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Subject: Sandy's T'ai Chi Chih Newsletter - August 2014
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A Newsletter from the Guide of T'ai Chi Chih



Justin's Insights

FLOW SOFTLY

"FLOW SOFTLY" should be the first command a teacher gives a new T'ai Chi Chih pupil. Not "move the hands and feet" and not "try hard—it's exercise," but "Flow Softly." If the student understands that, and tries to do it, there will be no other problems. Even a child can learn how to place the hands and feet.

Softness is important because of the Meridian channels, thru which the Chi flows. If there is tension or any strain, such as muscular effort, the meridians will contract and the Chi will not flow freely.

Correct shifting of the weight, proper Yinning and Yanning, circularity, these are all important, but they come after the student has learned how to move properly. If the student, after a few lessons is not making progress, it is best to tell her or him to forget what has been learned and go back to learning how to move properly. Many teachers have not really learned how to flow from the T'an T'ien, and they should be anxious to bring themselves up to par. This can be done by auditing Teachers' Training Courses and coming to the Conference, where there is much practice of the fundamentals.

Trying hard causes the student to tense muscles, and this defeats the very purpose of T'ai Chi Chih.

"The effort of no effort" is a phrase the teacher should remember and frequently use. If the teacher does the movements well, and explains them well, the student will tend to follow in the teacher's footsteps and, over a period of time, gradually sink into the Essence of T'ai Chi Chih
~Justin Stone
VFJ Dec.1999

THE VITAL FORCE ARCHIVES:
<http://www.taichichih.org/free->

More or Less: Which is it?

Reading over my notes from a workshop, I found this question, "What does it mean to deepen our practice?" My response was, "Learn more, understand more, feel more, delve deeper into the heart of T'ai Chi Chih."

Upon reflection maybe focusing on less, less, less, would be a better answer; less effort, less tension, less thinking, less trying. And yet I find I have a hard time getting to less without more.

I want to understand how each movement is put together, how the principles apply, what Justin has said regarding each movement and the practice as a whole.

Here are a couple ways I use to explore my practice for more, more, more:

Explore Each Movement

- Curve/Shape of the arm/hand pattern
- Width/Size of the arm/hand pattern
- How does it start and end and are there transitions within the move to be explored, such as making the variation and letting it go in Around the Platter Variation
- Synchronicity – feel the connection of the weight shift, the yinning and yanging, and the tan t'ien and the arm/hand pattern
- Feel the whole movement unfold with the focus at the tan t'ien – Flowing from the Center

Explore the Practice as a Whole

- Take one principle and do a practice with focused awareness on that one principle throughout the practice
- Do a practice with focused awareness on grounding. Experiment with new ideas or concepts of grounding, be creative. If you usually focus on the soles of the feet try the tan t'ien or vice versa or the whole area between the waist and the bottom of the feet
- Explore the feel of "moving from the tan t'ien", what does that mean to you, how do you interpret that concept

Now for less, less, less.

After working with each movement, looking at how all the parts work together, then it is time to let go of the questioning, critiquing, working, mind engagement. Now the work is done and I can move with balance that requires little effort because I have found my correct stance and alignment. I move with feeling awareness of all the parts in harmony so there are no disturbances that wake up the mind into a questioning mode. I move without tension as everything is flowing softly and smoothly because all parts of the movements are in balance and in synch.

There are a couple of ways to approach our practice.

Materials

Justin Stone's materials may be purchased from local T'ai Chi Chih Teachers or through Good Karma Publishing.

www.gkpub.com

★ T'AI CHI CHI PHOTO TEXTBOOK APPS for both iPhone & Android phones can be downloaded and purchased online for only \$9.95.

★ The apps consists of time-lapsed photography of the originator, Justin Stone, performing of all the movements. As well as links to some movements on YouTube.

★ Important points about moving correctly are called out and special essays discuss balancing yin and yang, the Tao, the great circle meditation, serenity, studying with a teacher, function and essence, the power of Chi circulation, body posture, and more.

Purchase the Android application: Android app

Buy the application for iPhone, iPad & iPod Touch: Apple app

Additional excellent references may be found on DVD: Interviews with Justin Stone and Carmen

www.gkpub.com

And on the CD: Justin Stone speaks on T'ai Chi Chih:
www.gkpub.com

Sandy McAlister's Seated T'ai Chi Chih DVD:
Seated DVD

Pam Towne's DVD:

[Serenity in the Midst of Activity DVD](#)

Lessons with Pam via Skype:
Skype

Prepare for teacher accreditation, or fine-tune your practice

Teacher Resources:

Justin Stone's:
DVDs/Videos
Books
CDs/Audios

T'ai Chi Chih on the web: taichichih.org

[archived-past-issues](#)

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Chi Reflections

THIS PRACTICE

The result is not the point: it is the effort to improve ourselves that is valuable. There is no end to this practice.

~Shnryu Suzuki - Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind

CULTIVATING PATTERNS - FLOWING CHI

I often place my car keys in the same location when I return home so I won't have to search for them later.

As teachers we cultivate similar habit patterns in our students to help them learn and remember important points about T'ai Chi Chih. How many times were you reminded to "focus on the soles of the feet", "practice every day" and "move with softness and continuity?"

Unfortunately, some of the habit patterns we encourage in our students do not serve them well later. Consider a student who places too much attention on the checkpoints rather than focusing on the whole movement. The checkpoint focus was appropriate when first learning the movement, but eventually it becomes a distraction. The mature student is aware of the checkpoints, but passes through them without losing focus on the flow of the Chi. In this way, the teaching must eventually be transcended to realize the deepest benefits of T'ai Chi Chih practice.

Students are not always willing to do this, and develop habit patterns in response to our teaching. Eventually, we may need to

- We can do, what I call, a formal practice. That is where we do a full practice of all 19 movements and Cosmic Consciousness Pose. We do this practice grounded in the present with no distraction of correctness or mind chatter.
- We can do a working practice. This is where we work on our form with a questioning, critiquing mind. We may not do all the form, we may stop and start, do one movement many, many times, practice a movement too big and then too small in order to find that effortless place. We may just work on our weight shifts, looking in a mirror to see if we are staying level and not leaning.

Many times Justin has said "never do a careless T'ai Chi Chih practice". Whether we are working on our form or doing a 'formal practice' the intent is to be present and grounded. I feel Justin is talking to us all, students and teachers, when, in Spiritual Odyssey, he says, "I congratulate you on being a T'ai Chi Chih teacher. Please never stop trying to improve your practice; this is part of the responsibility of being a teacher."

Learn more, understand more, feel more, delve deeper into the heart of T'ai Chi Chih. Then when it is time, let go; less effort, less tension, less thinking, less trying.

Sandy McAlister -- in Hayward, California

T'ai Chi Chih Events lead by Sandy McAlister, Pam Towne, and Daniel Pienciak

Sept. 11 - Sept. 14, 2014 : **Prajna Retreat** - Aston PA with Sandy McAlister

Contact: April Leffier:
lirpaleff@rcn.com, 610-532-6753

Sept. 25 - Sept. 28, 2014 : **T'ai Chi Chih Retreat** - Pecos Benedictine Monastery, Pecos, NM with Sandy McAlister

Contact: Ann Rutherford:
ruthergary@aol.com, 505-292-5114

Oct 6, 2014 - Oct 11, 2014 : **T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Accreditation** - Old Mission Renewal Center in Santa Barbara, CA

Trainer: Pam Towne
Contact: Lisa Otero:
lisa.otero@post.harvard.edu, 805-766-1342 (cell)

Oct 11, 2014 - Oct 17, 2014 : **T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Accreditation** - Buffalo, MN

Trainer: Sandy McAlister
Contact: Deb Bertelsen:
debbertelsen3@hotmail.com, 612-805-6366
or Susan Bitney:
smbitney@gmail.com, 612-353-4968

October 17, 2014-October 19, 2014: **T'ai Chi Chih Retreat** Estes Park, CO with Pam Towne

Contact: Marie Dotts: mcdotts@hotmail.com, 970-412-9955

Other T'ai Chi Chih Events

<http://www.taichichih.org/events>

Your attending T'ai Chi Chih events is an excellent way for you to receive helpful feedback, improve your practice, and to be with other T'ai Chi Chih practitioners.

T'ai Chi Chih Events lead by Sandy McAlister, Mission Statement

The International T'ai Chi Chih Community of students and

And ...

TCCcommunity.net

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adjust or remove those patterns. The fact that T'ai Chi Chih students cultivate such habit energies indicates how important it is to be fully present when we teach. We must transmit the teaching with as much clarity as possible. Our own extraneous habit energies can distort our teaching of the movements, and may be unwillingly embodied by our students.

Many of us do not realize how readily we create and follow habit patterns in our lives. Although these tendencies can be helpful, they also foster a reliance on past experience, and can keep us from flowing with the Chi. Habit energies encourage the construction of a false identity around the self which can lead to suffering.

Remind students that "T'ai Chi Chih will teach T'ai Chi Chih." This helps them focus on the intuitive knowledge which comes from doing the movements. Encourage them to approach their practice with a fresh perspective every time, and to explore it with detailed attention. Help them develop habits based upon the feeling of the movements rather than specific checkpoints or details. This will enlarge their focus, and help their T'ai Chi Chih practice mature.

Habit patterns can help us cope with our current level of attention, but they are limiting, and do not encourage our growth. These patterns can even adversely influence our students as they learn T'ai Chi Chih. As serious teachers, we should examine our own habit energies to teach with the greatest clarity, and to directly know what is real.
~ Ed Altman
VFJ - Dec. 1994

accredited teachers is dedicated to the personal practice of T'ai Chi Chih and to sharing with the world this form of moving meditation and its benefits affecting body, mind, and spirit.

Finalized Nov. 20, 2012 on Justin Stone's 95th birthday

<http://www.tcccommunity.org/free-archived-past-issues>

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