

# ***TAIJIQUAN POSTURE, ALIGNMENT & MOVEMENT PRINCIPLES***

***Katherine Allen, Registered Instructor TCUGB, BCCMA, PTCCI (Level 8)***

*compiled 1999 and updated 2005 by K Allen Email: katnom@btinternet.com*

## **POSTURE, BODY ALIGNMENT, BREATHING & MINDSET**

- 1) Feel suspended from above. Imagine a flexible silken thread attached to the topmost part of your head, pulling you upwards, creating an energetic, light, sensitive feeling. Your spine should feel extended and supple, as a string of pearls.
- 2) Imagine a weight on the tailbone, pulling gently downwards like a heavy tail. The spine should feel stretched upwards and downwards at the same time, like an elastic band being pulled at both ends. The spine must always be straight from tailbone to top of head - note that 'straight' does not always mean 'erect'.
- 3) Feel rooted and connected to the earth, creating a feeling of stability and grounded strength.
- 4) The shoulders should feel relaxed downwards and the chest should feel soft and natural.  
(Avoid the stereotype army style posture i.e. chin projecting out and up, shoulders back, chest puffed up, knee joints locked and pelvis tipped back, as this results in many postural defects and an inability to move fluidly.)
- 5) The elbows should feel heavy and sunk downwards.
- 6) The spine should operate as a unit. In most moves the nose will be aligned with the navel.
- 7) The knees should be aligned in the same direction as the toes.
- 8) In forward stances, the front knee should never project beyond the toes.
- 9) Hips and shoulders should remain level and down - never collapse the rib cage on one side.
- 10) The joints should feel open and relaxed. Never lock or overextend any joint.
- 11) The breath should be relaxed, soft, fine and continuous - never hold the breath. Breathe in and out through the nose, breathing smoothly, softly and abdominally. (If you feel a tendency to breathe out when a move is expanding, then follow the tendency, but do not force this matchmaking because forcing is counterproductive.)
- 12) The tip of the tongue should be positioned lightly at the roof of the mouth. (This is a safe, stable position which also relaxes the jaw. This position promotes saliva flow and energy flow.)
- 13) The face should be calm and relaxed with a smooth unworried brow. The eyes should follow the movement and should display mental focus and attention in the moment.
- 14) The mind must be clear and calm so that the art can flow freely.

## **MOVEMENT**

- 1) Movement should feel as though it begins at your centre and extends outward, similar to a flowing wave of energy. Use the mind, not force, to allow the move to flow.
- 2) Stepping should be light and agile. When you first place a foot forward or backward, it should touch the floor with no weight, just as though you were stepping out onto a thin piece of ice to see whether it can carry your weight - then transfer the weight.
- 3) Power comes from the ground, up through the legs and is directed by the hips and waist outward through the arms and hands.
- 4) Be aware of your centreline - often hands will line up, pass through or defend the centreline.
- 5) Movement should be continuous, flowing like a wave, without any stopping points. The lower and upper body must co-ordinate and move as one flowing unit.
- 6) Movement should appear to be agile, light, rooted, effortless, well balanced and graceful.
- 7) All joints in the body should move in a liquid, boneless way, as though moving through water.
- 8) All movements begin with the body as a unit and end with the body as a unit (i.e. a limb does not continue moving after the weight shift is complete - everything begins together and ends together at the same moment. No part of the body moves in isolation.)
- 9) Movements must be focussed to one direction. The eyes, body and mind must be focussed.
- 10) Contraction should follow expansion (insubstantial - substantial, empty - full, coiling - uncoiling, opening - closing, Yin - Yang etc.)
- 11) All moves should look relaxed, balanced and fluid: as graceful as a cat and as smooth and powerful as a soaring eagle.