

Centering Training

General points: Train first at super-slow speed until you become proficient, then train at normal slow centering speed. Train in role A and an equal time in role B. Spend equal time training on the right side and the left side.

Drills:

Level 1;

1.1 Shoulder techniques: **A**—with your palm on the side, front or back of B's shoulder, connect with his center, follow his movements and uproot him. If you feel B resisting, suddenly disappear. Keep your root and center as you push. **B**—use your mind to lead the energy of A's push down into the Earth under your feet. Use small circles to hide your center from A's pushing. Train with one shoulder at a time.

1.2 Center techniques, high chest: same criteria as 1.1, but A now pushes with his palm high on B's front centerline.

1.3 Center techniques, high back: same criteria as 1.2, but A now pushes on a high place on B's back center line. If A suddenly disappears, kindly be prepared to prevent B from falling.

Level 2:

2.1 Shoulder techniques: **A**—with your palm on the side, front or back of both of B's shoulders, connect with his center, follow his movements and uproot him. If you feel B resisting, suddenly disappear. **B**—hide your center from A's pushing on your shoulders.

2.2 Center techniques, mid-chest: **A**—with your palm placed at mid level (Juwei) on B's front centerline, connect to his center, follow his movements and uproot him. If you feel partner **B** resisting, suddenly disappear. **B**—hide your center from A's pushing.

2.3 Center techniques, mid- back: **A**—Standing behind B, place your palm at mid level (Lingtai) on **B's** back center line, connect to his center, follow his movements and uproot him. If you feel B resisting, suddenly disappear, but kindly prevent him from falling down. **B**—hide your center from **A's** pushing.

2.4 Elbow techniques: **A**—with your palm on the outside of **B's** elbow, seal his elbow in to connect with his center, follow his movements and uproot him. If you feel **B** resisting, suddenly

disappear. **B**—hide your center from **A**'s pushing on your elbow. Train with one elbow at a time.

2.5 *Spiraling Techniques—Seal Opponent's Elbow*: From parallel pushing hands position where **A**'s hands are inside or under **B**'s hands, **A** Yang spirals up to **B**'s elbow and seals it in trying to attach to his center and uproot him:

Level 3

3.1 *Shoulder techniques*: **A**—with your palm on the side, front or back of both of **B**'s shoulders, connect with his center, follow his movements and uproot him. If you feel **B** resisting, use the technique of left/right on/off. **B**—hide your center from **A**'s pushing on your shoulders.

3.2 *Center techniques, abdomen*: **A**—with your palm placed at Yin Jiao on **B**'s front centerline, connect to his center, follow his movements and uproot him. If you feel partner **B** resisting, suddenly disappear. **B**—hide your center from **A**'s pushing.

3.3 *Center techniques, lower back*: **A**—Standing behind **B**, place your palm at Mingmen on **B**'s back center line, connect to his center, follow his movements and uproot him. If you feel **B** resisting, suddenly disappear, but kindly prevent him from falling down. **B**—hide your center from **A**'s pushing.

3.4 *Elbow techniques, Elbow Na*: **A**--while your palms adhere to both **B**'s elbows connect to his center and follow his movements to uproot him. If you feel **B** resisting, apply on/off, left/right technique. **B**--As **A** adheres to both your elbows, prevent him from uprooting you.

3.5 *Spiraling techniques—Open Opponent's Elbow (Small Rollback)*: From crossed pushing hands position, **A** Yang spirals from outside of **B**'s wrist to place the tiger mouth of his hand on the inside of **B**'s elbow and open **B**'s arm outward to disrupt his center.

Level 4

4.1 **B** let **A** seal your forearm into your open door side Use small circles to neutralize **A**'s push on your forearm. **A** push slowly and steadily through **B**'s open door. Suddenly disappear if you feel **B** resisting.

On-off up and down. Neutralize opponent's downward push. Neutralize opponent's upward lift. Apply on off up and down.

On-off left and right—

Circling energy left to right and right to left

Circling energy up to down and down to up

Spiraling energy--Circling energy left or right to up or down.

Principles to be applied.

Taijiquan Treatise by Zhang, San-Feng

2. Once in motion the entire body must be light and agile. It especially should be threaded together.

The body's movement must be soft, relaxed, smooth, natural and comfortable. When this happens, there is no body tightness, no stagnation of Qi, and no mental confusion. Softness will enter into your every motion, and you will move naturally, quickly and efficiently.

The body should be a coherent whole, with all of its parts connected and unified by the Qi moving within them, like ancient Chinese coins connected by a string. In order to manifest the soft Jin of Taiji, the body must act like a soft whip to express the power.

Taijiquan Treatise by Zhang, San-Feng

2. Shen should be retained internally.

Retaining the Shen internally means to be calm, patient, and restrained in your actions. This helps giving away your intentions to your enemy.

3. The root is at the feet. Jin or movement is generated from the legs, mastered by the waist and manifested from the fingers. From the feet to the legs to the waist must be integrated and one unified Qi.

It is important to balance the force and Qi of the substantial hand with the root in the feet and to balance the insubstantial force suspending the head with the Qi sunk to the Dan Tian. The trick to unifying the Qi and the techniques is correct Taijiquan breathing.

4. If you fail to catch the opportunity and gain the superior position, your body will be disordered. To solve this problem, you must look to the waist and legs.

If your partner places you in an awkward position or is dynamically moving you into an unfavorable situation your body will often tense, which allows your partner to find your center and "root-push" you off balance. Whenever you discover yourself entering such a position or situation, you immediately lower your body to re-root through your foundation, while using your breathing and your waist to neutralize the incoming manifestation of energy.

5. If there is a top, there is a bottom; if there is a front, there is a back; if there is a left, there is a right.

The first meaning of this passage is to keep your body centered. When up and down, right and left, etc. are balanced, you will be centered and you can create a firm root. When you are centered, your mind will be on the lower Dan Tian and the Qi can be gathered there abundantly and you are able to use the waist to direct and action and power easily and smoothly.

The second meaning concerns fighting strategy. Taijiquan emphasizes completeness; when attacking high, you must defend low. When moving in one direction, you must balance mind and Qi in the opposite direction.

The third meaning is to manifest Jin with balanced power.

6. If the Yi wants to go upward, this implies considering downward. If you want to lift and defeat an opponent, you must first consider his root. When the opponent's root is broken, he will inevitably be defeated quickly and certainly.

If you wish to knock an enemy down or push him away, you must first break his root so that he is unstable and can be easily defeated. In addition, when your enemy loses his root, his mind temporarily will be scattered and confused, and this will provide you with a good opportunity to attack.

7. Substantial and insubstantial must be clearly distinguished. Every part of the body has a substantial and an insubstantial aspect. The entire body and all the joints should be threaded together without the slightest break.

When your opponent attacks on your right side, that side should become insubstantial and your left side should become substantial to attack him. In order to do this effectively, your entire body—from the feet, legs and waist to the fingers—must work like a unit, and move as if threaded together, like a soft whip.

Taijiquan Classic by Wang, Zong-Yue

8. When the opponent is hard, I am soft. This is called yielding. When I follow the opponent, this is called adhering.

When your enemy attacks you, do not resist him, but instead give way and lead his force into emptiness so that his attack misses you. The Chinese term translated as “yielding” literally means “walk away.” Adhering to your partner means to maintain contact with him and follow his motions so that when the right time comes, you can make the appropriate move.

9. After you have mastered the techniques of adhering and following, then you can gradually grasp what “Understanding Jin means. From “Understanding Jin,” you gradually approach

enlightenment (intuitive understanding) of your opponent's intention. However, without a great deal of study over a long time, you cannot grasp this intuitive understanding of your opponent.

The more you practice, the more sensitive you become.

10. An insubstantial energy leads the head upward. The Qi is sunk to the Dan Tian.

The upward energy is balanced by the Qi sunk to the Dan Tian and the bottom of the feet. When the head is upright, the spirit of vitality will be raised, alertness will increase, the sense of enemy will be present and the body will be straight and upright from the tailbone to the top of the head. When the Qi is sunk to the Dan Tian, the mind is calm and the root is strong.

12. No tilting, no leaning. Suddenly disappear, suddenly appear.

If you maintain a relaxed, centered, and balanced posture, and adhere and follow, you can respond easily and lightly to your partner. You can then “appear” with your own attack, where he doesn't expect you.

12. When there is pressure on the left, the left becomes insubstantial. When there is pressure on the right, the right becomes insubstantial.

Wherever the opponent attacks that part of you withdraws, receiving and neutralizing the opponent's incoming power and transferring it to the opposite side where you will automatically attack.

13. A feather cannot be added, and a fly cannot land. The opponent does not know me, but I know the opponent. A hero has no equal because of this.

No matter what the opponent does, you adhere and follow. After much practice you can be so sensitive and accurate in your response that not even a feather can touch you without setting you in motion. If you reach this level, no one can match you. In order to reach this level, you must train listening Jin – skin feeling and sensitivity. Skin feeling is a tool for communication between your body and your opponent's.

14. Stand like a balanced scale, move like a lively cartwheel.

The body stands upright, centered and in equilibrium, just like a scale balancing two weights. Neutralize incoming forces by moving your whole body as a unit, with the centerline of your body acting as the axle.

15. When the opponent presses sideward or downward, then follow. When there is double heaviness (mutual resistance), then there is stagnation. Often, after several years of dedicated training one still cannot apply this neutralization and is controlled by the opponent. The reason for this is that the fault of double heaviness is not understood. To avoid this fault, you must

know Yin and Yang. To adhere means to yield. To yield means to adhere. Yin not separate from Yang, Yang not separate from Yin. Yin and Yang mutually cooperate, understanding this is "understanding Jin."

When there is mutual resistance, the liveliness of Taijiquan action stagnates. Then the person with the greatest external strength will gain the upper hand. You must learn to automatically yield to your partner's attack while remaining lightly attached to him. When you have neutralized his attack, your Yin becomes Yang as you attack. When you learn how extreme Yin becomes Yang and extreme Yang becomes Yin, you will learn the knack of timing your attacks and defense, and will gain the ability to borrow your opponent's force. This is understanding Jin.

16. After understanding Jin, the more practice, the more refinement. Silently learn, then ponder; gradually you will approach your heart's desire.

This passage emphasizes that it takes a great deal of practice to develop understanding Jin. It also hints at the need to combine physical practice with intellectual study, including the study of the Taiji classics. Practice and study go together. One reads then practices to develop a physical feeling for what one has read. Then one rereads and practices some more to deepen the intellectual understanding and the physical feeling.

17. Fundamentally give yourself up and follow the opponent. Many misunderstand and give up the near for the far. This means a slight error can cause a thousand-mile divergence. The learner, therefore, must discriminate precisely.

Do not try to strategize and force your opponent into a bad position. Wait for him to attack you, then take advantage of his attack. Stick and follow the opponent patiently and when an opportunity presents itself, attack. If you try actively to attack your partner or get him in a bad position, it is called giving up the near for the far. The student should be very precise in determining right and wrong techniques because a slight error in the beginning of training will have greater and greater consequences as time goes on.

Thirteen Important Keys of Regulation the Body by Gu, Liu-Xing

18. Curving shape and spiral (coil), the mind and the body are centered and the Qi body is round.

Coiling is a spiral movement that allows you to change techniques from Yin to Yang and vice versa. To spiral skillfully, the mind and body must be centered, and you should always keep the body in a good Peng Jin state. The coiling must be done with the entire body, not just the arms. Your body must move with round and circling patterns. When you master the art of coiling, your hands will always be on top of your opponent's arms and you will have the advantage.