

Patience

It is impossible to flow softly in T'ai Chi Chih practice unless the mind is allowed to remain patient. Events have their own timing and must be allowed to unfold in their own way. Like a flower blooming; there is no way to rush it. This is the inherent intelligence of the Chi (called Prajna) being expressed. This infinite wisdom is far beyond the limitations of a conceptual or calculating mind.

It is easy to understand this intellectually, yet few embody this attitude in their T'ai Chi Chih practice. The reason is that the Ego continually tries to direct the movement for its own satisfaction. It is not accustomed to playing the role of the observer and simply cannot wait to "make it happen." Yet when we allow it to take control we also end up using effort or physical strength that makes it impossible to allow the movement to unfold naturally. A residual trace of thought is left behind which prevents the timing from being right, and the effort falls short or overshoots the mark.

Justin continually emphasizes the need to allow our T'ai Chi Chih practice to be "absolutely soft". He further states that "softness means letting go." Ah, but letting go of what? First and foremost, he is advocating letting go of all tension. Where there is tension, the Chi cannot flow freely and the purpose of T'ai Chi Chih is compromised. A good guideline is to remember, "if it bends, it holds tension." In other words, the ankles, knees, waist, hips, shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingers are the places where tension is often found. However, as

candidates in their T'ai Chi Chih teacher training course can attest, trying to find and release each bit of tension can be an overwhelming job. It seems that every time tension is released in one area of the body another bit presents itself. It's a bit like trying to chop down a tree one leaf at a time! There is a more efficient way.

If we dig a little deeper we might examine what (or who) is behind all this tension? It comes from the mind (Ego) calculating each action and anticipating a certain result or reward. This acting with expectation creates all sorts of problems in our lives and our T'ai Chi Chih practice. When we are able to release the scheming mind we can silently observe each T'ai Chi Chih movement as it is happening without getting in the way. This is cutting off the root. We intuitively sense the flow of the Chi and patiently wait for it to express itself in the most effortless, appropriate way. The back heel rises, the waist turns and the shoulders rotate as needed, and without effort.

When practicing T'ai Chi Chih, and especially when teaching, there is room for the Ego, or T'ai Chi Chih, but not both. When we let go of the self and allow T'ai Chi Chih to take the lead we find the movements are full of mystery and wonder. More importantly, we transcend our own limitations and delve into the deepest aspects of this spiritual practice. Prajna is always awaiting the opportunity to express itself. We need only silence the mind and practice T'ai Chi Chih with patience to open up to the greatest inner resource... awareness.

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