

Qigong and Equine-imity

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Horses are large animals. They run with strength and grace and are calm and elegant when still. Equine-imity means gaining mental calmness with the presence of a horse. [Qigong](#) is an ancient Chinese healing art that has proven health benefits. Practicing Qigong with the presence of a horse can feel surreal and it can be dreamlike if you are actually practicing Qigong on a horse. Thanks to a special health improvement program at Stanford University, you can now have this experience



Beverly Kane

Dr. Beverly Kane is Assistant Professor of Medicine at Stanford Medical School. As a senior Tai Chi/Qigong practitioner, she is also the instructor for Stanford Medical Tai Chi. She funded [Horsensei Equine-Assisted Learning & Therapy](#) in 2003 to provide science-based learning and therapy with the assistance of horses. According to Dr. Kane, Equine-imity or Somatic Horsemanship is the practice of exploring the physical relationship between humans and horses both on the ground or with [Share Image](#) on a horse in order to promote physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health in both species. She further explained that Somatics is a [mind-body](#) conditioning and healing practice through re-patterning

neuromuscular connections. Somatic horsemanship combines the principles of safe, traditional horse handling with techniques from Tai Chi, Qigong, yoga, dance, mindfulness training, and other somatic, martial, meditative, and healing arts. It includes practices from equine-assisted psychotherapy, natural horsemanship, exercise physiology, and sports medicine.

At the Stanford's Equine-imity program, it begins with the quiet time with a single horse or the herd. The Equine-imity program offers four phases of training depending on the individual needs.

- Phase One – Observe, Relax, Meet and Greet. Appreciating the beauty of the pasture. Getting comfortable with the herd. Sensing the different levels of energy from each horse and from the herd as a whole. Sensing how they affect people. There are two specially designed games they play to connect people with the horses.
- Phase Two – The **Dan Tian** Walk. Dan Tian is where we store the life energy or Qi. Professor Beverly said that like human beings, horses have Dan Tians as well. They will teach students how to lead a horse with body language awareness and how to blend human energy with the horses'.
- Phase Three – Grooming and Massage **Meditation**. One horse is taken out of pasture and tied in a corral to be massaged by a student.
- Phase Four – Somatic Bareback Riding Meditation. Students will ride to music in an arena.

All phases include the practice of Qigong breathing, centering, and grounding exercises as a prelude to being with the horse(s). Professor Kane mentioned that Horses are quite sensitive to Qi (or live energy) and even though they were used to her practicing her forms among them and some days they acted more interested than others (see the attached photo).

Ba Duan Jin or Eight Sections of Brocade is an ancient Chinese Qigong form and most practiced nowadays around the world for health purposes. During Equine-imity, students will learn all eight movements while on the ground. In Phase Four learning, students will do the five movements “Two Hands Holding up the Heaven”, “Drawing the Bow to shoot the Vulture Alternately”, “ Separate Heaven and Earth Alternately”, “Wise Owl Gazes Backwards Alternately”, and “ Clench the Fists and Glare Fiercely” on the horse. She nicknamed this practice as Wu (or Five) Duan Jin. The attached video clip shows Shaolin Monk Heng Yuan practiced Qigong on a horse.

Currently, Equine-imity is offered at Webb Ranch in **Portola Valley** near Stanford University in California. However, Professor Kane stated that they would consider traveling to your city if local horses are

accessible. For more information, you can visit its website via a [link](#) here.

SUGGESTED LINKS

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Violet Li

Tai Chi Examiner