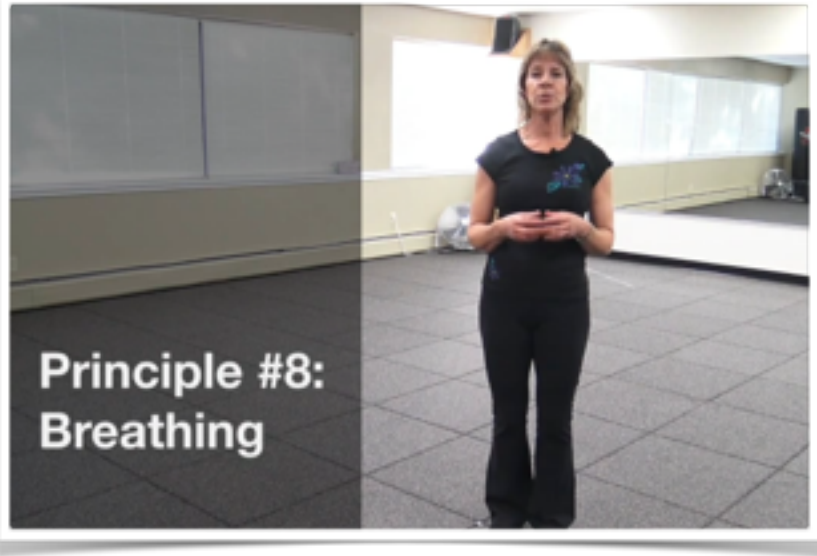




Principle #8 Breathing

Integration for energy, relaxation, and meditation

8 concepts: Soft, slow, uniform, slender, calm, continuous, deep, long

Breathing is level two in the progression of Tai Chi. You must first learn to regulate the body. Then you can move on to regulate the breathing. Then you must learn to regulate the mind and then the chi and then the spirit.

When first thinking about the breathing, you should consider the martial arts application and breathe on the exertion of the force. Next, learning to control your breath much like a singer has to control their breathing is essential. It is not a quick inhalation and quick exhalation. It should be continuous and uniform, slow and calm.

As you train, the control of your breathing will also guide your energy flow and relaxation and meditation. It also improves your lung function as you allow the lungs to expand and contract fully. It also supports the idea of gathering and releasing.

Class #22

Focus: Breathing

Postures 1-11

Teaching points:

Make your inhalation and exhalation match each other. They must be slow, calm, continuous and uniform.

You must think about the martial arts application and exhale on the force application of each move.

Warm-ups: 25 minutes

- Step side to side, holding ball
- Chi walking
- Pushing Chi
- Part the wild horse's mane
- Brush knee
- Repulse the monkey
- White crane spreads its wings
- Wave hands like clouds
- Ward off sequence

Form practice: 15 minutes

Do the first half of the form trying to match your breath to each move. Concentrate on being uniform, slow, calm and continuous.

Cool-downs: 5 minutes

- Pushing chi
- Roll the ball
- Ball right to left
- Heaven and earth

Homework:

Pushing chi. Try to think how the breath helps you with understanding the move and with moving the chi. Feel how the breathing also helps you with continuous motion and gathering and releasing the chi.

Class #23

Focus: Breathing
Postures 12-24

Teaching points:

Again, thinking about the martial arts application of each move, exhale on the exertion of the movement.

Breathe deeply and continuously. Make your breath deep, uniform, slender and long. You must not "hold" your breath at any point. Make sure your exhalation equals your inhalation. Most people struggle with controlling the breath out. It is easier to breathe slowing in than it is to breathe slowly out. This is especially true when you are using big muscles in movements because of the oxygen demands those muscles place on your system.

Warm-ups: 25 minutes

- Step side to side, holding ball
- Step side to side and lift
- Step side to side and kick
- Chi walking
- Fair lady works the shuttle
- Pick the needle up from the sea bottom
- Kick, smash and box the ears
- Return the tiger to the mountain
- Deflect, Intercept and punch
- Snake creeps, pheasant stands

Form practice: 15 minutes

Practice the last half of the form concentrating on deep, uniform, long and slender breathing.

Cool-downs: 5 minutes

- Pushing chi
- Roll the ball
- Ball right to left
- Heaven and earth

Homework: The Ward Off sequence. Concentrate on keeping the breathing as uniform as possible.

Class #24

Focus: Breathing

Postures 1-24

Teaching points:

8 concepts: Soft, slow, uniform, slender, calm, continuous, deep, long

Make sure your posture, i.e. columns, is perfect so your breathing can conform to the 8 concepts. You must also maintain delicate lady's wrists to lead the chi.

Learning to regulate the breathing allows you to move to the next level of regulating the mind and the chi. Remember that the goal of regulating is no regulation. It must become automatic so your mind is not consumed with your breathing pattern.

Warm-ups: 20 minutes

- Step side to side, holding ball
- Step side to side and lift
- Step side to side and kick
- Chi walking
- Part the wild horse's mane
- Brush knee
- Repulse the monkey
- Wave hands like clouds into single whip
- Snake creeps, pheasant stands
- Ward off, grasp the birds tail

Form practice: 20 minutes

Perform the entire form 4 times. Each time through, try to keep the 8 concepts of breathing in the forefront of your practice. The first time through make the breath soft and slow. The second time through, make the breath uniform and slender. The third time through, make the breath calm and continuous. And the last time through, make the breath deep and long.

Cool-downs: 5 minutes

- Rushing chi
- Roll the ball
- Ball right to left
- Breathing in and out(up and down)
- Pushing the mountains
- Heaven and earth

Homework:

Practice each move separately, thinking about how the breath helps the movement.