

Kung-Fu Training Formulas: Part 1

Traditional kung-fu styles often use herbal formulas for purposes other than treating injury and illness. One important and often-overlooked aspect of kung-fu medicine is the use of internal training formulas. These herbal remedies are usually taken either to offset the possible side effects of hard training or to prepare the body for such training, thereby preventing injury. Many of these formulas are taken with a small amount of alcohol—rice wine or vodka—that is 100 to 130 proof, because spirits help the herbal materials to be assimilated more quickly and act to open and course the channels and collaterals, thereby promoting the free flow of qi and blood.

There are two types of training formulas: those that regulate or move blood and qi to prevent stagnation to help avert the development of chronic problems caused by overuse or repeated impacts (fall or blows); and those that tonify the body, and strengthen the organs, sinews and bones so you have more energy to train and can recover more easily from minor injuries. Some formulas, like tiger bone wine, combine both strategies. Formulas that regulate blood and qi should not be taken to excess; moving without supplementing can create an imbalance.

Herbal formulas that concentrate on supplementation of the qi and blood can be cloying and cause digestive problems or stagnation of qi and blood. For example, overuse of ginseng can cause indigestion, belching and acid regurgitation, bleeding gums and a sense of fullness in the chest and diaphragm. Training formulas are for healthy people engaging in martial arts practice. They should be used responsibly and should not be taken if one is on medication or pregnant.

One simple and useful training formula is Martial Arts Training Powder. Generally taken before hard training or sparring, this formula moves and regulates qi and blood to prevent stasis and reduce injury. When I taught kajukenbo

years ago, my students and I used this formula and found that it ameliorated the effects of hard blows and throws, reduced bruising and eased post-workout aches and pains.

Martial Arts Training Powder

18 grams ZHI KE
(Fructus Citri Seu Ponciri)
18 grams JIE GENG
(Radix Platycodonis)
27 grams DANG GUI
(Radic Angelicae Sinensis)
9 grams HONG HUA
(Flos Carthami Tinctorii)
9 grams TAO REN
(Semen Persicae)
18 grams CHEN XIANG
(Lignum Aquilariae)
18 grams NIU XI
(Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae)
18 grams CHEN PI
(Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae)

Have the herbs ground to a fine powder. Take 1/4 teaspoon of the powder with either warm water or a small amount of spirits before training.

Dang gui is often used to tonify or supplement the blood. It is important to note that dang gui, more popularly known as *tang kwei*, is a root with a "tail" (wei) and a "head" (tou). The tail of the root moves or quickens the blood more than it supplements. The head supplements more than it moves. If one asks for just dan gui he will be given a longitudinal slice of the root with both parts. This form of dan gui both moves and supplements and should be included in Martial Arts Training Powder.

Another formula that serves the same purpose is Tiger Bone Wine (He Gu Jiu). A commercial product by the same name is available at some Chinese liquor stores. If you do not live in an area with a large Chinese population, it is possible to make your own Tiger Bone Wine. Neither the commercial product nor the



homemade variant contains real tiger bone. Tiger is an endangered species and should not be used in any herbal formula. Most herb stores substitute pig bones, but any dried bones can be used.

Tiger Bone Wine

30 grams HU GU
(Os Tigris—ask for a substitute)
12 grams RU XIANG
(Gummi Olibanum)
12 grams MO YAO
(Myrrha)
20 grams DANG GUI WEI
(Tail of Radix Angelicae Sinensis)
20 grams NIU XI
(Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae)
2 grams ZHI NAN XIANG
(prepared Rhizoma Arisaematis)
4 grams TIAN MA
(Rhizoma Gastrodiae Elatae)
4 grams XUE JIE
(Sanguis Draconis)
13 grams ROU GUI
(Cortex Cinnamomi Cassiae)
20 grams SHU DI HUANG
(Rehmannia Glutinosa Preparatae)

Grind the herbs and add to 1 gallon of 100 to 120 proof vodka or rice wine. Let this mixture sit out of the light for six months. Shake occasionally. Before training, take 1 tablespoon of liquid. This formula moves and regulates, as well as supplements. Since it can be drying, take it in small quantities as it can be very drying. Pregnant women should avoid taking this mixture. 🐅

Tom Bisio writes a monthly column for Inside Kung-Fu.

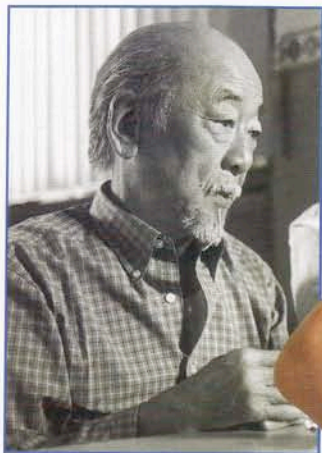
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