



stillness is the master of unrest



Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Studio

Wee Wu-Tang—The monthly e-newsletter

January 1, 2011

From Sifu Ray

"If you truly want to be free, concentrate not on what you want to get away from, but on what you want to move towards."

- Philip Carr-Gomm

Instead of making New Year's resolutions for what you don't want, try to envision what you do want. This is also a great time to reflect on the past year to see where you started and dream of where you want to go. The Chinese say the year reveals the day's mystery, which means that with a year's worth of time behind, many questions can be answered.

The Chinese New Year falls on Feb. 3 this year, but the Studio will celebrate it on Feb. 26. A sign-up sheet for the banquet will be in the Studio soon.

Lion Dance practice will be every Saturday this month; try to make as many as you can.

My newest book, "Lessons with Master Liang," is now available in paperback, with a limited number in hardcover. You can preorder at the Studio.

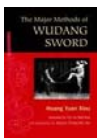


Two additional book recommendations:

"Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World" by Prince Charles, ISBN 978-0061731310



"The Major Methods of Wudang Sword" by Huang Yuan-xiou, translation by Dr. Lu Mei-hui, ISBN 978-1583942390



"Those who hammer their guns into plows will plow for those who do not..." - Thomas Jefferson

Teacher Training Seminars / Refresher Course

Saturday, 6:00-8:00pm

January 15: Class Structure

March 12: Tutor Training and Update

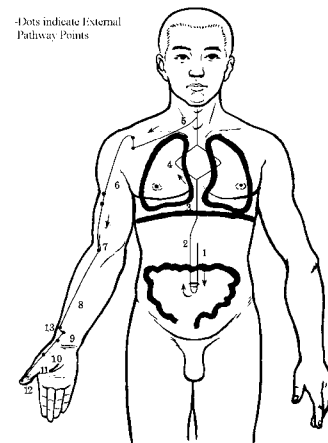
Seminars are free and open to any current Studio member. If you are a regular tutor at the Studio, you need to have attended either the October or November session PLUS the March session. There are new policies and teaching strategies being instituted for assimilating new students.

T'ai-Chi: A Meridian Exercise by Matt Peterson

It is well known that T'ai-Chi is beneficial for health. There are a number of perspectives from which to approach the reasons why. Generally speaking, from a western perspective, T'ai-Chi is an exercise for the whole body that is fairly low impact, develops strength and muscle tone, improves spatial perception and balance, improves cardio-pulmonary function, has psychological benefit, and more. The reason this activity has these benefits can be summed up under the western definition of "exercise," which relates T'ai-Chi with a number of physical activities that would for the most part share the same benefits. However, from a Chinese medical perspective, one can look into health and physiology, specifically meridian function, for a deeper understanding of T'ai-Chi and its effects on the body.

One way to organize the body in Chinese Medicine is meridian theory. Briefly, a meridian is a perceived pathway for qi (chi) and blood in the body that has no physiological manifestation but is known due to pathology, or illness, along its pathway. There are 12 meridians for the body's main organs, as well as eight "extraordinary" meridians that have their own functions. All meridians have both internal and external pathways along which disease can manifest symptoms. More widely known are the external pathways that are depicted on acupuncture charts and are the sites for treatment in acupuncture and other modalities, such as acupressure massage. The internal pathways are not to be ignored however. The treatment that takes place on the external pathways travels through the whole meridian, including the internal pathways, to affect all the areas of the body through which it passes. Moreover, the meridians all connect and intersect both internally and externally creating a circuit of movement throughout the body.

T'ai-Chi as an exercise is always moving the body, and therefore the meridians. Stretching and contracting, opening and closing, the sequence of postures stimulates all the meridians. One of T'ai-Chi's foremost principles is to lower the breath to the tan t'ien in the abdomen. Among the numerous reasons for doing so there is a Chinese physiological correspondence. The Lung Organ in Chinese Medical theory governs the breath and its function is to grasp the energy of the air we breathe and distribute nutrients out to the body surface. Its meridian begins



Lung Meridian pathway, including internal and external branches

internally in the abdomen, not high in the chest where its external pathway appears (see illustration). The T'ai-Chi principle of breathing with the abdomen stimulates the internal origin of the Lung Meridian with every breath. This promotes the function of the Lung Meridian and its role in supporting the health of the body by strengthening its defense to the outside world and contributing one-third of the body's total energetic makeup through inhaled air (with the other two-thirds being the energy from food and your inherited constitution). The Lung Meridian is also the beginning of the sequence of the flow of qi and blood throughout the meridian circuit of the body. So in addition to the movement of the postures manipulating meridians, the deep breathing also stimulates internal movement that will carry through all the meridians in the body.

Exercising the meridians can promote balanced movement within them which is the definition of health in Chinese Medicine. Some of the profound healing ability of T'ai-Chi as an exercise can be understood and explained from this perspective and the function of the Lung meridian is but one element of a greater interconnected system. Yet, to paraphrase Sifu Hayward, just because we can explain the method of action does not remove the mystery of its functional impact. One of the strengths of Chinese Medicine is its preventive approach to maintaining health. T'ai-Chi is a powerful tool to use in that pursuit.

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