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Xin Qi Shen Dojo
8314 - 8th Ave NW
Seattle WA 98107
info@wuji.us.com

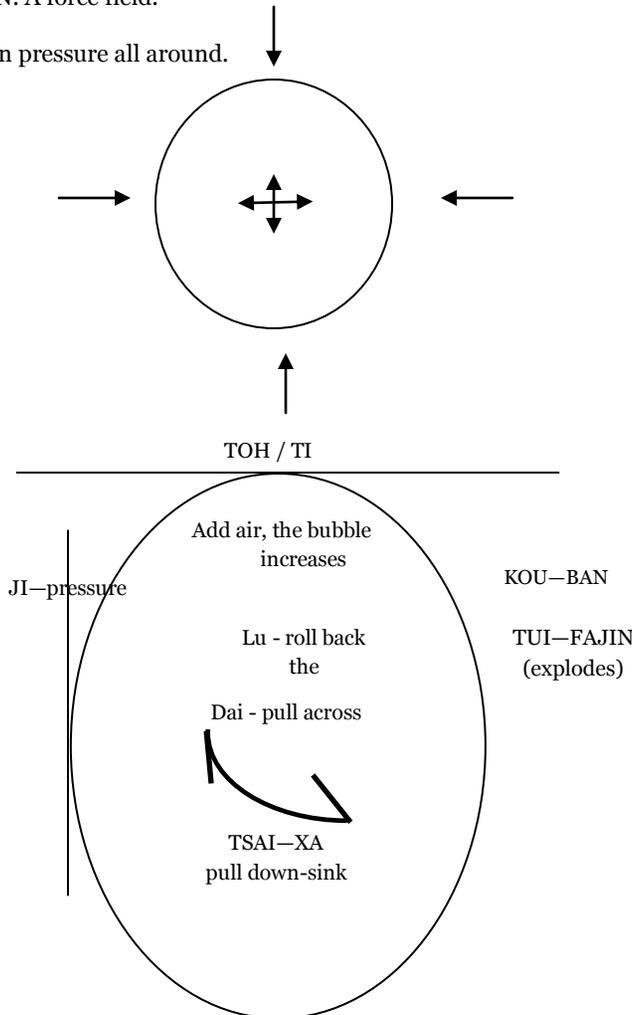
A SIMPLE LOOK AT THE INTERNAL ENERGIES

If you draw a circle, automatically there is a center.

If you talk about the internal arts you automatically have PENG jin. No Peng, no Taiji, Bagua or Xing I.

PENG = FULLNESS, NEURTAL, A WELL INFLATED TIRE OR BALLOON. A force field.

Peng, even pressure all around.



Many changes this year!

We all seem to be in the same boat, times have either taken their toll or are challenging. It's not just us but talking with other instructor's enrollment is down and things just aren't as they use-to-be.

Life just gets in the way. Getting married, job change, moving, babies, and family responsibilities. They all get in the way of practice and training. I really miss my own personal practice and time-out.

Dojo members have seen a few changes in the last few months. I'm happy to have Karin Collins as part of the dojo offerings. Karin is a student of Sam Masich and teaches Yang Taiji Quan in the Yang Cheng Fu lineage. For reference, our Yang Taiji Quan descends from Yang Shou Hou (Cheng Fu's older brother). Both good. Karin also teaches the melt system (check karincollins.com for info.) Saturdays mornings Karin and Ken Wright are teaching a pushing hands session.

Due to popular requests our Chen Taiji class is now in the mornings, Sunday 10:15 -11:30, after the Sanshou class. It's nice to have both classes back to back again. Keep in mind there is always room for new members in all classes.

As you've probably noticed there are more plants in the dojo. Part of the trials and changes going on is Emerald City Gardens had to close on Leary Way NW. We will be using the dojo as a "pop-up store" until our online store is able to take off. Official open hours are: Friday: 12-6 pm, Sundays 12-5pm. It'll be indoor plants and succulents.

All in all it's a year of transition. The year of the snake shedding its old skin. What's going on with you? I don't believe guilt is good so don't go there. Do you miss practice? I do. Is there room for practice or study in your day or week? If you don't have time for classes :(what about trying to remember and practice what you do remember (or fake it) as you wait for the microwave to heat that water. If you can't go to sleep, practice the form in your head.

With the new changes look forward to more workshops, added classes, and openings for private lessons.

Arts? Principles? Techniques? Or worship?

As I've stepped out of the Aikido world and look at it with new eyes I find myself wondering about many things. O'sensei was a genius, his teachers were also remarkable in their times. The same holds true in the internal arts of Taiji, Bagua, Xing Yi, and Qi Gong. Each master had a unique intelligence, creativity, and skill that they tried to pass onto the next generation. Trying to pass on a special understanding they had. They had an insight due to their training, experience, and wisdom.

As I've stepped away from Aikido, I look back at many of my colleagues and teachers that actually worshiped the founder of the art over the art he created or the lessons he was trying to impart. Most of the Aikidoka that teach seem to think the founder was IT! No one else will achieve the level of skill or understanding of the art or have the entire globe of techniques he did. I think about masters like Koichi Tohei, Nishio sensei, Saotome sensei, Saito sensei, Toyota sensei, and many more who were brilliant and expanded on the teachings of the founder.

Aikijitsu master Don Angier once said, "the mark of an excellent teacher is that his students break away and create their own unique method." This is true of Sokaku Takeda if you look at his history and his students. Even in the Chinese internal martial arts, variations and various styles grew from the main systems that are now called official 'styles'. Within each you also have sub-styles, not to diminish them but to point out the creative ability of those incorporating the basics and teachings into their own expression. It called an ART!

I've studied with Master Yueng, Harris sensei, and many others. I've been in classes with Harris sensei and had his counsel many times in learning from various instructors.

Tohei sensei was amazing. However it's because he had a view of Aikido and felt free to pursue it, expand beyond the formula he was taught and trained in. Master Tchoung Ta Tchen created the 'double form' instead of following the traditional method. On a visit to Tchoung with Master Gao Fu, after seeing our Yang section one, she commented, "You've changed it." He responded with, "I've made it better!"

Back to the main point. Study the art, the principles, and see how they benefit your life. It's great to admire the founders, teachers, and masters, but what does that get you? "I'm in the lineage of the Fu family." Big deal, it's a cool style but you're not Fu Cheng Sung. Being in the lineage or studying a style doesn't impart skill. Your effort and creativity does. Move beyond.

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

What's the difference between a nudge, a push, or a shove?

What's the difference between a bump and a body slam?

What's the difference between someone touching you or grabbing you?

What's the difference between someone grabbing you as a friend, as a stranger, as someone trying to cling on?

It's all about volume control. Kindness has a certain touch, force for control has a lack of gentleness.

That's what we're trying to learn and discover practicing the applications of these arts. Ideally, how to apply enough force and pressure to neutralize the situation and do no more harm. Koichi Tohei sensei would say, "practice relaxation and your reactions will eventually be relaxed. Practice tension and you will react tense. Practice fighting and you will fight. Practice non-fighting and you will seek harmony." What you practice the most will eventually become your natural and daily reactions.

It's not appropriate if your father-in-law is drunk, gets expressive, and in order to control him you take him out (i.e. break an arm or two). You'd be better off controlling the movements, regardless of intense, and then subduing him or leading him where no one would be impacted. Master Woodcock had a few great techniques for this.

Now my question is Wait it's coming . . . Why do you practice applications?

Personally I think they're fun.

Are you waiting for that one time when someone will drop down from a tree and attack you?

As Dave Harris Sensei would say, the applications and volume control enhances our health and awareness. It expands our nervous system and awareness which ultimately improves our health by expanding our nervous system. This is play. All animals when they are young play fight. It's not a win or conquering situation, it's moments of 'got you', then run away. Or wrestle in a playful manner, not a combat situation.

The volume control thing. Enjoy the feeling and dealing with pressure. Enjoy the sneaking out of the pressure and force. Learn from the pressure as to how you are off balance or out of alignment. Enjoy the non-verbal communication with your partner.

What are you learning? Do you know? What do you really feel? Do you know? When you are working with a partner can you feel the knot in their shoulder? Can you feel their desire to get you or to win? Can you feel their uncertainty in their movements? Can you feel their balance or lack of?

More importantly, as a good uke and partner, can you help them instead of resisting them? Can you guide them to a better application, movement, or balance? When I'm uke I try to feel what's happening. Often you'll hear me say, "drop your shoulders", or "tuck your hips", or "loosen your knees." It's because I can feel, as you doing the technique, your tension or misalignment. If I were a bad uke I wouldn't say anything, or I'd resist, or I'd counter. You'd learn much less. A good uke is to let their partner know what would make the movement better, not why it's bad.