

The Taiji Walk

By Nancy Deye

This article is an excerpt from the author's book, *the Essential Principles of Taiji Quan*, which is available on Amazon.com. Or you can purchase a signed copy directly from the author (nancydeye@gmail.com).

With the head the size and weight of a bowling ball supported by a spine that leans, for many people, walking becomes more of a controlled falling, with the upper body leading and equilibrium compromised. Taiji walking is the basis for rotting, grounding and weight shifting skills that are fundamental requirements in every Taiji form. They are also essential skills that support us in our daily lives. With an upright posture and the deliberate shifting of weight from one foot to the other, we learn to move from our center of gravity, the Dan Tian.

In Taiji Walking, often taught as a fall prevention exercise, the eyes should look straight ahead, the mind should be focused on the bottom of the feet, and breathing should be normal. All movements and weight shifting are done as slowly as possible, building strength, balance and endurance.

The ultimate goal is to be so aligned with gravity and have such control of movement that if someone said "Stop!", could it be done? Could the challenge of stopping mid-movement be met with a balanced, centered and rooted body?

- Place both feet together, weight evenly distributed, with the knees slightly bent.
- Place all the body's weight onto one leg, which then becomes the substantial, full leg.
- Slowly lift up the foot of the other leg, which is now insubstantial and empty of weight. Slowly take a natural step forward. Shorter steps are easier. Place the heel down first, the toes pointing forward. Slowly place the rest of the foot onto the floor, but no weight should be on this foot yet. Concentrate on the sensation of the floor beneath the body.
- As slowly as possible, transfer weight onto the front foot until there is no weight on the back empty foot. With the heels of both feet on the floor, the back foot and leg is now empty/insubstantial and the front foot and leg full/substantial.
- As slowly as possible shift the weight from the front foot to the back foot, until all the weight is on the back foot.
- With all the weight on the back full/substantial foot, slightly lift the toes of the front foot and turn it on its heel until the toes point outward about 45 degrees.
- Place the whole of the front foot on the floor and slowly transfer all the weight to the turned-out front foot.

- Slowly pick up the back foot, move it towards the front foot and then take a natural step forward. Place the heel on the floor first and then the rest of the foot, with the whole front foot now pointing forward.
- Repeat the sequence.