

“TURN THE MILLSTONE” IN 4 METHODS

(INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED SKILLS TRAINING)

NOTE: THESE PRACTICE METHODS TAKE YOUR “TURN THE MILLSTONE” DRILL (ON PAGE 2) TO A HIGHER LEVEL. DESIGNED FOR A NATURAL PROGRESSION AND TRANSITION FROM ONE TO ANOTHER, THIS GRADUALLY BUILDS SKILLS AND COMPREHENSION OVER TIME. THESE DRILLS INCREASE IN COMPLEXITY AND PROGRESSIVELY CHALLENGE BOTH BEGINNING & ADVANCED LEVEL STUDENT TO ACHIEVE NEW LEVELS OF MANUAL DEXTERITY AND HAND/EYE COORDINATION AND CAN BE A VALUABLE PRACTICE FOR TAI CHI STUDENTS TO HELP OVERCOME THE EFFECTS OF “BI-MANUAL INTERFERENCE” IN THE BRAIN AND ENHANCE “MIND/BODY UNITY”. REGULAR PRACTICE WILL GRADUALLY IMPROVE THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE “NON-DOMINATE HAND” AND WILL RESULT IN GIVING YOU A FEELING OF BEING MORE AMBIDEXTROUS. HOWEVER, THESE EXERCISES SHOULD, OF COURSE, NOT BE VIEWED AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE DAILY PRACTICE OF “THE FORM”, BUT, CAN BE A GOOD SUPPLEMENT AND VERY VALUABLE “TOOL IN THE TOOLBOX” OF THE SERIOUS TAI CHI PRACTITIONER TO IMPROVE THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THEIR FORM. THEY ARE ESPECIALLY VALUABLE IN STUDYING “TUI SHOU” (“SENSING HANDS” PARTNER PRACTICE) AND WILL GREATLY SPEED UP THE ACQUIRING OF TAI CHI SKILLS OF A HIGHER LEVEL - IF PRACTICED DAILY.

1. HOLD THE BALL AND PLUCK THE PEACH:

Similar to our standard drill on page 2 in your handbook... except more emphasis is placed on finding the “integrity of a circle” between the thumb and middle finger of the rising hand that is “plucking a ripe peach off the tree”. In addition, unlike in the “beginner’s version” of this drill, the palms no longer need to “face” each other - since the arms are more open and “rounded” as if they are encircling a big bushel basket, the hands will be at a more “oblique” angle toward each other (advanced students studying “Tui-Shou” with a partner will note that this is the “bushel basket capture” concept of the partner’s arm... with your upper arm bearing against the back of your partner’s elbow).

2. SMALL CIRCLE DRILLS UP TO THE CORNER:

Prior to turning to the opposite side, the hand that is at the bottom (in holding the ball position) now begins to “drill” upward (near your body) toward the corner... then turns over and “plucks the peach” (when facing East, your left hand drills toward your N.E. corner... and when facing West, your right hand drills toward the N.W.).

3. DRILL UP TO THE CORNERS AND ROLLBACK:

“Drilling up” is done in the same manner as in Number 2 above... but, at the beginning of the turning to the opposite side, your other hand applies a “Rollback” (just like in the form). Note that, as you complete your turn and end up facing the opposite side, you no longer end in the usual “holding a ball” position... but your arms will end up relaxing into a somewhat oblique orientation off the horizontal plane.

4. PALM DEFLECTION - DRILL - PLUCK - ROLLBACK:

The “drilling” and the “Rollback” are exactly the same as in number 3 above... except it is preceded by a “palm deflection” (when facing East, your right palm deflects to the N.E. corner... and when facing West, your left palm deflects to the N.W. corner). The “drilling hand” then rises up to touch the outside of the wrist of your deflecting hand (it will momentarily look like “Crosshands” posture in your form). Importantly your drilling hand that turns over, must torque over with a sudden “snap” (Note that your “palm deflection” is like the beginning portion of “Brush Knee” posture, your drilling hand coming up to touch the outside of your opposite wrist is like “Crosshands” posture... it then continues like “Apparent Closure” posture, and is obviously followed by “Rollback” (just like in the form). With all this in mind, it comes clear that daily practice of this drill becomes a way to quickly develop Tai Chi skill in applying these postures in an efficiently functional way).