



Tai Chi: Controlled by the Waist

Lynn Zelmer, Special Needs Instructor
Australian Academy of Tai Chi

One of the tai chi classics indicates "The motion should be rooted in the feet, released through the legs, controlled by the waist, and manifested through the fingers". [Chang Sen-feng, c1400 in Lo et al, The Essence of Tai Chi Ch'uan]

I may focus on this classical quote again but I'll start with the waist as it's critical to achieving good tai chi form.

Some of our tai chi moves appear to be quite sweeping, with arms swinging from side to side or up and down. Generally the motion is only apparent, with the upright torso, shoulders and arms simply following the turn of the waist.

To demonstrate how this works in the tai chi form, take the horse riding stance (feet flat on the ground and shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent), raise your arms shoulder high and slowly rotate the waist from side to side. A fairly moderate change in the waist produces a significant sweep of the arms and hands which we can use to create horizontal or vertical circles. The more you relax and let the waist control the arm movement, the easier your tai chi is likely to be.

As the classic suggests, good tai chi form requires correct foot movement, sinking the weight into your legs and using them to transfer your weight while keeping the body upright, controlling your movement through turning at the waist, and following through with [usually gentle] hand movements.

Formal tai chi instruction is available from the Academy through evening classes in Mt Morgan, Yeppoon and Rockhampton. Phone Debbie on 07 4936 1858 for details.