



## 10 PRINCIPLES OF YANG CHENGFU

### by Master Yang Chengfu

#### 10 TAI CHI PRINCIPLES OF YANG CHENGFU

##### 1-4 ARRANGE THE BODY FRAME

###### **1. Top of the head floats up to raise the spirit**

This means pushing up and energetic so the posture of the head is upright and straight and the spirit is infused into its apex. You may not use strength. To use strength makes the back of the neck stiff, whereupon the Qi and blood cannot circulate freely. You must have an intention, which is empty, lively and natural. Without intention, that is empty, lively, pushing up and energetic, you won't be able to raise your spirit.

###### **2. Relax the shoulders and drop the elbows**

Relaxing the shoulders means the shoulders are sinking, open, and hang downward. If you can't relax them downward, the shoulders pop up and then the Qi follows and goes upward, causing the whole body to lack strength. Dropping the elbows means the elbows are relaxed downward. If the elbows are elevated then the shoulders are unable to sink. When you use this to push someone they won't go far. It's like the 'cut of' energy of external martial arts. External martial arts are thought to use energy from parts or sections of the body, as opposed to the 'whole-body' energy of Tai Chi Chuan.

###### **3. Relax the chest and open the shoulder blades**

The phrase 'relax the chest' means the chest is slightly reserved inward, which causes the Qi to sink to the dantien. The chest must not be puffed out; if you do so then the Qi is blocked in the chest region. The upper body becomes heavy and the lower body light and it will become easy for the heels to float upward. 'Open the shoulder blades' means to round the upper back which makes the Qi stick to the back. If you are able to hold in the chest then you will naturally be able to slightly round the back. If you can slightly round the back, then you will be able to emit strength from the spine, which others cannot oppose.

###### **4. Relax the waist and lower back**

The waist is the commander of the whole body. Only after you are able to relax the waist will the Qi sink, and the two legs have strength making the lower body is stable. The alternation of empty and full all derive from the turning of the waist. Hence the saying: 'The wellspring of destiny lies in the tiny interstice of the waist. In Chinese thought, the waist tends to be regarded as the lower back (mingmen) rather than a circle girdling the middle of the body. Whenever there is a lack of strength in your form, you must look in the waist and legs.

##### 5-7 COORDINATE THE MOVEMENTS

**5. Separate empty and full** - In the art of Tai Chi Chuan, separating full and empty is the number one rule. If the whole body sits on the right leg, then the right leg is deemed 'full' and the left leg 'empty.' If the whole body sits on the left leg, then the left leg is deemed 'full' and the right leg 'empty.' Only after you are able to distinguish full and empty will turning movements be light, nimble and almost without effort; if you can't distinguish them, then your steps will be heavy and sluggish. You won't be able to stand stably, and it will be easy for an opponent to control you.

**6. Synchronize upper and lower body** - In the Tai Chi Classics "synchronize upper and lower body" is expressed as: 'With its root in the foot, emitting from the leg, governed by the waist, manifesting in the hands and fingers - from feet to legs to waist - complete everything in one impulse.' Literally 'one Qi'. This could also be rendered as 'one breath.' When hands move, the waist moves and legs move, and the gaze moves along with them. Only then can we say the upper and the lower body are synchronized. If one part doesn't move then it is not coordinated with the rest.

## **7. Practice slowly, continuously and without interruption**

Strength in external martial arts is a kind of acquired, brute force, so it has a beginning and an end, times when it continues and times when it is cut off, such that when the old force is used up and new force hasn't yet arisen. There is a moment when it is extremely easy for the person to be constrained by an opponent. In Tai Chi, we use intent rather than force, and from beginning to end, smoothly and ceaselessly, complete a cycle and return to the beginning, circulating endlessly. That is what the Tai Chi Classics mean by 'Like the Yangtze or Yellow River, endlessly flowing.' And again: 'Moving strength is like unreeling silk threads'. These both refer to unifying into a single impulse.

## 8-10 HARMONIZE THE MIND

### **8. Use intent rather than force**

When you practice Tai Chi Chuan, let the entire body relax and extend. Don't employ even the tiniest amount of coarse strength, which would cause musculoskeletal or circulatory blockage with the result that you restrain or inhibit yourself. Only then will you be able to lightly and nimbly change and transform, circling naturally. The net of acupuncture meridians and channels throughout the body are like the waterways on top of the earth. If the waterways are not blocked, the water circulates; if the meridians are not impeded the Qi circulates. If you move the body about with stiff force, you swamp the meridians. Qi and blood are impeded, movements are not nimble; all someone has to do is begin to guide you and your whole body is moved. If you use intent rather than force, wherever the intent goes, so goes the Qi. In this way, because the Qi and blood are flowing and circulating every day throughout the entire body and never stagnating, you will get true internal strength after a lot of practice.

### **9. Match up inner and outer**

What we are practicing in Tai Chi depends on the spirit, hence the saying: 'The spirit is the general, the body his troops.' If you can raise your spirit, your movements will naturally be light and nimble, the form nothing more than empty and full, open and closed. When we say 'open,' we don't just mean open the arms or legs; the mental intent must open along with the limbs. When we say 'close,' we don't just mean close the arms or legs; the mental intent must close along with the limbs. If you can combine inner and outer into a single impulse, then they become a seamless whole.

### **10. Seek stillness within movement**

External martial artists prize leaping and stomping, and they do this until breath (Qi) and strength are exhausted, so that after practicing they are all out of breath. In Tai Chi Chuan we use tranquillity to overcome movement, and even in movement, still have tranquillity. So when you practice the form, the slower the better! When you do it slowly your breath becomes deep and long, the Qi sinks to the dantien, and naturally there is no harmful constriction or enlargement of the blood vessels.