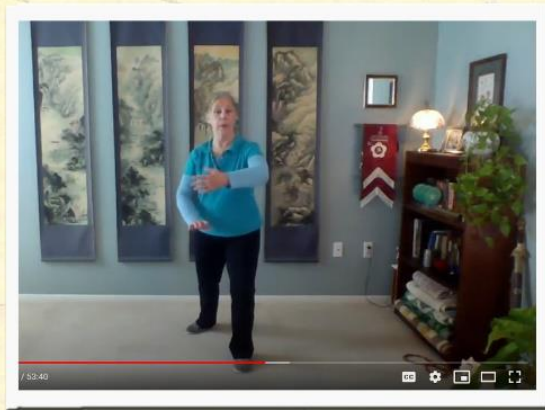


Traditional Yang Style Taijiquan Part 1

taught by Terri Morgan



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第一段

武当研究会

Wudang Research Association



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Traditional Yang Style Taiji

This 8 Week Course (16 Classes) with an additional 3 Weeks (6 Classes) of Cloud Hands practice is taught by Terri Morgan. Terri is an international taiji champion who has studied, practiced, and taught since 1985.

This course introduces the movements, basic principles, and practice methods for traditional Yang Style Taiji with the expectation that the student is following along.

Basic stretches, walking and stepping methods, and a step-by-step explanation for each movement are included. Traditional applications and practical applications are also included along with breathing methods, overall relaxation, posture, development of good balance.

Cloud hands practice is a stationary practice that introduces the four cardinal directions: North, South, East, West. These four directions correspond to four of taiji's core applications – ward off (peng), pull down (lu), press (ji), and push (an).

Videos were recorded during March, June, and July 2021

This book contains a preview of the course.

Introduction to Traditional Yang Style Taijiquan

8 Week Course (16 Classes) with an additional 3 Weeks (6 Classes) of Cloud Hands practice *taught by* Terri Morgan

Each class builds on the one before.

In the first class each week, we work on physical movements. We focus on the body position and good alignment. We pay attention to physical energy and geometry; the physical aspects of what we are doing when we move.

In the second class each week, we pay attention to internal work. We focus on using the breath with the movements from the previous day. We pay attention to internal energy, using the mind, and how we are doing the movements.

In traditional taiji, the physical movements combine with the internal work. A physical movement may be generally correct, but if it's not coordinated with the breath or lacks intent and purpose, it's not complete.

Understanding both the physical dynamic behind the movement and the internal work is essential to developing skill with the traditional applications. Each movement includes the opportunity for several applications. The shape of the forms is tightly connected to the applications.

WEEK 1

Getting started with Yang Style taiji. Look at the form. Talk about the physical movements. Opening movements, first 3 movements.

This class repeats same sets on Tuesday but with the focus on internal workmanship.

Beginning Yang Style Taijiquan 8 Weeks #1
(00:53:40)

March 15, 2021

Warm ups.

1. Stretch.
2. Change the weight.
3. Stepping.

Stretch.

Introduction to a basic outward stretch and the tiny, small, and large heavenly circle.

Knees bent. Arms slightly rounded. Keep the shoulders down.

Description and discussion of the connections for the large, small, and tiny heavenly circle.

Change the weight.

Pouring sand. Straight first. Then with a circle.

Push to the opposite side to transfer the weight.

With an outward circle, the knee goes around the toes, not beyond the toes. Showing the circle patterns and the connection into a figure eight. (outward circle)

This ability to transfer the weight smoothly is a fundamental skill, yi zhong gongfu).

Stepping

Rolling type of step, back and forth

Detailed description and examples of the stepping method.

60 front / 40 back.

Keep the body in good alignment. Sink into the heel. Bring the foot through Place it. Transfer the weight.

Mention of the active use of the waist with stepping.

Form Practice

Preview of the first part of the form. Mention of the forward and back motion through brush knee.

Preview what it feels like. Try to follow. As we go through the open and close, back and forth, forward and back, the rhythm of the form.

Then, we'll go back and cover the first 3 moves.

Basic walk through with mostly open and close, description of what to do in the movement. Emphasis on what is necessary for the movement.

The rolling motion, forward and back, are part of all taiji.

Discussion of repetitions. Things to pay attention to in each movement. Things to pay attention to between the movements.

Salute

Don't salute with your feet apart.

Taiji salute is softer, rounded. Not sharp as in Shaolin.

1. Opening

Open the feet.

Raise and lower the hands.

Resist as the arm comes up. As if someone is pressing on your arms. Enough that you continue to raise your arm. The same as it comes down. That requires a little bit of strength to press down. No higher than your shoulders. Soft. Not hard.

2. Ward off Left, Pull down Right

Shift onto the left. Sink.

Turn the right toes to 45* Transfer the weight.

As push thru the leg, raise the right arm.

3. Ward off Right, Pull down Left

The extended arm should have a nice slope. The hands focus on the middle.

Ward off and Pull down are two of the 13 postures. How the hands work together to do the two movements.

Everything is well coordinated and everything works together.

At the beginning, both hands go up and down together. As I move, both hands continue to work together while doing different things.

Practice: Movements

Repeat this series slowly, with descriptions of where the hands are and how they are working together with the movements of the body. Using the combination of ward off and pull down. More on this in the context of applications tomorrow.

Practice for how to move. What are the movements? How do we get there?

Taiji is simple and yet complicated. These few movements have 4 of the 8 directions. What the 13 postures are, how we use them in solo practice, how we use them in 2 person practice or push hands.

Practice again. Pay attention to the rolling motion, backward and forward. Pay attention to finding your center as we start.

Again, but just a little faster. Pay attention to that rocking motion. Transfer the weight.

This principle follows through. The outward appearance maintains an effortlessness, relaxed, substantive movement. There is purpose to what we are doing.

Discussion: Weight, Balance, Placement

Today we focused on Where are my hands supposed to be? The weight transfer as we step. And the rocking motion. Transferring the weight between the legs, not over. Demonstration of the concept. Correct and incorrect.

Yang style stays at the same level. We have some rising motion in the form, e.g. White Crane. But as we are stepping, one of the key ideas in Yang style is consistency at a level. We have full extensions, all the way on the floor. Also work for that single, even line – if I attached a string to my waist – to see how I'm moving

through the form – with the example of brush knee (correctly and incorrectly) consistency at level, the active use of the transfer of the weight thru the legs and good placement gives you the balance point. If you can't find it, you will be off balance.

As we get started, finding that balance point is a skill that has to be learned.

Once we learn it, some other things can come into play. As I step thru, if I'm in balance, I can do other things with my foot before I put it down. It takes some effort and paying attention to body alignment. Find that balance point.

We work with the balance points to connect each of the moves. Where does this stop? How do I get from this move to the next move?

Using the first 3 moves, answers to these questions.

Where do we turn? How did we get there? What are the angles that we use?

There are many layers that go with these movements. That is part of what taiji is. There should be substance to taiji. The next layers, there's always a next layer, give us more insight into what we're doing and how that can benefit the internal organs, muscles, tendons, the rest of the physical body, and self-defense.

Lots of layers. I'll touch on some of them. This is the first class of the 8 week course.

Beginning Yang Style Taijiquan 8 Weeks #2 (00:48:31)

March 16, 2021

Reminder of what we did yesterday. The focus today will be on the internal work. The external movements have to be there, but we're going to pay attention to the internal work.

Warm Ups

Stretch

Placement checklist.

Reach and stretch out over the legs, open the hip. Keep the knees bent.

This stretch is a basic warm up.

Weight transfer.

Feet wider than shoulder width. Push down and across. Not up. Side to side.

Circles. Circle around each foot makes a figure 8. Knee stays over the foot. Knee circles around the toes. Continue the circles and work lower.

We use this circle pattern everywhere.

Simple practice gives us the ability to focus on them so when we put them into the form, we can do the movements with much greater facility.

Stepping

Transfer the weight and step through. Place the foot. Push forward and pull forward.

Discussion: Foundations

These three sets give us quite a bit of what we need for our foundations in taiji practice. Simple moves. There's a lot there.

Practice: Whole form

We're going to go through the whole form. Then, we're going to review the three moves from yesterday.

Relax. Open and close. Gentle rolling motion. Focus on shifting forward and back.

Discussion: Use of Space

Using short steps to be able to complete the form in the space I have.

The shape of the movements needs to be consistent. Whether it's larger or smaller, it needs to be consistent.

Demonstration: Larger steps.

Controlling your space. How big can the step be to finish the form in this space? Or is it a self defense situation looking at the space between where I need to go or who I need to deal with? How much space matters? We want to control our own space. The idea of keeping the step consistent has a side benefit. That is giving you a measure of your own space. How much space can I cover? How much space do I need? What does that feel like? These kinds of things help our practice.

Form Practice

Salute

1. Raise the hands.

Transfer the weight to the right, release the left.

2. Left ward off, Right pull down

3. Right ward off, left pull down.

Discussion: Internal Work

Several things to pay attention to, not the least of which is that this one move, (ward off, pull down, press, and push.)

The two we see most easily, ward off and pull down. Ward off has a bounce to it; more buoyancy, resistance and extension at the same time. It's not forced. It's not a physical affection or something done with the arm. It comes from the lower dan tian. It comes from the

root. Peng is one of the 13 postures of taiji. This is not a tap it with your arm and push push push. The idea behind peng is ‘go away.’ That energy underlies the movement. It’s not the movement. The energy that underlies the movement is not the movement.

I can use my two hands with peng. I can use my leg with ward off. I could use my hip, my shoulder to ward off. It’s the underlying energy.

Pull down has the same idea. It’s more direct. It’s more visible. Easier to see and easier to understand. I can use pull down with my arm. If my opponent is in the right place – that’s not to say my opponent needs to be where – it’s as the opportunity presents itself – I can use my whole body to pull down.

What’s available? What’s possible?

The technique and the energy work together. They are not the same thing. I’m emphasizing this because there are a lot of folks that have long lists of techniques. This one does this and that one does that. We don’t have any of that.

We have some. Our focus in taiji isn’t on this one thing for this one purpose for this one situation. I have this kind of energy. I can work with it. We are learning Peng today. I can use it with this hand. I can use it with that hand. I can do all kinds of things with it that are not dependent on “this” move.

We want to cultivate that connection and that separation.

The other two: Elbow

There is an opportunity to use the elbow. It’s not part of the way we practice this form. It is part of the possible applications in these simple moves. Shoulder. Right here.

Ward off and Pull down cardinal

Elbow and Shoulder are angular

Practice: All of this together. Pay attention to the physical body. Just these three moves.

As we work with each of these moves, we have energy and applications. The breathing work we do helps cultivate our physical strength, to cultivate the idea of open and close. It helps to start the process of circulating the qi, the internal energy, not the physical energy. It's different than the kinetic energy. We begin to connect the dots. We begin to enable our mind and our intent – what am I thinking about doing? How am I going to do this? - to drive what we are doing.

We move it from “I need to pay attention to this physical movement.” to “I’m going to do this.”

The example I have is learning the alphabet. Basic moves, how to connect them, what goes on internally. We are now writing some simple sentences. This idea of the mind and the intent driving whatever it is, you're writing paragraphs and stories.

Practice: Focus on the Breath

Practice again. This time, using the breath. Breathe in and breathe out.

Demonstration: Hu-Xi

For breathing practice, we're going to use Hu/Xi, in Chinese, literally breathe out and breathe in. Together with a tone, so that it is possible to hear the breath as it extends through the movements.

The breath is long and sustained. There is no sharp breathing. Shaolin does that. Taiji doesn't do that. Even with fa-jing we don't do that. Extend the breath.

There are spaces between the breath. We use those. There is a moment of clarity that occurs in that space. There is the potential for many different types of things, there's the potential for many different types of things, many different changes in those moments. We use them as part of our meditation practice. Part of our mindfulness practice in taiji to pay attention to variously our emotional body, calming, centering. Our physical body, releasing tension. Developing strength. Developing flexibility. Our mental body, letting go of anger, tension, mental tension, worry. Some things will come back. But we can let them go for a little while.

There is also a spiritual aspect to our practice. It's not some out there thing, but there is a mystical quality to part of what we do. It's part of the philosophy. It's part of the tradition. That we are able through practice to develop skills in concentration, skills in looking at things in a different way, in a holistic way.

Taiji comes from a vary holistic philosophy. There is a very deep holistic idea. It comes from the Daoist teachings. We can find it best in a particular phrase: Dao sheng yi, yi sheng er, er sheng san, san sheng wan wu shi.

From the Dao comes one, from one comes two, from two comes three, from three comes ten thousand things.

This idea of being one, everything is one, and from the Dao, from the potential for everything, we get one. There's nothing here. It's only potential.

And now we have one.

If you have one, you must have two. There is one and there is not one. Yin and Yang.

We use this. It's supposed to sound simple. It's harder than it sounds.

Practice: Using Full Breath

Using the diaphragm and the back to open the lungs.

Full and complete breathing.

Narrated with movements and breathing.

Second set with breathing only.

Discussion: Connections

This coordination physical movements. Upper body with the lower body. Hands with the feet. Elbows with the knees. Shoulders with the hips. Breath with the movement in the correct direction with the energy.

Demonstration: Ward off, pull down

The energy, reference ward off, pull down. Opposing forces as I step through. Coordinated with the step. Everything all together. Arrives all together. You end up in a well-balanced, well-placed, position. You're supposed to. That's the goal. If you're not, check yourself. What's the position that I should be in? Right?

When we start out, feet about shoulder width apart. Raise the hands. My feet don't move. Breathe in and breathe out. Use the whole body. Not just the arms.

Shift. Turn 45* Transfer the weight. Shoulder over the hip. Place the foot. Where do I put my foot? According to my leg? And transfer through.

Demonstration: Covering Distance

How long my step is depends on how long my leg is. That's where my foot goes. If my supporting leg is lower, if my knee is bent more, then my step can be bigger.

How much your supporting leg is bent? How long is your leg?

Don't overreach. You need to know what your leg is going to do.

We can use the energy to increase the step.

Simple step. Slowly with a small bend.

Same step with more of a bend in my supporting leg.

With movement. Two steps.

The same concepts as we have with the easy stepping, apply to more energetic stepping. We build on that.

Practice: Movement and Breath

The more you can connect the breath with the movement, the more you can extend the breath through the movement, the easier it is to move from body mechanics – I'm going to put my arm here, I'm going to bend my elbow, I'm going to put my hand here - to working with the energies, and the shapes and the dynamics, in our form.