



American
Organization for
Bodywork
Therapies of
Asia

Jin Shou Tuina™: Long Definition

“Hsu Hong-Chi said that you are only half of a Gong Fu teacher if you don’t know the medicine. Anybody can learn to fight and anybody can teach some one else how to fight, but the ability to put people out there and be responsible for the physical and mental well being requires that the teacher understands his students on a much deeper level than just showing them fighting techniques.”

— Vince Black

Jin Shou Tuina is the name that has been given to the tuina practiced by the North American Tang Shou Tao gong fu family. NATSTA is an organization dedicated to preserving and disseminating traditional Chinese internal martial arts and medicine. NATSTA was founded by our teacher, Vince Black, at the request of his teacher, Hsu Hong-Chi, a Taiwanese master of Xingyi Quan and Chinese medicine. Our lineage continues back through Hung I-Hsiang and Zhang Junfeng in Taiwan to Li Cunyi and Gao Yisheng in northern China. All these men were experts in both the internal martial arts of Xingyiquan and Baguazhang and Chinese medicine. Hsu Hong-Chi was so renowned for his medical skills that he was called "Golden Hand" and it is from this we have chosen the name for our tuina system.

Jin Shou Tuina™ uses the standard repertoire of hand techniques such as rolling, pressing, pushing, rotating, shaking, etc., along with a "whole body sequence" that teaches various protocols for combining techniques to address specific areas of the body and specific conditions. The true distinction of a Jin Shou Tuina™ practitioner is the fact that he or she is the product of the Tang Shou Tao philosophy and method of training. The Tang Shou Tao philosophy is that Chinese medicine is a complete method of primary health care. Tuina and other forms of bodywork are considered the front line of primary health care, but must be used in accordance with and as part of the whole body of Chinese medicine. Chapter Twelve of the Nei Jing Su Wen tells us "the wise man treats the same sickness with diverse methods." Thus our teachers have taught us to strive for understanding and mastery of all aspects of Chinese medicine, rather than to focus on one or another "specialty." Accordingly, in addition to hand techniques, the Jin Shou Tuina™ system uses moxibustion, cupping, external herbal medicine, dietary advice and therapeutic exercise to aid the healing process. When appropriate, licensed practitioners also use acupuncture and internal herbal medicine. Practitioners must develop a solid understanding of Chinese medical theory and be able to diagnose and treat according to the Eight Principles, Meridian Theory and pattern differentiation.

The Tang Shou Tao method is the method of the internal boxing schools originating in northern China. Personal cultivation through the study of attack and defense skills is emphasized, and this has been found to provide profound results when practiced diligently. Internal boxing is a process of training the body to move in a unified way that progresses from large whole body movements to ever smaller and subtler movements. The beginning level exercises can resemble a typical gym class to a casual observer. The purpose is to teach the integration of breath, relaxation and obvious strength. There are many pushups, sit-ups, kicks and stretches. This is Qigong applied to strength training. On the other hand, advanced level exercises might be no more than standing meditation, or many repetitions of simple movements. This teaches cultivation of Jing, Qi and Shen and a refined strength. Although this is primarily aimed at developing martial skill, over time the body becomes strong, forceful and yet gentle, combining yin and yang skillfully with a calm and balanced energy. This is perfect foundation for the practice of bodywork.

Injury management is also emphasized for the obvious reason that individuals seriously training a martial art may incur a range of injuries. Techniques have been specifically developed to manage the stresses required by the demanding workouts of our boxing systems. These range from routine post work-out maintenance to techniques for reviving an unconscious fighter. Jin Shou Tuina™ provides many strategies to manage injuries ranging from minor bruises to major traumas. These systems, both the martial and the medical, are the product of highly developed methods of physical culture and centuries of clinical research. A practitioner who has gone through this training will gain invaluable experience and insight about reality as described in the Chinese medical classics and the method of cultivating health.

Both the philosophy and the method lead us to emulate our teachers and grandteachers in striving to become a "superior practitioner" who understands the human condition in the terms laid out in the Nei Jing, and is able to use the complete repertoire of Chinese medicine to fulfill the ideal set forth in Chapter Two of the Su Wen; "To nurse sickness or repress rebellions when they break out is similar to the man who waits to be thirsty in order to sink a well." We believe strongly in the fundamental utility of traditional training methods in both martial arts and medicine. We are working to find ways of preserving these and making them available in a form that is functional in our society today. It is vitally important to us that the skills we possess today cannot be separated from the self-sacrifice, dedication and open heartedness of our teachers and grand teachers. To be part of a tradition carries with it responsibility; we strive to honor and further the teachings we have been fortunate enough to receive. These experiences and insights are what guide a person to become a Jin Shou Tuina™ practitioner and distinguish us as a distinct bodywork system.