

cisely, your muscles learn the quickest, most energy-efficient route.

In the Tao, Lee touched on the relationship between agonistic and antagonistic muscle activation: "The rule in sports is try to have no more tension in

the acting muscles than is necessary to perform the act, and to have a low degree of tension in the antagonistic muscles as possible and to maintain any necessary inhibitory control. When [muscles] begin to 'tighten up' too

much, we find our speed and skill being handicapped."

Your muscles act around your joints by pulling on them so you can move your limbs. This usually involves opposing pairs of muscles. For instance, when you extend your arm at the elbow, you activate the triceps. When you bend at the elbow, you activate the biceps. So when you throw a punch by extending your arm, your triceps act as agonists, and your biceps act as antagonists. If the biceps are overactivated, they work against the triceps and slow down your punch.

Coordinating efficient use of agonists and minimizing antagonist activation is the key to relaxation. And relaxation is the key to energy conservation and speed. This is a matter of neuromuscular training and can be learned only by doing. And to that, I should add, by doing correctly. It makes no sense to practice without proper form. Train any other way, and you'll program inefficient neuromuscular pathways. And once programmed, they're difficult to reprogram.

I know a lot of people who dismiss the importance of good form. I understand. In the beginning, hitting things is a lot more exciting than standing in one place and checking your stance. But if you want to raise your skills to the next level, you need to make form—both stationary and in motion—your first priority. I've alluded to this before, but what Lee said bears repeating: "The mastery of proper fundamentals and their progressive application is the secret of being a great fighter." ❧

About the author: A registered dietician who specializes in sports nutrition, Teri Tom is a board member of the Bruce Lee Foundation and the first woman to be certified to teach jeet kune do under Ted Wong. The Jeet Kune Do Source is the official column of the Bruce Lee Foundation. Jun Fan jeet kune do is a registered trademark owned by Concord Moon. The image and likeness of Bruce Lee are used with the express permission of Linda Lee Cadwell and Concord Moon LR. All rights reserved. For information about ordering Bruce Lee's books, visit www.blackbeltmag.com.

“When you train in good form, you teach your muscles to remember the most biomechanically sound sequence of doing things.”



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