



YANG FAMILY
TAI CHI CHUAN

詳推用意終何在
益壽延年不老春

"IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT WHERE, IN THE END, THE PURPOSE LIES, IT IS TO INCREASE THE LONGEVITY AND EXTEND ONE'S YEARS, A SPRINGTIME OF YOUTH."

SONG OF THE THIRTEEN POSTURES

Tai Chi Chuan

The Journal of The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association

Winter 2011 Number 28



YANG FAMILY
TAI CHI CHUAN

President's Letter

Dear Members:

With the New Year upon us, I want to wish everyone a "Happy New Year". I also have a lot of news to share with you.

For a long time, due to problems in funding, the Association was unable to compile a student handbook. As a result, the Association's centers and instructors did not have a standard handbook to give to students. However, I am very excited to tell everyone that with the assistance of many enthusiastic people, the student handbook is basically completed and is in the design phase. The handbook includes Tai Chi Chuan theories, essentials, hand techniques, footwork, pictures and explanations of the first section of the traditional form, and the International Association's program. As the content of the student handbook still needs to be improved, revised and supplemented, an electronic version will be first made available. Later, the updated version will be available on the Association's website where members can download it for free. This will also facilitate ease of future revisions and upgrades.

Through the Affiliated School/Instructor Program, the International Association welcomes all Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan instructors to join Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan as one family. Since its inception, the International Association currently has 31 Yang Chengfu Tai Chi Chuan Centers and 40 certified instructors throughout Europe, North America, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 12 countries and regions, laying the foundation for Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan in many new areas. However, the requirement that Center Directors and Certified Instructors need to attain at least the 4th rank has prevented many instructors who want to

join the Association. With the assistance of many Directors, the Association has set up the Affiliated School/Instructor Program. We hope that through this program, we will be able to attract more Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan instructors and bring the development of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan to a new phase.

The next step for the International Association is to set up a Judges Committee, an Instructor Committee, and a Tai Chi Chuan Teacher's Academy, to help our expansion in more countries. The purpose of the Judges Committee is to train, assess judges' skill, set up ranking, and organize competitions. It will also maintain test content, scoring, and arbitration standards so as to nurture high quality judges. The goal of the Instructor Committee is to assess instructor grade, set grade standards, and receive student feedback on instructors, thereby improving the skills of the instructors and maintaining their teaching standards. The International Association's main focus for the future is the Teacher's Academy. We hope that through this Program all qualified Association instructors will be able to join and teach. Students attending classes will accumulate class credits and the accumulated credits will be used in the assessment of rank. Currently, Italy is the first to implement this program, with Germany and Brazil not far behind in this process. The curriculum is still in the development phase and will need further improvement and refinement. Our goal is to establish an international Tai Chi Chuan university without walls.

Finally, the International Association plans to organize a tour to China in August 2012. Since 2007, we have had many requests to revisit China to tour, study, appreciate the Chinese culture and sample Chinese cuisine. We will map out the most appropriate route for the 2012 China tour and let you know in the near future.

Master Yang Jun

President

Translated by Mui Gek Chan

CONTENTS

President's Letter	2
Training Taijiquan Teachers	3
Taijiquan is Good Medicine	6
Interview with Yang Laoshi	10
Notes on the 5 Element Theory	16
Tai Chi Chuan Wen Da	18
Practice Pages	20
A Brief Visit to Grandmaster Yang Zhenduo	26
Principles in Practice	28
Overview of the Student Handbook	30



Training Taijiquan Teachers: a Pilot Project

By **Claudio Mingarini**
Director, Rome YCF Center



In November of 2001, at the Rome Yang Chengfu Tai Chi Chuan Center, we began an unofficial training course for teachers. I felt it necessary to start this program because in our organization there were already about 15 advanced students who expressed an interest.

It was also a chance to give additional opportunities to those who already had the fundamental basics of Taijiquan and were interested in deepening their understanding of the art. A few of them were already beginning to teach their own courses and were doing their best to improve their technical skills and understanding of Taijiquan.

From the start, we were very much interested in the different aspects of Taijiquan from philosophy to health benefits as well as the martial aspects. We tried to explore these topics with the precious help of good experienced people specialized in the different subjects.

In March 2003 I had the honor and the joy of staying for about three weeks in the house of Master Yang Jun and Fang Hong. I had the pleasure of helping Master Yang Jun create a draft of the programs and topics of study that he thought appropriate to teach in the Association.



Editor-in-chief
Yang Jun

Editor
Dave Barrett

Graphic Design
Jing Li

Contributors
Yang Jun
Claudio Mingarini
Dave Barrett
Lisa Nutt
Amber Lycan
Danella Piccini
Eric Madsen
Helen Smeja, MD
Edward Moore
Enzo Bordi
Mui Gek Chan
Pete Voll

All Tai Chi Chuan enthusiasts are invited to submit articles, letters, and pictures for publication. Both critical and complimentary letters concerning the form and content of this journal are welcome. Please send correspondence in electronic format to:

editor@yangfamilytaichi.com

or mail to:

**International Yang Family
Tai Chi Chuan Association**

P.O. Box 786
Bothell, WA 98041 USA
Tel: +1 (425) 869-1185

© All rights reserved. Any reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.

PRINTED IN USA



The first notes were written in his house during the little spare time we had since the days were all very busy from dawn to dusk. When we met again at the Paris seminar in April, we kept working on it and the work was so intense and concentrated that I had to delay my departure for Italy by two days. To get back home I had to beat all my previous land speed records, travelling by car from Paris to Rome in eight hours! In fact I had to direct a seminar that began on Friday in Rome and we couldn't leave from Paris on Thursday afternoon before 3pm.

When Master Yang Jun thought it was the right time to start an official course for teachers in Italy, there was already a group of advanced practitioners. We had the first draft of the program, which gave us a clear path of practice.

When I was appointed National Technical Director for Italy in 2003, I began to work even harder practicing, studying, researching and teaching. To be able to manage this important new position I needed more contact, additional practice and training with Master Yang Jun. I began to follow more frequently and intensely than before his public seminars as well as the Director's seminars. I knocked increasingly on his door (and that continues now more than before) requesting private lessons. I needed to improve my movement and total integration with Taijiquan because my students continued to grow and improve in theory and practice and I had to keep pace to be able to continue teaching. The Master helped me a lot in this and with great patience and thoroughness gave me hundreds of corrections about everything.

I organized, as suggested by Master Yang Jun, a scheduled course for teachers with 4 annual events of 8 hours each. This was integrated with the annual open seminar organized with Yang Laoshi in Italy, (since 1998) and then, finally, from October 2009, with the 5th annual meeting of the Teachers Course directed personally by Master Yang Jun.

Over the years I have had the great opportunity to continue working together with Master Yang Jun to refine our approach to the curriculum. Using notes from Yang Laoshi's 2009 Instructor's Seminar in Italy, I present here a broad outline of this pilot program. The goal of the program is to train teachers to have a firm grounding in both traditional Chinese training methods and modern exercise science.

The Traditional Method:

Up until now Taijiquan has been taught with what we call a traditional method.

Traditional method in teaching represents the following:

- a) The Moral Code
- b) The 5 Directions

The Moral Code

Traditionally, there were 4 main concepts within the Moral Code:

- 1) **Respect.** Show respect to the teacher, as teachers show respect to students.
- 2) **Benevolence.** A kind of devotional love concerning the family, looking after your own parents and after elderly generations. NB: for a Disciple his own Master is like a father.
- 3) **Loyalty.** Very important, because everything converges in it, it's how you behave toward a brother.
- 4) **Humility.** Never think you're better than the others.

The traditional way to begin and end a class greeting the teacher is an example of respect and will be used as part of the standard teaching method.

A Moral Code, which can be appropriate for multi-cultural use, will be developed for the instructor training. This is an important step because the moral code keeps the whole system of training intact and it is traditionally placed at the beginning of the study progression.

The 5 Directions:

Traditionally in China, Masters have been teaching using the 5 Directions. Usually they didn't talk much and they preferred to guide the students in practicing. The 5 Directions were traditionally "sung" in the following order:

The 5 Directions

Chinese	Pinyin	English	Description
手	shǒu	hand	This refers to the hand positions, to techniques and movement.
眼	yǎn	eyes	This refers to the way we use our gaze, and our spirit, and how to look and where to direct our intention.
身	shēn	body	This refers to the body posture, mainly the torso, which during practice must always be flexible.
法	fǎ	method	This has a double value: a) a practice method, referring to the 10 principles and the traditional movement characteristics of the Yang family and b) martial and energetic meaning of movement.
步	bù	step	This refers to the stepping methods, leg positions and footwork, and rooting the stances on the ground.

How to use the 5 Directions

5 Directions in teaching are applied in the following order:

1. Footwork (stance, foot and legs)
2. Body shape*
3. Hand technique*
4. Gaze
5. Method/Application

*(The order of #2 and #3 can be reversed. In other words, a teacher can explain hand technique before body shape, it is okay to be flexible here.)

From tradition towards a new teaching methodology

Grand Master Yang Zhenduo has devised a teaching method that retains the traditional methods while adding important modern developments. He presents small sections, explains them, talks in detail about each movement, making use of the 5 directions and always referring to the 10 Essential Principles. This is an excellent method for both beginners and those with more. While explaining the single movement, the five directions are applied: starting from the stance work, then the hand technique and the body posture, and after that the gaze.

Finally, the meaning and the movement application will be explained, starting from the gaze direction then expanding it, together with the energy points.

This way of teaching is the model that will be used for the Standardized Teaching Method:

- Introduction and explanation of the 10 Essentials
- A small section of the form, naming the postures
- Explain the postures in detail using the “5 Directions”
- Guide the movement by using spoken cues

Combining traditional and modern approaches

A teacher must be able to explain movements and theory of Taijiquan, which they must first clearly and deeply understand. Comprehension is connected to personal experience and practice. A good teacher must develop the ability to clearly explain stance, techniques and theories, being

able to advise people what to feel inside and which direction to follow. In our Standard Teaching Method, modern scientific research is going to support the Traditional Method and its theoretical foundations. Physiology, anatomy, psychology and philosophy can complete and confirm knowledge of specific fields offering a common language, which is clear, appropriate and scientific. In this way we will be able to pass on and make people understand what we know without distorting the essence of Taijiquan and the correct meaning of its theoretical foundations.

While this is only a basic outline, it may help to clarify the Teachers Training Program proposed by the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association. Master Yang Jun has also been developing for some years a similar program at the Sao Paulo, Brazil Center with Angela Soci and Roque Severino. Holly Sweeney-Hillman is leading a particularly valuable further effort in developing technical and scientific curriculum. Frank Grothstück has also been helping since the beginning in the practical approach to the program and, advised by Master Yang Jun, is now starting an official Teacher's Training Program in Germany. Of course, there are many other Center Directors and Certified Instructors who are seriously working in the same direction to achieve the same objective.



The final program of instruction will be the result of all these ongoing experiences and enriched by new projects already underway. Master Yang Jun says, “it will collect the precious essence and substance of the Chinese tradition without excluding the experience reaped later in the West, incorporating new and valuable elements provided by scientific and medical research”.

(Special thanks to Anna Siniscalco for compiling the notes to the Instructor's Seminar and Roberta Lazzeri for assistance with the Chinese characters.)





Taijiquan is Good Medicine

By Dave Barrett
Journal Editor



For many years Grandmaster Yang Zhen-duo has been describing Taijiquan as a multi-function exercise with a variety of important health benefits. In recent years the medical research community has been exploring this same line with scientific methods and academic rigor. The results are compelling. This article summarizes key health benefits of regular Taijiquan practice.

In a recent article in the Science section of the *New York Times* entitled, "A Downside to Tai Chi? None That I See", Jane E. Brody offers the following endorsement: "After reviewing the existing evidence for its potential health benefits, I've concluded that the proper question to ask yourself may not be *why* you should practice tai chi, but *why not?*"¹ For the past 34 years Ms. Brody has written the Personal Health column at the *New York Times* and her considered opinion represents an important breakthrough for Taijiquan in the mainstream media. She adds her journalistic voice to a swelling chorus of medical and professional evaluations of the health benefits of Taijiquan practice. "A growing body of clinical research has begun to evaluate the efficacy and safety of *t'ai chi* as a preventative and rehabilitative therapeutic tool for a variety of health issues including: balance and postural stability, musculoskeletal strength and flexibility, cardiorespiratory fitness, immune function, and general stress management. This research has been summarized and critically evaluated in recent reviews."²

The most comprehensive of these summary reviews, titled "The Effect of Tai Chi on Health Outcomes in Patients with Chronic Conditions: A

Systematic Review", has been published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. Dr. Chenchen Wang, M.D. and her colleague at the Tufts-New England Medical Center, Dr. Joseph Lau, M.D. along with Dr. Jean Paul Collett, M.D. of the Jewish General Hospital at McGill University in Montreal did an initial survey of 743 abstracts. They selected 47 research studies as meeting the proper scientific/academic standards and then summarized the reported health benefits, organizing them by clinical domains.³ These health outcomes are quantifiable; the data has been collected, analyzed and subjected to peer review.

In presenting this material to you, gentle reader, I have tried to keep it as simple as possible. The literary style of modern medicine is obtuse in the extreme. Data points and summary charts are useful but what they leave out, by necessity, are the inspirational stories of those who have found in Taijiquan practice a measure of comfort and healing relief from their symptoms. I'd like to thank those of you who contributed your stories to this article for offering us all a glimpse of the human side of the research equation.

Effects of Taijiquan on Balance

- In each of these sections please change the asterisks to bullets
- Improved balance function, kinesthetic sense, and strength.
- Improved postural stability and control.
- Improved dynamic balance control and smoothness in rapid aiming arm movements.
- Improved ability to use the elasticity of peripheral

tissues for postural stabilization.

“Three cross-sectional studies of individuals with 1 to 35 years of Tai Chi practice experience revealed that long-term Tai Chi practitioners had greater lower extremity flexibility than nonpractioners and that Tai Chi was effective in improving normal gait velocity and producing a trend toward improved maximal gait velocity in elders. Overall, these studies reported that long-term Tai Chi practice had favorable effects on the promotion of balance control, flexibility, and cardiovascular fitness and reduced the risk of falls in elders.”^{IV}

One April morning in 2002 I got out of bed and could not keep my body upright. The subconscious reflexes that make postural adjustments to maintain steady posture were gone. I had suddenly lost all sense of balance. My vestibular system was irreparably damaged leaving me with a condition known as Bilateral Vestibular Deficit. Those first few days I moved around like a person on a boat rocked by huge ocean waves, grasping at whatever was available to hold me up. With time and effort the human brain can adapt to such damage. Good balance is something most of us take for granted until it is lost; fortunately, loss of balance is usually only temporary and rarely so sudden and severe. Our sense of equilibrium occurs at an unconscious level but is a very complex sensory system consisting of three different sources of input – vestibular, visual and somatic sense. The complexity of human balance, together with the brain’s ability to compensate when there is loss, provided a means for me to develop a new way to balance. Tai Chi Chuan is the method I found to exploit this complexity and plasticity to build a new sense of balance.

In January of 2005 I took a leap of faith and began my practice of Tai Chi without knowing if or how Tai Chi would help my particular condition. Over the past six years I have developed a sense of balance that is very different from normal but much better than I had expected when I began. My balance and overall well-being has dramatically improved and the best part is that it continues to improve.

Lisa Nutt, a student of Carl Meeks, Kentucky

Effects of Taijiquan on Musculoskeletal Condition

- Enhanced arthritis self-efficacy, quality of life, and functional mobility among older adults with osteoarthritis.
- No significant exacerbation of joint symptoms.
- Enhanced muscular strength and endurance of knee extensors in elderly individuals.

“The authors suggested that Tai Chi appeared to be safe for patients with rheumatoid arthritis and might serve as a weight-bearing exercise with additional potential advantages of stimulating bone growth and strengthening connective tissue.... Patients experienced improvements in vitality, social functioning, mental health, and ability to carry out physical activities and emotional roles. The study concluded that Tai Chi maximized independence and improved quality of life for people with chronic disabling conditions.”^v

I have Ankylosing Spondylitis (A.S), degenerative disc disease, bulging discs in my neck, little cushioning around my sciatic nerve and high blood pressure. My daily practice of Taijiquan has become an essential part of managing my physical problems and of enriching my life. Taijiquan is teaching me how to open my spine and joints. This expansion reduces the pressure on my nerves and eases the pain I feel because of my pinched nerves. Consequently, I have stopped taking prescription migraine medicine and eliminated my need for the three to four daily Arthritis pills I had taken previously.

It is very depressing to be relatively young (43) and have so many serious ailments. Practicing Taijiquan has helped me to regain control of my own health and to be able to feel and to utilize my Qi energy, a major contributor in rebuilding my confidence and strength. Taijiquan has also helped greatly with my feelings of depression and powerlessness caused by my ill health and now that I am teaching several classes per week, I am experiencing even greater benefits.

Pete Voll, Certified Instructor, Front Royal, Virginia



Effects of Taijiquan on Hypertension

- Decreased blood pressure

"We found 4 studies with a total of 401 patients with hypertension. The duration of Tai Chi training for the studies was 8 to 12 weeks and 3 years. Blood pressure, maximal oxygen uptake, and heart rate (HR) were recorded before and after each session. A reduction of mean blood pressure was found for regular Tai Chi practice in all the studies." vi

My story revolves around stress, blood pressure and mental/emotional well-being.

move up one line to remove extra space what's known as the "monkey mind" gets out of balance in people and this results in increasing levels of mental, emotional, and even physical stress. One acts and feels besieged under this kind of inner pressure. Learning the 103 forms, internalizing the sequence, and using the attention to focus on achieving the standard in each form while developing the slow, smooth, large forms inherent in Yang Style keeps one's "monkey mind" busy enough. It resets the mind's proper relation to the whole person, creating an opportunity for the person to experience relief and relaxation from the constant chattering - some of which is likely self-critical and contains unrealistic expectations of oneself, or worse.

When the experience of this kind of relaxation begins to accumulate and become familiar to the person, there is a kind of confidence that develops and begins to grow, which further deepens the feeling and experience of "song" (relaxation). Enough of that experience can alter one's perception of oneself and how one feels they are connected to other people and the overall sense of well being pervading one's daily life, in body, mind, and spirit. That was the positive inner benefit that I discovered in the regular practice of tai chi! It's like preventative medicine for the mind and spirit, as well as exercise for the body, building up immunity to stress and inner ailments.

Amber Lycan, a student of Pat Rice, currently living in North Carolina.

Effects of Taijiquan on Psychological Measures

- Improved perceived self-competence and visual-motor integration.
- Improved symptoms and reduced stress and anxiety.
- Higher levels of health perceptions, life satisfaction, positive affect, and well-being; lower levels of depression, negative affect, and psychological distress.

"Results from 2 randomized controlled trials indicated that 283 low-activity older adults participating in either a 16-week or a 6-month Tai Chi exercise program showed improvement compared with the control groups in several indices of psychological well-being that evaluated depression, psychological distress, positive well-being, life satisfaction, and perceptions of health." vii

There are many reasons why I decided to learn Taijiquan but what convinced me, especially, was my wish to overcome a difficulty in concentrating and to learn how to control the anger that often engulfs me. Some of this relates to workplace stress. Another aspect of this is that I find it very difficult to memorize anything and I'm a slow learner.

Now I feel that I've been able to control my anger better, by addressing it outside of me instead of letting it in, as I used to in the past. I was obliged to take antidepressant drugs, to be able to get along well. I also took other ways to take care of my depression, but I always had few "highs" and too many "lows"; nowadays I'm doing better and I hope I can improve even more.

I conclude by saying that I've been taking some little steps forward to improve my physical and mental condition, being helped by this new interest of mine and I feel eager to go on, in spite of my difficulties, my moments of disappointment when it takes too long to learn new things that certainly are simpler for others. I feel very happy when I come to lesson every Monday and I spend time with all of you trying to learn a good thing. I've met very nice people, always encouraging me, and this has a great importance too.

Danella Piccini, a student of Roberta Lazzeri, Firenze, Italia

Effects of Taijiquan on Cardiorespiratory Condition

- Enhanced cardiorespiratory function.
- Improved health fitness of the elderly.
- Enhanced cardiorespiratory function for low-risk patients with coronary artery bypass surgery.
- bullet points, add space here-term practice may benefit cardiorespiratory function, flexibility, and body composition in the elderly.
- Changing heart rate variability and improved function of vegetative nervous system, especially increased parasympathetic nervous system.

"Results related to the effect of Tai Chi on cardiovascular and pulmonary function have been reported in 11 publications by Chinese researchers since 1979. Although 1 study reported

that the metabolic intensity of the activity seemed insufficient to generate improvements of young adults, all other studies suggested that regularly practiced Tai Chi might delay the decline of cardiorespiratory function in older individuals and might be prescribed as a suitable exercise for older adults.”^{viii}

Effects of Taijiquan on Fibromyalgia

- Reductions in pain.
- Improvements in mood, quality of life, sleep, self-efficacy, and exercise capacity.^{ix}

“This randomized, controlled trial shows that tai chi is potentially a useful therapy for patients with fibromyalgia. The effect was evident in the FIQ score, a well-validated, multidimensional instrument for the assessment of fibromyalgia, and in other measures of pain and quality of life and was consistent with both subjective and objective assessments. The observed benefits exceeded the specified thresholds for clinically significant improvement used to assess pain, sleep quality, depression, and quality of life, and these benefits were sustained at 24 weeks. No adverse events were reported in the study participants, indicating that tai chi is probably a safe therapy for patients with fibromyalgia. Our results are consistent with those of a previous, nonrandomized trial of tai chi for fibromyalgia, as well as with the findings in other studies showing the benefits of tai chi with regard to musculoskeletal pain, depression, and quality of life.”^x

I took a shotgun approach to fibromyalgia: that is, I tried many therapies simultaneously. I hoped that at least one of them - or some unknown combination - would bring relief from pain without dire side effects. Because I was trying a variety of remedies at the same time, from acupuncture to prescription drugs, it is hard to say with any certainty what worked and what didn't. There are two exceptions: one, at huge expense, I had all the mercury amalgam fillings in my teeth replaced. This had a noticeable effect only on my dentist's bank account. (He might well argue that since my disease is now under control, it had a hidden, long-term positive effect on my immune system.) The second, less ambiguous exception is Tai Chi. After about five minutes into my practice, the pain that gripped my legs and shoulders would begin to loosen and the heavy fog that clouded my brain would lift a little. By the end of the long form, my legs no longer felt as rigid as boards, and my shoulders and neck no longer felt as if they had been hammered. I didn't feel exactly sunny, but I could get through the day.

Memory loss is one of fibromyalgia's cornucopia of symptoms and if I hadn't been taking classes for some years before my diagnosis, I think it would have been difficult to learn the form once the disease had asserted itself. As it was, in my practice at home, I kept getting lost and had to keep a cheat sheet of the moves at hand. It also was hard to motivate myself to begin practice in the mornings: pain and fatigue made moving the very last thing I wanted to do. I found that music and some very gentle warm-up exercises helped get me started. Now, after six years, my disease is more or less under control. I still have flare-ups, but usually they last only a few days and, in large measure, my energy has returned.

Christine Andrae, a student of Pat Rice, Virginia

Conclusion

As the value of daily Taijiquan practice comes into focus for modern medicine, there will be ongoing projects to further explore the mechanisms by which Taijiquan benefits the individual. While specific results are quantifiable, the challenge for researchers is to understand why and how Taijiquan is so effective in ameliorating such a broad array of health issues. “Good Medicine” is a concept that is a living presence in Native American communities and perhaps this more ancient concept of healing provides the answer: “Medicine power is the power of creation. Whatever that power is, it causes the grass to grow, the earth to rotate, and all the things that happen in all of creation. This is a tremendous power. It is the power to create life. And the more that Indian people or other people become acquainted with that power, the more they are able to internalize and utilize and flow with that power.”^{xi}

I Brody, Jane E., NYT, Sept.27, 2010

II Wayne PM, Kaptchuk TJ. Challenges inherent to t'ai chi research: part I — t'ai chi as a complex multicomponent intervention. *J Altern Complement Med* 2008;14: 95

III Wang C, Collet JP, Lau J. The effect of Tai Chi on health outcomes in patients with chronic conditions: a systematic review. *Arch Intern Med* 2004;164:493-501.

IV Ibid., 494 V Ibid., 496

VI Ibid., 496 VII Ibid., 499

VIII Ibid., 497

IX Yeh, Gloria Y., M.D., M.P.H., Kaptchuk, Ted J. and Shmerling, Robert H., M.D.

Prescribing Tai Chi for Fibromyalgia — Are We There Yet? *N Engl J Med* 363;8 nejm.org august 19, 2010, 783

X Wang C, Schmid CH, Rones R, et al. A randomized trial of tai chi for fibromyalgia. *N Engl J Med* 2010;363:75

XI Steiger, Brad. *Indian Medicine Power*, Gloucester, Mass. Para Research, 1984, 19





Health Aspects of Taijiquan Practice: A Conversation with Master Yang Jun

By Eric Madsen

With help from Sylvia Dambrauskas

Western scientists have recently begun investigating links between Taijiquan and its effects on balance, pain management, arthritis, and osteoporosis. Nearly all of these studies have shown a positive impact on the lives of practitioners. These conditions are among a growing list of ailments that Taijiquan has shown to benefit. This confirms what long-time practitioners have known for generations. I recently had a chance to talk to Master Yang Jun about his thoughts on the health benefits of Taijiquan, and to clarify some points that have intrigued some of us for years.

Why is Taijiquan practiced slowly?

The reason we practice Taijiquan slowly can be separated into two parts: internal and external. First, from the physical standpoint, the external movements are practiced slowly. We use this pace for stepping, because it develops leg strength and balance; this is the basic foundation. Also, when we practice slowly and our pace is even, we can make our breath even and calm. We keep our breathing deep and even (有氧呼吸), so you always have oxygen. That's why we can keep calm; our breath is not rushed.



This can also help us internally. Practicing slowly allows us to be calm and stable. The mind is centered. When you practice quickly and send out too much energy, then it's very easy to get excited. So, practicing slowly helps.

Internally, it helps your mind be calm and externally it builds your foundation.

What is Fang Song (放松)?

Song is a very important method for practicing Taijiquan. How do you understand Song?

Song is not limp, but Song is also not asking you to be hard. So Song has a feeling of extension allowing the whole body to be connected. At the same time it has a natural feeling: there's energy inside, but it's not stiff. The feeling of Song is open and extended; the joints and tendons are open and connected.

Often Song is translated as 'relaxed', but relaxed can also give the image of being limp. Here we should understand that we're not going to be hard, and we're not going to be soft; we're going to be in the middle. This means outside our shape looks soft but inside we feel extended with spring-like energy inside.

Song and Fang Song are the same. Song means relax; Fang Song is more of a verb. The meaning of Fang is “to put” or “settle into.”

Rou (柔), which comes from Fang Song, is also an important idea. Rou gets its strength from softness but it feels like steel inside. It is flexible and yielding but when it is used it becomes like a whip; it is springy.

Why is Song important?

The benefit of Song is very important from Taijiquan’s point of view. One of Song’s benefits comes from the energy. When we practice Taijiquan what kind of energy do we use? Here we say, “On the outside it looks soft, but inside it feels like steel.” So you use the method of relaxation to get that feeling. However, when we practice, we first relax (song). When the body is soft and supple you can unify the soft to become hard. The last step is soft and hard combined together. So keep the energy relaxed. It is important to develop the energy correctly so that it is not hard or limp.

Secondly, if you can relax, then it is easy to coordinate your upper body and lower body. You can then unify internal and external allowing you to move continuously. This all comes from the process of relaxation.

Lastly, if you can relax, you are more flexible. So when moving forward and backward, the footwork is also more flexible. We say, “The lower body feels heavy, the upper body feels light, and the middle is flexible.” Relaxation helps with coordination and flexibility.

Yang Style stresses extension, how does that help?

Different styles have different flavors. In Yang style we practice slowly, evenly, and the movements are large. The important thing is that it feels graceful. When you practice a smaller frame, then you feel the spirit differently; it is more concentrated. But in Yang style we want to feel open. With an open mind and open spirit it feels graceful; that’s the special flavor

of Yang style. If you cannot feel that internal extension then it’s hard to feel your mind extended or graceful. It’s not only the physical movement, but also the internal feeling that is graceful, open and large. The internal and external connect here, because the method asks you to extend. This results in a graceful feeling.

Does it help for health reasons?

Yes, but I’d like to say that all Taijiquan has health benefits because all the styles share similar principles. The Yang style uses a bigger circle. Therefore, the movements are larger. This helps with circulation. With the large circle and extended feeling, the energy circulation reaches through the whole body. Also, you don’t feel rushed inside.

Taijiquan is based on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM); in TCM different seasons affect different organs. Should our practice change according to the seasons?

Actually, the Yin/ Yang philosophy (Taiji - 太极) that Taijiquan is based on is the same philosophy that TCM uses to understand the body. In Taiji philosophy we say that we want everything balanced and centered. So balance between the organs is most important. Practice will help the mind be centered. To help the mind be calm and understand the philosophy, your expression should be neutral and centered.

So with that in mind, I don’t think your practice should change much through the seasons. You may feel more active during spring and summer; this is when the Yang cycle is strong. That doesn’t mean you should stop practicing in winter. You should practice in all seasons! There is no specific change to the method, such as only practicing the form in spring, or only practicing weapons in winter. However, I would say that the weather affects the body’s physical and internal feeling. So when you are cold or stiff, probably you need to do some warm-ups and stretching. Also, you might have to practice a little longer until you start to feel the circulation improving and your body warming



up. In summer time you can adjust a little bit. Maybe you don't need to warm-up like in winter. You might feel that even after practicing only a little while that you already feel warm and the body's circulation is reaching its peak. I feel this is the only difference.

Should we practice when we feel sick?

It depends on your condition. If you have a cold, then practice can help, especially if you start sweating a little bit. This will help your recovery and rebuild your internal strength to fight the cold. If it's serious, like the flu, with a high fever, headache and sore joints, then it's probably not a good time to practice. I would suggest more rest.

If you have a chronic illness I would encourage you to practice Taijiquan because it is an exercise that gently promotes oxygenation. The more you practice, the more it helps you. Generally a person with chronic illness shouldn't practice too strenuously. The affected organs can't take that kind of stress. Taijiquan is good because it uses deep breathing and a slow, even motion. Everyone can practice like this. You know, people with chronic illnesses also need exercise to improve their circulation. Taijiquan can help with this.

Over time, practitioners are able to calm their mind and find balance. Generally people with chronic illness have stress and sadness; inside they feel mental pressure. Practicing Taijiquan helps relieve this mental pressure. A good attitude can help cure the illness. Taijiquan can balance the mind and help your illness. When we talk about balance we don't only talk about the mind, there's also the physical part. The doctors in China prescribe Taijiquan for people with chronic illness more often than Qi Gong because it has more physical movement.

In the classics they say not to practice after drinking. How much drinking is too much?

(Laughter) One drink is too much! Not drinking means no drinking!

Anyways, from the TCM point of view, drinking alcohol is good for you. In Chinese medicine if you drink a little bit it actually helps your

circulation.

In western medicine you also have this kind of saying, right? One glass of wine a day keeps the doctor away. I'm not sure if this is a serious saying or just a joke.

There are studies saying that a glass of wine is fine, especially for things like heart disease.

Yes, because a little bit of alcohol will raise the heart's activity and also help with blood circulation.

But, how much is allowed? This is the question! I would say drinking a little bit of alcohol, especially in the wintertime, will help your circulation and heart. But a little means a little; you cannot drink too much!

It is better not to combine Taijiquan with alcohol. Taijiquan alone will raise your circulation. That is one of the reasons we say not to drink before practice.

What about food?

This is a difficult question. In the past we didn't talk much about food, because people never ate enough. Right now we eat too much. So we say, when you are full this is not a good moment to practice. You have to rest at least one hour before you can practice, especially if you are going to practice something hard like explosion energy (fajin).

How about a snack or a small bite to eat?

That's okay. A little snack is okay. Mainly when you eat too much and feel your stomach is full, that's a problem. So, about food, we already have a lot of health information about what kind of food is good for you. I'm not going to give any recommendations, like people who want good health cannot eat meat. It is more about how much you eat. If you are out of balance, always eating too much of one thing and not in control of yourself, then this is going to be a problem. Whatever food we eat should support our body's needs.

The relationship between food and TCM is as complex as any other system. There's no real

set way, but we generally say that in winter you eat warm (Yang foods such as red meat, 韭菜 (chives), and dried peppers) and in summer you eat cold (Yin food including most vegetables and crab). That doesn't say that a Yang food can never be Yin. This depends on many different factors, such as preparation and the style in which it is cooked.

You say when we breathe it should be deep and calm, but you also stress that we don't focus on breathing. Could you clarify the function of breathing in Taijiquan and why we should not focus on it?

In Taijiquan we use abdominal (dantian) breathing; this lets the Qi sink down to the dantian. This requires you to relax the abdomen (dantian) so your breathing is deep and long. This will help the blood and Qi circulation in your body. This type of breathing is slow, smooth and even to help you feel calm. You should feel the energy continuously flowing. That is the idea. Your mind should not concentrate on how you breathe or on the Qi.

When we talk about the Qi, we say Qi is a kind of energy. Qi is connected to your lungs and therefore to your breathing. So if you concentrate on your breath, you will breathe differently. This will affect Qi circulation and your energy. So, during practice you should not focus on breathing. Instead, you should focus on what you are doing in the moment.

This is the method of our practice: the mind leads, the Qi follows [以意行氣，意到，氣到，而勁到。].

When you move your body there are two aspects: first, the mind plans, and then the body follows and moves. Everything, including the Qi and the body, follows the mind.

So your mind should not concentrate on your breath or your Qi. If you do, you will miss the main point, which is: Where do you want your body to move and what is your plan to move?

In Chinese we say yundong (運動); this reflects the personal physical motion. Yun

refers to the mind thinking. Dong means the body follows and moves.

Then we also talk about zhijue (知覺), this is knowing how your opponent will move, knowing his intention, and knowing what to do, all without thinking.

Body movement is both internal and external. Internally you will connect with the mind; externally, you will connect with the body. Your body should follow the mind's lead. If we are only thinking about how we breathe and Qi, then you lose that part.

Taijiquan is a martial art. We should always be focusing on the idea that there is an opponent. You cannot focus your spirit inward, on yourself. You have to project your mind to the opponent's side in order to understand what your opponent is doing. This is the reason we say you should not focus on how you breathe.

So the mind should focus on the intent of the movement.

That's right, the mind is focusing on what are you are going to do. Then the Qi and breath will follow your mind. For example, when you speak, you don't think about inhaling or exhaling, right? But you are flowing. Are you thinking: "When I speak, should I inhale at this point and at that point exhale?" You never think of that, right? You focus on keeping your speech flowing. You never think about breathing. If you do, you cannot flow, then your Qi and energy are blocked. You lose your center. You lose concentration. You have to understand this main point. We say, breathe deep and keep the Qi flowing, but we never focus our mind there.

How does the Five Elements Theory (Wu Xing – 五行) relate to health and Taiji theory?

We say the complete theory of Taiji [yin/yang] also includes the five elements.

The universe is a big Taiji and your body is a small Taiji. How do you understand your body as a small Taiji? This point comes from Taiji theory and the five elements. The nurturing and countering relationship between the five



elements was developed from thousands of years of experience. Chinese medicine matches organs with elements. The yin organs are, the liver [wood], heart [fire], spleen [earth], kidneys [water], and lungs [metal]. The yang organs move and act. They are the bladder [water], small intestine [fire], large intestine [metal], gall bladder [wood] and stomach [earth].

The organs are also matched with the expression, or emotion, that affects them. It is best when the emotions balance each other. From the five-element theory we understand the importance of being balanced.

Everything is connected with your expression. For example, when you give a speech, you may be afraid and shake a little bit. In this situation, you can really feel the organs physically connected with your internal expression. Your internal emotion is connected with every part of your organs.

In *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (attributed to Luo Guanzhong) there is a famous general named Zhang Fei, who was terrifying to behold. He was an intimidating man whose spirit was so black that he had dark skin and a hard beard with steel-like bristles. His eyes were large and round and he had a face the size of a water basin.

He was armed with a snake-tongued spear [丈八蛇矛] and rode a black horse. He was the son of Guan Yu. Like his father, he was a mighty warrior. Once Zhang Fei won a battle by shouting so loudly that the enemy soldiers, who knew of his reputation, were literally scared to death.

That's why I say during practice, what are we doing?

We are strengthening our spirit. Your spirit comes from your heart. Just as your body has Taiji, your heart also has Taiji, because your heart is the ruler of your body!

The five-elements represent directions. The five directions are east [wood], south [fire], west [metal], north [water] and center [earth]. There are also the five gates (positions): left is wood,

forward is fire, back is water, right is metal, and center is earth.

The five elements are connected with your internal organs, your position, and the cardinal directions. When we say your center is balanced, not only are your emotions balanced, but also your body's position and direction are connected with the understanding of Taiji. Whether internal or external, it is important to be balanced. Understanding the relationship between the five-elements is how one measures their state of balance.

When practicing Taijiquan your mind and physical center need to be balanced.

Emotions matched with Yin organs:

喜 [happiness/ joy] 心 [heart]
 怒 [anger] 肝 [liver]
 忧 [anxiety] 脾 [spleen]
 悲 [sadness] 肺 [lungs]
 恐 [fear] 肾 [kidney]

Emotions matched with Yang organs:

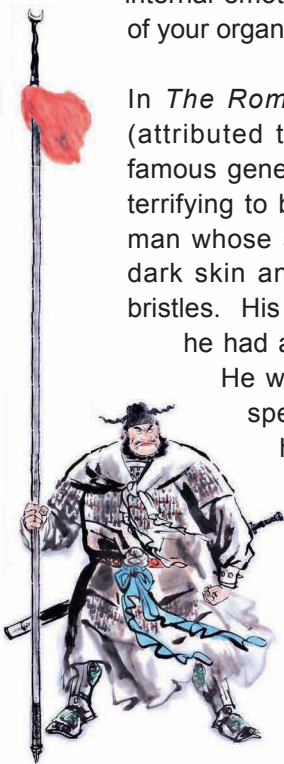
惊 [shock/surprise] 胆 [gallbladder]
 思 [thinking/longing] 小肠 [small intestine]
 怕 [fear] 膀胱 [bladder]
 愁 [worry] 胃 [stomach]
 虑 [concern] 大肠 [large intestine]

What is the relationship between Jing, Qi and Shen in Taijiquan?

Jing, Qi, Shen are the three basic components of a person. We can talk about them from both a TCM and from a martial arts point of view. Jing we translate as 'essence', Qi we translate as 'energy', Shen we translate as 'spirit'. So, what is their relationship?

As I mentioned earlier, you need to pay attention to the form. When your spirit is raised this will help your Qi circulation.

When you have more energy and more Qi circulating, your body can store more essence (Jing). More Jing can promote more spirit. So, Jing, Qi and Shen support and help each other grow stronger. Just as they support each other, if one is lacking, the others will be affected. If they don't support each other, in the end they all fail. This is their relationship. But we say



spirit (Shen) needs to be in the forefront of your practice. You must strive to increase your spirit. This will increase your Qi circulation and your storage of Jing.

Here we have two kinds of spirit. One is developed when you practice by yourself. As we discussed earlier spirit comes from your heart. In Chinese we call this first type of spirit Xin Zheng (心正). Xin Zheng can be translated as right or upright (Zheng), heart (Xin).

So you need to be centered, righteous, and follow a moral code.

In order to improve your Shen you must cultivate your morality. Once you have a centered heart, you will do the right thing in practice. When your body does the right thing, that's the right spirit. If you don't have this righteousness in your heart, then you don't have the right spirit.

The second method of cultivating spirit is Xiu Shen (修身). Xiu means practice or exercise. Shen means body.

How do you physically raise your spirit? We've already discussed the internal requirements. In Yang style, Yang Chengfu's ten principles give us a good method. The head is raised and centered; when you look forward, it is agile and alive. Drop the hips, relax the waist, and round the back. These principles should be balanced. You should not focus on one aspect too much. The feeling should be natural and not forced.

When you have the right spirit, then your Qi and energy are correct and you'll have good circulation of Jing, Qi and Shen.

Where is Taijiquan today compared to its history? Is Taijiquan a martial art that benefits people's health, or, is it a health exercise that can also be a martial art?

Today's Taijiquan, like my grandfather has said, is a multi-purpose exercise. It is both a martial art and a health exercise. It also allows practitioners to join a social community. Its practice shows the flavor and beauty of Chinese culture.

Is Taijiquan viewed differently than in the past? Yes. In the past, people understood Taijiquan as a martial art, more so used for self-defense. But our ancestors never really considered Taijiquan

as just a martial art. In Wang Zongyue's *Song of the Thirteen Postures*, he wrote very clearly: 詳推用意終何在，益壽延年不老春。

In the first sentence he says: "I've been thinking a long time, trying to figure out the purpose of Taijiquan." The second part mentions Yan (延). Yan is like extending your life. Yi Shou (益壽) means you live a healthy long life. Bu Lao Chun (不老春) means you never get old. Chun (春) means spring. Spring gives you the idea of growth; you always feel alive in springtime!

A benefit of practicing Taijiquan is that you keep your life in springtime. There is a continual feeling of growth.

That's what our ancestors said about the use of Taijiquan. They pointed out that Taijiquan's health benefits were as valuable as its martial arts benefits. But, at the time, most people practicing Taijiquan understood it as a martial art. Our ancestors could see what Taijiquan would become in the future - an art that helps people become healthy.

As our ancestors foresaw, today we use Taijiquan to benefit our physical and mental health. In addition to this, the strategy, philosophy, and culture of Taijiquan can also be of great value to people.

That being said, Taijiquan has always been a martial art. Even though we now say that improving health is the primary benefit, do not forget that it is still a martial art!



Notes on The Five Elements Theory

Compiled by Helen Smeja, MD

Diagram by Nicole Long



In the Five Elements theory, every element develops, controls and balances another. The five elements are associated with their own color, movement and direction:

Wood (everything green, including grasses)	Green	Left	East
Fire	Red	Forward	South
Metal	White	Right	West
Water (colorless)	Black (no color)	Back	North
Earth	Yellow	Center	Center

“Personal balance is reached by ordering the “elements” residing in one’s body, using exercise and movement to arrange these forces for maximum harmony.

The “southern” influence of Fire is shifted to the front of the body, relating to one’s consciousness and the heart.

The “northern” Water element is moved to the back (corresponding with the influence of the kidney qi and courage).

These energies can be counterbalanced by the “easterly” influence of the rising sun, on the left side of the body, associated with liver qi,

controlling willpower and anger.

The right/western energies represent the autumnal, metallic energies of the setting sun, in the direction within the body that relates to the lungs, sadness and compassion.

The center/Earth is the center for energy storage, called the dantian. It is at the navel and is responsible for thought and mental centering.” [1]

The relationships between the five elements can be illustrated by the following diagram:

The outer cycle is the constructive cycle, whereas the inner cycle (illustrated with the broken lines) is the deconstructive cycle.

The following explanation of the diagram is from the Yang Family Tai Chi website – theory section:

(Constructive cycle)

Earth is nourished by Fire
 Metal is created by Earth
 Metal dissolves to feed Water
 Water nourishes Wood
 Wood feeds Fire

(Deconstructive cycle)

Water quenches Fire
 Fire tempers Metal
 Metal cuts Wood
 Wood restrains Earth
 Earth holds back Water

The thirteen postures relate to the eight energies (developed from yin/yang changes) and the five steps. These five steps are a reflection of the five elements (interdependent and opposing elements). They are basic and do not change.

Footwork includes left, right, forward, back, center.

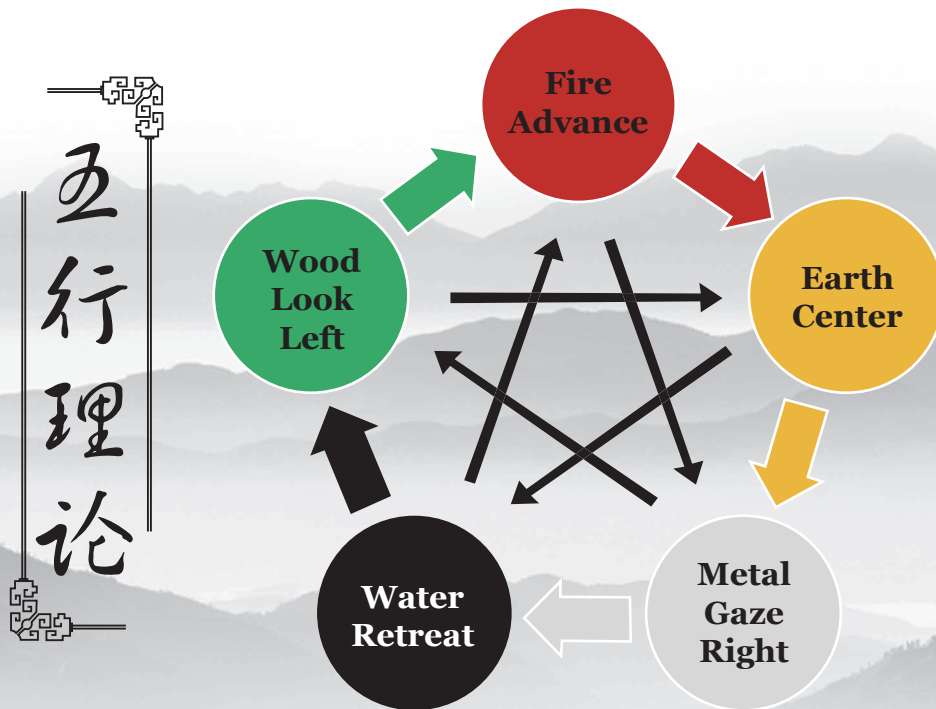
To understand the changes of the eight energies, one can think of the different times

of day, where one time frame changes into the next (e.g. dawn, mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon, dusk, evening, night).

When you do the five steps, you need to be stable from all eight directions to keep your center stable and balanced.

1. Horwood, Graham, editor, *Tai Chi Chuan and the Code of Life*, Singing Dragon 2002, revised 2008, p.X

Five Elements Theory



Tai Chi Chuan Wen Da

Questions and answers from Master Yang Jun's Seminars in Montreal, September 2009

Compiled by Helen Smeja, MD



When you do the opening of the form, where is the energy point?

The energy point is more on the palm. In the form, during the push movement, the energy point is also on the palm. In the opening, you need to keep your arms extended enough. As you are pushing down, you should imagine you are pushing a ball into the water.

When we change stances from an empty stance to a bow stance from Hand Strums the Lute to Left Brush Knee, is there any circling of the left foot?

Generally, if there is no direction change, there is no circling of the foot. When there is a direction change, even if it is not very big, you will need to bring in your foot before stepping forward. So in this change of stance, where there is no direction change, you will not circle in your foot.

In Brush Knee and Push, what is the timing of the step with respect to the arms?

Generally, when the arms arrive towards the back, the foot should be touching the ground. When the arms circle back, the heel arrives at the same time. They should be connected together. There are, however, allowances made for coordination depending on the person's age. Certain adjustments can be made for more senior persons, where balance and coordination may be more of a challenge. The timing of the arms arriving at the same time as the heel touches the ground is also seen in Strike the Tiger. In Strike the Tiger Left, the left arm arrives on the right side of the body at the same time as the left heel touches the ground.

What is split energy?

It is a short, quick, sudden energy, like a snap. When the nurses skilfully and cleanly tear off a piece of gauze tape from the roll, they are using split energy. It is also the kind of energy you use when you pull on a string to turn on an old-fashioned light bulb. It requires a sudden change of energy.

When we do push hands, you never use split energy, otherwise your opponent will be very unhappy.

Even when you use your elbow, you can use split energy. It is not always obvious from the outside. When you do a push, you can also use split energy.

What kind of energy is a shoulder strike?

"Shoulder strike" is not an accurate translation. We are referring to a leaning energy when we use the term "kao". Leaning energy is a more accurate translation. You use it when you are leaning on something, or on your opponent, as in Parting Wild Horse's Mane.

How do you bring in your foot when you are making a direction change?

How high to pick up your foot? Just slightly above the ground. You should feel that anytime you want, you could touch the ground. If you can imagine the ground saturated with water after a heavy rain, you want to be able to step without making any splashing. If you make a splash, you have lifted your foot too high.

In Left Brush Knee, what is the trajectory of the deflecting arm?

The deflecting (left) arm protects your center.

The palm of the deflecting arm goes past the centerline of the body. You need to have your palm curved. You want to do a circle that is big enough. Sometimes the palm is held too high at the end of its circle to the right side. It should finish at the solar plexus level.

What is the weight distribution when you sink down for Needle at the Sea Bottom?

When you go down, the weight distribution remains 70% on back (right) leg, 30% on front (left) leg. As you sink your center down, you leave your weight distribution 70-30, but it feels harder because your center is going down. You should not be shifting any weight forward; you should maintain the 70-30 weight distribution.

In the separation kicks, what is the coordination of the gaze?

This is important. Where and when you set your sight is important to help control your balance. When you cross your hands, you look forward over your crossed hands. As you start lifting your foot, you start to look towards the corner. You finish fixing your gaze to the corner as you finish lifting your foot. Then you complete your kick.

What is the height of the kicks in the separation kicks?

Your thigh should be at least at 90 degrees from the standing leg. When you do your kick, you can kick lower, but when you bend your leg again, your thigh should be at least at 90 degrees. Generally, in the form, during one-legged stances, your thigh should at least be at 90 degrees. You need to feel your qi sink naturally. If your breathing is too short or too tight, it means that your qi is not sunk down.

How do you open the hook of the Single Whip in the form?

How you open the hook depends on the movement that follows. For instance, when you open the hook going into Cloud Hands, the opening of the hook is more rounded. When you open the hook from Snake Creeps Down to Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg, the opening of the hook is more curved and sharper.

Sword form questions:

Can you give us some advice to help us keep our balance when performing the “Big Dipper”?

First, before attempting to perform any movement, you need to be warmed up enough. To help keep your balance, your sight needs to be fixed on a point in front of you. Your heart/mind needs to be fixed. When the mind is more fixed/focused, then your qi can be sunk. There are basically two methods you can use. The one you should try first is to look forward and fix your gaze as you are extending to stand up on your right leg and circling your right arm up with sword pointing forward (Preferred method).

A second method you could use, especially when you are doing a demonstration in difficult conditions (e.g. under very bright lights, in situations where you might not see well, or in high stress situations, as in front of a large crowd of people) is to first look forward, fix your gaze and then stand up and circle your arm up. Keeping your head well centered and pushing up will also help to sink your qi and thus improve your balance.

Can you give us some advice on how to manage the grip on the sword and control the sword for “Dusting in the wind”?

You need to know the intention of the movement. In the “Dusting in the wind”, there is a whip kind of feeling. You need to concentrate on where you want that energy to go. The grip on the sword has to be relaxed enough. The waist turn leads the arm movement, which then leads the sword movement. The sword comes back up to the vertical position with a spring-like movement. If you are not relaxed enough, the sword will look too stiff. Throughout the movement you need to show control and show a sending off of “explosion” (fajin) energy at the end. In order to get the whip feeling, it is important to relax, to use your waist, to not have your grip too tight and to trust yourself. It takes practice to learn how to send the energy out and then how to control it, but it is also very important to learn how to trust yourself when you deliver a thrust.





Transition from High Pat Horse with Palm Thrust.

Shift back and turn your body to the right. Use the waist to turn the left foot in 135°.



Move weight to the left leg and stand up, picking up your right leg. At the same time, rotate your right arm and cross both arms in front of your body. Right knee faces straight forward.



Cross Kick

Kick straight out using the heel. At the same time, open your arms. The right arm and leg should be aligned.

Step Forward and Punch Groin



Continue to rotate your body, stepping forward. Curve the left arm and bring it across your waist. Form a right fist and set it on the right hip.



Shifting forward, rotate the body to square and sweep the left arm in a big circle, setting it by the left knee. At the same time, throw the right punch forward from the hip at groin height.



Shift back slightly and bring your arms up chest high.

太極拳



Bend your foreleg in, shin vertical, toe pointing down.



Maintain your upper body position and center, sinking down on the left leg. Turning the right foot open by 45°, place it forward, in line with the left heel.



Move forward, turning the body to the right. The left arm circles forward while the right arm rotates the palm to face upward.



Turning left, rotate the left arm into ward-off and open the right palm diagonally downward. Left toes open forward to 45°.



Moving forward, rotate the left arm from ward-off into the grabbing palm. Continue to circle the right arm from outside to inside, bringing it toward your waist.



Right foot stepping forward into the bow stance, circle the arms closed on the left side.





Form a bow stance, right arm warding-off upward as the left palm presses downward. Curve right arm (1/4 of a circle), left hand is the width of one fist away from your right arm.



Turning right, rotate both arms and circle them to the right corner, right palm facing out and the left palm turns in.



Turning left, shift backwards. Lower both arms slightly as they circle to the left corner. Look towards the right hand.



Turn your body square while separating the arms.



Bring your arms in while shifting weight back.



Shift 70% of your weight to the back leg. Keeping the body square, draw your hands in toward the chest and sit the palms. Don't lean back. Continue to sink the chest and open the armpits.

太極拳



Turn your body to the right, rotating your arms. Right palm turns in and left palm turns facing forward.



Continue turning your body to the right; bring both arms in front of your body, left palm presses the middle of your right forearm and is ready to push forward.



Form right bow stance and press both arms forward. Curve right arm (1/4 of a circle), looking forward.



Push arms forward until shoulder high, keeping hands shoulder width apart.

Body faces forward.



Shift weight to your back leg and level your palms. Keep your eyes looking forward.



Use the turning of your waist to move the arms. The left hand has the intent of pulling and the right hand follows the movement.

Shift weight forward to complete the bow stance.



Practice Pages

Your head should turn with your body, eyes looking forward.



The right foot turns in 135° while following the turning of your waist.

The arms follow the turning of the waist, making a large circle.



Shifting back, continue to circle the arms until they reach 45° to the left corner.

Keep your body straight and do not lean back.



Shifting to the right, pivot on the ball of the left foot until it feels comfortable.



Sit your left palm and look forward past the tiger's mouth.

Shifting forward, turn your body slightly to the left. At the same time circle and rotate your left arm straight ahead.



Single Whip

Moving forward, the left palm strikes out. Make sure your torso is vertical and your chest is rounded. Your torso should be facing between south and southeast.



Open the right foot to the back corner.

太極拳



Continue shifting and rotating your body to the right. Circle your arms to the right (Southwest corner).



Right hand makes a hook, fingertips pointing down.



Look forward, following the direction of the left arm.

Picking up the left foot, step straight forward. At the same time the left arm wards-off.



Shifting back, bend the right knee towards the corner, left leg straightening without locking the knee. Draw in the left hand.



Sinking your center, gradually extend the right arm.



Sink down onto the right leg while lowering the left hand inside the knee. Then extend it forward towards the inside of the left foot. Maintain the extended hook hand.



A Brief Visit with Grand Master Yang Zhen duo

by Enzo Bordi
Roma, Italia

It was during a Yang style Taijiquan class held in Rome that my instructor, Ms. Wu Min Yi, proposed a trip to China to a small group of advanced students. She said she would like us to meet her instructor, the Grand Master Yang Zhen duo, and experience some of his precious teachings. Our goal was to meet the living descendants of the creator of Yang style Taijiquan. It was a wonderful and unforgettable experience that I want to share with other passionate Taijiquan practitioners.

In the summer of 2005, we left Rome and after a 10-hour flight reached Beijing. I do not remember the distance between Beijing and Taiyuan but surely the train took a number of hours as I fell asleep despite the large number of adult passengers and children among which, to my wonder, one woke me up by his crying and loudly calling to his mother "mamma, mamma" exactly like an Italian child!

We arrived at the Mining Hotel and our instructor contacted Master Yang Bin, grandson of Master Yang Zhen duo, to plan the time and place where we could have our lessons. The weather in Taiyuan was better than in Beijing and we agreed that our lessons could be held in the open air. As we took individual lessons, I was practicing the 103 form early in the morning before my turn and one day I was astonished when I saw that a group of Chinese women were behind me following my movements!



拜访杨振铎大师

Master Yang Bin was very kind and patient with us but at the same time strict and punctual, meaning that until he saw his instructions if not perfectly applied then acceptably applied, we had to repeat the movements many times to get them right.

The time to meet Grand Master Yang Zhen duo had come. Min was eager to see him again while I, to the contrary, was on the one hand worried that I was not sufficiently prepared to meet such an authority on Taijiquan. On the other hand, I felt encouraged by having taken lessons from his grandson, Yang Bin. We went to his home and were supposed to take lessons in the open air but the weather was not good and a heavy rain started falling. We thought we might have to postpone or even cancel the visit as only a few days remained before our departure. When we entered his home, Grand Master Yang Zhen duo and his wife gave us a warm welcome and soon I had a familiar impression of having already known him. The rain was not an obstacle to our class,



we moved a table to another room and placed the remaining living room furniture next to the walls and a suitable space for the practice was astonishingly created. The Grand Master asked me, through the young interpreter, how long I had been practicing as if the time played an important role in the awareness of the profound aspects of Taijiquan. His body emanated power and at the same time, elegance. He showed kindness and ability through his calm and natural motions. He made me feel comfortable and gave me simple, basic instructions to be always borne into taijiquan practice at any level like, "be natural, soft, and let the body behave free from any mental impediment". He encouraged me to carry on my taijiquan journey; I took this experience and his words like a blessing for the future. Once our lessons were over we sat down with a warm cup of tea and the Grand Master showed us the books that had been published in honor of his 80th birthday. Five years have come and gone and yet his warm welcome, familiar attitude and joyful smile are still in my eyes and in my heart.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Yang Zhen Duo
Chairman
Yang Jun
President

ADVISORY BOARD

Yang Bin V.P.
Han Hoong Wang V.P.
Mei Mei Teo V.P.
Nancy Lucero
President's assistant
Audi Peal
Director of Legal Affairs
Pat Rice
Adviser
Fang Hong
Secretary

DEPARTMENTS

Fang Hong
Department of Membership Services
Yang Jun
Department of Outreach and Development
Dave Barrett
Journal Editor
dave@yangfamilytaichi.com
Yang Jun
Department of Training Standards
Bill Walsh
Department of Public Relations
bill@yangfamilytaichi.com
Mei Mei Teo
Department of European Affairs
meimei@yangfamilytaichi.com
Angela Soci
Department of South American Affairs
Claudio Mingarini
National Training Technical Director of Italy

INTERNATIONAL YANG FAMILY TAI CHI CHUAN ASSOCIATION

The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of Traditional Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan.

HOME OFFICE

P.O. Box 786
Bothell, WA 98041 USA
Ph: +1 (425) 869-1185

SOUTH AMERICA OFFICE

Rua Jose Maria Lisboa 612, sala 07
Sao Paulo - SP
CEP-01423-000
Brazil
Ph: +55-11-3884.8943
+55-11-4704.6578

EUROPE OFFICE

Ornstigen 1
18350 Taby
Sweden
Ph: +46-8-201800

CHINA OFFICE

No. 131 N Taoyuan Rd,
Taiyuan, Shanxi 030002
P. R. China
Tel: +86- 351- 4226121



Principles in Practice: Discovering The Form Through Empty And Full

By Edward Moore

“When full and empty are clearly distinguished,
Hard and soft follow the changing situation.
Yin and yang must complement each other,
As moving back and forth we shift and change.
The ch'i is aroused with the changing power of relationship,
and the spirit is held within.”¹

Li I-Yu, excerpt from Song of the Essence and Application of Taijiquan

In studying the Taijiquan hand form there are several different stages that we have to pass through in order to learn the various aspects of the practice. The first stage is called “knowing the movements”. In the beginning we are mostly paying attention to the physical elements of the form. Where are the feet pointing? Are the arms held in the correct way? At this point it is most important to pay attention to the footwork and body positions until we are able to make the forms correctly. The hand form is memorized in sequence and postures that may at first seem somewhat awkward to perform become very comfortable and relaxed. Eventually practicing the forms becomes an essential part of our everyday life and feels completely natural. With correct practice, physical health improves and stress gradually decreases. The correct footwork becomes a sturdy foundation to build our movements on and Yang Chengfu's Ten Essentials guide us along the way. The first three of the Ten Essentials describe how to align the body correctly so we can gradually begin to discover the more internal elements of the art. Raise the head, draw in the chest and relax the waist are the first three points. These are all very practical points for the beginning student, as well as a continual guide for anyone who wants to improve their practice. What about the 4th principle: “Separate empty and full”? Suddenly we go from very tangible directions on how to adjust the shape of the body to a more philosophical sounding notion.

At first, separating empty and full can be thought of in terms of the weight shifting in the legs. Yang Chengfu's commentary states, “In the art of Tai Chi Chuan, separating full and empty is the number one rule. If the whole body sits on the right leg, then the right leg is deemed 'full' and the left leg

'empty'. If the whole body sits on the left leg, then the left leg is deemed 'full' and the right leg 'empty'. Only after you are able to distinguish full and empty will turning movements be light, nimble and almost without effort; if you can't distinguish them, then your steps will be heavy and sluggish. You won't be able to stand stably, and it will be easy for an opponent to control you.”² In moving from posture to posture, we can feel that we are continually shifting the weight forward and back, right and left in the stances. For those who have studied the forms for several years, we come to the second stage of development that is called “knowing the energy”. At this stage, gaining a deeper understanding of the concept of empty and full can bring a new focus to our practice. If we study this carefully, it can take the art beyond a purely physical exercise towards a truly internal martial art.

The concept of empty and full is rooted in the theory of Yin and Yang that is the guiding principle and foundation of the art of Taijiquan. Considering the underlying nature of Yin and Yang and how it is expressed and utilized by our art can be an important tool in understanding the subtle and powerful elements that run deep through the physical movements of Taijiquan and make it an internal martial art. In the “Secret of Yin and Yang” that is attributed to the teachings of Yang Ban-Hou, it says; “Few have truly cultivated the yin and yang of Tai Chi; Swallowing and spitting, opening and closing give expression to hard and soft. Controlling the cardinal directions and corners, drawing in and issuing forth, let the opponent do what he will; All is but the transformations of action and stillness, so what need is there to worry?”³





The concept of Yin and Yang (Taiji) is widely known, but how can we understand it in our practice? A good definition of Yin and Yang is a great start: “Yin-Yang theory is based on the philosophical construct of two polar complements, called Yin and Yang. These complementary opposites are neither forces nor material entities. Nor are they mythical concepts that transcend rationality. Rather, they are convenient labels used to describe how things function in relation to each other and the universe.”⁴ Here we can see that the Taiji theory is a very practical concept for understanding how opposites interact with each other, and all things can be understood to have both a Yin and a Yang aspect. “The character for Yin originally meant the shady side of a slope. It is associated with such qualities as cold, rest, responsiveness, passivity, darkness, interiority, downwardness, inwardness, decrease, satiation, tranquility, and quiescence. It is the end, completion, and realized fruition. The original meaning of Yang was the sunny side of a slope. The term implies brightness and is part of one common Chinese expression for the sun. Yang is associated with qualities such as heat, stimulation, movement, activity, excitement, vigor, light, exteriority, upwardness, outwardness, and increase. It is arousal, beginning, and dynamic potential.”⁵

How do we apply this to the form practice? Master Yang Jun emphasizes that each Taijiquan form sequence has a Yin phase and a Yang phase, also known as a storing energy phase and a releasing energy phase. In the movement Left Brush Knee And Push, for instance, in the first part of the form we should imagine that we are joining with an opponent’s movement and circling the arms while moving back. This is the Yin part of the form that yields and follows their energy. Before we begin to bend the left knee and move the weight forward again, we have the right hand near the right shoulder ready to strike out. The chest is drawn in and the upper body is slightly inclined. The waist relaxes and the Qi is naturally sinking and the Shen (spirit) is raised. This is the energy storing technique, the important Yin element of the form that must precede the Yang element of striking out. If the posture is poorly aligned by sticking out the chest or the waist, the energy-storing element is missing. Without energy storing, we can’t have energy releasing and we lose the internal Yin-Yang connection in the practice. In the Yang phase of

the form, we move forward and send the energy of the legs through the waist to the hands. It is important that we use the “deng-cheng” method in the legs: pushing with the rear leg and supporting with the front leg in order to properly extend the energy to the hands while remaining rooted. According to Master Yang Jun, “The feeling is different when you bring in the energy and store it and when you release it. First you feel the body is getting full. When you send out the energy, you send it out to the hands and you feel the full is transferred down. The hands feel a little bit more energized and also like a whip that has snapped. In the end position the hands feel more full. You need to relax, the energy goes out but the root remains stable. The hands are getting full; the body is empty. The body is empty but the root is full, the center is full. Don’t explode energy and pull out your root. Also, don’t keep the body entirely full so that the hands cannot have energy.”

It is important to remember that “full” does not mean “stiff”. At all times the body needs to remain supple or the Qi will be obstructed. The legs should be stable; the waist is full and the upper body light and connected. This interplay between the energy storing and energy releasing techniques can be observed through all of the movements regardless of how slow or fast they are performed. Attention to these phases can serve the practitioner by making them more aware of the subtle changes that they may have previously overlooked. As Yang Lu Chan’s commentary on the Tai Chi Classic states, “Always clearly distinguish full and empty and you will naturally have the ability to change at will.”⁶ Through understanding the interplay of empty and full as a natural process we can continue to delve into the mystery of Taijiquan, discovering new and exciting things in motions that we have practiced every day for years. In this way we can truly move from “Knowing the movement” to “Knowing the energy”.

1 Wile, Douglas, trans. *Lost T'ai-chi Classics from the Late Ch'ing Dynasty*, State University of New York Press, 1996, p.51

2 Yang Chengfu, recorded by Chen Weiming, translated by Jerry Karin

3 Wile, Douglas, trans. *T'ai-Chi Touchstones, Yang Family Secret Transmissions*, Brooklyn: Sweet Ch'i Press, 1983, p.78

4 Kaptchuk, Ted J. O.M.D. *The Web That Has No Weaver*, New York: McGraw Hill, 2000, p.7

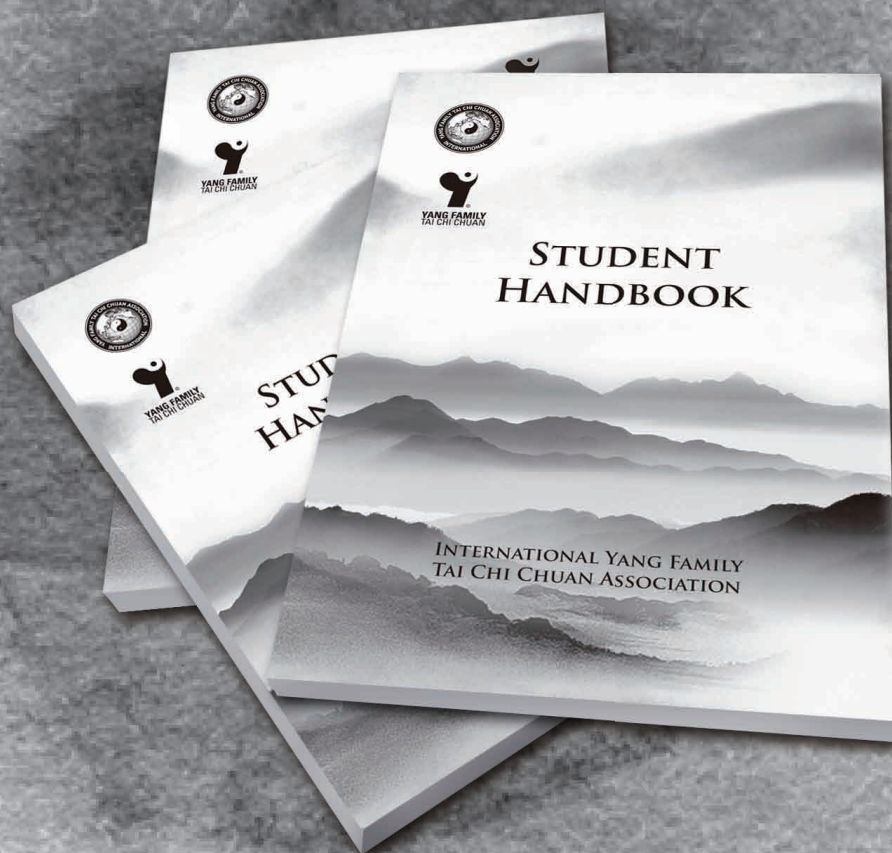
5 *ibid*, p.8

6 Wile, Douglas, trans. *T'ai-Chi Touchstones, Yang Family Secret Transmissions*, Brooklyn: Sweet Ch'i Press, 1983, p.104



The Association's Student Handbook: An Overview

*By Dave Barrett
Journal Editor*



The Student Handbook is a comprehensive document, many years in the making, which provides a valuable collection of information for students at all levels. It begins with several essays introducing the history and development of Taijiquan, along with an explanation of the health benefits of daily practice. In the following “Fundamentals of Practice” section there are 15 articles that include: warm-ups and stretching exercises, foot work, stance work and palm techniques. For the first time, in one place, we have the essentials of our physical techniques, including kicking skills clearly explained and illustrated with photographs. There are also articles on weight shifting, transitional motions and breathing methods.

In the “Practice Section” the sequence lists of all of our forms, including the weapons, are compiled. The first section of the 103 form is presented as a photo-sequence with instructional narrative using the “Practice Pages” model we have developed in the Journal. A highlight of this section is a 17-page article covering the repertoire of push hands patterns, with numerous photos. Again, this is the first time such a complete description of the Yang Family’s push hands methods has been presented.

The “Essential Theories” section includes Yang Chengfu’s seminal 10 Principles and several essays that explore how these principles are integrated into our practice. These

three sections form the foundation of the Handbook and represent a primary source for Yang Family fundamentals that can be studied for years to come.

The latter sections of the Handbook are devoted to detailed information on the progression of practice, ranking system requirements and test materials as well as biographies of the Yang Family. Supplementary articles include an extensive resource guide of study materials for Taijiquan in particular and Chinese Philosophy in general. A unique feature of this article will be the active links to web resources that can be accessed from your computer.

The final sections contain articles on certified instructor training, membership forms and Association documents.

This is an historic publication, which represents the work of many dedicated students and teachers. In particular, the production team of Eric Madsen, Adam Batten and Edward Moore led by Bruno Repetto deserves tremendous credit for compiling, organizing and finalizing this work. In utilizing the e-book technology to publish this Handbook the Association will be able to amend and update as necessary, creating a living document that will continue to reflect the development of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan.

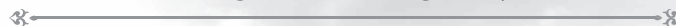


Yang Family SEMINARS 2011



Master Yang Jun

6th Generation Yang Family and
5th Generation Lineage Holder of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan



Mexico City, Mexico

April 1-3, 2011 Hand Form
Contact: Daniel Corona
Ph: +52 5559055963
Email: Daniel@yangfamilytaichi.com
www.TaiChi.org.mx

Paris, France

April 15-18, 2011 Hand Form
April 19, 2011 Push Hands
April 20-21, 2011 Sword Form
Contact: Duc Nguyen Minh
Carole Nguyen
Ph: +33-(0)9- 620 683 65
Mobile: +33-(0)6 07 26 72 96
Fax: +33-1-60 12 24 19
Email: duc@yangfamilytaichi.com
http://www.clubchevry2.com

Berlin, Germany

April 26-29, 2011 Hand Form
2:30pm-4:30pm review Class
5:30pm-7:30pm Push Hands
Contact: Johannes Mergner
Ph: +49-30-34787871
Fax: +49-30-36407017
Email: johannes@yangfamilytaichi.com
http://www.yangstil-taiji.de

Milan, Italy

May 12-15, 2011 Hand Form
May 16, 2011 Sabre Form
May 17, 2011 Push Hands
Contact: Giuseppe Turturo
Ph: +39 346 3503704
Email: giuseppe@yangfamilytaichi.com

Budapest, Hungary

May 20-23, 2011 Hand Form
Contact: Vadas Mihály
Ph: +36-30-44-50-800
Email: mihaly.vadas@t-online.hu
http://www.taiji.hu

BULGARIA

June 17-19, 2011 Hand Form
June 20, 2011 Sabre Form
June 21, 2011 Push Hands
Contact: Stanislav Bagalev
Ph: +395 888-228-842
Email: sifubagalev@abv.bg
http://www.yangtaichi-bg.com/
Contact: Tihomir Todorov
Ph: +359 898-531-692
Email: yangfamilytaichichuan@abv.bg
http://www.yangfamilytaichi.bg/

Cluj-Napoca, ROMANIA

June 24-26, 2011 Hand Form
Contact: Mihai SERBAN
Ph: +40729059990
Email: mingdao.cluj@gmail.com
http://www.mingdao.ro

Winchester, VA USA

July 8-10, 2011 Hand Form
July 11-12, 2011 Sword Form
July 13, 2011 Push Hands
Contact: Pat Rice
Ph: (540) 667-7595
Email: pat@yangfamilytaichi.com
Website: http://www.atocitaijiquan.com/

Louisville, KY USA

July 22-24, 2011 Hand Form
July 25 Push Hands
Contact: Carl D. Meeks
William W. Wojasinski
Ph: (502) 693-7724 or (859) 312-2456
Email: carl@yangfamilytaichi.com
Email: william@yangfamilytaichi.com
http://www.kentuckytaichi.com

Seattle, WA USA

August 12-14, 2011 Hand Form
Contact: Hong Fang
Ph: (425) 869-1185
Email: fanghong@yangfamilytaichi.com

Montreal, Canada

August 25, 2011 Push Hands
August 26-28, 2011 Hand Form
Contact: Sergio Arione
Tel (514) 684-5984
Email: Sergio@yangfamilytaichi.com
www.taichimontreal.com

Buffalo, New York, USA

Sept 9-11, 2011 Hand Form
Contact: Robert A. Gott
Ph: (716) 822-0222
Fax: (716) 822-0222
Email: bobbott@yangfamilytaichi.com
www.reddragonschool.net



INTERNATIONAL YANG FAMILY
TAI CHI CHUAN ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 786
Bothell, WA 98041 USA