

BASIC QI GONG / TAI CHI TERMINOLOGY

Qi or Chi: (pronounced chee) – energy, vital essence, breath

Qi Gong: also qigong, chi kung (pronounced chee gong) -- energy discipline or vitality work; qi gong uses breath work, self massage, special movements and visualization for better health and vitality; often uses repetition to achieve a meditative state

Tai chi: also tai chi chuan, taiji chuan – grand ultimate fist or exercise; tai chi uses specific focused movements to stimulate energy or chi flow within the body to create balance, health and vitality; requires remembering specific movements to flow through a routine or “form;” also is a subtle hidden martial art

Taiji: commonly called yin/yang – well known black and white circular symbol representing balance of yin and yang. Called a taiji because it represents the Grand Ultimate or Tao or all there is in our dualistic reality.

Yin: the black side of the taiji symbol; night, soft, empty, still, feminine, rest, calm, lightweight

Yang: the white side of the taiji symbol: day, hard, full, motion, male, active, agitated, heavy

Dan tien: also tan tien—from Mandarin “elixir field;” energy center, kind of like chakra in yogic system; energy bank account or storage facility; in our system 3 major dan tiens: 1. lower, 3 fingers below naval about 3 fingers into body; 2. middle dan tien, center of chest about heart height; 3. upper dan tien corresponds to pituitary gland in center of brain

Lao Gong point: also Pericardium 8 on accu-chart – center of palm or heart of the palm; human beings emit the most chi from this point on the body making it the easiest place to feel chi. This point shows up on Super PET scan imaging as light shining out of the palm. Can be used by healers to assist in mind/body healing of many kinds; on the yang side can also be used by skilled martial artists to send devastating chi into an opponent

Yong Quan point: also Bubbling well, Kidney 1 – sole of foot center at base of ball; essential massage point for calming spirit; stimulating this point promotes chi flow through the entire body which is one reason it's better to stand and walk than to sit.

Tao Te Ching: (pronounced dow de ching) – written in the 5th or 6th century BC perhaps by Lao Tzu, this text is the second most translated book in human history, second only to The Holy Bible. It contains verses which reflect on The Tao or the all and is the philosophical side to the exercise of tai chi. It's said that by reading the Tao Te Ching one becomes wise, by practicing it's words one will become a sage.

Rooting: directing energy from the lower dan tien through the legs out the bubbling well in the feet and deep into the ground to act as a foundation for the body. Practicing rooting creates better balance and strength in the lower body and is said to heal organs when done in sunlight.

Three Treasures: jing, qi and shen; in order, these are the names of the energy ascribed to the three dan tiens; jing resides in the lower dan tien and is often related to sexual energy; qi resides in the middle dan tien and is said to be given by one's parents; shen resides in the upper dan tien and is related to the spirit which makes sense since it is the closest of the three to the heavens.

Tai chi styles: in the common Ping Yin system of classification, there are 5 styles of tai chi whose names are still those of the families which have perpetuated them and kept them alive. These styles are Chen, Hao, Wu, Yang and Sun. There are also tai chi systems or styles that are outside of the common Ping Yin systems, one of these is BaMen. Within each of these styles or systems there may be multiple tai chi forms than can be learned ranging from open hand short forms to weapon wielding long forms. Common tai chi weapons training includes staffs, swords, long sword, spear or long staff, fan.

Natural breath or embryonic breath: a natural breath in and out the nose with the mouth closed, ideally the teeth are together but not clenched. This breath is not forced in any way and with practice should come from the lowest parts of the lungs so that the belly may expand when inhaling.

Meridians: the network of channels in the body through which chi is distributed and stored. Meridians are typically close to the surface of the skin which is why acupuncture needles don't penetrate far to affect chi flow. Meridians are like highways for chi, there can be traffic jams, it can flow smoothly, not so smoothly, fast or slow. Qi gong, tai chi and acupuncture share the common goal of creating better chi flow in the body to optimize health and well being.