

# INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

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## OUR SECOND VISIT WITH SIFU

Things have changed, AGAIN! As usual our visit with Sifu went great. We practiced Chi Kung, Sections 1-8, and basic Tuishou and Fa-jin work. On this trip most of the senior/advanced members were either working, or on vacation so we were primarily a beginning and intermediate group. Sifu was slightly disappointed that only a few of the group knew Tuishou or Sanshou (7&8).

First of all, section one has been modified. I'm not sure I have the complete modifications yet but I'm working on it. When I do we will adopt the new 'improved' version. Sifu has added two more LAN CHAO WEI (grasping sparrow's tail) into section one, so now we have four. The Lan Chao Wei is considered one of the most important forms in Tai Chi Chuan.

All the applications are based upon these four movements. The Tuishou is Lan Chao Wei and these are also the first four of the original Tai Chi 13 postures. Sifu feels they're not practiced enough so he's added more in section 1.

Sifu emphasized the importance of Tuishou to Tai Chi Chuan. He said that knowing only the solo form was like only knowing the alphabet not knowing how to read or write. The Tuishou teaches you the use of the solo forms. From here the next step is Sanshou, teaching the interaction of yin and yang and the vulnerabilities of attack and defense, yielding to force and be in an advantageous position at the same time. The solo form without the Tuishou is like a meal without any flavor.

Another new piece of instruction was the placement of the tongue as we practice. Normally it's said the tongue should be at the roof of the mouth, behind the teeth. Sifu said this was incorrect, the tongue should be touching the acupuncture point in the middle of the roof of the mouth. He said to try this for a while and notice the difference.

After class we were invited to his home and stayed until 7:30 watching Kung Fu movies (his two favorite ones). All in all we had a great time. Being around Sifu and Simu (his wife) is a treat. Just watching them move and seeing someone of their skill who has internalized all the principles of Tai Chi Chuan. JUST GREAT!

## THE POWER OF OUR THOUGHTS

Let your mind think about eating a very ripe strawberry, peach or any fruit you really like. The mere thought can have your mouth watering, practically tasting it. If you take this further, you can even imagine the smell and texture of the fruit. With the sensations your body gets from only thinking about these things I don't have to say anything more about the power we possess and use daily.

In all the Nei Jia the mind (*I*) plays the most important role. Hsing I Chuan is sometimes referred to as I Chuan (mind fist), or Shin I (heart and mind). All the Nei Jia try to coordinate the *I*, *Chi*, and *Li*. The *I* guides the *Chi*, which drives the *Li*.

*I* = mind/intent, *Chi* = energy, *Li* = strength/power. This is why it's important to get beyond the mere movements and choreography of forms or the memorization's into the feeling and focus as you practice. This is what Sifu and Master Gao call the REAL ART. Until you get to this point they call it 'playing Tai Chi'. You need to get to the point where you can focus on your mind guiding your body and

chi through the movements, not just going through the shell and the outer forms.

This is also why knowing the applications to the various movements is very important, even if your interest doesn't include the martial aspects. Think of holding a pebble in your hand, hold it for a while. Next think of holding a golf ball, next a bowling ball. Notice the different sensations? Each thought guides the chi, blood, and feelings to your hand to various intensities. Knowing the applications as you practice the form does the same thing. It focuses your chi and eventually your power to specific areas. This cultivates chi flow, circulates the chi, and directs it, exercises it.

On the same thought, think of various other sensations. Think of tasting a lemon, what about a piece of ginger, or a hot pepper. Notice how your body, your entire body, reacts. The thought of something sour has a tightness about it. A thought about a sweet taste has perhaps a more relaxing result.

One Chi Kung method focuses on 'smiling' internally toward various organs. If thinking about

tastes have certain effects upon you then it's easy to see the positive results of various visualizations we do while practicing the forms and chi kung. Some Chi Kung have you begin by thinking about a happy or pleasant memory and bringing the thought into your various organs.

We should begin all forms with the WUJI, the thought of calmness, emptiness, complete relaxation. It's very important to take a moment for this. You may not feel the difference at first but it does have an effect. If you add a drop of water to a cup of tea, at first you don't notice the change, but there is one! Drop after drop the change becomes more noticeable. This is the same principle we use. Each practice, each session

changes things (for the healthier) little by little. It only requires mindful practice.

Everything counts. It's better taking two minutes to relax than to remain tense for those two minutes. As we become more centered and relaxed our thoughts have a stronger effect upon ourselves. It's important to keep our internal dialogue positive or neutral. We've accumulated enough negative stuff without having to add more. The Nei Jia is to improve our health on all levels; physical, mental, and spiritual. At the beginning of each day (and now and then) take a minute to enforce an inner 'happy' and healthy taste.

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## DETAILS

In all fields, services, and skills it's the details that make the difference between average and exceptional. The smallest refinements and details = the greater excellence, skill, and quality. This principle relates to all things, *especially* our practice.

One of the details I wrote about was using the *I* in all movements. This determines whether you will eventually have any power or not. These details and refinements can only be focused on after you're no longer worried about the next movement or form. Some of the many details we study in our advancement of the arts are: relaxation, softness, differentiation of yin yang, flow, 3 bows, lifting the crown, sung, hsu, fa, and transitions. These are just a few.

*RELAXATION* - The more we can relax, the better the quality of our practice, our life, and the greater potential to advance in all areas of skill. Excess tension chokes our chi flow, limits our body movement and gives our partner a chance to counter attack. Instead of trying to relax, work on being loose and letting go. That's the secret!

*SOFTNESS* - Softness is the stage beyond relaxation. If we are soft, not limp, the movements are all very natural and easy. Though the outside may be soft, internally we should always be centered and solid. When we make contact with our partners in applications our softness should off-balance or neutralize our partner's attack unconsciously. By the time your partner realizes this it's already too late.

*YIN YANG* - All our movements reflect the changes from yin to yang, ever moving from one to the other. Up/down, right/left, store/issue, coil/attack. We must be mindful to distinguish these changes.

*FLOW* - The silk reeling movements; once we start a form we never stop dead. At a beginning level this is merely the continual flow from one movement into the next. At an advanced level this is the internal flow of the chi, storing and issuing. At this level it may

sometimes appear that the outward movement stops, but this isn't really the case.

*CURVES* - This refers to the 3 or 5 bows (depending on how you count them). This is giving detail to the body structure and setting the ground work so the peng jin can develop. Here you pay attention to keeping your limbs always curved and rounded. Legs and arms should always have a bow to them, they always form a part of a circle. In the lower body it's the legs, the arms form another bow, and the torso is the next. Never keep your back stiffly straight.

*SUNG* - Though this is relaxation, it's much, much deeper also. As you sung, your attention is on storing your energy before issuing it. This takes place in the transitions. When you develop this moment of detail to your practice, your skill level will develop quickly and strongly. It shows you where you develop power and begin to use the fa-jin.

*HSU* - This is the actual storing and sinking of the chi. It's the refinement of Sung, without sung you can't get to Hsu. Sung is in the muscles and Hsu is in the joints. As the muscles relax and soften, then the joints can loosen up and permit greater chi flow. Hsu is where the famous one inch punch comes from.

*TRANSITIONS* - At first, the transitions are in-between the postures. As you advance the entire form is a transition and eventually your entire workout is a transition. LIFE IS A TRANSITION! Things should flow smoothly from one move to the next. At first you need to learn not to stop when you finish one movement, before you start the next. Always a feeling of transition a flow and exchange from yin to yang to yin ...