

Exercises of Taiji Internal Kung-Fu

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Taiji Qigong is the foundation of practicing Taiji Boxing (T'ai Chi Ch'uan). A good practitioner of Taiji Boxing should be well trained in Taiji Qigong, which provides vital energy.

In practice, whatever form or whichever style of Gongfu (Kung-Fu) is performed, first of all, the disturbance of seven emotions should be dispelled for the factors of joy, fury, melancholy, brooding, sorrow, fear and shock all have close relation to the changes of the functional activities of qi.

Joy slows down the flow of qi, and overjoy is even worse. It results in short breath.

Fury causes adverse flow of qi and impairs the liver. The function of the liver is to store and regulate blood, whereas qi is the commander of blood. When the liver qi goes adversely upward, it will carry blood with it and bring about hematemeses; also, the transverse flow of the liver qi will restrain the spleen from transporting and transforming. As a result, diarrhea caused by indigestion will occur.

Melancholy and brooding cause stagnation of qi. Melancholy damages the spleen and brooding hurts the stomach. Brooding concentrates the mind and longstanding brooding upsets the functional activities of qi, followed by the stagnation of qi in the middle-jiao as well as dull digestive function of the spleen and stomach.

Sorrow consumes qi and excessive sorrow causes abnormal breath and stagnation of qi. Further the accumulated qi will be transformed into heat and heat, in turn, exhausts qi.

Fear leads qi downward to hurt the kidney and cause the incontinence of stool and urine.

Shock disturbs qi and damages the heart—the storage place of vitality. If shock harasses the vitality, the heart qi will have nothing to depend on and the vitality loses its dwelling place.

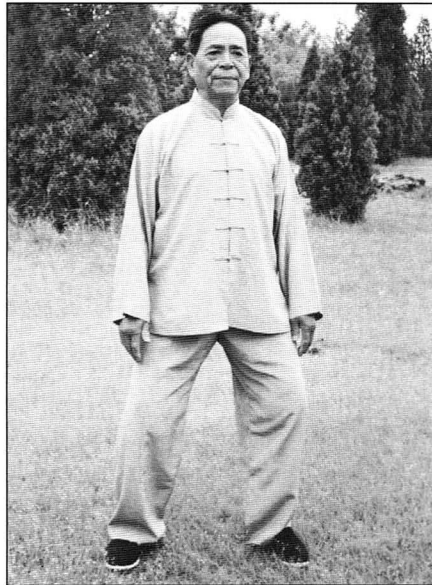


Fig. 1 Wuji

As the above seven emotions can lead to pathogenic changes of the functional activities of qi, they should be fully guarded against in practice. The practitioner should, before practice, have ease of mind, undivided attention on the middle of the body, natural breathing with mouth gently closed, tongue touching the upper palate, and exude quietness. Concentrate on Dantian and keep mind and breathing interdependent.

It is advisable that the exercise be stopped if there are some uncontrollable situations in nature or in the practitioner himself, such as sudden storm, thunder and lightning, heavy fog, dusty and polluted air, rage, worry, upset, discomfort caused by a cold, drunkenness, etc.

The exercise forms are standing, sitting, lying and skill practicing. The following is the introduction to several exercises of standing.

I. The first thing to seek in practice is Wuji—the foundation of the training of internal qigong. Just as the boxing proverb goes, the training should start from Wuji, and its pursuit is the opening up and closing down of yin and yang. Standing can ease the mind, obtain the sensation of emptiness within the body and the non-sensation of load on legs. When the practitioner enters the state of complete tranquility and emptiness, inspiration will be derived in qihai. Once qi is stirred up, Taiji will come into being. The practitioner should, by smoothing the flow of qi in tranquility, select the mean way between existence and

non-existence, form and lack of form. The purpose of entering into Taiji state should always be kept in mind, yet the practitioner has to exert every effort to create a favorable condition for the birth of Taiji instead of simply seeking for it. The practitioner can gradually sense it and obtain it, then his gongfu and inspiration grow with each passing day. When consciousness, experience and inspiration are integrated as one, the practitioner can steer to the wonderful state.

The exercise of Wuji standing can:
a) cultivate the root of inspiration in tranquility and build up primordial qi;
b) preserve qi and temperament and fill up Dantian with qi;
c) integrate the physical body with qi and make the body as solid as a huge rock; and
d) acquire tranquility physically and mentally in an empty state, hence the ejective force.

Wuji standing followed by Taiji boxing is obtaining Taiji by seeking Wuji, and it is a simple and important form out of many varieties.

1). Stand upright with feet shoulder-width apart, knees bent slightly and relaxed, arms hang naturally on both sides. Then put hands on the abdomen, with left hand on top (the right hand on top for women). Softly close the eyes, the tongue on upper palate, mind concentrated on Dantian (Fig. 1).

Draw down the turbid qi from the top of head by consciousness, imagine there is a patch of cloud coming down straight to the ground, then slowly dispersing around. Meanwhile, relax the whole body along with the descending of the cloud. When relaxed, turn consciousness first to Zuqiao then to Dantian. (See acupoint drawings on page 13.) By this time, the sense functions of the eyes, ears, mouth and nose to the outer world are lost in subconsciousness. Only by consciousness, sense and listening to the delicate changes of Dantian can one train one's qi in an ease of mind. This is shutting the four doors (the eyes, ears, mouth, and nose), or locking the door to restlessness and whimsicalness.

In the shut world, it can be sensed that the internal qi is integrated with the external one through pores all over the body.

This is meditation, in which the practitioner, being happy and carefree, feels that he is floating in the air like an im-

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mortal. Stand in this state quietly for from 45 minutes to an hour with consciousness concentrated on Dantian.

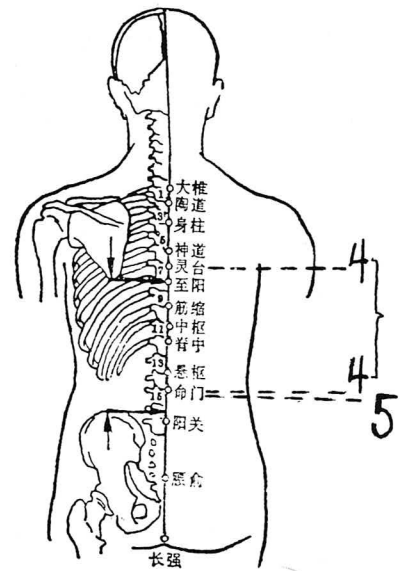
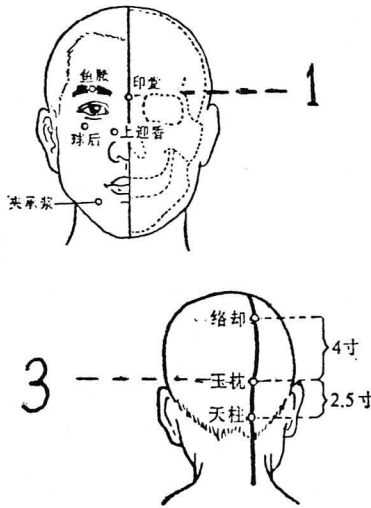
2) In the final position, gently place hands on the abdomen, massage slowly and evenly around the navel counterclockwise (clockwise for women). Each circle is larger than the other until 36 circles are made. Then, moving upwards, the hands are above the breast and moving downwards, they are on the lower abdomen. Then turn to massage clockwise (Counterclockwise for women). Each circle is smaller than the other until the twenty-fourth around the navel. Hands rest on the navel, stand quietly for a moment. While hands are making circular massage, the conscious activity within should be simultaneous with the movements of hands.

After long-term practice, the inward motion will become noticeable and harmonious with the outward movements of hands. Up to this time, the effect of practice can be satisfactory.

Calm down both inward and outward activities, slowly open the eyes, rub hands till they are hot then massage 20 times along the ears—head top—forehead—jaw.

Wuji standing stresses much on the complete whole of consciousness and qi obtained by descending qi to Dantian together with consciousness concentrated on it, from where the consciousness guides breathing.

Dantian lies in the central part of the body. According to the theory of yin-yang and five elements, it belongs to Earth in the center. In practice, the concentration of one's attention is the same as sowing seeds in the field, where they will take root, blossom and bear fruits. Therefore, in practice, Dantian should



be always kept in mind with closed eyes looking at Dantian and ears listening to the free contraction and relaxation of Dantian. Only concentrated mind can result in excellent effect of meditation. Long-time concentration on Dantian can generate qi and blood, strengthen the vitality. The experience of ancestors has proved that sticking to Dantian in

practice can bring about wonderful harmony of internal and external qi.

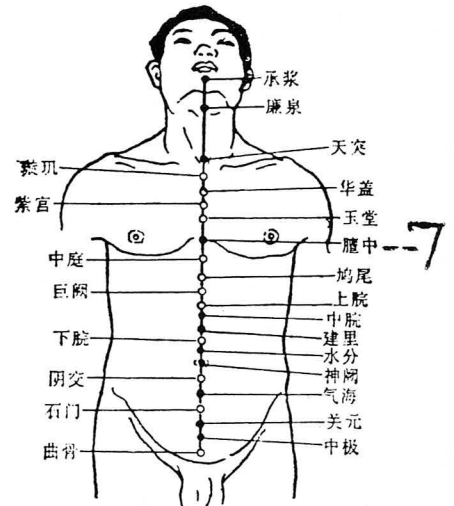
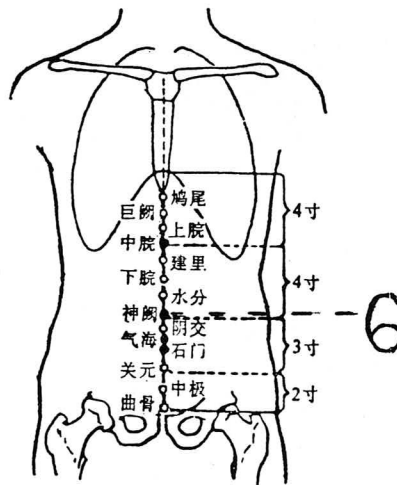
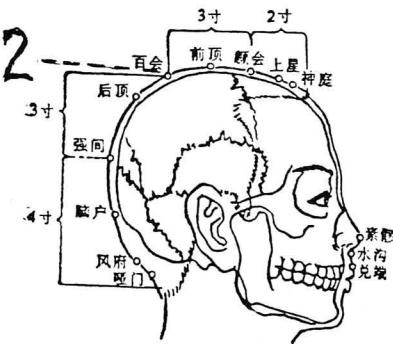
II. Obtain Qi by Inhaling and Exhaling

When Wuji standing is skillfully performed, the practitioner can further practice deep breathing which is an exercise of breathing through both mouth and nose. Pacing with it, contract the navel when exhaling and relax it when inhaling. This exercise should be performed at 5-7 o'clock in the morning on green grass in the park or open places with fresh air.

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, gently place hands on the lower abdo-

Acupuncture Points

- 1 - Zuqiao
- 2 - Baihui
- 3 - Yuzhen
- 4 - Jiaji
- 5 - Mingmen
- 6 - Middle-Dantian (men)
- 7 - Middle-Dantian (women)



men, one on top of the other, relaxed. First breathe in from the nose softly, slowly and evenly, the tongue on the upper palate. Meanwhile guide qi with consciousness from Zuqiao—Baihu—Yuzhen—Jiaji—Mingmen then directly to middle-Dantian. (See drawings page 13.) Slowly protrude the navel to its full extension then breathe out qi from Dantian from the slightly opened mouth guided by consciousness, the tongue on the lower palate. Along with it, contract the navel until qi is completely breathed out. Start again. One inhaling and one exhaling is a complete breathing, that is, getting rid of the stale and taking in the fresh. Repeat 36 times, then rub the abdomen and face.

Beginners may perform 9 repetitions of this exercise every day. If they feel

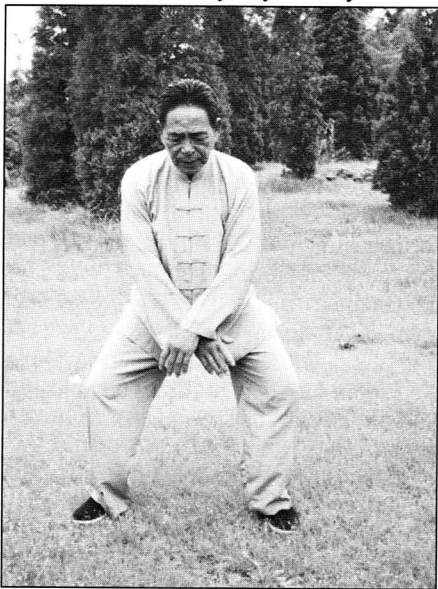


Fig. 2

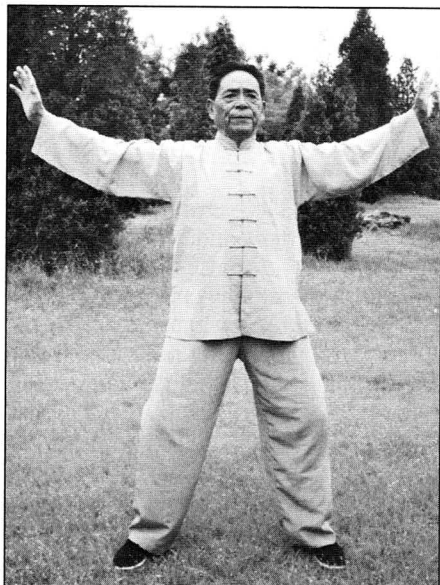


Fig. 3

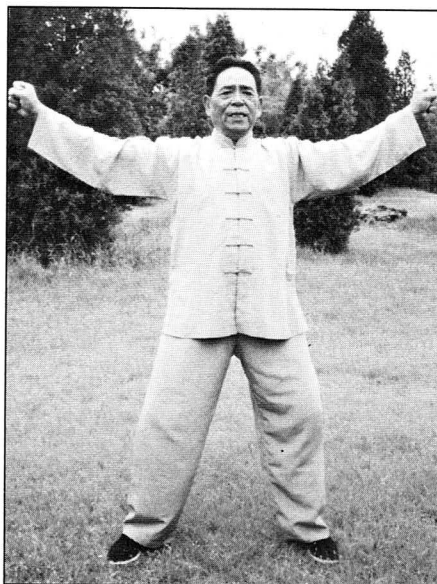


Fig. 4

no discomfort after 10 day's practice, they can increase the intensity gradually up to the requirement.

III. Opening and Closing Arms to Train Force

1) The intention of this form is to promote primordial qi and internal force by opening and closing of arms, folding and stretching of the abdomen and chest.

2) Start from Wuji form, bend the knees slowly to a half squat, cross the arms in front of the abdomen (Fig. 2), then bend the arms and slowly raise them to the chest, palms up.

3) Turn forearms inward, then stretch out obliquely upwards on both sides. (Fig 3) Keep joints of the shoulder, elbow and wrist flexible. No part should be stiff or rigid.

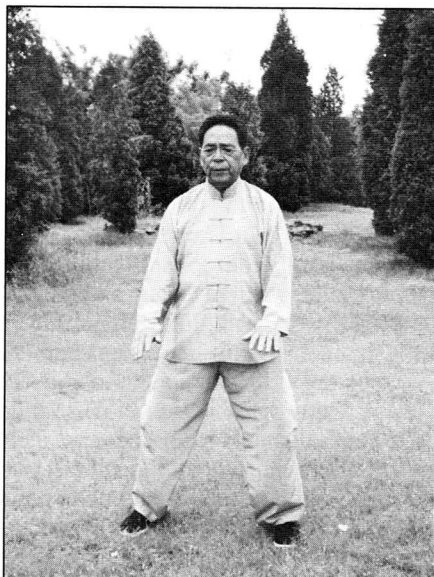


Fig. 6

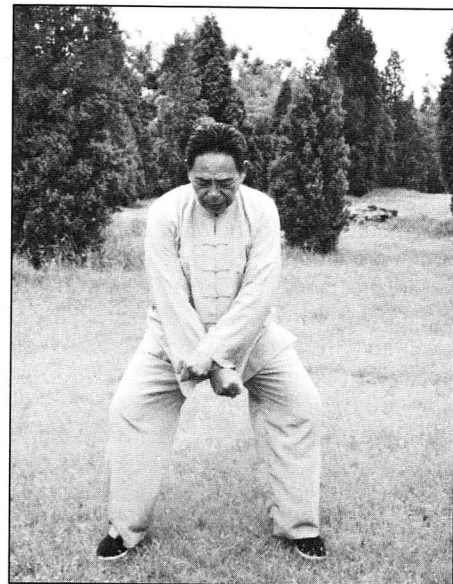


Fig. 5

4) Clench the fists slowly, put arms down and descend the internal qi.

Place the crossed fists in front of the abdomen with the fist hole facing out. (Figs. 4 and 5)

Clench fists, repeat the above movements. Longtime practice can make internal qi circulate continuously and improve the internal force.

IV. Lifting and Grasping

The intention of practicing this form is to lift and grasp the Earth qi into one's body, and it is a training for internal qi and force.

1) Start from Wuji form, relaxed, the feet shoulder-width apart, the knees slightly bent, the palms facing ground, imagine that the hands are relaxed down to the ground.

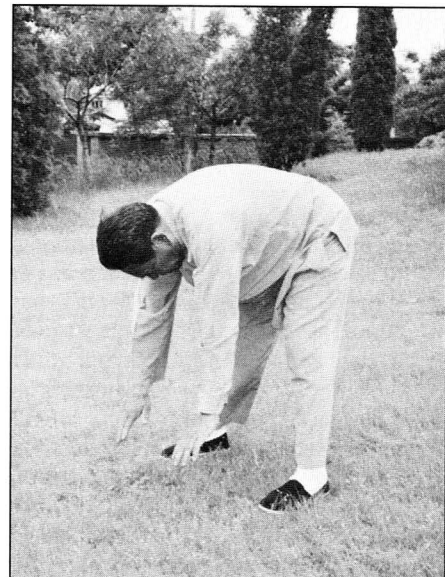


Fig. 7

2) Bending forward, slowly clench the fists tight, straighten the knees, imagine something is being grasped and lifted. Then push the palms up to the sky. The body force goes together with internal qi to the dantian. (Figs. 6-9).

V. Catching and Blocking

The intention of this exercise is to catch the external qi in front of the body into oneself then block it for a moment. Longtime practice can promote the internal qi.

1) Start from Wuji form.

2) The right leg steps forward, shift the weight onto the left leg (Fig. 10), raise hands up to the chest.

3) Bend the right knee to make a right bow step, shift weight forward, reach

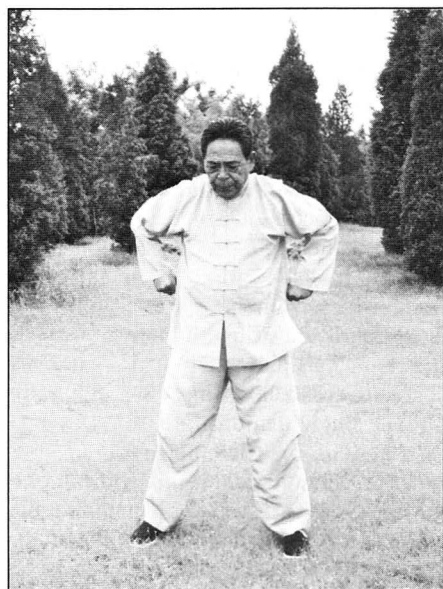


Fig. 8

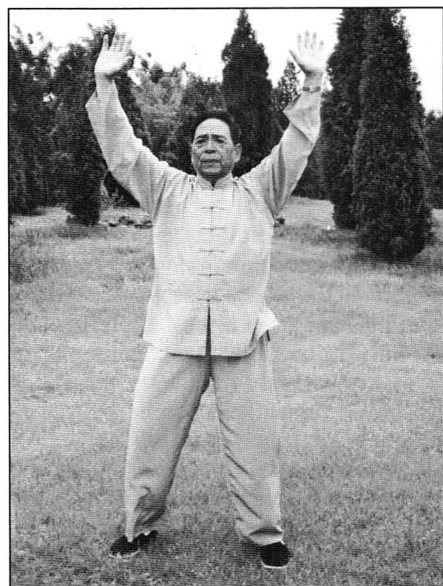


Fig. 9

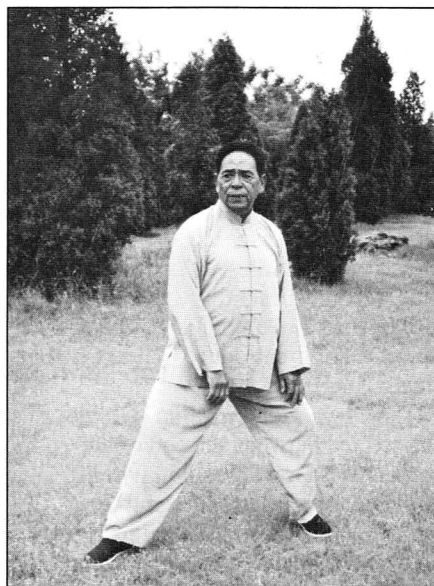


Fig. 10

out hands forward, with eyes looking ahead. (Fig. 11)

4) Clench fists as if something is grasped then draw fists to abdomen with full attention. (Figs. 12-13) At this time, lean forward to meet the grasped thing in imagination so as to keep qi and force in balance. When the grasped qi and force conduct to the body, block them within for a moment with consciousness, then relax.

Again stretch out the arms to repeat the form. The frequency of repetition is decided by one's interest and physical condition.

In the practice of the above forms, the control and guidance of consciousness is important. That is, the practitioner should pay full attention, with careful experience and right under-

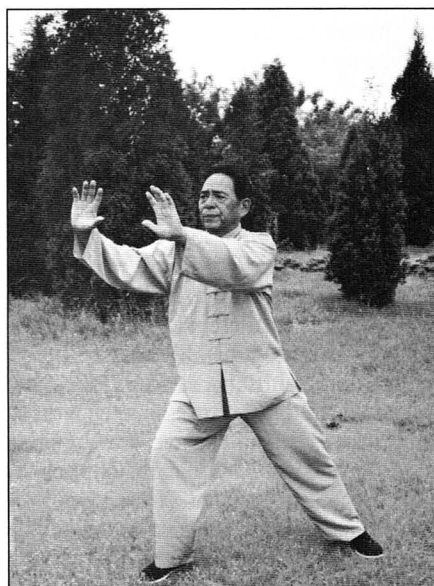


Fig. 11

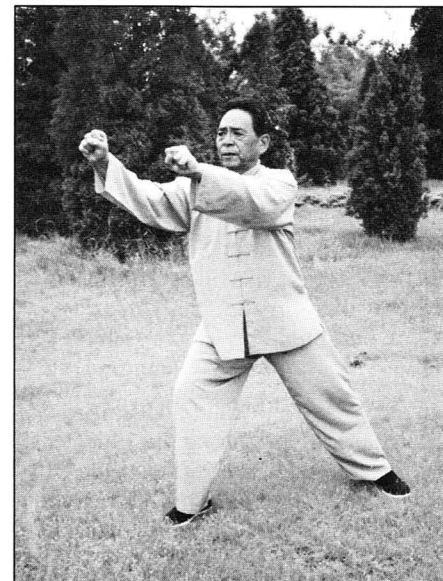


Fig. 12

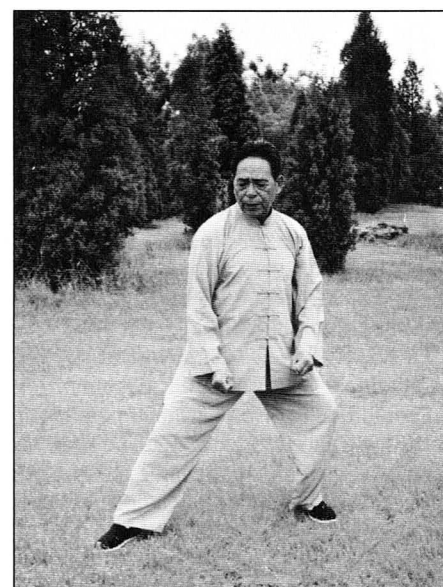


Fig. 13

standing, to capture the juncture of flow of qi and force as well as their transformation. Sure enough, the wonder of Taiji internal kung-fu will be explored after persistent and devoted practice. ✓

How did you first get started in T'ai Chi Ch'uan? It is probably one of your most important memories. T'AI CHI invites readers to send in their personal story of how, why and when they got started and the impact it made on them. Enclose a photo if you can. Please limit your story to 400-600 words.●