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Inner Balance for Kids

Tai Chi Chuan and Qigong for Children
and all who work with them

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Who is this book for?

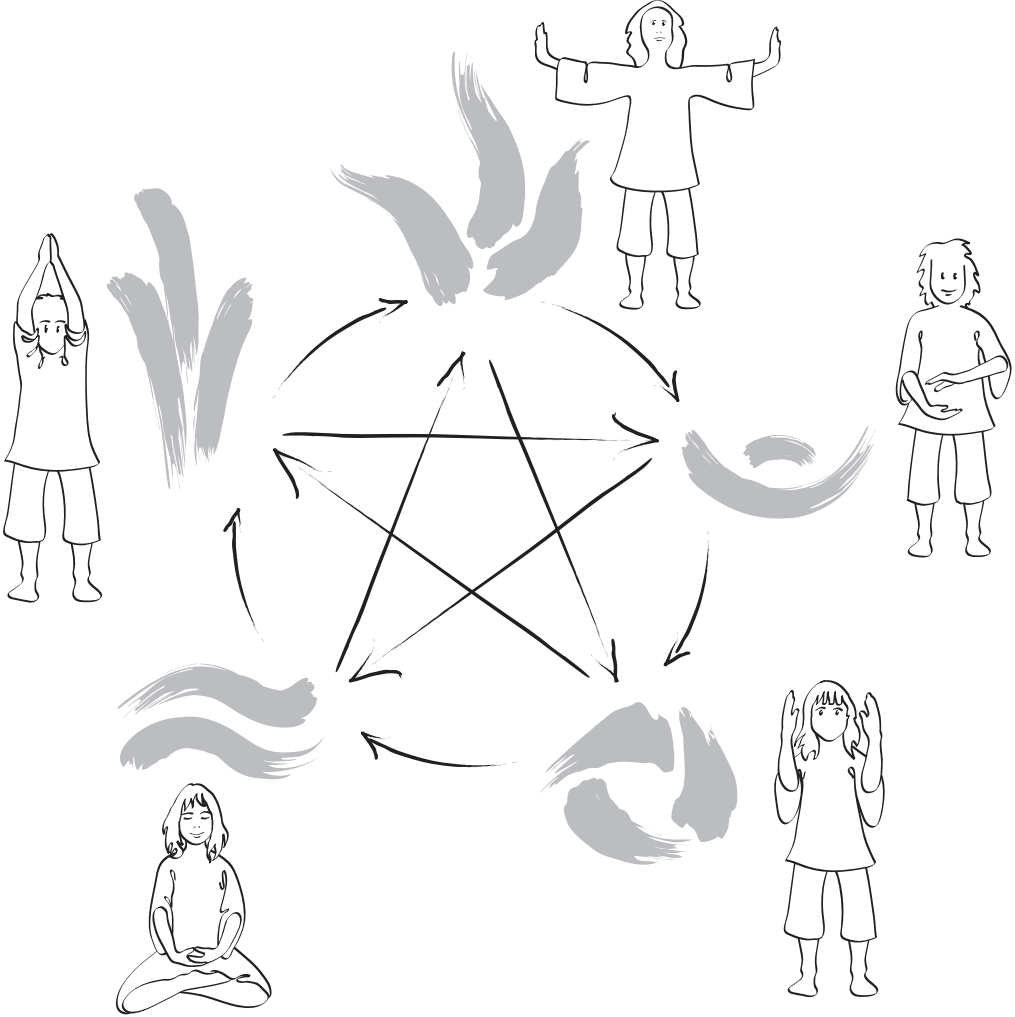
We aim to provide a kind of reference guide and workbook for all those who work with children, in preschool or in school or in sports clubs, as trainer/teacher for all kinds of Asian movement arts or in the field of therapy.

If you as reader do not practice tai chi chuan or qigong but already have your own resources for movement/bodywork with children, we hope to give an impression of the specific qualities of these ancient Chinese exercises for mind and body, and how aspects of these arts can be conveyed through simple exercises. We are confident that the wide range of presented examples can lend inspiration for many different fields of work. We also trust that our readers will have the competence to integrate any useful aspects into their own offerings for children in a meaningful way.

Above all, we intend this book as a treasure chest and as an encouragement for all tai chi chuan and qigong trainers and teachers who work with children, or who are intending to do this.

We wish you all much enjoyment along the path.

Dietlind Zimmermann, Norbert Heinrich and Hans Dieter Wöhrle



Exercises and games



Creeping Like a Scout

Age: 3 and above.

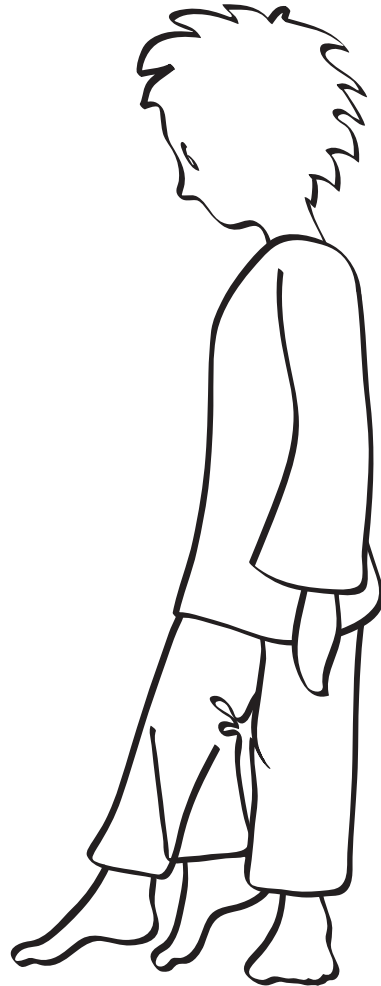
Goal: Moving mindfully and silently, for restless children. Slow down.

The exercise: A scout or spy sneaks silently through the forest. They do this by first feeling the ground with one foot, then putting the weight of the foot down, and only then very, very slowly shifting their body weight onto it. It is more of a glide or a flow of gravity from one leg to the other.

Additional remarks: This way of creeping/sneaking is also wonderful to practice outside in the woods, through the leaves. It works if you move very slowly.

Additional variant: One child walks around the room with closed eyes, very slowly, another child puts small obstacles before or under the walking child's feet from time to time, so that the walking child has to place their feet differently.

What children love about this: Playing at being a spy or scout.



Spirits on the Lava Islands

Age: 8 and above.

Goal: Stabilizing the body structure, slowing down, training observation skills.

Resources/equipment: Gymnastic mat or blanket – rolled up.

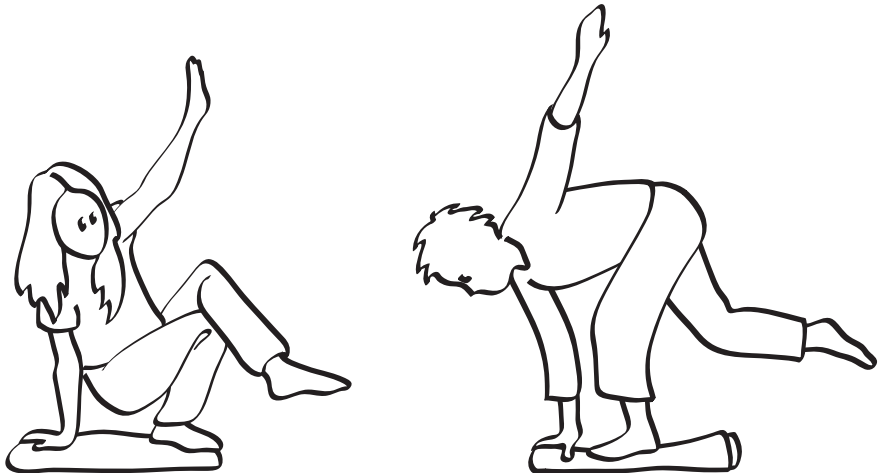
Preparation: Everyone is given a gym mat or blanket, which they roll up to that the roll is roughly as wide their own foot. We lay these rolls out in a circle and everyone stands on theirs. The key principle here is to make sure we never touch the ground around the mat!

The story: There are small islands floating in a big ocean of liquid lava that you can't touch without burning. Each island is inhabited by an enchanted spirit. The spirits can touch their island only with one foot or knee and with one hand or elbow. In this position, each spirit

must wait until another spirit passes by and releases them. Then the new spirit takes up their position on the island and stays there. Meanwhile the freed spirit now floats around above the lava sea and looks for a new island – and frees the spirit there.

Additional remarks: Each time a spirit is freed, everyone can adopt a new physical position on their own island while waiting for release. Then the new spirit goes around and sees who they want to free and which physical position they want to copy.

What children love about this: The challenge of balancing in a completely “crazy” position (only two points of contact with a very narrow and wobbly surface), as well as the freedom of choosing who to rescue and which spirit they want to try to imitate.



Snake hand defense

Age: 8 and above.

Goal: Freeing yourself from a firm grip by a slight movement, having a “liberating experience”.

Precondition: The snake movement has already been practiced (see previous exercise).

The exercise: The children stand in pairs facing each other at arm’s length. One child stretches out a hand, the other child grasps them by the wrist and holds tight. With a small impulse from the center, the grasped child now makes a sinuous, snaky movement with their arm, deliberately bringing the tip of the snake’s nose (fingertips) around the wrist and forearm of the attacker, and then lowers their own hand towards the ground. If the attacker doesn’t let go at this point, the attacker’s wrist ends up in a painful joint lock. And so now the snake hand controls the situation.

This movement can be executed in two ways. Either in an outer spiral (the outside of the snake hand fingers slide over the attacker’s arm and the fingertips move – if the grip is right to right or left to left – first from the inside of the attacker’s arm to its outside) or in an inner spiral (if the attacker does not let go). Or in an inner spiral (the inner side of the snake hand fingers slide over

the attacker’s arm and the fingertips move first from the outer to the inner side of the attacker’s arm).

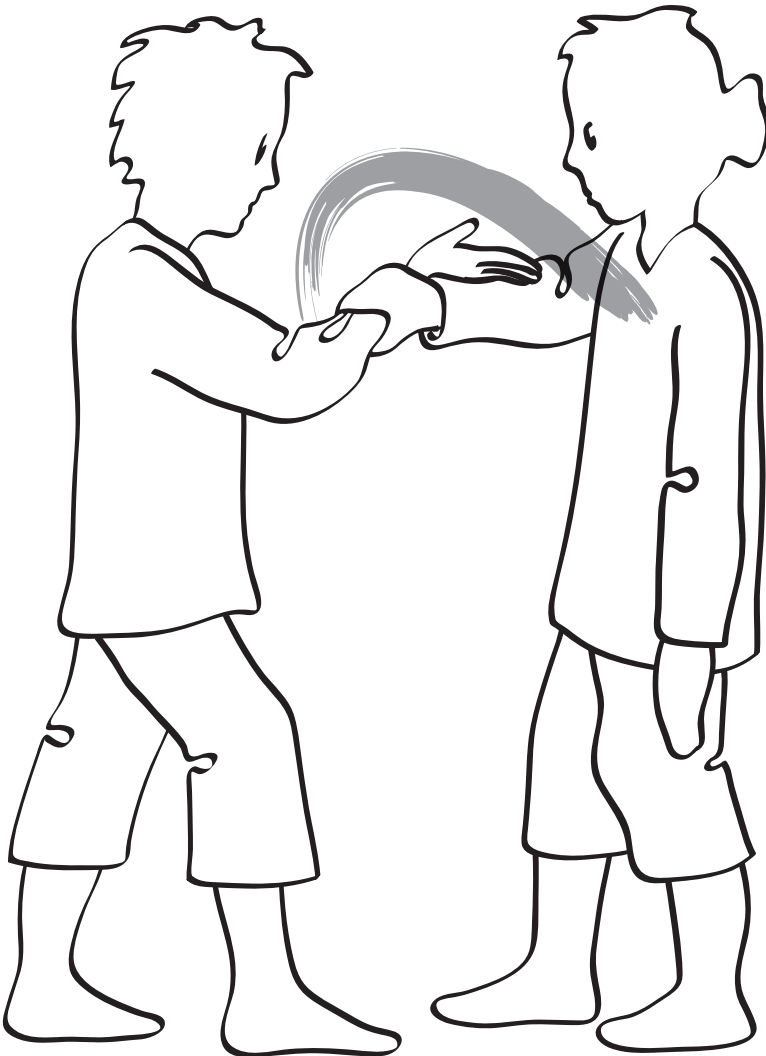
Three variants: The Snake Hand Defense can also be used if you are grabbed by both wrists. In this case it’s possible for both snake hands to perform a spiral movement in the same direction, i.e. both to the right or to the left, whereby one hand makes the inner rotation and the other hand the outer rotation. If both spiral together to the outside of the attacker’s arm, this gives more of an opening position towards the attacker’s body, if both spiral to the inside of the attacker’s arm, more of a closing position. This generates different starting positions for further action.

Additional remarks: Since this is an application suitable for use “in the real world”, and is also a lot of fun for the children, they should be allowed to practice it in all conceivable combinations (see the variants). Start with clear guidelines so that they know exactly what is being practiced and how. Later, this can turn into something closer to “free play”.

What children love about this: Being held in a vice-like grip by someone else is a situation that many will have experienced. It’s a classic “power and powerlessness”

situation. Knowing that you can get out of this – with very little effort – is a truly “liberating” experience.

You can see eyes shining with pleasure as they train this.



Ball of Light

Age: 6 and above.

Goal: Building an energy field around the body, relaxing deeply, creating a protective space.

The exercise: The children sit on the floor. Place your hands on your belly below the navel and gather your attention there in the large space of the lower dantian. Breathe into this space and feel if warmth or light would like to appear. If this happens, allow this light to grow larger so that it fills your lower belly and may even expand around your pelvis. You can rest in this light for a few breaths.

Variations/advanced: A second step for the children in this meditation: Gather your attention in the middle dantian in the chest area, around the breastbone (sternum). Also feel your breathing in this space. With each breathing out you can let a golden light begin to flow here, spreading from there, becoming brighter and more intense, soon filling your chest area from within and then expanding beyond your body to an arm's length

around your body into a large ball of light (the Great Dantian). You can rest in this light for a while and enjoy its effect.

At the end of the meditation, lead the light back to the lower dantian, and consciously end the exercise there.

Additional remarks: If attention is concentrated in the Great Dantian, the energy of the body also fills this space. Children can use the Ball of Light as a protective space.

What children love about this: Finding deep relaxation.



