

# INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

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## NEW VIDEO

After several obstacles overcome, one of two tapes is completed. Initially it was to be one tape but on first filming it ran well over 2 1/2 hrs so it's been divided into two tapes. The first is O'mei Mt. Chi Kung. This is an instructional tape covering the basics of this chi kung method. The second tape is our Yang Tai Chi Short Form to compliment sifu's book. Sifu taught 3 slightly different versions of this form. The differences are only in the transitions between the middle section and the last. In this tape I cover the most basic version since sifu's book isn't out yet.

## SUMMER WORKSHOP

Sat & Sun - July 1 & 2nd  
Mt. Vernon WA

\$60 per day/ \$100 both days

Let me know if you will be attending and what days.

## SATURDAY CLASSES

May 6 - group 8:00-11:30  
May 20 - SIFU?  
June 3 group session 8:00-11:30  
June 4 - Tree Chi Kung  
(Mt. Vernon)  
June 17 - 7&8  
July 1&2 - summer workshop

## CLASSES OUTSIDE

As the light stays longer and the weather becomes endurable we will move the classes to the playground unless it begins to rain. It's a good idea to have a sweater with you and a pair of gloves in case a breeze picks up. 58th & Phinney Avenue at the Woodland Park Zoo playground.

## A NEW COLUMN

This month we begin a column on the question and answers portion of Master Feng's book thanks to the effort of Felicia. Some of the questions may seem funny or dumb but it's important to read them none the less. Too often members of a class don't ask certain question because they think the questions are dumb, or they have forgotten the answer the last time they asked. Many members loose out when a

question isn't asked (or answered). Some of us just don't have the knack for asking the right questions. Or . . . we don't know enough yet to ask questions. Also, when a question is asked a second time there may be students present that didn't hear it the first time. I know too many cases when the teachers have edited either translations or articles since they thought the information wasn't important. (perhaps not for them) So regardless of the questions it's important to have access to all we can get.

## KOOTENAY TAI CHI CENTRE SUMMER RETREATS

Box 566

Nelson, B.C. V1L 5R3  
(604)352-3714

KUNG FU SUMMER RETREAT  
FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

August 1-5

\$240 Canadian \$200 US

TAI CHI CHUAN

August 13-19

\$395 Canadian \$335 US

PA KUA CHANG

August 21-27

\$395 Canadian \$335 US

## MONTANA TAI CHI CHUAN ASSOCIATION

Tai chi instructors in Montana have put together a newsletter. In this first issue there is an excellent article on 'Four Stages of Development in Tai Chi chuan Practice' by Daniel Loranz. The newsletter is in my filebox for reading. Both beginners and advanced students can benefit for the article.

## AN OLD APPROACH

Yes, Tuesday night Yang class has changed a little bit. Beginning members won't notice but for the first hour I've returned to a traditional teaching method. This method is characterized by much repetition, minimal talking, everyone together, and plowing ahead. To plus side to this is developing a strong foundation and better basics whether you want to or not. This also permits

## A GREAT GIFT

The layers and dynamics of tuishou or any partner work goes far beyond the mere instruction and patterns we are trying to study, refine and learn. Partner work brings many things to the surface that we normally seek to ignore or avoid. We have our own little quirks, our own baggage from the day, family etc. We have our own frustrations on not getting it, or having had it last week and not this week, wanting it NOW, etc.

One of the most wonderful gifts in partner work is having a partner that works 'with you'. "Well, isn't that the way it should be?" Ideally yes but it seldom happens in real life and learning situations. Though I'm specifically taking about partner work here this also applies to learning forms.

There are the partners that are so busy showing you what they can do, or how good they are that you might as well not be there (except they need you as an audience or dummy to practice on). There are the partners that are continually showing you the possibilities and options. The problem is all you need and want to understand is how to do the damn exercise.

There are the partners that would rather socialize and visit instead of practicing mindfully or working on 'listening' skills

There are the partners that just aren't there! They give you no energy or movements to really work with. They hook onto a basic pattern and then zone out.

There are the partners that are so afraid of showing you the 'wrong' way they continually apologize instead of practicing and seeing what happens. As long as there is an attempt there are no mistakes in my view.

There are the partners that correct every movement you do that you don't get to practice the exercise. In fact, most of the time you're over-loaded with information that you may forget the pattern of the movement.

Then there are the partners that 'listen' to what you are trying to understand and the two of you work at it. Instead of showing you they are working with you. Instead of teaching you they are helping you or sharing.

It's all so complex. There are times we need to be shown how, times we must be permitted to fumble, time to put things together, times to study detail, times to let go.

Now, if we could just get the right timing.

ATD

beginners to struggle at their own pace instead of trying to keep up with all the beginners. One problem with the older method was that continuing members once passed the basic postures just work on their current form and memorization instead of **really** studying and refining the basics.

Every now and then the session will turn into a group study session working on a basic element.

Remember: It doesn't mean anything what patterns and forms your mind remembers; what's important is that your body sees the movement as ordinary.

# Taking A Break?

Part II by Harvey Kurland

Weight loss and a low fat diet are an important part of the treatment for diabetes. After stopping exercise for one or two days there are enzymatic changes in the muscles that are reversed; which reduce the benefits that exercise provides for the diabetic. For them taking a few days off is not a good idea. Overdoing it is no good either, it has to be the correct dose. Diabetics should exercise with medical approval.

After a few days off the body starts to adapt to rest. Your muscles will get weaker and your endurance will suffer. The amount of enzymes in the muscles that are responsible for aerobic and anaerobic metabolism will drop. The muscle fibers will start to shrink, i.e. atrophy. All the beneficial effects of training will slowly erode. Flexibility is also reversed.

Often it is thought that stiffness and lack of flexibility is an effect of aging. But in reality it is more of an effect of not stretching. If you stop stretching your flexibility will return to your normal level. Sometimes it seems as if this takes place within days. The loss of the range of motion by older people is related to simply not going through a complete range of motion, i.e. not stretching. It seems like people who are naturally flexible like to stretch and those who need it most don't like stretching. Hard won increased flexibility is lost in a few weeks by giving up stretching. Usually it seems like those people who need to stretch don't and those who are naturally flexible focus on it. So the flexible stay flexible and stiff stay stiff. Most very flexible people have a genetic capacity to be flexible. People who never really seriously stretched will get very flexible in a short period of time. That will reverse when the stretching program stops.

Obesity is often helped by exercise. There is a critical number of calories needed to burn up per week to see any difference. The minimum kcals need to use by exercise per week is 900 calories, i.e. 300 unused on at least three alternate days per week. But this should be combined with diet. It helps to have skinny "fast metabolism" genetics. In t'ai-chi this would be about an hour, three times a week of straight form work, no rest breaks and no stops at the dessert shop on the way back from class. One first class dessert is equal to about two to three hours of t'ai-chi. People who are most successful in losing weight from exercise train five days a week for one to two hours per day and burn upwards of 3,000 kilocalories per week. High levels of higher intensity aerobic exercise also raises the baseline metabolism and reduces the appetite. I read a chocolate truffle bar label which revealed it had 300 calories of which **190 calories** came from fat. That is equivalent to an hour of t'ai-chi or three miles of walking, for an average sized person. For those interested in weight loss, every day you don't practice is a day you add calories to your fat stores. Days lost; pounds gained.(3500 kal equal to about 1 pound of fat.

I found that when I was a graduate student my diet was pretty stable and I exercised a couple of times a day. Besides going to Sifu Tchoung's classes, training with Andy Dale, Dave Harris, & Don Scott, I would work out on my own for hours. But when the break came and I went on vacation my weight would shoot up ten or more pounds in a week. Later when I moved to Guam and taught science, my weight shot up even more. Part of that was the change in diet but most of it was a reduction in exercise. I was burning thousands of calories per week when I was at UW. But that dropped to a couple of hundred on Guam, even with training with David Kalama, doing t'ai-chi and jogging. The amount of calories used up in exercise is critical. One reason older people get fatter is that they burn less calories (Kcal) because they become more sedentary and have less time for recreational activities. For that reason we need to train on a regular basis if we are trying to keep weight down. This is especially important for those with slow metabolisms.

Exercise is used to help prevent heart disease and rehabilitate heart patients. It seems to help increase functional capacity and the ability to do daily activities. It also increases the good cholesterol, HDL or high density lipoproteins, that are thought to help prevent heart problems. Aerobic exercise can raise HDL's. Again a certain dose is required. As soon as your exercise program is stopped, those good HDL's go back to normal levels. Regular exercise reduces the risk of heart attack.

Skill is another issue. If you stop training you will forget forms. You will have difficulty doing certain movements. In pushing hands and sparring, timing and appropriate reactions are lost. Though in t'ai-chi ch'uan it seems some basic level of skill maintains and may even increase. I think once you get to a certain level of skill you start integrating the t'ai-chi concepts in many mundane activities. So those factors remain active. These are keeping centered, relaxing and sensitivity: the general and global skills. The more gymnastic and power based movements may not be there, but some part of the art remains. After several years of layoff, students return and in a short period of time they seem to be pushing hands and rooting quite well. But not as good as if they continued training. There is also a learning concept of extinction. This is where time off allows us to forget bad habits. Then when we return we relearn good habits; so the bad habits are lost. For best results stick to a basic program at least 3 times per week for 20 minutes per session.

Harvey Kurland received his Masters Degree from the University of Washington . He has degrees in public health education and exercise physiology. A certificated instructor of T'ai-chi ch'uan by Grand master Tchoung Ta-tchen He also holds certification from the American College of Sports Medicine and International Sports Sciences Association.

## Feng Zhiqiang and His Qigong Teacher Hu Yaozhen

In 1948, when Feng was twenty-two, he was studying xing-yi [form-intent] in Peking with Master Tien Xiuchen. Tien gave him an introduction to the xin-yi [mind-intent] master, Hu Yaozhen. Hu was a traditional Chinese doctor and martial artist. Before he took Feng as a student, he tested his strength (Feng was already renowned for his strength). Hu stood rooted and allowed Feng to use all his power to push him. But no matter how Feng tried, he could not move Hu a single inch. Feng was amazed and asked how he had such great sinking energy (rooting). Hu explained this was done by sinking the energy to the dantien and producing a weight of 1,000 pounds. Hu had Feng take a solid stance and pushed him several feet with the touch of two fingers on his chest. Feng was dumbfounded and broke out in a cold sweat. When Feng asked how that was achieved, Hu explained it was inner energy (neigong). He could focus his inner energy into his two fingers and although they looked harmless, they contained immense power....

Hu told Feng that up until now he had been simply training in outer form. So, for the next two years, Feng studied intensely with Hu in xing-yi, neigong, wujigong, sancai meditation, tu-na, and jin-na. Hu suggested Feng study Chen style with his good friend, Chen Fake. Feng continued studying with Hu and now uses Hu and Chen Fake's instruction as the foundation for his qigong practice.

In 1953, Chen Fake and Hu Yaozhen, along with several other famous martial artists, founded the Metropolitan Martial Arts Research Institute in Peking



Anxiety during partner work is common. It may not appear to be so when watching a roomful of people practicing, but in conversations I have had over the years

### Feng Zhiqiang Answers Questions about Qigong

#### **Can you eat before practicing qigong?**

Before doing qigong, it is best to eat nothing or very little. This is because if the stomach and intestines are empty it will be easier to cleanse the digestive system, the tendons, muscles, marrow, and to expel the turbid qi. Of course, it's perfectly fine to nibble just a little before practice.

#### **How long should you wait after eating before practicing qigong?**

Generally one hour after eating you can practice. If you know ahead of time that you will be practicing qigong after eating, then it's best to eat until you are only half full.

#### **Is it common to feel especially hungry after practicing qigong?**

Yes, this is a common phenomenon and it is a very good sign. It shows that the practice has improved the digestive system.

#### **Can you eat immediately after doing qigong?**

You should rest and relax a bit first before eating. Don't eat immediately afterwards and, by all means, avoid gorging yourself.

#### **Can you do qigong after drinking alcohol?**

It's not good to do it immediately after drinking, especially if you are drunk. When one is under the influence of alcohol, it is not easy to find the serenity and quietness of mind that are required for qigong. Also, when you do qigong, your blood is circulating rapidly and the alcohol will naturally be carried along weakening your internal organs and destroying your general fitness.

#### **What should you do if nature calls when you are doing qigong?**

You can temporarily break off from your practice. But remember to do a closing first. After you have taken care of things, you can resume practice.

#### **Can you immediately go to the bathroom after practicing qigong?**

Calls of nature should be attended to before practice begins so that you avoid interruption during practice or the need immediately after practice. However, if you find that after practice you always have this urge, then consider it natural, go with it, and do not try to force yourself into some other regimen.

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it has become clear to me that though the subject matter may differ from person to person, the emotions occur in most of us. As a beginner it may be difficult to see it in

# ANXIETY AND PARTNER WORK

by Cedar Acosta

those who have been practicing for long enough to either move through their particular vulnerabilities or who find their own way of dancing with them or who have created a way to control them, but don't let appearances give you a chance to feel you are alone in the experience.

I think most of us who find ourselves practicing tai chi over a period of time have experienced some kind of violence in our lives. Whether it be from surviving situations where your life has been threatened, living in an emotionally or physically abusive home, experiencing being 'left out' or rejected as a child or being painfully aware at an early age that you see the world differently than many people around you; all these experiences have lasting effect. On a gentler level we all have fear of getting hurt somehow, maybe even more so if we have not had more extreme situations in our lives. Regardless, how do we keep doing partner work when we have difficult emotions rising during practice?

My basic rule when I feel fear/anger/frustration/anxiety begin to rise is to keep the energy moving, continuing to breathe and grounding through my feet or otherwise dispersing the sensation. In order to do this effectively I need to honor the sensation by acknowledging it, recognizing it and then letting it go. I then refocus on the exercise or the principle I am working on. If the emotion persists I acknowledge the sensation again and do my best to ride with it -- there may be something useful informationally that I am not getting at the moment -- and often the sensation disperses as I continue to practice. If the emotion persists and begins to strengthen and I am doing my best to keep practicing mindfully, it may just be time to take a break. I know that when I am fatigued (not just tired, but stressed and overworked) it may be more significant to my practice to rest rather than continuing to overwork myself. I know also that there are times when negative emotions are a sign that there is something in me trying to show itself. It may be strong enough occasionally that to continue practicing is too forceful and it makes more sense to rest and give myself some time to let the information emerge by feeling into the experience. Most of the time I have gotten the information quickly so I could go back into practice. There are occasions though that it is more appropriate to stop and rest or get some outside help from friends, elder sisters/brothers in the art or even from a professional counselor or healer depending on the situation.

One of the dangers of attending to a sensation is in making it stronger and/or beginning to indulge in it. It is also too easy to give the sensation more meaning than it truthfully has (blaming others for your emotional state or

re-wounding yourself with the pain are two examples of this). It is best to stay in 'observing mind' if you work with yourself this way, practicing as a kind of meditation. There is also, I believe, a danger in being too quick to release a negative emotion, in that you can use too much emotional muscle and end up denying something that will just come up again and sometimes in a perverse or more intense way. Balance is called for and appropriate technique for the situation at hand.

For me, practicing tai chi in a group or with a partner reflects the microcosm of the social situations I have around me everywhere. I get a good challenge with the same issues I have where ever I go. What I have in class is an opportunity to work with those issues while directly applying tai chi principles without so many other distractions. To compound my own personal situation I know I also pick up on the energy of a room that may be mucky or the state of the person I am practicing with or near. This is real life. I go back to the basic rule to keep the energy moving. One way to play out our own fears is to hold judgment about the others around us. Judging a partner for being too hard, crazy, angry, etc. can stagnate the energy and distract from the present, here and now practice. Observing is useful, but investing emotional meaning and attitude in the observation is distracting. It helps me to remember that often what I dislike in another is present in me to some degree or I wouldn't be experiencing it so well. What I feel is, after all, my own emotion from my own life experience and it is my own responsibility to choose an appropriate action accordingly. If I need a partner to not talk to me quite so much, I need to say so. If I am a bit overwhelmed by the strength or speed of my partner, maybe I need to ask them to slow down for now as I am still learning what I am doing. If I am in a good state of mind I can play with the understanding that the 'attack is never wrong' and I

## ANXIETY AND PARTNER WORK CONT:

can ask myself what can I do differently to partner it well, but there are times when to ask for a change is very appropriate.

In mindful practice awareness of the emotional body is as important as the awareness of the physical and mental bodies. Just as we can overwork a joint or think too much, we can also indulge our emotional body by trapping the particular state in which we find ourselves. Chest, neck, stomach and head are great places to trap emotional pain. The intellectual mind can play out its role in stagnating fear states by running loops about what we think is happening in a partnership or in the room. I do my best when I feel pain in a particular area to remember to breathe into the stuck area in order to release it. When I feel healthy I breathe and lighten the energy around me as well.

Part of the process of knowing self is recognizing my particular fears and vulnerabilities. I may not be able to rid myself of them, but in honoring them I can take the power out of them. Just as in recognizing a knee problem, or a tendency to judge people who are different than me can help me change my behavior, recognizing a fear of being rejected allows me to function with the information rather than being ruled by the state. At one point in my practice, accepting the reality that I have a kind of violence in me that plays itself out occasionally was a

major breakthrough in my practice with others. Understanding that about myself helped take the charge out of some of my fear of others hurting me as well as changing the quality of my practice. It is easier for me now to stay present when practicing rather than reacting or blanking out as I have in the past.

I believe that the greatest changes we make come with continuing to practice mindfully. It is not something we can think out or manipulate into being, it is instead a gradual process of coming to know ourselves and others in relationship. In solo practice we gain knowledge of ourselves and build our basics. In partner practice as we begin to touch hands, our talents develop and we begin to serve others. We continue to learn about ourselves and how we are intimate with other humans. We also have a great opportunity to help each other get better at working with each other physically, emotionally, mentally. Listening to those with greater experience, playing with our peers and supporting those who have just begun all have their challenges and their fun. Practicing has its own power of transformation that is beyond us. May we all learn from our difficulties and keep practicing!

Cedar Acosta is a licensed massage practitioner and teaches tai chi chuan in the Greenlake area and is a member of the Internal Wushu Arts.