

Elements of T'ai Chi

Elements of Posture (Standing "Wu Chi" Position)

- Entire body is loose and relaxed.
- Head is held so that it feels as if top of head is suspended from above by a thread of energy.
- Upper body is light and relaxed. It feels as if it is floating above the waist.
- Lower body is substantial, solid and relaxed. It feels as if it is sunken or rooted into the ground.
- Knees are bent at all times. When "sinking" knees are bent at least two inches.
- Tailbone is pointed down towards floor so that hips are gently tucked under.
- Feet are in the "Horse Stance" – feet at least shoulder width apart and are pointing straight forward.
- Tip of the tongue touches the roof of the mouth.

Elements of Breathing

- Breathing is easy and relaxed, not forced, or exerted.
- Breathe through your nose and pay attention to the breath as it enters and exits your body. *Feel* the sensation of your breathing.
- Breathing comes from stomach not chest. Leave your chest slightly "sunken" while expanding and contracting your abdomen.
- As you inhale, expand you abdomen and allow your breath to fill your body.
- As you exhale, relax your abdomen and allow your breath to flow from your body.
- As you exhale, sink your *Chi* into the lowest area of you abdomen. Sink your *Chi* into your *Tan Tien* (located about three finger widths below your navel).

Elements of Movement

- All movement is generated with energy from the waist and *Tan Tien*. Typically movements are in line with the waist.
- Movement is always relaxed. Stiffness is released from all limbs so that they can flow throughout the movements.
- Movement of arms is usually in the manner of being lifted by the wrists as if a thread of energy is lifting them. Movement is always light and relaxed.
- When feet are on the ground the legs are heavy and "rooted" but relaxed. It might be helpful to imagine them filled with water. When foot is lifted the leg becomes light and flows from one movement to the next. Imagine all the water flowing in to the "rooted" leg.
- When stepping forward, feet are gently placed down heel first. If you find that you are "plopping" your feet down, you may want to consider sinking down lower or not putting your foot out too far.
- Keep your back as upright as possible. Typically movements are done in such a way that you are leaning neither forward or backward.
- Connect all movements with the waist and *Tan Tien*.