

## FLOW SOFTLY

by Justin Stone, December 1999

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“Flow Softly” should be the first command a teacher gives a new [T'ai Chi Chih®] pupil. Not “move from the hands or feet” and not “try hard—it’s exercise,” but “Flow Softly.” If the student understands that, and tries to do it, there will be no other problems. Even a child can learn how to place the hands and feet.

Softness is important because of the Meridian channels, thru which the Chi flows. If there is tension or any strain, such as muscular effort, the meridians will contract and the Chi will not flow freely.

Correct shifting of the weight, proper Yinning and Yanning, circularity, these are all important, but they come after the student has learned how to move properly. If the student, after a few lessons, is not making progress, it is best to tell her or him to forget what has been learned and go back to learning how to move properly. Many teachers have not really learned how to move from the T'an T'ien, and they should be anxious to bring themselves up to par. This can be done by auditing Teachers' Training Courses and coming to the Conference, where there is much practice of the fundamentals.

Trying hard causes the student to tense muscles, and this defeats the very purpose of TCC. “The effort of no effort” is a phrase the teacher should remember and frequently use. If the teacher does the movements well, and explains them well, the student will tend to follow in the teacher's footsteps and, over a period of time, gradually sink into the Essence of T'ai Chi Chih.