

## T'ai Chi

The meaning of T'ai Chi = "What is"

Embracing Tiger, Return to Mountain, a book on T'ai Chi philosophy by Chungliang Al Huang.

"Essential Exercises from China", video by Al Huang available from

"Living Tao Foundation", P.O. Box 846, Urbana, IL 61801, (217)337-6113)

"Golden Door's Response to Stress", video on T'ai Chi from the Golden Door, Escondido

(Available by mail order from Ranch Mercado.)

## T'ai Chi Chuan

The classic dance of about 107 moves to form a smoothly flowing sequence of movements. Done gracefully and slowly, the dance embodies the metaphors of life such as detachment, balance, change, choice, letting go of compulsions, setting goals, appreciating life as it is, enjoying its treasures, releasing burdens, facing problems, solving them and being joyful.

The Long Form, once learned, takes about 20 minutes to complete. The Short Form takes about 10 minutes.

## Chi Gungs

The name given to individual exercises used to practice T'ai Chi. Most Chi Gungs will be found within the Long Form of T'ai Chi Chuan. Some are "energy raisers" while others are "energy soothers".

ARM SWING - turning left, forward, right accompanied by swinging wide arm movements. Keep knees bent with moves.

TRIPLE WARMERS - connecting energy centers along the spine line from the tailbone to the next with the use of up and down arm and hand movements. Move hands up to breathe in, press palms down to breathe out.

- a) Pubic bone to throat ...up/down x3
- b) Pubic bone to heart ...up/down x3
- c) Pubic bone to navel ...up/down x3
- d) Pubic bone to throat, sweep hands forward and out sideways from throat level, move arms down to the earth, return hands to level of pubic bone ...repeat x3
- e) Pubic bone to heart, open out with backs of hands, down and up again ...repeat x3
- f) Pubic bone to navel, swing arms out sideways, down and up ...repeat x3
- g) Repeat a) x3 to complete the Triple Warmer sequence.

KI - Stepping back from life to see the "larger picture".

WATERMELON - Releasing a burden, then opening up the sky.

THE ARCHER - Aiming at a target representing a goal in life - always hit the bullseye!

SIDE STRETCH - Symbolic of sidestepping life when necessary.

TWIST AND TURN - Looking back and all around you for resources, not just straight ahead.

PASSING CLOUDS - Representing freedom and the joy of moving, also symbolic of constant change and shifting energy.

CRANE FLAPS WINGS - Contrast flight with being grounded.

Always begin and end your practice in your "Center" (Don Tien)

## T'ai Chi - The Dance of the Five Elements

Inspired from the traditional T'ai Chi Chuan, this dance is the design of Al Huang, a world renowned T'ai Chi master. The sense of moving with flow and Chi energy is subtle and takes time to grasp so that you just do it without force or aggression.

1. Stand, feet slightly apart, knees slightly bent, arms down by side. Breathe rhythmically.
2. Move (float) arms forward and up to shoulder level (as if balloons are floating your arms upward).
3. Step back with right foot, bringing backs of hands to chest, elbows out sideways.
4. Sweep arms forward and out sideways, as if to sweep the decks clear. Then...
5. Lower left arm down (as if to take energy from the earth) and lift right arm up (as if to reach to the heavens) and bring the energies together in front of you, circling your hands in space in front of you as if mixing the energies into your Don Tien (your "center"). This stokes up your FIRE.....
6. Sweep your hands and arms forward and up out of your Don Tien and reach up high, blazing out your fire (symbolic of your life's work, the things you do in life)...
7. Change the hand position overhead bringing your hands down to your side to imitate rain or showers falling down around you (the WATER element) cooling and refreshing to soak into the earth, out of which grows the tree...
8. Spread your arms out sideways swaying them like tree branches (the WOOD element). Walk around slowly 360° to the left, looking out from your branches to really look at your world (how often do we really appreciate what we already have around us and really look at it to savor and enjoy?). Then, having turned around once, you are facing forward again..
9. Sweep your right arm back 180°, reaching down, back, overhead and front, selecting that which you do want from this ½ of the universe and bringing it into your "center".
10. Repeat with the left arm around 180° to take what you want from the other ½ of the universe, adding it to your "center". Draw your hands into your Don Tien and treat what you have selected as your treasure, like GOLD (the mineral element). Turn your hands over your Don Tien as if you were savoring this treasure, enjoying it, owning it... Then, let it go...drop your hands strongly down as if ridding yourself of the compulsion of "having to have it", leaving yourself free to fly high.
11. Sweep your arms up sideways like wings of a bird, flying high. Aspire to the heights of your being with the movements of your arms (the AIR element). Having reached those heights, you have the inspiration to embrace your problems...
12. Circle your arms out in front of you, as if you were hugging a huge beach ball. Look into the circle as if all your challenges were there...face them, look them in the eye...acknowledge them and deal with them... (This move is called "Embracing Tiger").
13. Pull your hands towards your chest, symbolic of dealing with the problems inside of yourself, seeking the answers from within and taking responsibility for the decisions you make as to how to deal with them and their outcome...
14. Gently lower your hands, palms down, moving them from chest level down to face your "center," returning to the starting position where you began, hands over your Don Tien. (This move is called "Return to Mountain". Mountain symbolizes home, which is your "center" within your body. This is suggestive of a stable home base.

REPEAT...leading back with the left foot and turning as the tree to the right, your hand on your "center" Don Tien, all other moves are the same.