

NEWSLETTER

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FORM COMPLETIONS

The following are the second group I've taught that has completed the Liang-I Chuan (mix of Pa Kua and T'ai-chi ch'uan from the Fu system): Russ Fish, Dennis Sharp, Victor Crandall, Cedar Acosta, and Derryl Willis. Also, Steven Cousins has complete the Hsing-I Chuan Five Elements.

THANKS 5 WILLOWS

The Five Willow Tai Chi Association sponsored another evening filled Chinese new year celebration with many local instructors performing. It most like the only time when the majority of the internal arts instructors in Seattle and surrounding areas can be found at one place.

DID YOU KNOW?

Those who went to the Chinese New Year Celebration or attend many demonstrations (except our club's) notice the vast array of uniforms. Traditionally there are no practice uniforms in the Chinese martial arts! What westerners now call 'kung-fu' uniforms were the every-day wear of the average worker in China. prior to the Cultural revolution. If these arts were permitted to be practiced during the cultural revolution then most like the 'kung-fu' uniform today would be a Mao Jacket! So if you're a nurse should you practice in your nurses' uniform? With the modern wushu moving towards a performance art in recent years all the brightly colorful and intricate costumes have evolved for PERFORMANCE value.

If you feel the need to get a 'kung-fu' uniform to look right then I'd say focus on your practice instead and use the money to enjoy a dinner at a nice restaurant!

WATER LOGIC

A rock is a fixed shape. Water fits the container or situation.

Perception depends on context, experience, emotions, framework, etc.

Add one rock to another and you get two rocks. Add water to water and you get water. Perception builds up by layers. The layers do not remain separate but build up to give a total perception.

A rock is static; water is fluid. Rock logic is concerned with "what is." Water logic & perception are concerned with "what might be."

Perception strives for meaning and attempts to make sense of what is present. Perception also seeks a stable state. Water seeks to flow toward a stable state, a rock is immobile.

From Serious Creativity by Edward DeBono, published by Harper Business

MORE CLASSES

If Saturday sessions don't work for you, or you'd prefer evening session check out classes by other club members:

Chris Matthews 789-9223:
Tuesdays Chi Kung, Push hands, Free Hands & Applications

Cedar Acosta 440-1290: Lake City & Madison Valley Basics & ongoing sessions.

REWARD EXCELLENCE

Part of the Aikido philosophy is to be positive and extend ki (chi), and to help all things grow and develop naturally. To extend ki means to focus your energy like the heat from a light bulb radiating out in all directions. The thought is that when you extend ki you create a positive flow outward thus you become a channel for this energy to flow thus you will draw more and more ki from the universe. Just like a garden hose, if the nozzle is shut off the water

inside becomes old and stale. As we extend ki our body systems (the pipe line of ki) becomes stronger and healthier. Also this positive flow nurtures all things around us just like a clear spring feeds the plants, animals and earth that surrounds it.

The other thought is that if your mind is positive it increases this ki flow or sets a condition where ki can flow stronger. Negative thoughts and actions have the reverse effect. If we just think about being around a positive person they do inspire us and make us feel lifted whereas being around someone negative or depressed weakens and brings us down.

During the one year club celebration my first sensei, Bernie Lau visited and as always, his presence was inspiring. It reminded me of goals and set me to thinking about my past training and reflecting on whether I've stayed on track or not.

One reflection was that I've gotten caught up in the critiquing and criticizing mode that's unfortunately very common. "This isn't good enough!", "Oh that was sooo lousy", "I expected more . . ." Instead of enjoying the 'now' and seeking to appreciate to good, look for the excellence or the effort for excellence.

One habit I've started is working at expressing my appreciation and enjoyment of an others work. Since I'm hooked on the internet and 'surf' the net often I've seen many web sites, some that are just beautiful, some are informative, and some that are fun. Having worked on the club web site I know the difficulty of getting all the components to work together smoothly. So now, if I come upon a site that brightens my day, is informative or unusual in some way I stop for a second and send the author a 'thank you' note. Well all enjoy appreciation and as we all know it can make a so-so day that much better.

REWARD EXCELLENCE CONT:

Recently I caught a small clip of a Dr. from Hawaii promoting his book: The Pleasure Prescription. Part of his study resulted in the following information:

- Acts of kindness boosts our immune system
- Watching acts of kindness also boosts our immune system
- Moments of quiet and peace boosts our immune system (what our practice should be!)

So, next time you get good service, or when there is an effort of good service, when a clerk or server brightens up your day by their attitude let them know they've made a difference. In restaurants of course it's usually done with a good tip, however a word of acknowledgment can make it that much better. Remember the server is the messenger for the food and not the cook so don't confuse the quality of the food for the service.

Look for the positive, look for the excellence, support effort and helpfulness.

APPRECIATE AND REWARD EFFORT AND EXCELLENCE create a positive flow.

ATD

piece is ending the next piece is beginning. Without an ending there can be no beginning and without a beginning there can be no ending. You may be thinking that this is all very obvious and intellectually you may understand this but the goal is to allow the body to understand this. Nothing happens by itself, it is always the result of something else that occurs.

When we say that once begun the form continues without breaks or interruptions until the end we need to understand another concept that is inherent within Tai Chi and that is change. This is the purpose of movement, to promote and embrace change. As we move from one position to the next we are changing the position of the body, the feet and the hands. This may be obvious but the implication of change goes far beyond this simplicity. Change must occur within movement. By this I mean that the speed and tempo of the movement must constantly be changing to adjust to the flow of energy within the body.

Change must also be allowed to occur within the body. As one part of the body becomes more yang another part of the body must become more yin to compensate and keep the body whole. This is obvious in looking at weight shifts. As the weight shift from the back leg to the front leg the back leg is going from yang to yin and front leg is going from yin to yang.

Movement in T'ai Chi Ch'uan

© 1997 by Chris Matthews

While there are many different positions in Tai Chi they all contain some common aspects and one of these is movement. The form, once begun, continues to move until it is finished. The classics discuss the fundamental aspect of yin and yang and the exchange of energy. While it can be said that yin corresponds to stillness and yang corresponds to maximum movement you must remember that each contains the other so that within yin is yang and within yang is yin. Therefore within movement there is stillness and within stillness there is movement. Another way to look at this is that at the precise moment when one position ends is the same moment when the next position begins. Or to think of this in very subtle terms, breaking each moment into smaller and smaller moments, and seeing how as each little

A movement begins from nothing. Prior to the movement starting it has no motion, and the mind is empty. An infinitesimal moment before the movement begins the mind forms the idea of the movement. Not the whole movement, just the portion that is immediately in front of it. It is the intent of the mind that supplies the change necessary for the movement to begin. Just as your car cannot go from rest to maximum speed in zero time neither can your body.

All movements can be broken down into the following three periods: beginning, middle and end. In the beginning the movement begins from nothing and slowly over time builds speed and energy. The period of no movement also corresponds to maximum stored energy. During the middle phase of the movement the speed will remain fairly constant but may vary as directed by the energy. The middle period corresponds to maximum working energy. At the end of the movement the speed must go to zero and so the speed of the movement must begin to decrease prior to the end of the movement. The end of the movement again corresponds to maximum stored energy.

The following table is intended to generalize some of the facets of this subject. Do not try to extend some of the generalizations across a particular movement, such as single whip. Instead look at the generalizations with the microscopic parts of the movement.



the ocean (table period #4) and will sit waiting to be changed back to potential energy. This happens when the sun evaporates the water taking it up into clouds and moving it back to the hills where it releases it as rain (table period #5/#1). The water has had energy added to it by the sun and is now ready to do more work. Kinetic or working

<u>Period</u>	<u>Period Name</u>	<u>Movement</u> <u>Speed</u>	<u>Energy</u>	<u>Characterized by</u>	<u>Yin/Yang</u>
1	prior to beginning	zero	maximum stored	internal movement	maximum yin minimum yang
2	beginning	slowly increasing	stored energy being changed to working energy	internal movement creating external movement	decreasing yin increasing yang
3	middle	constant	all energy changed to working energy	external movement	minimum yin maximum yang
4	ending	slowly decreasing	working energy being changed to stored energy	change from external movement to internal movement	increasing yin decreasing yang
5	after the end	zero	maximum stored	internal movement	maximum yin minimum yang

As you can see from the above table the periods labeled "beginning" (#2) and "end" (#4) are the two periods with the most change in terms of both energy and speed. Everyone is pretty clear on where the "prior to beginning", "after the end", and "middle" periods are. It may be instructional to note that when learning new movements it is these three periods that are what most students really learn. However, it is the periods "prior to beginning" and "after the end", and the transitions to "beginning" and from "ending", that are the most critical and also the hardest to recognize and perform. Without these four periods movements the form will not be linked and the energy created during the movement will not complete its flow. Since one of our goals is to store energy in the body it is important to allow the movement to complete itself.

In science there are two types of energy: stored energy which is called potential energy and working energy which is called kinetic energy. A dam is a good example of these two types of energy. The water behind the dam is the potential energy and it just sits there waiting to be useful (table period #1). As the water is released it begins to flow downhill and slowly gains speed (table period #2). This falling water is the kinetic energy and at some point towards the bottom of the downhill flow the water is made to hit a paddle attached to a wheel which causes the wheel to turn, doing work (table period #3). After the energy has been taken out of the water (turning successive wheels for instance) the water will have arrive at

energy must always find an end and take in additional energy to once again become potential energy (i.e., there is no such thing as a free lunch).

We are looking to accomplish the same thing with Tai Chi. We want to boost the amount of stored or potential energy we have in our bodies. Just holding the energy in place does not accomplish this goal. We must find a way to change the potential energy to kinetic energy and then draw in additional energy so that when we change the original kinetic energy and the drawn in kinetic energy to potential energy we have more than we started with. By ensuring that each movement be allowed to begin and end we will build up additional energy during our Tai Chi play.

TRAINING CHANGE IN PA KUA CHANG

Part I

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One of the key aspects of Pa Kua is change. The art is based on constant change in both strategy and

technique. It's fighters of old were noted for their rapidly changing evasive footwork and elusive maneuvering. Like all aspects of any martial art, in order to get good at it, you must train it. Since it is more difficult to train a concept than it is to train a technique, I have outlined two approaches.

CONCEPT:

CHANGE The concept of change is used in most martial arts. The basic idea is to change your strategy or specific techniques to meet the demands of the situation and thus defeat your opponent. What sets Pa Kua apart from other martial arts is the heavy emphasis on understanding of the art. Indeed most of the techniques are called "palm changes" or have "change as part of the name such as "overturning body change". In attacking the Pa Kua practitioner constantly moves and maneuvers to create or find an opening in his opponent's defense. In defending, he constantly changes footwork, body posture, and directions to evade and elude his opponent. A description of the old masters "turning left, spinning right, rising, dropping, overturning, and changing" as they fought multiple opponents is the epitome of the art. This is the skill we are striving for.



So can you change? It is easy to intellectually understand the concept, but can your body perform what your mind tells it to? Most people can not. Better yet, can your body react correctly and change to an attack without your mind interfering? Unless you are a master, it is very doubtful. Don't despair. You can achieve a high degree of ability if you train for it. The first method of training is done on equipment. The second method is done with a partner.

EQUIPMENT TRAINING:

There are all kinds of martial arts equipment on the market such as heavy bags, speed bags, wooden dummies, etc. As well training equipment can be improvised using chairs, walls, trees, rocks, etc. The only limit to what could be considered a piece of training apparatus is your imagination. Watch any Jackie Chan move for some ideas. I think of equipment as having two categories: equipment that moves (poles, spring arms, bags) and equipment that is stationary (walls, trees, couch potatoes). The apparatus itself is not important. How you train on it is. In using any piece of equipment it is important to define in your mind what skill it is you are training. The same apparatus can be used in different ways to train different skills. Start off your "change" training

by facing your apparatus. Firmly state what skill it is that you are going to train. In this case "changing skill". This is necessary to distinguish in your mind what goal you are trying to accomplish. I believe that verbalizing the goal has a clearer more profound affect on the mind than just mentally thinking it (consult any affirmation book). Now strike the apparatus with any technique. Once you hit the device immediately change to another technique and hit again. Move around the apparatus using your footwork, circle walking, and stepping. After each strike, change direction, toe-in or toe-out, and move around the apparatus.

Immediately strike again. This drill is easier if you perform one of the palm changes from any of your forms. The training should be done lightly and correctly. You are not training power so do not be concerned with the amount of force your strike has. Do be concerned with correct form and balance. Initially go slow. It is more important to perform the changes correctly than rapidly. Speed and quickness will come over time. If you have multiple apparatuses available. Weave between them stepping and changing directions and techniques each time you come in contact with them. The most important dimension of this training is that you must not stop or pause between techniques, strikes, or changes. Flow from one move to the next. Keep constantly moving. I recommend you perform a minimum of five or more changes to establish the "*flowing like water*" feeling. If you become winded or tired, walk the circle around your target until you are ready to begin again. The object is to continuously move and constantly change directions. Your movements should be smooth, fluid, and continuous. The paramount "sin" is stopping to admire your devastating hit or pausing for photo opportunities. This hesitation must be eliminated. Initially you may want to follow a prescribed sequence. Later you should advance to a state where your changes are extemporaneous. Follow your instinct and let your body perform whatever change comes to it. Within a short time you should be able to whirl like a tornado and strike like lightening. I only recommend this type of training after you have a firm grasp of your basic eight changes. This means you can perform any one change on demand and correctly. Performing this type of training 15 to 30 minutes daily will bring significant results in three months.



T'AI-CHI CH'UAN CONCEPTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

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A recent article in the L.A. Times said that t'ai-chi ch'uan can help people with arthritis. Other research shows that t'ai-chi ch'uan can help your balance, prevent falls, and benefit coordination. Some doctors believe it can help people with fibromyalgia and multiple sclerosis. Traditionally it has been used to lower high blood pressure, prevent osteoporosis, stomach problems and other stress related disorders. T'ai chi is a low intensity aerobic exercise and aerobic exercise has also been shown to increase intelligence, so it may even make you smarter. The peaceful, serene feeling one gets from the exercise helps to fight bad stress and is a good adjunct for meditation. Often t'ai-chi ch'uan is referred to as moving meditation. There are many benefits to the practice of t'ai-chi ch'uan.

To get the most out of it is has to be done regularly at least three times a week for a half hour or more, ideally daily. Certain basic concepts need to be followed as well in order to get total benefit. The most important is to relax. This allows your ch'i to flow without blocks through your body. You will feel tranquil and peaceful, but it is a spirited relaxation, not a zombie like trance. Relaxation must be emphasized as any extra tension will inhibit the beneficial effects. Also the back must be kept straight and the head held up. Third, you need to concentrate on your tan t'ien, elixir field. It is claimed that sinking the mind and breath to the tan t'ien will create a health promoting chi that will permeate your while body.

In our classes we will discuss these and other essential concepts to practice t'ai-chi ch'uan correctly in order to get the most benefit out of this marvelous exercise. We will also teach you to how to do the form in a small space. And we will go over the exercises researchers used to produce the significant

beneficial results which were published in major medical journals.

T'ai chi ch'uan is classified as a martial chi kung exercise, based on Taoist health exercises. The majority of the benefit from t'ai-chi ch'uan comes from a few basic concepts. First and most important is to RELAX and SINK.

This is called SUNG and CHIN in t'ai-chi ch'uan. It is not flaccid relaxation. The back should be straight with the head in a neutral position. Hold your body as if held by a string attached the top of your skull, (pai-hui point) the rest of your body falls with gravity like a giant rag doll or marionette. This allows you to relax, sink your ch'i to your tan t'ien and move freely. As I always say, "When in doubt, RELAX."

Next, the hand must be relaxed. The fingers are relaxed with just enough energy to keep them straight. The shoulders are dropped and relaxed. The elbows are dropped and 'SUNK' sown, but not forced down. The movements should be natural. This allows the chi to flow freely through the body and to the tips of the fingers. Muscle tension blocks the chi and reduces sensitivity such as listening energy, ting jing, and tension blocks discharging energy, fa jing.

The focus is on the tan t'ien. "Field of elixir", a point two inches below the navel and in line with the top of the head. Concentration this point is important for rooting and for chi kung benefits. Doing only "ward-off" while holding these principles is better than doing 108 movements without these concepts. Focus on the basic principles when doing the form. More is not necessarily better. If you are more concerned about getting through the form, than being in the form, then you need to go back and practice the basics.

1. Tai c'hi chuan is a very good chi kung exercise if done properly. Follow the basic concepts for optimum benefit:

2. The body is held straight, suspend the head.

- 3.The body is completely relaxed.
- 4.The chi sinks to the lower tan t'ien)by relaxing).
- 5.The tongue stays at the roof of the mouth.
- 6.Breath through the nose and breath with the diaphragm.
- 7.Weight shifts from empty to sold, the waist moves the arms. Keep the concepts of Ying and Yang (tai c'hi).

Harvey Kurland received his Masters Degree from the University of Washington and has dedicated himself to public health issues for the last 30 years. He has degrees in public health education and exercise physiology. He is a certificated chief instructor of t'ai-chi ch'uan by Grandmaster Tchoung Ta-tchen and teaches at the University of California at Riverside and Loma Linda University. He also holds certification from the American College of Sports Medicine and International Sports Sciences Association.



Northwest Tai Chi Chuan Association