



...Those new to t'ai chi AND those wanting to continue their t'ai chi practice are WELCOME to join this community event. In each session we will focus on our breath, engage in gentle movement, learn t'ai chi basic exercises and over time explore t'ai chi postures (movements).

## T'ai Chi - Deceptively Subtle

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A PDF of handout is located at [communityevents.mononaterrace.com](http://communityevents.mononaterrace.com) under Health/Wellness Programs, T'ai Chi at Monona Terrace.

Taijiquan (or T'ai-Chi Ch'uan), has its roots in traditions that go back thousands of years. One version of its beginning is that Zhang Sanfeng, a Taoist monk, often ventured deep into nature to gather apothecary herbs. During one of his journeys he came upon a fight between a crane and a snake and was struck by the way that they used deception and body movements to evade the attacks of each other. Finally exhausted from the even contest the two creatures departed. Sanfeng, though, was left with inspiration that led to development of the early basics of taijiquan. [[www.aymta.org](http://www.aymta.org)]

T'ai chi is deceptively subtle. Initially one sees the shape of the movements, often focusing on the arms. We try to figure out how high we raise our arms in a movement, what direction the palms should face, if our elbows should be bent or straight, and how to do all of this and stay relaxed. Over time we learn the core of the body is the commander. It is our core that leads the movements. By softening our arms, relaxing our mind, and focusing our breath, the movement takes its shape.

Progressively one learns to combine internal energy with movements that are too subtle for most people to observe. This ability is based on the integration of three treasures: body, energy and spirit (jing, chi and shen, respectively, in Chinese). It is also the skill that t'ai chi masters maximize. They are known for the subtlety and power of their relaxed mindful movements; showing a small amount of energy is capable of neutralizing a far greater external force.

A t'ai chi posture called "Wield the Pipa" is a good movement for beginners to practice. While it may appear that the arms are sweeping across the body, changing shape as they move, with practice one learns that the arms are fairly stationary and have little movement on their own. It is the subtle use of the body's core that leads to this deception.

"Wield The Pipa" follows "Brush Knee Twist Step" in the Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan tradition. (See the article "T'ai Chi: A Mindful Practice" on website above for a description.)

At the end of right "Brush Knee Twist Step" your weight will be on the front (right) foot; left hand is extended in front of the body at chest height (push movement); right arm is relaxed at the side.

### WIELD THE PIPA

Four things are happening simultaneously:

- 1) Turn the core (waist) slightly to the right;
- 2) Move the left foot behind the right heel, keeping the weight onto the right foot;
- 3) Move the right arm towards the chest (forearm/palm facing down)
- 4) Raise the left arm out to the side (forearm/palm facing forward).

*Note: A Pipa is a string instrument; hands will look like you are playing a guitar.*

5) Transfer your weight onto the left foot (that is now your back foot) and take the weight off the right foot. At the same time, raise the left arm a little closer to the side of your head making an L shape (approx 120° angle).

6) Keeping the arms relaxed and maintaining the current shape, turn the core (waist) to the left, ending at the diagonal. Your body will spiral up and your empty foot and arms will simply follow.

7) Sink your body and turn the waist back to the right and to the center of your body – at the same time bring your right (empty foot) towards your body.

8) Step out (heel/toe) with the empty foot and raise the body slightly (straightening back leg); keeping weight on the back foot and arms stay in the same shape.