



# Tai Chi Newsletter

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## Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone

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### The Three Regulations of Qigong

Regardless of the form or philosophical basis, all Qigong has this much in common, they all require that the practitioner learns to regulate their body, breath, and mind, commonly called the Three Regulations (sān tiáo) or the Three adjustments: regulation of the body (tiáo shēn), regulation of the breath (tiáo xī) and regulation of the mind (tiáo xīn). The coordinated regulation of the body, breath, and mind helps to guide and regulate the chi (qi) and is crucial to eventually learning to regulate the chi directly.



The synchronized coordination of the Three Regulations is used to either just mobilize and guide chi within the body, which may be useful in cases of chi stagnation manifesting as stiffness and pain for example, or it may be used to move chi into and out of the body. This can be done simultaneously to rid the body of pathogenic or otherwise unusable chi, and to gather healthier chi from the environment, to be stored at the end of the practice.

Additional components may be layered into a practice that work with specific body tissues, organs, glands, nerves, and body cavities among other things, that can amplify chi flows, open a body more completely, and awaken other inner senses. This is more correctly called “neigong”, or inner practice. Few teachers make the distinction between calling a practice a qigong or a neigong, mainly because even the word qigong is new to many westerners and adding another new word may only create confusion when they are essentially part of the same continuum.

#### Moving and Quiescent

Most complete qigong systems include a balance between moving and stationary practices. This is one way of creating a balance between Yin (quiet) and Yang (active) energies within a body.

The stationary practices may be done standing or sitting. Whether done standing or sitting, quiescent qigong practices remind people of meditation, and so are often referred to as meditation or as “standing meditation” or standing post (Zhang Zhong). While it may be tempting to use that familiar nomenclature, and it is true that both moving and stationary qigong practices may serve as a bridge to meditation, qigong is not meditation. Something different is going on here. Whether

physically moving or still, the mind is both quiet and in active sensing mode, attending to the Three Regulations and working with the chi. This is also a deeper aspect of the Regulation of the Mind, using the mind to regulate itself, which can present some unique challenges. This “qigong state of mind”, as some masters call it, is necessary to progress farther in qigong cultivation.

Moving practices are extremely varied, depending on the type of qigong being practiced and the specific desired result. In most qigongs, the movements are flowing and graceful. Although these can be qualities that initially attract some people to the practice, most importantly the movements are designed to help guide the chi and encourage it to flow in the ways necessary to achieve the intended results.

#### Storing Chi

In moving qigongs there’s usually a more even balance among the regulations of body, breath and mind, so it’s somewhat easier to get a stronger circulation of chi throughout the body. In stationary practices, the mind may do more of the work, and because of that it’s possible for some chi to get stuck in the head. Accordingly, it’s especially important to attend to drawing chi out of the head after a stationary practice, and then sink it to penetrate the body. There are many possible ways to sink the chi. While it may be done by the mind alone, some teachers like to insure this happens by teaching their students to physically wipe their body down, from the top of their head to the lower dantian, at the end of their practice. In addition to clearing the head of chi that may get stuck there, this facilitates the movement of chi to the lower dantian.

The lower dantian is a main energy center in the body, located slightly below the navel and towards the spine. It’s where chi is stored at the end of any practice session, whether moving, quiescent, or combined. Storing chi at the end of a qigong session is like putting money into your savings account. The more you put in, the more you will have to draw from when you need it. Without storing at the end of the session, much or all of the gathered chi will dissipate, negating most of the value of the practice.

#### Effort in Qigong Practice

In defining qigong above, the concept of applying “effort over time” was introduced. When practicing qigong, or in trying to accomplish anything in life for that matter, there should be a sense of “full effort without strain”. Too often when we think of effort, there is a sense of working at or even beyond our full capacity. This type of effort is problematic if you are trying to become healthier and stronger. First, it creates more tension in

your nervous system, leading to increased stress. Second, you leave yourself no margin of error, no safety zone, if you are working at your maximum. This sets you up for various types of strain and injury, most often occurring at whatever is your particular weakest link. Obviously, this is not a way to build health.

In some daoist traditions, working at full effort without strain is referred to as “The Golden Mean”, or colloquially as “the 70% rule”. This guideline states that after ascertaining your true 100% capacity, you proceed at 70% of that capacity. You can then put full effort into that 70%, without strain, maintaining a margin of safety, and as your 70% ability increases, your 100% capacity is also increased commensurately. You’ll always have that extra 30% to draw on if you really need it.

### Concluding Remarks

Different teachers and authors will also have their favourite approaches based on their training and experience. The important thing to keep in mind in that regard is that while any one qigong may not intrinsically be better than any other, there are qigongs (or other related practices) that may be better for you, depending on where you are at this point in your life. Discuss any concerns you may have with a prospective teacher before beginning a practice, to make sure you’ll be getting what you need. Doing any qigong will likely be better than doing none, but with a little research you may find just the right fit for you.

You really do have to put some effort into your practice, ideally making it a part of your daily life, but just 20 or 30 minutes of daily qigong will yield greater health with more energy, a peaceful heart, and a clear mind, which will positively impact every part of your life. Although you could take it well beyond that point if you choose, even if you “only” got that far, how wonderful would that be?

I hope this has been helpful and informative, that it’s answered some questions you may have about qigong and raised a few more for you to consider. I wish you all the best on your journey!  
By Steven Cardoza

(First published in the Spring 2008 issue of Chi Journal)



**World Tai Chi & Qigong Day**  
One World ... One Breath  
Hundreds of Cities -  
Over 70 Nations  
Saturday 30th April 10.30am - 12.30pm  
www.WorldTaiChiDay.org  
Cotteridge Park, Franklin Rd,  
Cotteridge, Birmingham B30 2HG

### Students & Teachers

In the early 60’s I studied at the Taipei Koushu Federation in Taiwan. My teacher Mr. Ch’en Mei Shou was keen to teach his five element Hsing-I, but put us through 3 months of general Koushu forms first. He liked to linger with us over a pot of soup, feathers still on the chicken, and offer some reflections. One evening he shook his head back and forth and said, “I am really not teaching in the right way! If I was teaching in the right way I would teach the rooting first, but then all the students would run away. First, I have to know your character!”

Twenty Five years later I was visiting Ben Lo’s class at the Clement Street School. That evening was the second session of a new beginning class. It was the middle of the winter and not many students came. Ben turned to me and said, “I have to ease up. I have already eased up. If I teach the way I used to teach, all the students will run away.”

A few years later at one of the camps, Ben invited Marshall Ho as a visiting guest Master. Ben Lo and Abraham put on quite a show. Abraham and a student (Bill Helm maybe) did what he called his “A&B” form (san shou), which he apologized for, saying that it was a “smuggled form,” not really one derived from Professor Cheng’s teachings. Then it was Marshall Ho’s turn to perform, but Marshall was relatively new to T’ai Chi and he did not have the demonstrable soulful form that Ben and Abraham had demonstrated. He spoke before he demonstrated saying something to this effect: You are all very fortunate to have such great accomplished Masters to study with. Their form shows the highest level of t’ai chi practice. I do not have such fine form to show you. I have not studied so intensely. I only began to learn t’ai chi when I was an older person, but I am teaching many students. “I must say I believe a little bit of t’ai chi is good for everyone!”



The Master struggles to make his teaching method and art adaptable to the times that we live in.

Gregg expressed his appreciation for the time that he shared during his recent visit with me and my students. The visit raised questions for him. What do you do once you have made a significant investment in the basics to achieve a higher level of demonstrable skill in the push-hands? We have to consider the teacher-student relationship and also the potential to develop your art with a practice partner of your choice.

There is a big difference between how I relate as a teacher to a student who has only recently gotten a hunch that he or she would like to try a little t’ai chi and a more advanced student. New students may not yet know what t’ai chi is. For a hundred students heading into the form for the first time, maybe one will continue to practice. Then there is the student who’s interest in t’ai chi has already matured. He or she has read a good deal of the literature, completed the basic form, and now expresses some enthusiasm about further cultivations. The teacher has to sense that there is mutual respect. The teacher is looking for students that he or she can teach full heatedly. But when is the right time for some extra work, details and shared insight? How much time do you have? Does your t’ai chi interest-maturity permit you to recognize the opportunity that a teacher offers you? What kind of opportunity are you looking for?

Teaching is not just about more basics. Teaching is about SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE. Where do you get this special knowledge? I am thinking about your concerns, Gregg, and I suspect this is what you are inquiring about.

T’ai Chi is an art. Each artist has his own taste. We choose from the elements that come to our attention in this great debate and in our personal experience. Push-hands leaves plenty of room for impulse, eccentric timing and creative solutions. Some

recognize classical lessons in a personal way that make those specific lessons their basics by choice. "...the spirit rising from the bottom of the spine—which is kept ram-rod straight and in a plumb erect position....," for example.

That form correction does in fact carry over into the push-hands is basic, foolish to argue with fundamentally, but subject to myriad interpretations. The feeling of buoyancy, the possibility of tilting the pelvis, a momentary rise or fall, is also part of the push-hands art. How do you weigh each stated principle relative to another? When is one idea more urgent than another? When must you suck to your root dead-nuts on—this is all part of the special knowledge that you go about collecting. Having stored experience in silence over many years a teacher may then be able to articulate points that have become cognitive to him or her, maybe not. But you have to be able to feel what the teacher is doing. You have to have access to higher level practice. There has to be a spirit to spirit investment, teacher to student, student to teacher, student to student. This takes a significant investment in time and it is a learning path that cannot be embarked upon without matured interest and mutual respect.

Students come and visit my classes in Seattle from time to time. They have come from cities in China, from Taipei—ah but mostly from California! From the perspective that I have as a teacher I can tell you that I always feel that I never get enough one on one time with anyone. People are way too committed and busy when they travel to visit classes. Modern life.

Take a look at this response that I received yesterday from an old student who I invited for some extra practice in the park during his proposed visit to Seattle: "I don't know if your suggestion was for you and me and perhaps Pam or if you might still lead practice if there were six of us. Tim, Pam's oldest, lives in Seattle, and has the baby for Saturday. Mary Wong is full Chinese, lives in Seattle and met Pam on the internet, then subsequently met Tim. All expressed interest. Lotta options. Anything goes. I'll be in touch." A second email arrived a day later altering the plans to invite me to dinner instead. The times given were exactly the times that I told them in advance that I had a regular scheduled t'ai chi class which defacto they have already talked themselves out of. I get used to it. I certainly am not going to miss my class!

There is some old Chinese etiquette advice: "Don't leave the dinner table until after the older guests leave." Now I am surely becoming one of the older guests and I am feeling that the younger guest are leaving too soon. When I first heard Martial Ho's remark that a little bit of T'ai Chi is good for everyone, knowing our seriousness at the time, I protested. Now I can think of many people who would be better off with just that little bit. I have to sincerely ask myself if I am teaching in the right way. We each have few hours in which to choose our priorities. No blame. I can tell you though, that there are several students that I would really like to spend much more time with, but they have a million things to do.

My interest in the Push-hands is in either winning with ease, comfort and relatively soft light knowledgeable application, or when trapped, losing easily. I think panting and getting all worked up during push hands, trying to win every point, demonstrates nothing more than one's own ineptness. This is the view that I hold dear. Someone else may have a different way of stating their personal goals.

by *Saul Krotki*

## Five Principles of Tai Chi Chuan Skills

Mr Benjamin Lo of San Francisco.

Five basic principles for the development of good Tai Chi skills are:

- 1) Relaxation.
- 2) Separating Ying from Yang.
- 3) Turning the waist.
- 4) Keeping the body upright.
- 5) Maintaining the hand like a beautiful lady's hand.



"People always say to me [Ben Lo], 'You always emphasize relaxation. But how do I do it?' I say, 'Do the form.' That is the only way. A lot of people ask me: 'Do you have any special posture that can help me relax?' I say yes. They ask, 'What?' I say: 'Do the form.'"

Of the five principles, the first one, relaxation, is the most difficult, he said. The other four, he said, everyone can do. "You don't even have to know Tai Chi Chuan to do them perfectly. The problem is that when you put them together, you cannot do it, especially when your legs start burning, aching, shaking and you forget about all the principles. A lot of people are like this."

"Everybody thinks that they are relaxed, but when they meet somebody better than them, they become hard. So we cannot be perfect. It is a lifetime challenge. We just keep doing and doing, refining and refining. Just the basic things."

### PLEASE NOTE:

Please send your Newsletter contributions for future issues to [markpeters@kaiming.co.uk](mailto:markpeters@kaiming.co.uk)

## Martial Arts Movement

Following a discussion at a recent trainings session on extending and contracting muscles, I thought it would be helpful to explain types of movement. Basically, there are three types of movement. Movements that we choose to make, movements that happen regardless of our choice, and movements that fall somewhere in between the two. We will look at them one at a time and hopefully I will manage to explain why it is that understanding them makes us better at what we do.

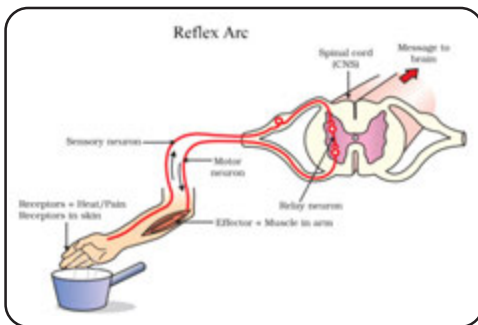
### Category 1 – Conscious Movement

This is the one we are all familiar with. We decide what we want to happen and we initiate the movement. Opening a door, switching on a light, the list is endless. These movements have a tendency to be relatively simple as keeping conscious track of complex movements is not easy. If you have ever watched a baby grow up and learn to move you could argue that even these simple actions are combinations of other internalised actions. Moving our hand to pick up a cup uses more muscles than I can bear to count.

## Category 2 – Unconscious Movement

This is where things start to get interesting. Humans, like many other animals, have a fascinating and complex neural structure. Our sensory nerves do not pass directly to our brain, but synapse at the Spinal Cord. This leads to a very clever phenomenon; the Reflex Arc. Basically, what happens is thus. A sensory nerve picks up a signal, this signal travels the length of the nerve and then hits the spinal cord where it is transmitted to the brain, we then experience the sensation. However, this is not all that happens. When the nerve impulse hits the spinal cord, it also triggers a motor nerve impulse. We move before we know we need to move. In evolutionary terms, this gives us a massive advantage. We automatically pull away from potentially harmful events without having to make a conscious decision that yes, the event is potentially harmful and yes, we should probably pull away.

As martial artists, we should understand this phenomenon and how to manipulate it in others. Tapping the tendon underneath your kneecap and watching your leg jerk upwards is a fine example of reflex action.



## Category 3 – The Internalised Movement

If we repeat a movement enough our body remembers it. At least that is how it seems. In actual fact, our cerebellum remembers it for us so the bit of our brain we live in does not have to. This allows us to perform increasingly complex movements. Our body carries out the simple action automatically and we can then add a new layer of complexity to it. Hopefully we then internalise that and so on... We call these internalised actions Motor Pathways (though there are many other fine terms, muscle memory, physical intelligence are just two I have come across) and for convenience we divide them into Fine and Gross. Fine Motor Pathways involve the small muscles of the hand (there are also graphomotor pathways but as these are all about writing we can safely ignore them) and enable us to play the piano, the violin, to type at a computer keyboard, to roll a cigarette whilst driving (That is a bad thing on so many levels I probably shouldn't have written it). Gross Motor Pathways enable us to do bigger tasks using our limbs and body.

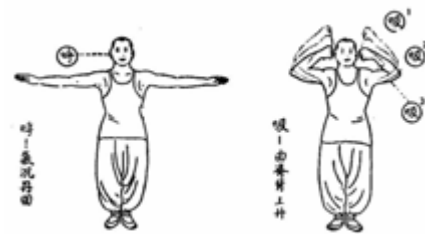
Category three movements fall in between the first two categories because we can choose to initiate them, but the fine detail of the movement is automatic. This is why we practice the form over and over again, so that correct movement and alignment can be imbedded. However, it should be stressed that these movements are not reflexes. They are simply internalised actions. We need to learn them so our cerebellum

can remember them and replace old habited poor posture. By working on the fundamentals patterns are formed. It is why every effective self-protection system is based on a foundation of default actions (natural actions). It is worth bearing in mind that your brain is capable of internalising anything and everything you want, if you do it enough. The limit is your body, your motivation and your imagination. Train with a purpose even if the purpose is the enjoyment of refinement.

By Mark Peters

## Great News for Kai Ming Club Membership

We've renegotiated our insurance policies and managed to cut costs significantly meaning from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022 membership drops from £21 to £15 per person. This will still include a FREE t-shirt in the first year, monthly newsletters, and discounts on club items and events.



## Are you interested in qigong workshops?

I am running 3-hour sessions live on zoom on

Thursdays 1-4pm for £30

January was Ba Duan Jin, March Yang Family Qigong.

Both were well attended and feedback great.

**Next session will be**

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May – Tai Chi Ruler**



## Advanced monthly training sessions.

Sessions are held each month for 3 hours at Weoley Hill Village Hall, Bournville, to enable instructors time for their own training and for more advanced students to gain the time to develop a deeper understanding of the application of tai chi.

Sessions are Sunday's 9.30-12.30 at £30 per person.

### 2022 dates

April 10th

May 8th

June 12th

September 3rd & 4th (weekend camp)

Oct 9th

Nov. 20th

Dec. 4th

