



AWAKENING THROUGH PRACTICE

*Lessons on Self-Discipline, Energy,
and Inner Growth*



By Sophie Chen

A guide to inner transformation through daily practice,
awareness, and disciplined growth.



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Growth*

AUTHOR

Sophie Chen

www.deyufancentre.com

*This formatted edition organizes the source
material into thematic parts and chapters
for easier reading and navigation*

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AWAKENING THROUGH PRACTICE: LESSONS ON SELF-DISCIPLINE, ENERGY, AND INNER GROWTH

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Written by Sophie Chen

www.deyufancentre.com



About the Author

A few years ago, a young, hardworking, and talented headhunting consultant, Sophie Chen, began her journey into meditation and oriental arts in search of self-understanding and inner growth. What started as a personal exploration soon became a life-changing experience, as these practices brought balance, clarity, and refinement into every aspect of her life.

Deeply inspired by this transformation, Sophie felt a sincere desire to share this blessing with others. She committed herself to creating opportunities for both teachers and students to walk the path of self-cultivation through virtue-based arts.

As the Managing Director of Deyufang Centre, Sophie Chen founded a platform dedicated to supporting individuals who strive to refine themselves and contribute beauty to the world through their arts. Her vision goes beyond personal development—it is about building a community rooted in discipline, wisdom, and inner harmony.

Through her travels and social interactions, Sophie has met many remarkable teachers whose knowledge and presence have the power to positively impact the world. At the same time, she has encountered individuals searching for meaning, a refined lifestyle, and a supportive community. Through Deyufang, she aims to bridge this gap by connecting sincere students with impactful teachers.

“Deyufang is still a young sapling. With dedication, continuous learning, and perseverance, Sophie and her team are committed to nurturing it into a strong and flourishing tree. It is their hope that the arts cultivated and shared through this platform will serve as seeds of wisdom and growth for generations to come.”

Sophie CHEN

www.deyufancentre.com

Foreword

In a world increasingly driven by speed, distraction, and external achievement, the importance of inner cultivation is often overlooked. *Awakening Through Practice* offers a refreshing and much-needed perspective—one that brings attention back to discipline, awareness, and steady personal growth.

This book is not about quick success or instant transformation. Instead, it presents a path rooted in consistency, humility, and practice. The insights shared by Sophie Chen are simple in expression yet profound in depth. They reflect not only intellectual understanding but lived experience.

Through themes such as self-discipline, energy awareness, and human nature, this work gently guides readers toward a deeper connection with themselves. It encourages reflection, patience, and the willingness to grow step by step.

What makes this book particularly valuable is its practicality. These teachings are not meant to remain as ideas, but to be applied, observed, and experienced in daily life.

For those who are seeking clarity, balance, and a meaningful path of self-development, this book serves as a thoughtful companion.

Preface

This book is a collection of reflections and teachings developed over time through continuous practice, observation, and real-life experience.

It was not written as a traditional book from the beginning. Instead, each chapter emerged naturally—from questions, challenges, and moments of understanding encountered along the path of self-cultivation. Over time, these individual insights formed a structured body of work centered on discipline, energy, and inner growth.

The purpose of this book is not to provide fixed answers, but to offer perspectives that can be explored through personal experience. True understanding does not come from reading alone—it comes from applying these ideas in daily life and observing their effects.

Some concepts in this book may feel familiar, while others may challenge existing beliefs. This is a natural part of growth. Readers are encouraged to approach the content with an open mind and a willingness to reflect.

There is no need to rush. Progress happens gradually, through consistent practice and awareness.

If this book helps you understand yourself more clearly and take even a small step toward inner development, then it has fulfilled its purpose.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have supported and contributed to this journey.

To my teachers, whose wisdom and guidance have shaped my understanding and practice—your influence is deeply appreciated.

To the students and practitioners who have walked this path alongside me, your questions, reflections, and dedication have played an important role in the development of these teachings.

I am also grateful to my team at Deyufang Centre for their continuous support and effort in helping bring this work to life.

Finally, I extend my appreciation to all readers. Your willingness to explore, reflect, and grow gives meaning to this book.

Introduction

In a world filled with constant distractions and endless demands, true growth often feels out of reach. ***Awakening Through Practice*** is not just a book—it is a guide to rediscovering your inner strength through consistent action and mindful discipline.

This book explores the powerful connection between self-discipline, energy, and personal transformation. It shows that success is not built overnight but shaped through daily habits, intentional effort, and inner awareness.

Whether you are seeking clarity, motivation, or a deeper sense of purpose, this book will help you build a foundation for lasting growth. Through practical insights and simple yet powerful lessons, you will learn how to take control of your energy, sharpen your focus, and create meaningful change in your life.

Your journey does not begin with perfection—it begins with practic

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PART I

**Human Nature, Identity,
and Relationships**

Are We Really Different, or Is Human Nature the Same?

We grow up in different families, in different cultures, and with very different life experiences. So it's natural to ask: does human nature change from one background to another? On the surface, it seems obvious that it does. People think differently, behave differently, and hold different values. But if we go deeper—past the surface—another possibility emerges: our expressions may differ, while the core of human nature remains remarkably similar. 1) Who are you without your labels? Most of us define ourselves through identity markers: our name our education our work our role in the family and the experiences we've lived through But are these things who we are—or just the story built around us? Try asking yourself: Before you had a name, who were you? If you hadn't graduated from that school, who would you be? If you didn't have this job, who would you be? If you weren't your parents' child, who would you be? If you didn't go through those experiences—those hardships, those circumstances—who would you be? Once those layers are removed, what remains is surprisingly simple: a human being—plain, direct, and unadorned. 2) Values change, but often because the world changes Many of our beliefs and value systems are not permanent truths. They're shaped—sometimes heavily—by the time, the culture, and the social expectations around us

A belief that feels “obvious” today may have been unthinkable in the past, and may look outdated in the future. Consider how societies once viewed widows in certain historical eras. In some places and periods, a woman whose husband died was expected never to remarry, because remarriage was equated with disloyalty.

There were even systems designed to publicly reward or enforce “chastity.” In many modern societies, remarriage has become ordinary—almost routine. The point is not which era is “right,” but what the contrast reveals: what we call morality or virtue is often influenced by external forces—culture, tradition, laws, and social pressure. 3) Different behaviors don’t automatically mean different human nature Modern life is complex. Cultures mix, opportunities diverge, and the gap between people’s life experiences can be huge. So it’s tempting to believe we now have many different “types” of human nature. Yet many differences live at the level of expression rather than essence. Yes, you and I are not the same. Our personalities, choices, and life paths diverge. Even our “energy” and emotional capacity can feel different. But underneath the variety, certain drives repeatedly show up: We compare ourselves with others. We want to feel seen. We want recognition and validation. What changes is how people try to earn that recognition. One person pursues growth and mastery, hoping to be acknowledged through effort and achievement. Another person looks for shortcuts, choosing speed over depth. The route is different. The angle is different. But if the underlying desire is the same—to be recognized—it becomes harder to argue that human nature itself has fundamentally changed. 4) “Selfishness,” expansion, and the role of emotional capacity Another key difference lies in what we might call a person’s emotional range or capacity. When someone’s sense of self is small—when their attention and energy are limited to their own needs—they may appear more self-centered. They simply don’t have enough inner space to hold anyone else. But when someone’s capacity expands—when they can feel the room, understand others’ realities, and empathize more deeply—their behavior can look more “noble.” They may give more, care more, and sacrifice more. Yet from another lens, that might not be sacrifice at all.

It may be the natural result of inclusion: when you genuinely feel others as part of your extended self, caring becomes automatic. So the behavior changes dramatically—but that still doesn't necessarily prove that human nature is different. It may indicate that the expression is different, shaped by emotional breadth and inner energy. 5) A simple summary: two foundational drives If we were to summarize the argument as clearly as possible, it might look like this: At a fundamental level, humans tend to prioritize the self (what some would call "selfishness," at least in the basic survival sense). Humans crave recognition—to be acknowledged, validated, and to feel a sense of importance. Just as food and warmth are basic needs for survival, recognition becomes a powerful need once survival is secured. And at this level—the desire to matter and be seen—people are often far more alike than we assume.

The Need to Create Value and the Complexity of Human Love

Each of us must strive to learn and create value. If we do not create value at all, but instead become a burden to our relatives and friends, eventually our friends may leave us, and even our family members may gradually distance themselves. But is this always true? Consider a family with a child who is “not ordinary.” Perhaps the child has physical or mental health challenges. In many such cases, parents still raise the child with unconditional love. They may see the child as a gift from heaven. They might think, “Out of so many parents in the world, why did this child choose me? There must be a special mission for me in this lifetime.” With patience and care, they dedicate themselves to nurturing that child. However, human effort always has limits. That limit differs from person to person. If a family is extremely poor and the child continually brings heavy financial or emotional burdens, the parents’ tolerance may be very low. They may give up earlier. But if the family is extremely wealthy, they may have the resources to support the child for a lifetime. Regardless of wealth, raising such a child can bring complicated emotions. Have you ever felt that your mother loves you deeply, yet at times you also felt that she disliked or even hated you? Many people have experienced this. Love is not always purely unconditional in daily life. When you are a “good” child, your mother may show you more love. When you behave poorly, that love may feel reduced

Parents are human. They have emotions. If a parent is in a bad mood, even if their child plays a beautiful piano piece, they may not fully appreciate it because of their own emotional state. If a family

has two children — one excellent, thoughtful, and filial, and another rebellious, disrespectful, or even involved in wrongdoing — which child do you think the parents might feel more attached to? Interestingly, some parents may spend even more time and energy on the “problematic” child — especially if they have the resources to do so. Why? Because human beings have a deep emotional need: the need to be needed. When someone depends on us, we feel valuable. A weaker child who cannot take care of themselves may make the parents feel needed. The more they give, the more attached they may become. On the other hand, a very independent and highly successful child may not “need” the parents as much. The parents may feel proud — but sometimes also insecure. They might subconsciously wish the child were not too excellent, because it highlights their own limitations. Human nature is complex, yet also simple. At its core, human nature desires comparison, recognition, and validation. Our ego wants to exist and be acknowledged. Parents may appear to love the more troubled child more deeply because that child provides them with a sense of importance and recognition. Meanwhile, the independent child who says, “I don’t need you anymore,” may unintentionally create insecurity in the parents. So what is growth? Growth is the ability to understand human nature. If we were placed in the exact same circumstances as someone else — with their experiences, struggles, and past — we would likely make similar decisions. This ability to stand in another person’s position is empathy. The more people we can truly understand and empathize with, the wiser we become. That is real exposure — not just seeing more of the world, but understanding more of human nature

Receiving Feedback from Others

We often encounter people who like to teach others, who feel compelled to give advice or point out our mistakes. How should we handle such situations? Do you think a person must have the “qualification” to advise you? What does qualification mean? Does it mean that the person must be more skilled or experienced than you in that field to give feedback? If it’s about ourselves, we should indeed hold this standard. When we give feedback to others, we first consider whether we are truly knowledgeable or experienced enough in this area. We also need to sense whether the other person is open to receiving feedback. If they are receptive, then

we provide it. But what about feedback coming from others? What if the person giving feedback is less skilled than you in that field? Must they be more capable than you to be able to provide useful insights? Not necessarily. Sometimes people give advice out of pride, simply wanting to show off their abilities or to feel superior. But even if their intention is arrogant, if there is even a small part of their feedback that can help you — whether you can act on it now or not — it is invaluable. The tone, the intention, or the arrogance behind the feedback is irrelevant. Even someone who knows nothing in a field can still offer feedback. Perhaps 99% of it is useless, but if 1% is truly valuable, that alone makes it worth listening to. In truth, the “qualification” to advise is something we assign ourselves. If we feel insulted by someone’s advice, it often stems from our own pride. True wisdom is humble — low as the dust, like water, like the deep ocean. It does not require putting on a mask of humility or pretending to be open; only we know whether we sincerely accept feedback. Even as experts, we must remain

open to learning from others. Most advice may have little value, but with an open and humble heart, the useful 1% is worth absorbing. The key is to approach feedback without ego, without attachment to status, and with genuine openness.

How to Truly Understand Yourself

Do you truly know yourself? How well do you understand who you are? Many people assume: “Of course I know myself best. Who else would know me better?” After all, we spend the most time with ourselves, so it seems natural that we understand ourselves the most. But consider this: sometimes someone asks, “Why do you enjoy doing this?” or “Why are you drawn to this type of person?” We search our mind for an answer and give one confidently. But pause — are you 100% certain that your answer is the real reason you like that activity, that person, or that work? If we pay attention, we often realize we are not truly certain. Yet we feel we cannot show uncertainty. So when asked, we often give an answer that sounds confident — even if deep down, we are unsure. Is there a way to gain clarity, to understand ourselves more accurately and objectively? Since we spend the most time with ourselves, we have the best opportunity to do so. One powerful method is to observe yourself as if you are another person — take the perspective of an outside observer looking at your body and mind. Here’s a simple exercise: Prepare a notebook and a pen

Set a timer for 5, 10, or 15 minutes. Write down every thought that comes into your mind. Keep writing continuously. Every three breaths, ask yourself: “What am I thinking? What am I thinking? What am I thinking?” After a few minutes of recording, read back what you wrote. You will likely be surprised: “I never realized I’ve been thinking about these things so much.” This practice reveals the true content of your mind. Once you recognize your thoughts, you can understand your emotions. Thoughts influence emotions, and emotions drive our words and actions. Self-improvement begins

with self-awareness. A practical way to start is: write down your thoughts and check in with yourself every three breaths: “What am I thinking?” After repeated practice, you’ll notice patterns: the same types of thoughts recur, triggering the same kinds of emotions. These emotions shape your behavior and speech, which others perceive as your personality. If you want to understand your personality more deeply, dedicate ten minutes daily to this exploration. Over time, you will develop greater awareness and reduce the control that fleeting thoughts have over you. Thoughts will translate less into emotions, emotions into actions. You will no longer be a slave to your mind — you can choose to act consciously, take control, and achieve true freedom.

The Wisdom of Accepting Our Inabilities

Is it true that learning to be “incompetent” is the path to true growth? Yes. This kind of incompetence is real — it’s the things we cannot do, the skills we haven’t yet mastered. Often, we judge ourselves harshly: “I can’t do this, I can’t do that, I’m not good enough.” We push ourselves to succeed, striving to become perfect, striving to be excellent in every area. But ironically, this very mindset can block our progress. The first step is to accept our incompetence — to embrace our ordinary, average selves. This acceptance isn’t resignation or passivity; it’s about compassionately acknowledging that in some areas, we are ordinary, and that’s okay. True acceptance means feeling content and happy in our ordinary state, not constantly struggling or feeling inadequate. Without this acceptance, we fall into inner conflict and constant self-pressure. Accepting our limitations is a form of high-level wisdom. It allows us to recognize our true priorities and understand what we should focus on. Simultaneously, when we accept our own imperfections, we become more compassionate toward the imperfections of others. This wisdom of tolerance brings greater happiness, reducing judgment, misunderstanding, and resentment — resentment toward life, toward people, or toward circumstances

People who can truly accept their own incompetence are rare and wise. They are not ordinary. Many people are easily influenced by others’ criticism: “How come you can’t do this?” And they internalize it, feeling compelled to change their image or meet external expectations. Sometimes, adults who cannot accept their own limitations impose their unfulfilled dreams onto their children,

forcing them to succeed in ways the adults themselves could not. This stems from an inability to accept personal incompetence. Ironically, those who cannot accept their own incompetence are often the most ordinary and constrained in life. True wisdom lies in acknowledging: “I am imperfect, I am limited, and that is okay.” By embracing our incompetence, we open the door to authentic growth, freedom, and compassion.

Transforming Pain into Gratitude

Most people believe that their worries and pain are caused by others. We often complain: “Why did that person speak like that? Why did they act this way? How could they be so disrespectful?” We imagine that if it weren’t for this person or that unlucky circumstance, our life would be smooth and peaceful. But is this really true? When we blame the outside world for our suffering, it helps to pause and reflect: no one is perfect, and we ourselves are probably a source of trouble in someone else’s eyes. Perhaps our words or actions have caused discomfort or even pain to others. If someone has expressed dissatisfaction with you, it’s likely because you have, in some way, created challenges for them. Humans seem to exist in a constant cycle of mutual hurt. So how can we stop this cycle, at least on our side? The answer lies in changing perspective. What one person says or does may not harm someone else, but it feels painful to us because of how we perceive it. Can we adopt a different perspective? We can learn from those who are not easily hurt: observe their mindset, their energy state, their acceptance and tolerance. By practicing this, the same event or person no longer causes as much suffering. How can we practice this? Start by recognizing when something causes you pain or discomfort. Then, in your mind, try to reframe the situation: imagine responding with a smile, or even gratitude, even for things that are unpleasant or painful. Transform the connection with the event from pain to appreciation, from negative to positive energy. With consistent practice, facing similar situations becomes easier, and we naturally respond with positive and constructive energy. Challenges are the situations and people that make us uncomfortable or test our abilities. Many people lose confidence or feel defeated when facing

challenges. But some see challenges differently: “I may not be capable now, but this is where I can start to grow and improve.” Challenges are temporary limits; by facing them, we expand our abilities for the future

To understand the thoughts and emotions that trap us, and how our worries originate, it helps to explore ourselves like a personal dictionary: “This event triggers this emotion in me.” Remember, not everyone responds the same way. Our inner dictionary is unique, and by studying it, we learn to navigate life with awareness.

The Meaning of True Friendship

You can stay away from friends who are not really your friends. Because friends who aren't real friends don't matter. I can share with you the concept of friends. In many people's eyes, I may appear to be a person without friends. No one invites me to watch a movie. No one invites me to eat. No one invites me to go shopping. Because everyone knows that if someone invites me, I definitely won't go. After a long time, I don't have such friends. I don't even have to tell my friends that Sophie won't come to a party. In this sense, I don't have friends. This is the environment I created for myself—an ecological environment. But I will have teachers and classmates who study with me. I will have friends who study with me. This is enough. Of course, I will have colleagues. I will have some colleagues at work. But in communication with them, we only talk about work. I don't make friends. Gradually, they will understand. If they invite me to a bar or a restaurant, I will say, "I'm sorry, I don't have time." I can stay away from friends who aren't real friends. Because friends who aren't real friends don't exist.

Why? We usually say that when a boy goes out with a beautiful girlfriend, everyone will feel very proud. Where does this pride come from? It comes from comparing with friends. It comes from the envy of friends. So there is always a comparison in communication and getting along with friends. You are taller than me, I am taller than you. If you keep your distance, you will find that in getting along with friends, you are really constantly comparing. When you get better, have progress, or receive a promotion, or when something good happens to you, you share it with your friends. On the surface, they will say, "Oh, I'm so happy

for you. I feel happy for you.” But in fact, they don’t want you to get better. Because when you get better, in comparison, they are not as good. So we don’t have to share any good things with friends—unless they have an interest-based relationship with you. For example, your parents or family will wish you well, because your parents get a sense of value. They can also show off: “Oh, my child is so good. It means I’m so good.” There must be a so-called interest relationship. They will sincerely wish you well. They will sincerely feel happy for your success. Friends, however, won’t. You can observe more often and find out how you really get along with your friends

What Can Be Perceived Is the Self

What can be perceived is oneself; what cannot be perceived is not oneself. Why define it this way? We've all heard the phrase "petulance and humiliation do not disturb" (), right? In fact, both favor and humiliation are equally dangerous to us. Favor refers to others' liking and recognition of oneself. Usually, when we see others' approval or affection, we feel happy. But it has a huge side effect: once you gain someone's favor, you hope to keep it forever, and you fear losing it. Why do we care about others' favor or humiliation? It is because we think we are contained in this body. We believe the body is ourselves, that we are separate from the world, independent from it. Only when we realize that we are actually one with the world will we no longer care about favor and humiliation. It's like the consciousness in our mind at this moment: we can be greater than this body. It is just that our consciousness tells ourselves, "Ah, this body is what I can perceive, so this is me." The surrounding air that we cannot perceive, that is not me. What can be perceived is oneself; what cannot be perceived is not oneself. Why define it this way? Therefore, in our daily practice, whether we are shrinking ourselves—filling ourselves with gratitude to make our ego smaller—or loving the world, being compassionate to the world, we are blurring the boundary between ourselves and the world.

In other words, we are softening the boundary that says, "I am this body," or "I am this defined self." All practices—positive practices—are meant to bring us closer to the truth. Positive practices, such as cultivating compassion and gratitude, help us approach truth. Conversely, negative energy will make our ego

clearer and our boundaries more rigid. Therefore, we practice expanding and shrinking ourselves simultaneously—small without inner boundaries, large without outer boundaries. Nowadays, our families are small nuclear families, but in ancient times, there were large extended families. Our sense of honor and shame was connected to the whole family. In such a system, the ego was relatively larger, and the practice was to expand the ego and blur its boundaries. That is why, in ancient times, one person's honor or shame represented the whole family's honor or shame—it was meant to help us practice expanding our self, letting it become more diffuse and subtle. Thank you.

When Virtue Does Not Match Position

We have all heard the saying: “If virtue does not match one’s position, disaster will follow.” Let’s explore the theory behind it. If a person lacks virtue but, due to chance or coincidence, possesses great wealth, how will they use it? They may indulge in unhealthy activities or pursue fleeting pleasures, which could ultimately lead to physical decline and a broken family. Once the body weakens and the family is fractured, the wealth gradually drifts away. Similarly, if a person lacks virtue but wields significant power, how will they use it? They may satisfy personal desires, seek recognition, and enjoy the control over others’ lives. This sense of superiority, this feeling of “I can control you, I can control the world”, can be extremely damaging to oneself. We know that when a person becomes excessively proud or arrogant, eventually they will fall—hard and painfully. Is there a standard to judge whether a person’s virtue matches their wealth and status? Within a certain range of wealth, a person can use it wisely to maximize their value. Beyond a critical point, however, excess wealth may be misused for unhealthy pursuits—it becomes uncontrollable. Power works the same way: if our power allows us to do positive things, it is still within the scope of our virtue. But once it reaches a point that breeds arrogance, that power ceases to be beneficial and becomes harmful. Thus, “If virtue does not match one’s position, disaster will follow.” It means that some wealth and power exceed the range in which we can use them correctly, and this excess brings negative consequences. It is not something we should pursue. Besides wealth and power, there is also reputation. If the whole world praises a person whose virtue does not match the admiration, they may become arrogant—this is the side effect of praise. However, a truly

virtuous and stable person will not be swayed by praise and can bear it responsibly. They may use their reputation to gather resources and create more value, but not for selfish gain. Remember this principle: the more selfish an individual, the more suffering they will experience, because selfishness is contrary to the truth of the world: we are interconnected. If what we possess helps us feel more connected to the world, it has a positive effect. If it only makes us feel superior, feeds our ego, or encourages indulgence in personal desires for recognition and praise, then it is harmful—better not to have it. As individuals, we must remain clear and mindful: do the things we possess create positive value? Do they make us more selfish and superior, or do they help us feel increasingly connected to the world? This is today's reflection. Please like, share, and spread this wisdom—it is our shared responsibility. Thank you.

Learning to Be Both Teacher and Student

Many of us are extremely selective when looking for a teacher, thinking that someone must meet certain standards to qualify as our teacher. Yet, every one of us needs to be a student. The problem is that many people struggle to truly be students—not because there aren't capable teachers around, but because they lack the willingness to assume the role of a student. Being a student means acknowledging that someone else knows more than we do, that we are in a position to learn. It requires putting aside pride and humbly learning from another person. Confucius said, "Among three people walking, there must be a teacher for me." In truth, even with just two people, there is a teacher in the other. When we see the strengths in another, we are already learning. When we focus on their weaknesses, arrogance arises. Arrogance comes easily and gives a sense of superiority, whereas humility is difficult, often triggering feelings of inadequacy. I used to be extremely selective, believing that only someone with great wisdom could be my teacher. I realized, however, that being a disciple of a wise person is relatively easy; many can do it. The real challenge is learning from ordinary people. Even when someone seems ordinary, without extraordinary wisdom, we can still be their student. We can see their strengths, cultivate respect and humility in their presence, because these qualities come from within and are not dependent on the other person. Over time, I also became a teacher. Being a teacher makes arrogance very easy to rise. Therefore, whenever someone calls me a teacher, I consciously cultivate humility. We should not avoid teaching out of fear of arrogance. The knowledge we acquire is our

responsibility to share and pass on. Furthermore, the emergence of arrogance is also an opportunity—a feedback mechanism reminding us that we need more stability and humility. Equally important, we must not deny others the opportunity to be students. Only when a person is genuinely in a learning state, with respect and humility, can the knowledge, energy, or guidance we share truly be received.

So, allow others to be students. At the same time, always maintain humility in your heart, remembering that others also teach us how to share better and how to be teachers without arrogance. Every one of us needs to be both a teacher and a student.

More Than 99% of People Don't Truly Love Themselves

What do you think it means to love yourself? Is it eating healthy food? Exercising? Reading more books? Doing healthy activities? In fact, none of these are the essence of self-love

True self-love happens in the present moment. When you become aware of your own existence, you naturally feel a gentle smile arising within you. You feel a quiet sense of contentment. Each time you truly notice yourself, a subtle smile appears. That is direct self-love. At the level of the mind, we may tell ourselves: “I love myself because I have this.” “I love myself because I can achieve that.” “I show love to myself in this way.” But this is not direct love. Direct love is this: in this very moment, when you become aware of your existence, you feel deep satisfaction—without any reason. If, when you become aware of your body and your presence, you cannot naturally smile, that’s okay. It simply means we have not yet learned to love ourselves directly. Realizing this is already better than living in self-deception. There is no need to blame yourself. When you notice that you do not yet love yourself, accept it. Accept the current state. Accept that you may not yet have the ability to love yourself fully. And within that acceptance, begin practicing a smile. Within that acceptance, begin practicing contentment. Gradually, each time you become aware of yourself, try to bring up a small smile. Then accept. Bring up a little more smile. Then accept again. This is why I often share two very important practices: Awareness of oneself. The inner smile. Through these two practices, we slowly learn to love ourselves directly—without reason, without conditions. When awareness

arises, contentment arises. A smile appears naturally. Self-love also has levels. At first, your contentment and smile may feel like one point. Slowly let it grow to two, three, and continue accumulating. Until one day, you truly and completely love yourself. At that moment, you experience deep wholeness and inner freedom. I hope everyone can learn to love themselves. Self-love is a practice. If this sharing brings even a little help to you, feel free to like, share, and pass it on. With blessings for all, may we learn to love ourselves more and more each day. Thank you..

Understanding Personality Through Face, Posture, Voice, and Movement

We all know that a person's facial features can reveal aspects of their personality. But beyond the face, posture, walking style, and even the voice can also reflect who someone truly is. For example, when a person is angry, you can see it immediately in their facial expression. If someone remains in anger for a long time, their facial muscles gradually form muscle memory. Over time, this becomes part of their facial appearance. The same applies to posture. When we feel discouraged, our body naturally collapses inward. If a person remains in that emotional state for a long period, this posture also becomes muscle memory and eventually shapes their habitual body language. Walking style reveals energy. If someone's energy is low or scattered, their walking may appear casual, dragging, or unfocused. Their movement mirrors their inner state. Our voice is another powerful indicator. The body is like a musical instrument that produces sound. When the body is healthy and open, the sound becomes harmonious and natural. If there is blockage somewhere, we cannot use that area to resonate, and the voice will reflect a certain limitation or quality. Some people speak from the chest, some from the throat, and others project their sound upward toward the head. Each vocal pattern corresponds to a different personality tendency. If you are highly sensitive, you can precisely sense which personality traits match which vocal qualities. In fact, you do not need to memorize complicated theories. You can simply practice simulation. For example, when you observe someone's facial expression, place your awareness into that expression. Imagine you have that face—what kind of emotional state would it create within

you? If a person holds that expression long-term, it means they are living in that emotional state long-term. The same applies to walking. If you carefully imitate someone's walking posture and truly embody it, you can feel what kind of inner state accompanies that movement. If a person lives in that energy continuously, it becomes their personality. Voice works the same way. Try imitating someone's voice and observe how it makes you feel. If that feeling is sustained over time, it shapes character. To understand someone, we do not need to collect and memorize large amounts of information. We only need to enhance our perception and temporarily place ourselves inside the other person's body to feel their energetic state. If they consistently live in that state, that is their personality. Reading personality through face, voice, posture, and movement is not some mysterious science requiring endless data. It requires sensitivity. We often fail to perceive others because we ourselves are blocked. Our bodies carry tension, and our empathy has not been developed. We approach others with strong judgment. When we judge, we resist entering their experience. If we think someone's face is unattractive, their posture awkward, or their walking unpleasant, we refuse to embody them—and therefore, we cannot truly understand them

Only when we reduce internal blockages, purify our energy, and decrease judgment toward ourselves and others can we truly understand both ourselves and others. This kind of understanding is free from judgment. It is rooted in acceptance and compassion. And only through this deeper understanding can we genuinely help others. If this reflection brings even a little value to you, feel free to like, share, and pass it on. Thank you.

Unconditional Acceptance and Love

— A Path for Self and Others When we are able to accept ourselves unconditionally, the next step is to like and love ourselves unconditionally. When you truly realize your own existence, you will smile naturally because you genuinely like yourself. This love is unconditional. It does not depend on your status, knowledge, or achievements. If your love comes from thinking, “I am successful” or “I am knowledgeable” or “others will recognize me,” that is not true love. It is excitement in the mind—a response to external validation, comparison, and expectation. True unconditional love is simple and direct. The moment you are aware of your existence, you feel happy and smile naturally, without any conditions or imagination. When we love ourselves, our children, subordinates, and everyone around us can feel it. They first sense that they are accepted wholeheartedly. When they are truly accepted, they can tell you about their mistakes without fear of judgment. They no longer worry about: “What if I don’t get good grades? What if I can’t find a job? Am I good enough? Will I embarrass my parents?” Instead, they simply feel your wholehearted acceptance. Some parents only try to “accept” their child when serious problems arise—illness, depression, or mental health challenges. But such acceptance is not genuine; it is a compromise, a desperate attempt to make the child change. True acceptance is different—it is unconditional. It is being able to accept the child as they are, all the time. Only when their hearts are truly open can your love penetrate. Then they will see for themselves: “Ah, this is what love feels like.” Gradually, they will want to cultivate love in their own hearts. They will learn from you how to become someone capable of loving others. Through action and practice, they develop a heart that holds

more and more love. These are the principles. But how do we practically accept ourselves, love ourselves unconditionally, and help our children feel truly accepted and loved?

There are many concrete practices. Understanding the principles in our minds is not enough. Whether for ourselves or for those around us, we must put them into practice. Please pay attention to our future courses, where we will guide you through specific exercises. Thank you.

Are Humans of Good or Evil Nature?

– A Perspective from the Elements Are people inherently of good nature or evil nature? Today, we will explore this question from the perspective of elements. Whether it is the five elements of Taoism or the four great elements of Buddhism, each element has both positive and negative characteristics. Take the fire element as an example. Positive characteristics of people with abundant fire elements include leadership, decisiveness, a sense of purpose, and the ability to inspire others. Negative characteristics include a bad temper, frequent conflicts with others, arrogance, and a lack of empathy. A person with a strong fire element may display positive traits at times and negative traits at other times—it depends on the situation. In reality, all of us contain all elements. Our existence depends on having them; it is just the distribution of elements that differs, which results in unique personalities. If each of the five elements were exactly 20%, there would be perfect balance. However, absolute balance is impossible. Even the most advanced practitioners only approximate this balance, and the elements are constantly fluctuating. For example, someone with a lot of fire elements and very little water elements still possesses water element traits, such as empathy and sensitivity—it's just less obvious. Every element carries both positive and negative traits, and all these seeds exist in every person. If you consider yourself kind, it does not mean you are superior—everyone possesses these qualities to some degree. If you consider yourself selfish or cold, it does not mean you are inferior—everyone has both positive and negative aspects. A virtuous person may have many negative thoughts, though they are not expressed, and a person with low energy may have many positive thoughts, though they are hidden. In essence, we are all the

same. Understanding this allows us to adopt a neutral perspective on our strengths and weaknesses. We neither feel arrogant because of our strengths nor inferior because of our weaknesses. These are simply different manifestations of the elements. From this perspective, everyone in the world is equal. If you have any questions, please leave a comment. Thank you

From Arrogance to Equality

A Tea Practice of the Heart A few days ago, I shared a story about “the straw dog.” Perhaps some of you have reflected on it. Today, let us uncover the answer together

In the Tao Te Ching, it is said that Heaven and Earth treat all things as straw dogs. If Heaven and the sages treat us as straw dogs, we may feel they are unkind. But why do we feel this way? It is because, deep in the human heart, we believe we are naturally superior—superior to straw dogs, superior to other species, superior to much of life itself. We do not want to be treated equally. At the root of this lies human arrogance. This arrogance brings us countless troubles. When someone disrespects us, we become angry—because we believe we are inherently entitled to respect. Once our basic needs for food and shelter are met, we spend our lives striving desperately: studying, working, earning money, chasing recognition, pursuing honor. Beneath much of this effort lies the desire to stand above others. And it is not only about being above other species. We want to be above other human beings as well. This tendency is deeply embedded within us. In fact, much of our suffering arises from this subtle yet persistent arrogance. When arrogance diminishes, happiness increases. The principle is simple. But how do we practice it? In tea ceremony practice, when we place a bowl or a tea scoop before us, we hold an attitude of respect. We may even give the bowl or scoop a name. Why? Because naming helps us truly see its existence and honor it. In the act of naming and respecting, we practice equality with an object. In a previous sharing about the “straw dog,” I mentioned that when receiving such an object, the first thing we do is give it a name. Before each

practice, we pause with it in stillness. This is not a ritual for the object itself; it is a practice for us—to see its existence clearly, to respect its presence, and to sense equality. How do we move toward a deeper level of equality? When we lift an object, we lift it from the dantian. We sense it with the whole body. We allow it to become part of us. Just as you would never say your left hand is more important than your right hand, or that one cell in your body matters more than another—you recognize that every part of your body is equally important. Only when we fully experience that the bowl and the tea scoop are one with our body—that it is us, and we are it—can we truly respect it at a deeper level. This is a practice. Slowly, through such training, we may one day look at a stone and regard it as equal to ourselves. We may look at a straw dog and see it as equal to ourselves. We will respect others as we respect ourselves and accept others as we accept ourselves. As this happens, arrogance gradually fades—until it disappears entirely. And in that state, we may finally experience genuine happiness and true freedom. This is today's sharing. I welcome your reflections and discussion. Thank you

In the Eyes of the Sage, In the Eyes of the Stone

There was once a master and his disciple. One day, the disciple pointed to a group of people in the distance and asked, “Master, why did you choose me as your disciple instead of them?” The master replied, “Because you wish to learn, and they do not.” The disciple pouted, then asked another question. “Master, do you love me?” “Of course,” the master answered. The disciple picked up a stone from the ground and held it before the master. “Master, do you love this stone?” “Of course,” said the master again. The disciple frowned. “Do you love me more, or do you love the stone more?” The master simply smiled and remained silent. The disciple grew angry. “How can you regard me and a stone as equally important? You are heartless!” In the disciple’s eyes, the master was unfeeling. But what about in the eyes of the stone? Consider a mother with two sons. The elder son is successful and brings honor to the family. The younger son is ordinary, even troublesome, bringing shame upon the household. Yet the mother loves them both the same. The elder son complains, “I worked so hard to bring you wealth and honor, yet you treat me the same as him.” But in the younger son’s eyes, the mother’s love is unconditional. Whether he succeeds or fails, whether he does good or wrong, her love remains unchanged. In the Tao Te Ching, it says: “Heaven and Earth treat all things as straw dogs.” To us, this sounds cruel. We feel that Heaven and Earth are unkind because they treat us as straw dogs. But how does the straw dog feel? When we are strong, we desire more resources. If we do not receive them, we call it unfair. When we are weak, we wish to

be treated equally with the strong and to receive equal opportunity. So where does the problem truly lie?

Is it in Heaven and Earth—or in the shifting standards of our own hearts? This is today's reflection. I welcome your thoughts and discussion. Thank you.

PART II

**Growth, Discipline, and
Inner Training**

Daily Progress and the Power of Incremental Growth

If every day we just repeat today — doing the same simple and monotonous tasks — can we really achieve anything in our lifetime? Imagine what we do today, multiplied by 365 days, then multiplied by 80 years of work. Would it amount to meaningful achievements? Probably not. So, what is the essence of achieving success? The essence is continuous progress — today slightly better than yesterday, tomorrow slightly better than today

This incremental progress comes from small improvements: doing a little more today, working a bit more efficiently, creating slightly more value today than yesterday, and even more tomorrow. If we judge ourselves only by short-term standards, it may feel impossible to improve every single day. Some days we are in a good state, some days not. But we can aim for longer-term progress: this month better than last month, this year better than last year. Over time, the value we create each year compounds, and this becomes a true measure of our progress. How can we achieve daily improvement? By reflecting and evaluating ourselves. Ask: “In what area can I improve today?” We acknowledge our imperfections and recognize the many areas for growth — but we focus on just one thing. Tomorrow, we practice improving that one point. Or set a very small goal: improve a little tomorrow, a little the next day. Over ten or twenty days, this builds momentum, gradually forming a “new self.” In this state, we naturally create more value. Learning and progress are exponential — what some call “exponential growth.” The achievements we gain in life depend on how much value we create each day, every day. Improvement is

gradual. There is no sudden transformation; progress is achieved step by step. “Being slightly better than yesterday” — as Dao sages and Master Fu emphasized — is the key to hope and achievement. Without it, life can feel discouraging, repetitive, and hopeless if we simply look at our daily actions multiplied over 80 years. True progress comes from daily reflection and small improvements. Find tiny ways to refine yourself, enhance your work, and gradually improve. This approach can lead to unimaginable levels of life experience — a life full of surprises. These surprises are moments of discovery: realizing “I can do this,” discovering new ideas, experiencing the energy of a great tree, and appreciating the world in ways we never imagined. Living with this habit of amazement, we continuously celebrate growth. Every day, we notice: “Wow, I can do this!” Life becomes a chain of daily marvels, and progress becomes a source of constant joy.

Building Confidence Through Practice

From your expression and state, I can sense a confidence—what some might call a sense of certainty. How are you able to feel so assured, believing that the path you are walking is the right one, and that you will eventually reach your goal? For many of us, such a destination feels distant, almost unreachable, and this often leads to anxiety or even giving up. In fact, I haven't always had this confidence. There were long periods when daily meditation didn't seem to bring noticeable progress. I went through tremendous suffering, helplessness, and challenges. At times, I resisted certain practices, but later I became willing to try them. Things I once couldn't accept or understand, I eventually could. Through consistent practice, I began to feel meaningful growth. Gradually, insights emerged, and at certain moments, I caught glimpses of the true nature of the world. Theory then helped me connect my practice to that understanding. From a theoretical perspective, success is achievable—it only requires continued effort. Each of us progresses along this path at our own pace. Having seen my progress, I now have confidence in the future. If I have grown significantly over the past year, and consistently over previous years, I trust that next year and the years after will yield equal or even greater progress. My confidence stems from the certainty that my practice will not stop. As long as I do not stop practicing, as long as I do not accept failure, success is only a matter of time. Confidence doesn't appear all at once. It grows gradually through daily life, routine, solving small problems, and accumulating small victories. Over time, this small confidence compounds into profound certainty. Some may ask, "How long must I practice before I can stop?" This mindset often prevents true progress. The path requires a lifelong commitment.

The right mindset is understanding that learning and growth are continuous—ongoing throughout one’s life. Only then does time become a factor in achieving success. For example, in my tea ceremony courses, learning does not end after a few days. It is a lifelong study—something we practice repeatedly, a journey spanning our entire life. Confidence comes from consistently stepping onto this path and embracing the process, even if it feels long or uncertain. Even if you don’t yet feel confident, or haven’t yet begun your practice, there’s no need to worry or rush. The time will come. Life itself will remind you: this is the path every human must walk

Returning to a Stable State After Social Activities

Sophie, I have a question. We often attend social activities. If we return from a place where the environment is rough or our energy is low, how can we bring our mind back to a relatively stable state? You mean, how can we ensure we return to our previous state? Yes. Many people think that meditation alone is enough to restore their state. But in fact, they rarely assess whether they are fully recovered. Suppose your usual energy level is 50 points. After meditating, you might feel better, at around 45 points. The next day, you go to another social activity. After returning, you meditate again and feel you're back to the same state as yesterday—but in reality, you may only be at 40 points. This is like the frog in warm water—the decline is gradual, almost imperceptible. We retreat without realizing it. How to Assess Full Recovery Track distractions during meditation: Record how many times your mind is taken away by thoughts in a set time, for example, 10 minutes. For concentration practice, assess how much focus you can give yourself today. Do this assessment immediately after leaving a low-energy environment:

This allows you to adjust your state in time, rather than slowly retreating. Example: Normally: 2 distractions in 10 minutes After a social event: 20 distractions in 10 minutes Continue meditating in 10-minute blocks: $20 \rightarrow 10 \rightarrow 5 \rightarrow 2$ When your distractions return to your normal baseline, you know you've fully recovered. Avoid gradual retreat over time: Without assessment, small declines accumulate, and you may gradually drift away from your usual state. Sometimes retreat happens so subtly that you don't even

notice a minute-by-minute drop. Likewise, small progress can go unnoticed unless tracked. Key Principle Assessment and recording are essential. Regularly evaluating meditation or concentration sessions ensures you don't slowly lose your baseline. This method allows you to recognize improvement and prevent unnoticed declines. Summary: Don't just rely on how you feel; measure your recovery. Structured assessment is the most reliable way to maintain and restore your mental and energetic balance after challenging social situations.

Restoring Balance After Low-Energy Environments

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Suppose your usual energy level is 50 points. After meditating, you might feel better, at around 45 points. The next day, you go to another social activity. After returning, you meditate again and feel you're back to the same state as yesterday—but in reality, you may only be at 40 points. This is like the frog in warm water—the decline is gradual, almost imperceptible. We retreat without realizing it.

How to Assess Full Recovery

Track distractions during meditation: Record how many times your mind is taken away by thoughts in a set time, for example, 10 minutes. For concentration practice, assess how much focus you can give yourself today. Do this assessment immediately after leaving a low-energy environment: This allows you to adjust your state in time, rather than slowly retreating.

Example: Normally: 2 distractions in 10 minutes

After a social event: 20 distractions in 10 minutes

Continue meditating in 10-minute blocks: 20 → 10 → 5 → 2

When your distractions return to your normal baseline, you know you've fully recovered. Avoid gradual retreat over time: Without assessment, small declines accumulate, and you may gradually drift away from your usual state. Sometimes retreat happens so subtly that you don't even

notice a minute-by-minute drop. Likewise, small progress can go unnoticed unless tracked. Key Principle Assessment and recording are essential. Regularly evaluating meditation or concentration sessions ensures you don't slowly lose your baseline. This method allows you to recognize improvement and prevent unnoticed declines. Summary:

Don't just rely on how you feel; measure your recovery. Structured assessment is the most reliable way to maintain and restore your mental and energetic balance after challenging social situations.

Setting Goals with Honest Self-Assessment

A lot of people, when they set goals, are not accurate in their self-assessment, or they overestimate themselves. For example, they may set a goal at 80 points while actually being at 30 points. Are there any good ways to approach this? Yes, there are methods for setting goals. First, we need to be honest with ourselves. If we know we are at 30 points, many people might think they are at 50 points, or only 10 points. If they are 30 points but think they are 50, they are overconfident. If they are 30 points but think they are 10, they are too self-abased. In any case, we must look at ourselves honestly and give ourselves a score. If a person wants to go from 30 to 80 points, even if we try very hard from an energy perspective, our body may collapse. It consumes a lot of energy because our energy, or qi, is connected to our body. The state of the body and energy are in dynamic balance. When the body is healthy, energy is usually higher; when energy is higher, the body is healthier. They affect each other. So how can we evaluate ourselves? Through goal setting. If you don't know whether you are at 30 or 50 points, you can experiment. Set a goal slightly above what you think you are: If you think you are at 50 points and set a goal at 60, you may find it very difficult. Then you adjust to 50 points. If 50 is still too difficult, you go lower.

If you set a goal too low, say 20 points, it will be too easy, and you can then raise it gradually: 30, then 40, etc. Through this feedback, you learn where you really are. It's a continuous adjustment process. If you can't achieve your goal, many people feel useless, inferior, or want to give up. In fact, these emotions are

unnecessary. Not achieving a goal is just valuable feedback: it tells you your current position, and you can adjust incrementally. For example, go from $30 \rightarrow 31 \rightarrow 32$ points. It's not too difficult to increase by a small step. Improve a little at a time, stabilize, then raise yourself again. Little by little is the key.

The Fastest Way to Improve Is to Change Slowly

In the previous video, I mentioned that the biggest mistake in self-improvement is being too impatient. The more we rush, the slower our progress becomes. Yet paradoxically, there is a fastest way to grow: steady and even change. What does that mean? It means changing a little bit—then accepting that change. Changing a little bit more—then accepting again. This cycle can repeat very quickly. And the faster this cycle of “small change + acceptance” moves, the faster we grow. The key is that during those tiny changes, we hardly notice anything happening. One day, you feel nothing. One week, still nothing. But after one month, when you look back, you suddenly realize: Wow, I’ve changed a lot. Why must change be gradual and even? Because of a human weakness: when someone tries to change us immediately, hidden inside that effort is rejection—non-acceptance. The same applies when we try to change ourselves. The emotion of “I must change” often contains “I don’t accept who I am right now.” That inner resistance slows everything down. So the most efficient way to improve is to make the change so small that even we don’t feel we are changing. Change a little, accept it. Change again, accept again. When acceptance and change happen simultaneously, progress becomes natural and fast. How do we apply this in practice? In my first year of cultivation, I simply meditated every day: 30 minutes in the morning, 30 minutes at night

I continued until meditation became as natural as eating or sleeping. On days I didn’t meditate, it felt like I hadn’t eaten or slept—something was missing. At that point, the habit was formed.

I didn't need willpower. I didn't feel I was "trying." I simply practiced, and progress happened naturally. After meditation became effortless, I added Taiji into my life. When Taiji became natural, I added tea practice. Then shakuhachi. Then other artistic practices. From the outside, it may look like I'm doing many things. But to me, they are like eating and sleeping—natural, effortless, requiring no force. I don't rely on willpower. I don't push myself. I don't control myself. And precisely because of that, growth happens quietly and continuously. Almost every month, I can clearly feel noticeable progress. Real improvement can be both very fast and almost imperceptible at the same time. Because there is no resistance. No conflict. No internal friction. You might say, "Forming even one habit is already difficult. How can we build so many?" I will share more about that in the next video. Thank you.

The Fastest Way to Grow Is to Change Evenly

In the previous video, we mentioned that the biggest mistake in self-improvement is being too impatient. The more we rush to grow, the slower our progress becomes. Urgency often carries an underlying sense of non-acceptance toward our current state. Yet growth can actually happen very quickly. The key lies in what I call even change. What does “even change” mean? It means changing just a little, then accepting that change. Then changing a little more, and accepting again. Change and acceptance happen simultaneously, in a continuous cycle. The increments are small—so small that we barely notice them—but the cycle itself can move very quickly. You may not feel it in a day. You may not notice it in a week. But after a month, when you look back, you’ll be surprised at how significant your progress has been. Why must change be even and gradual?

Because of a human weakness. When we try to change ourselves immediately and dramatically, the desire to change often contains rejection—disapproval of who we are right now. This creates internal resistance and drains our energy. The only truly rapid way to improve is to let change happen so subtly that we hardly notice it. Change a little, accept it. Let acceptance and change occur at the same time. The faster this cycle moves, the faster we grow. How can we apply this in real life? Let me share my own example. In my first year of practice, I meditated for thirty minutes every morning and thirty minutes every evening. Eventually, meditation became as natural as eating or sleeping. If I skipped it, I felt uncomfortable—just as if I had missed a meal or a night’s sleep.

At that point, meditation was no longer effort; it was a habit. Only after that habit was firmly established did I add Tai Chi to my life. When Tai Chi became natural, I added tea ceremony. Then the shakuhachi. Then other artistic practices. From the outside, it may look like I'm doing many things. But in reality, each practice has become as natural as eating and sleeping. I don't rely on willpower. I don't force myself. I don't control myself harshly. Because there is no resistance, growth happens naturally and continuously. Almost every month, I can clearly feel my own progress and transformation. Real progress is both rapid and almost unnoticeable. It happens without struggle, without collision, and without internal friction. You might say: forming even one habit is already difficult. How can we possibly build so many and integrate them into our lives? I will share more about that in the next video. Thank you.

Stop Trying So Hard: Act Without Inner Resistance

Stop Trying So Hard — Act Without Inner Resistance I have never seen someone achieve true success through “struggle” alone. Why? Because struggle often contains resistance. And resistance consumes energy. You may push yourself for a day or two. Perhaps even a week. But if the process is based on constant internal tension, you cannot sustain it for a hundred days or ten thousand days. Eventually, exhaustion leads to quitting.

You might argue that many accomplished people work very hard. Of course they act consistently—but they are not struggling in the inner sense. They are simply doing what they do. Struggle implies that you believe something is difficult. Yet difficulty and ease exist only in the mind. If you believe something is hard, it becomes hard. If you believe it is easy, it becomes easier. In the very moment of doing, however, there is neither hard nor easy. Those judgments arise before action begins, after it ends, and during pauses in between. If during those moments you interpret the task as natural and manageable, there is no unnecessary energy loss. All your energy can be devoted to the action itself. But if you decide beforehand that it is difficult, you are already draining yourself. When the time comes to act, you have less energy available. The world appears according to how we perceive it. Every experience has both positive and negative aspects. To me, pain is an opportunity for growth. I do not seek suffering, but when it comes, I meet it with acceptance. Instead of resisting what I dislike, I allow it. When resistance fades, suffering begins to dissolve. This idea reflects the principle of wu wei described in the Tao Te Ching. Wu

wei does not mean doing nothing. It means acting without inner friction—without unnecessary resistance or force. Similarly, many people admire the Buddha, placing him on a pedestal. Yet excessive worship can unintentionally create distance. We begin to feel that reaching such wisdom is nearly impossible. But if you hold the belief that we share the same essential nature—that what he achieved is also possible for us—the distance begins to shrink. He, too, experienced suffering and hardship, refining himself step by step. No matter how clouded our minds may seem, we can gradually clear them. If we stop believing the path is unbearably difficult, we reduce internal resistance. With less inner conflict, we can act more purely, focusing on steady refinement and growth. When action is free from struggle and resistance, progress becomes both faster and more sustainable. If this reflection has offered you even a small insight, feel free to like, save, or share it. May your path be steady and free from unnecessary struggle.

Returning to the State of an Infant

— Interpretation and Practice of Tao Te Ching Chapter 10, Verse Tao Te Ching, Chapter 10, Verse 2 says: “Concentrate your energy to softness, and you will be like a newborn child.” The translation can be interpreted as: “Gather your essence and energy to become soft and gentle, able to return to the state of an infant.” But how can we truly return to the state of an infant? First, we need to understand the difference between infants and adults: Soft body: Infants have extremely soft, flexible bodies. Full of energy (Qi): Their energy flows freely through their entire body, and their breath reaches everywhere. Unblocked: Infants have very few accumulated thoughts or beliefs, so energy flows smoothly. As we grow, thoughts, knowledge, and concepts accumulate in our body, forming blockages. Over time, the body stiffens, energy slows, and vitality decreases. Stubbornness in old age is not only mental; the body is also stiff and rigid due to decades of blocked energy. How to Return to the Infant State The key is to become soft while remaining full of energy (Qi). Simply practicing yoga to become physically flexible is not enough—without energy, the body is like an empty balloon: soft but lifeless. The true state of an infant is a soft and energetic body. Practice Methods Method 1: Connect Breath with Body Guide your breath through your entire body, letting energy fill every part. If you cannot breathe to the whole body initially, start with one area at a time. Use breath to sense each part of your body and release any blocked energy

Note: the “Qi” here is not air—it is energy. Breath can guide energy even to your hands or arms. Method 2: Develop Body Awareness Through Physical Training This is not about building

muscles, but sensing each part of your body through weight or movement. Once you become aware of each part, it becomes easier to guide breath and energy throughout your body. By combining breath and body awareness training, we can gradually return to the state of an infant: soft, full of energy, flexible, and alive. This is the essence of Tao Te Ching, Chapter 10, Verse 2. If you have questions while practicing, feel free to leave a comment and discuss. Thank you. If you want, I can also make a simplified visual diagram showing the “infant state practice”, combining breath, energy, and body awareness, so it’s easier to follow in daily practice. Do you want me to do that?

The Practice of Mind-Body Unity

Tao Te Ching Chapter 10 — The Practice of Mind-Body Unity
The Tao Te Ching is a book of practice, but many people today only try to understand it with their minds. The mind cannot truly comprehend the Tao; it may make us feel “I am clever, I understand it,” increasing pride and excitement. Understanding it intellectually alone cannot help us express it in our own words, generalize from it, or apply it in daily life. The Tao Te Ching is entirely about practice. Today, we explore the first two lines of Chapter 10. Each line is a practice in itself. First line: “Zai Yin Po Bao Yi, Neng Wu Li Hu?” Translation: “Can spirit and body be united without separation?” In other words, mind-body unity. In daily activities—walking, eating, opening doors, washing hands, brushing teeth—our body performs actions, but the mind often drifts to the past or the future, not aligned with the body. Core method: Bring the mind back to the same space-time as the body—what we call the present moment.

Some may say, “Isn’t this simple? It’s just the present.” There are two types of people who think it is simple: No real practice: They only understand “the present” in their mind, but cannot truly focus. Truly practiced: For those who have developed the habit, mind-body unity is natural. For most of us, focusing on the present is complex and requires various practices to achieve. How to practice mind-body unity Make a commitment: Focus on walking while walking, eating while eating, brushing teeth while brushing teeth. Challenges: When you try, you may find it almost impossible. The mind and body are already used to separation; habitual environments and actions have formed “muscle memory” that is

hard to change. Use tools: Dojo or practice space: Create or join a dedicated space. For example, the author's tea room is a dojo, used for meditation, tea practice, guqin, and wisdom videos. Entering the dojo signals the mind to focus, not relax or watch shows. Practice partners: Even without being physically present, connecting with others via the internet allows shared practice. Practice through art: Every art practice naturally triggers mind-body alignment. Example: Tea ceremony: The bowl is in the present, but many people's eyes may focus on it while their mind drifts. Proper practice means truly seeing the bowl—its shape, color, and texture—while also noticing who is seeing it. When you observe the observer, you are not just seeing the bowl—the bowl also “sees” you. Bowl and observer merge in the same space-time. This is mind-body unity. The second practice will be discussed in the next video. Feel free to leave comments if you have questions.

My Morning Practice

A Simple Answer to “What Should I Do When I Wake Up?”

Some friends once asked me during a livestream: What should we do first thing in the morning? This is my answer. In the summer, when the sun rises early, I wake up at 5:00 a.m. and finish around 5:40. Now that the weather is cooler and sunrise comes later, I wake up at 5:20 and practice until 6:00. I usually check the official sunrise time for Shanghai, and you can look up the sunrise time for your own city as well. Aligning the practice with the rhythm of dawn makes a difference. The night before, I prepare a glass of vegetable and fruit juice and leave it in the refrigerator. When I wake up, I drink it immediately and make sure to hydrate well. Replenishing water in the early morning is essential. If it isn’t raining, I carry a stool out into the courtyard. There, I alternate between sitting and standing. When sitting, I practice contemplation of the Four Elements and insight meditation. When standing, I practice exchanging energy with a tree. I also spend time simply sensing the energy of the earth and allowing an exchange to happen. Before beginning, I adjust my posture: relaxing the waist and abdomen, gently tucking the lower back, and straightening the spine. When the body is aligned and settled, the first practice begins —

connecting with a large tree. For about ten minutes, I “become” the tree and then return to myself. When I inhale, I place my awareness into the tree, sensing its roots deeply embedded in the soil and its trunk rising straight toward the sky. When I exhale, I relax back into my own body, observing my presence and becoming aware of the one who is experiencing. After practicing with the tree, I move to contemplation of the Four Elements, and then to insight

meditation. When all the practices are complete, I balance my energy through gentle breathing through the pores, allowing everything to settle naturally. Then I quietly wait for daybreak, simply feeling the arrival of light. This is my morning practice. Over time, I will share more details about each method. Now the air is cool. It is six o'clock. The day has begun.

A Ten-Second Way to Interrupt Anxiety

When you feel extremely anxious and your mind won't stop racing, there is a quick way to stop anxiety—in just 10 seconds. Lower your head and look at your legs, at your body. Feel your legs, feel the presence of your body. Ask yourself: Is the anxiety still there? Continue to feel your body. At this moment, your anxiety stops.

Relax your mind, relax your head. Ask yourself again: Where is the anxiety now? Can you still find it? The most effective methods are often the simplest methods. The greatest truths are simple. Return to the present moment. Return to your body. In the present, there is no worry, no past, no future—only the here and now. That's all.

The Hidden Harm of Reading

– And the Right Way to Do It For many people, reading can actually be harmful. That may sound exaggerated, but there is truth in it. The philosopher Wang Yangming proposed the idea of “the unity of knowledge and action.” True knowledge, he said, must be put into practice. If it cannot be practiced, then it is not real knowledge. However, when we read too many books without practice, the mind begins to deceive itself. It tells us, “I’m impressive. I’ve read this book and that book. I know this. I understand that.” Gradually, arrogance arises. This arrogance is one of the greatest harms that reading can bring. The correct way to read is to learn from the words and actions of the ancients and reflect inwardly: Can I do this? If I cannot, how can I? What kind of practice would allow me to embody these teachings? This is the true meaning of reading. It is not about saying, “The sages could do this and that because they were sages. I am an ordinary person, so it’s normal that I cannot.” When knowledge becomes nothing more than conversation material among friends, it only feeds pride and brings no real benefit. The Tao Te Ching is a profound and powerful book. Yet for most people, it is not suitable to approach casually. It is a book meant for cultivation. It must be read with energy—what traditional philosophy calls “qi”—not merely with the intellect. If we try to understand or even memorize it using only the analytical mind, it may do more harm than good. For example, when it speaks of Heaven and Earth, we are meant to feel their qualities and energies directly. What is the nature of Heaven? What are the characteristics of Earth? When it mentions a valley, we should sense its openness, humility, and receptivity through our own inner experience

We must enter into each sentence and extract its method of practice. If studied correctly, even this single book can reveal the principles of Heaven, Earth, and all things. So why do many people memorize it yet still lack wisdom? Because they have not practiced it correctly. For most people, I recommend the writings of Cai Gentan. His work is composed of short sections, each explaining a small principle. Every teaching invites self-reflection: Can I live this way? If not, how can I train myself to do so? Compared to the Tao Te Ching, his writing is more accessible for modern readers. You do not need to extract the method of cultivation yourself—it is clearly explained in simple language. Your task is simply to practice it. In summary, the right way to read is to use the wisdom of the ancients as a mirror. Reflect inwardly. Recognize where you fall short. Then practice deliberately until understanding becomes embodied action. That is the proper way to read. Thank you for reading. I hope this reflection is helpful. If you have any questions, feel free to leave a message.

The Practice of Gratitude

Today I would like to share a practice of cultivating gratitude. Usually, we think we should feel grateful when someone treats us well or when good things happen. But true gratitude goes deeper than that. We must also learn to be grateful for unpleasant events and for people who are not kind to us. Why? Because their presence and those experiences come to teach us something we need to learn. This is the first level of gratitude. The second level of gratitude is appreciating everything you own. Every book, every table, every piece of clothing, your room, your bed, your pen—everything that accompanies your daily life. Be grateful for their existence and for the quiet support they provide. The third level of gratitude is being thankful for the functions of this body. Be grateful for your hands, your feet, your eyes, your nose, your mouth, and your ears. It is easy to assume these are things we are entitled to. But they are not guaranteed. Some people are born without certain abilities. The health and wholeness of our body is not something that must exist—it is something we have been given. Therefore, we should be grateful for it. The fourth level of gratitude is gratitude for awareness itself. Be grateful that this body can perceive. Be grateful that you can sense moral understanding, discomfort, tightness, even pain. Perhaps some parts of the body feel blocked or sore. Even these sensations deserve gratitude. They are signs of life and signals of awareness. The final level of gratitude is the most important. Be grateful for the existence of all phenomena in each present moment. With one clear thought, observe everything that is happening right now. Whatever arises—sounds, sights, sensations—offer gratitude to it. Wherever your awareness goes, let your gratitude follow

Perhaps your awareness is now inside your body. The next moment, it may shift to a sound outside. Then it may rest on the image you are watching, or on the feeling of the phone in your hand. Everything that exists in your field of awareness deserves gratitude. Most importantly, be grateful for your own existence. Where is that “self”? Where is the observer? As long as that attitude of awareness is present, you can observe the entire world—your body, sounds, sensations—and at the same time observe the one who is observing. Be grateful for that observer. Because if that awareness did not exist, none of these experiences would exist. Without the observer, even emptiness would not be known. The fact that consciousness is present—that there is an awareness capable of experiencing—is a profound gift. All experiences arise from it. Be grateful for its existence. This is the practice of gratitude. If you have any questions, feel free to leave a message. Thank you.

Why Daily Meditation Might Not Lead to Progress

Some friends told me that they meditate every day but don't notice any significant progress. In this article, I will share the main reasons why daily meditation may not result in noticeable improvement.

- 1 You Haven't Evaluated the Quality of Your Meditation Many people focus only on time spent, but meditation quality is more important than duration. Meditating for five or ten hours is not necessarily effective if your mind is still distracted. Quality evaluation example: Suppose you practice 15 minutes of insight meditation (Vipassana). Count how many thoughts pulled you away from focus. If it was 10 thoughts, aim to reduce it to 7 next time, then 3 over a period. Set measurable goals for each session. Only then can meditation efficiency improve.
- 2 You Rely on a Single Meditation Method Many practitioners stick to one method, like insight meditation. Insight meditation is fundamental and useful for calming intense emotions. But it mainly dissolves negative energy and doesn't actively increase positive energy like love, compassion, or gratitude. Long-term exclusive reliance on insight meditation may slow progress or even produce subtle side effects.
- 3 You Haven't Practiced Honestly or Under Guidance Every meditation practice has subtle effects, and without guidance, you may be unaware of them. Advanced practices can show side effects quickly, not after years. Example: Practicing with a tree for energy alignment might gradually transfer both beneficial and unnecessary qualities from the tree to you. Experienced teachers help you monitor progress, detect subtle attachments, and balance practices. Without a teacher, reaching advanced states is extremely unlikely—

almost like winning a lottery. 4 Attachment to Positive Energy We often assume that more love, compassion, or gratitude is always better

Positive energy can have side effects if clung to. Practice requires releasing attachment, whether the experience is pleasant or unpleasant. Techniques such as breathing through the dantian and pores help release energy and return the body to a balanced state. 5 Advanced Practices Not Yet Learned Some powerful methods accelerate progress: Water and earth energy practices Four-element practices from Buddhist traditions However, these techniques require precise guidance due to their intensity.

Every Meditation Method Has Side Effects

If I tell you that every meditation and spiritual practice has side effects, would you believe it? Even practitioners with many years of experience might not believe this—but it is a fact. Every method is like a medicine: all medicines have side effects. The difference is some are minor, some are stronger. Minor side effects: These are “non-prescription medicines.” You can learn and practice them on your own safely. However, if you overdo it, side effects may gradually appear. Even basic practices like insight meditation or cultivating love and compassion have minor side effects if practiced excessively. Major side effects: These are “prescription medicines.” They require expert guidance from teachers or masters. They work quickly but demand high precision, frequent supervision, and years of practice to avoid pitfalls. Personally, I am fortunate to have a teacher guiding me daily. But if you don’t have a teacher, how can you know if a method has side effects? One way is to check whether you feel balanced. If something is strongly liked or disliked, you are out of balance. Examples of side effects: Vipassana (Insight Meditation): Long-term practice may make the world feel meaningless. You may dislike social interactions, office work, or city life, preferring solitude in temples or mountains. This is a clear side effect of the practice

Compassion Practice: People assume compassion is always good. But true compassion is not just a concept; it’s a feeling. Many of us practice a conceptual compassion, which can include subtle arrogance or control. For example, when visualizing someone in pain, you might try to “inject” love and compassion to control or

eliminate the pain. That is not true compassion. True compassion accepts suffering. Side effect: Feeling “I must help” can create arrogance, thinking, I am compassionate, I am helping you. Even basic practices can have side effects. Like medicine, knowing about the side effect doesn’t mean we shouldn’t practice—we just need awareness to adjust when necessary. For instance, I once spent a long period ignoring the material world: unkempt hair, worn clothes, avoiding social life. This was a side effect of my practice of detachment.

Emptiness, Light, and the Path of Harmonious Practice

Emptiness () and Light () together represent what we often call “one generates two, two generates one”. But what is One ()? One is the circle that forms when Emptiness and Light are in dynamic balance. This circle is also called Dao (). Today, let’s break down this mysterious concept and make it a little less abstract. The Layers of Existence Jing () – The Material World / Body

The material world we see, hear, and perceive is Jing. This is the densest form of energy because all matter is condensed energy. Different levels of condensation form different materials, and combinations of these elements form the world as we know it. Qi () – Energy / Life Force When Jing is refined or loosened through observation ()—which is simply deep awareness and relaxation—the blocked areas in the body gradually release, forming flowing Qi. This is the vital energy that moves within us. Emotion / Perception When Qi becomes thinner, it transforms into sensations, emotions, and feelings, such as anger, love, or compassion. Shen () – Mind / Consciousness When refined further, it reaches Shen, the level of mind or consciousness. Shen is conceptual—it has no images or sounds, just pure ideas or awareness. Emptiness () Beyond Shen lies Emptiness, which can be thought of as subtle vibrations or sounds. Many practitioners in Zen follow a path of refining Jing to Qi, Qi to Shen, and Shen to Emptiness. But this is only half the path. The Creative Aspect – Light () Light represents Yang, the creative force. Emptiness and Light arise together, generating each other. Light creates Shen, which in turn creates Qi, and then Jing. This is a creative flow, forming the world from energy into matter, as

opposed to only refining or consuming energy. Dynamic Balance Emptiness is one point, Light is another point, and together they form a dynamic equilibrium. This balance is the true “One”—a circle of harmony. This is also called Dao. In practice: If a practitioner’s body becomes weak, it usually means they have only followed the refining path (consuming Jing and Qi) without cultivating Light. If someone feels light, airy, or disconnected, they have focused too much on Light without grounding themselves in the body. Thus, true practice involves both:

Refining – transforming Jing → Qi → Shen → Emptiness
Creating – manifesting Light → Shen → Qi → Jing Only by integrating both can one achieve a harmonious, dynamic balance in cultivation. Summary Emptiness + Light → Two → One (Dynamic Balance) → Dao. This is a subtle concept, and words cannot fully capture it. Understanding even a little is considered progress.

PART III

**Energy, Body, and
Healing Practice**

The Energy Within All Things

Every object in this world carries its own corresponding energy. Its shape, color, texture, and other qualities are all determined by this energy. This means that no two objects are ever completely identical. Even objects that appear to be of the same type cannot possess exactly the same energy. Humans are no exception. Even identical twins, who look exactly alike, have subtle differences — their DNA fingerprints are unique. There cannot be two people with identical energy. How is this energy formed in us? Take a stone as an example. Its color develops over thousands or even millions of years, absorbing the energy of its specific environment. If the environment has more fire-element energy, the stone is more likely to appear red. Humans are similar. The “self” we are today is the result of a cumulative collection of all past experiences. Wherever our body goes, it is influenced by the energy of that environment. For instance, noisy, chaotic places can make us feel uncomfortable, while nature brings physical and mental comfort. If we spend long periods in nature, absorbing its energy day by day, our overall energy changes — and so does our character. Conversely, if we are constantly in polluted, stressful environments, we gradually adapt to that energy. This adaptation is not inherently good; it means we become similar in energy to the environment around us.

Everything we experience — the places we go, the sights we see, the sounds we hear, and even what we read or watch — contributes to our energy. Our body, personality, and thoughts today are all expressions of accumulated energy. How can we cultivate more positive energy? Humans have the unique ability to distinguish positive and negative energy. In higher dimensions,

energy is energy, without labels. But as humans seeking happiness and freedom, we identify energy that nourishes us as positive. We naturally want to accumulate more of this nourishing energy. There are many ways to do this: Environment: Spend time in quiet, pleasant, and comfortable spaces — especially in nature. Feelings: Ensure that your emotions are positive. When negative feelings arise, acknowledge and replace them with positive ones. Thoughts: Maintain awareness of your thoughts. When you notice unhelpful or negative thoughts, greet them with a smile and transform them into positive ones. While the concept is simple, putting it into practice is more challenging and requires a systematic approach. With consistent effort, your results will be amplified. This is today's sharing. If you have questions or thoughts, feel free to leave a comment. Thank you.

How to Protect and Restore Your Energy

Many people feel like their energy is being secretly drained, but we often don't know how this happens or who is "stealing" it. What most people don't realize is that we are also unconsciously taking energy from others. Think about a friend who always leaves you feeling exhausted after meeting them. You need a long rest just to recover. That is a sign that this person is drawing your energy. On the other hand, is there someone who makes you feel so comfortable that you want to spend all your time with them? You feel drawn to be around them, even a little "addicted." In that case, you are also subtly taking their energy. The important thing is: this exchange happens unconsciously on both sides. Neither party necessarily knows it. So there is no need to hold grudges toward people who drain our energy. The solution is understanding and compassion—because we are all doing the same thing.

How to Recognize Energy Exchange Notice your own state: Before meeting someone, feel how you are. After meeting them, feel how you are again. If you notice that you feel drained or less energetic afterward, this person may be consuming your energy. You can then choose to reduce interactions with them. Notice your effect on others: If you always feel happy and relaxed around someone, that's a sign you may be taking their energy. However, simply interacting with others—even high-energy people—does not automatically increase your energy. If your time together is purposeless—chatting, drinking tea, without focus—any energy taken is simply consumed, not transformed into your own growth.

The Best Way to Recharge Your Energy The most effective way to restore energy is not from people, things, or

activities. Instead, it comes from: Spending time in nature: with trees, flowers, and grass. Listening to healing music. Exercising, cycling, hiking, or simply being alone with yourself. Observing your own thoughts and feelings inwardly—developing self-awareness. True energy comes from a space like a “black hole”—a place beyond time and space, where we can deeply connect with ourselves. You don’t need to act or do anything; just be present, quietly feel, and absorb energy

When you learn to generate and maintain this energy, you can continually grow, become happier, and feel deeply satisfied. This kind of happiness and satisfaction is unconditional, not dependent on external events. Summary Energy exchange happens unconsciously—both giving and taking. Use compassion and understanding toward yourself and others. Observe your feelings before and after interactions to identify energy drains. Purposeful self-time in nature, exercise, and reflection is the most effective energy source. True happiness comes from cultivating your inner energy. Thank you for watching! If you found this helpful, share it with friends and send them blessings.

How to Produce a Beautiful Sound on the Shakuhachi

() Today, I'd like to share a few key points for practicing the shakuhachi and producing a gentle, warm sound. 1. Use Your Teeth and Gums (Upper and Lower) When air enters and exits the instrument, be fully aware of the space between your upper and lower teeth and gums. Imagine it as a small balloon. If you are sensitive, you might even feel a slight tingling sensation. Practicing this awareness will help your sound become particularly soft and warm. 2. Energy Inward, Not Just Outward When playing, we often feel as if the energy is being released outward. Try imagining a delicious cake in front of you. As you blow, draw that cake into your mouth and feel it with your teeth and gums. This visualization helps you collect energy while playing rather than depleting it, preventing fatigue during long practice sessions. 3. Expand Your Oral Space Try enlarging the “balloon” between your teeth and gums—not just in your mouth, but extending it into the surrounding space. This makes your sound even softer and gives it a quality that feels almost beyond the material world. At the same time, you can imagine using this expanded oral space to “eat” the delicious cake on a plate, fully sensing both the plate and the cake. This grounding helps stabilize your base and your posture, enhancing your overall sound quality

The Theory of Energy Transfer and Conscious Intention

In the late Qing Dynasty, there was said to be a barber with a remarkable ability. Many people addicted to opium would visit him for a haircut, and after the haircut, their cravings would disappear. Today, let us explore the theory behind this fascinating phenomenon. First, we need to understand a core idea: every object carries a certain form of energy. The type of energy it holds is related to its inherent qualities. However, this is not fixed

When an object remains in a particular environment for a long time, it absorbs the energy of that environment and gradually changes. This is one explanation for why stones appear in different colors. Over time, a stone may absorb certain environmental qualities—what we might metaphorically call “water-like” energy, resulting in bluish tones, or “fire-like” energy, resulting in reddish tones. Similarly, human beings also carry energy, and our energetic state is constantly changing. A person addicted to opium may be influenced by a specific internal energetic pattern that drives compulsive behavior. If that unwanted and harmful energy leaves the body, the craving may naturally diminish. If objects can carry energy, and energy can shift or transform, then human consciousness may also guide energy, directing it to a specific place. According to the story, the barber would use deep concentration and relaxation to guide the addictive “energy” into the client’s hair. Once the hair was cut off, the energy symbolically left with it, and the addiction disappeared. Such a practice requires strong focus and deep relaxation. The more focused and relaxed one is, the more effective the process becomes. In daily life, similar

practices can be applied symbolically. Before eating, one might place gentle awareness on the food, inviting qualities such as health, vitality, and gratitude. During elimination, one might visualize unwanted emotions or negative patterns leaving the body along with physical waste. For example, if you feel afraid of being judged, you may imagine guiding that fear out of your body during elimination, allowing it to depart with what is no longer needed. This can be seen as a shortcut for “energy evolution.” With consistent practice, what enters the body is associated with health, vitality, and gratitude, while what leaves is anything unhelpful or burdensome. Over time, one’s overall energetic state becomes more positive and refined. If this sharing has been helpful to you, feel free to like, share, and recommend it. Throughout the practice, carry blessings for all beings. Thank you

Perhaps We Never Truly Learned How to Walk

In fact, most of us do not truly know how to walk

You may think you learned to walk at one or two years old. But it is possible that for decades, the way you have been walking has been inefficient—quietly placing stress on your body. Why? Every time your foot touches the ground, there is vibration. If that vibration is heavy and abrupt, it creates impact. Over time, repeated impact becomes wear and tear. Many people walk with heavy steps. The contact with the ground produces clear sound and shock. The body is not fully integrated, so the force is not evenly distributed. The healthier way to walk is to move from the core. When the core is engaged, the whole body participates. The steps may appear light, but they are more powerful and stable. Instead of collapsing into the ground, the body connects with it in a controlled, continuous way. When movement is integrated, the impact becomes softer and smoother. The interaction with the ground feels less like collision and more like cooperation. Think about skilled dancers. Their movements are fluid. Even when they move quickly, nothing feels sudden or broken. Transitions happen gradually and continuously. That smoothness comes from full-body coordination and a refined relationship with the ground. Walking works the same way. Proper walking is not automatic. It must be learned and practiced consciously. When you learn to walk correctly, you are training your core and exercising your entire body at the same time. Most importantly, you reduce unnecessary energy consumption and self-inflicted impact. As physical impact decreases, the body gradually becomes healthier. And when the body is healthier, the heart,

emotions, and mind naturally follow. If this sharing has been helpful, feel free to like, share, and recommend it. Thank you.

The Essence of Romantic Love and Self-Practice

Romantic love is something almost everyone experiences, worries about, and struggles with. Some people spend their entire life chasing it, wasting a lot of time and energy. Today, I want to share the

essence of romantic love and how we can practice to free ourselves from its control and gain more freedom. Why do we need romantic love? The need for self-identity At the brain level, you admire a person, like their values and hobbies, and you also like and agree with yourself. This shows that our sense of self is incomplete. We want to be understood and recognized. The need for external recognition Sometimes, romantic love serves as a way to gain social approval. For example, having a beautiful partner may make you feel proud, or being with someone wealthy or prestigious can make you feel envied. This desire is rooted in wanting recognition from the outside world. Blocked sexual energy in the body When energy is blocked in the sexual organs, we lose control over ourselves. How to practice to overcome romantic love Meridian level Develop body awareness, especially core awareness. When you feel the lower chest area, blocked energy, particularly in the sexual organs, will be attracted there. By guiding the energy into the chest and spreading it throughout the body, blocked sexual energy will flow freely, healing the body. Energy level Practice gratitude, compassion, and self-care. Love and like yourself unconditionally. Positive energy will satisfy us, so we no longer need recognition from others. Mind/Brain level Reduce thoughts, quiet the mind, and settle into stillness. When the mind is calm, you will not feel excitement

merely because someone shares your values—this excitement is the seed of romantic love. Through practice on the levels of meridians, energy, and mind, we can free ourselves from the control of romantic love. Benefits of this practice

Healthier body and better skin Abundant energy and focused mind Clearer thinking and enhanced intelligence Greater freedom in life I hope everyone can gain more freedom through these practices.

Dream Yoga: Transforming Energy Through Dreams

Dream Yoga – Transforming Energy Through Dreams Let’s explore a practice called dream yoga—what it is, the theory behind it, and how to practice it. In a dream, our five senses are largely inactive, so we are not affected by the material world. As a result, our subconscious mind manifests itself. Events from the past, experiences stored in our subconscious, or sensations in our body unconsciously appear in our dreams, forming the dream itself. If the first thing we do upon waking is write down our dreams, and later recall these dreams during meditation, we can begin to understand the energy behind them. We can ask ourselves: “In my past, especially in my childhood, was there anything that created a similar energy?” Often, these reflections lead us back to past traumas. By consciously remembering them, we create an opportunity to slowly dispel their negative effects. During this process, if we inject positive energy—a smile, gratitude, or kindness—into these past traumas, we can transform the negative energy into positive energy. Energy itself is neither good nor bad; it is simply useful or useless to us. Dream yoga allows us to turn useless energy into useful energy. Dream yoga can also be practiced during the day. Even when awake, most people spend time in a state of daydreaming, their minds wandering to the past or future. By consciously writing down and analyzing these thoughts, we can uncover the energy behind them: a desire for recognition, fear of judgment, or excitement from praise. Observing these energies allows them to gradually diminish. If we add positive energy—gratitude, compassion, or an inner smile—these energies can be

transformed into positive energy that supports our spiritual and mental growth. This is the essence of dream yoga: observing, understanding, and transforming energy through our dreams and conscious reflections. If you have any questions, please leave a comment. Thank you.

Standing Between Heaven and Earth

– A Practice to Restore Energy Hello everyone! Today I'm sharing again from my courtyard. Since the weather has become cooler, many of my practices are done outdoors. Many people think that a practitioner naturally has higher energy than most others, and therefore attracts friends seeking to absorb that energy. I experience this as well. However, even practitioners need to restore their own energy. For me, going outdoors—especially spending time with a large tree—is a quick way to recharge. In fact, having a single tree nearby is far more beneficial than being surrounded by a hundred practitioners. We must learn to absorb energy from nature, not from people. Absorbing energy from other humans carries side effects. Even the wisest person carries their own karma, habits, and tendencies. Absorbing their energy means also absorbing these patterns. A tree, by contrast, has minimal side effects. Instead of being surrounded by wise humans, it is better to befriend a tree. The Practice: Standing Between Heaven and Earth

This practice may sound lofty, but it is simple and grounded. First, go outdoors—ideally on the ground floor, because higher floors are disconnected from the earth and its energy. Preparation: Stand naturally, rooting your legs deep into the ground while your head reaches upward. Feel the downward pull from the earth and the upward extension of your spine. Your shoulders naturally relax down, your core engages, and your body is fully stretched. Initial Exercise: Slightly bend your knees, keeping them behind your toes. Let your arms hang naturally, relaxing your body. Expand your awareness into the earth. Inhale, gathering energy from below. Press your feet into the ground while inhaling, drawing energy up from

your legs, torso, to your head. Exhale, letting the energy flow down your body like water, returning to the earth. Repeat this inhale-gather, exhale-release cycle to connect fully with the earth. Beginners can simply follow this pattern to start feeling the connection. Advanced Practice: Inhale, drawing energy from the ground to your body, up to your head. Exhale, releasing energy from the crown outward, like a fountain flowing back to the earth. The hands may move gently to facilitate awareness, but this is optional. This practice resembles standing meditation (zhan zhuang) in Tai Chi. Standing meditation is not simply standing still—it is a form of meditation while standing. Even if your knees lock, energy can still flow if the body is slightly relaxed, allowing a state of “firm but loose” that promotes energy circulation. By practicing this, we can restore energy, feel grounded, and experience a flowing connection between heaven, earth, and ourselves.

Energy Exchange with a Tree

– A Meditation Practice This is another corner of my courtyard. I often sit here because there is a tree. I spend time meditating with this tree, usually around ten minutes a day, exchanging energy with it. Whenever my shen (spiritual awareness) touches the tree—when I imagine myself entering the tree, feeling its sap and temperature—I can sense its pure energy. My shen feels comfortable and nourished, and naturally this energy begins to influence my body

Remember this principle: our body is constrained by time and space, so it ages and cannot instantly move from one place to another. But our energy is only limited by space, not by time. You may have heard that ancient battlefields or places where many people have died feel eerie. Even hundreds or thousands of years later, the energy there persists. Time passes very slowly for energy. Our shen, however, is extremely free. It is not limited by time or space. It can enter a tree, ascend to the moon, or travel to the past or future. When we practice, we not only train our body and energy, but also our shen—guiding it, respecting it, and making it respond to our intention. With a tree, we interact using shen and qi. During breathing, I extend my awareness into the tree. If we practice abdominal breathing, it is not just guiding breath from the nose to the belly, but placing our awareness directly in the abdomen and directing breath there. Similarly, we can extend this interaction to objects and space. When you see a tree, place your shen there and let your awareness guide your breath. Your breathing naturally becomes long and calm, directly connecting with the tree in an energy exchange. The more relaxed you are, the more effective this practice becomes. There are several ways to relax: Self-awareness:

Observe who is speaking, moving, or acting. Recognizing this “who” brings deep relaxation. Connection with all beings: Hold the intention that you are acting for the benefit of all beings, or simply focus on the concept of “beings.” This also induces relaxation. Once the body is fully relaxed, place your shen on the tree, observe your breath, and let your energy follow. Technically, the breath doesn’t actually move—it is energy breathing. Your shen first influences your qi, which carries energy to the tree for interaction. Switching attention back to yourself—observing who is breathing or moving—is a complementary practice. Each time you place your shen on the tree, it is a yang (active) practice. Each time you return attention to yourself, it is a yin (passive) practice. The interplay of yin and yang enhances the effect. This principle of active and passive, creating and receiving is key. Just as when running fast, the preparatory backward motion is essential, the same applies here. Practicing in this way deepens your energy awareness and connection. This is a meditation practice with a tree, expanding on previous shares. If you have any questions, feel free to leave a comment.

Expanding Awareness and Emotion Through Shakuhachi Sound

Previously, I mentioned that we can let the sound resonate from our chest, spreading through the entire body and even filling the whole room. Today, I want to share a slightly different approach: placing our spirit directly into the room. It's not about letting the sound gradually travel outward—it's about immersing the entire room with our presence

If you find this difficult to imagine, you can start by visualizing placing your lips at two or four corners of the room. This method also helps expand both your awareness and your body's perception. Right now, I am placing my spirit throughout the room. One interesting thing is that whenever I introduce a new element into my intention, the sound I produce subtly changes. Even my shakuhachi teacher, listening remotely, can tell which elements I've included in my practice. If you cannot sense this yet, we can practice together to improve our sensitivity to sound. Next, I press my legs firmly into the earth while spreading my awareness across the room. The resulting sound becomes more mellow—soft, diffuse, and gentle rather than sharp or piercing. If I only focus on grounding downward, the sound becomes more concentrated and forceful. Different types of sound suit different pieces or environments, expressing distinct feelings. Beyond technique, I often allow my emotions to guide the sound. For example, if I want to play a sound imbued with love, the tone reflects that emotion uniquely. If I try to express compassion, the sound is similar to love but gentler, lighter, and less intense. You can also experiment with sounds carrying respect or gratitude—it depends entirely on the feeling you wish to

convey. When I practice the guqin, even if the piece is about love or longing, I might bring compassion, gratitude, or a sense of emptiness into my playing. The emotional energy of the sound depends more on the performer's inner state than the melody itself. That's today's sharing. There's already a lot to take in! If you have any questions, feel free to leave a comment. Thank you.

How to Use Dantian in Life and Practice

Today, I am going to share how to use Dantian. Whether in art practice or everyday life, if you can use Dantian effectively, it will reduce internal consumption and make learning and living much easier. So, what is Dantian and where is it? Many of you may know that Dantian is located in the abdomen, about two horizontal fingers below the navel. This is called the Lower Dantian (Xia Dantian). It seems that energy blockages rarely form here. Xia Dantian is closely connected to our material world, the physical realm. In the future, I will also share about the Middle Dantian and Upper Dantian, but for simplicity, we will refer to Xia Dantian as Dantian. How do we use it in everyday life and study? For example, I have a pig's horn that I use during meditation. Each breath, I move it slightly, which helps me improve focus. When I move it, I'm not just using my fingers—the movement comes from Dantian. The force starts from Dantian and extends to my hands, allowing my hands to remain relaxed. When I practice Chadao, I often handle many tea tools. I try to engage my Dantian by first touching the bowl with my hands, then gradually letting the force connect to Dantian. This way, Dantian “feels” the bowl, and when I pick it up or set it down, it is Dantian that guides the action

The same principle applies when picking up a book. My body naturally follows my hands, but if I rely only on hand muscles, it's difficult to use Dantian properly. For example, when holding a Chi Ba, many people grip it with rigid hands—but in fact, it's Dantian that holds it, even when pressing specific points. Using Dantian allows the body to relax and qi to flow. Right now, as I speak, my voice comes from my chest. Next, I will try using Dantian, so that

my voice emerges from the whole body, centered on Dantian. Don't fall into the misconception that Dantian is only a single point—it is infinitely small and infinitely large. While we think of it as located in the abdomen, it can encompass the entire waist, the whole body, the room, or even the universe. As I expand my awareness and Dantian, my voice changes accordingly. Wherever my consciousness is placed, that is where I am, and I can speak using the space my awareness touches. This is my sharing about Dantian. If you have any questions, feel free to leave a comment. Thank you!

Clothing, Energy, and the Five Elements

A few days ago, I attended a sharing event on behavioral feng shui, which discussed how clothing can influence our energy. Some of the ideas resonated with me, while others I disagreed with. The theory is based on the five elements. According to the time of our birth, we can determine the distribution of the five elements in our energy. For example: If you lack fire, wear more red clothing or red jewelry. If you lack earth, wear yellow. If you lack metal, wear white. If you lack water, wear blue. If you lack wood, wear green. Wearing natural jewelry can also support your energy. However, I don't fully agree that we can judge our five-element distribution solely by the time of birth. Environmental factors after birth—our experiences, growth, and work—also influence our energy. For example, a little girl sitting next to me clearly had strong water energy, but the teacher's evaluation suggested she lacked water. I felt this was inaccurate. Her experiences and environment shaped her energy beyond birth factors. Therefore, we need to consider current personality and sensitivity to truly understand energy. If you are sensitive, you can feel someone's energy intuitively. Without talking to her, I could sense that she had a lot of water energy and very little fire energy.

Regarding clothing, I want to share my personal experience. Before my practice, I dressed formally for work every day. After starting practice, I became very carefree. I could wear the same T-shirt for a long time—even if it developed a hole, I could still wear it to the supermarket! My master laughed at me, asking why I was so carefree. Through practice, I realized that the outer appearance and inner energy are equally important. Our clothing and image

help attract the energy we want. The way we present ourselves to the material world can influence the energy we receive. Over time, I began to invest in learning about different fabrics, materials, and craftsmanship, and how they affect us. Whenever possible, wear clothes made of natural materials such as silk, linen, or wool. Natural fabrics are “alive” and interact with your energy. When your energy is positive, they respond positively; when it’s negative, they reflect that back. They also act as a protective barrier against negative energy. Sometimes, I wear a headscarf made of silk or velvet—similar to how Muslim women cover themselves. This helps store positive energy, which is particularly useful for inward-focused practitioners. Outward energy is visible, but inward cultivation requires all possible support, including clothing. This is today’s sharing. If you have questions, please leave a comment. Thank you

Using Chi Ba and Qigong for Energy Flow

Hello everyone, today I want to share again about Chi Ba and Qigong. Honestly, I didn't really want to share, but my master encouraged me, so here I am. Although I'm not very skilled with Chi Ba, I think, and my master agrees, that what I share might be something most people haven't heard of. For practitioners, these points may be interesting and even helpful. If you have a Chi Ba, you can practice along with me; if not, you can still listen and follow the instructions mentally. I am standing now. When I play, I first place the sound in my chest, then guide it to flow through my legs and arms into the Earth. When you hear the sound, you can do the same. First, gather the sound in your chest, letting it accumulate like a balloon. As you continue, let this energy flow through your legs and arms into the Earth. Why does this work? Many people have blockages in the chest, and using the energy of sound can melt these blockages, letting them flow into the Earth. This is essentially Qigong practice. Next, I fill my entire body with the sound, transforming it into an energy sphere. I accumulate the energy until my body cannot contain it anymore, and then I let it expand in all directions, eventually filling the entire room with sound energy

Now, I visualize my entire body inside the Chi Ba, feeling the vibration and presence of the bamboo as if I have shrunk into it. I also want to share a simple method my Chi Ba teacher taught me in the first class for opening the throat and relaxing the body. When I look at the screen, I don't just use my eyes; I use my entire facial muscles. Initially, I could only use the muscles under my eyes. Now, I can relax my whole body while observing. This method makes

what you see less sharp and more relaxed. You can try it—it's about relaxation and opening the throat. My throat used to be tight, and it took a lot of practice to open it. A simple method is to close your mouth and make a “hachen” sound, which opens the throat in all directions. Once open, your voice changes immediately. There are many ways to practice Qigong with Chi Ba, or Xinfu, but today I only shared a small part. If you are interested, you can contact me privately. Also, a small note—cats come to visit me every day. Goodbye, bye-bye!

Why Spiritual Practitioners Must Strengthen the Body

For those on a spiritual path, physical training is essential. Why? First, we must understand the relationship between essence, energy, and spirit—often described as body, energy (qi), and consciousness. These three influence and interact with one another, eventually forming a dynamic balance. A healthy body supports stable energy. Stable energy nourishes the spirit. Likewise, when the mind is focused, calm, and positive, it generates positive feelings that influence the body, promoting health. This is easy to understand: body affects mind, and mind affects body. But what happens if a practitioner focuses only on mental cultivation—meditating daily, sitting in deep concentration—while neglecting physical exercise? The mind may become highly focused and quiet. However, the body may begin to experience discomfort. At that point, some practitioners unconsciously try to disconnect from the body. They may think: “The body is not important. The pain is not me. I will keep distance from it.” The spirit begins to observe the body as if it were a stranger, like a separate life form. Over time, this disconnection weakens the flow of energy from body to spirit. In traditional understanding, essence transforms into energy, and energy transforms into spirit. If the spirit cannot receive the support of bodily energy, spiritual progress becomes very slow. Many people practice inner observation during meditation. Part of this practice is observing bodily sensations. When we become aware of blockages in the body, those blockages may gradually soften. However, if a large amount of energy is released while the muscles remain tight and rigid, the energy still encounters resistance. Energy

naturally wants to flow. If the muscles and tissues resist change, the energy “pushes” against them. This can result in pain and discomfort. Even sincere meditation practice can produce such side effects if the body is not prepared. I experienced this personally. After attending a seven-day retreat with many hours of daily meditation, my mind was extremely focused. But two days after returning home, I began to feel pain throughout my body—even in my fingers. It was clear that my muscles and bones were not yet ready to carry the level of energy my mind had reached. My mind had progressed quickly, but my body had fallen behind. For the body to catch up, it had to adapt and “upgrade.” That process was uncomfortable. The energy pushed through the system, and growth happened through pain. This was only a minor side effect. It is said that more severe imbalances can lead to serious illness—or force someone to step back and begin again

Spiritual cultivation cannot be rushed. We cannot immediately pursue the highest teachings or deepest methods if our system cannot support them. If your energy cannot sustain it, and your body cannot bear it, the result may be counterproductive—leading to declining health, lack of motivation, and depleted energy. In traditional language, essence refines into energy, and energy refines into spirit. But if there is insufficient energy, there is nothing to support spiritual growth. Therefore, for practitioners, physical training is just as important as meditation. Strengthening the body is not separate from spiritual practice—it is a foundation for it. I hope everyone takes this seriously. If you have any questions, feel free to leave a message. Thank you.

How to Open the Central Meridian

() Today, I want to share a method I discovered for opening the Central Meridian, or Zhong Mai. This is not necessarily an ancient technique I found in classical texts; it came from personal practice and observation.

1 Feeling the Central Meridian The first step is awareness of the observer. When you watch or perceive, try using your whole body rather than just your eyes. For example, if you only use your eyes, they may become tense. If you involve your face and entire body in perception, the body naturally relaxes. The observer—the one who is aware—is located in the Central Meridian. Feeling this observer allows you to sense the Zhong Mai.

2 Applying Compassion () Once you can sense the Central Meridian: Direct compassionate energy to this area. Compassion is not a mental concept like “I am compassionate”; it is a physical experience. You can feel the flow of energy in your body, warmth in your chest, and even slight perspiration with practice

Compassion is outward-flowing energy. Sense it with your whole body and observe who is applying the compassion—this is the observer in your Central Meridian.

3 Combining Compassion with Gratitude () Compassion alone carries a subtle ego—the desire to help and influence others. Gratitude is the complementary energy: Focus on your body and all its sensations. Appreciate everything, including your existence, your body, and all experiences. Gratitude is inward-flowing, a yin energy. By practicing compassion and gratitude together, you create balance in the Central Meridian, harmonizing the yin and yang energies within your body.

4 Understanding the Central Meridian as Energy The Central Meridian is not a fixed line: From head to perineum, it

contains a swirling flow of energy. With deeper body awareness, your entire body becomes the Central Meridian. Think of your body as a balloon filled with energy. When fully sensed, the Zhong Mai is everywhere. This is a felt experience, not a conceptual one. Both compassion and gratitude must be paired to avoid side effects: Practicing compassion alone may develop subtle arrogance. Practicing gratitude alone may induce self-deprecation. Together, they neutralize each other, creating a balanced state. 5 Practical Notes Opening the Central Meridian is not instantaneous. It requires deep and sensitive body awareness. Your breathing should flow through your entire body, allowing you to feel the observer within. The Central Meridian is experienced as energy throughout the body, not just a line from head to perineum. The goal of practice is harmony, balance, and centeredness, not simply opening the Zhong Mai as a target. When compassion flows outward and gratitude flows inward, the Central Meridian is naturally activated.

Moon Practices and Energy Awareness

Today, I'd like to share a practice related to the moon. We all know that during a full moon, tides are affected. The moon's movement influences the movement of water on Earth. Similarly, our bodies—like plants and animals—contain a lot of water. During the full moon, small tidal effects occur inside our bodies. We may not perceive them, but their influence is real

The moon's energy can amplify our own energy, because energy fluctuates like waves, just as water does. If your usual energy is negative, it will be amplified many times during the full moon. If your usual energy is positive, it will also be magnified significantly during the full moon. Because of this, I carefully check and assess my energy state in the 2–3 days leading up to the full moon, aiming to maintain a positive energy state. I also have specific exercises during these days, using the moon's energy to enhance and uplift my own energy. It's important to understand that all humans and animals are affected by the moon. During this period, people may be more irritable, emotions are intensified, conflicts increase, and some decisions may be less rational. In extreme cases, even wars can occur. We should approach these phenomena with understanding and patience, knowing that these effects will pass, and people are largely unconsciously influenced by the moon.

New Moon Practices The new moon—the first day of the lunar month—represents the transition from nothing to something, from darkness to light. This is an excellent time to set a new intention or goal. Making a wish during the new moon allows your intention to grow gradually with the moon, until it reaches fullness at the full moon. I usually prepare a few minutes before the new moon—sitting,

meditating, and mentally setting my intention for the month. This could be a goal to achieve or a new habit to cultivate. Beyond meditation, I may also change my home environment slightly—buy flowers, rearrange things, or take other small actions—to support the growth of positive habits or intentions, allowing them to develop along with the moon’s phases. These are some moon-related practices I follow, which you may use as a reference. If you have any questions, feel free to leave a comment.

PART IV

**Tea Ceremony,
Etiquette, and the Way**

The Origins of Chado and Tea as Cultivation

Initially, tea was used as a medicinal substance. However, by the Tang Dynasty, people mainly drank tea for the enjoyment of its flavor. During the Song Dynasty, Buddhist monks elevated this leisurely activity of daily life to the level of spiritual consciousness and incorporated it into temple rituals. It was at this point that the tea ceremony, also known as chado, came into being. Monks from China in the Song Dynasty introduced chado to Japan, and it reached its peak during the era of Sen no Rikyu over 400 years ago. Until the 19th century, chado was an activity participated in only by men. It was not until the early 20th century that women generally began to take part in it. The chado integrates daily life behaviors with religion, philosophy, and aesthetics, evolving into a comprehensive cultural and artistic activity. It is not merely a form of material enjoyment. Through learning tea etiquette, one can cultivate temperament, develop aesthetic sense, and elevate the spiritual realm. The concept of Ichigo Ichi-i in chado not only expresses the importance of cherishing every interaction with guests, as the same interaction will never occur again, but also implies that every moment is unique, and the combination of what we perceive through our senses at this moment will never repeat. Through chado, we practice treasuring the present moment. These methods of elevating the spiritual realm through chado practice can also be applied to other art practices, as well as daily life and work. What you see here is one of the most basic procedures in chado practice. Observe the movements of the body and hands, and experience the feelings it brings. Through these movements and the

interaction with the teotang, fully sense the present moment. Each movement is meticulously designed to enable awareness in the present moment, and these movements can make the flow of energy smoother. In Taiji practice, a traditional Chinese martial art, specific body movements can make energy more abundant and feelings more balanced. We practice controlling energy in Taiji. The essence of chado practice is the same. However, chado is more challenging than Taiji because in chado, we need to interact with different objects, increasing the difficulty of controlling energy, but its practicality is enhanced as it applies to daily life. When interacting with objects in chado, we unconsciously exert force, causing muscles to tense. We need to practice using less force and relying more on energy. Whether in chado, Taiji, or other art practices such as guqin, shakuhachi, dongxiao, calligraphy, dance, kendo, or aikido, the intention comes first, energy follows the intention, and the body follows the energy. For example, when you intend to stand up, the thought is the instruction, energy moves according to the intention, and the body follows to manifest the action. This relationship among intention, energy, and the body is a process of manifestation.

Concentration affects manifestation. If concentration is insufficient and thoughts are distracted, even simple actions cannot be performed steadily. This is what chado practices. Picking up a tea bowl seems simple, but the challenge is doing so steadily with an unwavering mind. A skilled tea master can even sense distracting thoughts during the practice. In chado, every movement reflects the current state of energy, mind, and sentiment. By observing a person's hand movements, one can judge whether their mind is pure and thoughts are positive. Actions progress slowly, orderly, and firmly, practicing the principle that "slow is fast." Impatience and haste cause mistakes, while patient, step-by-step progression leads to steady and effective results. Maintaining mindfulness in every action allows movements to appear gentle and elegant. If

mindfulness is lacking, actions appear restless. When picking up an object, the dantian (core) moves first, then the body, then the hand. Energy flows from dantian through the body to the hand, completing the action. Seiza, or kneeling posture, strengthens the core and legs, and cultivates uprightness, peace, and harmony. Learning chado is not just about understanding with the mind. The key lies in practicing with the body and feeling with the heart. Only through practice can we achieve the unity of body and mind, as well as the unity of knowledge and action.

Cleanliness, Awareness, and Environment

It's not that it doesn't get dirty, it's just that we can't see that it gets dirty. If we can't see that it gets dirty, does that mean it isn't dirty? When it comes to cleanliness, you may notice that many Westerners, or even in our historical TV series, people wear white socks. Our ancestors usually wore white socks. Modern people, especially my grandparents' generation, would say: "Ah, you wear white socks, they are not durable." What does "not durable" mean? Just because we wear black socks, does it mean they don't get dirty? It's not that it doesn't get dirty; it's just that we can't see that it gets dirty. So, we are always using different ways to deceive ourselves, or let ourselves ignore certain things. In our tea practice, when going onto the tatami, we must wear white socks; otherwise, we cannot enter the tea room or step onto the tatami. This is because the entire space of the tatami and tea room must be kept absolutely clean. Cleanliness, though we shouldn't use the word "expensive," is indeed the most valuable thing. A person's value is first reflected in whether they are clean—spotlessly clean. Maintaining a spotless space means maintaining a spotless heart. When our heart, our whole body and mind are clean, it becomes very difficult to tolerate seeing a place where the feng shui of a corner is not good, or where it is not clean, and we feel compelled to clean it. Some friends may ask: are we taking the "heart separately"?

Of course, we must take the heart separately. We enter a good energy field, first make our heart clean, and only then can we cultivate and eventually discard this separation. But if we discard it at the beginning, what kind of energy can we use to support

ourselves so that we can truly not take the heart separately? Therefore, the requirements for the environment are like a tool, a kind of support, including when we study tea ceremony. Is it unnatural for us to study tea with so many rituals? Maybe a bit formal? If we do not follow these rituals at all from the start, it is excessive indulgence. Of course, if someone can remain completely peaceful and at ease even under such indulgence, like some people “lying flat,” and accept their own mediocrity, that is also a high state. But most people, when “lying flat,” will blame themselves—they cannot truly lie flat. Truly lying flat means being unaware that you are lying flat. Environment is therefore extremely important. As mentioned in one of last week’s videos, forming good habits is about improving our entire environment: our ecological environment, the people we interact with, our diet, daily routine, and activities—all constitute our ecological environment. When we change this ecological environment, we naturally begin to improve ourselves. So, forming good habits means gradually changing our environment. Since changes to the environment cannot happen overnight, we need to gradually improve our environment, step by step.

The Wisdom of Three Fingers: Effort Without Strain

Article: The Wisdom of Three Fingers — Effort Without Strain
In Chadao practice and many artistic disciplines, we are encouraged to use three fingers instead of two. Why? Try this: place your thumb between your index and middle fingers so that the three form a small triangle. Let the other two fingers rest gently and naturally. You will notice that your palm feels more

buoyant, more alive, and more relaxed. Now try picking something up with only two fingers. It often feels slightly unstable. The moment we sense instability, we instinctively add force. Once we add force, muscles tense, and the flow of energy becomes restricted. At that point, we are using brute force rather than integrated power. With three fingers forming a stable structure, the object feels naturally supported. Lifting it becomes easy. This is not about exerting more strength—it is about using coordinated, efficient power. Imagine two ways of completing the same action. You could use nine parts sheer force, or you could use one part force supported by nine parts structural alignment and integration. Both approaches may achieve the same result, but the first consumes far more energy. When we rely on excessive force, the action becomes tiring. It is difficult to enjoy, and we hesitate to repeat it. When we use structure and integration, the action feels lighter and more sustainable. If you intentionally try lifting something with only two fingers, you may notice a subtle shaking. Add a third finger gently to the side, and suddenly the movement stabilizes. That is the wisdom of three fingers. This principle extends beyond hand technique. It teaches us something about how we act in life. When

facing a task, try not to rely on strain. Strain implies resistance—pushing too hard. Instead, seek stability and alignment. When action is supported properly, it becomes more enjoyable and sustainable. We can achieve the same outcome through tension and overexertion, or through balance and coordination. The difference lies in energy consumption. The first path exhausts us. The second allows us to continue effortlessly. Ultimately, regardless of how many fingers we use, what matters is reducing internal energy consumption while completing the same action. Less resistance. Less tension. More stability. More integration. This is the deeper wisdom behind using three fingers in Chadao practice. If you found this sharing helpful, feel free to like, share, and repost. Wishing you steadiness and ease in all you do.

The Weight of a Tea Scoop: Treating the Light as Heavy

Article: The Weight of a Tea Scoop — Treating the Light as Heavy In Chadao practice, what kind of inner method can we cultivate through the use of the tea scoop? Many people think the scoop is simply a tool for lifting tea powder. They use it and move on, rarely reflecting on how they are relating to it. Precisely because it is so light and easy to use, we tend not to value it. And this is exactly where the practice begins. In tea practice, we learn to treat the light as heavy. When holding a tea scoop—though it weighs almost nothing—we imagine it weighs ten or twenty pounds. When lifting something heavy, we know we must engage the dantian, use the whole body, and absorb the weight gradually. In doing so, the heavy object feels lighter. With something light, we reverse the approach. We treat it as if it were heavy. We lift it with the whole body. We engage the center. We absorb its “weight” fully. When you can feel the presence of a tea scoop with your entire body, your physical awareness begins to awaken. Why do we normally feel nothing? Because the body is often blocked—tight, rigid, and disconnected. The flow of energy is restricted. When holding a very light object, there seems to be nothing to notice. But if we train ourselves to perceive subtle sensations, our sensitivity gradually increases. Think of a needle dropping to the floor. It makes a sound. Some people can hear it; others cannot. The difference lies in inner quietness. Some minds are calm and still. Others are crowded with constant thoughts. Thoughts themselves make no physical sound, yet they function like internal blockages, preventing us from perceiving subtle reality. When we can genuinely sense the

“weight” of a tea scoop, it means these internal blockages are beginning to dissolve. Whether or not you can feel it becomes a test of how developed your bodily awareness is. This wisdom applies beyond tea practice. In daily life, we often treat small matters casually. When we act in slightly inappropriate ways without immediate consequences, we ignore them. Over time, repetition forms habits, and habits shape character. In a short moment, the impact seems small. But over a lifetime, accumulated patterns can have profound consequences. That is why there is a saying: do not commit a wrong simply because it is small; do not neglect a good deed simply because it is small.

Likewise, do not treat the tea scoop casually because it is light. Draw it into your awareness. Sense it with your whole body. This is the wisdom the tea scoop teaches us in Chadao practice. If this reflection has offered you even a small insight, feel free to like, share, and recommend it. With blessings to others. Thank you.

Centering the Mind Before Performing Tea

Before beginning the tea ceremony, first calm and center the mind. Intention moves first, qi follows, and the dantian activates. When placing a bowl down, slowly release its weight, allowing it to settle gently without colliding heavily with the tatami. Arrange the tea utensils that require cleaning in their designated positions. The placement of each object, the space, and the layout are all carefully designed. This practice trains our eyes to become more sensitive to the environment. Although the utensils were physically cleaned during preparation, what we now cleanse is their energy. Cleansing Energy Through Yin and Yang When cleaning the tea caddy, circle the upper half as yin and the lower half as yang, blending the two. Use your hand to guide out any excess energy. Pure yin and pure yang possess transformative power; when yin and yang merge, they create—just as positive and negative electrical charges produce a spark when they meet. If you cannot yet sense yin and yang energy, you may use fire and water as substitutes. When cleaning the tea scoop, form a hollow shape with the left hand as if holding an energy ball. Use the energy of this imagined sphere to cleanse the scoop—half a circle yin, half a circle yang, or again, water and fire as symbolic substitutes. Even when taking out the tea whisk, maintain a sense of solemnity, as though holding incense to place into an incense burner. Alignment of Body and Tool Move the bowl closer to the body before picking up the ladle. Observe that the ladle is lifted only when the arm and the ladle form a straight line. Let the ladle become an extension of the arm, a part of the body. This action may appear insignificant, but it helps us center ourselves again. The

body leans slightly forward, engaging the waist and abdomen. Even though the arms may cross, energy flow is not obstructed; instead, it strengthens the flexibility of the core. When using the ladle, remember that it is an extension of the hand. Keep the index finger straight and the hand relaxed. Pour water evenly into the bowl. The dantian is the center, the shoulders sink, and the armpits open—these three occur simultaneously and interact with one another. When returning the ladle to the brazier, let the body follow its movement. The Sound of the Whisk and the Flow of Energy When picking up the whisk, maintain reverence. Lift it at an even speed and feel the core as you rotate it. Check the whisk twice. Practice with inner method and mindful intention so that the sound produced is calm and unhurried. The circular motion gathers energy from the coccyx and perineum, guiding it upward along the spine and central channel.

Cleansing the Bowl, Cleansing the Heart When taking the bowl from directly in front, grasp its three points. Maintain graceful hands and an open posture, like standing meditation in Taiji. Use the tea cloth to clean the bowl. Though the bowl is already clean, through this act we cleanse its energy—and our own heart. Wipe three and a half circles; on the final half circle, engage the core and return to the center. On Sharing and Practice Some friends have privately asked: “If you explain everything in such detail, won’t everyone practice on their own and stop enrolling in your courses?” If everyone truly practices independently, I would be very happy, because these are deeply valuable exercises. Without open sharing, more people would never encounter them. What is shared publicly is only a small portion. Through daily practice, new insights continue to arise. For those who wish to go deeper, the courses still hold their value. This is today’s sharing. You are welcome to like, share, and recommend. Practice during the process—bless others, bless yourself. Spreading wisdom is our shared mission. Thank you for watching. Blessings to you all.

Blessing While Preparing Tea, Gratitude While Drinking

When we whisk tea, our hearts should be filled with blessings. We consciously infuse the tea with the energy of goodwill. When we drink tea, our hearts should be filled with gratitude. Through one small bowl of tea, the energy between host and guest becomes connected. In ancient times, monks went from house to house on alms rounds. It was not because they could not find work or support themselves. They could always return to the mountains and farm. Rather, through the act of receiving alms, they allowed others to practice generosity while cultivating gratitude within themselves. When we practice compassion, it must be accompanied by gratitude. Otherwise, compassion can easily turn into arrogance. Practicing Giving and Receiving In tea ceremony practice, we take turns being host and guest. In doing so, we practice both giving and receiving. We cultivate compassion and gratitude at the same time. Through this process, our energies exchange and interact

The deepest root of human suffering is often the belief that we are separate individuals, isolated from the world and from one another. We believe there is a clear boundary between “you” and “me.” But in this exchange of energy—where one practices giving and the other practices receiving, one cultivates compassion and the other gratitude—that rigid boundary begins to soften. Through the flow of energy, we become more closely connected. The strong shell surrounding the self gradually becomes more transparent. We connect more deeply with others, and more harmoniously with the world. A Small Bowl, A Shared Field of Energy This is why, in tea practice, we fill our hearts with blessings when preparing tea and

with gratitude when drinking it. If this sharing brings you even a small sense of inspiration, you are welcome to like, save, or share it. In doing so, you are already practicing generosity. You are offering goodwill to others. Perhaps somewhere in the world, in a corner you will never see, someone may benefit greatly from your small action. That person may feel deep gratitude. And invisibly, you will be connected. In that simple gesture, the boundary of the self becomes softer and more open. When we offer blessings, we are not only blessing others—we are also blessing ourselves. Because the blessing begins in our own heart. Thank you

Appreciating Tea Utensils with Mindfulness

in Tea Practice Today, I'd like to share how, in tea practice, we can appreciate tea utensils with mindful intention. This could be a tea bowl or a tea cup. Usually, when we admire these objects, we focus on their shape, color, texture, patterns, or the feel and warmth when we touch them. These observations are valuable because they help us remain present in the moment. Yet, there are deeper “mind methods” () that we can practice while engaging with these objects. Today, I'll share two such practices. Step 1: Bow and Connect I begin by offering a respectful bow to the tea bowl. Lowering the body naturally evokes humility. Then, I observe the bowl as a whole, connecting fully with it—becoming one with it. When I lift it, my body lowers further, elbows resting on my knees. I observe the fine details, feeling its warmth and texture, before placing it down and finally looking at it as a whole again

Practice 1: Humility The first key practice is to cultivate humility. Before a tea bowl, we acknowledge equality with the object. Just as a sage regards all people as “like puppies,” the sage also sees themselves equally—there is no arrogance or separation. By fully connecting with a simple object with humility, we transform an abstract idea into embodied practice. Practice 2: Becoming the Object The second practice is to merge with the object. When we truly immerse ourselves, we are not only ourselves in our bodies—we become the bowl. Gradually, this practice extends: we learn to become the entire tea room, the whole space, the Earth, even the universe. In this process, humility allows the self to become smaller, while connection expands the self. The dual

practice is: Shrink the ego and cultivate humility. Expand the self by becoming one with the object. Sharing and Blessings If this sharing brings you even a little insight, feel free to like, save, and share it. During practice, maintain a heart of blessing. May everyone gain wisdom. Sharing wisdom is our shared responsibility, and by doing so, we move closer to a harmonious and beautiful world. Thank you.

Practicing the Heart Method in Appreciating Tea Utensils

Today I would like to share how, in the study of tea ceremony, we appreciate tea utensils with a cultivated inner mindset. The object may be a tea bowl or a teacup. Usually, when we appreciate a tea utensil, we focus on its shape, color, texture, patterns, and decorative impressions. We may also pay attention to the sensation of touching it—its texture and temperature in our hands. All of these are valuable, because they help us remain present and grounded in the moment. However, there are many more inner practices we can cultivate. Today, I will share two essential “heart methods.” First, let me demonstrate how I appreciate a tea bowl. I begin by offering it a bow. When our body lowers, a sense of humility naturally arises. Then I observe the bowl as a whole, connecting with it fully—allowing myself to become it. Next, I gently lift the bowl, lowering my body even more, resting my elbows on my knees. I observe its details carefully, feeling its warmth and texture. Afterward, I place it back down and once again

take in its overall presence. Within this process, there are two key practices. The first is cultivating humility. When we lower ourselves before a tea bowl, we allow humility to arise and deeply experience equality between ourselves and the bowl. There is a teaching in the Tao Te Ching: “Heaven and Earth treat all things as straw dogs.” In the eyes of the sage, even the sage himself is like a straw dog. It is only in the human mind that we interpret this as unkindness. But when we truly connect with an object and stand before it with humility, we begin to understand that this is not cruelty. Rather, it is the realization that the sage, the people, and

even the straw dog are fundamentally equal. This understanding should not remain merely an intellectual idea; it can become a living practice. So, before a simple bowl, we cultivate humility. As we look at it, we allow ourselves to become it. We are no longer confined to the self inside this body—we are also the bowl. Gradually, we learn to become the entire tea room, the entire space, the whole Earth, and even the universe. As humility makes our ego smaller and smaller, our sense of self simultaneously becomes larger and larger through connection. Ultimately, we practice becoming very small—small to the extreme—and at the same time becoming very large—vast and boundless. These are the two practices: To become humble and make oneself small. To become the tea bowl and make oneself vast. If this sharing has been even slightly helpful to you, please consider liking, saving, or sharing it. Throughout this process, hold a sincere intention to bless others and wish for everyone to gain greater wisdom. Spreading wisdom is a responsibility we all share. In doing so, the harmonious and beautiful world we long for will come ever closer to us. Thank you.

The Lady's Hand in Tea Ceremony Practice

The “Lady’s Hand” in Tea Ceremony Practice In tea ceremony practice, our hands are required to maintain a particular posture. This posture is called the “Lady’s Hand.” It means that the forearm and the surface formed by the pads of the fingers are aligned on the same plane. If I place my arm on a table, you can clearly see that the forearm and the finger pads form one flat surface.

The fingers and palms remain relaxed, and the center of the palm is slightly hollow. This hollow space is where qi gathers. Our qi flows into this hollow center, and from there it interacts with the object when we lift a teacup. Why must this area remain flat and aligned? Try bending or twisting your wrist. When the wrist is locked or tense, qi cannot flow smoothly. As a result, the hand becomes stiff. When a stiff hand lifts an object, there is often noticeable collision or clumsiness. Therefore, the hand must remain relaxed so that qi can circulate freely, flow into the palm, and interact with the object through this flow of energy. In addition to maintaining a flat plane, the fingers should be gently closed together. It is true that an object can still be lifted with fingers spread apart. However, when the fingers are open, qi is not gathered. To compensate, we must rely on physical force instead of qi. In tea practice, we learn to use qi rather than force. Why does keeping the fingers together and the wrist aligned allow qi to transmit more easily into the hands? Every hand gesture activates specific muscle groups within the body. When certain muscles are engaged, they generate particular patterns of energy flow. Some people may have heard that during meditation, practitioners form specific hand seals

to enter certain states or stimulate particular energies. For example, when we place our hands together in a certain way, it becomes easier to cultivate reverence and focus. This is because the gesture activates specific muscle groups, which in turn generate an energy flow aligned with devotion and concentration. In martial arts films, we often see distinct hand gestures that evoke feelings of heroism or boldness. These gestures stimulate different muscle groups and therefore different sensations. If we position our hands differently, the internal feeling changes again. Every gesture evokes a corresponding internal state. This is why, in tea ceremony practice, we adopt the “Lady’s Hand” posture. It helps us connect more deeply with the object. It allows the weight of the object to be absorbed into the body and settle into the dantian. The “Lady’s Hand” is not limited to women. Men can practice it as well. When men adopt this gesture, it conveys elegance and dignity. The internal experience remains the same. If this sharing has been helpful to you, you are welcome to like, recommend, or share it. As you do so, raise a sincere intention of blessing others, wishing that more people may gain wisdom. Through such small actions, the harmonious and beautiful world we long for moves one step closer. Thank you.

Practicing Wu Wei Through the Body

Practicing “Wu Wei” Through the Body You may already have your own interpretation of “wu wei.” Today, let us set aside intellectual analysis and instead practice it through the body and direct feeling. In the Tao Te Ching, the phrase “wei wu wei” (doing non-doing) points to a state of effortless action. But rather than explaining it conceptually, we can enter it through practice. In previous tea ceremony sharing, I mentioned that when we practice Tai Chi, it is easier to sense qi because our hands are empty. Without holding anything, the arms and body can relax more fully. Qi arising from the dantian flows smoothly to the hands. However, when we hold an object—a cup, for example—our hand muscles unconsciously tighten. The flow of qi decreases. Why does this happen? When we lift a cup, we clearly feel the muscles engaging. The flow of energy is reduced because we perceive the cup as something external, separate from ourselves. We think: “I must pick it up. I must control it. I must do something to it.” This subtle sense of separation prevents total acceptance. What is total acceptance? It is recognizing the object as part of the body. It is sensing it from the dantian and lifting it with the whole body. When you truly lift something with your entire being, you may notice that its weight no longer feels as heavy. Energy flows naturally to the hands. This is deeper acceptance. The same principle applies to daily life. When facing a task, thoughts arise: “I am doing this.” “Is it easy or difficult?” “What if I fail?” These thoughts create separation between you and the action itself. Only when you merge with the action—still doing it, yet without extra mental noise—are you practicing wu wei. The same applies to all perceptions of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought. If we can accept every

experience fully through the body and feeling—without dividing “me” and “the phenomenon”—then all perceptions, sensations, and events become one integrated whole. There is no isolated “me” and no separate “object.” Or perhaps both exist, yet inseparably as one. In that state, there is genuine freedom and ease. We often say sages are selfless. In truth, they may still appear “selfish,” but their sense of self includes all beings and all phenomena. When they help others, they are helping themselves—because there is no separation.

Through tea ceremony, through the Guqin, and through all artistic practices, we learn to connect ourselves with an object. Then we connect ourselves with an action or event. Gradually, we expand this connection until we are united with all things. This is true wu wei—true freedom. Although the concept may be easy to understand, it must be practiced daily. Only through continuous practice can it move from theory into lived reality at the level of the body and direct experience. I welcome your reflections and discussion. Thank you.

A Precious Glimpse of Etiquette from 1908 Beijing

Today I would like to share a rare piece of footage filmed more than a hundred years ago. The scene takes place in 1908, in Beijing, China, during the final years of the Qing Dynasty. The video captures a simple moment outside the doorway of an ordinary household, yet what it reveals is profoundly moving: how people greeted one another through ritual bows. It appears to be early morning. A man buys some food and sits down right outside someone's door to eat. The male owner of the house comes out and drives him away. He then goes off to buy food himself. The men wear long queues and traditional robes typical of the late Qing era. But what struck me most was not the clothing or the setting — it was the gestures. Within just a few dozen seconds, several distinct forms of greeting appear. Different bows seem to reflect different relationships: between elders and juniors, between friends, between men and women. Even in such an ordinary, fleeting moment, etiquette was alive and embodied. The first time I saw this video, I was deeply moved — almost to tears. By 1908, the Qing Dynasty was already in visible decline. One could argue that ritual culture at that time was already weakened compared to earlier periods of China's five-thousand-year civilization. And yet, even then, people still carried themselves with this kind of courtesy and embodied respect. Beyond cultural nostalgia, I began to reflect on something very practical. If we greeted one another in this way today, our bodies would benefit. Bowing engages the core; it requires structure and balance. But more importantly, every time the body lowers itself, something softens inside. A genuine sense of humility can

arise through the posture itself. I experienced this personally. When I first began studying tea ceremony in Singapore, there was a senior classmate who treated me quite rudely. I have a fiery temper, and I responded sharply. The result was tension and unpleasantness between us

However, during practice sessions, the teacher paired us together. In tea ceremony training, one person practices as the host and the other as the guest. There are several moments when host and guest must bow to each other. So, quite unwillingly, I lowered my body and bowed to her. At that exact moment — as my body bent forward — I felt that at least half of my anger dissolved. It wasn't something I reasoned through. It happened through the body. That was when I truly understood the concrete power of bowing. If two people dislike each other but must greet one another respectfully, and if this gesture has become a kind of muscle memory, then each bow slightly reduces hostility. The act itself cultivates humility and respect. Even if resentment remains, it gradually weakens. For this reason, I believe bowing holds very practical value. I sincerely hope that within my lifetime, more people may rediscover and embrace this simple practice — not as rigid formality, but as a living cultural gesture. Perhaps through something as small as lowering our bodies in greeting, we may recover a vital element of our heritage — one that shapes both posture and heart. Thank you for reading. I welcome your thoughts and reflections.

Entering the Way Through Sound

A Tea Practice for Daily Life

Today I would like to continue sharing methods of cultivation through tea practice — methods that can also be applied to other arts and to everyday life. Some people say the essence of tea practice lies in drinking tea. Others say its core lies in ritual form. I agree with both. Whether it is the ritual or the tea itself, what truly matters is that we use our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body to experience every moment of the process. I am sometimes asked whether I play soft background music while practicing tea. Almost never. Tea practice is a training in presence. It is about listening to what is already here — the sound of water boiling, the sound of pouring, the whisking of tea, the subtle friction of footsteps across tatami. These natural sounds are enough. Over time, I have grown to love natural sounds more and more. I live in an old house in Shanghai's plane-tree district, where soundproofing is poor. I can hear my neighbors walking, opening and closing doors, coughing, speaking. Gradually, I stopped labeling these as "noise." Instead, I began to feel their warmth — the texture of ordinary life. They are the most natural sounds. In tea practice, sound becomes a doorway into the present. We enter the Way through sound. But we do not attend only to sound when it is present. When there is relative silence — the pause between sounds — that "blank space" is equally precious. We learn to appreciate the beauty of sound, and also the beauty of its absence. Because the absence of sound is also a kind of sound. Many people have heard of the tea concept known as *Ichi-go Ichi-e*. It is often understood to mean that each gathering is unique and will never happen again, therefore it should be

treasured. I deeply agree with this interpretation. At the same time, I understand it more deeply as this: every single moment is unique. Every single moment deserves to be experienced fully and cherished. Right now, as you watch this video and listen to my voice, allow other sounds to enter your ears as well — the hum of the air conditioner, distant traffic, voices in your home. Let them all arrive. The combination of sounds that exists in this exact moment will never occur again. Only this once. It is worthy of your awareness. Then gently ask: who is hearing these sounds? Oh — it is myself. And where is this hearing happening? In which part of the body? Or is it outside the body? Then allow yourself to become all the sounds. Merge with them. Let listener and sound dissolve into one field. This is entering the Way through sound

Cultivating Energy Through Tea Practice

Today I am using tea practice to share several methods of cultivation. These methods can also be applied to other artistic disciplines and to daily life. What you see in tea practice is a very basic sequence. I invite you to observe the movements of my body and hands, and to notice the feeling they evoke in you. Through the interaction between the body, the hands, and the tea utensils, we learn to fully experience the present moment. Every movement in tea practice is intentionally designed. Its purpose is to help us remain aware in the present and to allow our energy — our qi — to flow more smoothly. In Tai Chi standing meditation, our arms are held as if embracing a large tree. In that posture, energy becomes fuller and our state more centered and balanced. In fact, throughout Tai Chi training, we are constantly learning how to move and direct energy. Tea practice follows the same principle, though in some ways it is more challenging. In Tai Chi, our hands are empty, making it easier to relax the body and arms. When the body relaxes, energy naturally becomes abundant and smooth. In tea practice, however, we are interacting with objects. We must perform specific actions with precision. This often leads to subtle muscular tension, which makes relaxation — and therefore the smooth circulation of energy — more difficult. Whether in tea, Tai Chi, or any art form, the principle is the same: Intention leads, energy follows intention, and the body follows energy. For example, if you are sitting and you decide to stand up, the decision itself is intention. Intention gives a signal; energy moves; energy propels the body to rise. This is the relationship between intention, energy, and form. It is the process

of manifestation. We are constantly manifesting in daily life, consciously or unconsciously. Yet the clarity of our focus determines the quality of that manifestation. When attention is scattered and thoughts are excessive, even a simple action becomes unstable. In a refined art such as tea practice, every movement reveals the current state of our energy. Our energy reflects our mental state, and our mental state arises from thought. By observing a person's hand movements — their continuity, their steadiness, the way they interact with objects — one can sense whether the mind is calm and clear. The smoothness of transitions and the absence of unnecessary collisions with objects serve as feedback. They show us our state in real time and allow us to adjust quickly. You may notice that at any given moment, my hands perform only one action. The movement proceeds slowly, steadily, and with order. This trains a principle: “slow is continuous, and continuous becomes fast.” When we rush, we make mistakes, and everything slows down. When we move patiently, step by step, with clarity and determination, the final result is often achieved more efficiently

When awareness is sustained from one movement to the next, the entire sequence appears gentle and elegant. Without awareness between actions, movements look anxious or restless. Some have commented that my body sways too much and that I should minimize movement and extend my arms more directly. In fact, the body must move this way. The movement begins in the dantian (lower abdominal center), then flows through the torso, and only finally reaches the hands. Energy originates from the center, travels through the body and arms, and then the hands complete the action. This is only a small introduction to help you taste and appreciate tea practice as an art of cultivation. There are many more principles and internal methods to explore, and I will share them in a future series. If you do not yet have the opportunity to practice tea formally, the principles I share can still be applied to other art forms. Every discipline has its own emphasis, and tea practice has its

irreplaceable qualities — which is why it remains one of my primary practices. If you have any questions about the ideas in this video, I welcome your reflections and discussion.

The Importance of Materials and Craftsmanship in Tea Room Design

When designing a tea room, aside from its dimensions, the choice of materials is extremely important. Just like the clothes we wear, the design style matters, but the material used is equally significant. In many Japanese temples, when constructing a Zen hall or tea room, specific types of wood and particular craftsmanship are always used. Why is this so? Because wood carries energy and life. Different types of wood have varying energy levels, much like people—some individuals have high energy, while others less so. Each type of wood also has its own characteristics, similar to plants: some can be used as medicine, some are edible, and some may even be harmful. Wood works the same way, which is why specific woods are chosen carefully. Certain woods emit a subtle fragrance that naturally calms the mind and harmonizes the breath. Even if you think the concept of the energy and life of wood is somewhat mystical, from a scientific perspective, every type of wood releases a distinct aroma. Some scents are known to relax and soothe us, just like the pleasant smells we notice in everyday life. Being in such an environment consistently allows every breath to nourish and refresh us quietly. Moreover, the interaction between a person and the wood can affect the wood's energy. When your energy is high and you treat the space with respect, the energy of the wood rises. When you are tired or low on energy, returning to that space can provide a sense of replenishment. The wood “stores” positive energy and returns it when needed, continuously changing in energy based on how it is treated. If unhealthy activities occur in the space, or if the wood is treated carelessly without respect—like throwing things on

the tatami or sitting roughly—the wood’s energy diminishes over time. Thus, it is essential to treat wood as a living entity. When nurtured, it grows and maintains vitality

Regarding craftsmanship, temples often use mortise-and-tenon joints, which strengthen over time. Nails, by contrast, are prone to rust and decay. This is why many Japanese temples, hundreds of years old, remain in excellent condition. My own tea room follows similar principles inspired by Japanese temple construction. I collaborated with the “Wood Etiquette” team to create my tea room. They are a reliable team deeply familiar with high-quality wood, and this exposure influences their approach and character over time. As the saying goes, “carpenters carry fragrance”—this refers not to physical smell but to the qualities and temperament shaped by working closely with wood. The materials in my tea room, such as Katsura and Cedar (including Akita cedar), follow these traditional standards. Even the supporting beams (dragon bones) use cedar, with higher-quality pieces for visible areas and lesser-quality pieces for hidden parts. The craftsmanship relies on mortise-and-tenon joints, and no paint is applied. Instead, the wood is polished using a traditional tool called the golden leopard knife, creating a smooth, tactile surface while allowing the wood’s natural fragrance to persist. This scent is subtle, not overpowering like perfume. You notice it only when you focus and engage with the environment, similar to refined social interactions that are calm, respectful, and mutually enriching. A tea room and its wood should be appreciated in the same way. This concludes today’s sharing. If you have any questions, feel free to leave a comment. Thank you.

The Art and Philosophy of Tea Room Design

Designing a tea room is more than arranging a space; it is about creating an environment that nurtures both the mind and the spirit. In Japan, practice spaces for the Way are called dojo, while in China, they are known as daochang (). Every dojo or daochang has life and energy. Before entering, it is customary to bow as a sign of respect—a rule well known across tea ceremony, kendo, flower arrangement, and many other arts. Even when passing a temple in Japan, people will bow to acknowledge its presence. Materials and Energy Just as our clothing affects our comfort and expression, the materials used in a tea room are equally vital. In many Japanese temples, when constructing a Zen hall or tea room, specific types of wood and craftsmanship are chosen with care. Wood carries energy and life, and different types have varying energy levels—much like people, some vibrant and high-energy, others more subdued. Each wood type also has distinct characteristics, much like plants: some are medicinal, some edible, some even harmful. Certain woods emit subtle fragrances that naturally calm the mind and harmonize the breath. Even from a scientific perspective, every type of wood releases a distinct aroma. Some scents are known to relax and soothe, similar to pleasant fragrances we notice in daily life. Being in such an environment allows every breath to nourish quietly and profoundly. Furthermore, interaction between people and wood affects the wood's energy. When treated with respect and attentiveness,

the wood's energy rises. When one is tired or low on energy, returning to the space can provide a sense of replenishment.

Careless treatment, such as sitting roughly or tossing objects onto the tatami, diminishes the wood's energy over time. Thus, wood should be regarded as a living entity; when nurtured, it grows and maintains vitality. The craftsmanship also matters. Temples often use mortise-and-tenon joints, which strengthen over time, unlike nails that may rust or decay. High-quality wood and precise construction explain why Japanese temples, centuries old, remain in excellent condition. My own tea room follows these principles, crafted by the "Wood Etiquette" team. Their deep familiarity with wood imbues both the space and their character, echoing the saying: "Carpenters carry fragrance"—a reflection of temperament shaped by their intimate work with wood. Dimensions and the Way of Balance The tatami mats in my tea room measure 1910 × 955 mm, a standard size. It takes five steps to traverse one tatami, a design that ensures steps are neither too large nor too small, cultivating calm, measured movements. The height of the tea room is carefully limited to 2.0–2.2 meters. Too high a ceiling can evoke pride or arrogance, too low can feel oppressive. Similarly, the width of the tatami allows tea utensils to be arranged harmoniously; spacing that is too wide or too narrow disrupts energy flow. Every tea utensil has a proper place. For example, the tea jujube and tea scoop are positioned at precise distances for harmony. The proper spacing creates a balanced environment, embodying the principle of moderation. In such a space, practitioners naturally internalize the middle way. Over time, this practice shapes not only their movements but also their character, cultivating equilibrium—the essence of harmony. Tea room design, therefore, is a holistic practice: combining material, craftsmanship, spatial proportions, and arrangement. Every element contributes to a subtle energy flow that nurtures the practitioner, allowing tea to become more than a ceremony; it becomes a way of cultivating mind, body, and spirit.

The Origins and Philosophy of Tea Ceremony

I practice what is commonly called the Japanese tea ceremony—I put that in quotes because its origins trace back to China during the Song Dynasty. Buddhist monks in temples invented the tea ceremony as a tool for spiritual cultivation. After the Song Dynasty, due to invasions by minority groups during the Yuan and Qing dynasties, much of China’s core cultural heritage was lost. These groups were generally not interested in such practices, so the tradition gradually evolved differently from its original form. In contrast, Japan’s geographical isolation as an island nation allowed its early tea practices to be preserved more completely. Modern Japanese tea ceremony is therefore closer to the original practices developed by Song Dynasty monks

Tea as a Medium, Not the Goal The core of the tea ceremony is not tea itself. Tea is merely a medium for practicing the Way—just as flower arrangement, incense, or kendo can be. In Japan, many disciplines are suffixed with “-d” (道), linking them explicitly to the pursuit of the Way. Dance and music, for example, can also serve as means of spiritual cultivation. The distinction lies in whether one is genuinely practicing the Way or simply engaging in the activity superficially. For instance, drinking tea without deeper reflection is just drinking tea, not tea ceremony in its true sense. Similarly, dancing or performing music without mindfulness is not entering the Way. In Japan, this distinction is formalized: Chano-yu (茶の湯) – the study of tea as an art form. Sad (茶道) – the true Way of tea, emphasizing spiritual cultivation. Although the name “tea ceremony” was directly borrowed from China, centuries of practice in Japan have

enriched it, incorporating cultural and aesthetic values that shaped Japanese society. From the perspective of origin, one could say it is Chinese tea ceremony. From the perspective of development and preservation, it is Japanese tea ceremony. Globally, most people recognize it as Japanese, not Chinese, because its flourishing and codification are associated with Japan. The Core Principles The essence of tea ceremony draws from both Buddhist precepts () and Confucian etiquette (). While these are rules, their purpose is not mere compliance but returning to the fundamental source—the Way. Some may call it God, Tao, or the ultimate principle; the name does not matter. Confucius advocated “li” () not merely as politeness but as a physical embodiment of respect through bodily gestures. I once saw a century-old video from Beijing: when two familiar neighbors met at a doorstep, they would crouch deeply in greeting, holding a chicken or a pastry in hand, yet still bow respectfully. Why not just say “hello” or shake hands? The act of lowering the body cultivates humility and respect in the heart, creating a profound sense of reverence. This mindfulness of respect is not limited to human interactions; it is a state of awareness we should carry at all times, whether in the presence of others or alone.

The Hidden Wisdom in Tea Ceremony Practices

Our ruling class in ancient times was surprisingly clever. They integrated rules into interpersonal interactions. The idea was simple: since people must interact, why not embed a structure that fosters respect and reverence in every action? Over time, these actions became a method of spiritual cultivation, though many mistakenly consider them mere formalities

Every gesture, every step, carries meaning. To practice effectively, one must explore these meanings and bring mindful awareness to each action. For instance, when I lower my body in a bow, I must sense what this movement signifies. Understanding the intention allows the gesture to cultivate genuine humility. Without this understanding, the same movement could be performed arrogantly, yielding only a fraction of the intended effect. With proper awareness and heartfelt intention, an action can awaken the full potential of reverence and humility. This principle applies not just in tea ceremony, but in daily life. For example, notice your posture as you watch this video: slouching or leaning produces a negative feeling, while an upright, balanced posture cultivates dignity and uplifts both yourself and others. Even simple tasks, like picking up an object, become profound when performed mindfully. When your core and hands move in unison, the action is smooth and deliberate, rather than rushed or careless. In tea practice, many rules exist to guide these subtle movements. Every small motion is designed to evoke positive sensations, nourishing the mind. As one's energy grows through practice, one may eventually grasp the essence of the Way itself. Finally, while many practices seem

simple at first glance, their difficulty lies in consistent application and situational awareness. Knowing which practice to use at the right time—whether angry, sad, or lazy—is key. For instance, laziness is not a fixed trait, but an energy imbalance that can be corrected with the right method. Many people watch or save my videos, especially key exercises, but few ask technical questions. Without guidance or correction, practice can easily become misdirected, leading one to feel the exercises are ineffective. In truth, the practices are useful, but understanding and proper application are essential.

A Lesson from Sen no Rikyū

A Lesson from Sen no Riky Today, I want to share a story about Sen no Riky, one of my favorite stories. One day, Sen no Riky was invited to a tea gathering. He traveled a long distance with his students and arrived, dusty and tired. Before entering the courtyard, Riky noticed a thin wooden plank on the ground, covered with dirt and mud. Immediately, he realized that this was deliberately placed by the host, because every corner of the courtyard was always kept spotless. He smiled and stepped on the plank—and, as expected, there was a small water pit underneath. He fell in, getting completely wet and dirty. The host, hearing the commotion, came out and apologized. After polite greetings, the host led Riky to a prepared bathing area with hot water, clean towels, and fresh clothes. After washing and changing, Riky happily attended the tea gathering. Afterwards, Riky's student asked, "You knew there was a water pit under the plank, so why did you step on it?" Riky replied, "Since this is the host's intention, I cannot go against it." This story always moves me. Why did the host set up such a trap? Riky had come a long way and must have been dirty. If he could wash and change, he would attend the tea gathering more comfortably. But the host didn't directly tell him to bathe and change, because it might make Riky feel judged or insulted. Instead, the host gave Riky a choice, respecting him deeply. Riky understood that everything was prepared, so he chose to step on the plank, trusting the host's intention. This interaction shows a profound kindness and respect—helping others without using words, giving them freedom to choose, and maintaining dignity. In our modern interactions, we often announce our help openly, but here, the host's care was silent, subtle, and respectful. This story reminds us how to interact with

others with harmony, respect, and understanding. If you have meaningful or interesting stories, feel free to share them.

How to Use the Bing Spoon in Tea Practice

How to Use the Bing Spoon () in Tea Practice Today, I want to share how to properly use the bing spoon () in tea practice. 1 Don't Grab It Carelessly Many people pick up the bing spoon casually because it feels light. But this creates tension in the palm and fingers and leaves the wrist unsupported. In tea practice, we follow the principle: "Lift heavy as if light, lift light as if heavy." Imagine the spoon weighs ten pounds—can you still hold it carelessly? True mastery comes from letting the spoon naturally rest on the structure of your hand, not forcing it with your muscles. 2 Correct Way to Lift the Spoon Use three fingers to lift the central point of the spoon. Keep the head of the spoon still in the water. Allow it to tilt naturally, forming a slanted angle.

Once your wrist senses it can act as a lever, lift the spoon fully. The key is letting the structure support the weight, not brute strength. 3. After Flipping: Check Your Position Once flipped: Right hand supports the spoon on the middle finger pad. Left hand lightly assists, fingers relaxed. Hands form a "hugging a tree" posture. Spoon surface vertical to the tatami, height level with chest. Pause 1–2 seconds to feel body alignment and relaxed energy flow. Remember: the "tree" is a metaphor for energy. You are holding and feeling qi, not just a physical object. 4 Scooping Water When scooping: Keep left hand relaxed, use two contact points to transmit force. Force originates from the Dantian (abdomen). Right hand guides the spoon, thumb slides along smoothly. Fingers remain mostly straight—the spoon is an extension of your fingers, which are extensions of your arm, which are extensions of your Dantian.

The movement comes from the abdomen, not just the hands. 5Advanced Layer: Intent → Energy → Form Intent moves first. Energy (qi) follows. Physical movement occurs last. Your intention leads the action; the spoon moves naturally. 6Core Principle The practice is not just about technique: Relaxation

Structural alignment Leveraging the wrist and arm Dantian-centered energy Intent-driven motion If the hands are tense, qi cannot flow. If qi is blocked, the spoon floats. If the spoon floats, the essence of tea practice is lost. This is the basic practice of using the bing spoon. In future lessons, we will explore cutting the tea cake and drinking with the spoon. If you have questions, feel free to leave a message. Thank you.

Key Points on Bowing and Prostration

Key Points on Performing (Bowing/Prostration) When it comes to , there are actually many important points to consider. Here's a step-by-step guide to proper practice: **Correct Way to Perform :** Use of the Abdomen: Only your abdomen should actively exert force and move. Other parts of the body move only as a result of the abdomen's movement. **Arm Arc:** Your arms should naturally form a gentle arc—up and down, without significant change throughout the movement. **Spine Alignment:** Your spine and the back of your head should stay in a straight line. This alignment is maintained from the starting seated position throughout the entire bow. **Body Descent:** How far should your body go down? When your palms naturally rest on the tatami mat without pressure, your body does not need to move further. Let your waist guide the hands downward until the palms naturally reach the mat. No extra force should be applied with the hands. **Hands Without Force:** During the descent, your hands should not push or press against the mat. They should remain completely relaxed. **Body as a Board:** The front of your body and your back should move as a single unit, like a flat board. As your abdomen moves, the “board” rotates slightly along the central axis without changing its overall structure. **Common Mistakes in :**

Chin Position: The chin is part of the upper body and its relative angle and position to the rest of the body should remain consistent. Many people either push it forward or tuck it too far; both are incorrect. **Spine Alignment:** Without sufficient core strength, the spine can bend incorrectly, or the hands may press into the tatami. **Mental State During :** The most crucial aspect of is your mental state. Bowing should be performed with respect, humility, and

gratitude. Without these, the movement becomes meaningless—like going through the motions mechanically. Integration of Mind and Body (): is not just physical. It's an exercise in knowing and doing simultaneously. Through this practice, your body connects with your inner mindset—respect, humility, and gratitude. Because the bowing movement lowers the body, it naturally supports cultivating these inner qualities, making the physical act a tool to deepen your mental and emotional awareness. Summary: Abdomen leads the movement. Arms follow a natural arc. Spine and head remain aligned. Hands stay relaxed, not pressing the mat. Chin and body posture maintain proper relative positions. Mental attitude of respect, humility, and gratitude is essential. This is the core purpose and meaning of in practice.

PART V

Music and the Arts as Cultivation

Touching the Guqin with Qi and Gentleness

When the fingers touch the strings of the Guqin, the transition must be extremely gentle. It is not a sudden strike, not a sharp “snap” against the string. There is no abrupt attack. Instead, the finger approaches softly, makes contact softly, and leaves softly. The entire movement is a tender transition—arriving gently, touching gently, and departing gently. Some friends have asked me to share more about the guqin. In truth, I am still a beginner. Altogether, I have taken just over a dozen lessons, and seven of those were three years ago. At that time, my fingers hurt too much, and I gave up. But deep down, I always knew that one day I would return to learning the guqin. It is such a powerful instrument for quieting the heart. This time, learning feels different. It is no longer as difficult as before. The main reason is that I have begun to learn how to use qi to sense the strings. The strength does not originate from tension in the fingers; it is transmitted from the dantian. Because of this, the hands are much more relaxed. My body and hands are increasingly at ease, and the sound that emerges is fuller and more capable of guiding one into a spacious, airy state. When the fingers are stiff and we pluck the string mechanically, even a single note sounds unpleasant. But when we use qi to play, the sound changes completely. The contact between finger and string becomes a gentle transition—never a harsh strike. The finger approaches softly, touches softly, and withdraws softly. This is similar to what we practice in tea ceremony: when lifting a bowl or handling any object, we do so with gentleness. There is no stiffness in the touch, no abrupt force. Everything is guided from the dantian.

When we return to sensing the strings from this center, the experience becomes entirely different. The more our awareness remains in the present moment, the more each note that arises becomes softer and cleaner. Yet words like “soft” or “pure” are not enough to describe it. Each note becomes something to savor. Every tone carries us into deeper stillness. We merge with the strings and fully sense their presence. With the pads and tips of our fingers, we feel the texture of the string. We treat it with tenderness. Internally, we hold specific heart methods—not only in the hands but also in the ears. Our ears must follow the origin of the sound and trace its destination. We can hear the subtle, slightly rough sliding sound between fingertip and string. That sliding sound is part of the music. When we are able to hear it, accept it, and even enjoy it, we enter a quieter and more tranquil state. Through this practice, the guqin becomes more than an instrument. It becomes a path toward stillness

Experiencing the Healing Power of Shakuhachi

Through Love and Mindfulness

Hello everyone, Now that the weather is cooler, I sometimes go out into my garden to play the shakuhachi. It feels more comfortable there, and I can connect with nature on a deeper level. Yesterday, I was listening to a video I recorded and noticed something very interesting. When I lie down completely relaxed and listen, I can feel vibrations in my eardrums—not just the eardrums, but throughout the cranial cavity. It feels like tiny bubbles are bursting continuously, creating a very pleasant sensation, almost like a gentle massage for the ears and head. I realized that this vibration is strongest when I play the shakuhachi with proper intention—using love, compassion, and a mindful heart toward all beings. You can try listening to the sounds I shared in yesterday’s video while lying down, completely relaxed. You’ll find that it has a truly massage-like effect on the body. I plan to share more experiences like this in the future. The energy of love and compassion is incredibly powerful—it genuinely affects the physical body in the subtle realm. These vibrations act as a type of massage that we usually cannot achieve through regular exercise. They help release deep blockages within the body through sound. It’s truly amazing. I hope everyone can practice the shakuhachi with mindful intention, benefiting both themselves and those around them. Now, I want to emphasize the correct posture for playing the shakuhachi. My shakuhachi teacher always stands while playing, often for many hours a day, and always stands upright. When playing, my legs are grounded, and my waist and abdomen are engaged but not stiff,

allowing energy to flow freely. Pay attention to your waist and back—especially for those of us who sit for long periods. Shoulders should be open and relaxed. If unsure how to do this, you can stand against a wall so that your entire back, from spine to head, including the shoulders, touches the wall. This posture may feel challenging, but the sound produced will be remarkably different. Today, I want to try playing a very simple, short passage with love. I also want to share that, to massage inner muscles through breath, it is more effective to play short sounds rather than long notes. This method trains smaller internal muscles, including those near the organs. I can demonstrate how this allows breathing to be rapid, free, and clear. The sound flows naturally, without pressure or control. If we play long notes, it is more difficult to avoid controlling the breath. I feel that my garden and the sky are filled with this free, beautiful sound. While long notes have some effect, the short-note method seems more effective in releasing inner tension. That's my sharing for today. If you have any questions, please feel free to leave a comment. Thank you.

Performing Arts as a Spiritual Practice

Yesterday, a friend of mine, an actor you may be familiar with, followed me on Xiaohongshu. He seems like a practitioner. Today, I want to share my thoughts: performing art is actually a very good spiritual practice tool. Why? First, a good actor must have a strong sense of faith. He must truly believe that he is the character. This is a faith at the level of God. I have shared before about the three elements—Spirit, Energy, and God—and how they influence each other: God represents faith, the concept in the mind. Energy is feeling, life force. Spirit is the body and the material world. For an actor, faith touches the character, creating a huge flow of energy. This energy becomes denser, forming the spirit of the character. The spirit then influences the actor's behavior, which is what the audience sees. In other words, good actors work from God → Spirit → Action, bringing a character fully to life. When an actor wears the character's clothes or enters the character's environment, he unconsciously brings more depth to the role. The spirit influences the spirit, and in turn strengthens his faith. Actors absorb the character's energy

If the character is positive, with love, responsibility, and family values, the actor absorbs these energies. If the character is a villain, selfish or evil, the actor absorbs negative energy unless he is already a highly cultivated practitioner with strong compassion. In any case, the actor learns not to judge; every feeling is a tool. If negative energy comes, it can leave without leaving a trace. So when choosing a character, it's better to select positive characters. The same principle applies to tea practice: every time we enter the tea class, our God reminds us to practice being a better self. We imagine

the ideal self, the state, the feelings, and behaviors we wish to embody. At the level of God, we touch the ideal self. At the level of Jin, the etiquette, rules, and processes of practice stimulate positive energy. This, in turn, affects our God-level perception. At the mind level, practice can directly influence Qi, helping us cultivate compassion, respect, harmony, and other positive qualities. Tea practice is essentially a performance of a better self. By slowly absorbing the energy and essence of this role, we are influenced by it and gradually improve. Everything comes from the Tao. We can find the Tao in every role, every job, and every form of art. That's all for today. If you have questions, please leave a comment. Thank you.

Guqin Meditation: Flowing with Sound and Silence

Guqin Meditation – Flowing with Sound and Silence Guqin Meditation is about relaxing the whole body and allowing yourself to fully experience sound. Relax your body completely, letting every muscle loosen. Allow all sound to flow naturally into your ears, and down through your entire body. Accept all sound without resistance. Notice the silence between sounds. Observe where the sound comes from and where it goes. Every sound arises from silence and returns to silence. Accept the entirety of existence, the flow of sound and the quiet between, and let yourself return to silence. This practice is about being fully present, experiencing the natural flow of energy and sound, and connecting with the stillness that underlies all vibrations.

PART VI

**Daily Living, Practice,
and Embodied Wisdom**

Eating as Practice

Turning a Simple Dessert into Cultivation Today the weather is beautiful — blue sky, white clouds, and rows of old plane trees lining the street. I’ve heard many of these trees are nearly a hundred years old. Whenever I pass a tree, I feel it is an opportunity for connection. One breath, one tree. I’m sitting in a dessert shop today, and I want to share something simple but important: how to truly enjoy a piece of food. Before eating, I always begin with a short prayer. This is not a religious ritual, but a practice of awareness — and it is an important one. Why? Because this food will become part of my body. So before taking the first bite, I place my attention fully on the food. When the mind is present, I consciously evoke three qualities: Health, Vitality, and Gratitude. These are the gifts food offers us. Health. Vitality. Something to be thankful for. Where attention goes, energy follows. When the mind rests on the food, intention guides the flow of energy. By focusing on these three qualities, I invite them into the body through this act of eating

When I feel that the food is “filled” with health, vitality, and gratitude, I begin to eat. But the practice does not stop there. While eating, I try to let the pleasant sensation move beyond the tongue. Instead of tasting only with the mouth, I allow the whole body to taste. Every cell participates. The enjoyment spreads through the entire system. The same applies to water. Before drinking, I pause and truly receive it. Water may seem tasteless, yet its purity is its flavor. I let the whole body feel nourished — a gentle, soft hydration reaching every cell. Today the water has just a hint of lemon, very light and refreshing. When you experience food this way — with the whole body — something shifts. Energy begins to circulate. A

light layer of sweat may appear, not from effort, but from activation. It feels fresh. Just now, I noticed my lower back straighten naturally. It was not forced. It happened because the energy began to flow more freely. Perhaps it is not the food alone, but the way of sensing it — allowing the body to fully receive — that opens circulation. This is why cultivating energy awareness matters. When we drink tea, we can do the same: feel the flavor with the whole body, allow its energy to circulate through us. In tea practice, this sensitivity is trained deliberately, so that eventually it becomes natural in daily life. Even when eating dessert. Even when eating rice. Even when drinking water. Finally, I want to say something about discussion. Culture is not arrogance or prejudice. True culture is openness — the ability to understand, to include, to recognize that all things are interconnected. It is seeing the limitations of others with compassion, and responding with respect. A simple dessert can become a practice. A glass of water can become nourishment at every level. The difference lies in awareness

How to Avoid Choosing the Wrong Teacher

Today, I want to share how to avoid choosing the wrong teacher or master. In fact, more than 90% of people have already made the wrong choice. We live in an age of illusion—the light of truth is not always clear, and many people are confused in the dark. So it's important to understand how to make the right choice. First, you need to know that there are two types of teachers you might be attracted to, similar to the music you enjoy. The first type is music that truly nourishes you and helps you improve. The second type is music that resonates with your current energy and is popular. It feels familiar or passionate, like love or excitement. Listening to it makes you feel understood—but every time you listen, you relive old pain. This music may actually hurt you. I want to give an example from an ancient zither song that my teacher recently asked me to learn. Many of you have heard the story of Sima Xiangru and Zhou Wenjun. The lyrics include words like: “” When I read this, I thought: why should I learn this song? True love does not make me fall or go mad. True love brings peace, calm, and positive energy. If someone cannot bring you this calm—if they drive you to madness or destruction—then that person does not deserve your love

Back to choosing a teacher: The first type is a teacher who nourishes and elevates you. This is the right choice. The second type is someone who makes you feel recognized or excited, whose ideas thrill you—but may also manipulate or PUA you, making you feel unworthy. This is the wrong choice. A good teacher helps you feel peaceful and calm, like a gentle stream nourishing you. Sometimes

when I speak with my master, if I am very tired, I fall asleep during the call. He says, “Listening to wisdom can make you fall asleep, because it relaxes you.” If a teacher makes you feel relaxed and calm, they may be the right teacher. If a teacher constantly excites or overwhelms you, even if they are highly accomplished, they are not the right teacher for you. I hope everyone is fortunate enough to meet the right teacher or master in their life. This is today’s sharing. If you have questions, feel free to leave a comment. Thank you.

The Practice of Upright Seated Posture

(Seiza / Vajra Sitting) The posture I am sitting in now is called upright sitting. It is also known as kneeling sitting or Vajra posture. During the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period, as well as the Qin and Han dynasties, our ancestors commonly sat in this way. Later, influenced by foreign cultures, we gradually began using chairs—and today, even sofas have become the norm. The human mind is very clever. It constantly makes things easier and more comfortable. Sitting has become increasingly effortless. However, while comfort has increased, our physical and mental health has gradually declined. Why did the ancients choose to sit upright in this way? If you observe my current posture and compare it with how many people sit today—leaning, slouching, reclining on sofas or chairs—you will notice a clear difference. Upright sitting naturally appears centered and dignified. “Centered” and “dignified” are not merely external appearances; they represent an energetic state. In this posture, it is easier to activate positive, upright, and constructive energy. From the perspective of energy, when it becomes balanced and centered, the body also becomes healthier and more aligned

But is upright sitting something you can just do casually? Or does it require specific principles? It absolutely requires learning. Many people misunderstand this posture. Some assume that the body weight should rest mainly on the heels. In fact, that is incorrect. The body’s weight should be evenly distributed along the lower legs—from the knees down to the feet. How can you achieve this? First, lift your body slightly. Then slowly lower yourself down. As you approach your heels, allow only a small portion of

weight to rest on them. The majority of the weight should be supported by the lower legs. The thighs must also remain engaged and active. If you are unsure how to activate your lower legs, use this method of lifting and gradually lowering to find the correct balance. The second key point concerns the lower back and pelvis. Many people believe that arching the lower back and lifting the hips is correct. This is also a mistake. The area at the base of the spine (often referred to in traditional practice as the “Mingmen” region) should be gently activated. Instead of arching, allow the lower back to settle and flatten slightly backward. When this happens, the abdomen naturally engages. If you overly arch the back, the abdominal area cannot properly activate. Once the lower back settles and the abdomen engages, the body will naturally seek balance. The thighs and torso will form roughly a 90-degree angle, meaning the upper body will lean forward very slightly—just a subtle inclination, not exaggerated. Place your hands gently on your thighs. Let your gaze fall diagonally downward. The head should feel as though it is lightly lifting upward. Sense a vertical line extending from your tailbone, up through the spine, through the back of the head, and all the way to the crown. Feel this line being gently lengthened upward and downward at the same time. Just a slight extension is enough. Relax the shoulders. When the core and spine are properly engaged, the rest of the body—including the shoulders—naturally relaxes. In fact, the entire body is engaged, though the lower legs, thighs, and core work more actively. Other areas—such as the chest and neck—remain in a state of relaxed alertness: not tense, but not collapsed. This is why the posture appears centered and dignified. In such a state, healthy and upright energy can be more easily activated. Let me also demonstrate what an incorrect posture looks like. If I collapse like this, with my weight resting mainly on my feet and my core disengaged, the posture loses its effect. Correct upright sitting requires considerable strength. Because of this intensity, it is natural to rest occasionally.

Especially in practices like tea ceremony, where we must sit for extended periods, it may not be possible to maintain perfect posture at all times. Being able to hold it for five or ten minutes is already quite good. This is what I wanted to share today about upright sitting. If you have any questions, feel free to leave a message. Thank you.

Afterword

At the end of this journey, what remains is not just knowledge—but awareness.

This book by Sophie Chen is not meant to be read once and set aside. It is meant to be lived, revisited, and quietly reflected upon. Each chapter offers a mirror, not instructions—a way to see ourselves more clearly rather than a way to become something else.

Throughout these pages, we explored human nature, the complexity of relationships, the discipline of growth, and the subtle world of energy and inner practice. Again and again, one truth gently emerges: everything begins within. Our perception shapes our experience. Our awareness shapes our reality.

The ideas in this book may at times feel simple, and at other times deeply challenging. That is their nature. Truth often appears ordinary on the surface, yet reveals depth when practiced sincerely.

This is not a book of quick answers. It is a companion for a longer path—a path of observing, accepting, and gradually transforming oneself. Whether it is learning to accept our limitations, understanding others with empathy, or cultivating inner balance, the essence lies in consistent, gentle practice.

As you close this book, the real work begins.

Return to your daily life—with a little more awareness.
Observe your thoughts—with a little more honesty.
Treat yourself and others—with a little more compassion.

If even a small part of this book stays with you—perhaps a single idea, a single practice, or a single moment of clarity—then its purpose has been fulfilled

Transform your life from within.



In *Awakening Through Practice*, Sophie Chen shares timeless insights for cultivating self-discipline, restoring energy, and nurturing inner growth. *Combining ancient wisdom and contemporary practices*, this book offers a path to balance and presence in everyday life.

Embrace the journey of daily practice and discover your true potential within.



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