



Linda's T'ai Chi Weekly Handout May 19, 2024



When students come to T'ai Chi or Qigong, they often come with tension in the body-shoulders and elbows lifted, hands and jaws clenched, bellies taut, knees turned-in, and generally stiffness throughout the body including the mind that is intent on perfection. Often described as “steel wrapped in cotton”- the steel in T'ai Chi and Qigong is the energy within our bodies and the cotton is the outward softness of body, mind and spirit.

Softness is one of the more difficult concepts to express in our Tai Chi and Qigong. We all try so very hard to get it right. Our goal is to relax, soften and to flow with the energy in our body, mind and spirit rather than force or coerce the energy. We want to paddle downstream with the current, not upstream against the current. Tai Chi and Qigong postures are a constant yin yang of opening, expanding and closing and contracting,

like the cobra and crane fighting. As life becomes more complicated and the onslaught of never -ending information comes our way, we all tend to have a very tight grip on life. That tight grip is reflected in how we hold our bodies, what we feel and think. Tai chi and Qigong invites each of us to “stop the world” and enter the realm of calm and reflection. Not easy to do. But, once achieved, it is quite a gift.

In Tai Chi, opening and closing movements like ward- off and embrace the peacock’s tail. are similar to the cycle of the seasons, with opening movements stretching the front of the body and closing movements stretching the back. The front of the body is the Yin side, and the back is the Yang side. Opening and closing refers to expanding and contracting when moving away from and towards the point of origin, which is within the body, at the lower dantien. The lower dantien is in the belly (the golden orb) and with the energy from the Life’s Gate- the lumbar area of the back. Movements are achieved through relaxation, without using muscles or tension. I refer to the energy of the life’s gate as the “tush push”.

Daily practice is important to achieving the stillness of Tai Chi and Qigong. Notice I did not say, quiet. Quiet is the outside world, stillness is what happens internally.

Peace, Linda

