

The Bubbling Spring

The importance of this point in Tai Chi practice is multi-faceted. In terms of a postural and balance guide, the idea is that when the weight falls properly on this point one has aligned the weight of the upper body correctly in respect to the base of the lower body. The feeling of this correct alignment is that the foot, even of a weight bearing leg, should be soft and relaxed. It's interesting to note that most of our muscular usage (some tests say as much as 80%) is compensation for poor balance. So as our balance and posture improve, we become more efficient in our muscular use, not only conserving energy, but also freeing the body to move which is a prime contributor to the strength element in Tai Chi. The awareness of the desired feeling of the foot being soft and relaxed is one of the most important indicators of this correct body relationship.

On the energetic level, the Bubbling Spring represents the gate that either permits or inhibits the "Earth Chi" from rising up and entering the body. Once again, the prime factor here is balance. If the balance is good, the foot relaxes, and the energy is permitted to flow into the body. If the balance is poor and the foot is tense, then the energy is blocked. This actually describes a very important aspect of Tai Chi both as a martial art and a health tool. The importance of Chi or vitality is understood in all aspects of the practice, but the quality that ultimately determines how much Chi one accesses is not force or effort or desire, but balance.

To find this alignment, start with your feet. The balls and heels of your feet should feel evenly weighted. The center of your weight should feel as though it floats in the center of the arch of your foot just behind the balls of your foot. From there move up through your ankles, knees and hips, seeking a sense of stacking them centrally one above the other. Moving past your hips, point your tailbone toward the ground so that it isn't shifted forward, backward, or to either side. Then extend this feeling of stacking up your spine to the top of your head. Now your structure is stacked. From there, focus on relaxing as if the stacked feeling overflows through the top of your head and pours down through your shoulders, chest, ribs, abdomen, waist and back. The vertically stacked structure and downward relaxation should feel mutually reinforcing.

