“Hard/External” Martial Arts forms include Karate, Tai Quan Do, Mu Tai and Kung Fu. A hard technique meets force with force; either with a head-on-force blocking technique, or by diagonally cutting the strike with (one’s) force. It is an example of the defender using the attacker’s force and momentum against him or her. Although hard techniques require greater strength for successful execution, it is the mechanics of the technique that accomplish the defense.

“Soft/Internal” Martial Arts include turning the attacker’s force to his or her disadvantage, with the defender exerting minimal force. With a soft technique, the defender uses the attacker’s force and momentum against him or her, by leading the attack(er) in a direction to where the defender will be advantageously positioned and the attacker is off balance. In some styles of martial art, a series of progressively difficult, two-student training drills, such as pushing hands or sticky hands, teach the exercise the soft-technique(s).

The defender leads the attack by redirecting the attacker’s forces against him or her, or away from the defender — instead of meeting the attack with a block. The mechanics of soft technique defenses usually are circular: Yielding is meeting the force with no resistance, like a projectile glancing off a surface without damaging it.

1. CHI – Energy:

   1. Chi is the underlying structure of inanimate as well as of living things, and is encapsulated and concentrated into energy centers in the human energy globe.

   2. Chi is dispersed from the energy centers to the shell of the energy globe through certain actions and attitudes we take in life.

   3. There are four (4) aspects of Energy:
      - The ancient term for Chi is Te - The influence on events and other people manifested by one who has regained lost energy.
      - **Chi is Raw Energy.** Also called “lifeforce” energy.
      - **Ching** is energy in action.
      - **Shen** is refined energy, spiritual energy.

4. **Force is a function of muscle tension.**
   - **External** Martial Arts (ex. Kung Fu, Karate, Tai Kwan Do)
   - **Internal** Martial Arts (ex. T’ai Chi Chuan, Baquazhang, Xingyiquan)

2. SUNG – Alert Relaxation:

   1. The Three (3) States of Sung:
      - **Tension:** The state which occurs when the muscles are flexed (Yang).
      - **Relaxation:** The state which occurs when the muscles are allowed to go limp (Yin).
      - **Sung:** The state of Relaxed Alertness/Activated Tendon Energy.

   2. What is “Alert Relaxation”?
      - Sung is not possible unless the joints of the body are loose.
- Sung is an energetic state of state of totality of body and mind: both body and mind are still, alert, and focused.
- Sung looks soft on the outside, but is powerful on the inside.
- A Sung mind allows a Sung body to develop: The Ch'i will circulate freely, allowing the development of flexibility and ease in the body, rejuvenation and longevity.

3. CHING – Lightness or Softness:
   1. The purpose of Ching is to remove plodding heaviness and cultivate sensitivity and internal energy.
   2. Movements should be performed without any trace of force.
   3. The muscles should be free of any unnecessary tension.
   4. The mind should maintain a joyful attitude.

4. MAN – Slowness:
   1. The practical purpose of slowness is to allow the mind enough time direct movements and concentrate on details.
   2. Slowness allows the mind enough time to direct the Ch'i.
   3. It is important to maintain a sense of rhythm, even when moving at a slow rate.
      - Slowness allows one to "step in the air", to stop or reverse movement at any time and not lose balance
      - Practice slowing the routine as much as possible.
   4. Outer calmness will lead to inner calmness
   5. After the foundation of lightness and slowness has been laid, it will always be possible to maintain a steady speed.

5. LIN – Agility:
   1. Agility is a movement without stiffness, free from the inhibitions of tension.
      - Agility is balanced movement.
      - Agility encourages the most effective movement.

6. YUAN – Circular Movement:
   1. All T'ai Chi movements are composed of circles or arcs. Circular movements generate considerable more power than linear movement (torque).
   2. Beginning practitioners should enlarge all arcs to the limit without violating proper posture.
   3. As skill develops, the size of the arcs may be reduced. One must have the intention to make all movements circular, particularly movements of the hands and arms.
   4. Eventually the body will lead the hands and arms into circular movements.
7. YUN – Constant Rate:
   1. One must **intend** constant rate or smoothness.
   2. Constant Rate is directly related to **constant rhythm of breathing**.
   3. Constant Rate is necessary for a **continuous flow of Chi**.

8. Consciousness:
   1. **Consciousness is awareness of an action**.
   2. Chi is moved by consciousness:
      - First, one imagines the movement of the Chi.
      - Later, the Chi moves by the focus of the eyes, or at a single will-thought.
   3. Thought does not mean rational or verbal thinking, but silent, aware, willing or intending.
   4. **Action** can mean an individual movement, but at the highest level, the action of the T’ai Chi routine is not a series of individual movements, but a continuous flow. Total consciousness occurs when the mind is completely stilled.

9. Breathing:
   1. **General principles of breathing**:
      Wherever possible, and especially in T’ai Chi practice, one should attempt to cycle the breath completely: exhalation expels all air; inhalation completely fills the **body**.
   2. **Coordinate the breathing with the movement**:
      - **Inhalation**: During the rising of the body, the bending of the arms, the bending of the legs, grasping of energy, etc.
      - **Exhalation**: During the lowering of the body, the extending of the arms and legs, all strikes, etc.
      - **Soft, slow, gentle movements** make respiration soft, slow and gentle and visa-versa.
      - **Coordination of breathing and movement** constitutes the unification of the internal and the external.
   3. **Benefits of T’ai Chi breathing**:
      - **Increase in lung capacity**
      - **Elimination of toxins from the blood** (diaphragmatic movement massages the liver).
      - **Increased oxygenation of the blood** nourishes all systems, especially **Increasing the function of the brain** and nervous systems.
   4. **Breath & Chi**:
      - On the **exhalation**, direct the Chi down to the Tan T’ien energy center.
      - On **inhalation**, move the Chi from the Tan T’ien to the leading part of the body in the posture, or, for purposes of healing, direct the Chi to the affected part, using both breath and eyes.
      - **Inhalation of Chi** nourishes the “Shen” or **Spirit**.