

The Wu Style Tai Chi (Gah Gee) Group Slow Form

By Sifu Lenny Aaron

RELAX – CONCENTRATE – MOVE SLOW – BREATH SLOW
& ALWAYS A SUBTLE SMILE ☺

It takes years of dedicated practice to master the Tai Chi Gah Gee slow form. You must put your mind in the form with complete concentration from the beginning to the end and master every movement. Stay balanced, rooted and have total muscle control throughout the entire form. Every movement in the form - and I mean EVERY movement - is as important as the one before or after it. There should never be a change in speed unlike in the fast form which may speed up or slow down. Cherish EVERY moment from the beginning to the end of the form. Don't wash over one movement just to get to the next. Don't move your feet faster than you move your hands. You can try using one breath for one movement and that'll determine your speed. For example, when your hands go away from your body during brush knee twist step, that should be one breath out. DO NOT FORCE YOUR BREATH as this will create tension in the lungs and chest. 70% - 80% lung capacity is fine. You can also try the "chase the running ant" method. Literally imagine the speed of a running ant and try to follow it as slow, smooth and even as you can.

Now these are methods to remain constant throughout the solo form but when doing the tai chi group slow form it is important to do it together. Remember that part of being a martial artist is being aware of your surroundings. You should "feel" with your peripheral vision the movements of the students around you. Since you're not supposed to do the form with your eyes closed, this shouldn't be a problem. If there isn't a student in front of you, usually your peripheral vision can catch someone somewhere.

By experiencing your energy in the company of others who share the same responsibility of keeping the group moving in unison, and adjusting your movements in relation to the movements around you, you develop an acute peripheral awareness and sensitivity. You can physically "feel" the motions around you even without a direct line of site and adjust yourself accordingly. This can also translate into sensing an opponent's intention in push hands or combat, like when an opponent may be closing the distance on you.

Remember that it's impossible for you NOT to be affected by others in the "group slow form", whether harmonious or distracting.

In a group form there is also the benefit of community chi; as described by Tom Bender, any action which employs and enhances our skills and joins them together with those of others to bring forth the wonderful gifts of joint action - is vital for the fellowship of community to develop and be sustained. When held sacred, it honors, joins, expands and enriches our own nature and that of the community of life. A group, or preferably the community itself, can raise healing energy and feed it into the energy body of the community.

In other words, the enrichment one gets from doing the tai chi forms can be even higher when done in a group. But only when the community acts together.

Remember, move with them. Not against them. Even the words "against them" sounds hostile. To achieve our tai chi goals it's important to be in harmony with the people around you. Everyone has their own life's rhythm. But for example, musicians have to join together in one rhythm to create music.

This is our goal. Make music!