

On Position and Intent

by Kathy Jo B. Connors

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***Question:** How can we improve our ability to 'spring forward' on loss of contact?*

Our earliest training incorporates two ideas that I think begin to address this problem. The first is position and the second is what we often call intent. These ideas are maintained (hopefully) throughout all of our training, but are afforded special attention throughout the slow first section of the SLT. To me, these are deep subjects, so I'll try to avoid being wildly longwinded (admittedly a challenge).

POSITION

Position is one of the first things we emphasize, and upon which other abilities are built. If you could train your position to be constantly superior to that of the opponent (or partner), then you would have advantage when opportunities arise. One of the simplest examples is when a direct opening occurs to the opponent's center, you would already be closely aligned for a strike. This is also a simplistic illustration of the geometry that states "the shortest distance between two points is a straight line." If one is primarily concerned about chasing hands, for example, this type of critical and precise positioning will become very difficult to maintain. I am not at all suggesting that we should be immobilised or static in an effort to maintain position; quite to the contrary. This is where sensitivity and other skills play in, as aids in dynamically maintaining position. To the extent that we deviate from ideal positioning, it will take us longer to recover it and missed opportunities when they arise. Position is one of the elements that enables our notion of speed (for us, a relative measure for "who gets there first" rather than concern for distance over time).

INTENT

Closely related to positioning is the notion of intent. You can allow your partner to feel your intent, perhaps most noticeably when expressed as direction and magnitude of force. If nothing is in the path, then motion can freely occur; if another force is precisely meeting yours, then there is no motion, but some part of the body will feel the strain of maintaining position while those forces are applied. Intent can also be such that there is little or no noticeable physical force expressed (e.g., through a bridge). The direction of intent must be maintained even when little or no physical magnitude is expressed or revealed. But when an opening occurs, the mind, and body,

are already trained upon their target, and thus the limb can freely and immediately move unimpeded to their target. Like positioning, if this intent is not maintained at all times, then it may not be present at the exact moment the opportunity and necessity arise. If the intent or concern is elsewhere (e.g., on head hunting or hand chasing), then we are already behind a step when the opportunity arises, and our readjustment (mental and physical) will require time. Perhaps too much time. There is much more to it, I think, but these for me are the starting places. I enjoy that I can make so many discoveries by going back to the sets, and also that discoveries throughout practice helps me to see and understand my sets better. This is one of my great pleasures in Wing Chun.

Any and all insights I may have are owed to my teacher, Kenneth Chung. Any shortcomings in my understanding or expression belong wholly to me.

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