



Xin Qi Shen Dojo

WUJI.COM
8316 8th Ave NW
Seattle, WA 98117
206-234-8794

Summer 2006

© 2006 A.T. Dale

Relaxation: A Spiritual Practice

From the first moment you begin class you hear those frustrating words: 'Relax! Did you know that many languages don't have the word relax? Instead of saying relax, it's usually something like: let go, release, loosen, soften up.

Most of my teachers have talked about relaxation as a natural state, a state when we return to calmness, health, and the unity of mind and body. As I think about it more and more I don't think relaxation is natural at all. And, there are many types or degrees of relaxation from completely loose to an athlete's alertness.

I consider relaxation of mind and body as a spiritual state. Only when the mind is calm can the body truly relax. And, if the body isn't at ease the mind can't relax.

When I'm talking about spirit or spiritual I am referring to a state where we are calm, centered, clear, and at peace with ourselves. Now that's true relaxation. There are few people I'd describe as being close to that state. Those individuals usually have a casual and happy-go-lucky air about them. Almost an "I don't care." attitude. What goes on around them doesn't touch or move their center.

In order to relax we have to basically

just 'let go.' Let go of our posturing, or our need to control, manipulate, or force our views, beliefs, or opinions. No needless reaction to words or actions. What comes to mind is the Wisdom of the Great Round Mirror.

I try my best not to tell students to relax since the opposite usually happens. Or, they become frustrated. Instead I prefer asking them to be comfortable. Once you're comfortable you're able to relax. If you're not comfortable then there's no way you can relax. All new members of Xin Qi Shen Dojo get the following homework (for the rest of their lives): at every red light, every line you have to stand in and wait, TV commercials, stuck in traffic: take a moment to see if you are physically comfortable. If not, then adjust your stance, loosen up, try to figure out why you are uncomfortable and let go. Then proceed about your task.

It's daily decrease, not daily increase. Learning to be comfortable within our bodies, with circumstances, and events. This, of course, is a continual process. What we each need to ask ourselves is what's important? Being healthy and happy or in continual tension and conflict? Moving from, and as center

(Continued on page 2)



Wisdom of the Great Round Mirror

1. A mirror will reflect absolutely any object which comes before its surface, it will not refuse to reflect any object. All are equally accepted.
 2. There exists no distinction between good and evil, big and small, beauty and ugliness, sacred and profane for the mirror. The mirror reflects such huge things as mountains and oceans, in the same way it will reflect a tiny insect. This is an equality of acceptance, there exists no value judgment, definition or concept, only the object is reflected.
 3. The mirror reflects the mountain as a mountain, and the ocean as an ocean, it accepts things as they are without changing them.
 4. The mirror never keeps a reflection after the object is removed. It returns to its peaceful state ready to reflect anything that comes up without sticking to anything.
- Cultivate your mind like a mirror.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Relaxation	1
New Classes	2
Ukemi	
Meeting Your Teacher	3
Certifications	
Form Collectors	4

(Continued from page 1)

instead of being blown in all directions by the winds of events, words, and life's situations.

Another saying comes to mind from the Zen tradition:

"A warrior has no opinions, a warrior is simply aware."

As we practice our forms are we practicing for showing off, exercise, or to develop a following? Shouldn't we be practicing to strip away layers of tensions and desire? Skill will come. As we practice *tuishou*, *roushou*, or any partner work, are we doing it to show what we know, to control or injure our partners, or to learn from the situation? How to surf, stay centered and safe? We should be studying ourselves in this particular situation.

Class and practice. This is one easy area to polish ourselves. Too often I see students practicing with the assumption that they're learning specific movements to deal with real attacks. The real lessons are in body movement, balance, centering, learning about

ourselves, where we're tense, where we're controlling, where we fight and clash, where we aren't centered or over our feet. Class and partner practice is teamwork to learn and polish the principles not merely throwing someone down, or demonstrating who is better or showing off or comparing our practice against others.

Question: When you learned to drive what did you practice? I practiced the techniques of driving and awareness of events during the time I was driving. Have you ever had to veer out of the way of a cat, squirrel, biker? Have you ever had to slam on the brakes to avoid running into or over something? When you drive are you constantly looking for that squirrel or event to happen?

Due to your driving practice, which involved technique and awareness training, I bet you were able to swerve out of the way or brake before hitting the cat. (I sincerely hope so). However, you didn't practice that, you practiced technique and awareness drills. Techniques in a

dojo, no matter how free form, will never be the same as in real life. We can't simulate a real-time situation within the dojo. On a small level we may be able to simulate the attack but never the intent, anger, desperation, momentum or desire to really hurt each other. Dojo practice is training on various levels. If a car comes out of the blue and is about to hit you, you'll jump out of the way, or you'll duck a strike and see an opportunity to counter or escape.

I see dojo practice, whether it is form work or partner work, as practicing to relax within various situations. Actually it's a study of ourselves to see where we aren't relaxed and then figure out why not and fix it. This is that stripping away bad habits and attitudes, letting go.

People care too much! It's good to want to be correct and strive for improvement but I see too much effort creating blockages. The minute a student doesn't give a *sh*** about who is watching or how perfect their form is, it's usually the most correct I've seen them practice.

Autumn
New Classes



Principles of the Internal Arts - Sifu Iden - Sundays
Sanshou 7&8 workout - Laoshr Flener - 3rd Sunday
Aiki & Ki classes (no throws) - Dale Sensei - Wed 6-7pm
Morning Basic Bagua - Laoshr Hartshorne - Tuesdays 8-11 am
Bagua Qi Gong & Meditation - Sifu Dale - Saturdays 8:30-9:30

And more: check wuji.com/classes



Ukemi: The art of falling?

Ukemi is usually translated as the art of tumbling. More correctly it is the art of receiving. Uke receives the technique nage (thrower) issues.

All instructors and practitioners I know agree that they learn the most from being uke. From being thrown by their teachers and advanced practitioners. If you know how the technique feels when done correctly it's a great insight and help into learning how the technique should be done.

Burk and I were discussing the value of ukemi and the perspective of Henry Kono, an Aikido instructor in Canada. In a lecture Henry mentioned that the first two years learning Aikido at Hombu Dojo (Aikido headquarters) was only taking ukemi.

Kono sensei mentions that the uke is the one who is actually doing real Aikido, not the nage. Ukes have to keep themselves safe, flow, blend, and stay centered while being thrown. Uke doesn't just stand there and have the technique done to them. Uke gives the Nage something to work with, force, power and momentum. Uke, not only has to be in better shape but more adaptable. Every Aikidoka knows who is a good uke and whose isn't. It's also usually the person who's Aikido is very good.

When showing a technique a sensei usually will pick an uke he doesn't have to worry about while demonstrating the technique. One the sensei doesn't have to hold back or fear the uke can't handle the power or movement of the throw. (There are a few instructors that don't care and either hurt or brutalize their ukes).

But this is true of all arts. The one who is a good partner is usually also the best, or will be, at the technique and the art. Uke = receiving. This is the same as Zheng Manjing's "investing in loss". Practice being a good uke instead of a technician.

**Congratulations
Belinda, Bruce,
Mike, & Tom**



Mike Ullmann
Roushou teaching
certification #3.



Tom Flener
second dojo member to
achieve a Qi Gong
Teaching certification



Belinda Frazier
3rd Xin Qi Shen Dojo
Qi Gong Teaching
certification



Bruce Brown
Roushou
teaching
certification #4.

WHEN YOU MEET YOUR TEACHER

Most new students seeking instruction in the martial arts, not merely the internal arts, seek instruction in the art instead of from a teacher. They want to learn the techniques and forms. Seasoned students and practitioners actually seek to find a teacher that has 'it' or can convey 'it'. Having 'it' means that the individual personifies the skill and/or the philosophy of the art. Someone who embodies the art.

The seasoned practitioner seeks an instructor instead of a style or art. Then they seek to learn *from* the teacher instead of being taught by them or merely learn the art. Much of learning is stealing the art from the teacher. Regardless of how sincere the teacher wants to share and teach the art, much of the time their personal ability has passed what they teach. More precisely, they may think they are teaching what they are doing, but are actually teaching either how they were taught or how they did the movements last year.

I feel I've been very, very lucky in meeting the teacher's I've

had. If you don't feel the same then keep looking! In addition, there are a few masters I just wish I'd been able to study with from the video tapes I've seen. Aikido master Nishio sensei is one, Bagua master Liu Jing Ru is another. The big question is WHY?

The film I've seen of them shows me they have IT. Their movements embody the art, as I understand it. I don't know who they are or what they're personalities are like but as I see them perform their art they optimize what I think and understand the art to be or become. It's the direction I'd like to head in.

Look at your teacher. Look at the art. Look at the philosophy. Look at the emphasis of the organization. What you learn will either lead you there or influence you in that direction. That is also a part of your study.

Though you are studying with a teacher or a school don't follow blindly or expect to be spoon-fed skill. As you learn and practice are your movements becoming similar to the teachers? Good, or why not?

How Many Forms Do You Have Or Need?

We have small ones, big ones, skinny ones, etc. Short forms & long forms. How many do we need?

We have the 12, 19, 24, 36, 48, 91, 96, 108, 365 and many in-between forms. Abbreviated, short, long, longer, shorter! Why?

Are we doing the internal arts to learn forms or learn the internal arts? Does learning more forms mean you'll get more skill? How many of us have the time to spend on learning another form, much less the memory to pick up another. How many Yang or Chen forms do you need? Why is one better than another? Are the movements different within the various forms of one art, or are they the same or similar, just put together differently? Less is more!

Why collect forms? Especially ones that are alike? Master Tchoung taught us the long form first. After that we learned the short form, only it wasn't a different form, it was a modified version of the long form removing the repetitions.

When teaching beginners Taiji, regardless of Yang or Chen, as we do the opening I announce: "Now you know the shortest Taiji form." The minute you learn the opening movement, or a Taiji exercise, you have a

short form! You also have a long form depending upon how many repetitions you do. Then as we progress to Grasping Sparrow's Tail or Lazily tying coat it's the second shortest Taiji form. I've started doing this with the weaponry too. After learning a new movement in the form we add the closing so the form feels complete.

From here I usually make new members do it on both sides so this short symmetrical Taiji form will benefit all muscles in the body in a balanced way. That's enough. This way if a student can't attend classes at least they have a complete series to work on and when they come back we just add the next step.

As new members make it to Single Whip they will have the 4 most important Taiji postures: peng, lu, an, Ji. In essence that's all we need to have, practice and refine. The rest is filler.

We can add more progressing on through the rest of the long form if the student is interested, or onto the 24, 48, or long form, but the beginning, the short form, doesn't have to be relearned, it's the same. No use in learning another choreography or tying up more memory. The rest is embellishment, exploration and refinement.

Having seen the structural and coordination damage from skating athletes jumping and

landing in only one direction I do insist on symmetry. Taiji is the **ONLY** martial art traditionally taught one sided. For entertainment just ask a Taiji student to punch left handed.

When learning to type there is no problem left vs right hand. You don't think about it. Same with driving or playing piano. Equally important while we focus on health or martial arts the muscles of the body should be balanced. If we approach it as nothing special there won't be a problem. When we learn one side first, then try the other side then there tends to be a greater difficulty.

All my teachers insisted that 20 minutes of quality practice is enough. But they also said it take us about 15 minutes to get there, to get the kinks out and then to quality practice. A 10 minute form doesn't do it except reinforce memory. So even with the short form we need to continually practice for at least 20 minutes.

Kung fu = time on a method = skill.

INTERESTINGLY When I say this is the next move: No problem. When I say now we do left side: Big problem.

用意不用力

Mind Not Strength

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



Enjoy Summer!