



## **Linda's T'ai Chi Weekly Handout October 8, 2023**

### What are the basics of learning T'ai Chi & Qigong? Lesson 1

With so many new students joining us, It is a good time to review the basics of T'ai Chi. Many people who come to T'ai Chi with no previous experience, believe that T'ai Chi requires contorting the body into shapes and positions that are unnatural. This comes from experience with other exercise programs and other wellbeing forms. But, T'ai Chi/Qigong is different. These forms use the body naturally- how you walk, stand and sit; how you bend over to pick something up; how you rotate your hips to empty the dish washer or place items on a shelf. There are no extraordinary physical movements in T'ai Chi. And, yet, new students in particular, lift-up shoulders, lean and stretch forward, lock elbows and knees; twist the back to name a few. T'ai Chi is like resting in a chair or walking to and from your car- all natural movements, the way the body is designed.

The effort is minimal. I tell my students "don't try so hard". Amazing, right? Have you ever had a teacher say, "don't try so hard?" But it is true. When we try hard, we get tense and contort our bodies into positions that are not natural. So, it is not effort we need- it is energy. The energy is maximized but the energy does not come from effort. It comes from the ball of the foot ( the bubbling well spring). Just like walking. When you walk, you step with your leading heel, then push off with the back heel. If you walk slowly and pay attention, you will notice this motion.

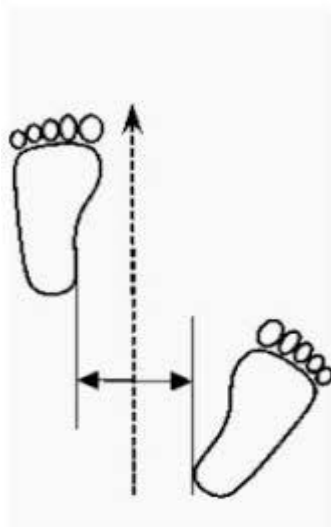
Over the next couple of weeks, I will write about the basics. Today, we begin with feet. T'ai Chi is rooted in the feet. If the feet are not correct, nothing we do with our arms, hands, waist or breath matters. We have to be rooted first.

Feet are important. The foot and ankle are complex mechanical structures made up of 28 bones, 33 joints, 112 ligaments and controlled by 13 extrinsic and 21 intrinsic muscles. The extrinsic foot muscles are found in the lower leg and act to dorsiflex, plantarflex, (raise the foot up and down) invert and evert the foot (rolling the foot inward and outward). The intrinsic foot muscles are entirely contained within it, and primarily act to move the toes.

The 3 main functions of the feet are supporting body weight, providing balanced, and shock absorption. Very important to being able to function in our day to day lives and essential to T'ai Chi and Qigong.

Lesson 1- The Bow and Arrow Stance. This is the most stable stance you can use in your daily life and in T'ai Chi.

Leading foot- always forward in the direction you are moving as shown by the long arrow



Back foot at a 45 degree angle to the leading foot

The channel is the distance between the leading and back foot shown by the arrow



Here is another view of the bow stance. The leading foot is the Left foot in his figure.

The back foot at an angle is the right foot in the figure. Notice the channel as demonstrated in the blue box.

Practice your bow stance when you wait in a line, or watching a soccer game or doing the dishes. A bow stance takes the pressure off the lumbar and the knee, very important as we get older

Try it, you'll like it

Linda