

CORE CRADLES



THE CORE CRADLES

The first form of Tantsu developed in 1980 was a series of cradles with which a Tantsu practitioner could gradually build up the trust needed to introduce Tantsu's more intimate cradles, usually culminating the session with the most powerful, the Pieta. (It is now presented below as the Anterior Cradle.)

In 2006 I was called to Chicago to teach Tantsu to a group of Tantra teachers. When I found out they had been using the Tantsu from my first book with couples in their programs, I decided to develop a new form of Tantsu for people that were already close enough to start with the Pieta. With the help of one of the Chicago teachers, Amber Seitz, I developed and started teaching this new form in weekends in America, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, France, Holland and Japan. We found everywhere that even those who were not intimates were comfortable in the Pieta. Many said that the way they felt contained made it safe for them.

Though everybody feels safe once they are in the Pieta, not everybody is comfortable starting in it. I decided to develop a similar cradle in which we start from behind instead of from the front. Starting the containment from the back enough trust is built up that anybody can be rolled into

The Core

the Pieta facing us without any problem. When I returned to Italy to co-teach another Tantsu class with Fabrizio Della Piane, he showed me how he adapted this new Posterior Cradle to make it more comfortable. We shared how we both found it invites a greater connection to inner movement and he convinced me that with that connection we could let go of sequence.

The new Core Cradles facilitated this because we stay in one position. In the other cradles which have complex transitions, moves in a specified order are still needed. Over the next few classes we evolved the Core Cradles presented in this book. The kinds of moves that can be done in any order in a free exploration are illustrated at the end of each cradle where they can provide inspirations for subsequent shares.

The Posterior Cradle is ideal for starting a Tantsu Share. Properly prepared, anyone can be held in total comfort while being awakened within through the connection to the breath and movement. After connecting and exploring one whole side in it, anyone can be rolled into the Anterior Cradle for work on their other side. These two cradles that make up the new Basic Tantsu are called the Core Cradles, both because they are at the core of the new Tantsu and because they contain someone's whole core.

The Core

According to most martial arts and somatic practices, our movements come from our body center in the hara. In Watsu, floating someone level with our heart, our heart center is as much involved in our movement as our body center. The two are one core. As we empty into the void in our base at the bottom of the breath there is a growing sense of peace. As our breath rises up through our heart and out our arms moving with the one we float there is a growing sense of joy. The peace is the oneness we feel in the emptiness in that void. And the joy may be coming to know that we are actually able to feel, to realize, unconditional love.

Those first holding others outside their immediate circle in Watsu or Tantsu often express awe at how much oneness they feel with someone who had not been close to them before. Those being held in a Core Cradle often express how its containment allows them to go deep within. The word core has its origins in the word for heart, and it may be that it is the heart's deepest center that the containment allows them to access, where they, too, know their oneness and unconditional love.

The mind, too, has a deep center. Often in a Share we feel called to reach up and touch the face. At the beginning of our Tantsu, once our forearms have fully connected and contained someone's core, the first place a hand comes to rest upon is the heart, and the other hand, the face, drawing the head, too, into the core.

If our centers of body, heart and mind each have their own deeper center in which we can access our oneness, it may be that deepest center is one and the same and that some of the movement we connect to within is the traffic between all our centers and that one, which is our true core.

CORE CRADLES

Beyond Sequence

Moves in both Core Cradles are presented in a natural progression. A Core Opening connects breath and inner movement. Our exploration expands to include head, neck and shoulder. We return down the arm pressing it to the core with the breath and then lift it to guide us into a free exploration of stretches, moves and positions that open access to other parts. After the arm and the hand we return to the core, to the heart and the hara. Exploring the Hip and Pressing Down the Leg leads into a lift and balancing of the leg that guides us into another free exploration and closure.

Stations

Supplementing the support of the continuous containment of their core is that provided by stations. A station is where we come to complete stillness with someone. Typically the hand that has established this deep connection stays at that station while the other hand begins an exploration out from it, or connects to another station. The stations are easy to recognize and free us to follow whatever movements come up to lead us into a greater shared creativity knowing that whenever it completes itself there is always another station ahead where we can drop back together into stillness. Once you learn the same stations in both Core Cradles you will find them yourselves in the subsequent cradles. As your explorations between stations becomes more creative, as that creative impulse completes itself, you will find yourselves arriving at new stations. The descriptions and illustrations of each cradle's Core Opening, Return, Closure and major stations are followed by examples of the kinds of moves and stretches that can occur in that cradle's free arm and leg explorations.

Starting with Forearms

We start with our forearms instead of our hands. Our hands communicate to and take orders from the brain. They have been trained to do, to manipulate, to massage, to caress. The hands have incorporated habits and ways of feeling through their past experiences touching someone else's body. Our forearms haven't. Their broader contact gives more of a sense of being held than being touched. Our forearms are closer to our core and it is easier to engage our whole body in their movements. Once we've established our whole body's movement with the breath through our forearms then our whole body can also arrive in the holding and movements through our hands. Then the hands, too, can participate in our being with another.



Posterior Cradle



Posterior Cradle

When you are ready to start place a thin flat cushion on a mat or carpet and tell the one to be held to lie on their left side in a fetal position with their rib cage on the cushion to which the shoulder should be close but not touching. Explain how the cushion is there to take some of the weight off their shoulder. Make sure they are comfortable on it. Remove if not.

Try different cushions under their head so they can select whatever is the most comfortable. Place a cushion between their knees to see if it adds to their comfort.

Once they are totally comfortable move into position behind them, your bent left knee close to their occiput, your left foot pulled back, and sit on whatever cushion(s) provide the best support. Be centered where your forearms can comfortably reach both shoulder and hip. Place your right calf against their base with your knee lowered, supported on a cushion. Hold your arms out without touching to determine if your cushion raises you high enough to comfortably lean over them. If not add another cushion under you.

If it would be more comfortable, instead of having your left leg bent in front, you can have it bent back to your left side, or you can have your left knee supported by a cushion with your left shin under the pillow supporting their head.

CORE CRADLES



Core Opening

FOREARM START In the Posterior Cradle sit behind someone, your knee and calf containing the two ends of their spine while your forearms come to rest at the top of the shoulder and the bottom of the hip (where the softness of the tissue or an indentation invites). Holding with a slight pressure, your forearms are gently pushed apart each time the one you hold breathes in. Feel that expansion become the expansion in your core that draws the breath into your lungs. And then with each outbreath sink even deeper into the silence at the bottom the breath, into the base of your core. As your arms are spread apart again feel yourself being drawn up out of that emptiness. Let the breath draw you up through your heart and out your arms.

Notice where your arms hold are the corners of an inverted triangle that has the emptiness at its bottom. When the breath comes up does it draw you into one side more than the other? Is this an invitation to slowly move or rock? Rather than exploring all the ways you could move a person with your forearms, focus on whatever micromovements you feel rising up inside either one (or both) of you. Notice how, whatever movement arises it engages your whole body and not just your arms.

Don't be concerned whether movements come from you or the other. Once movement is initiated, it takes its own course. Don't be concerned if no movement surfaces. Share our oldest state of being, stillness.

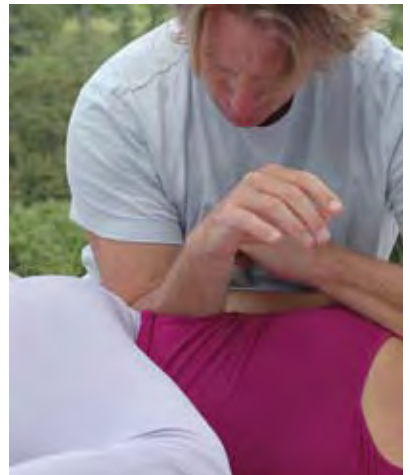
FOREARM AROUND HIP When holding these first places feels complete, keep one forearm at the shoulder while the other, with the outbreath, leans into places around the hip on an approach to the lumbar. Allow any inner movement to arise and stay in each until you feel completion. When your forearm arrives in the lumbar, stay at least three breaths, leaning in as deep as you feel invited with each outbreath Then slowly come all the way out with one inbreath.

Posterior Cradle



FOREARM SHOULDER ROTATION Clasp the shoulder between your forearms and, moving from your own core, lift and slowly rotate the shoulder, your whole body participating in every movement. Notice how a counter clockwise movement opens the shoulder. Continue the movement in whatever shape the shoulder invites. Whether you continue in just one configuration of your forearms, or are drawn to move it with another configuration, avoid any temptation to bring your hands into play. That will come later when your hands are called in for a much fuller exploration.

CHEST OPENING Reaching under their arm, use your forearm to slowly lift and lay their arm back over your right thigh. Changing the location of their arm opens up a new access to their body. Notice how inviting the upper corner of their chest is. Gently lean your left forearm into it. Notice how, turned towards you now, the lower back invites back your other forearm. Reaching over their right arm press into their lumbar muscles with your right forearm.



CORE CRADLES

RETURN TO HIP While your left forearm holds open their chest, your right leans into the lumbar gently twisting the spine without touching the spine itself. Be aware of how your whole body finds a balance in that hold. Leaning in with each outbreath gradually work your right forearm to the place in the hip where it first started. Hold in stillness at least 3



breaths. Notice how your left forearm's steady pressure continues to open their chest, and how that opened chest invites your right hand to the heart center.

HEART STATION Your left arm leaning into the corner of the chest has opened the chest preparing for your arrival at the heart center. Maintain your forearm's constant pressure there as your right hand, coming from your whole body on the outbreath, slowly raises and gently comes to rest on their heart center. This is the first time your hand comes into play. The forearms' continuing pressure helps establish your hand as coming from your core. Breathing together drop deeper into, and stay longer in, the stillness at the bottom of each breath. It is in the emptiness there that all we hold becomes one, that we become one with those we hold.

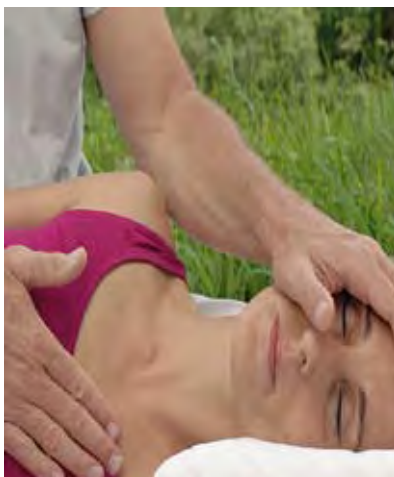
CONNECTING THE HEAD When you have leaned your forearm into the corner of their chest with your hand resting on their heart center long enough to feel the oneness at the bottom of the breath, gradually lift your left forearm from their chest. Prepare your left hand for its first contact in the share, to hold their head with that oneness.

As you slowly lift your forearm feel how the oneness of the breath and the core is rising up with your hand and slowly settling down with its first touch on the outbreath, a very gentle laying of the hand on the cheek, a place of exquisite delicacy. Without pressure or massaging, feel the micro movements under your hand. Stay at least 3 breaths.

AROUND THE HEAD When complete, with the inbreath raise your hand and with the outbreath lay it on the side of the face, again without massaging, without pressure. The intent is not to work the area but to feel the whole head under your hand, to feel how it connects with the core under your other hand each time you breath out and drop into the emptiness.

With the next inbreath lift your left hand and, with the outbreath settle it down a couple inches around the side of the head, your contact on the heart remaining constant. Repeat two or three more times until the hand reaches the occiput.

Posterior Cradle



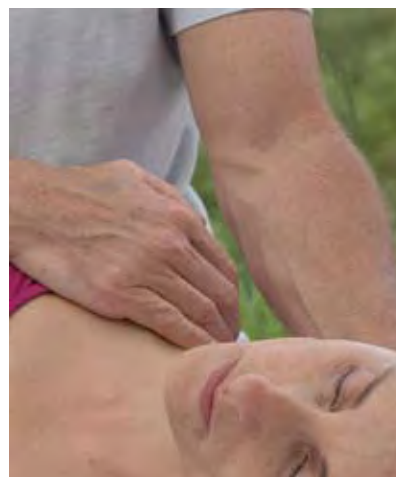
OCCIPUT When your hand has completed its journey around the head, press under the ridge of the occiput with the heel of your hand, keeping your other hand on the heart center until they, too, become one at the bottom of the breath, a double station. What you hold under the occiput is a major station of the head. Feel its connection, its oneness with the core at the bottom of the breath. Then keeping your left hand in its new station, with your right hand pull down the shoulder to stretch. Hold.

NECK A held stretch invites exploration of what is opened or brought to the surface. Explore along that stretch pressing into the muscle down the neck with the heel of your left hand.

SHOULDER ROTATION With both hands and your whole body explore how the shoulder invites lifts and rotation.

ARM BREATH SQUEEZE Lay their arm on their side. Your left hand holds it at the top as your right slowly squeezes the breath out of it (and out of your core). Lean in further down with each outbreath, pressing the arm into their core. Just before the wrist lift the arm on the inbreath.

FREE EXPLORATION With the arm lying across your open hands, feel its weight and its lightness after having been pressed into the core. Listen. Move, stretch and hold in whatever way invited. Explore whatever else can be accessed as its position changes such as illustrated on pages 27-29. When complete hold the hand in both hands. Contain and explore.



CORE CRADLES



Core Return

THE HAND Complete your free exploration holding the hand in front of you with both hands. Alternate holding it close between your hands, containing it the way you are containing their core, with gently pulling it open, exploring.

HEART HEART The next station is on your own body. Place the back of the hand against your heart center, or, if that would be uncomfortable, place the hand palm down on your thigh near your knee. Hold their hand under your right hand as your left reaches between your waist and their head to come to rest on their heart center. Hold.

With your right hand lay their right arm out in front of them or, if certain it would be comfortable at your side, slip it under your left arm and lay it back over your thigh.

HEART HARA Place your right hand just below the navel, pulling in with more pressure than the constant pressure the left hand maintains at its station at the heart. Keeping your back straight, hold both until they too become one at the bottom of the breath.

HARA HARA Remove your left hand from the heart to replace the hand that is just below the navel. That hand moves behind to hold the hara from the back, pressing into the muscle alongside the spine in the lower back. While pressing from both sides notice how your right leg is supporting the base of their core. Hold their whole core as one with your core.

Posterior Cradle

HIP EXPLORE Keep one hand stationed at either the front or the back of their hara (whichever is more comfortable) while your other hand explores around hip and down buttock.

HIP ROLL Holding the hip with both hands explore rolling slowly in a clockwise direction moving with your whole body. Speed up the roll with your arms moving faster and faster. Lean the heel of your right hand into the hip joint and vibrate. Stop. Hold.

LEAN DOWN LEG Station your left hand at the top of the leg. With each outbreath gently lean the heel of your right hand or forearm further down the side of the leg.

FREE EXPLORATION Pick up the leg and hold below the knee with both hands. Pull it towards you as you lean back and find its point of balance. Maintain that balance as you explore rotations, stretches and whatever you can access propping it into different positions as illustrated on pages 30-32.

Core Closure

BACK BEND Complete the Free Exploration by pulling their foot back and propping it on a cushion. Their body itself becomes the last station in this cradle, a station you can explore gently rocking with your hands up and down their back. Hold behind their heart and hara. Hold.

Keep your left hand on their lower back, push their right leg towards their left and slip back from physical contact.

