

“And what’s so important at this level of *chi sau*, where your unconscious self-defense starts to express itself without you programming a particular drill or whatever—it’s more like, ‘ok, we’re going to do some freestyle, you’re initiating, I’m going to respond, and we see what happens’—the *chung chi*, the forward sticking energy...so we have *chi sau*, which is sticking hands—well, the sticking doesn’t come from me just maintaining contact, it comes from some pressure that’s pushed from the pelvis and *daan tin*, and transmits or conducts all the way up from pelvis to shoulder to elbow to forearm and your wrist, and that’s where we’re sticking, is on the wrist and the forearm, but it’s coming from this energy that comes from the *daan tin*, as opposed to me pushing down with some force with my wrist, my hand, or my arms. So if I have forward-sticking energy, which is this forward intention on centerline, always pressing against my partner’s techniques, the moment they open up a little hole, because there’s this constant pressure like water pressing against a dam—is the metaphor I use in class a lot—and the hole opens up in the dam, then that water doesn’t think ‘oh, should I go through this?’, its nature is to move into the space. And through osmosis, all the rest of the water follows. So for us, it’s like that impetus to fill a space is always sprung-loaded in the *chi sau*. And when my partner gives me an opportunity or leaves a hole open, I will fill that space with proper technique. And I’ll do it without having to think about it.

“So *chi sau* and the forward *chung chi* are really, really critical. Critical for the unconscious expression of all your training to come out naturally. Without that, if I have my hands and I’m doing *chi sau* with somebody and then their hands move or leave or there’s a hole, but I don’t have any forward energy pressing into there, I’ll feel, ‘oh, there’s an empty space here, hmm, what should I do?’ because there’s no hands there anymore, there’s just this emptiness, and then I’ve got these two hands on the centerline, ‘well, geez, I can sort of do anything,’ but again it doesn’t come out right away, so it’s going to be too slow, and then whatever you decide may not be the right technique.”

E: “Well, also, in an actual martial situation, I mean, when we start *chi sau*, we’re standing still, but in an actual martial situation, there’s most likely going to be forward energy coming towards you and so if you’re not, also just from that basic point, if you don’t have any engaged forward intent, the person’s going to plow through you.”

S: “Well exactly and, again, in a fight, there’s movement towards each other, right, to do harm, but what we do, is we train to have this forward intention coming from our *daan tin*, the core of our body, instead of my upper shoulders, back, neck, arms, fist—so I’m not pressing down with force, with rigid energy; I’m spring-loading energy from my core through relaxed structure. So what I have is, it’ll feel very different but, my structure will actually be stronger using *chung chi*, coming from the pelvis, than someone’s force coming from their upper body muscles. But the thing is: is that I’m still going to have the ability for sensitivity and change because my arms are relaxed; they’re locked almost into a position because they’re forcing with muscle tension. So if they try and force something, I’m going to be able to change really quickly and hit, whereas they’re going to be stuck in these sort of thick muscle contracted positions, and then they’ll want to punch with this rigidity. So again I’m going to have advantages there.

“One of the beautiful things in our *mook jong*, wooden dummy training, is when we work the dummy, we’re basically training against something big, solid, and rigid. And right on contact, we change. If you feel anything that’s too rigid, you just keep changing the line, and then a counter-attack on a new angle. So that’s what we do: we try and force somebody, through better structure and forward *chung chi* energy, to get them to sort of like tense up a bit because they feel this really intense energy coming

towards them, but it's relaxed. But for them, because they haven't trained *chung chi*, their typical response, stress response, is going to be to go tight, and then I got them. Then they're in the Wing Chun trap."

E: "Then they're the dummy."

S: "Yeah. Except this one I get to hit. That's the linkage with the *chung chi*, the forward-sticking energy, and the *chi sau*, the sticking-hands. The sticking energy doesn't come from pushing the hands. All I want to do is make sure that my arms are going forward, straight-line centerline [45:00], and the *chung chi* is pushing behind that. And then I wait. I do my basic roll, with the *tan sau*, *fook sau*, *bong sau*, but I'm just waiting, waiting for a hole to emerge, whether my forward *chung chi* is going to open up their structure, or they're going to get tense. So that really speaks about Wing Chun fight strategy. I want to either open up the centerline, having better structure and forward *chung chi* so I can hit them, or I want to force them to leave centerline, in which case my straight-line is going to get there sooner, or I'm going to force them into tension, which is I can move around them like the *mook jong*. So these are basically the three scenarios, in terms of fight philosophy in Wing Chun, that we trained for to create for ourselves but then to be successful at it. I do not, as much as I can, I do not engage in any other fight scenario than that, because I don't have the training for that.

"That's why I never initiate. Because when I initiate, I'm basically giving an opening to somebody, so I want to wait for them to come to me, whether it's in *chi sau* or a fight or whatever else too, so I can now correspond with my response to it.

"So, again, one of the sayings we have in our system is: "He moves first, I hit first." So what that means is, you know we follow that, so we always make sure that if we're going to get into a confrontation, number one, we're never the aggressor, which is just a really amazing ethical, moral thing to do, and have that based as a principle in the system; and then with that we also train that, 'ok, you may move first, but I'm going to hit first.' And so we train for that.

"I'm always responding to—and I've said this in class many times before—your training in Wing Chun, and the nature of the art, and then when the expression of it in a fight, is that your opponent is always going to determine how you're going to hit them. I'm not going to have a plan. All I know is I'm going to go to centerline, and get contact, and from that point on, it's the other person, basically whatever they do, that's going to decide how they're going to get hit. Based on a movement, an angle, whatever else, because my Wing Chun will find the hole, I'll fill the space with the appropriate technique, and I won't know what that is until it actually shows up in the moment. So for me that's the brilliance of this martial art, and the simplicity of it as well. It's complex, in terms of the training and all the things you need to do, and it's certainly not easy, but it's simple in terms of what you're trying to actually accomplish: centerline, centerline, centerline. I never get hit; I hit anytime I want."

"What else do I want to say about the *chi sau*? You know, we talked about sensations being the key factor. Anytime our eyes are open, it's almost impossible to stop the visual information getting processed in our brain and taking up some space. So we do the blind-folded *chi sau*. What that does is it allows us more bandwidth to really drop in to felt-sense of what's going on and to not have the distraction of the visual, so we get to really cultivate that skill and really deepen those neural pathways, and really noticing subtle changes in someone's balance, or if they're on or off centerline, or if it's

rigidity or relaxation, or whatever it is. That is more advanced sort of level of the training, is you put blindfolds on and, the only rule is you don't disengage. And you can say well what are you going to do if someone disengages? Well, great, I guess they don't want to fight. But as a training method, as long as I have contact, I can find you even if you start moving around me, as long as I've got an arm, and this is where your *chi sau* training helps you, but also the *mook jong*, because the *mook jong* always delivers, you just follow the arms right to the hit. So as long as I have at least one arm if not two, I know exactly where the centerline is. Even as it's moving, my arms will just continue to find it, because I'm using the other person's arms or limbs as pathways or guides into the sweet spot. Because I know that path so many times from the practice or also playing on the *mook jong*."

E: "So is the idea with blindfold, then, when you take it off, you've learnt somehow to listen, be more sensitive, to your tactile sense over your visual sense, so you don't put as much credence in the visual?"

S: "Yeah, and you can have more confidence. And this is a thing: I do this in class sometimes without having to put the blindfold on, like I'll give a drill in *chi sau* [50:00], and people are doing it, and you're doing step one and step two and step three, and they're really engaged in sort of left-brain, right-brain, left-brain, right-brain, you know, back-and-forth, trying to think about it to remember, but then also want to feel it to see if it works, so they're in that struggle of going back and forth. And after I see that they've done it enough times, they have the rudimentary movements, I'll either come up to them and I'll engage them with the *chi sau*, and I'll say 'go, don't think about it,' and then they'll do something and it's like 'oh my god, wow that was ten times better than me thinking about doing it,' but it just comes out. Or I'll just playfully walk by somebody while they're training and I'll give them a little *lan sau* and then all of a sudden their *chum kiu* turns and they've got the *jong sau* out and it's like, so where did that come from? You didn't train that directly. Or this really funky footwork will come out. I take their balance; it's something that you would only see maybe playing on the *mook jong*, but somebody who's doing *chum kiu* can now do that because the principles of my balance, structure, all of that have been trained, the body just naturally finds that place.

"So at some point in time you have to get the left-brain out of the way of the right-brain's complete brilliance. This is one of the other paradoxes: I say to beginners, you really are much better than you think you are, but you're still not that good. So you're not that good, because you're a beginner, but you're much better than you think you are when you're training because you're thinking when you're training, you're not just pure experience, pure authentic, spontaneous movement, which is where your martial brilliance is. It's always good for them to remind themselves of that, and just to have some playful experiences. Where it's not so much programming left-brain; it's just like, 'ok, come and do something and see what happens.' Just to sort of see, ok, what can come out <?>."