



Linda's T'ai Chi Weekly Handout

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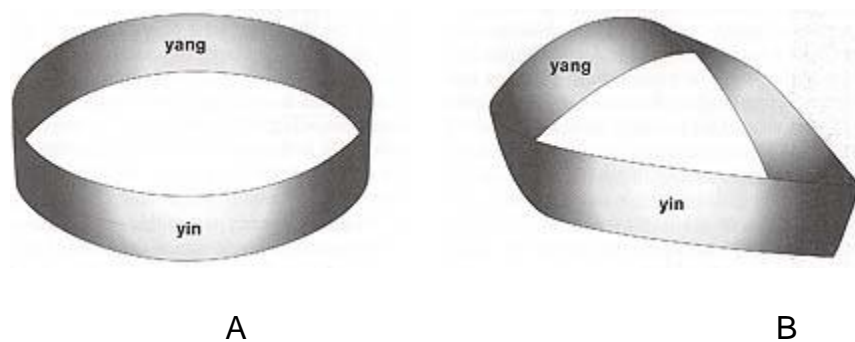
Clear Your Mind



“Yang is our mind; it’s a cerebral activity. It’s your emotions. Yin is our body. * By practicing T’ai Chi, we connect these two parts, and we balance the yang energy with the yin energy. When these two things balance, then harmony is achieved. When harmony is achieved, then transformation follows. And the transformation is that we feel better. “(Linda Fung, former Ballet dancer and now teaches T’ai Chi in Hong Kong.) We feel good in our skin. The dis-ease we feel in our body and our mind comes from being out of sorts with the integration of all systems.

When we are in balance, we feel our qi (chi) or life force which traditional Chinese medicine considers a form of energy that can heal mind and body. The belief in Traditional Chinese medicine is when qi is unlocked and flowing through the body it can address the body's injuries.

When qi flows naturally and unobstructed, our body improves. This means that all of our systems are healthy, working together and cooperating. Our balance gets better. We sleep better. We have enhanced vitality and energy. Simply put- when we are well hydrated, rested, at peace emotionally, well-nourished and using our bodies naturally, our energy is robust. When we are neither too hot or too cold, our energy is robust.



In diagram A, the flow of energy is indeed circular but does not reflect the coordination of yin and yang. In diagram B, a mobius strip, there is no beginning or end. The flow of energy from yin and yang is natural as one kind of energy makes way for the other. This is the continuous motion of T'ai Chi. This is our goal- to let our energy move from yin to yang in one continuous flow – no beginning no end. One replaces the other seamlessly.

“To achieve this flow, we need to clear our mind. We need to be in the moment. But being in the moment does not imply being recklessly self- indulgent or oblivious to the past or future. On the contrary, it implies coordinating past, present and future. Being in the moment requires using concentration and creative faculties to intensify the effectiveness of any action. “(The Tai Chi Book, Robert Chuckrow, Ph. D)

To clear our minds, we can take these steps:

1. Discover relaxation in the body. If we are used to carrying stress in our bodies, we may not relax easily. The body will not want to let go. You may feel sleepy as you relax. That is okay. We need to move from tension through sleepiness to alert but relaxed. Have you ever noticed that you are in a high activity period and you sit down for one minute and fall asleep? We are striving for the phase after the high activity period before sleep- relaxed but alert.
2. Let your eyes **see** but not **look**- quiet the eyes. Use your peripheral vision
3. Breathe deeply and slowly
4. Let your body move naturally. The walking movement is very natural. T'ai Chi is like walking. The body is aligned.
5. Keep your attention on how your body feels as you move from one posture to another
6. Reject the monkey brain and seek focused attention on the present space and time.
7. Hydrate well before, during and after a practice.
8. Enjoy each moment.
9. Seek progress not perfection.
10. Have fun
11. Leave your worries at the doorstep as you step into your T'ai Chi space.
12. Express gratitude daily

- To be more precise, there are parts of the body that are yang and part yin,. But this is the author's interpretation.

One more word about breathing. Breathing is key to clearing the mind. T'ai Chi breathing clears the mind. I bring another technique to you that can be used if you are feeling stressed out and anxious. It is not T'ai Chi breathing. I find T'ai Chi breathing quite stress reducing but this is one more technique to consider during times of high stress and anxiety.



This technique, called Box Breathing, is used by many professions (police, nurses, military). Box breathing is a powerful, yet simple, relaxation technique that aims to return breathing to its normal rhythm. This breathing exercise may help to clear the mind, relax the body, and improve focus.

The technique is also known as “resetting your breath” or four-square breathing. It is easy to do, quick to learn, and can be a highly effective technique for people in stressful situations. Box breathing counteracts the fight flight response to danger. According to the Mayo Clinic, there’s sufficient evidence that intentional deep breathing can actually calm and regulate the autonomic nervous system .

It differs from Tai Chi breathing in that the inhale and exhale are the same and in between in the inhale and exhale, the breath is held for a count of 4. This is not to be

used with Tai Chi performance but it seems to be effective for people in highly stressed situations.

1. Breathe in deeply through your nose to the count of 4 (4 seconds)
2. Hold breath for count of 4
3. Exhale to the count of 4
4. Hold breath to the count of 4

Do this for about 5 minutes. You may have to work up to the 5 minutes. Start where you are most comfortable. Make sure you are sitting comfortably as you do this exercise. It can clear your mind and reset your fight flight response. If you have the time, a walk with and in nature can do the same thing. As you walk, breathe deeply and slowly and enjoy the view.



Peace, Linda