

My personal experience with Zen-Stretching® .

I met the **Zen-Stretching®** a few years ago when, collaborating with the Body Mind Center Association of Brescia, I had the opportunity to meet Silvia Marchesa Rossi.

Silvia, during a demonstrative lesson that lasted a few hours, had the opportunity to introduce us in a fluid and engaging way in the world of ZS. I found it immediately interesting because it met some of my interests and embraced specific passions.

I was already familiar with the Makko-Ho exercises, since I was also involved in Shiatsu and acupuncture, but in this case I understood that the method allowed me to expand considerably what I had already found interesting and effective.

The ZS could become a useful tool to integrate with my Shiatsu practice and above all it met my desire to spread the culture of **how much we can individually support our well-being, by learning to take care of ourselves with a simple and effective practice based on listening and self-knowledge through movement.**

More time passed before my journey with the ZS could begin.

There were various obstacles to overcome in order to complete my training, but from the very first approach through the basic course I felt that I would go all the way...

I must admit that a greater commitment in my practice came only last year when, as a result of important changes in my working and personal life, the state of malaise, especially physical and energetic, in which I was immersed, became very clear.

I had pulled the rope for too long and now my exhausted body was clearly showing all of this. Therefore I had to roll up my sleeves and start taking care of myself.

Alongside homeopathic medical treatment, consultation with various specialists and the treatments I received, I started to practice ZS more intensively.

The practice of the **basic sequence** was certainly the one that I performed more regularly, however, from time to time, I also went deeper into the exploration of the other exercises.

Through a tutorial with Silvia I started, on her advice, to practice a little bit all the exercises without focusing specifically on tonification and sedation, in order to give more global stimuli to my body that showed symptoms in all the elements. More than anything else the feeling was, and still is, of a general state of emptiness that is hard to be filled.

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Conclusion:

The practice of Zen-Stretching® has allowed me and still allows me to deepen my knowledge of myself.

It has helped me to bring more attention to my elements in an empty condition (Metal and Supplemental Fire) in particular to the Metal element and to the message implied in this condition: the need, first of all, to "take my breath" with respect to rhythms that had become unattainable for me (nb. the Metal element and the relationship with rhythms... the breathing rhythm, inhalation-expiration, air enters and air leaves) and then to the need for a broader and more complete breathing. I found interesting Silvia's suggestion to pay attention to the relationship between my breathing and my emotional states, and also to observe other people's way of breathing. I experience the latter as an indirect way, through the others, of observing myself.

An equally interesting and important experience was attending the Third Level which, through the creative phase of the representation of the various elements, gave me a lot of joy and reconnected me with my need to express myself and to do so with a playful way.

Perhaps that lonely and a little too serious child needs to play a little bit more and to do it along with other friendly people.

THE COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

**Zen-Stretching® lessons proposed in an "alternative" way:
how the quarantine period due to Covid-19 opened me up to new ideas.**

... and then the infamous Covid-19 arrived (while I'm writing we are in the middle of the health emergency) and with that the need to think of an effective way to continue practicing with the small and persistent group of Zen-Stretching® followers.

Following a previous experience, a few weeks ago I decided to offer to my group some classes via Skype connection: this solution would have allowed them to continue the training provided by the weekly lessons while also maintaining, among other things, the precious moment of socialization that the group classes allow.

The initiative was welcomed in spite of some difficulties deriving from someone's inability to juggle with technological tools or from someone else's inevitable difficulties in connecting.

But we're getting started and it's paying off. The mood of the students is high, the practice meeting represents a moment of positivity that eases the concern and tension experienced in these days. Moreover, it allows to engage various family members, making them feel more involved in their loved one's activities.

And from what comes what...

I am thinking about how to spread this positive experience to more people and consequently I accept the offer of the Holistic Centre La Crisalide to give classes in streaming [at the following link you can find the history of the classes].

(https://www.facebook.com/events/734722707059511/?active_tab=discussion) in order to:

- give comfort to people forced into the home,
- maintain interest in the activities of the centre,
- help raise funds for hospitals that need machinery to cope with the health emergency.

I talk to Silvia so that she can give me her opinion on this project that, even if it was born from the intention to bring 'psycho-physical comfort' in such a particular moment, can certainly represent a promotional tool for the ZS. Silvia agrees and we're off!

Summary of some of the classes in live streaming

LESSON 1 AND 2: An introduction to Zen-Stretching®.

- Introduction of Zen-Stretching® and explanation of how to perform the exercises: respect for the body, stretching in the exhalation phase, focusing the breath in the lower Tiantien area, holding positions, listening in a relaxed position.
- Joint heating
- Explanation and performance of the two opening exercises (CV and GV)
- Explanation and performance of the base/monitoring sequence.

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LESSON 5: Diversified stimuli on basic sequence

- Joint heating
- Opening exercises 3 times plus complementary exercises for CV and GV with chair variant for CV and wall variant for GV
- Basic sequence by marking the degree of difficulty (scale 1 to 10)
- Introducing the concept of empty and full
- Repeating the basic sequence but in tonifying or dispersing mode for each position (to help them become familiar with this modality)
- Repeating the monitoring sequence to check for changes