

INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

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PA KUA HU KOU

Aside from the basic walking and stepping patterns of Pa Kua Chang, the emphasis on the Hu Kou is another of its specialties. This extension of the thumb and index finger is to aid in focusing the chi to the palms and fingers. It draws the energy to them as you practice.

This month I'd like you to make a special effort to emphasize the hu kou. Not only is this important in the palm positions but in all applications. This hand position lets us hook and re-direct arms and hands efficiently. It

creates opportunities for techniques and strengthens the fingers for nerve techniques.

ANCESTOR LU (Taoist classic)

Before situations have been experienced, before matters arise, you should make your mind clear and calm. Clarity and calm are roots of the Way, but it can happen that you may for no reason get caught up in all sorts of before-the-fact considerations, assailed by hundred thoughts; then when you go through situations, dealing with

people and events, they turn out differently than you thought, and so you try to make your thoughts fit them.

This depletes the vitality, wearies the spirit, and exhausts the energy. It is better not to be conscious of the future, letting it be as it may. Therefore students who do not get rid of this consciousness can hardly learn the way. The way to get rid of this consciousness is to forget objects, dismiss concerns, and clear the mind so that it is like space.

SILENT LEARNING

Aikido master Koichi Tohei always emphasized that 75% of what we actually learn as we study the arts comes silently. 25% is the formal instruction we get in class from our teachers. Most of our skill and knowledge (body wisdom) comes from our exposure to our teachers, fellow students, masters and our inner wisdom (if we're open to it).

Everything has a certain degree of contagiousness. If a depressed or negative person enters a room, the energy of the room begins to reflect this. The atmosphere changes as this person's energy poisons the rest. Vocabulary is the same. If you're around a group that uses certain slang phrases or swear words often you'll gradually pick them up. The same is true of a positive person. As they enter the room things seem to brighten up. When Tohei sensei taught or was at an event, all of a sudden everyone was joyous. His energy was so strong and positive he would radiate harmony.

Learning is the same but much more subtle and slow. There are lessons you pick up, beyond your trying to learn, in each class session, actually this goes on all the time. Though consciously things get very frustrating at times, and it may feel like nothing is going right, or being integrated into your body movements, this is only superficial. As we share learning techniques, thoughts and practice, our higher mind, our body wisdom is absorbing all that's happening. It takes this type of learning quite a bit of time to grow and mature. Perhaps you're not ready to 'see' or make use of this knowledge yet. Perhaps your body isn't trained or strong enough yet. Whatever the reason, it takes time. Somewhere down the road you'll move and do things very spontaneously, naturally, things seem to make sense (all of a sudden).

As you relax and calm yourself, this type of silent learning increases. Tension, apprehension, anger, anxiety blocks this type of learning. They also block our health

and happiness. Another level of this is the way we effect others, or how they effect us. If we're centered or working on centering, trying to relax and focus toward being healthy we have an effect on those we come into contact with. For some this may be just a small effect, others it may be very significant. On some level we do have an effect, so keep this in mind when you're around others. Do you ever come away feeling down or negative? Do you feel uplifted or centered? As our awareness grows these are important factors to keep in mind and to understand in order to keep ourselves healthy.

The nei jia are based upon inner cultivation. Becoming stronger, healthier and centered. We have the power to make decisions on how to proceed in our activities and lives. As we advance in the nei jia we'll find ourselves making healthier decisions. It's not necessarily a conscious decision, it sprouts like a seed planted, we don't necessarily see it grow day to day, month to month. Though we don't see it growing at first, below the ground the roots are emerging. We may want to practice a half hour each day but we may not find the time.

Instead of being angry or beating ourselves up, just let it go, perhaps next time. Keep your intent on this wish and someday the time may just become available. We will find the time and the practice will take more priority.

MIND LIKE A MIRROR

It seems strange to say: FORGET WHAT YOU KNOW but this is what you want to do before you begin anything: the form, the class, practice or training. Don't expect this practice to be as wonderful or the same as the last practice. approach each session with an open, calm mind. Your past practices and lessons have given you a certain body wisdom so turn your head off!

To quote a few other sages:

'The usefulness of a cup is in its emptiness'

'In a beginners mind there are many possibilities, in an experts there are few'.

'In emptiness anything is possible'.

There are four lessons in the Wisdom of the Great Round Mirror:

1. It reflects things as they are.
2. It doesn't discriminate in reflecting things.
3. It doesn't make judgments about the reflections
4. It doesn't cling to images once they're gone.

In the various classics you'll see references to the five thieves: the five senses. A great book to read if you want more information is VITALITY, ENERGY, SPIRIT: A Taoist Source book.

Shr-fu's guidelines for correct practice are:

- ☯ Gaze but don't look
- ☯ Don't let fragrances distract you
- ☯ Listen internally
- ☯ Mouth closed and empty
- ☯ Feel internally

FANTASTIC!

In the years I've been teaching, whenever I've done the Zhan Zhuang in classes regularly it has reduced enrollment. One of the primary reasons people start Tai Chi is because they associate it with no work, no sweat type of exercise. I usually leave the Zhan Zhuang for your own practice if you're interested in advancing. The club has moved from a training situation, where I force you to workout, into a teaching and sharing class situation. I give you the information and basics for your own research.

members do tend to practice the chi kung and solo forms on their own but very few practice the Zhan Zhuang. I've heard from five members recently who have bought the Zhan Zhuang book and are now inspired to practice regularly and finding a big difference in their practices.

The book is inspiring as well as informative. It's nice for me to hear the results of your practice. It's amazing that something so simple can be so powerful. When studying with shr fu i would practice the postures for 1/2 hr while watching the news. My reason for practicing was different however, I hoped to be able to last through the class session without dying or being sore the next day. Master Tchoung would have us hold them up to 45 minutes.

For those of you sincerely interested in expanding your skills and chi the Zhan Zhuang are one of our most important methods for chi kung.