



# **The Dancing Wu Li Masters**

## **Secrets and Training Methods**

**By Roland Nansink**



### **Author's Note**

This is an original training manual on internal martial arts and embodied awareness. It is unrelated to, and not endorsed by, Gary Zukav's 1979 book *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*. Here "Wu Li" is used in the sense of 武理—the *principles of martial practice*—as well as a playful nod to 物理 (physics). Any overlap is purely linguistic.

### **Medical & Safety Disclaimer**

The methods herein are for education. Consult a physician or qualified health professional before beginning. Train slowly, within comfortable range; discontinue any movement that causes pain, dizziness, numbness, or tingling. You alone are responsible for your safety.



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## Prologue — Why the Masters Dance

The phrase *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* points to the paradox at the heart of real skill: the deeper the principle, the lighter the touch. Mastery is not stiffness but responsiveness—structure that can bend without breaking, presence that can turn without losing center. In internal arts the body becomes a listening instrument. We learn to converse with gravity and ground reaction, to meet pressure as dialogue, and to welcome uncertainty as choreography rather than combat.

Internal training is not mysticism wearing silk pyjamas. It is patient attention to what works in the body: alignments that transmit force, breath patterns that stabilize pressure, mental frames that reduce noise so intent can travel. When these converge, movement looks effortless and feels decisive. That quality—call it *quiet power*—is useful in conflict but even more valuable in ordinary life: a steadier voice, a kinder presence, a body that lasts.

This book is a field manual. It favors experiments over slogans, drills over dogma. You can start today, in your living room, and verify claims by feel. Take notes. Change variables one at a time. Pay attention to what changes in your breath, balance, and mood. Mastery is just accuracy repeated kindly over years.



## Part I — Foundations

### 1. What *Wu Li* Means: Principle over Posture

**Wu** (武) evokes the art of ending conflict; **Li** (理) is principle, pattern, the grain of reality. *Wu Li* therefore means *the principles that make martial action work*. There is also the homophone 物理—physics—reminding us that these arts are ultimately about forces: gravity, momentum, elasticity, impulse, leverage.

#### Five Working Principles

1. **Ground Path** — Efficient force travels from the foot to the hand through aligned bones and elastic tissues.
2. **Elastic Body** — Tendons and fascia store and release energy like springs; muscles set angles more than they shove.

3. **Vector Honesty** — Move in the directions forces are truly traveling; don't resist diagonals with straight lines.
4. **Breath as Pressure** — The diaphragm and abdominal canister pressurize the trunk, stabilizing without bracing.
5. **Economy** — Use the least muscular effort that accomplishes the task.

### **Practice: Posture That Breathes**

Stand with feet under hips, knees soft, crown gently lifted. Imagine the pelvis as a bowl of warm water; tip it forward and back to feel extremes, then rest in a neutral that allows a deep, quiet breath. This is our home base.

## **2. The Body as Instrument: Tensegrity, Fascia, and Ground Path**

Human structure is not a stack of bricks; it's a **tensegrity** system: a buoyant mast (bones) suspended by continuous tension (fascia and muscle). Push on one region and distant areas respond. This interconnected fabric is why small changes in the foot can free the neck, and why efficient power feels like a wave rather than a shove.

### **Tensegrity Checks**

- If you lift the arm and the neck tightens, the local muscles are overworking. Reorganize so the ribs and pelvis share the load.
- In a light push-up position, breathe quietly. If breath becomes noisy, you're bracing rather than pressurizing.

### **Drill — Ground Path Scan**

Place your palm on a wall. Press at 10% effort while letting the rear foot *answer*. Tune angles until you feel pressure pass through the pelvis into the ground rather than lodging in the shoulder.

## **3. Posture That Breathes: Axes, Bowlines, and Neutral**

Think of **three bows** stacked over a central axis: ankle→knee, hip→rib, shoulder→wrist. Each bow must be springy — not locked straight, not collapsed. Neutral is not rigid; it is the place from which you can move in any direction with equal ease.

### **Self-Setup (3 Steps)**

1. Feet parallel and alive; weight through the tripod (big toe, little toe, heel).
2. Pelvic bowl heavy and neutral; sacrum drops, lower ribs soften in.
3. Crown floats; chin slightly tucked; gaze soft.

### **Common Errors & Fixes**

- **Over-tucking** flattens natural curves → Breathe into the back ribs; allow a subtle lumbar lordosis.
- **Locked knees** kill spring → Keep a whisper of flexion.
- **High chest** blocks diaphragm → Exhale fully, then inhale down and wide.

## **4. Breath Mechanics: Pressure, Diaphragms, and Rhythm**

Breath is more than oxygen; it is **pressure management**. The respiratory diaphragm, pelvic floor, and thoracic outlet behave like a team. When they synchronize, the trunk stabilizes without rigid bracing, freeing the limbs for fine work.

### **Cadences to Train**

- **Box (4-4-4-4)** for downshifting the nervous system.
- **1:2 Inhale:Exhale** (e.g., 4 in, 8 out) to lengthen parasympathetic tone.
- **Step-Matched**: 3 steps inhale, 4 steps exhale while walking to integrate rhythm.

## **Drill — Humming Exhale**

In standing, inhale through the nose; exhale with a gentle humming “mmm.” Feel the chest and face resonate. Humming increases nitric oxide and encourages smooth exhale—often producing calmer heart rhythms.

## **5. Attention & Intent: Yi Guides Qi; Qi Motivates Li**

Where attention goes, organization follows. In practice we use **Yi** (intent) like a soft beam. Send it from the rear foot to the front palm and notice how tissues along that path “wake up.” This isn’t mysticism; it is motor control improved by imagery.

### **Two Useful Images**

- **Balloon Elbow:** Imagine a light helium balloon tied to the elbow. The arm lifts without neck tension.
- **Laser Line:** Imagine a line from heel to hand; align joints so that line feels unobstructed.

**Pitfall:** Harsh concentration tightens the face and throat. Use relaxed focus—see widely while attending precisely.

## **6. Training Mindset: Lab Notes, Repetition-with-Variation**

Keep a practice journal. After each session, record: 1) drills and durations, 2) sensations (breath, warmth, balance), 3) one micro-adjustment for next time. Learning accelerates when you make small, testable tweaks.

**Repetition-with-Variation** means repeating the same drill but changing exactly one variable (speed, surface, breathing cadence, angle). This prevents mindless grinding and exposes principle.



## Part II — Core Solo Methods

### 7. Ritsuzen (Standing)

**Purpose:** Build ground path, decompress the spine, calm the nervous system.

#### Setup & Cues

- Feet hip-width, parallel; knees soft.
- Pelvis neutral; sacrum heavy; crown light.
- Tongue on the palate; jaw relaxed; breathe quietly through the nose.
- Hands: at sides (beginner) → “hug-a-tree” (forearms round) → “sword-hanging” (elbows heavy) as you progress.

#### Progression

- Weeks 1–2: 3 × 3 minutes (rest 1 minute).
- Weeks 3–4: 2 × 5 minutes.

- Weeks 5–8: 10–20 minutes continuous, posture variations.

## Quality Markers

- Hands warm, feet alive; breath silent; micro-sways tolerated, not frozen.
- After standing, walking feels springy without effort.

## Troubleshooting

Cold hands → too much muscular bracing. Exhale longer; soften glutes; slightly bend knees.

Neck tightness → elbows too high; drop them and lengthen the back of the neck.

## 8. Santi and the Three Bows

Santi trains three bows over a central axis, teaching you to bear load diagonally while remaining soft.

### Foot & Knee Geometry

Front foot points forward; rear foot  $\sim 45^\circ$ . Knees track over middle toes; avoid collapse inward. Elbow and front knee share a plane, protecting centerline.

### Drills

- **Wall Press:** From Santi, press the front palm into a wall at 10–20% effort. Feel the rear foot answer. Micro-adjust stance until the pressure routes to ground without shoulder strain.
- **Switching Sides:** Transition through neutral to the opposite Santi without bobbing the head.

### Breath

Inhale to expand the back ribs; exhale to feel the lower abdomen thicken slightly, like a supportive belt.

## 9. Shili (Testing Power)

Shili is moving while subtly “meeting” imaginary resistance. You create gentle vectors and observe how your body organizes around them.

### **Protocol**

- Imagine pushing heavy air with palm → elbow → shoulder.
- Let the ribs expand on inhale; on exhale feel pressure travel to the standing leg.
- If the breath becomes noisy or the neck tightens, reduce intensity; recover the path.

### **Partner Variant**

Palm-to-palm at chest height. Each applies 10–20% pressure while walking slowly. Goal: maintain conversation in full sentences.

## **10. Mo Ca Bu (Friction Steps)**

Glide the feet as if on rice paper. The hips ride level; the head traces a smooth horizon.

### **Steps**

1. Transfer weight *before* stepping.
2. Skim the foot close to the floor; avoid reaching with the torso.
3. Land whole foot; absorb with hip springs.
4. Practice lines, circles, and figure eights; add step-matched breathing (3 in / 4 out).

### **Common Error**

Reaching with the chest. Fix by imagining a magnet under the sole pulling you forward.

## **11. Fali (Issuing): Elastic Release vs. Muscular Push**

Issuing is the *unloading* of stored elastic energy. It should feel like letting a bowstring go, not like shoving.

## **Build–Release Cycle**

- **Load:** Coil through ankles–hips–ribs.
- **Connect:** Pause a micro-moment; feel fascia tensioned along the line.
- **Release:** Exhale as the vector travels; wrists stay quiet.
- **Settle:** Return to neutral without collapse.

## **Solo Drill**

Snap a hand towel. Seek a crisp sound from body-wave timing, not arm speed. Keep face relaxed; exhale naturally.

## **Safety**

Keep intensity low at first. Tendons adapt slowly; frequency beats force.

## **12. Song (Unbinding) & Soft Strength**

**Song** is progressive release of unnecessary contraction while maintaining structure. It is not limpness; it is clarity without clutter.

## **Head-to-Toe Scan**

- Eyes soften; tongue rests on palate; jaw unhooks.
- Collarbones widen; scapulae slide.
- Ribs expand 360°; belly broadens.
- Pelvic floor blooms on inhale, gathers on exhale.
- Knees and ankles spring.

## **Test**

After a release, can you produce more effect with less effort? If yes, that is Song.

## **13. Hand Work: Spirals, Hooks, Hollow Palm**

Hands express the line. Explore three shapes.

- **Spiral Hand:** Forearm pronates/supinates while the palm rotates as if screwing a jar lid.
- **Hook Hand:** Fingers curl to link forearm fascia; useful for light clinging, not grabbing.
- **Hollow Palm:** Center of palm subtly domes; pressure routes to the heel of the hand.

### **Coin Spiral**

Hold a coin under the proximal finger pads while rotating the forearm. Keep the coin with structure, not gripping.

## **14. Footwork Maps: Triangles, Diamonds, Circles**

Lay tape on the floor.

- **Triangle:** Advance on one leg; pivot at the apex to change line.
- **Diamond:** Forward and lateral steps combine; ideal for evasive entries.
- **Circle:** Orbit a point; the pelvis turns like a turret while the head stays quiet.

### **Metric**

Record your steps on audio. Aim for near-silent landings at higher speeds.



## Part III — Inner Architecture

### 15. The Three Fields: Lower, Middle, Upper

- **Lower Field** (pelvic bowl to navel): base of support; locomotion power.
- **Middle Field** (diaphragm to collarbones): emotional tone; respiration; contact hub.
- **Upper Field** (throat to crown): orientation; gaze; fine motor control.

#### Bridge Drill

On exhale feel the lower field thicken as the upper brightens; on inhale keep the lower broad while the middle widens. Move while maintaining the bridge.

### 16. The Axis & Pelvic Clock

Imagine a clock on the pelvis. Explore 12 (posterior), 6 (anterior), 3/9 (side tilts). Find a neutral—often a quiet 11:30 for many bodies—that allows easy breath and swift direction change.

### **Axis Test**

Have a partner apply gentle shoulder pressure. If the pelvis wobbles, re-find the foot tripod and adjust the sacrum heavy/crown light cue.

## **17. Micro-Relaxations & Recovery-in-Motion**

Sprinkle tiny releases into practice and daily life. Every third breath, soften a region. These micro-changes accumulate.

### **Walk–Release Protocol**

- 50 steps focusing on jaw; 50 on shoulders; 50 on ribs; 50 on hips.
- Note which region yielded the largest ease.

### **Downshifts**

- Extended exhale (1:2) 2–3 minutes.
- Humming 90 seconds after intense drills.
- Eyes-softening cycles (blur → focus) to lower arousal.

## **18. Vision, Gaze, and Balance**

Vision drives posture. Tight tunnel vision tightens the neck; panoramic vision widens options.

### **One-Pointed Gaze**

Fix a distant point in soft focus while moving quickly. Keep awareness wide. This stabilizes the vestibular system and reduces panic under speed.

### **Reading Posture**

If text pulls your face toward screens, reset by lengthening the back of the neck and floating the crown.

## 19. Emotional Regulation for Training

The nervous system is the gateway skill. Use **Name** → **Normalize** → **Navigate**:

- *Name* the feeling.
- *Normalize* (“It’s okay to feel this”).
- *Navigate* (choose one small helpful action).

### **Pressure & Poetry**

Under gentle partner pressure, recite a haiku or count breaths aloud. If voice trembles, reduce effort and recover center.



## **Part IV — Partner Skills & Applications**

### **20. Listening Hands: Contact as Conversation**

**Ting** (listening) is tactile attention: feeling direction, depth, and change without anticipation.

#### **Two-Point Listening**

Forearm-to-forearm contact. One draws micro-circles; the other follows without losing center. Switch often. Pressure: as light as possible while staying connected.

**Cues:** Melt → Meet → Move.

### **21. Yield, Redirect, Reframe**

Three frames for alive partner work:

- 1. Yield:** Accept force into structure without collapse; route to rear foot.

2. **Redirect:** Change the vector by turning the pelvis on the tripod; use circles not lines.
3. **Reframe:** Change context—distance, timing, or angle—so the problem dissolves.

### **Game — Redirection Tag**

Attacker pushes slowly; defender may only pivot and step—no hands. Swap roles. Debrief: what did you feel? what changed?

## **22. Conflict Hygiene: The Seven Bodyguards**

1. **Awareness** — See it early.
2. **Distance** — Don't get close without reason.
3. **Angle** — Step off the line.
4. **Barrier** — Put an object between you and risk.
5. **Voice** — Clear boundary statements.
6. **Footwork** — Move to safety.
7. **Technique** — Last resort: simple, clean tools.

### **Script**

“Stop. That’s close enough. What do you need?” Say it with relaxed face, steady breath, hands visible.

## **23. Push-Hands: Cooperative → Alive**

Start cooperative to learn lines; add unpredictability as skill grows.

### **Stages**

- **Fixed Pattern:** Learn circles and neutralizations.
- **Variable Speed:** Keep breath and posture as rhythm shifts.
- **Free Step:** Add footwork; maintain connection with minimal pressure.

## **Rules**

Consent, clarity, and debrief every round. Stop on pain, not on pride.

## **24. Self-Protection Basics: Distance, Timing, Angle**

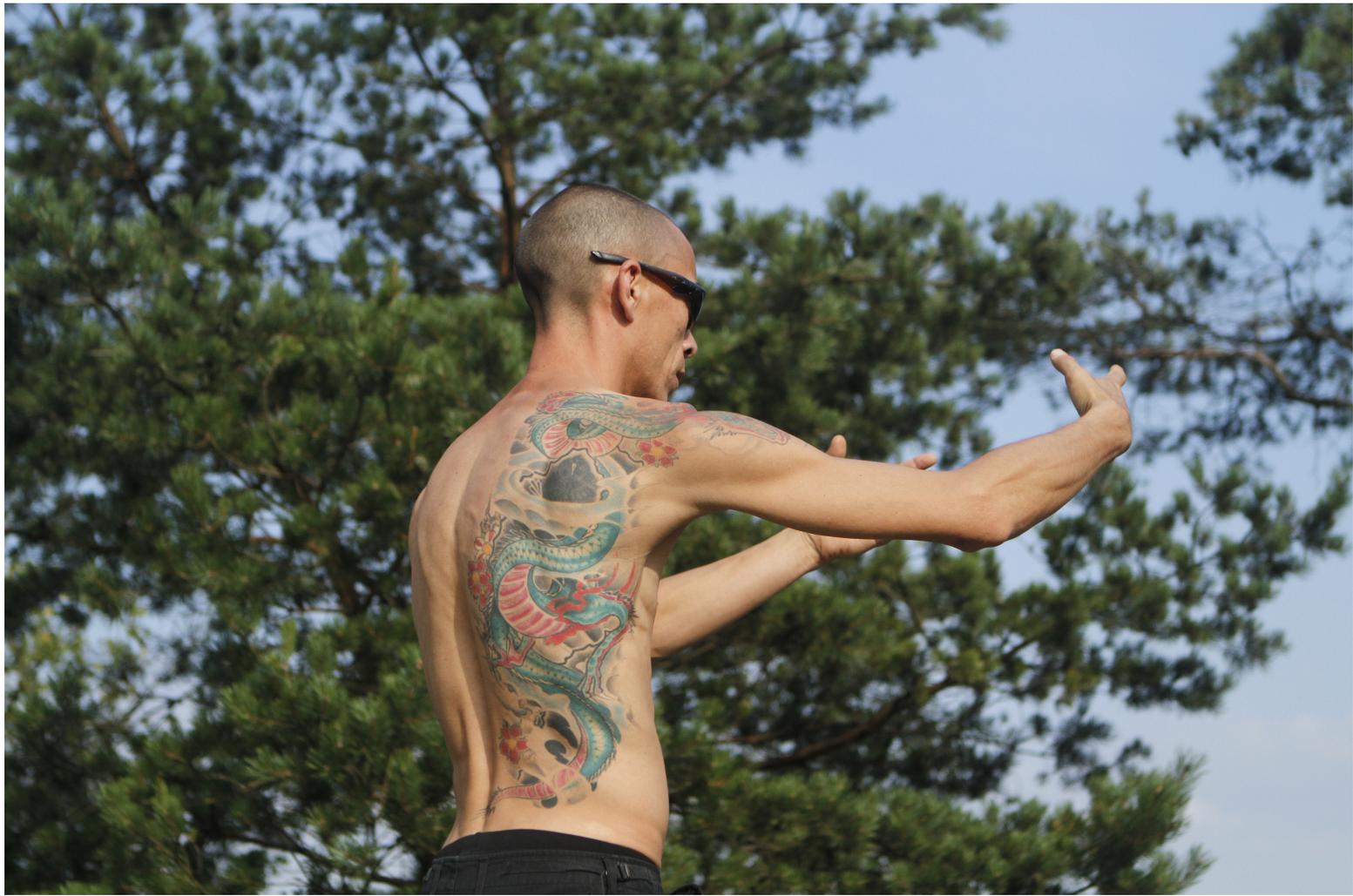
Prefer prevention over domination. If touch is required, use structure-based responses.

### **Three Clean Tools**

- **Shield** (forearm frame) to guard the head and create space.
- **Spear** (heel-of-hand line) to the chest/shoulder *to move mass*, not to damage.
- **Wheel** (hip turn) to off-balance and exit.

### **Intensity Rules**

Train at 20% → 40%. Never exceed 60% without protective gear, coaching, and consent.



## Part V — Programs & Periodization

### 25. The 12-Minute Daily Set

1. **Ritsuzen** — 3 minutes.
2. **Santi** left/right — 2 minutes.
3. **Mo Ca Bu** lines — 3 minutes.
4. **Shili** wave — 2 minutes.
5. **Humming breath** — 2 minutes.  
Optional: 30s **towel snap** at very low intensity.

#### Why It Works

Touches structure, breath, footwork, elasticity, and recovery in one compact stack.

## **26. A 12-Week Foundation**

### **Weeks 1–4 (Roots & Breath)**

- Minutes/day: 15–20.
- Focus: Standing (3×3), pelvic clock, box breathing, triangle steps.
- Metric: 10 minutes quiet standing with warm hands.

### **Weeks 5–8 (Connection & Listening)**

- Minutes/day: 20–25.
- Focus: Santi, shili vectors (push/pull/spiral), friction steps, partner palm-walk.
- Metric: Maintain conversation under light partner pressure while stepping.

### **Weeks 9–12 (Elastic Release & Rhythm)**

- Minutes/day: 25–30.
- Focus: Fali timing (towel drill), step-matched breathing, hand spirals, small-circle push-hands.
- Metric: Issue clean releases without breath-holding or jaw tension.

### **Weekly Template**

Mon: Structure + footwork

Tue: Breath + shili

Wed: Partner listening

Thu: Structure + footwork

Fri: Elastic release

Sat: Review walk

Sun: Recovery + journal

## **27. Weeks 13–24: Power without Tension**

- Add light **weighted hangs** (5–10% bodyweight) for decompression if appropriate.
- **Medicine ball spirals** (2–4 kg) for whole-body coiling.
- **Footwork maps** at higher speed while staying silent.
- **Reframe games** with unpredictable rhythms.

## **Benchmarks**

- Clear, crisp towel snap with relaxed face.
- Redirect a push from various angles while speaking calmly.

## **28. Weeks 25–36: Spiral Integration**

- Small-space power: generate effect within one step.
- Multi-vector issuing: compress–expand with torso spirals.
- Eyes-closed contact improvisation at 20% speed.

### **Caution**

Never chase “shock.” Chase clarity. Intensity follows clarity.

## **29. Testing & Benchmarks**

### **Quarterly Checks**

- **Standing endurance** with calm breath.
- **Step silence** (audio record).
- **Partner stability** (light push from 8 angles).
- **Elastic timing** (consistent towel crack without grimace).

### **Self-Assessment Rubric (0–5)**

Structure | Breath | Intent | Energy Routing | Rhythm | Recovery

## **30. Troubleshooting & Plateaus**

- **Cold hands in standing** → reduce muscular bracing; lengthen exhale.
- **Neck pain in Santi** → elbow too high; drop it; lengthen the back of the neck.
- **Can't feel elasticity** → slow down; lower intensity to 20%; sequence before speed.
- **Breath holding** → whisper “haaa” on exhale until silent.
- **Partner overwhelm** → narrow drill rules; return to fixed vectors before re-adding variability.



## **Part VI — Transfer & Everyday Wu Li**

### **31. Athletic Transfer: Sprint, Throw, Swing**

Apply ground path and elastic release.

#### **Sprint Start**

Load feet, coil hips, quiet wrists, release. Keep crown long; exhale on first two steps.

#### **Throw**

Rear-foot load → hip coil → rib float → arm whip. The hand is last, not first.

#### **Swing (Racket/Club)**

Pressure into trail foot → spiral through pelvis → settle through lead leg → relaxed hands.

### **32. Creative & Stage Presence**

Before presenting, use a 90-second set:

1. Stand and breathe (30s).
2. Humming with soft gaze (30s).
3. Hand spirals while speaking your first sentence (30s).  
Result: steadier voice, warmer presence.

### **Onstage Anchors**

Feet heavy; crown light; feel the back ribs widen on the first exhale.

## **33. Work & Leadership Under Pressure**

Leaders who regulate themselves regulate rooms. During tense meetings: slow inhale, longer exhale; pelvis neutral; crown light.

### **De-escalation Script**

“Let’s slow down. I want to understand. What outcome do you need?”

## **34. Walking, Sitting, Lifting: Micro-Dose Practice**

- **Walking:** Roll through tripod; pelvis a quiet bowl; eyes look far.
- **Sitting:** Hinge at hips; ribs float over pelvis; feet flat.
- **Lifting:** Load legs; keep heel–hand line; exhale on effort.

### **One-Minute Resets**

Pelvic clock at your desk; 10 humming breaths between calls; 30 silent steps before entering a room.



## **Part VII — Teaching & Ethics**

### **35. Coaching Principles, Progressions, and Safety**

- Start with breath and standing before contact.
- Progress one variable at a time: range → speed → complexity.
- Use consent and clear rules; stop on pain.
- Debrief every round: “What did you feel? What did I feel? What will we try next?”

### **36. Curriculum Design & Assessment**

Design in 12-week blocks with weekly themes. Build in testing and recovery weeks. Track subjective and objective markers (warm hands, calm breath, step silence, partner stability).

#### **Sample Class (60 min)**

- Arrival breath (5)
- Standing (10)
- Santi transitions (10)
- Mo Ca Bu + step-matched breath (10)
- Shili vectors (10)
- Partner listening (10)
- Journal & close (5)

### **37. Culture, Humility, and Service**

Power without ethics corrodes. Practice is for making you *more responsible*, not more forceful. Champion humility, inclusivity, and clear boundaries. Celebrate students' perception and composure more than raw force.



## **Epilogue — The Quiet Brightness**

In time, the body becomes simple and the world grows generous. You stand, breathe, and move, and life becomes less of a fight. The dance is not between you and an opponent; it is between tension and release, attention and drift, gravity and flight. Keep practicing kindly. The rest unfolds.



## **Appendix A — Practice Journal Templates**

### **Daily Mini-Log**

- Today's time & drills: ...
- One thing I felt: ...
- One thing I'll try next: ...

### **Weekly Reflection**

- What improved? ...
- What stalled? ...
- What surprised me? ...

## **Appendix B — Glossary**

- **Wu Li (武理/物理):** Martial principle / physics.
- **Ritsuzen:** Standing cultivation.
- **Santi:** Three-body posture.
- **Shili:** Testing force.
- **Mo Ca Bu:** Friction stepping.
- **Fali:** Issuing force.
- **Ting:** Listening.
- **Song:** Unbinding/relaxation with integrity.
- **Tripod:** Big toe, little toe, heel contact points.

## **Appendix C — Suggested Reading**

- Classics on standing and internal training (various translations).
- Modern fascia and biomechanics texts.
- Books on breath and vagal tone.
- Works on conflict communication and consent.