



Xin Qi Shen Dojo

WUJI.COM
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Shin Shin To Itsu 身心合一 Shēn Xīn Hé Yī

Mind and Body As One

There is no need to achieve a special state of mind.

Merely taking this posture is a special state of mind.

zen saying

Our face, our body, our attitude, our actions all demonstrate who we really are. How centered and secure, or not. The mind and body are like two bells hanging side by side. The ringing of one creates vibrations in the other. When you haven't a care in the world, then life seems great. Not only is your mind stress free but your body will be and move more relaxed. When your body is comfortable your mind is likewise able to calm down. On the same subject, if your mind is worrying and anxious your body tenses up and becomes fragile. Also, if your body isn't comfortable, like a pebble in your shoe, you become irritable.

For those of us who view the

internal arts as a way of centering and polishing ourselves, practice is more than going through movements and forms. As we move through our lives and situations we have better opportunities to practice beyond our forms. Staying calm in hectic situations. Practice staying comfortable and relaxed when things are fast paced and stressful.

Our faces & body language. What do they say? Do you walk around with a frown or a smile? As I go for walks it's amazing how many people I see with a look of misery. Notice your reaction to the people you meet. Think about that grocery checker who is cheerful and welcoming and the relaxation and ease you feel compared to the one who just wants to get rid of you. Remember the interaction of mind and body. In your daily life polish a positive attitude, spread

encouragement & joy.

Training in the internal arts is coordination of yin/yang, coordination of outward movements and inward intent. Relaxing the body so the energy flows freely, not just in movement but radiating from us.

Our dojo practice is small when compared to the rest of our week. What we practice the most is how we will act, behave, and react in daily situations. Now we have a choice. Do we practice to be centered, at ease, and relaxed or do we only react to situations that arise? Are we on a treadmill that controls us or do we move from a strong center?

Practicing these various forms and applications should lead us back to moving mindfully, strongly, and centered so we can act efficiently, healthily, and strongly of our own choice.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Mind & Body As One** 1
- Return To Softness** 2
- Teaching Certifications** 2
- Protect Your Partner** 3
- Misc.** 4
- Club Profile: Mike**
- What's Going ON?** insert



David: Roushou
Teaching
Certification



Mike: Long
overdue
Aikido Nidan

Burk: Roushou
Certification & overdue
Aikido Nidan



Returning to Softness

As many of you know I tend to favor Roushou above Tuishou. This has been mostly due to the current direction of sport Taiji, but also due to the fact that those I've come in contact with have little understanding of what soft and relaxed is. I reflect on the soft & cuddly nature of Master Tchoung's push hands, the looseness of Master Feng Zhiqiang's, and the ghost touch of Master William Chen. Visiting with John Camp recently it seems we both have come to the same frustrations and conclusions. The roushou people and free hands people are lighter and softer than push hands players. They tend to be more fluid and less muscling of techniques. Taiji people have poor footwork and tend to move stance to stance instead of moving free and natural when dealing with punches and attacks. This doesn't seem right. With sport Taiji becoming popular, Tuishou is no longer seen as a step in the Taiji curriculum but a destination.

Part of my fault with club members is that I've tried to teach 'better' or in a more organized way than the way I was taught.

To begin with using specific individual drills, focus on alignment, structure, and then moving on from there. What I see happening, not just in our club but in the Taiji community, is that the spotlight doesn't shift beyond this and no one is achieving the soft skills that Tuishou should teach. Everyone is too concerned initially about stance, connection, structure, peng and no one has time to invest in loss, yielding, and softness. This has led me to examine what's wrong, change my emphasis, and start teaching the way I was taught instead of the way I thought was better.

With Master Tchoung, we did only a few isolated drills and moved onto 4 hands quickly. Once having the basics then it was push and off-balance. From here you learned not to resist, to soften up, let go and invest in loss. We would practice being pushed over and over again, similar to Aikido being an uke, to loosen up so the push wouldn't knock us down or hurt us. When pushed uke would ride the push back, hop and then land on one leg to force better balance and show control. Slowly as the lessons were learned and we loosened up we were able to neutralize the pushes with our body not just our hands. We learned to absorb and root the push through relaxation instead of mental and technical tricks. Early on there wasn't any nonsense about not being permitted to step or move the feet. Slowly we learned that we didn't have to always move the feet to neutralize an attack. When learning to surf you just do it and then work on refining what you're doing. Theory of body alignment, structure, and correct movement can only be addressed after you've surfed a few times and can pay attention to those things. Knowing them first won't help you surf initially.

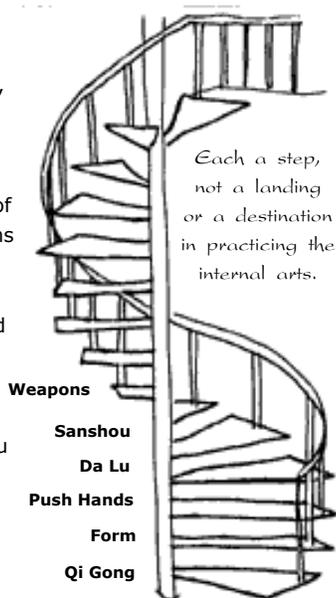
One criticism I've heard of this method is that it's too soft. "You're not giving me anything!" Well that's the idea! Softness, emptiness. "I know the enemy but they don't know me" comes to mind. If I permit a connection, in essence that's fighting or letting my partner have a sense where I am. This is why I think the roushou people are lighter and softer than those preferring push hands.

I tend to follow, seek to become like, those I see as the best: Masters Tchoung, Feng, W. Chen & Master Yueng. Master Tchoung said it's better to practice like a loose noodle than use any strength. Since I've not seen better then it makes sense to follow his teachings.

I see the same thing in Aikido. Not many practice relaxed movement anymore. Half are using muscular tension and stances, thinking they are extending. Others down and out use force and strength to complete throws thinking that that's extension and to show off. The best Aikido masters I've met, when throwing, made it feel as if I fell by myself. Their touch was gentle and soft, not hard or controlling. The good ones move 'as' the center not 'from' their center.

One common thing I also see with those I consider to have the highest skill is that their movements are casual and natural. They don't take stances in order to push, throw, or do a technique. They're able to apply a move, yield, adjust etc at any time and point. Also, at any time or point they have volume control. They can be gentle or firm (not rough).

Please focus on relaxation and softness as much as technique and form.



TEACHING & CERTIFICATION

I'm often asked, "Can I teach?" The simple answer is that if you know a form you are able to teach! Also, sharing is important in gaining greater insight into what you know and practice. Whether you're a good teacher or not depends upon many, many factors, and hopefully, the more sincerely you teach the better your teaching skills will be.

Xin Qi Shen Dojo teaching certification means that whatever art you are teaching, you've passed certain requirements so I stand behind you as a teacher and you represent the club.

Club certification mean that you know not only a piece of the art but are well rounded. You've been trained in qi gong, solo forms, push hands, roushou, and weaponry. You've not only gone through the forms but show a passion for the art and your own practice.

These certificates aren't just handed out; there is a testing procedure. You should be able to stand in for any of the instructors teaching any session. The test is just that. You must teach a session for an entire month.

If you're interested in pursuing a teaching certification let me know. I'm happy to announce David Wheeler and Burk Dowell have just been certified in teaching the complete curriculum of Roushou. More importantly, during their teaching the roushou class, each has added their own input and creativity in the curriculum and teaching the class.

Congratulations & Xie Xie
David Wheeler & Burk Dowell



Protect Your Partner

I guess this is my ranting for the last year! Aikido, according to the founder, is the art of loving protection and peaceful reconciliation. I also consider this as part of all the internal arts. As one disciple of the Aikido founder said in addition to several Chinese internal artists: Don't make enemies!

Over the last year one of my 'sermons' has been: "Protect your partner." On the other side of this, don't practice with a meathead or someone who hurts you. Many times as we do partner work our partners many be too young to realize they are forcing the technique or applying more pressure than is necessary. There are several way to handle this but what's important is that we just don't accept the situation!

During one of Bernie's workshops he mentioned trusting your instincts and walking away from situations you don't agree with.

"Don't check your brain at the door!"

Annie Walker

Early on in my training as one of my teachers took a dislike to me (yes it could happen), being young and naive I thought that his excess power and the abuse I took during applications was training. It turned out he was showing displeasure with my attitude, which I didn't understand at the time.

Please understand, when performing wrist locks and nerve techniques, there is pain involved. If not your partner isn't performing the technique correctly and it won't work in a real situation. Also, it won't increase my range of flexibility if my partner doesn't do a real technique, so we can train harder and more realistically. At the same time there is a line that is crossed with using too much force or being just plain brutal.

I've been lucky in that most of my instructors had the skill and maturity to do the techniques with efficiency yet not torture the students.

In the last few months I've been viewing various disciples of the founder of Aikido and how they interpret his words and art. In addition, I've been studying how they move and where their concentration is. What I seem to be looking for is how they handle themselves as they demonstrate and teach. Actions show who we really are whereas speech can cloud the issue.

Peace, harmony, and centeredness. Where is it? This not only applies to Aikido but all arts. Brutality is abuse regardless of art.

I've watched videos of the Russian Systema, Aikido, Taiji and Bagua applications. All in all there is a commonality to all the top masters in execution and movement.

First of all, in my opinion, all the highly skilled practitioners move effortlessly. They don't show really much exertion, force, or extra power. They don't slam the attackers to the mats or force them down, they permit them to fall and help them to fall. It doesn't look like they are punishing their partners.

Second, they move naturally and casually instead of talking

stances and moving like a movie martial artist. The movements seem so casual that, for someone not knowing the art, it looks fake. They move comfortably within their own bodies and range of motion. There is no extra exertion, macho bull****, or power tripping. Now again, a strong technique will send your partner flying or dropping to the ground but you don't have to add extra to it if the technique is done correctly.

Third, attitude! I've watched tapes of Cheng Man Ching, Morihei Ueshiba, Koichi Tohei, Tamura sensei, V. Vasiliev and all have this big smile on their faces during the applications. There is a joy and whimsical attitude during fast and furious attacks. Though there may be showing off in their movements there is no obvious "look at how powerful I am" in their execution of technique.

Our goal is to develop health, skill, centeredness, and flowing with the Dao (Aiki). It's most important to protect our partners from our own ego and abuse. Though I say often, "It's all about me." This relates to my focus on moving myself instead of trying to manipulate my partner. At the same time it's my responsibility to keep my partners safe during the movement and technique so that they feel safe in launching an honest, full committed attack so I can study the movement and technique fully.

I've heard some master's claim that training needs to be hard and sever. However, the best of the people I've seen, though they train hard and seriously don't teach or encourage the brutality I've seen with those emphasizing being tough.

PARTNERING

We are not fighting in class, we are learning and practicing to polish, refine and learn new skills. Most often when practicing an application the focus is only on getting our partner down instead of the process of the movement and technique.

If you keep doing what is easy for you, or your favorite technique, then you aren't learning anything new. You aren't expanding your range of motion and ability to deal with various situations.

*If all you can use is a hammer,
then all problems will be dealt with as a nail!*

Also keep in mind you may be enforcing and practicing bad habits. Why are you in class or attending a workshop if not to learn from the teacher?

As the founder of Aikido said:

Willingly begin the cultivation of your spirit!



Congratulations!

Passing Aikido 4th kyu exam:

Francine Seders
David Wheeler
Sonny Mannon
Bob Iden
Bob Mills
Ed Baxa
Jim Doulong

Form completions:

Jim Harmon - Dragon Palm
Adam Gehrke - Dragon Palm
Patti Char - Dragon Palm
Stephan Illa - Old 8 Changes
Sonny Mannon - Nei Gong Bang
Sonny Mannon - Chen Taiji 96
Brain Johnston - Bagua Striking Set



New DVDs Available

Bernie Lau Aikijujutsu Collection
Bagua Zhang Basics
Harris Sensei Workshops
Tuishou & Sanshou soon to come!

Merging Sessions

The Internal Arts Training session, usually the 3rd Sunday of the month will now be merged with the Instructor's Training session. It will be the 1st Sunday of each month. We will spend 1/2 hour on teaching methods, techniques and principles, then the remainder on skills training.

Like it? Promote It!

Enrollment over the winter for various workshops (and some classes) has been enthusiastic but the groups have been small. The Jo, Xing Yi, Sanshou, and others. If you like them, promote them. I'm currently working on possible changes to future club programs. Also, with the talent we have in the club you might talk someone into a workshop or offer one. Dojo is usually available Fridays, Saturdays, & Sundays.

Teaching Rotation

As more members become certified to teach, this also expands the range of presenting and teaching the various arts. To make use of all the talented instructors in the club some of the classes or sessions will have a monthly rotation of who is teaching. This has already taken effect in the Roushou class. Andy, Burk, David, and Mike will each be teaching for a month in rotation. I've gotten very good feed-back on this. We'll be slowly doing this in other classes.

Workshops

Xing Yi - John Camp
Aikido - Andy
Aiki Jo & Short Staff - Andy
Internal Arts Festival - group
Bandon Dojo - group
check the web for more

Wuji.com
Xin Qi Shen Dojo
8316 - 8th Ave NW
Seattle WA 98117



Happy Springtime

How I got here

(at Xin Qi Shen Dojo.)
by Mike Ullmann



When I moved here from Texas in the early 1980s, I had three goals in mind: Hike in actual mountains, kayak in an actual ocean (not the Gulf of Mexico) – and learn Japanese martial arts from an actual Japanese.

In Texas I had studied, for years, both Karate and Aikido. Both my senseis were white guys. We'd have visiting teachers from Japan, or Hawaii, swing through with some regularity, but it felt somehow wrong learning these Oriental arts from Round Eyes.

On arriving in Seattle I visited, several times, the Seattle Aikikai dojo. The level of Aikido I saw there was impressive. But the atmosphere was tense. Nobody seemed to be having any fun, and the (Japanese!) sensei seemed remote and removed from the action on the mat. Also angry. I now think Andy must have been one of the students on the mat, this would have been 1981 or very early 1982. I decided this wasn't a dojo I wanted to belong to.

A year or so later I moved to a house just across Aurora from Green Lake, and exactly two blocks down an alley from the Phinney Center. Walking by I saw a notice: Phinney Dojo – Aikido, Andy Dale, sensei. Not Japanese, I thought, and so I ignored it. For years. Until one wintry night, in between hiking and kayaking seasons, when I had nothing else to do and walked up the hill and into class.

It was fantastic. Andy was teaching on these old wrestling mats that kept sliding apart (I assigned myself the task of mat minding) and it was obvious not only that he was very good, but that he could teach. That's a critical distinction. I came back with my gi and stayed until Andy dropped Aikido in the late 80s. One of the great things about those years was the diversity of the folks on the mat AND the semi-regular visits we'd have from people like Dave Harris and Sid Woodcock. Also trips to the old Washington Aikikai and to Vancouver. And Don Angier.

When Andy stopped teaching Aikido I tried attending his Tai Chi classes for about a month, and discovered my attention span was inadequate. I also tried classes at the Seattle School of Aikido, but didn't like the style then being taught there. So I dropped the art (and moved to Olympia, then Kent), but told myself that if Andy ever started teaching it again, I'd be back. While living in Kent Pam Cooper taught an extension class in Aikido at Highline Community College that I attended as a ringer, and was so happy to be rolling around again that I showed up for her next class at the West Seattle School of Aikido and signed up. That lasted one night.

Commuting from Kent to West Seattle, practicing, then driving home, took close to four hours after work at a time when I was already drowning in upper management chaos.

In August of 1998 we were looking to move back to Seattle and I thought I'd try to track Andy down. I thought it unlikely that this traditional martial artist knew anything about the Internet, but when I searched I found his astonishingly huge Web site. It was, in fact, considerably bigger than his initial Xin Qi Shen Dojo in Magnolia. And on the Web site, the announcement that he was starting Aikido again in September. We didn't actually move to Seattle until Halloween, so I spent the first two months commuting from either Kent or Bellevue (where I worked) to, essentially, Discovery Park, and then back to Kent. Since that first Aikido group was mostly his senior Tai Chi students, I figured it behooved me, the outsider, to sign up for Tai Chi as well.

That was going on eight years ago. Andy has gotten better and better. And he does, on occasion, act very Japanese.

Member Profile Mike Ullmann

It's amazing what you find out when you ask members to write about finding the dojo!

Mike, even when he was new member years ago, is one of the core pillars of the dojo. Typical of someone studying Japanese martial arts, the minute he joined classes this was his dojo and he was determined to take care of it. He immediately treated it as his own instead of as a visitor helping it run smoothly and stay clean.

Mike was just promoted to Nidan (second degree black belt) in Aikido this March along with Burk. This was a long overdue promotion and the test they took is actually equivalent to a third degree black belt test at Aikido Hombu Dojo.

In addition to Aikido, Mike has also spent a great deal of time studying the Yang Taiji systems. He is now accomplished with the long form, push hands, and sanshou. Also, he will be testing for his Roushou Teaching Certification this April.

Now every once in a while I'll say you should be up at 5:00 am practicing in the park. Well, Mike teaches a 6:00 am Aikido class at the Seattle School of Aikido. Who else is ~~not~~ dedicated enough to get up at that hour and practice?

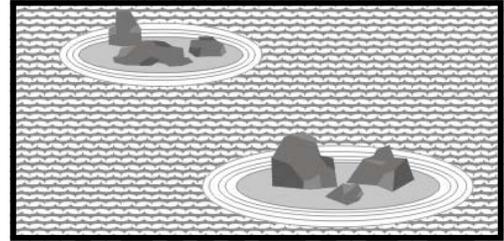




Shoshin
Beginner's
Mind



EMPTY YOUR CUP



What's Going On?

or Uh-ho he's pissed!

When not in class it seems I'm spending most of my time editing and burning the videos of our workshops. The Internal Arts Festival was 14 hours of video and has taken several months to finish. Currently I'm working on the footage from Dave's February workshop at the dojo.

As I watch and edit the videos, it amazes me how many participants either don't see, don't understand, or ignore what the presenter is teaching and doing. Instead of studying what is taught or the movements and how the presenter is doing the movements, quite a few just do their own thing or just mess around. Reverting to old habits, techniques, or common moves already known.

No uke-ship = no refinements

Once in a while I've heard, "This is the way we do it at our school." or "This is what I'd do." Why pay for a workshop just to work out? I assume taking a workshop is to learn from the skill and insight of the presenter. If you can't change your movements and adjust to other methods of dealing with a punch then you're in a rut, or your responses are very limited and your skill level is very limited. If you're not interested in expanding your range then there is no reason to take the workshop.

Look at the teacher or presenter. Do they have a skill or finesse that you don't? Are they someone you think is good and talented? Do you want to attain their skill level?

A List:

- Empty your cup when you take a workshop, even if you 'think' you know the material. Come to learn something new or another way of approaching what you may already know.
- Listening of course is important but even more so watch! Notice how they move, copy how they move. Watch how they apply the technique, not the result of the technique. The way they apply the technique is what gets the results, not the

result.

- Don't assume you know more than your partner. Don't lecture your partner or ramble on about what you think . . . PRACTICE don't show off and unless your partner is an absolute beginner or asks for help let them try and try again.

Remember we are practicing 'principle' based arts not mere techniques. Skill is being able to work on various levels and having 'volume' control. Being gentle when working with a beginner, being firm (not hard) when working with someone your own level.

A List:

- Can you do the technique slower and more controlled?
- Can you be lighter or softer to your touch?
- Can you stop at any point?
- Can you feel your way through the entire movement?
- Is your footwork the same as the teacher's?
- Are you copying the movement just like the teacher?

WATCH THE DVDs if you have them. Watch the background. Lot's of info there if you pay attention. If you're in the frame were you doing the technique like the presenter or were you in your own world?

Did the technique feel like sensei? Dave's footwork was casual but exact, who paid attention and copied that? His touch was light and he hooked - didn't grab or force.

Looking at the video participants many were taking stances, grabbing & using much strength in techniques. This was the same at the Internal Arts Festival. Stances are something you already know. Expand your range, increase your abilities.

Watch the DVDs of the various workshops three times:

1. First watch the presenter
2. Second, watch the presenter's footwork
3. Third, watch the people practicing in the background.