

Understanding the Hips and the Waist (Parts two & three)

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Understanding the Hips and the Waist Parts 2 & 3



UNDERSTANDING THE HIPS AND THE WAIST

ZHENGQUE LIJIE KUA YAO 正確理解胯腰

BY SAM MASICH

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PART TWO: THE WAIST

1. DESCRIBING THE WAIST

The waist (yāo 腰) is a part of the lower torso that encircles the abdomen at a level approximately between the top of the pelvis (at the iliac crest) and the lowest part of the ribcage, or between lumbar vertebrae two to four. The word ‘waist,’ generally speaking, refers to a juncture at the narrowing middle of an object made up of two joined parts.

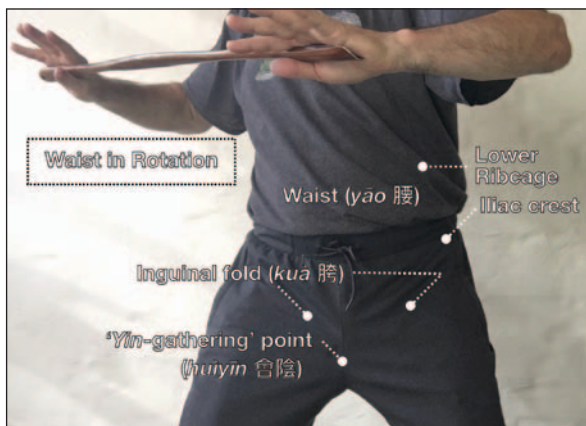
Relative movement in the waist, where the ribcage moves contrary to the pelvis, is accomplished by the interplay of three layers of muscle along the abdominal wall. From outside to inside they are: the external obliques, the internal obliques, and the transverse *abdominis*. The fibres of these muscles merge toward the midline surrounding the *rectus abdominis* and also serve to support breathing and to protect the abdominal organs.

The waist region houses the organs of digestion and organs of elimination, including the stomach, colon, small intestine, kidneys, liver,

pancreas, spleen, and gall bladder. Below these, in the pelvic region, are the urinary bladder and the organs of reproduction, including (in women) the uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries, and (in men) testicles.

Several important point locations used in internal self-cultivation arts (nèigōng 內功) and traditional Chinese medicine (zhōngyī 中醫), particularly in acupuncture (shùxué 腧穴), are located in the abdominal region, including the ‘cinnabar field’ (dāntián 丹田), the ‘life gate’ (mìngmén 命門), and the ‘sea of vital energy’ (qìhǎi 氣海). These play a part in advanced energetic aspects of *taijiquan* training.

Clear and articulate waist movement supports the correct practice of forms and exercises in *taijiquan*. Without skillful waist movement, many of the goals of *taijiquan*—particularly in the areas of martial art, health maintenance, and self-cultivation—cannot be thoroughly realized. Rotation of the waist, for example, in the ‘right-side look’ (or ‘closed-side turn’) stimulates and massages the abdominal organs, which, under normal circumstances, do not shift their position a great deal. When this kind of waist movement is clear, it is possible to see a fold appear in a practitioner’s jersey, dropping diagonally



Clear waist rotation produces diagonal shirt folds from the right shoulder to the left hip.

downward from the area of the turned shoulder to the opposite side iliac crest. Inclination is also generally visible by folds in the upper garment, whereas indicators of compression and extension are difficult to see.

2. HOW THE WAIST MOVES

Movement initiated from the *yao* involves combinations of four types of articulation—'rotation,' 'inclination,' 'compression,' and 'extension.' While most classical push-hands drills emphasize waist *rotation* (the ribcage rotating laterally in relation to the hips) in order to effect neutralization, *inclination* in the waist (tilting from the vertical axis in any direction and in relation to the hips) serves the same neutralizing function. Lengthwise *compression* and *extension* in the waist are used to augment neutralization and to support expressions of power.



Here, waist inclination tilts the right-lower ribcage toward the iliac crest.

Whether movement is initiated centrally or peripherally, the waist-area muscles inevitably come to be involved, resulting in what is often called 'moving from the centre.' At the start of actions initiated *centrally*, muscles in the lower abdomen are the first to stir; once motion begins, all parts of the body make their contribution to the movement endeavour. Muscles of the lower abdomen, through combinations of flexing and relaxing, provide immediate support for actions initiated *peripherally* by the arms and hands. The 'moving from the centre' concept is vital to the development of 'perceptual movement,' a way of transporting oneself that allows *taijiquan* principles to be maintained during dynamic action.

The hips and the waist need a degree of autonomy from one another in order for the player to accomplish 'movement from the centre.' It is especially important to keep in mind that *relative* waist movement in *taijiquan* is always either intentionally decided upon or must be trained and engrained to the point of being reflexive. Relative waist movement must be completely coordinated with hip movement so that together the hips and the waist can guide the entire body. Clearly articulated waist movement is felt consciously by the practitioner but is not necessarily apparent to an observer. Such movement can be extremely subtle in practitioners who give the waist region high priority in training.

Learning how to control one's waist movement can begin during the practice of preparatory exercises such as those found in the 'Yang-style Taijiquan Eight Brocade' (Yángshì Tàijíquán Bādùànjǐn 楊式太極拳八段錦) routine, where simple waist *isolation* exercises precede more complex waist *integration* exercises. Studies in hip-and-waist articulation and coordination for the purpose of martial arts training usually begin with partner drills such as the 'Eight Disc-framed Fixed-step Push-hands' methods (bāpán jiàzǐ dìngbù tuīshǒu 八盤架子定步推手). These eight drills examine ways in which force can be received, neutralized, and returned while maintaining deep-sticking conditions. They are ideal vehicles for the study of the hips and the waist and are excellent preparation for 'four-squares push-hands' (sìzhèng tuīshǒu 四正推手), which demands even greater coordination of the *kua-yao* complex.

3. FUNCTIONS OF THE WAIST

The waist plays many roles in *taijiquan* and its functional importance cannot be overemphasized. To follow are some of its significant functions.

The waist as axle

The waist is located at the centre of the body and, in 'The Thirteen-Powers Circulation and Cultivation Transmission,' is likened to the axle of a wheel.

The 'vital energy' (qi 氣) is like a wheel—the waist (yāo 腰) is like the axle.

In *taijiquan*, 'the waist-as-axle, *qi*-as-wheel' concept functions in several ways, including in the stabilization of movement, the neutralizing of force, the efficient generation of power, and the accumulation of *qi*. The wheel-and-axle system possesses many mechanical advantages when either of the two parts is rotated. The system is utilized in two basic ways. First, if force is applied to the outside of a wheel causing it to rotate, torque is generated at its axle; a larger wheel can generate more torque with less effort than a small one. This principle is used in devices such as the screwdriver, the capstan, and the pulley. Secondly, if force is applied to cause rotation to the axle, then larger, faster, and constant movement takes place at the periphery of the wheel. This principle is seen in a bicycle and in simple flywheel devices such as foot-operated potter's wheel.

More complex flywheel applications include the regulation of machinery such as automotive engines and the accumulation and storage of kinetic power in reciprocating engines. These mechanical principles provide the basis for many martial arts techniques in *taijiquan*. Flywheel storage systems, which are used to store input rotational energy, suggest a metaphor for traditional *neigong* practices concentrated on gathering, storing, and reusing *qi* in the abdomen.

The varied ways of moving the waist are also evocative of a gyroscope, a wheel which, when spinning rapidly, and mounted on an axis free to alter its direction, can be used to stabilize an object, change orientation, and measure changes in orientation. Combining central and peripheral movement, the body is capable of rolling,

spinning, gyrating, pivoting, and so on, in endless variation.

Since individual muscles are capable only of pulling, the heavier parts of the body must, by their greater mass, provide an anchor for the exertions of the lighter parts. In *taijiquan*, finding support for lighter, smaller body parts by skillful placement of heavier and larger ones figures into methods such as 'rooting,' receiving force, supporting structure, and 'uprooting.' Correspondingly, outward movement initiated by the external limbs can overcome inertia in the inner core. Skills of softness, highly sensitive touch, and the issuing of whiplike force result from freedom at the periphery and are made possible by stability at the core.

The 'centring waist'

The 'centre of gravity' or 'centre of mass' is a non-visible and singular point residing in the waist region approximately in front of the second sacral vertebra and is where the combined mass of the body appears to be concentrated. The body is maximally stable when the centre of gravity is aligned directly above the centre of the stance, in other words, the line of gravity must reside above the base of support. A lower centre of gravity and a wider base of support—within the structural limits of the joints and muscles of the leg—results in a more stable stance structure. This centre of gravity is correlated with the point known in Chinese medicine and internal arts as the 'lower *dantian*' (xià dāntián 下丹田), hence the advice, 'sink *qi* to the *dantian*' (qì chén dāntián 氣沉丹田), found in *The Taijiquan Treatise* (Tàijíquán Lùn 太極拳論). Movement of peripheral body parts, the arms, and legs, takes place around, and in reference to, the *dantian* which can therefore be referred to as the 'centre of movement.' The *dantian* is considered by *taijiquan* masters to be the specific point from which 'movement from the centre' originates.

The 'supporting waist'

Movement through the hip-track during weight shifting causes the waist to be carried along without need of abdominal flexing, leaving the waist region free to support actions undertaken by the arms and hands. When the arms are supported in this way, there is unity in the stance foundation, the hips-and-waist core, and

the arms. By contrast, when the ankles are twisted and the knees are torqued, the waist-area muscles become rigid, obstructing core muscle coordination and leaving the arms and hands without the support of the stance, hips, and waist.

In the context of ‘deep-sticking,’ the regions of the body used to establish and maintain the ‘point-of-contact’ (usually the arms and hands) need support from the muscles in the waist region. The ability to ‘rest-into’ and ‘support’ at the point-of-contact between two partners is best developed when the waist structure supports the actions of the arms and hands and is in turn supported by the hip-track. Skillful coordination of the waist-area muscles with movement through the hip-track bolsters support for the point-of-contact. Precisely located releases of tension in the waist region can stimulate ‘movement through relaxation.’

The ‘turning waist’

Waist-area turning accomplished by *relative movement*—for example, when the ribs move and the hip joints do not—causes lateral waist movement contrary to the path that would be taken by the hip-track during weight shifting. Relative waist turning does not disturb the structure of the stance, as the movement is not dependent on the legs.

Trying to turn the upper body without the use of relative movement in the waist area causes the ankles to twist, the knees to torque, and the hip-track to become malformed. In these situations, the waist and upper body are actually *carried* to the side by the twisting leg elements, a kind of movement that ought not be described as ‘waist turning.’

Waist turning toward the closed side of the stance is used for neutralizing force away from one’s centre. When sticking to an opponent or practice partner who is providing pressure, one can rotate or incline the waist in order to neutralize. Well-employed relative-movement waist turning, generally required in ‘right-side look’ situations where one must turn to the closed side of the stance to avoid being trapped by the incoming force, preserves the conditions required for deep sticking.

The ‘generating waist’

The waist contains the mechanism for syn-



Alessandra Papas (Italy/Germany) and Dorian Gregory (USA) explore waist rotation with the author.

thesizing energy from raw materials. The term *dantian*, literally ‘cinnabar field,’ alludes to an imagined crucible inside the abdominal region where the ‘elixir of life’ (or immortality) is produced. This image, drawn from Daoist internal alchemy (*dàojiào nèidān shù* 道教內丹術) accords well with the biochemistry that takes place in the digestive tract, which is housed in the waist region. Here, food components such as carbohydrates and fats are biosynthesized into usable sugars and fatty acids to be transported throughout the body by energy-bearing adenosine triphosphate molecules. Massaging the digestive and other internal organs with waist movement, such as found in *taijiquan* practices, is believed to help to optimize this energy-generating process.

The ‘originating waist’

The waist is also the ‘centre of origin,’ the place where the process of creation begins in the human body. After fertilization and the creation of the first cell, or ‘zygote,’ the subsequent mass of yet undifferentiated cells (‘blastocyst’) undergoes various processes to form the embryo, which implants itself into the endometrial lining, forming an umbilical connection with the placenta. At this stage the embryo has formed a top-to-bottom and side-to-side axis, but no separate body parts are identifiable. It is from this ‘centre’ that the body gradually develops, growing to both its inner and outer peripheries until, in the last stage of fetal development,

rhythmic ‘breathing’ movements occur and fingernails extend beyond the finger tips. The *dantian* is understood by some as an intangible point somewhere deep in the belly that exists as a remnant of the origin of one’s physical existence.

The ‘life-nourishing waist’

Attention to the waist region is an important part of most internal self-cultivation practices that form a part of the health philosophy called ‘nourishing life’ (*yǎngshēng* 養生). Modern lifestyles do little to exercise the range of movement possibilities in the waist region and many contemporary work activities require minimal core body strength or movement. Lack of abdominal activity results in stagnation in the waist region and can have serious health consequences. *Taijiquan* players continually deepen their understanding of the waist region, as it is the location of many of the body’s organs in addition to its function as centre of gravity, mass, and movement.

PART THREE: HIP-AND-WAIST ERRORS

1. THE “FOUR ERRORS” IN CLASSICAL TAIJIQUAN THEORY

Steadfast support from the hip-track, coupled with freedom of movement in the waist region, allows for the emergence of the four connection qualities—‘sticking’ (*zhān* 粘), ‘adhering’ (*nián* 黏), ‘connecting’ (*lián* 連), and ‘following’ (*suí* 隨)—that are the basis for what is called ‘perceptual movement’ (*zhījué yùndòng* 知覺運動). Developing a conscious relationship with the structure and processes of one’s hip-and-waist region furthers self-knowledge. Correct *kua* and *yao* understanding and employment creates conditions for the development of the profound ‘sticking-adhering energy,’ which is itself a tool for self-cultivation. Conversely, when practitioners do not know how to manage their hips and waist, they are prone to making four recurrent errors—‘reaching’ (*dǐng* 頂), ‘skewing’ (*piān* 偏), ‘losing’ (*diū* 丟), and ‘resisting’ (*kàng* 抗)—identified in classical *taijiquan* literature. In the ‘deep-sticking passages’ (chapters four through six of the *Yang-family Forty Chapters* (*Yángjiā Sìshí Piānzhāng* 楊家四十篇章)), these four errors are described and their role in hindering the development of perceptual movement is identified.

‘Reaching, skewing, separating, and resisting’ are errors in partner work. They are called errors because, having failed at ‘sticking, adhering, connecting, and following,’ how could one consciously perceive through movement? If one does not know oneself, how can one understand others?

The errors of ‘reaching,’ ‘skewing,’ ‘losing,’ and ‘resisting’ are described above as examples of unsound strategies employed in the wake of a failure to make and maintain connection. They occur when there is a need to compensate for an impaired core structure. According to the author, not only do the four errors impair the development of perceptual movement they also prevent one from knowing oneself.

Known by some *taijiquan* masters as ‘the four don’ts,’ ‘reaching,’ ‘skewing,’ ‘losing,’ and ‘resisting’ generally appear in push-hands play when one wants to take control of a situation before it has arrived or to preserve a perceived advantage. ‘Reaching’ means extending past the point-of-contact when connected with a partner and results in the player moving part of his or her body beyond its support structure. ‘Skewing’ is an attempt to preserve or recapture a lost moment, or to create a better situation. Skewing results in tense and contorted body positions.



Author practicing clear hip and waist articulation during dynamic movement.

‘Losing’ refers to disconnection from a point-of-contact that has already been established. ‘Resisting’ is characterized by rigidity and inflexibility and results in inability to receive incoming force.

Learning to recognize and to overcome in oneself the errors of ‘reaching,’ ‘skewing,’ ‘losing,’ and ‘resisting’ is a lifelong quest that provides the basis for *taijiquan* as an art of self-cultivation.

2. OBSTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOURS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE CLASSICAL ‘FOUR ERRORS’

Virtually all problems in practice are caused by behaviours that obstruct correct functioning of the hips and the waist. Once hip-and-waist functioning is compromised, a cyclical process begins amongst these obstructive behaviours, thereby eroding opportunities for a return to principled practice. Clearly identifying obstructive behaviours and their sources will help the *taijiquan* practitioner to correct the four classical errors identified in the deep-sticking passages.

The author of ‘The Taijiquan Classic’ has pointed practitioners clearly toward the hip-and-waist complex. Because the correctly-aligned hip-track forms the basis and foundation of all other movement in *taijiquan*, it is vitally important that the *taijiquan* player be vigilant in identifying, and thorough in addressing, involuntary muscular activity and tension in the hip-and-waist region. ‘The Taijiquan Classic’ is unequivocal in its argument that hip-and-waist errors cause all other errors.

Its root is in the feet; issued from the legs and controlled by the waist, it goes to the fingers. Because of this foot-leg-waist principle, integrated and unified qi is always required. Driving forward, returning back; only then can there be a chance of achieving the ideal position for power (deshì 得勢).

There is a crucial reason that the ideal position for power is not present. If the body is ‘skewed’ (pián 便) and ‘disordered’ (sànluàn 散亂), its error (bìng 病) must be sought in the waist and hips/legs (yāotui 腰腿)—upward and downward, advancing and retreating, left and right—all are like this.

The phrase ‘to achieve one’s goal’ (*deshì* 得勢) could also be translated as ‘be in an ideal place for achieving one’s goals.’ The word meaning ‘goal’



Author demonstrating the ‘foot-leg-waist principle’ using Taiji Spear in Guangping County (廣平縣), Hebei, China.

in the foregoing phrase is the character ‘*shì*’ (勢), meaning ‘power,’ exactly as in the ‘thirteen powers’ (*shísānshì* 十三勢). ‘Driving forward and settling back’ is a clear call to attention regarding movement through the stance; in other words, for correct operation of the hip-track. This line, therefore, could also be understood as, ‘... Only in this is there a way to find the ideal place for achieving intrinsic power.’ The character for the word ‘skewed’ in the phrase ‘skewed and disordered’ is ‘*pián*’ (便 or 偏), which is one of the ‘four errors’ identified in various early writings.

In order to avoid the four errors, one must first turn one’s attention to some of the behaviours that obstruct correct functioning of the hip-and-waist complex.

To follow are explanations of ‘bracing and clenching,’ ‘twisting and torquing,’ ‘augmenting and assisting,’ and ‘holding on and double grabbing.’ Each of these four sets of paired obstructive behaviours contributes to faulty hip-and-waist functioning, resulting in one or more of the classical four errors described above.

Bracing and clenching

‘Bracing’ and ‘clenching’ are two common forms of muscular strain that occur in the muscles of the hip-and-waist region. *Bracing* is effortful contraction, especially in the buttocks muscles, that acts to resist or obstruct. Bracing is characterized by actions of overextension such as leaning forward in order to use the skeleton as a rigid buttress. *Clenching* occurs mostly in the abdominal muscles and, although it seem-



Taiji Halberd

ingly creates the advantage of being less moveable by opponents, it, like bracing, results in the error of ‘resisting’ (*kàng* 抗). Because of the close resonant relationship between the buttocks and abdominal muscles, bracing and clenching are closely related obstructive behaviours.

When the muscles around one or both hip joints clench during weight shifting, the movement through the hip-track is impeded in its natural course. The pelvic area then either *vaults* over the resistant region or is *held* in a fixed shape, preventing proper rotation into the *kua* of the weighted leg. Thus, ‘vaulting’ and ‘holding’ are secondary consequences of bracing and clenching that result in a loss of fluidity, root, and stability, for which the upper body must compensate. Bracing and clenching are instinctive behaviours that are difficult to detect and correct.

Twisting and torquing

When shifting through the stance, it is important to avoid tension in the muscles around the hip joints, as inflexibility here results in ‘twisting’ in the ankles and ‘torquing’ in the knees.

Because of the limited rotational capability of the ankle and knees, ankle twisting forces the ankle and knee joints outside of their natural structure. Twisting and torquing actions so near the base of support compromise stance stability and pull players away from connection, thus creating conditions for one of the ‘four errors’—‘losing’ (*diū* 丟).

Ankle twisting takes place when the muscles surrounding the hips are too tense to allow the hip joints to rotate properly and, as a consequence, the ankles are forced to turn beyond their structural safety point. *Twisting* usually happens if bracing and clenching are present. *Torquing* the knees, that is, the knees being wrenched from side-to-side, is a byproduct of more extreme ankle twisting.

Understanding twisting of the ankles and torquing of the knees helps one to avoid a misconception regarding waist movement. Waist movement is sometimes understood incorrectly as the carried-movement, upper-body turning that is sourced in ankle twisting. This indirect movement of the body above the twisting ankles is not the same as relative-movement waist turning that is supported by a correctly-aligned hip-track.

It is proposed by neuroscientists that proprioceptive mechanisms within the ankle are directly connected with regions in the right hemisphere of the brain to form an attentional network for processing information regarding balance and the limits of body sway. When the ankles are twisted, proprioceptive information is gathered and processed. This emergency counterbalancing system is activated because one is *already losing balance* and must, therefore, tighten muscles in order to recover or maintain equilibrium. This ‘ankle anxiety’ is felt by the entire body, which in turn expresses itself in bracing and clenching types of obstructive behaviour. When one is free of excess tension in the hip region and can remain in the hip-track, the ankles also can stay relatively relaxed since balance is maintained by the body’s direct structural relationship with the line of gravity, rather than by reactive co-contractions.

Augmenting and assisting

‘Augmenting’ and ‘assisting’ take place in the hip joint and pelvic area. The femur ball and hip-socket are restricted in their range of movement; consequently, the range of the hip-track is also limited. When players try to *augment* this range with exaggerated turning actions, the hip joints are taken beyond their structural resting place (the *kua gen*), out of alignment with the knee and ankle joints and, consequently, the hip-track becomes distorted.

If the hips either jut backward or are thrust forward—both are forms of augmenting—the player feels compelled to *assist* the pelvis in finding a position that feels right. Assisting is a misguided attempt to remedy the effects of augmenting.

Since innate natural structure can be found only by relaxed settling, the urge to ‘assist’ the pelvis in trying to achieving a correct position ultimately proliferates the very structural problems the assisting was attempting to solve. Both augmenting and assisting escalate activity at the periphery, contributing to positional incorrectness and bringing about the error of ‘skewing’ (*piān* 偏).

Double grabbing and holding on

Whereas bracing/clenching, twisting/torquing, and augmenting/assisting are problems

that exist in both solo and partner work, ‘double grabbing’ and ‘holding on’ are maneuvers particularly related to partner interaction, notably during competitive push-hands play. Double grabbing and holding on give rise to one another and are not characteristic of the point-of-contact type of connection that is the basis for *zhan-nian jin* or ‘adhering-sticking energy.’ Their use promotes the ‘slippery’ (*huáquán* 滑拳) and ‘stiff’ (*yìngquán* 硬拳) boxing styles warned against by past masters.

Double grabbing is a preemptive control strategy which is defined as ‘clasping the opponent with both hands’ thumbs and forefingers closed.’ *Holding on* is a late attempt at maintaining control by attaching to an opponent’s arms, body, or clothing with one or both hands to maintain balance. Reliance on double grabbing and holding on is often an attempt to offset problems in stance structure—problems which are, in many cases, created by this very pair of obstructive behaviours. While double grabbing and holding on are most evident in partner interaction, these obstructive behaviours are often conditioned by incorrect solo practice. Both double grabbing and holding on are related to the classical error ‘reaching’ (*dǐng* 頂).

Disentangling the obstructive behaviours

Each of the paired obstructive behaviours can give rise to the others. ‘Bracing and clenching,’ ‘twisting and torquing,’ ‘augmenting and assisting,’ and ‘double grabbing and holding on’ exist in an interminable cycle in which correct hip-track alignment and articulated waist move-



Author demonstrating the form ‘Snake Creeps Down’ in the mountains of Shandong, China.

ment are lost. If one is to practice according to the *taijiquan* principles that support a deep-sticking, thirteen-powers approach to the art, each of the obstructive behaviours must be identified clearly, disentangled from the other obstructive behaviours, and replaced with principled alternatives.

3. SOURCES OF THE OBSTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOURS

For a *taijiquan* player to overcome 'bracing and clenching,' 'twisting and torquing,' 'augmenting and assisting,' and 'double grabbing and holding on,' he or she must mindfully explore the psychological, physiological, and technical factors that cause these obstructive behaviours to emerge.

Deeply engrained self-preservation instincts known by psychologists as 'innate defensive-action plans' induce reflexive responses in the face of possible harm. Threats, such as being restrained, hit, shoved, or otherwise set upon, provoke resistance and rigidity—responses that are antithetical to the qualities needed for *taijiquan* mastery. Threat need not be of the present moment in order to give rise to reflexive responses. The effects of trauma—remnants of threatening experiences from the past preserved in the subconscious mind and in body tissues—are experienced and dealt with internally as coequal with more tangible forms of threat, and can trigger all of the obstructive behaviours. *Taijiquan* push-hands and other partner studies can help individuals uncover inner patterns that manifest themselves as reflexive responses at the heart of the four errors.

On a psychological level, the obstructive behaviours are rooted in the four main self-preservation responses—'the urge to anticipate and to control,' 'fear of falling,' 'fear of losing,' and 'habitual holding'—described below.

The urge to anticipate and to control

Anticipation is meant to foretell and curtail adverse events before they become unsolvable. The sense of security that results from direct control of events is an emotional reward that comes at the expense of the principled-response option of 'sticking-adhering.' 'Bracing' is an example of anticipation, and the impulse to control results in 'clenching.'

Fear of falling

The fear of falling is an inborn emotion based in dread of injury or death. Loss of physical equilibrium triggers a protective chain of co-contractive responses to preserve uprightness even if alignment with gravity is sacrificed. 'Twisting and torquing' are examples of attempts to stabilize when a fall feels imminent.

Fear of losing

Many primal 'fear-of-losing' responses can become entangled with one another—losing connection, losing balance, losing ground to an adversary, losing tools or weapons, losing composure, losing 'face,' or losing people or things that provide security and comfort. The fear that arises in the face of loss triggers two contradictory impulses, the 'augmenting' tendency, which exaggerates one's position when confronted by loss, and the 'assisting' tendency which aims to substitute for what is being lost.

Habitual holding

If the perception of threat is constantly activated or endured for long periods of time, such as in cases of trauma, tension may become normalized and lead to a densification of the body's tissues. Responses meant to overcome repetitive stress can result in complex holding patterns and an inability to 'let go' in the hip-and-waist regions. The obstructive behaviours 'double grabbing' and 'holding on' are expressions of an organism that holds itself in a habitually reflexive manner. ■



Master Sam Masich has inspired thousands of students along their path with his unique interpretation of the Chinese internal martial arts. His work as a full-time instructor has taken him to over a hundred cities in Canada, the United States, Mexico, England, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Scotland, and China. Students from around the world have traveled to study with him in workshops and seminars such as his annual Summer Push Hands Training Camps held in Vancouver, Canada and in Berlin, Germany.

This three-edition article, "Understanding the Hips and the Waist", is an excerpt from the upcoming publication *Foundations of Traditional Taijiquan: Core Concepts and Full Curriculum Essays on Taijiquan* by Sam Masich.