



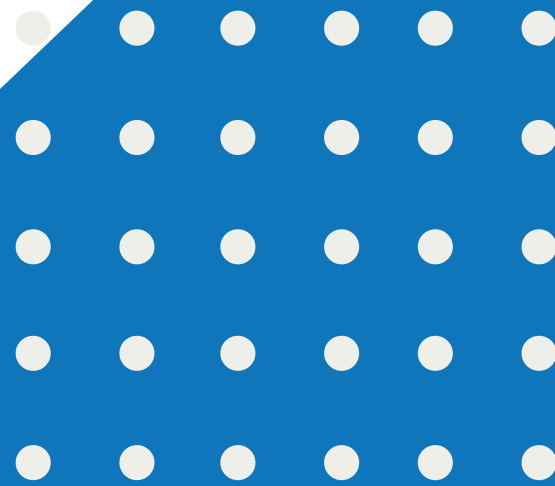
OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

STRESS RELIEF

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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 helping your body de-stress with Tai Chi.

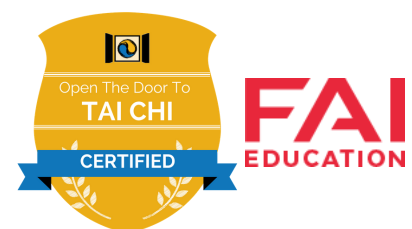
This series includes 3 separate videos. The first one is an introduction which gives you some important information on stress relief and how to use these videos. We have also supplemented the videos with a glossary of terms, a list of the movements in order of the form, and some research that shows how Tai Chi helps relieve stress and anxiety and can actually help lower blood pressure.

The second video teaches you the individual movements in this form and outlines the critical underlying principles which will ultimately help you relax and de-stress. 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 form for stress relief. Again, take your time with this. Not only are you encouraging your body to relax and let go of stress, 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 relaxed and deal better with the stress in your life. 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



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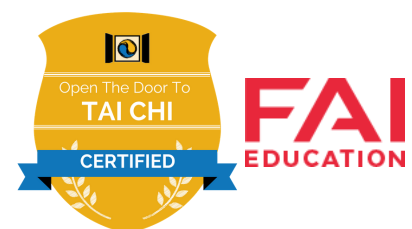
BEFORE YOU START

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

BASICS OF STRESS RELIEF FORM (PAGE 1 OF 2)

Tai Chi has been proven to lower stress and anxiety, lower blood pressure and improve sleep quality. We are extra-stressed today. Adding more stress is not the answer and high intensity exercise is extra stress! Tai Chi provides the answer to exercise without stress. It helps remove stress from your body. And it is proven as a moderate form of exercise as well! Adding Tai Chi will improve your overall fitness and help your body balance itself.

While these movements are from the Yang style of Tai Chi and are specifically selected to help you relax and de-stress 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 deal with the stress in your life. 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:

Sinking/Relaxation/Delicate ladies wrists

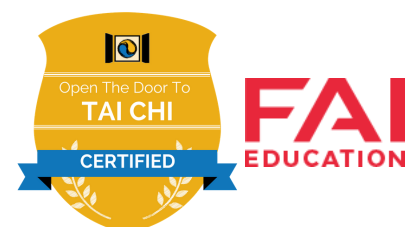
Substantial/Insubstantial

Moving from the dan tian

Breathing

Columns

Continuous flow



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BASICS OF STRESS RELIEF
FORM (PAGE 2 OF 2)

FORM OUTLINE:

Preparation

Wave Hands Like Clouds 3x to left

Single Whip

Step left to R, then Pushing Chi R 2x

Part the Wild Horse's Mane R, L, R

Pushing Chi L 2x

Ward Off Sequence L

Deflect, Intercept and Punch

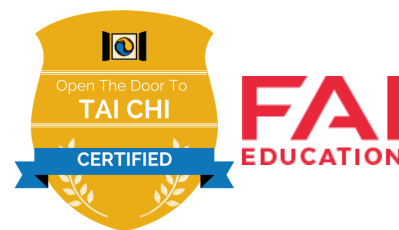
Step L foot back, White Snake Spits Out Tongue

Ward Off Sequence R

Wave Hands 3x to right

Wave Hands 3x to left

Return the Tiger to the Mountain



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OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

THE LANGUAGE OF TAI CHI
PAGE 1 OF 6

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. In this ever-changing world of technology and information overload, we often don't realize how stressed we have become. Everything around us moves at a frenetic pace and taking the time to slow down may seem foreign and even awkward. But our bodies need to learn how to relieve stress because the medical community warns us that stress can actually be the root cause of many chronic lifestyle diseases. Tai Chi is the perfect exercise to train your body to turn down the "fight or flight" central nervous system response that releases stress hormones constantly into our bodies.

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.



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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.



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THE LANGUAGE OF TAI CHI
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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.



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THE LANGUAGE OF TAI CHI
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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.



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Relaxation/connectedness

In Tai Chi, you should try to connect with and learn to control the energy in your body. This is part of the "healing" aspect and meditative component of Tai Chi. You must remain relaxed throughout and maintain your wrists in "delicate lady's wrists" to help the flow. As you move, think about your legs being light and your body flowing in a relaxing state. Sometimes it helps to envision light flowing through your body. The energy flow in Tai Chi keeps the movement going. Think of the Tai Chi symbol, the yin/yang circle. It flows from one to the next and back again, and each side cannot exist without the other.

Every move in the form is connected to the next movement. It is not a telegram where you start a sentence and then stop. You don't stop between each posture. Use your rotation and weight shift to connect each move. Remember that "hold the ball" is a transition . . . not a separate posture. Think about gathering the energy into the "ball" and then releasing it throughout the posture.

In order for your chi, or energy, to flow, you must keep your wrists loose and your hands soft and slightly cupped. This is called "delicate lady's wrists." If you make your hands and wrists tight, you will block the flow of energy. Imagine a violinist and her hand on the bow. Her wrist is fluid and yet controls the bow. You must keep your hands and wrists fluid to control your chi.



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Relaxation/connectedness (cont.)

Keeping your body relaxed and focusing on the energy flow allows you to start to benefit from the meditative effects of Tai Chi. As you relax your muscles and keep the movement flowing from one posture to the next, you can start to focus on "leading" the chi through the body. Imagine a light flowing throughout your body. That light is both powerful and healing at the same time. Allow the light to penetrate all parts of your body. Feel the energy and the relaxation that results. Keep the flow going by connecting all movements together and not stopping. As you learn to regulate the body in this way, you will begin to learn to regulate the mind and the chi.

Breathing

Breathing is level two in the progression of Tai Chi. You must first learn to regulate the body. Then you can move on to regulate the breathing. Then you can learn to regulate the mind and then the chi and then the spirit. When first thinking about the breathing, you should consider the martial arts application and breathe on the exertion of the force. Next, learning to control your breath much like a singer has to control their breathing is essential. It is not a quick inhalation and quick exhalation. It should be continuous and uniform, slow and calm. As you train, the control of your breathing will also guide your energy flow and relaxation and meditation. It also improves your lung function as you allow the lungs to expand and contract fully. Learning to keep your breathing slow and calm will also help reduce anxiety and contributes to keeping your blood pressure normal.



OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

STUDIES ON TAI CHI

Here are a few research studies that show improvement blood pressure, stress and anxiety.

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.

Lan, C., J. S. Lai, and S. Y. Chen. "Result Filters." Tai Chi Chuan: An Ancient Wisdom on Exercise and Health Promotion. Sports Medicine, 4 Apr. 2002. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11929351>>. Tai Chi Chuan (TCC) is a Chinese conditioning exercise and is well known for its slow and graceful movements. Recent investigations have found that TCC is beneficial to cardiorespiratory function, strength, balance, flexibility, microcirculation and psychological profile. The long-term practice of TCC can attenuate the age decline in physical function, and consequently it is a suitable exercise for the middle-aged and elderly individuals. TCC can be prescribed as an alternative exercise programme for selected patients with cardiovascular, orthopaedic, or neurological diseases, and can reduce the risk of falls in elderly individuals. The exercise intensity of TCC depends on training style, posture and duration. Participants can choose to perform a complete set of TCC or selected movements according to their needs. In conclusion, TCC has potential benefits in health promotion, and is appropriate for implementation in the community.

Mayo Clinic. Stress symptoms: Effects on your body and behavior <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-symptoms/art-20050987>

YouTube video. How stress affects your body - Sharon Horesh Bergquist <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-tlZ5-oPtU>

"Heart Health | Manage Stress - Consumer Reports." Heart Health | Manage Stress - Consumer Reports. Consumer Reports, Mar. 2013. Web. 30 Aug. 2015. <<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/2013/02/manage-stress/index.htm>>. Consumer reports states that Tai Chi is an effective practice for stress management.



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STUDIES ON TAI CHI

"Tai Chi and Qi Gong Show Some Beneficial Health Effects." NCCIH. National Institute of Health/National Center of Complimentary Medicine and Integrated Health, 1 July 2010. Web. 30 Aug. 2015. <<https://nccih.nih.gov/research/results/spotlight/071910.htm>>. The reviewers from Arizona State University and the University of North Carolina concluded that the evidence is sufficient to suggest that tai chi and qi gong are a viable alternative to conventional forms of exercise. They also noted that because of the similarities in philosophy and critical elements between tai chi and qi gong, the outcomes can be analyzed across both types of studies.

"Tai Chi and Cardiac Rehabilitation-Mayo Clinic." YouTube. Mayo Clinic, 23 July 2010. Web. 30 Aug. 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsbhtTwe5Kc>>. For hundreds of years people have practiced the Chinese martial art of Tai Chi for its many health benefits. Researchers who study Tai Chi say it can help reduce blood pressure, decrease anxiety, improve flexibility and much more. For these reasons, some doctors at Mayo Clinic have embraced Tai Chi and are teaching it to their patients.

Yeh, GY. "The Effect of Tai Chi Exercise on Blood Pressure: A Systematic Review." *Prev Cardiol* 11.Spring (2008): 82-89. The Effect of Tai Chi Exercise on Blood Pressure: A Systematic Review. U.S. National Library of Medicine. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0026138/>>. The review concluded that tai chi exercise may reduce blood pressure and serve as a practical adjunct to conventional hypertension management, but that further studies were needed. These conclusions were suitably cautious in reflecting the limited evidence available and appear likely to be reliable.

Wang, F., EK Lee, T. Wu, H. Benson, GY Fricchione, W. Wang, and AS Yeung. "The Effects of Tai Chi on Depression, Anxiety, and Psychological Well-being: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." In *J Behav Med* 21.Aug (2014): 605-17. National Center for Biotechnology Information. *Int J Behav Med*. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24078491/>>. The studies in this review demonstrated that tai chi interventions have beneficial effects for various populations on a range of psychological well-being measures, including depression, anxiety, general stress management, and exercise self-efficacy. Meta-analysis was performed on three RCTs that used depression as an outcome measure (ES=-5.97; 95% CI -7.06 to -4.87), with I²=0%.

Jin, P. "Result Changes in Heart Rate, Noradrenaline, Cortisol and Mood during Tai Chi." *J Psychosom Res* 33.2 (1989): 197-206. National Center for Biotechnology Information. U.S. National Library of Medicine, 1989. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2724196>>. Changes



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STUDIES ON TAI CHI

Jin, P. "Efficacy of Tai Chi, Brisk Walking, Meditation, and Reading in Reducing Mental and Emotional Stress." National Center for Biotechnology Information. Journal of Psychosomatic Research, May 1992. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.
<<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1593511>>. Tai Chi, a moving meditation, is examined for its efficacy in post-stressor recovery. Forty-eight male and 48 female Tai Chi practitioners were randomly assigned to four treatment groups: Tai Chi, brisk walking, meditation and neutral reading. Mental arithmetic and other difficult tests were chosen as mental challenges, and a stressful film was used to produce emotional disturbance. Tai Chi and the other treatments were applied after these stressors. After all treatments, the salivary cortisol level dropped significantly, and the mood states were also improved. In general the stress-reduction effect of Tai Chi characterized moderate physical exercise. Heart rate, blood pressure, and urinary catecholamine changes for Tai Chi were found to be similar to those for walking at a speed of 6 km/hr. Although Tai Chi appeared to be superior to neutral reading in the reduction of state anxiety and the enhancement of vigour, this effect could be partially accounted for by the subjects' high expectations about gains from Tai Chi. Approaches controlling for expectancy level are recommended for further assessment.

Yau, MK. "Result Filters." Tai Chi Exercise and the Improvement of Health and Well-being in Older Adults. 52 (2008): 155-65. National Center for Biotechnology Information. Med Sports Sci, 2008. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.
<<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18487895>>. Activity participation has a positive impact on both quantity and quality of life (QOL). Regular participations in physical, social, and cultural activities are associated with successful aging. There is considerable evidence that Tai Chi has positive health benefits: physical, psychosocial and therapeutic. Furthermore, Tai Chi does not only consist of a physical component, but also sociocultural, meditative components that are believed to contribute to overall well-being. This chapter describes the benefits of Tai Chi exercise for the older adults, particularly in terms of the psychosocial aspect. The perceived meanings, associated values and well-being, as well as the impact on QOL, of Tai Chi practice among the older adults in Hong Kong are also discussed. Tai Chi exercise is chosen by the elderly participants for its gentle and soft movements. Besides the physical aspect, the benefits they describe include lifestyle issues, as well as psychological and social benefits. Evidence points out that the improvements in physical and mental health through the practice of Tai Chi among the older adults are related to their perceived level of QOL. Findings from numerous studies support the belief that the practice of Tai Chi has multiple benefits to practitioners that are not only physical in nature. It is recommended as a strategy to promote successful aging.