

The How and Why of Internal Practice

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There are two schools of thought on practice of the Internal Arts – “just do what the teacher says and don’t worry about why” and “appreciate the reason behind what you are doing”. I am by nature a follower of the second method, I really seem to need an understanding of how things work. Here’s how I understand the process.

Goal: The goal of internal work is self-realization, enlightenment. This means directly experiencing the truth of the universe through the spirit. This is different from the typical understanding of things through the logical mind and the filters of the ego.

Benefits: Aside from the obvious clarity provided by self-realization, there are numerous side benefits along the way – creativity, improved health, stress relief etc. The benefits are all encompassing and can be directed at any area of life that aligns with the universe.

Foundation: A quote from Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin sums up the foundation of practice. “We are not physical beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a physical experience.” The purpose of internal work is to secure the ability to live from the perspective of our spiritual being, i.e., self-realization. We practice to reveal our true self.

How: Every-thing is energy. This is the fundamental premise of quantum physics and all legitimate spiritual practice. We are energy beings, and we have the innate (though often shrouded) ability to connect with and direct those energies. The practice methods of the internal arts use the energetic connections of the body-mind to remove the shroud that impedes self-realization.

Implementation: The internal path is typically divided into two overlapping and complementary approaches - movement, and stillness.

Movement – movement as dynamic energy work, aligning, connecting, moving, and opening the body systems. Clearing the way for the energy flows to come.

Stillness – stillness typically utilizes meditation and proceeds in two phases; first train the mind to be still and then from stillness be one with the consciousness of the universe and the true self.

Principles: There are three critical principles of practice, ting (聽), song (鬆) and wuwei (無爲). These are applied consistently to practice.

Ting (deep awareness) – awareness of what to change precedes change. It is the glue of awareness that holds practice together and makes change possible.

Song (release) – release is the action enabled by awareness, release applies to all emotional, mental, and physical stress.

Wuwei (non-doing) – will / intention enables wuwei, creating change via the connection to the consciousness of the universe. Wuwei exemplifies being rather than doing.

Take the points above and apply them to your internal practice. Internal work need not be complex – it can be as simple as sitting in meditation and taking a walk.