

Peng Energy

Peng jin or “energy” (pronounced “pung”) is an expansive force that is the most important skill in the internal arts. One of the main goals in each Tai Chi movement is to maintain peng. There are several energies in Tai Chi, but peng is the most important and it’s included in each of the energies.



One of my favorite ways to illustrate peng energy is by imagining a beach ball being submerged into a pool.



As you press the beach ball down into the water, you can feel energy build.



When you release the ball, this potential energy—this expansive force—causes the ball to spring out of the water.

This is peng.

A similar expansive force should spread through your body in each movement and technique of Hsing-I Chuan, Tai Chi Chuan, and Baguazhang. The DVD more clearly demonstrates peng, but I

also encourage you to find a teacher who truly understands this concept (most internal arts teachers *do not* understand it) and get one-on-one feedback.

Peng and the ground path are essential for internal strength. Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang says that peng is like a car engine revving. You can lift a car off the ground and race the engine as much as you can but the car won't go anywhere. When you put the car on the ground, however, the ground strength combined with the power of the engine will cause the car to take off.

The exercises in this e-book and on the companion DVD are intended to give you a basic idea of how peng and the ground path work together. Your goal should be to work these skills into every movement and technique.

Internal Strength Exercises

Exercise #1



The exercises in this book help you learn to establish and maintain the ground path and peng jin. The DVD explains all of this in more detail, including whole-body movement and silk-reeling.

All internal strength begins with the ground. Establishing the ground path and combining it with peng jin is essential for proper performance of the internal arts.

Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang says peng jin is like a car engine that's being revved hard. You can lift the car off the ground and rev the engine as hard as

you want but the car isn't going anywhere. Once you put the car on the ground and it's able to use the ground as the base of its power, it takes off.

The same is true with the internal arts.

These photos show me and my training partner, Tom Revie (dressed in white). In the first exercise, shown in the photo above, have your partner stand with feet shoulder width apart. Press into his shoulder and slightly downward so that he feels the push in his opposite foot. He should feel the pressure of the push in his foot (Tom's right foot).

When pressing into your partner's shoulder, don't let your partner collapse and move with the push. They should stand firm and relaxed, taking the push into the ground.

Likewise, your partner shouldn't tense his muscles and push back at you. If he collapses or if you feel tension and feel him pushing back, call him on it.

It's important for your partner (Tom in this photo) to relax the knees, relax the lower back, and try to feel as relaxed as possible while taking the press. He needs to set up the ground path with his mind from the foot to the shoulder.

It's also important for you to not push too hard. It isn't a contest of strength—it's a learning experience.

This is the first step toward recognizing how the ground path feels. Your goal is to learn to maintain the ground path in every movement of the internal arts—even when you step. It isn't easy. It takes years of practice, and that's why most people can't do it (that, and they haven't been taught).

Exercise #2



Your partner holds his hand out, keeping the elbow slightly bent and downward. He stands in a halfway stance or a high horse with more of his weight on the rear leg (perhaps a 60/40% weight ratio).

Press straight into his hand. He should ground it through the rear leg.

Your partner should feel the push going through the rear foot and into the ground. He must relax and not push back. Again, he takes it to the ground,

setting up the path in his mind from the hand to the rear foot.

Your push into his hand shouldn't be so strong that it would push him back. This is an exercise in which you're trying to help each other establish the feeling of the ground path. It isn't a contest or an exercise of strength.

The partner should allow his back to relax. You can relax and maintain the strength of the body structure, and that's the goal.