

A Taiji Student's "Bill of Rights"

Taijiquan is a mind-body movement art with a distinctive cultural history and certain widely touted benefits. As there is no accreditation or certification process for teachers, anyone can claim to be a taijiquan teacher: one who has learned from a video tape, taken a single course or weekend workshop, or even devised their own form. Prospective students have no protection from charlatans, no guarantee that the teacher they find is teaching authentic taijiquan or that they will garner the promised benefits. We created this document to advise students of the things they have a right to expect from any legitimate taijiquan teacher. It also points out to those who would be responsible teachers the obligations they owe to neophytes.

Taiji Students have a right:

1. to know the extent and nature of their teacher's study of the art (should be at least 5 years with "real teachers"-- not merely videotapes or books-- and should have included some apprentice teaching and study of the art of teaching)
2. to know their teacher's connection through successive "generations" of teachers to an established lineage or authentic Chinese heritage
3. to be introduced to an authentic form of taijiquan, and to know the history of the style they are studying
4. to know that there are many equally authentic and effective styles, but that some exercises claiming to be "taijiquan," "Tai Chi," or claiming to have integrated taijiquan with other arts are not necessarily equally authentic and effective
5. to know that movement must exhibit certain core characteristics-- defined in the three original taijiquan classics-- to be genuine taijiquan
6. to know that taijiquan can be dangerous if it is performed improperly, and that the teacher places the highest priority on fostering safe practice
7. to pay modest, "going rates" for instruction
8. to be referred by their teacher to good books and other resources on taijiquan, and to be informed about the activities of the larger taijiquan community
9. to be exposed to high-level performances, preferably above their teacher's level, by watching videotapes of recognized masters or by attending tournaments, demonstrations, workshops, etc.
10. to make steady progress and see benefits with diligent effort and regular practice
11. to expect appropriate, professional behavior from their teacher, without sexual pressures or interpersonal entanglements

12. to know the requirements their teacher feels they would need to fulfill in order to become a taiquan teacher.

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