

OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

TAI CHI BALANCE

TAICHISYSTEM.COM
FUNCTIONALAGINGINSTITUTE.COM



FAI
EDUCATION



OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

WELCOME!

Welcome to Open the Door to Tai Chi! We are excited to have you join us and are glad you are interested in improving your balance with Tai Chi.

This series includes 3 separate videos. The first one is an introduction which gives you some important information on balance and how to use these videos. We have also supplemented the videos with a glossary of terms, a list of the movements in order of the form, and some research that shows how Tai Chi improves balance and reduces the risk of falling.

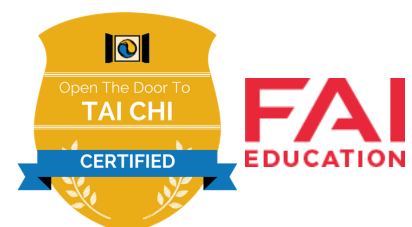
The second video teaches you the individual movements in this form and outlines the critical underlying principles which will ultimately help you with your balance. Take your time going through this video. Practice each movement separately by watching the demonstration and then stopping the video to do your own practice. This isn't a race! In fact, Tai Chi can be something you do for the rest of your life.

The third video is where we put it all together and you learn the Open the Door to Tai Chi balance form. Again, take your time with this. Not only are you improving your balance, but you will also be improving your brain as you now have to memorize the progression of the movements into a single form.

I hope you enjoy these videos and look forward to hearing how they have helped you be more balanced. I also hope you will be encouraged to continue your study of Tai Chi and seek out a local instructor in your community.



In Health,
Dianne Bailey,
CSCS, FAS, CTCI



TAICHISYSTEM.COM
FUNCTIONALAGINGINSTITUTE.COM



OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

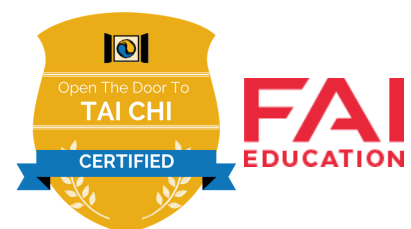
BEFORE YOU START

Open the Door to Tai Chi strongly recommends that you consult with your physician before beginning any exercise program.

You should be in good physical condition and be able to participate in the exercise.

Open the Door to Tai Chi is not a licensed medical care provider and represents that it has no expertise in diagnosing, examining, or treating medical conditions of any kind, or in determining the effect of any specific exercise on a medical condition.

You should understand that when participating in any exercise or exercise program, there is the possibility of physical injury. If you engage in this exercise or exercise program, you agree that you do so at your own risk, are voluntarily participating in these activities, assume all risk of injury to yourself, and agree to release and discharge Open the Door to Tai Chi from any and all claims or causes of action, known or unknown, arising out of Open the Door to Tai Chi negligence.



OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

THE BASICS OF BALANCE FORM (PAGE 1 OF 2)

While these movements are from the Yang style of Tai Chi and are specifically selected to help you with your balance based on the underlying principles, this form is not a traditional Tai Chi form. We created it as means to teach you these principles and help you improve your balance. We hope that it also inspires you to learn more and seek out an instructor in your area. You can move on to learn one or more of the traditional forms of Tai Chi.

Be sure that the environment in which you choose to practice is free from obstacles and any tripping hazards. Also, be sure that you have your physician's consent to begin any exercise program.

Principles:

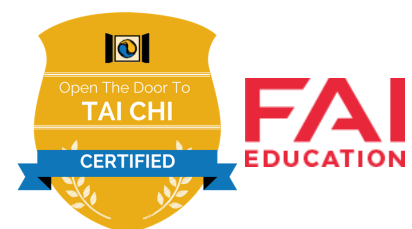
Columns

Substantial and Insubstantial

Lowering center of gravity – not locking knees

Eyes on horizon

Moving from the dan tian



TAICHISYSTEM.COM

FUNCTIONALAGINGINSTITUTE.COM

OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

THE BASICS OF BALANCE
FORM (PAGE 2 OF 2)

FORM OUTLINE:

Preparation

Lift Knees L,R,L,R

Brush Knee L,R, L,R

Pheasant Stands L,R,L

Repulse the Monkey 4x

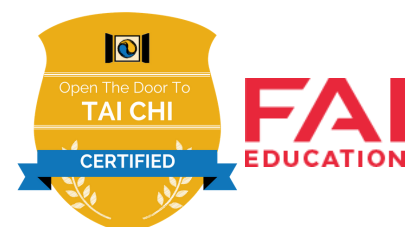
High Pat on Horse

Kick, Smash and Box the Ears R, L

Deflect, Intercept and Punch

Pushing Chi

Return the Tiger to the Mountain



TAICHISYSTEM.COM

FUNCTIONALAGINGINSTITUTE.COM



OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

THE LANGUAGE OF TAI CHI
PAGE 1 OF 4

Any time you begin a new pursuit, you must learn a new language. Tai Chi is no different. Here are some of the terms with which you must become familiar in order to really understand your practice of Tai Chi and help you with your balance. As we know, balance is a concern for every maturing adult. In fact, falls are the most common reason for heading to the emergency room in the U.S.! The reality is that if you don't train your balance, you lose it. And when you lose it, you are at risk for falling and injuring yourself. Balance is a key component in Tai Chi. In order to create balance in your movement, you must learn to shift your weight appropriately. The supporting leg is always bent – not locked - and you should focus on keeping strong through the hips. Your eyes should be focused on the horizon and not on the ground. Eventually you will be able to feel the inner balance through the dan tian.

Dan Tian

The dan tian is the center of your energy in your body. It is roughly 2 inches in from your belly button and 2 inches down. This location describes the lower dan tian. From an exercise physiology perspective, it is also the center of your balance. In Tai Chi, you must learn to move from your dan tian. In order to keep your columns intact and maintain balance including the concept of substantial and insubstantial, you must learn to move from the dan tian. Your shoulders must remain above your hips in a relaxed posture. If you allow your shoulders to lead a movement, for example, you end up pushing your shoulders in front of your hips.



OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

THE LANGUAGE OF TAI CHI
PAGE 2 OF 4

Columns

This principle is really all about correct posture. Just think about your mom putting a book on your head and making you walk across the room without letting the book fall to the floor. There are three columns that are incorporated in the practice of Tai Chi. One runs from the top of the head through the center of the body and the other two run from the shoulders through the hips. It is not a military “ram-rod” straight position . . . it is more of the idea that you are suspended from the ceiling and everything falls naturally into alignment.

As you learn to keep your shoulders above your hips and to move from the dan tian while keeping your focus on the horizon, you should feel a natural relaxation occurring throughout your body. A perfect posture like this allows the right muscles to support your body against the pull of gravity. Again, imagine a string attached to your head and that string allows you to be suspended from the ceiling (not like a noose!). Your body naturally falls into the perfect alignment and everything is relaxed.

Substantial and Insubstantial

Tai Chi is a series of one legged events. At any one time, one leg is substantial and the other is insubstantial. You should actually be able to lift the insubstantial leg off of the ground and keep your balance.



OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

THE LANGUAGE OF TAI CHI
PAGE 3 OF 4

Substantial and Insubstantial(cont.)

Think about real life. Walking is essentially a one-legged event. Research shows that approximately 80% of the time, you only have one foot on the ground at a time when you are walking. In this same way, we can look at running as controlled falling. As you propel yourself forward, your foot comes forward and "breaks your fall." In Tai Chi, we purposefully eliminate this controlled falling by focusing on balance and the concept of insubstantial and substantial in our one-legged events. As we step forward, we carefully place our leg down when we choose to put it down . . . and then we shift our weight forward from the dan tian, keeping our columns intact. Imagine an airplane landing very smoothly. It doesn't just hover and land straight down. It glides forward and touches down just at the right moment. Understanding substantial and insubstantial should feel as if water is flowing from one side to the next. One side empties before it moves. The weight bearing side is substantial and the non-weight bearing side, or the empty side, is insubstantial. Mastering this concept is key to balance.

Rooted and Grounded

The concept of being rooted in Tai Chi means that you are stable and in firm contact with the ground. It starts with relaxing your body. You want to be able to stand in any of the postures and feel all your muscles relax. You want to think of the concept of settling into each posture and creating a balance that will not allow your opponent to gain an advantage. This balance includes sinking into your stances as deeply as you personally can achieve.



OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

THE LANGUAGE OF TAI CHI
PAGE 4 OF 4

Rooted and Grounded (cont.)

As you work on being rooted, don't confuse this concept with having your feet glued to the ground. You must still have fluid movement throughout the form.

Weight shift and the concept of substantial and insubstantial play a big part in keeping yourself rooted. Try to imagine your whole body as a tree whose roots go both deep and wide. The substantial leg will be firmly in contact with the ground. As you move through the form, however, you must shift your weight and change from substantial to insubstantial easily and fluidly.

As you attempt to get deeper into each posture, make sure that your toes stay in alignment with your knees. Focus on allowing your feet to adjust and not letting them be "glued" to the ground in one position. Understanding the intention and purpose of each movement helps to understand how to become rooted and pulls together the concepts of substantial and insubstantial, balance, sinking and centering. When you consider the martial arts application of the movement, you can create the posture needed to be in the best position to defend an attack. If you are not properly rooted, your opponent will easily gain the advantage by pulling or pushing you off balance.



OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

STUDIES ON BALANCE

Here are a few research studies that show improvement in balance along with a reduction in the risk for falling.

Hain, Timothy C., MD. "TAI CHI FOR BALANCE STUDY." Tai Chi for Balance Study. N.p., 21 Apr. 2015. Web. 30 Aug. 2015.
<<http://dizziness-and-balance.com/taichi/default.htm>>.

Research shows that an 8 week course of Tai Chi significantly improved the balance of persons with mild balance disorders.

Jahnke, Roger, Linda Larkey, Carol Rogers, Jennifer Etnier, and Fang Lin. "A Comprehensive Review of Health Benefits of Qigong and Tai Chi." American Journal of Health Promotion : AJHP. U.S. National Library of Medicine, 1 July 2011. Web. 30 Aug. 2015.
<<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3085832/>>. This review has identified numerous outcomes with varying levels of evidence for the efficacy for Qigong and Tai Chi, including bone health, cardiopulmonary fitness and related biomarkers, physical function, falls prevention and balance, general quality of life and patient reported outcomes, immunity, and psychological factors such as anxiety, depression and self-efficacy.

Young, Travis. "Want Better Balance? Practice Tai Chi." - Mayo Clinic Health System. Mayo Clinic, 20 Mar. 2014. Web. 30 Aug. 2015.
<<http://mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/want-better-balance-practice-tai-chi>>. In 2004, the Oregon Research Institute conducted a six-month study on tai chi. Physically inactive community members between the ages of 70 and 92 were selected. Participants who practiced tai chi were less likely to fall, and those who did fall had fewer injurious falls when compared to a control group of people who only did stretching exercises.

Tsang, W. W., and C. W. Hui-Chan. "Effect of 4- and 8-wk Intensive Tai Chi Training on Balance Control in the Elderly." Med Sci Sports Exerc 36.4 (2004): 648-57. 1 Apr. 2004. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <<http://journals.lww.com/acsm-msse/Pages/articleviewer.aspx?year=2004&issue=04000&article=00014&type=Fulltext>>. Conclusions: The above findings indicated that even 4 wk of intensive Tai Chi training are sufficient to improve balance control in the elderly subjects.

Li, Fuzhong et al. "Tai Chi and Postural Stability in Patients with Parkinson's Disease." The New England Journal of Medicine 366.6 (2012): 511-519. PMC. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. Tai chi training appears to reduce balance impairments in patients with mild-to-moderate Parkinson's disease, with additional benefits of improved functional capacity and reduced falls. (Funded by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke; ClinicalTrials.gov number, NCT00611481.)