

Tai Chi and Snow Shoveling

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3:54 PM MST



Snow theme

Violet Li

When I rolled out of bed this morning, looking out of windows, I saw there are another five inches of fresh snow on top of the three inches of old packed snow which had at least one inch of ice underneath it. The regular snow shovels are useless to deal with the situation. The [snow shoveling](#) service can not come soon enough -- not to mention that they are expensive and could not totally get rid of the ice last time we called. If it is your situation, what are your options, do nothing and wait for everything to melt or shovel it yourself?

Well, take a deep breath. Do a few reps of the [Tai Chi](#) warm-up routine, especially including the shoulder rotation, waist turning, and knee circling (see a video clip demonstrating [Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei's Yang Sheng Kung](#) on the left hand side). Practice a few simple [silk reeling](#) routines 5 to 10 minutes. Maybe do a [Wuji standing](#) and meditate 5 to 10 minutes so your mind is calm, your body is relaxed, and your hands and feet are warm. Layer yourself well with long johns, sweats, and a coat. Put

on a knit cap and a scarf if needed. Get a **garden shovel** out which has a **straight** blade. Step into the snow with a pair of boots with good traction.

The left hand holds the handle while the right hand grabs the middle section of the shovel staff. Bend your knees. Sit your Kaos (Hip Joint or groin muscle). Shovel right underneath the pile of ice and snow while shifting your weight from the left side to the right. Then slightly turn your body to left and shift weight to left too and sink your Qi while the shovel is still underneath the pile. As you lift the shovel up with snow and ice on it, let the internal energy (or Qi) raise from the feet, transport through legs, hips, waist, back, shoulders, arms, and each of your hands. Throw the snow up. Make sure you shift your weight from left to right in a figure eight fashion. Use your waist/core to turn your body to the right side. With these combined motions synchronized, the snow will be thrown sideways. Sometimes the snow and ice can stick to the shovel. To rid of them, twist your wrists at the very end of the throwing motion. That is when your Qi reaches the extremity. This will cause a jerking motion which forces the snow and ice out. The entire lifting movement is very similar to “Cannons in a Series” (*Quan Pao Chu*) in Chen Style *Lao Jia* (Old Frame) *Er Lu* (Second Routine). Remember to alternate the process on the other side so keep it even.

Chen Style lineage holder **Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang** was born into an impoverished family. Furthermore, his family was black-listed during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. He started to work in factories since age of 13 to help supporting his family. He utilized the work as a way to train himself. It was said that he maneuvered and accumulated Qi while sawing wood. He used the Tai Chi method to step the mud to mix the clay for brick making. During this type of hard work, he built up leg muscles.

In *Tai Chi in Your Life*, Dale Napier encourages people to incorporate Tai Chi fundamentals into daily life. Tai Chi definitely helps me with snow shoveling.

Bend knees (Qu Qi), relax hip joints (*Song Kao*), turn waist (*Zuan Yao*), rooting and move Qi. Walla! The snow is done. The shoveling went quickly; I was energized after **this Tai Chi exercise**. The best part was that I was neither bored nor tired.

Wait, we are not done yet. You need to warm down after the shoveling. Do the following once you get inside the house.

- 1 Rub your hands together for at least 30 times. Use your hands to massage your knees. Do it slowly and gently. Circle one direction first then reverse the process.
- 2 Stand on the left leg, pick up the right foot and bend the knee backwards and up. You can stretch out the ligament on your right knee, and hold for a few seconds. Change side. You can do this multiple times until your knees do not feel sore.
- 3 Take a big step with the right foot forward. Bend the right knee so it is directly above

the right ankle -- make sure the right knee does not pass the right toes. Keep the left leg straight. Make sure your upper body is in an upright position. Hold for a few seconds and make sure that your left groin muscles stretched out. Then change side. Again, you can do this multiple times so your lower back feels relaxed.

- 4 Change clothes if they are wet from sweating.
- 5 Brew your favorite tea in your favorite tea pot or pour a glass of red wine in my case.
- 6 Sit in front of the window and marvel at the snow drift.
- 7 Say it softly to yourself ‘that’s my trophy for the day” and **smile!!!**

Extra: After this article published, I got quite a few feedbacks. Many echoed how Tai Chi helps to prevent injury from snow shoveling. I also discovered there are other Tai Chi practitioners and instructors wrote about the subject. Here are a couple of examples: Sifu [Michael Pekor](#) of [Tai Chi Kung Fu of Long Island](#) presented a video on youtube of a safe way to shovel the snow by applying some Tai Chi principles <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3lvvRACiX8&feature=related> and Ben of [Grand Ultimate Way](#) wrote about [Tai Chi and the Snow Shovel](#) .

NOW YOU CAN FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER (Username: Taichiexaminer).

SUGGESTED LINKS

- [Tai Chi in Your Life](#)
- [Chen’s Taichi For Health & Wellness by Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei](#)
- [Teaching Paraplegics Tai Chi](#)
- [Dr. Matthew Komelski on Tai Chi & Qigong](#)



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