



Wudang

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

II/19



From Sifu Paul

A return to nature's light cycles, the impending penumbra, snow blowers and shovels await their assignments, the chill in the air... it must be November. The month of Thanksgiving is here, and there's much to be grateful for and a lot happening at the studio. Take a moment to find out in this issue of *Wudang*.

Closed for the Holidays

The studio will be closed Nov. 28 for Thanksgiving and also the week of Dec. 24 through Jan. 1 for the winter/holiday break.

A Place to Rest and Talk

Our community room is up and running. Come on in! The room serves multiple functions: as an information center, a Push Hands room, a storeroom, and now as a rest-and-refresh area. Thanks to member Ann Nelsen for her design skills in creating a more open, welcoming, and attractive space while preserving its functional uses with elegance and simplicity. Well done, Ann.

It's a Match!

Our matching-grant fundraiser has reached our goal of \$5,000. The \$5k figure will be matched, bringing the grand total to \$10,000! Thank you to all of you who helped us achieve our goal.

Our studio is unique in that the quality and depth of our course offerings are paired with a mission to make T'ai Chi and related



practices accessible and affordable to all. Our current income from memberships falls short of our operating expenses. Without the donations from the autumn fundraiser, additional projects like studio upgrades, preserving our video library, seeding our education fund, technology upgrades, and more would not be possible.

This is our only fundraiser for the year, and although the matching grant has been a success, we will be keeping our fundraiser open through the end of the year. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, so all of your donations are tax deductible.

If you would like to support the studio and its mission and are looking for end-of-year tax contributions, please consider making a donation anytime through the end of December. Your contributions help us realize our mission, grow our membership, and become even better at what we do.

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**Fundraiser success:
\$10,000!**

Question of the Month

Question: There is a moment during the warm-ups when we tap the chest and are instructed to “wake up” our thymus gland. What is the significance of the thymus gland, and why should we give it special attention?

Answer: The physical thymus gland is located behind the sternum, between the lungs and above the heart. It is a part of our lymphatic system and produces thymosin, a hormone necessary for T cell production. T-lymphocytes, or T cells, are a specific type of white blood cell that protects the body from viruses, infections, and other threats. The thymus is in its prime from childhood through adolescence, when it reaches its maximum size and produces the full supply of T cells that the body uses throughout its lifetime. They are stored and distributed in our lymphatic system.



In adults, the thymus begins to lose its ability to produce T cells, typically stopping production around the age of 50. At this point, we have to use the T cells still active in the body. As we become elderly, the thymus gland has atrophied to a mere lump of fatty tissue in many adults. This degeneration is called thymic involution and causes a reduced immune response, making us more susceptible to illness. Hormonal changes in the body caused by stress, trauma, and aging seem to trigger this condition.

The function of the thymus was unknown in Western medicine, and it was largely ignored until the 1950s. In contrast, the thymus gland was known to the ancient Greeks as the

central seat of vitality. In India, there are seven focal points of electromagnetic fields in the subtle energy body known as chakras that are arranged in a column along the spinal cord, from its base to the top of the head. Between the heart chakra and the throat chakra, there is what is called the “higher heart” chakra that is linked to the thymus gland and represents the higher transpersonal aspects of the heart, its nature of unconditional divine love and as the “seat of the soul.”

In China, within the Taoist tradition, the thymus gland is known as “the little heart” in the core of the middle elixir field—one of three primary energy centers in the body—and is considered the seat of the will to live and is connected energetically to all the different organs and meridians (pathways of Qi flow). When one is healthy, this inherent will to live causes it to respond immediately to stress but also prevents infections and disease.

The diminishing capacity of the physical thymus gland is accelerated by stress, trauma, negative emotions, social isolation, etc. Conversely, it maintains its physical function longer and stimulates the creation of energetic immunity by connecting to the emotional attitudes of love, trust, gratitude, and other positive states. It responds to movement, breath, and meditation, making T'ai Chi and Qigong beneficial activities; massage, energy healing, tapping, sound and color therapy, singing, positive affirmations, and prayer can all be effective, especially when directed at the thymus.

We can't stop the sun from traveling east to west, as an old saying goes; but giving our amazing thymus gland a little attention just might slow it down a little.

Contact Us

For timely updates, follow Twin Cities T'ai Chi Ch'uan on **Facebook**.

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The thymus gland
is considered the
“seat of the soul.”

Upcoming Classes and Schedule Changes December/January

There are exciting classes on the horizon this fall/winter.

Monday Night Weapons, Jan. 6, 7:30–8:30: We will begin to learn the T'ai Chi Fan Form. The practice of T'ai Chi Fan develops grace and beauty in your empty-hand forms. In their utilitarian form, besides being used to cool oneself and provide shade, fans were made of fine paper and silks and were decorated as works of art.

Chinese fans also have a history as martial weapons. Fighting fans had ribs made of sharpened steel and were used for blocking, joint locking, point striking, and stabbing in the closed position and slicing, slapping, and distracting in the open position. Because of its disguised nature as a weapon, the fan was favored by women and gentleman-scholar/martial artists in China and was adopted by internal schools because it utilized “softness to overcome hardness” principles.

The class is open to anyone who has finished the Solo Form. This is a great form for those who are not particularly interested in the weapons training aspect of T'ai Chi. Principles of movement as extensions of the Solo Form will be emphasized.



T'ai Chi 43 Postures Form, Tuesday, Jan. 7, 6:00–7:25 p.m. and Saturday, Jan. 11, at 11:30 a.m.–12:25 p.m.: We will learn Symmetry 5,

which covers the postures Turn and Chop, Parry and Punch, Step Forward Ward Off Right, Cloud Hands, High Pat on Horse, Separate Foot, Kick With Heel, Punch Downward.

Come and learn Symmetry 1 if you've finished the Solo Form.



**The Healing Tao Wednesday at 7:30–8:30:
The Healing Tao Sampler Series:**

Beginning Wednesday, Dec. 4, we will begin a three-part miniseries of 60-minute Healing Tao sample classes.

Dec. 4: 6 Healing Sounds and 5 Animals Qigong: The Six Healing Sounds is one of the oldest qigong practices in China. It is a calming energy practice that uses movement, sound, and visualization to balance the emotions. This is a seated, standing, and moving practice that clears negative emotional patterns affecting the five vital organs. This is a dynamic and easy-to-learn practice that leaves you feeling clear and revitalized.

Dec. 11: Microcosmic Orbit–Expanding Orbits Qigong: The Microcosmic Orbit is the best known of all the Taoist alchemy practices. This meditation moves Qi in two deep energy channels within the body, bringing increased circulation and healing throughout. There is both a standing and seated practice. We will focus primarily on the Standing Orbit Qigong during this 60-minute sampler class.

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**Healing Tao Sampler
Series starts Dec. 4**

Dec. 18: The 8 Extraordinary Vessels Qigong:

The 8 Extraordinary Vessels are the deepest energy pathways in the body in the Chinese medical system. They store, distribute, and regulate vital energy in the body. This Qigong is not part of the fundamentals course and is not usually taught at the studio. Come experience a Qigong designed to open the Central (Chong), Front (Ren), Back (Du), Middle (Dai), Leg (Qiao), and Arm (Wei) Vessels in the body.

The Healing Tao Inner Smile, Jan. 8 through March 11, 7:30–8:45, \$144 (free to members), is a seated meditation practice that is the foundation practice of the Healing Tao system. We will learn to move neutral energy (yuan Qi) through five natural pathways in the body with a focus on developing a deep sense of unconditional self-acceptance.

We will learn one pathway per week, adding a new path to the one from the previous week, until we can meditate through all pathways in one meditation session. Inner Smiling is a simple and practical way to connect to what the Chinese call “ling,” or our inner heart essence, helping us to be more accepting and spontaneous in expressing our unique and natural soul pattern.

This is a beginner-friendly class, so if you haven’t meditated before, there will be plenty of helpful guidelines and assistance in helping you build your practice in a natural and gradual manner.

Eclectis: Boxing Fundamentals Saturday 9:30–10:25: Learn the fundamentals of boxing and acquire the five elements of martial arts—speed, timing, accuracy, power, and foundation—thru carefully selected drills and practices. Great for reflexes, conditioning, and understanding the core principles of martial arts.

This class teaches how to strike and throw combinations of punches with proper body mechanics, flow, and rhythm to maximize leverage and conserve energy and also how to train with a partner using safety training gear: focus mitts, punch balls, and foam sticks. It’s also a lot of fun. This class develops an



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Grandmaster Wai-lun Choi demonstrates a Liu Ho Pa Fa guard position.

understanding of the striking aspects of Tai Chi. Beginners are welcome.

12 Animals Class Saturday 10:30–11:25: The 12 Animals is the foundation practice for the Liu Ho Pa Fa system. Beginning Saturday, Dec. 7, we will teach the Mandarin, a mythological animal that develops coiling energy and lateral striking movement. Beginners are welcome.

The Liu Ho Pa Fa Main Form will be taught Thursday evenings beginning Jan. 9, at 7:30–8:30 for those who have completed one or more cycles of the 12 Animals forms. This is what the Animals Forms have prepared you for.

This is the original form of the Liu Ho Pa Fa System as created by Li Dong Feng. It is a deep and intricate journey through the six harmonies and eight methods, with many techniques, fighting strategies, and beautiful movement sequences. The form is in two sections; each section is subdivided into three smaller sections. We will begin learning Section 1A, which contains the first 10 postures. Talk to Sifu Paul if you are interested in joining the class.