

SILK REELING EXERCISES



Silk reeling (Chan Si Gong) is a series of exercises aimed to cultivate “Chan Si Jin” or Silk Reeling Energy — energy derived from the spiraling movement of tai chi. The majority of the silk reeling techniques are already inherent in various tai chi forms. However, silk reeling drills can be practiced by itself. A practitioner typically would stand in one place and practice each form separately under several repetitions.

The name “silk reeling” is derived from the handicraft of gathering silk from silkworms. Constant, deliberate and exact amount of tension is used to draw the silk thread out. If the pull is too hard, the threads will break. If the pull is too soft, there will be no threads, or the strands get tangled. Silk reeling relies on the discipline of body-mind concentration. For tai chi practitioners, the name “silk reeling” should immediately conjure and formulate a vision of intent in one’s mind of the evenness of movements and the sensation you wish to achieve. Each movement is even and continual with a slight tension — characterized by the even mixture of hard and soft energy.

Many tai chi masters would agree that the silk reeling exercises should be considered as an important training method for developing body awareness, coordination, unity in movement, strength and internal energy. How you move in silk reeling is basically how you would move in the tai chi forms. Because of such interdependence, the practice of silk reeling can prove advantageous for beginners — entering the practice of tai chi and qigong for the very first time.

There are many different types of silk reeling exercises. The silk reeling exercises that are taught here are based on those taught by Master Wing Cheung of the Tai Chi, Qi Gong and Feng Shui Institute. These exercises were created to cultivate deep relaxation, as well as to assist in understanding how the body should move to gain and utilize the hidden strength of tai chi – Silk Reeling Energy (Chan Si Jin). The primary focus is on improving the health and flexibility of the spine and subsequently the different joints of the body.

Proper spinal alignment is one of the most important keys to overall good health especially during our senior years. All our nerves are connected to the spinal cord as they passed through the narrow channel in the center of the spine. Numerous conditions can be attributed to the misalignment of the spine. Each vertebra would affect different parts of the body and body functions based on the segment of the spinal cord where the nerve passes through it. Also, the loss of structural integrity from the misaligned spine can present distress in the nervous system which may affect the brain, the brain stem, the spinal cord and/or the peripheral nerves.

While it can improve one’s spinal alignment, the silk reeling exercise may increase one’s flexibility, joint movement, and balance. It is also an exercise for internal power training. In order for the internal power to effectively express itself outwardly, each joint has to be strong yet flexible and be able to work with all other parts of the body. As you



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practice more, you will feel how these spiraling exercises help to develop your internal power.

Pre-Requirements

1. Keep the body upright;
2. Relax/concave chest and let it sink;
3. Suspend the top of the head from a thread;
4. Relax/maintain low shoulders;
5. Sink the elbow but keep space in the armpits;
6. Originate movements (i.e. shifting your weight) from the dan tien and practice ripple effects;
7. Arms and legs movements are circular in motion; and
8. Keep the mind calm. Place your intention on slow heavy sweeping movements. If your internal energy is developed, you will feel a heaviness in the movements of your arms and hands.

As in all qigong and tai chi exercises, visualization is important when practicing silk reeling:

1. Open vertebrae section by section;
2. Create more space in your body;
3. You are getting taller and taller;
4. Your head touching the sky to connect with the heaven energy;
5. Joints: shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers, hips, knees, ankles open more and more;
6. Your arms growing longer and longer;
7. Your hands growing deeper and deeper into the earth; and
8. Your feet: *rooting* – extend to penetrate deep into the ground to connect with the earth *qi*.

About the Author

Vu Nguyen is a certified (Level II) Tai Chi instructor with the American Tai Chi and Qi Gong Association (ATCQA). He regularly teaches Tai Chi at the Veterans Affairs Long Beach Hospital. Also, he teaches a weekly class at the Our Lady and All Angels Liberal Catholic church in Ojai, CA.

With a firm belief that the regular practice of qigong and tai chi can bring about overall body-mind balance, wellness and self-healing, Vu offers a different approach to teaching with more emphasis on mindfulness training. With over 3 decades of mindfulness practice, this course should help participants achieve a deeper level of active relaxation by synchronizing various breathing techniques with the slow, gentle and guided movements — foundational for enjoying the full benefits of continuous qi gong and tai chi practices.

Vu offers private as well as group classes. Please contact him for additional information by phone at (323) 977-8750 or via email at info@taichiclarity.com.

Wishing you happiness and the best of health.

