

Tui Shou Guidelines

Tui Shou, or “push hands”, is not about competition

Push hands is training, not a contest. When one practice partner gives the correct type and quality of push, the other practice partner can experience performing real neutralization and replace the common reflex to resist with an effective method of relaxing, absorbing, guiding, and responding to a push. The partner providing the push gets to experience being neutralized and learns how to avoid over-extending and becoming vulnerable. Tui shou should provide benefit to both players.

You are responsible for the safety of your partner

Tui shou is practiced for mutual benefit. Everything done must reflect care for the safety, well-being and advancement of your practice partner. Always take into account differences in size, strength, age, and skill level. Play slowly at first. As speed increases, so does the chance for injury. It takes a great deal of skill and control to play quickly and safely. Push hands is done in slow motion for the same reasons the form is done in slow motion. Do not change speed to seize an “opportunity.”

Try to develop a workable dialogue

Communicate with your partner. You must agree on the level of push hands you are practicing. Keep small talk to a minimum. It takes a great deal of presence to play slowly and fluidly. Limit your verbal communications to issues directly related to tui shou. If you are new to this practice, this may mean verbal questions or comments, especially if you are not comfortable. If you are experienced, do not give unsolicited lectures.

If a workable dialogue is not possible, you have the right to withdraw from the encounter, but don't give up, try again at a different time. Push hands can be terminated at any time and no explanation is required. Any person may stop pushing at any time without need to explain or excuse. Any person may refuse an offer of tui shou without need to explain or excuse.

Follow T'ai Chi principles

- Relax, Separate yin and yang, Turn from your center, Keep your body upright, Beautiful Lady's hand
- Try not to receive more or give more than 4 ounces of pressure when connecting with your partner
- Do not use force and strength – *even if it works against someone*
- “Don't insist, don't resist” – Ben Lo
- “Invest in loss” – Cheng Man-ch'ing
- Try to develop a tolerance for uncertainty

Tui Shou and the Form

Push hands isn't a replacement for Form Practice. It provides advanced form correction. Without push hands, it is very difficult to get the proportions and timing of shift and turn correct. Tui shou and the Form are part of a complete T'ai Chi practice. The Form without push hands “is like learning to sing without hearing yourself”.

Beyond these simple guidelines, remember to have fun, never underestimate the wonderful lessons your partner can teach you, and be open to enjoy this process of exploring your T'ai Chi at a deeper level. Relax and go with the flow!