



Internal Fighting Arts

Our Premiere Issue -- A Monthly E-zine for the Internal Martial Arts



A "Course" in Tai Chi Fighting Applications 400 Self-Defense Techniques in One Form

There are 75 movements in the Chen Tai Chi form, *Laojia Yilu*. Within those movements are said to be over 600 fighting applications -- punches, hand strikes, kicks, knee-shoulder-elbow strikes, chin-na, sweeps and takedowns.

A newly completed 3-DVD set explores the movements of *Laojia Yilu* and uncovers more than 400 fighting applications (no movements are repeated).

Sifu Ken Gullette, shown in the photo above, has studied the form with instructors such as Jim and Angela Criscimagna (disciples of Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang) along with Chen Xiaowang and Chen Xiaoxing. The DVDs focus on the body mechanics that make the fighting applications powerful and effective.

Internal artists worldwide have purchased the DVDs and call them "amazing," with information that is "gold." To buy the set at a special discount, go to the video and book page at www.kungfu4u.com.

Using the Internal Arts in "Real World" Violence - Officer Takes Down Suspect

--by Ken Gullette

One of my former students is a police officer for a Midwest city. I ran into him recently and he was excited about the effectiveness of Hsing-I Chuan techniques in police work.

A week before I saw him, he and his partner were called to a home where a violent suspect was causing trouble. A year ago, the same suspect had barricaded himself in his home with a gun.

This time, the officers forced their way into the home to find the suspect standing across the room, shirt off (just like in the Cops TV show), fists up, daring the officers to "come and get me."

My student took out his taser. The suspect laughed. "Go ahead and use it," he challenged the officers.

At the right moment, my student loaded his stance and exploded across the room, taking ground rapidly and knocking the suspect down with Pi Chuan -- splitting palm. His partner ran over and helped handcuff the suspect.

A moment later, the suspect looked at the officer who had used Hsing-I and said, "Man that was AWESOME! That was really fast!"

It isn't every day when a perp that you've busted compliments your technique.

This isn't the first time the officer has used Hsing-I in crime-fighting. Once, he was standing outside a hotel room, waiting for a suspected kidnapper-rapist who had abducted a woman. The suspect suddenly emerged from the room and the officer took him down quickly with an armbar that we had practiced in class hundreds of times.

The officer--whose name has been withheld due to privacy--tries to avoid violence if possible, and when he uses violence, he tries to avoid serious injury for the suspect.

Hsing-I Chuan developed a strong reputation in China when bodyguards used it to fight off bandits. In the 21st Century, it's proving its value again on the city streets of America.

My Favorite Techniques

Insights into techniques and body mechanics for more powerful self-defense with Tai Chi - Hsing-I - Bagua



Jade Lady at Shuttles

In Chen Tai Chi, the movement *Jade Lady at Shuttles* is often considered to be a punch and a jump that happens as you pursue an opponent as in the top photo on the left. At the end of the movement your body turns and you throw an elbow strike.

That's certainly one option, but *Jade Lady at Shuttles* can also be a very effective disarm against an opponent who is armed with a staff or a stick.



In the second photo, it shows the entry as the opponent swings the staff.

One of the keys to this is to capture the opponent's center. When someone attacks you with a staff or a stick, the weapon is traveling fast but the arm and the center of the opponent's body is not turning as fast.

Timing is crucial here -- don't be afraid to move in closer. You'll be out of range of the weapon and able to grab it as shown here.



By capturing the opponent's center, you continue with the movement, landing with both feet and using the ground and turning the waist and arms together. The opponent loses balance and continues moving in the direction of his strike.

This turning can be horizontal, as shown in the third photo, or it can be over and down, more of a vertical circle.



The end of the movement, and you now have the weapon. It isn't easy for your opponent to maintain his grip when you have the internal mechanics at work as you turn while he's off-balance.

Try this with a partner. Have them swing a staff or a stick. Move in quickly, grab the weapon and turn. It's crucial to incorporate the internal body mechanics including the ground path, peng jin, and whole-body movement. Your arms and waist must turn together--not separately--with full-body connection to the ground.

What Type of Fitness Routine is Right for the Internal Arts?

--By Ken Gullette

I thought I was in shape when I signed on with a personal trainer over a year ago. Years of internal arts practice, plus cardio and weight-training -- that has to be enough, right?

Wrong. After some intense 30-minute workouts, the trainer would walk away and I would collapse on the floor. The workouts focused on total-body training and plyometrics (explosive strength) with an emphasis on core strength, the muscles in the middle of your body that produce benefits that range from balance to a decreased risk of diabetes.

Some folks in the internal arts believe all you need to do is tai chi or bagua or hsing-i to keep at the peak of health. I believe, instead, in a well-rounded approach that includes cross-training in aerobics, weight-training, plyometrics, core conditioning, chi kung (for its centering benefits) and all of the forms and techniques of the arts. Combine this with proper nutrition--it's important to give your body the right fuel--and you can reach top conditioning at any age. For state-of-the-art fitness and health advice, I recommend Men's Health and Women's Health.

Visit www.menshealth.com.



The Philosopher's Corner

Leading into Emptiness - A Principle for Both Physical and Emotional Self-Defense

I have a cyber-stalker.

He's someone I know (I won't identify him here) in the martial arts. His email harrasment has been going on for about 3 years now. He even emailed my employer once, trying to get me fired.

Now, every few weeks, I get harrasing emails from him under phony names. He has attacked me on an Internet chat room (and was banned from the chat room). Occasionally, his emails fool me at first, although he always writes something that triggers my suspicions. Sometimes, it takes a few emails before the nasty messages come through. I block his email address and IP address, and it takes a few weeks for him to devise another name and get another IP address to harrass from.

In a way it's funny to think of the mental energy he's spending on me--someone who has done him no harm--instead of focusing on more positive matters. I get the emails and I shake my head. What a sad, jealous, empty life he must be leading.

One of the interesting concepts of internal fighting is the principle of "leading into emptiness." In a physical encounter, this happens when your opponent attacks and you deflect the strike or avoid it so that the strike fails to find a target. It only finds emptiness, and as a result, the attacker is frequently off-balance. The same principle works with people who attack you verbally, emotionally, or through email. They're into control, and they want you to respond. They want to push your buttons and they get off on seeing that they can make you angry. The next time you encounter such an attack, lead them into emptiness by not allowing the insult or email to upset you. Remain calm and centered. It works, and it's incredibly powerful. No amount of reason can reach someone who is seriously unbalanced. The best we can do is to master our own actions, center ourselves, and walk on. It's the most effective way to counter-attack.



Guest Editorial by Sifu Phillip Starr

How Often Should I Train?

Over the decades that I have taught martial arts, I have had a great many students ask this question and I always replied with another question; “What do you want out of it?” The answer to my question really makes all the difference.

Training is not confined only to the training hall where you follow the instructions of your teacher and practice with your classmates. It also includes practice outside of the training hall which is usually done at home by yourself. There’s a difference between the two. In class, your instructor can review some of the material you should already know and help you to polish your techniques and movements. This is often done through practice with classmates. However, he/she will also present new material.

In solo training on your own time, you are not presented with new material; you work to refine and polish the material with which you are already familiar. Advanced students can actually learn new material during solo training because they have been taught how to break down forms and how to find certain kinds of techniques and feelings within them.

To get the full benefits of martial arts, you must practice regularly. Training which is haphazard leads to naught. There will be times when you’re confused, your muscles ache, you get bumps, bruises, and other “lumps”, you get bored and/or it seems that you’re getting nowhere...and you’re tempted to just give it up.

Don’t!

Set goals for yourself; short-term and long-term. If you don’t have a goal; a destination, how can you know where you’re going? If you don’t know where you’re going, it won’t be long before you’re lost.

A short-term goal is one which can be reached within a few weeks...like remembering a certain form, coordinating certain techniques, and so forth. No matter how advanced you are, you must constantly set short-term goals! I’ve been training now for...let’s see...47 years more or less, and I still set short-term goals. Meeting short-term goals lets you know that you’re advancing and making progress. You’re succeeding! In short, they build up your self-confidence and help you realize that you can succeed.

A long-term goal is just that; a goal which is reached over a longer period of time...like becoming a black belt. Don’t look at the seniors and tell yourself that you could never possibly do what they can do. Of course you can! THEY did! I taught them, and believe me, if some of them made it, so can you! Your long-term goal is gradually achieved through reaching many short-term goals. And it can be done!

But once you achieve your long-term goal, you must set another one. Otherwise, you have no further destination and you end up spinning your wheels in the same place.

One of the most important things about setting short and long-term goals is to make up your mind that you will reach those goals, no matter what! NOTHING is going to stop you. If you don’t have a strong determination; the spirit to succeed no matter what obstacles you may face, you’re doomed before you even start.

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Training at home is essential. Don't defeat yourself right off the bat by making excuses why you just can't do it. Of course you can! One of the most common excuses is, "I just don't have the time." Sure you do! If you've got 15 minutes of spare time, you have enough time to practice something! You don't have to practice an hour or three every day; whatever time you have free will do. And everybody has some free time. EVERYBODY.

Another excuse is, "I don't have enough room." If you have room to stand up, you have enough room to practice.

If you hear yourself making excuses, put a stop to it and determine that you're going to succeed. Period. Then get to work on it.

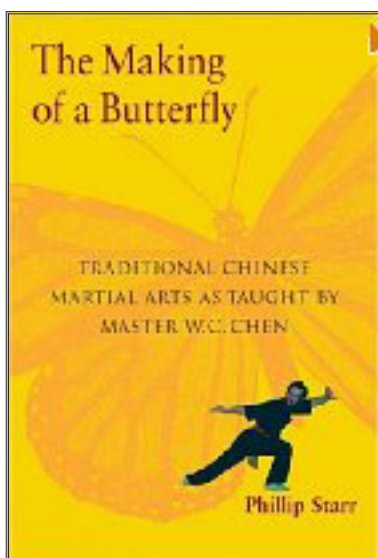
Now, to the original question of "How often should I train?" If you really want to learn the art and acquire substantial skill in it, then you need to practice six days a week. It may be that you can only put in 15 or 30 minutes a day (except for training hall classes), and that's fine. Do it. Obviously, the more time you can put into training each day, the better...but use whatever time you have available. Six days a week. Leave one day out for rest.

One well-known martial arts author wrote a piece on how many Americans view their martial arts training. One example he gave was regarding people who say something like, "I bowl on Tuesdays, I do martial arts on Mondays and Wednesdays, and..." as if it's just another activity (like bowling). It's something they "do." Real martial arts requires a change in lifestyle. You immerse yourself in it. It should change the way you think, the way you feel, the way you act. Bowling doesn't.

Any instructor who's been teaching for very long can tell which students train regularly at home and which ones don't. He will usually give more attention to those that do because he understands that they really care and want to learn. They're trying. Not bowling. He knows that he cannot possibly help anyone who doesn't try.

If you train regularly on your own, you'll notice that your progress is pretty good, for the most part. If you don't practice regularly on your own, your progress will be significantly slowed.

So take a look at your personal training time. If you're using it wisely, fine. If not, correct the problem and begin moving forward. Ask your teacher to help you figure out how best to do it. That's what he/she is for.



Sifu Phillip Starr is the founder of Yiliquan and the author of two highly-acclaimed books, "The Making of a Butterfly" and "Martial Mechanics." He is one of Sifu Ken Gullette's teachers. Ken earned a black sash in Yiliquan.

Sifu Starr lives and teaches in the Omaha, Nebraska area. His website is at www.yiliquan.org.

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