T’ai Chi: The Grand Ultimate: Lesson 5

**Basic Principles of T’ai Chi: The Center is at the Heart of our Movement**

**The movements of Lifting the Hands and Shoulder Strike challenge us to explore all the ways our center affects our movement.**

In **Lifting the Hands**, we are establishing our center and compressing our movement and energy toward that central point in our body.

For **Should Strike**, it appears that we are not using our center as we move with the side of our body. So how does the center come into play? During our practice, we’ll explore what the center means, does, is. For now the definition is the area that is defined by our shoulders and hips. I sometimes refer to it as our “magic square.” This is where we have our greatest strength, our best power, and from where we have our clearest intent.

These movements, and this concept, is one of the hardest and most valuable lessons of T’ai Chi. When we truly understand our own center, we can more easily control our balance, and accomplish the physical tasks that we set our mind to completing. In addition, when we come from a place of center in our thoughts, we are clear, authentic and stable. We are CENTERED.

Recommended reading: A wonderful book on this comes from Aikido teacher Thomas Crum, *A Journey To Center.* It’s the story of a year-long journey with his son where he learned the lessons of being and becoming centered.

Lifting the Hands & Shoulder Strike

From Single Whip

* Relax into your forward (left) leg, and slightly turn to the left. This will release the back heel of the right leg.
* Turn the hips to the right and allow the right foot to align. The right hand follows the right foot, and the left hand opens. Palms are toward each other.
* From the CENTER, compress the hands together and sweep the right foot. This completes Lifting the Hands.
* Drop both hands to your sides, and pull your right foot in to touch the left with the heel.
* Step directly to the side with the right foot, while gently cupping your right hand in your center. The left hand reaches left for balance.
* Shift the weight to the right foot, and draw the left hand in to the shoulder. As we inflate to the posture, the left hand turns so the fingers point to the right. This completes Should Strike.