



Application Principles

Intention is the Master Key to Tai Chi.

Applications create intention – deciding what to do, when to do it, and how to get it done in the simplest fashion. Intention creates energetic pathways causing nerves to thicken and strengthen, brains to grow larger, muscles to become more responsive. Creativity flourishes. Even if you have no interest in the martial aspects of Tai Chi Chuan, understanding applications will aid in mind/body integration while doing the form.

Here are some principles that lead to acquiring skill in working with applications.

Act naturally

This is so important. Tai Chi is natural movement done in a relaxed, fully aware state. Once you have decided on a course of action based on intention, do it naturally, or practice until it comes naturally. Reflex action is the fastest way to respond.

Relax

Tension blocks the flow of energy, thus slowing and restricting movement. Examine your actions with relaxation as an underlying principle.

Use Chi not Li

Chi is natural, relaxed energy that is smooth and flowing. Li is muscular, hard energy that tends to be choppy with jagged edges. Find a way to do your applications with the least amount of strength possible.

Neither too little nor too much

In Tai Chi, we seek to find the middle way if possible. Use the amount of energy needed – no more or no less. If one uses too much, it is a waste. If too little, you won't get the job done. Practice until you learn the correct amount needed for the task.

Not too early or too late

There is an ideal time for applications to be most effective. If one is too early, the opponent will still be centered and you will have to use excessive forces to overcome his defenses. If too late, he will have time to regroup and center. The idea is to keep the opponent from finding his center, his rootedness, and his ability to move smoothly.

Not too close or too far

Each action has an optimum distance for either defense or offense. Remember the Six Harmonies ~ foot and hand for distance, knee and elbow for mid range, and hip and shoulder for close in. If you use the wrong tool for the job, it most probably won't work, at least not optimally. Each distance has a different stance length and width. The further away, the longer the stance. Longer stances, for punching, etc. can use a greater length (the distance between the front heel and the rear toe), narrow width (between the inside of the front foot and the heel of the rear foot), and a greater angle of turn out of the rear foot in relation to the front foot angle. The shorter the stance, the wider the base of support in relation to the length. Also, the angle of the rear foot in relation to the front foot is less. One also needs to consider the fact that shorter stances are used for quicker moves while longer stances give more time for defense, offense, and power.



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Position yourself correctly in relation to the opponent

The safest place to be in relation to the opponent is behind him. Next would be to the sides, then corners, lastly directly in front. Try to design the application so you gain the advantage of position. Make him face the sun, look up to you, turn his head.

Decide the correct response and position yourself to accomplish this easily. Are you striking, kicking, throwing, or taking him down. Each requires a different position to be effective.

Open the doors and windows before entering

The doors are openings into the center of the opponent from the torso down. The windows are opening to the upper body. A good defense will have these openings closed- guarded. It will not be easy to find a way in, and as you try, you are vulnerable.

Make the opponent open the doors and windows for you. Let him come out and look for you. You can storm his castle, smash through the doors and windows, but it takes an overwhelming force – not in harmony with Tai Chi principles. Once he opens the doors and windows, you can move in without much effort. Experience teaches how to encourage the opponent to open for you.

Yin precedes yang

The yin phase of each technique is the initial phase of join, stick, and lead neutralization. This determines how the yang phase, attack will be accomplished. Yang against yang is force against force. Yin against yin means nothing is decided and the problem will keep coming back. First join with the energy, understand the problem, and then deal with it in a way that is comfortable for you.

Duei La

All energy expressions, applications, and movements require internal counterbalance of forces to insure staying in the root if something unexpected happens. If you push with all your might, and the object suddenly moves when you don't expect it, you do not want to lose your balance. So all moves require an internal energy moving in the opposite direction when going forward, send some energy back. When moving up, balance with some energy moving down. When moving right, some energy moves left. This is subtle and requires practice to understand and put into practice. Remember, Tai Chi is natural movement and action. Duei La is natural action done by everybody at all times, and can be intensified for use in martial applications and moving meditation by being aware of it and practicing it in the form and push hands.

Be patient and wait for the right time

All fruit ripens in it's own time. All situations will evolve in a natural way. Do not be in a hurry to accomplish a goal you set for yourself, or an outcome you plan ahead of time. Take the time during the yin phase to fully understand the situation. Take the time to gain control before you move into the yang phase and react. If you are centered and relaxed with a calm mind, the body will respond appropriately.

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