

Dao Yin

Dao Yin means “leading.” Chinese people in old times learned that the body in different postures will make the chi flow in different ways which were sometimes beneficial and sometimes not. Dao Yin is very old. Its long and rich history can be traced back 4,000 years in ancient China. Usually movement and special breathing was combined in order to first increase the chi circulation and then lead the chi to specific areas. Ba Duan Jin is an excellent classic method of Dao Yin. It uses different postures to twist, contract or expand certain parts of our body, to increase and lead the chi circulation to improve the health. Dao Yin is one of the source or original ideas of Tai Chi. The other three are the Tao te Ching, Jinglo theory (the pathways of chi) and General Qu Ji Guang’s 32 movements. It is possible that Dao Yin will become very popular the next few years.

BA DUAN JIN

Ba Duan Jin, also known as “**eight piece brocade.**” It is a fairly well known and popular set of eight exercises which is performed daily to promote flexibility and internal health. As you will soon see, the flexibility portion of the exercises is obvious. What many people do not appreciate is how the set promotes good health. Just as in the forms of the internal martial arts, the specific movements serve to open pathways of chi and massage certain internal organs. This set of exercises originated in the Shaolin Temple. Even today this set is one of the first things that the new monks are taught once they have been accepted into the Temple. This shall be the first of two articles detailing Ba Duan Jin. I will explain the first four exercises here and save the last four for the next issue of IMAR.

The key to learning these exercises is not so much trying to mimic the movements as trying to duplicate the feeling. In each exercise I will explain the basic movements and breathing pattern. Equally important is that you strive for the feeling that I describe in each exercise. Without the feeling you will not be benefiting internally.

SUPPORTING HEAVEN



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Begin by standing with your feet about shoulder width apart. Relax and clear your mind. As you inhale slowly, raise your hands up along your center line and over your head. Keep the body straight. Rotate your hands so that your palms face up and the tips of your middle fingers should be pointing toward each other. If you lack the flexibility to point the fingers, just do the best you can and do not force anything. As your hands raise your head follows until you are also looking up. Your hands shall be rotating to maintain the alignment of the finger tips as you push your palm toward the sky. You should FEEL the areas along your sides from your waist to your arm pit stretch and open up. Hold this position for a few seconds and exhale slowly as your hands separate and go back down to your sides. This exercise improves your digestion and aids in the absorption of food into your system. Perform this exercise eight times.

BOW AND ARROW

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Begin this exercise by getting into a horse stance. Keep the body straight. Start with your hands in front of your sternum with loosely clenched fists. Look to the left and you will begin to slowly inhale as the left hand extends to the side at shoulder level. At the same time the right hand is drawing back as if you are going to shoot an arrow from the imaginary bow. You should FEEL the sternum just above the solar plexus open. It may

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take a while to feel this but you should focus your execution of this exercise with that goal in mind. Hold the posture for a few seconds and exhale as the hands return to their starting position in front of your chest. Repeat the exercise on the other side as you look to the right and slowly inhale. The benefit of this exercise is in the opening of the **lungs**. Repeat this exercise four times on each side.

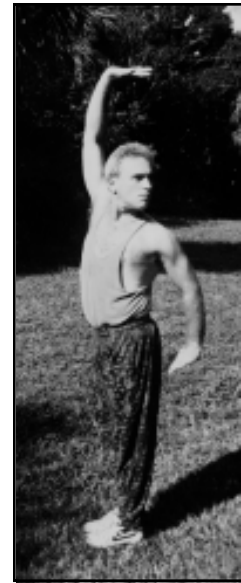
HOLDING UP ONE ARM

Begin with your feet about an inch or two apart. As you begin to inhale slowly, look over your left shoulder. As you begin to look over your shoulder, the right hand is rising along your center and reaching above the head as it slowly rotates counterclockwise to its maximum. Keep the body straight. The palm is facing up. Simultaneously, the left hand is extending to the rear directly behind the small of the back as it rotates clockwise. The palm faces down. Rotate the body to its maximum without straining as the right hand pushes up and the left hand pushes down.



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Hold this posture for a few seconds and exhale slowly as you return to face front and perform the exercise on the opposite side. You will then be looking over your right shoulder while inhaling. The left hand will now be rotating palm side up in a clockwise direction over your head. The right hand is facing palm down as it pushes and rotates counterclockwise near the small of your back. The FEELING is an opening all along the side of the body and a bit of the abdominal area along the same side as the raised hand. This exercise helps the spleen and stomach. Perform this four times on each side.



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LOOKING BACKWARD

Begin with your feet together and your palms at your sides. Rotate your upper body 180 degrees to the left as you inhale while leaving your feet facing straight ahead. Keep the body straight. Hold the posture for a few seconds and exhale as you return to face forward. Repeat the exercise to the right side. The FEELING here is a massaging of the area between the shoulder blades. This is the same area where a parent pats the back of a child to calm him/her down when the stomach is upset. The purpose of this exercise is to calm the body and eliminate moodiness. Perform this four times on each side.



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I have been doing these exercise every day for 7 months and have personally benefited a great deal. While they are quite simple, please do not dismiss them as simplistic. Like so many things in the internal martial arts, a lot of thought went into the movements and method of breathing. Give the exercises a chance and concentrate on the feeling. In the next issue I shall detail the remaining four exercises.

by James Dees

Allen Brown in Photos



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EIGHT PIECE BROCADE

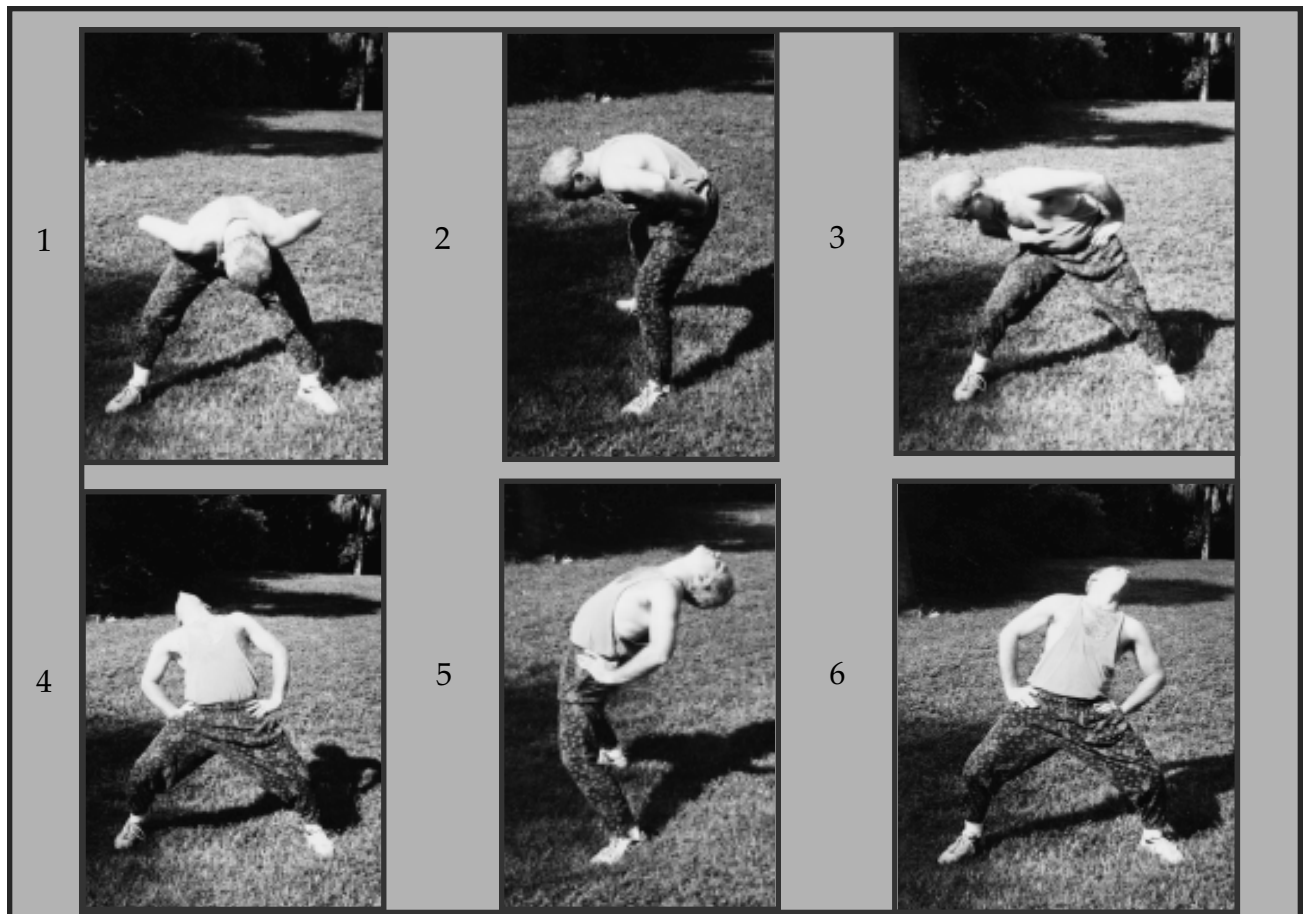
Ba Duan Jin - Part 2

By James Dees

In part one of Ba Duan Jin I explained the first four exercises. Here I would like to conclude with the remaining four. Once again, I would like to remind the reader that the key to benefiting from these simple, yet profound, exercises is to seek the feeling of the individual movement. Do not just try to copy the external movement.

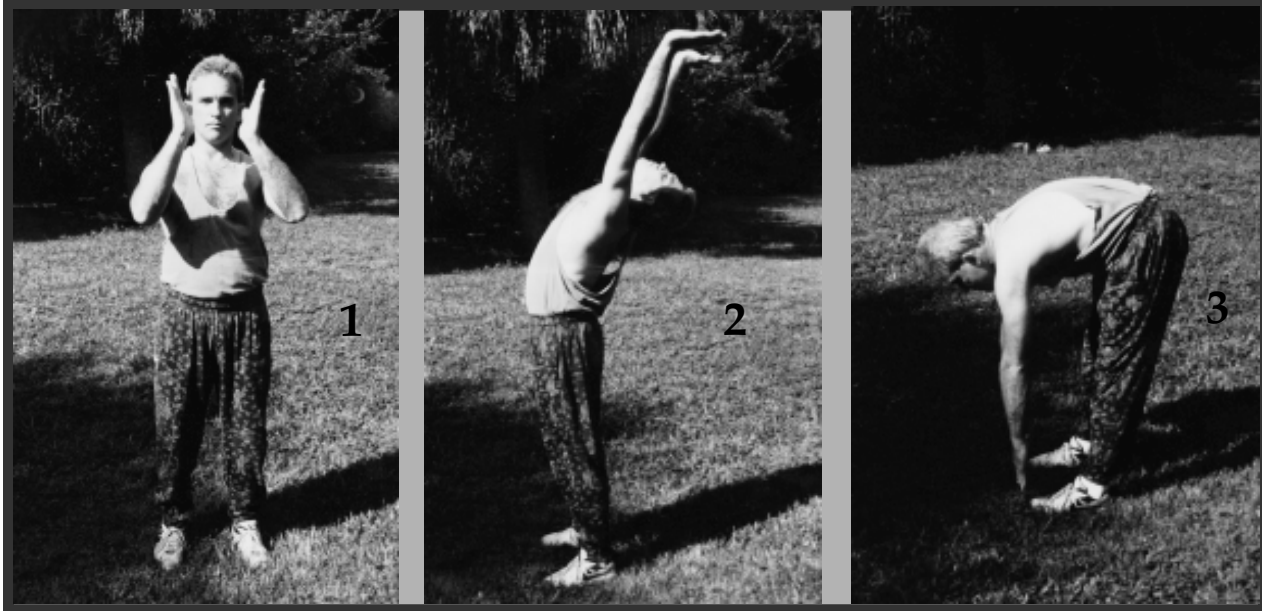
Rotate the Body

Exercise number five is Rotate the body. Begin with a fairly wide stance and place your hands on the hips. Bend forward at the waist and rotate counterclockwise emphasizing the movement of the hips. Inhale as the head goes back and exhale as it is brought forward. You will make four rotations counterclockwise and then switch directions. It really does not matter which direction you start rotating as long as you switch after four. You will do a total of eight repetitions. The key feeling is a massaging of the lower spine as your head bend forward and the sternum as the head bend back. This exercise is said to help relieve stress.



Bending the Body

Exercise number six is called Bending the body. Begin by standing with your feet together and raise your hands above your head. Bend over at the waist and try to touch the ground. Hold the position for a couple of seconds and then raise up again so that your hands are over your head. Repeat this eight times. Of course, do not bounce and do not force yourself to touch the ground if you are unable. With time you will improve. Your breathing should be normal. Personally, I find it best to exhale as I bend down. This exercise helps open the lower back and massages the kidney. You should feel the lower back open during this exercise.

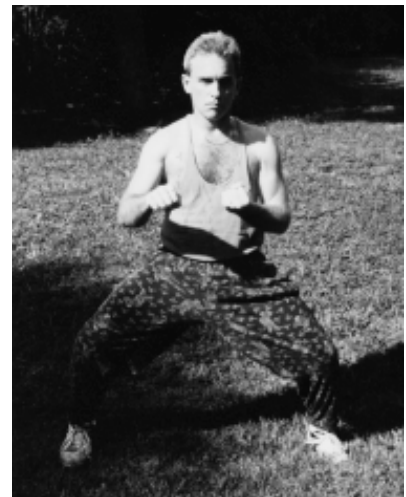


Holding the Fist



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Begin in a horse stance and keep the hip back and spine straight. Chamber both fists with tension. With your right fist execute a slow straight punch with maximum tension to work the muscle as you inhale. Draw back the fist slowly as you exhale. Repeat this with the opposite fist. Do four repetitions with each fist. This exercise helps tone muscles. You should feel as though you are pushing against a tremendous force as you are punching. You



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should also feel as though a great force is opposing you as the punch returns to chamber.

Standing on the Toes



The eighth and final exercise is called Standing on the toes. Begin with your feet together and your arms at your sides. Breathe normally. Raise up on your toes and drop all of the weight back into the heel. You should feel very relaxed and allow gravity to take control of your falling body. This exercise helps drop the chi. Do only seven repetitions of this exercise.

Do this set of eight exercises daily and your health will benefit and your body will be more flexible and loose. At least that has been my experience. I try to do this set at least once a day and sometimes twice. This set of exercise has become fairly well known and has a been practiced in the Shaolin temple for many years. I do not believe that this set would have endured unless there was some merit to it. I encourage everyone to try the exercises



and see what you think. When I began doing them I was very stiff. As a result of these exercises, and a couple more, the flexibility of my body has improved a great deal. Like the art of Hsing-i chuan, this appears very simple on the surface, but there is deep meaning and benefit here for those who invest the time and energy to practice.