, flushing away blockages. This process happens at the physical, energetic and mental levels. Since thoughts are simply a form of energy, the energy flow will clean out stagnant mental energy, allowing the mind to be clearer and stronger. Second, in every session of chi kung, the practitioner spends time in standing meditation. This part of the practice is dedicated on simply being still with the mind empty of thoughts, producing mental clarity. We call this "developing the Zen mind." This means the practitioner is not only practicing being comfortable with not thinking, but comes to find it immensely enjoyable. It is a simple process, but is not something many people make time for.

A common reaction to the proposition of taking time not to think might be, "Why would I want to practice not thinking? I need to think quickly in sports!" To shed light on this we should differentiate between the inability to think and the ability to enjoy having a clear mind, which means being free from unwanted thoughts. The inability to think means that, for whatever reason, a person is unable to think clearly and focus on the thoughts that are important to them. Being free from unwanted thoughts doesn't mean the person can't think, but that the mind is free from unwanted thoughts, leaving plenty of room for desirable thoughts to be focused on.

In a sports setting, an extreme example of being unable to think would be a person so overwhelmed with performance anxiety that they find it difficult to perform. For a skier at the

Winter Olympics, this could mean getting caught up in mental noise that distracts them from their race. They may find it difficult to make an important decision in real time, such as whether or not it's the correct moment to pass another skier. With a lack of mental clarity, their decision making might sound something like "Now is the right time. No, maybe not. Wait, it could be. Yes, I think it's the right time. But what if it's not?" etc. But, if instead of being overwhelmed with thoughts, that same skier has developed mental clarity, they will feel mentally relaxed and their fresh. During their race their decision making will be clear and smooth. The same split second decision about passing another skier will simply be "I must pass them now," and then the action will follow. Again, such a skill is absolutely invaluable for the serious athlete.

Apart from developing mental clarity, chi kung will strengthen the resolve and mental toughness of an athlete. Being mentally tough and resilient is often considered a trait of the most elite athletes. Those athletes might not even have an ideal physical form, but their mental strength allows them to transcend whatever physical setbacks they may have. To start this process and as mentioned before, chi kung flushes away rubbish thought patterns that might hinder an athlete's attitude. Unwanted thoughts like "I can't do this," "I'm too tired," "This is too difficult" will naturally get rooted out. This process of cleansing mental rubbish will in turn lead to the mind becoming stronger and more resilient to setbacks. For example, before starting chi kung a football player might lose a game and feel a large dip in their confidence. After practicing chi kung this would change to an attitude of "that's okay, I can learn from this and get better." This important difference in attitude is what can separate athletes who reach their goals from athletes that don't.

If you're an athlete that is serious about taking your performance to a higher level while also becoming healthier, practicing Shaolin Cosmos Chi Kung is a truly excellent way to make that happen. While the benefits mentioned here were explained in terms of improved athletic performance, they of course carry over to all aspects of life. All that is required is 15 minutes of chi kung a day to start moving towards the next level of your athletic achievement.