

INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

A.T.Dale, P.O. Box 77040, Seattle WA 98133, (206)283-0055

PROPER ENDING

Just as we have a preparation to the various forms and practices, the proper ending or 'cool down' is equally important. After practicing one of the quicker forms, or partner sets, don't just stop. Cool down, walk around slowly so you don't stress or shock your system. You should flow easily into and out of practice. After a quick form or concentrated practice, your blood and energy is focused

outward into the arms and legs. Slow down the pace to aid the transition of the blood and energy to return to the tan-tien and torso.

Though this is obvious with the quicker forms (your start breathing harder), it's equally important with the slower forms. Even though you may not be breathing hard or be exhausted, you need to let your system adjust to normal actions.

Don't just stop and then rush off or move quickly. Let the relaxation and tranquil feeling linger without movement, let everything settle then move around at an easy pace. Let everything return to 'normal'. The beginning preparation is to transition your mind 'into' the practice and the ending is to transition your body 'out' of practice.

MISOGI BREATHING EXERCISE

Part of the soothing and peaceful feelings we get from our practice and workout is due to focusing our mind and body completely on our forms and practice. The physical movements relax our body along with the fluid movements. They give us a centered, calmness. Above all else, this is the primary reason for practicing. If you don't enjoy practice, or if you don't come away with a sense of relaxation and comfortable then something isn't correct.

One of the easy exercises we can practice almost anywhere is the Misogi Breathing method from Aikido. Misogi is a Japanese term for cleansing and purifying exercises. This exercise is also used in many chi kung methods. Whereas in the Chinese arts this method is used for healing, in the Japanese arts it's used to empty the mind and prepare it for practice. This breathing method is done prior to most Japanese martial arts classes. This one is difficult to do correctly in a group session since everyone's lung capacity is different. I remember almost passing out trying to keep up with one of my teachers lung capacity.

INHALE - (mouth closed)

Visualize the air coming in through the nose, moving through your mind and out the back of your head. Think of it sweeping through your mind and cleaning out all tensions and thoughts. At the end of the exhalation imagine the air sinking down your back and gathering at the tan tien. Think of the air as water gathering around your tan tien.

EXHALE - (through the mouth)

Visualize your breath moving up from the tan tien out our mouth as far into the distance as you can imagine. We're talking about your breath sweeping across the county or into space. As you do this think of all the body tension and toxins flowing out with your breath.

START OVER

It's important that the breathing is smooth and even. To make it easier you may try to do each to a count of 4 (4 in - 4 out). Gradually increase the count as it becomes more comfortable. For some people it helps to think of the breath as a while flowing stream.

Try this for 3-5 minutes or 10 breathes. You should notice a change. If you practice this daily the relaxation and tranquil feelings increase dramatically. I find the best times are just after walking up or before going to sleep. Do not do this just after a meal. I also find it great to practice it (half heartedly) on my drive to and from Seattle.