



Linda's T'ai Chi Weekly Handout September 12, 2021

Looking Forward: Ideas for your consideration



Mt Baker, Washington in the Fall

Fall is just around the corner. As nature once again guides us, autumn is a time for change. It is a reminder that our bodies, minds, and surroundings are always developing. And, it is a time to assess where we have been and where we are going. So, we look forward with some options for your T'ai Chi practice.

If you are a beginner, you are 3-4 postures from learning the entire first set of the Yang Style long form. Congratulations. If you are an intermediate student, you have been refining the first set and learning the second set of the Yang style long form. And, if you are an advanced student, you have been refining sets 1 and 2 and focusing on learning the third and final set of the long form. You may not have memorized all of the postures and forms; that is okay. Memorization comes with repetition and focus.

The goal is to feel more confident about the postures within each set as well as to perform the postures smoothly, calmly, and softly. Each posture blends into the next as in silk reeling. As you continue your study, your posture, alignment, balance and form improve and the mind, body and spirit connection are enhanced. Mostly, I want us to have fun and enjoy the sense of wellbeing that comes when we take care of our body, mind and spirit.

We have been learning to set our mind, transitioning from empty to full, turning at the waist on every move, using our fingers as a

soft brush on a canvas to tell the story. We have been breathing deeply filling our entire upper cavity. We have lowered our shoulders, sunk the chest and opened our joints to let qi flow easily.

Options as you Continue your T'ai Chi Study

First and foremost, you do not need to change anything. If you are content with your T'ai Chi classes and performance, no change is needed or necessary. You can learn more and improve your skills without making any changes to the classes in which you are enrolled.

Some of you may be content with where you are in your Tai Chi. You like your class, the other members, the location of the class and the focus. Perhaps you are in a class with your friends. You may have no interest to make any changes in what you are doing. That is perfectly acceptable. There is no requirement to learn more of the 87- posture set or to learn other T'ai Chi forms and certainly no requirement to change what you are doing.

Some of the beginners may want to stay in the Tuesday beginning class and go no further. That is okay. You will gain all of the benefits of T'ai Chi even if you do not go any further than the first set - balance, posture, breathing and continuous motion.

Some beginners may be interested in learning the second set. That would mean joining an intermediate class on Monday at 5:15 PM at St James Church or the Tuesday 11:30 AM class at the Firehouse. You can continue with the beginning class and add the intermediate class if you wish. Or, you can transfer to an intermediate class. It is up to you.

Some of you who are intermediate students may be content to learn the second set only. That is again okay. Or, some of you may be ready to learn set 3. You can add the Wednesday 11 AM class (new time as of October 6, 2021) or you can transfer to the new class.

Advanced students may be content refining and perfecting the entire Yang Style Long form and not go any further in your study, Again, perfectly okay.

Then, there are some of you who are eager to learn more about T'ai Chi and the other forms that I teach. You can make changes to your class selection now or at anytime you are ready.

Here are some options should you want to expand your T'ai Chi practice of other forms:

1. Yang Style 18 form Fan

Tai Chi Fan is a very beautiful practice. It's like an intentional movement that emphasizes body awareness and mindful meditation. Observers and participants both can become easily entranced in the methodological and calming forms. Using weapons in Tai Chi is a historically common and significant practice. Fan is a weapon set and is performed by both men and women. There are other fan sets that are dance sets usually performed by women. This is not a dance. It is a method for working on balance, breathing and using a fan as a defensive weapon. It builds on your wrist strength.

2. Yang style Broad Sword Tung family

Prior to learning the Sword Form a student needs to have a firm understanding of Tai Chi practice. It is often said that the Tai Chi Sword Form has much in common with Chinese calligraphy. The brush is held in the hand with utmost delicacy so that the chi of the body, heart, mind and spirit can manifest through the hand to the brush tip and onto the paper expressing the subtle creativity of the artist. Likewise, the Tai Chi sword player becomes united with the sword by allowing the chi to extend to the tip of the sword. Thus, the quality of the form requires the use of the principles

found in the Tai Chi Form, relaxation, straightness, pliancy and awareness while acquiring the additional qualities of hand movements, nimbleness, moving from the waist and a clarity of spirit. The sense of being rooted gained in the form and in sensing hands becomes even more important as one always needs to be, “under” the sword.

3. Yang style Tung Family Set

The Tung Family set was designed by the Tung Family at the Los Angeles Academy of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. It is a beautiful set comprised of about 30 postures. Many of the postures are variations of postures already known by intermediate and advanced students. It adds other postures like the sweep.

If you are unsure about what to do or you just want to seek my counsel, I am here to help you. Over the course of my study, I added classes to increase my skills and to learn more about T'ai Chi. But I always kept my roots in the foundational principles of the slow set.

May Fall 2021 bring about the change you desire.

Peace, Linda