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## Qigong Massage for Your Child with Autism

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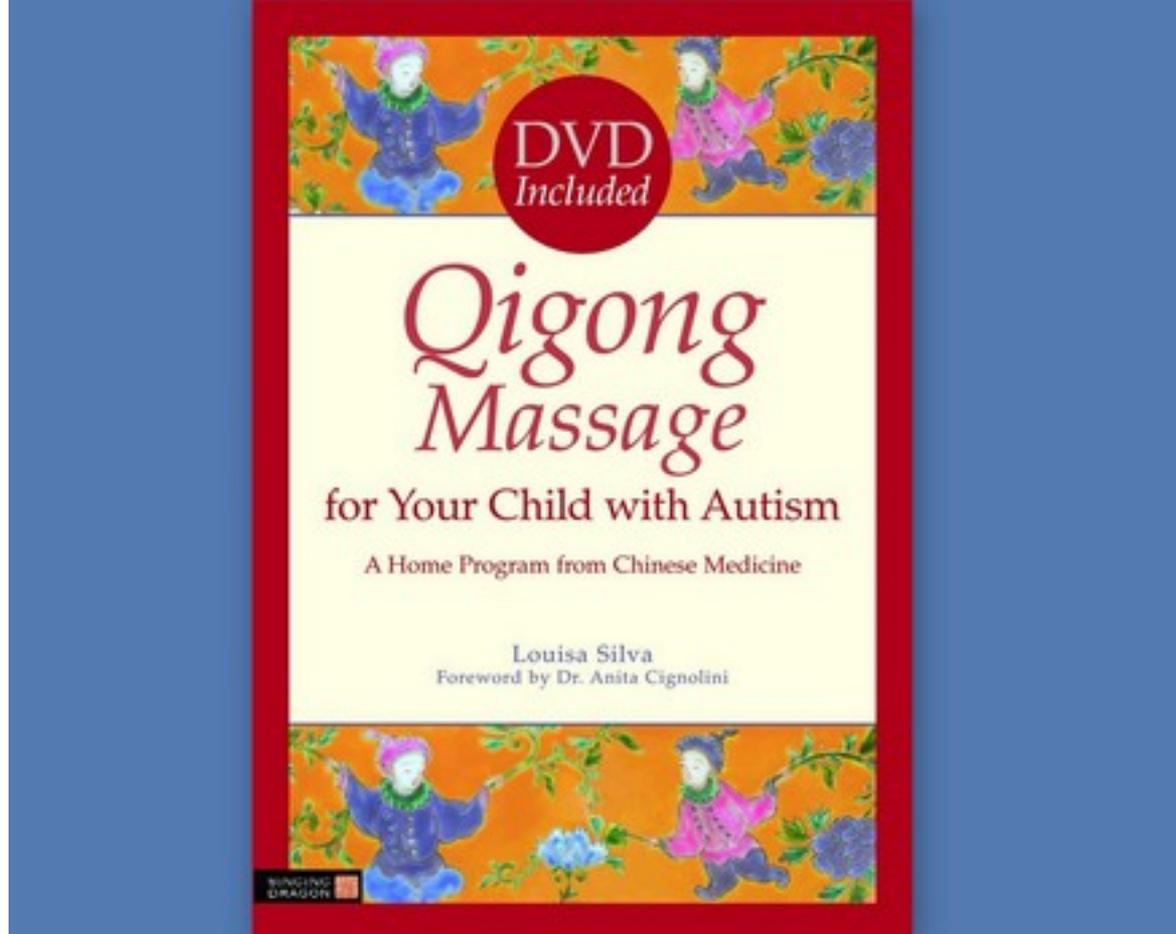
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With a 15-minute massage for five months, many young children with [autism](#) have significantly improved their symptoms, able to better behave, sleep and learn. If you have an autistic child, Dr. Louisa Silva's [Qigong Massage for Your Child with Autism](#) probably is the best gift that you can give to both him and yourself.



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Dr. Silva works on a patient  
*The Qigong Sensory Training Institute*



*The Qigong Sensory Training Institute*

Autism is a disorder of neural development. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), most recent data show that between one in 80 and one in 240 children with an average of one in 110 has an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In a May 9th report, it is revealed that one in 38 kids (ages 7 -12) has autism in South Korea. There is no confirmed cause for this disease. According to Dr. Silva, autism is a disease of the sensory nerve system and self-regulatory disturbances.

Based on Chinese doctrine, human Chinese medicine, human beings are made with matter and energy. There are three energy sources that generate growth: head (upper Dan Tian) for mental growth, chest (middle Dan Tian) for social and emotional growth, and belly (lower Dan Tian) for physical growth. The life energy, or Qi, flows out the top of the head, down outside of the body to the feet, and then travels upwards inside the body to renew three energy sources.

For autistic kids, energy and blood circulation are blocked at the surface of the body so that the skin and senses don't feel normally, and the deep energy sources cannot be nourished by the outside world. This causes the delay in cognitive development, socialization skills, and physical growth. Often the child's sense of taste is off, and they have little appetite, and eat only a few foods. This means that they are not getting the nutrients they need for proper growth.

Sometimes even gentle touch can cause pain. When circulation gets really bad, there is no pain at all. When a child does not feel pain, he seldom has empathy for others; he can hurt himself without realizing it, like banging his head. When ears are oversensitive to touch, a child often ignores his ears and doesn't listen well, so the kid cannot follow adults, teachers, and others. When there is blockage of energy and circulation in the chest, a child's fingers may not get enough circulation, and gentle touch

may hurt his fingers. If there is pressure in the chest, he may refuse to be hugged. When there is blockage in the belly, a child can have constipation or diarrhea. There will be less circulation to his toes, and cutting toenails may hurt. When there is a blockage in the head, it is hard for the child to settle down when he gets upset. It can take him a long time to calm down.

After graduating from the medical school of University of California Los Angeles, Dr. Silva worked as a family physician practicing Western medicine. Later, she earned a master degree in Public Health from the [Medical College of Wisconsin](#) and got board certification as a fellow in [the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture](#). She has since integrated her practice with Chinese Medicine to provide a more comprehensive solution to her patients. She started to realize the devastating effects that autism has on children, parents, and families when a son of her close friend was diagnosed with autism in 2000. She studied a physician-delivered treatment that was developed by Professor Dr. Anita Cignolini and designed a training program for early intervention. She also conducted a scientific study with Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT), and for eight years worked with more than 300 autistic young children and proved that [Qigong](#) massage has amazing effects. The result was published at [American Journal of Occupational Therapy](#) and [the American Journal of Chinese Medicine](#).

Qigong massage can remove the blockage and restore the normal feeling especially for young children, i.e. patting gently on the head will calm him down. Using [Qigong Sensory Training \(QST\) Program](#), some children see results in a month. Normally it takes five months to see significant results. Children with a severe autistic disorder have seen their symptoms abating to a moderate level; moderate patients become mild. The QST program requires parents or caregivers to give a child a 15-minute Qigong Massage on a daily basis. Twice a day is preferred by some children but not necessary.

In her book, Dr. Silva uses plain English to explain why and how the QST program works. There are 12 movements in the massage routine. Dr. Silva gives very clear instruction with illustrations for each one. Each child is different, so is his condition. She provides troubleshooting guidance and a checklist. She offers extra techniques for transitioning. She lays out the details of the healing process, so parents can have proper expectation. The best part of this book is that it also comes with a DVD. Dr. Silva understands it is extremely exhausting for families with an autistic child. She recommends that families get together and learn the QST together so they can support each other and exchange their experience.

Dr. Silva established [the Qigong Sensory Training Institute \(QSTI\)](#) to further help parents. To make the QST program more effective, Dr. Silva provides [a professional training program](#) to train QST therapists/trainers. So far, there are 60 certified trainers in the state of Oregon. Dr. Silva confirms that QSTI will offer professional training to other cities. Dr. Silva finds that it is helpful if children understand how QST works. On [QSTI's home page](#), a lovely booklet with colorful illustrations in eight different languages (English, German, French, Chinese, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Lithuanian) is ready for download so parents can read it to their child.

There is a question whether QST is effective for children above age 6. Dr. Silva says although they have seen improvements in older children after the Qigong Massage treatment, no formal research has yet been conducted, so she is not able to specify the exact benefits at this point.

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**Violet Li**

Tai Chi Examiner