



OPEN THE DOOR TO  
**TAI CHI**

*Tai Chi for the Everyday Person*

# OPEN THE DOOR TO TAI CHI

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## Tai Chi for the Everyday Person

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## Forward



As a PhD trained exercise physiologist specializing in aging, I am very familiar with the amazing benefits that the practice of Tai Chi has to offer. Over the past 20 years I have read numerous research articles documenting how Tai Chi improves balance, mood, cognition and health for all types of older adults. It has established itself as an evidence-based program recommended by international health organizations and I have personally recommended the practice to many individuals and fitness professionals.

Unfortunately, during the past 20 years I have only seen very few Tai Chi classes in action and therefore have not been able to actually refer clients to a class. Being one of the oldest, most researched and highly touted exercise programs in the world you would think there would be classes everywhere. And that people over the age of 50 would be flocking to those classes. But they aren't. And why is that?

Because traditionally there have been too many barriers for instructors and for the everyday person. I've always wanted to learn Tai Chi myself. In fact, several times I watched some online videos for that purpose but it just never really worked. And it seemed way too daunting to commit to what seemed to be a long and difficult path to becoming a Tai Chi master.

But now Open the Door to Tai Chi is destroying those barriers so that more instructors can become trained and more everyday people can experience its amazing benefits.

You don't...

have to immerse yourself in the Asian culture.

need to take a pilgrimage to Guangfu (the birthplace of Tai Chi).

study for years to ascend the martial arts ladder under the supervision of a Grandmaster.

study and practice the Daoism religion.

wear flowing robes and “kung fu uniforms”.

learn how to speak Chinese or read Chinese symbols.

Dianne will quickly and effectively guide you through learning the Tai Chi movements and forms so that you too can experience its benefits. Whether you are completely brand new to “movement meditation” or are an experienced martial artist Dianne’s instructions and cues will have you practicing on your own with confidence in no time.

I am so proud to be able to be part of this innovative and much-needed program. It is going to change the lives of so many people around the world so that they feel better, move better and live their life better.

Sincerely,

**Cody Sipe, PhD**

**Co-Founder, Functional Aging Institute**

**Internationally Acclaimed Fitness and Aging Expert**

*“Tai Chi is a great form of exercise. As someone who focuses her career on helping people move better and for a longer time, Tai Chi is an activity I recommend often at the end of care as a way to continue what we have done in rehab. Tai Chi can help improve balance, brain function and endurance. The cross pattern movements of this gentle martial arts practice help your brain learn more ways to cope with stress, improve memory and cognition and re-activate reflexes that you may have lost in your teens. Tai Chi can improve your ability to read and retain information as well, through these cross body movements. Mobility, flexibility and lack of core strength are the primary reasons our bodies begin to deteriorate. If you have considered getting into the practice of Tai Chi, but have been intimidated by the requirements physically, this book will be the perfect introduction to help you on your journey to improved health, balance, flexibility, mobility and core strength to keep you moving longer and stronger.”*

**- Dr. Marci Catallo-Madruga, PT, DPT, CMT, CTT**  
**Founder-Agility Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine**  
**Greenwood Village, CO**

*“Fantastic book! It’s such a great introduction to Tai Chi and the sharing of the Everyday Person’s experiences makes it “easy” to see how beneficial Tai Chi can be.*

*The philosophy of Chinese Medicine is about seeking homeostasis of yin and yang, qi and blood, hot and cold, humid and damp, activity and stillness -- internally and externally. As a Licensed Acupuncturist, my job is more than just inserting needles to rebalance one’s qi, it is also about educating & guiding patients to find this balance for themselves within and throughout their lives. Tai chi is the epitome of a balanced exercise and excludes no one. Tai Chi is a practice of maintaining our qi flow (yin and yang) for health maintenance and longevity. As such, it is easy to recommend Tai Chi for my patients, for with such a gentle exercise comes awareness of breath and placement of the body, core balance and strength, coordination and agility.*

*One does not need prior experience in martial arts, nor meditation, to perform Tai Chi. Whether one needs more movement to help with stiffness from arthritis or recovery from injuries, or whether one needs to calm anxieties, heightened reactions to stress, or high blood pressure, Tai Chi provides foundational lifestyle tools that can be practiced anywhere at any time. As a “moving meditation,” Tai Chi can easily become part of our daily routine to allow us to get through our busy lives with ease and optimal health!”*

**- Fuyiu Yip, M.A.O.M., Dipl. O.M., L.Ac.**

*“There are many physical and mental benefits of Tai Chi, as outlined in this user-friendly book by Dianne Bailey Tai Chi for the Everyday Person. Tai Chi improves flexibility, balance and strength. It is a low-impact exercise that is beneficial for every fitness level and all age groups. As both a physician and a student of Tai Chi, I highly recommend incorporating this tremendous activity as part of your healthy lifestyle. The testimonials in this book speak volumes.”*

**- Virginia D. Thommen, M.D.**



## Chapter 1

# My Tai Chi Story . . . and why it makes a difference for you

This is not your stereotypical journey. I'm not Chinese. In fact, I've never been to China. (My husband has, though, and he really enjoyed it!) I didn't have to hide myself away in the mountains for weeks in order to soak in the teachings and philosophy of the great masters. I'm really just a regular person who became interested in martial arts when my older son wanted to take Taekwondo. You see, he was 8 years old at the time and desperately wanted to become a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle!!

By 2005, I was a 3rd degree black belt in Taekwondo. I had studied Brazilian Jui-Jitsu, Krav Maga, Taekwondo and American boxing along the way. I had even been teaching kickboxing for over 7 years at that point. I really loved to punch and kick things!! I was really enjoying my martial arts and learning that even a regular person could be successful at it. I figured that adding Tai Chi to my repertoire would be good for me. After all, I wasn't getting any younger and I knew that eventually, I would need to slow down a bit. I looked at Tai Chi, considered the "movement meditation" that it represented and decided to give it a go. Of course, I knew that I would need to study it for a few years before I even considered teaching it. Holy cow! I had no idea how much I would hate it. Really. It was so slow. And so gentle. I was bored to tears! (Part of that was my instructor's fault. He would make me do chi walk-

ing for an hour at a time. Believe me . . . I vowed right then and there to never teach like that!)

I stuck with it, however, even though I didn't really enjoy it. (The word I chose to put on my 3rd degree black belt was "perseverance" which turned out to be fitting.) As I moved into my 50's, I started to realize the benefits that Tai Chi was providing for my body. It was the "soft" side to my "hard" style. It provided a balance that I didn't even know I needed. It gave my body the tools to continue to kick and punch and not get injured! It allowed me to practice my martial arts and gain the benefits of reduced blood pressure, anxiety control, better sleep quality and better body awareness. By the time I reached my 4th degree, I was ready to put the phrase, "Peaceful Warrior" on my belt.

As I began to teach Tai Chi, I also realized how much it could do for the general population . . . not just seasoned martial artists like myself. I watched as my students improved their balance, learned how to coordinate their movements and how to relax and feel the energy in their bodies. I began to understand how many people were reluctant to begin an exercise program because of the fear of injury and how Tai Chi was a welcome opportunity for them to start to move and improve. And I began to realize how the martial arts community had "hidden" this wonderful form of exercise! They had mandated that only people with the proper "lineage" be able to teach and instruct others, so there were very few instructors available. Classes were and are formatted in such a way that repels the casual participant . . . the person that doesn't want to swallow the whole martial arts lifestyle . . . the person that just wants to learn and grow and benefit from Tai Chi, but not have to adopt the philosophical lifestyle.

How completely selfish is this? How can we demand that the general population seek out the mountain top guru and change everything in their life in order to train in Tai Chi? Why can't we just "open the door" and let the curious come through . . . let them experience the life-changing benefits of Tai Chi? If, in the course of

their study, they choose to move on to the mountaintop . . . OUTSTANDING! But not everyone will do this and that is okay. They can still benefit from the many proven, lifestyle benefits of Tai Chi.

My goal is to bring these life-changing benefits of Tai Chi to the everyday person. The person who just wants to try something different. The person who needs to find a gentle form of exercise after recovering from a traumatic health compromise such as cancer. The person who has never really exercised and just needs a place to start. The person who has recently received a diagnosis like hypertension and wants to try a lifestyle change before they commit to a pharmaceutical routine. All of these people can benefit from learning Tai Chi. They don't need a lineage. They don't



need to commit their entire lives to the martial arts. They just need to “open the door” and walk through and begin to experience the wonderful outcomes of practicing Tai Chi. I invite you to do just that. Your first step is this book. Take some time to learn about Tai Chi and what it can do for you. And you'll start to realize the benefits that the everyday person can gain from practicing Tai Chi. And throughout this book, you will get to meet the everyday people who are already trying out this unique form of exercise and learn how it is improving their everyday lives. In fact, the first person that I want you to meet is Kathy. When she first walked into my office and handed me an already prepared, typed litany of the multiple health issues she was facing and the medications she was on, I have to admit that even I was skeptical that Tai Chi could help. But listen carefully to what she has to say. It's not magic. It's not a replacement for her medical doctors. But read on and see just how much Tai Chi has done for this retired physical therapist.



## Kathy

(68 years old, retired physical therapist)

*"I've been taking Tai Chi classes 1-2 times a week for about 2 years and practice at home about 2-3 times a week. I started taking classes because I believed they would improve my overall physical health, especially my balance and strength. I have significant arthritis, fibromyalgia and scoliosis. I had no regular exercise routine and I was recovering from total knee replacement on both knees.*

*When I started class I could barely complete a 30-minute beginner session and now I can handle a 45-min. more advanced session with little difficulty. That alone made me feel better and was a sign that I was improving. This was important to me because I use to be very active but for nearly 5 years prior to this, I was physically inactive and usually in moderate pain. My doctors noticed the difference, too. My resting heart rate has dropped from about 100 to between 75 and 80. My systolic blood pressure dropped from about 90 to 80. My gastroenterologist uses an approximate "stand-up-and-go" measure of a patients overall movement function. On my last visit he commented on how I was moving faster and with better balance. I hadn't thought about it but I really was doing better. My neurologist tests "standing with eyes closed". I couldn't do this for a brief moment at an earlier visit but last month I could stand with my eyes closed without even swaying from side-to-side.*

*In class, my improvement occurred in many areas and the changes were easy to see. When I started I had no one-foot standing balance. In spite of some nerve damage in one leg, I*

*can not only stand without falling but I can complete a one-foot Tai Chi form some of the time and am getting better.*

*My coordination was terrible at first. Rotating and shifting my weight was impossible. Now it comes without even thinking about it. And I can accomplish multiple tasks simultaneously with some effort (i.e.; coordinating my breathing with smooth movements, relaxed body alignment and smooth flow of energy). Tai Chi has improved my mental focus and concentration so that I can accomplish all this.*

*But the greatest and most satisfying experience is when I notice that on a day-to-day basis I can do things I just couldn't do before. I can work in the garden on uneven ground without losing my balance and reaching for something to hold onto. I no longer have a fear of falling. At one time I wouldn't attempt to work in the yard or go for a walk without my husband being present or without my cell phone near by. At one time I wouldn't attempt going up or down even 3 steps in my house without holding onto the railing. Last week I found myself at a theater with a long flight of stairs and no railing or someone to grab onto. There were people all around me and without hesitation I climbed down them and later back up without even a slight loss of balance. I was very impressed with myself! I also recently noticed that I can turn in my seat when backing up my car and see out the back window. I had almost forgotten that this was once impossible to do. Trunk rotation is a wonderful thing. One last example is something I'd like to keep a secret from my husband. He is use to doing all the household tasks involving lifting and carrying, such as removing dishes from the cupboard or carrying the laundry upstairs. These are things I can now do but still accept his kind help whenever I can get it.*

*I just wanted to add how much I enjoy going to Tai Chi class. It's hard work, I'm exhausted when I leave but I love it. I al-*

ways come away with at least one new insight about myself or the class: “When I concentrate on breathing, I relax more easily than if I try to concentrate on relaxing”, “If I bring my ball of energy to the front of my body first, then I can complete the form without falling.”, “If I put my hands out to the side with my palms down and feel the chi, I can balance better.”, “When I shift my weight during the form, I can rotate better”, “Boy, I really need to practice that more”. I like relating to people around my age-range who also have some trouble doing the forms, even when their issues are different than mine. Our teacher sets the tone for this by keeping the class laughing but still working, by telling us to do something but adding that there is no “one-correct way” to do it, and by sharing something about herself. This make it easier to laugh at our mistakes in a self-deprecating way that everyone appreciates.”

This kind of life-changing improvement awaits you. All you have to do is “open the door” and walk through. Welcome to the calm. Welcome to the challenge. Welcome to your new world that includes Tai Chi.





## Chapter 2

### So . . . Just what is Tai Chi?

In short, Tai Chi is a martial art. It began as a fighting style just like what you think of when you see movies with ninjas and Kung Fu fighters. The history of Tai Chi goes back hundreds of years to the 5th century as a Buddhist monk observed that Shaolin priests were neglecting their bodies through too much meditation and fasting. He taught them simple moves to strengthen their physical bodies. Move forward several centuries and several figures who may be more legend than reality, to Chen Wangting who lived from 1580-1660. Chen was trained in the military and developed a fighting style from his observations of the Shaolin. The Chen family developed and practiced Tai Chi as a fighting martial art for another hundred years.

In the early 1800's a man named Yang Lu-chan learned the fighting style from the Chens. Working with Chen Changxing, Yang bettered the art and ultimately became the father of Yang Family Tai Chi which is the slow, movement meditation style that we practice in the Open the Door to Tai Chi system. The health benefits of Tai Chi were first taught by Yang Chengfu in the early 1900's. The government of China, realizing these same benefits, created the 24 Form or Short Form that took 24 pieces from the long form and standardized it. This form is used to teach Tai Chi to "the masses." As a result when you walk through the parks of China's largest cities early in the morning, you see hundreds practicing the art today.

For the everyday person, learning the 24 or Short Form is perfect because you can join in when you see people practicing Tai Chi in a park. It also doesn't take long to understand the individual moves. But don't underestimate this martial art! As you learn the 24 form, remember that it is based in the Yang long form and is much more complex than you might think. It is not a horizontal learning event, but rather a vertical learning event. What I mean by this is that you don't continue to learn more and more different moves. Instead, you learn 24 moves and then begin to learn how to incorporate different principles such as rotation, grounding and energy flow to those 24 moves. Studying Tai Chi can be a lifetime pursuit!

Learning the moves is the first level of learning. You must figure out where your hands go and your feet move. That's okay! The basis of Tai Chi is regulating the body. You must learn how to do the moves first. Then you can move on to understanding how to incorporate the principles of columns, rotation, being rooted and grounded, relaxation, substantial and insubstantial, and others. You will also begin to understand the martial arts application of these moves and how to breathe with each one. We will discuss each of these principles and how to incorporate them into your practice later.

Tai Chi is a flow of moves, or postures. In contrast, the practice of Qigong involves performing individual moves, usually to accomplish healing of some kind. Tai Chi, as a martial art, was used as self-defense. In its current "movement meditation" form, it can also be considered a subset of the healing art of Qigong. The benefits of practicing Tai Chi are many and are certainly healing for much of our stress-induced illness patterns that exist today. It is, however, in its origins, a martial art, so the flow of the movements should be considered a choreographed fight. There are additional studies in Tai Chi that introduce weapons and "push hands" that you learn to do with a partner. We will confine ourselves in this book to the Yang style 24 form. The benefits to the everyday person will certainly occur just with this simple form!

If, after learning this simple form, you are interested in learning some of the other styles, I encourage you to seek out local instructors who can help you.

Tai Chi is a martial art  
that utilizes gentle, flowing  
movements to enhance health  
in the body and the mind.





## Judy

(70 years old, retired dental hygienist after a 45 year career. Volunteers regularly at local public radio and creates jewelry as a fun hobby and side business.)

*“When I started Tai Chi classes two years ago I could hardly do the forms without losing my balance. I even had trouble with chi walking! After a few months I was amazed at how much my balance had improved and now, after two years, I feel very confident in my stability while doing Tai Chi and in everyday life. I know I will continue with Tai Chi as a lifelong practice since I have benefited so much from it.*

*When I first met you, I was about to have spinal surgery and then two months of neck brace and rehab . . . and look at me now! Today I turned 70 and I am grateful for you and Tai Chi for my continued good health. I take nothing for granted! The class is a great group of people and friendships are developing out of this experience. Thanks for everything!”*



## Chapter 3

# What can Tai Chi do for you? (Hint: “It’s better than a glass of wine!”)

The above quote is an actual proclamation from one of my students at the end of class one night. I told you this is for the everyday person! Let’s take some time to look through all the things that you can expect from learning this relaxing, slow martial art.

The benefits of including Tai Chi into your exercise regimen are numerous. Because of the slow, meditative approach to movement, some people question it as an exercise modality since the aerobic component is not high. You should not dismiss it, however, simply because you might not break a sweat doing it! The intensity of this form of exercise can be increased or decreased depending on the depth of the postures and the duration of practice. It is certainly a low-impact form of exercise which is beneficial to people with existing joint issues and to people who want to avoid joint issues.

Let’s take a look at both the scientifically proven benefits and the anecdotal benefits that occur with the regular practice of Tai Chi. I do not intend this book to be a scholarly research treatise, but I will list some of the research studies at the end of the book so that you can look things up for yourself if you wish to pursue this subject in more depth.

## Physical benefits

As you would expect, there are many physical benefits when one practices any form of exercise over a period of time. The benefits that research has proven with the regular practice of Tai Chi are surprisingly far-reaching, especially in our current climate of anti-aging remedies. The Mayo Clinic lists some of the benefits of Tai Chi as:

Improved aerobic capacity

Increased energy and stamina

Improved flexibility, balance and agility

Improved muscle strength and definition

Enhanced quality of sleep

Enhanced functioning of the immune system

Reduction in blood pressure

Reduction in joint pain

Improved symptoms of congestive heart failure

Reduction in the risk of falls in older adults

That list is impressive just by itself! There are other studies that have proven improvement for those who live with chronic conditions such as fibromyalgia, Parkinson's disease, osteoarthritis, COPD and others. It has also been proven to improve bone mineral density in elderly women. One study (Tai Chi Chuan: an ancient wisdom on exercise and health promotion) even stated that, "The long-term practice of Tai Chi Chuan can attenuate the age decline

in physical function . . . ” It’s no secret that we are living longer now due in part to medical advances. It can be argued that we are not necessarily living better, however. The practice of Tai Chi can possibly be one of the ways we are able to increase the enjoyment of our later years because of the improvements it provides in physical function.

One of the biggest concerns of aging is falling. Obviously, the physical detriment of broken bones or concussions or even just severe bruising are difficult for the aging population to deal with. The mental effect of being scared it will happen again is even worse, however. There are many studies that show a rapid decline in independence after just one fall. Clearly, working on balance is an important concept to help prevent falls. In a meta-study, authors Wong and Lan wrote in “Tai Chi and Balance Control” that, “recent studies substantiate that Tai Chi is effective in balance function enhancement and falls prevention.” They also concluded that, “Tai Chi improves static and dynamic balance, especially in more challenging sensory perturbed condition.” A different study on the effect of 4-and 8-week intensive Tai Chi training on balance control in the elderly concluded that, “even 4 weeks of intensive Tai Chi training are sufficient to improve balance control.” Anecdotal, I have witnessed this in the classes I teach. Many of my students comment on the marked improvement in their balance. One student in particular related the story of how she and her husband were hiking and she was getting frustrated because she felt unstable going over the rocks. Then she remembered her Tai Chi training and started to incorporate some of the principles of columns and weight shift, and she immediately felt more balanced and in control on their hike!

One of the other anecdotal effects that I have seen in my classes is weight loss with Tai Chi. It is not something that people express as a goal when they start Tai Chi, however, I have had several students who have admitted that beneficial weight loss has been a side effect of their training.

## Mental benefits

The benefits of Tai Chi are not only substantiated as physical benefits. There are important mental and emotional benefits as well. Let's return to the list of benefits from the Mayo Clinic. They also list the following as resulting from practicing Tai Chi:

Decreased stress, anxiety and depression

Improved mood

Improved overall well-being

And I would add the following to that list:

Increased mental focus

Improvement in working memory/executive function

Social enjoyment and interaction

The studies concerned with the effect of Tai Chi on psychological well-being are not as conclusive as the studies on the physical benefits due in part to the obvious reliance on subjective measures. In general, however, the studies do demonstrate beneficial effects in regard to practicing Tai Chi for depression, anxiety, stress management and mood disturbance. One study on the therapeutic benefits of Tai Chi exercise (Kuramoto AM) states that, "Tai Chi can influence older individuals' functioning and well being . . . and the positive effects of Tai Chi may be due solely to its relaxing, meditative aspects." Just the other day, I had a student comment to me after class that, "It always seems that whatever I'm dealing with on a particular day just eases back into the proper perspective when I'm done with Tai Chi. It obviously doesn't make the problem go away, but it feels like I can approach it with a better mindset and a healthier attitude." That's really the beauty of Tai Chi. It's not some

mystical, magical force or religion. In one study that measured heart rate, adrenaline, cortisol and mood during Tai Chi (Jin P), “Relative to baseline levels, subjects reported less tension, depression, anger, fatigue, confusion and state-anxiety. They felt more vigorous and in general, they had less total mood disturbance.” In another meta-analysis regarding Tai Chi exercise and the improvement of health and well-being in older adults (Yau MK), “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 same study concluded that, “It is recommended as a strategy to promote successful aging.” That’s quite an endorsement! You might say that Tai Chi comes close to being a fountain of youth for those that practice it!

In my own experience, I have seen the improvement in mental focus and working memory. If you are not “in the moment” and really thinking about your movements and how to apply the principles of Tai Chi . . . you will get lost! You can’t think about what’s for dinner that night, or the fight that you had with your spouse the night before. You must focus your mind on the task at hand



“It always seems that whatever I’m dealing with on a particular day just eases back into the proper perspective when I’m done with Tai Chi.”



and that actually causes a relaxation and meditative effect. Because many of the movements force you to cross the midline, you are also forcing your brain to function in a different pattern by making the left side talk with right side. Jean Blaydes Madigan, a neuro-kinesiologist states that, “Crossing the midline integrates brain hemispheres to enable the brain to organize itself. When students perform cross-lateral activities, blood flow is increased in all parts of the brain, making it more alert and energized for stronger, more cohesive learning. Movements that cross the midline unify the cognitive and motor regions of the brain.” Wow! You are actually making your brain function better on all levels with the simple practice of Tai Chi!

In two different meta-studies concerned with the cognitive performance in healthy adults (Zheng, G, et. al and Wayne PM, et.al), they both concluded that “Tai Chi shows potential protective effects on healthy adults’ cognitive ability. Tai Chi shows potential to enhance cognitive function in older adults, particularly in the realm of executive functioning.” Executive function is defined on WebMD as “a set of mental skills that help you get things done.” Who doesn’t need to get more things done in his or her life? And unfortunately, if we don’t work at it, executive function declines as we age.

The last point I want to mention about the benefits of practicing Tai Chi is the most subtle, but certainly a very important point, especially as we age. I see a community develop in my classes that is so strong, it supports each member and provides a social interaction that is rare in our society. Many studies have shown that for successful aging, people need to be involved and to interact with each other. My students come to class to enjoy the benefits of Tai Chi . . . but they also come to class to enjoy the social interaction and support from their classmates. This kind of support and interaction can happen in any number of different venues, of course. I think the combination of the relaxing atmosphere, a non-intimidating, simple-to-move kind of exercise and the joint experience of learning something new that has a calming influence

on your mood is un-paralleled in the exercise world. Tai Chi brings together your physical well-being with your mental and social well-being in a unique experience that can be practiced for years. Better than a glass of wine, indeed!

“The gentle movements are surprisingly good at building strength while being easy on the joints.”



## Sandy

(70 years old, retired teacher. Teaches community classes for conversational Spanish. Maintains a very active lifestyle.)

*“Tai Chi has been an excellent exercise program for me. The gentle movements are surprisingly good at building strength while being easy on the joints. My balance has also greatly improved in the 3+ years I have been practicing Tai Chi. I highly recommend Tai Chi for people of all ages and abilities.”*



Jo

(40 years old, stay-at-home mom from New Zealand. Has had continual issues with her knees that prevent her from participating in many high intensity sports or activities)

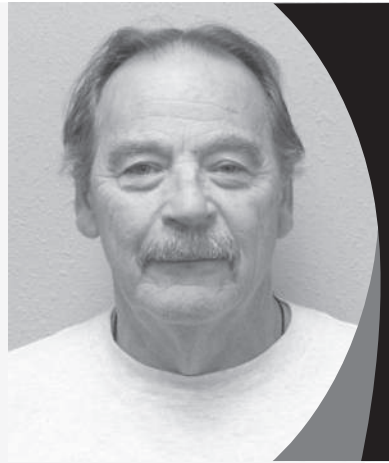
*“I was looking for something that could help me improve my overall strength and flexibility as well as have a philosophy that I could relate to. Tai Chi is a relaxing, go at your own pace type of activity. I really enjoy going and love practicing. I am now at the point where I can really challenge myself in terms of my own strength and flexibility. I have an ongoing knee injury but because I set the pace for myself I’m not really affected by this.*

*By the time class is finished I feel refreshed and my mind is calmed. I find I use the breathing and some of the techniques in daily life now – a pleasant surprise! It’s helped me a lot and the people who go are like minded and are lovely to practice with.”*

## Bill

(65 years old, New York  
born and bred, full-time  
maintenance supervisor  
with the Regional  
Transportation District.

Looking forward to  
retiring. Aids with care  
for ill family members  
when not at work.)



*“Tai Chi has helped me in a couple of ways. Over the years I have gone through periods of inactivity and Tai Chi has helped me maintain the flexibility needed to get back in shape when needed. It has kept things like arthritis and weight gain at bay so it is easier to lose the unwanted weight and ease the pain of stiff joints. Tai Chi, along with some Qigong exercises has also been an aid in stress management for me. The standing and moving meditation are relaxing and in the right environment, it could darn near put you to sleep! Last but not least, Tai Chi helps me maintain a connection to the martial arts. I still like to punch and kick things and I still practice some of the forms and techniques from Taekwondo . . . but I just don’t like when they punch and kick back now! So for me, Tai Chi is the best of both worlds.”*





## Chapter 4

# The Language of Tai Chi

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.

## Internal Martial Art vs. External Martial Art

Tai Chi is often referred to as an “internal” martial art. It focuses on unifying the body and the mind with the intrinsic energy or chi found in the body. External martial arts focus more on separate strikes that utilize power and strength. Internal martial arts believe in connecting each move to the next move and calming the mind by incorporating slow, uniform breathing. An external martial art will have the practitioner using their muscles in a tense and release fashion and will often be aggressive. An internal martial art requires that the entire body be relaxed and yet ready to strike if provoked.

## 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.

## Yin/Yang

Yin is on one edge of energy that is expressed as deficient. The opposite is Yang energy which is expressed as too sufficient. These forces don't exist without the other and they must balance each other out. Yin is often affiliated with soft, feminine and weak whereas Yang is affiliated with hard, masculine and strong. These concepts, however, are not to be taken as absolutes, but rather as relative ideas. Both Yin and Yang are present in each individual, situation, and even thoughts. Think of it this way: If a "normal" state of mind is the reference point, then your emotions are too Yin if you are depressed and they are too Yang if you are wildly ecstatic.

## Supreme or Grand Ultimate

This is the meaning of Tai Chi and the symbol of Tai Chi which is the Yin/Yang symbol that you are familiar with. As you look at the symbol, you can see that as Yin increases, Yang decreases and vice versa. They flow from one to the other in a continuous type of movement. Tai Chi itself is actually not Yin and Yang, however. It is rather the intention that begins the differentiation of the two forces. As you begin the form, you are in a state of calmness or formlessness called "wuji." You are balanced and relaxed. As you start the form, however, you begin to shift your weight from side to side and the flow of movements continues just like the flow between Yin and Yang. This is Tai Chi. The supreme or grand ultimate is the entire circle representing the energy that exists in the world and Tai Chi is the intentional movement that allows the energy to flow from Yin to Yang and back again. As such, Tai Chi is smooth, continuous and round.

## Chi or Qi

In Tai Chi, you are learning to lead the energy or chi through your body. This energy exists in the universe around you and also inside of your body. You are also learning to gather and release energy with each move.

## Columns

There are three columns in your body. One runs from the top of your head, straight down through the body. The other 2 columns run from each shoulder through each hip. Keeping the columns intact is a central concept of Tai Chi.

## Rotation

Rotating your body is another central concept in Tai Chi. The ancient manuscripts talk about it as “massaging the internal organs.” Our bodies are meant to rotate and we must practice this movement in order to protect the spine.

## Delicate Lady’s wrists

Another central concept of Tai Chi is the idea that your hands should be loose and flowing throughout the form. This is referred to descriptively as “delicate lady’s wrists.” By keeping the hands loose, you allow the energy to flow more freely throughout your body.

## Substantial and insubstantial

When you are practicing Tai Chi, you must focus on having one side as substantial and the other as insubstantial. It is as if water is flowing from one side to the other and back again. This concept and the idea of Yin and Yang are related.

## Regulating the body, breathing, mind, chi and spirit

There are 5 levels of learning in Tai Chi and they progress in a ladder fashion. One cannot regulate the breathing before learning to regulate the body. The ultimate goal of regulation is no regulation. In other words, once you master regulating the breathing, you

don't actually work on your breathing as you do the form. It comes naturally and allows you to begin regulating the mind, which then allows you to begin to lead the chi. I learned these steps from an outstanding book called *Tai Chi Chuan Classical Yang Style* by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming. If you are interested in learning more about Tai Chi, I highly recommend his books and other media.

#1 Regulating the body. You must first learn to coordinate the movements of your body for each posture. This is the basic level and involves learning to be rooted, balanced, centered and relaxed. Some people never really get past this level and that is okay! It is especially difficult to make your body learn new movements if you have never done a martial art before. Don't get frustrated! You will reap many of the benefits of Tai Chi just by working on this level.

#2 Regulating breathing. Once the movements become second-nature and you no longer have to work hard at being balanced, rooted and centered, you can begin to learn how to control your breath. This breath-control starts the process of coordinating your mind with the movements in a clear and relaxed state. This level is where you will really start to realize the benefits of stress/anxiety relief, blood pressure reduction, mood enhancement and an increased overall sense of well-being.

#3 Regulating the mind. The goal of regulating the mind is actually coming to a place of no thought. You are completely "in the moment" and are experiencing calmness, peacefulness and relaxation throughout the form.

#4 Regulating the chi. When you can get to a place of regulating the mind, you can begin to "lead" the chi throughout the body. This is actually very tricky, because if you think about the chi in a certain part of your body, the chi will stagnate there and stop circulating. You want your chi to move naturally and smoothly.

#5 Regulating the spirit. This is simply explained as the Daoist idea of releasing the mind and body from any bondage of concern in

this world and allowing the spirit to reach heights of enlightenment.

I hope that this list of ideas that are part of Tai Chi will help you understand the martial art that you are interested in learning. My goal is not to make you into a Tai Chi “guru” or a follower of the Daoist philosophy. It is important to understand these ideas and concepts, however, to make your practice of Tai Chi what you want it to be. And that idea, in the end, is what is ultimately important. . . the idea that Tai Chi will help you in your attempt to be the best person that you can be.







## Chapter 5

# Foundations to Better your Tai Chi Experience

In order to build a strong house, you must have a strong foundation. I just finished remodeling the house in which I have lived for over 28 years. We took it down to studs. We lived in an apartment for 4 months during this whole process. Sometimes, it was frustrating, but mostly, it was exciting to watch the transformation occur to a 1973, tired old house as it became a very livable, even beautiful home for the 21st century! I want you to remember this as you begin to learn Tai Chi. Sometimes, the subtle things are the most important things. It's not necessarily how flexible you can be or how knowledgeable you are about martial arts. It's about the basics . . . the foundations . . . that make your practice really come to life. As I watched my house being rebuilt, it wasn't until the last few weeks that the really visible improvements started to become real. It was the months of "non-sexy" work that made the pleasing, livable, visual part possible. It was the foundational work of removing the aluminum wiring and reworking the entire house with copper wiring so it is not a fire risk that makes my house better. It was the re-decking of the roof so that the snow we get in Colorado won't collapse my roof that makes my house better. Paint on the walls doesn't make my house better. New carpet doesn't make my house better. These make my house prettier . . . but not better. Think about this as you practice your Tai Chi.

The following concepts and principles will help you understand

Tai Chi as being much more than just performing certain moves in a set pattern. In order for you to experience the benefits of practicing Tai Chi, you must understand and incorporate these concepts and principles into your practice.

## 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.

## Rotation

Rotation in the ancient manuscripts is described as “massaging the internal organs.” Rotation is an important skill in everyday life. We are constantly turning to pick something up off the floor or put something away on a high shelf. Improper rotation or rotation without a strong core is another one of those areas that results in injury and time away from the things we want to be doing. We need to train the body to rotate on the central axis of the spine in order to keep things in alignment. If you move side to side from

your torso, you will feel the gentle “massaging” effect that the ancient manuscripts were talking about. You must learn to move from side to side, but still maintain your columns. This is the ultimate core workout!! As you rotate from side to side, your eyes should follow your movement. Since Tai Chi is a martial art, consider that rotation allows the entire body to be involved in a movement and not just the limbs. This provides tremendous power. Take a look at a baseball player’s swing, for example. He doesn’t just stand upright and swing his arms from the shoulders. He uses his entire body by stepping and rotating with each swing. Think about the rotation as a coiling and uncoiling, or a gathering and releasing of power.

## Balance

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.

## Substantial/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. 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.

## Moving from the Dan Tīan

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. Try to exaggerate this with pushing chi. Sometimes in order to understand being in alignment, your body needs to feel what it is to be out of alignment. Focus on the plane of mo-



tion coming from the dan tian and not from the shoulders. Imagine a circle around your hips and you must move that circle while maintaining correct posture.

## Ball of Energy/Circular Movements

The center of your chi or energy is the dan tian. However, in the form, you should be very aware of the ball of energy that is created by your movements. Try to direct the energy, or the chi to your extremities. As you move, recognize the circular patterns in your movement. Think about the martial arts application and where you would want the full force of your energy to be felt. Imagine energy between your hands as a ball that can change size and force.



In each posture, you should be able to find the “ball”, or the focus of your energy. Obviously, “hold the ball” is an easy move to see the ball. And remember that it is just a transition move. Your goal is not to “hold the ball” of energy for yourself. Your goal is to gather the energy and release it.

Notice the position of your hands throughout each move and begin to develop the sense of energy as you move the ball. By the end of the form, you should be able to feel the energy between your hands. Start to recognize the circular patterns that exist throughout the form and remember that the symbol for Tai Chi is the Yin/Yang circle. The two opposing energies flow into and out of each other continuously. It should feel the same as you perform Tai Chi. The circular motions in the form help the energy to continually flow.

## 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. 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.

## 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.

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 exhale on the exertion of the force. Next, learning to control your breath, much like a singer has to control his or her breath, 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.



### Margaret

(71 years old, retired teacher, cancer survivor. Has a rare condition that causes an anaphylactic reaction to intense aerobic exercise under high heat conditions.)

*“Tai Chi just relaxes me! Wave Hands like Clouds is a move that is positively hypnotic!”*



## Chapter 6

# The Form

As I have mentioned previously, the Open the Door to Tai Chi system teaches the Yang style 24 or short form. While I have decided to include pictures and explanations, please know that you really don't learn the form from a book. You need to find an instructor and go to a class. You need to have someone who can look at your movements and help you improve. You need to have the experience of doing the form with a group of people. You need to have instruction about how to incorporate the concepts and principles into each move and into the form as a whole. All of this is impossible if you are trying to learn from a book with 2-dimensional pictures. The book is a great way to reinforce what you are learning in the classroom. The book is a reference . . . a guide . . . and an inspiration. It is not a teacher.

So here are the moves to the Yang style 24 or short form. I have included some explanation for each move and the martial arts application for each move. I have also included the written list of the moves as they appear in the form. You will be able to get an idea of how each move is supposed to look and feel, but remember, it is vital that you learn from a qualified instructor. Once you find your instructor, use this book to help you practice.

## Preparation

Begin by standing tall, feet together, letting your shoulders drop away from your ears. Take a nice deep breath in and let it out, sinking into your knees. Bring your weight to the right and step out with your left foot about shoulder width. Bring your weight over to your left and then center your weight. With your palms facing backwards, raise your arms to shoulder height breathing in. Then drop your elbows and pull down with your palms slightly facing one another while you breathe out.

## Martial Arts Application

*If an opponent is reaching for your throat with both hands, raise your arms up and then drop them while grabbing his arms and pulling them down.*



## Part the Wild Horse's Mane

This move starts with Hold the Ball and moves forward in a similar fashion to Brush Knee. Think about moving the bottom arm forward and up from the Hold the Ball position. The top hand moves down with the palm facing the ground. Move the hand just outside of your leg, but not behind your leg. As you rock back, the hand that is high, stays high in the new Hold the Ball position. This one thing will help you understand and perform the move simply. Remember that the palm of the high hand should be turned towards your face when the hand is high in this move.

### *Martial Arts Application*

*If you think about this as a double block or as a ridge hand strike to the neck of your opponent, you will understand better how your hands should be moving.*

(1)



(2)



## White Crane Spreads its Wings

This is essentially a defensive move. All of your weight should be on your right. Do not allow any weight to shift to the left foot. This is important since your next step will be into Brush Knee left. Bring your right hand up to your temple as your left hand reaches out over your left leg. You will pause slightly into the posture with your right hand high and your left hand low and then move directly into the arm circles which will then position you correctly to move into Brush Knee left.

### *Martial Arts Application:*

*Think about facing off with an opponent. This posture allows you the opportunity to strike with your left foot or move back or strike with your hands.*

(1)



(2)



## Brush Knee

Thinking about the martial arts application of this move helps people remember what their hands are doing. For Brush Knee Left, your left hand is brushing across your left thigh in a low block and your right hand is “hitting” your opponent in the face or throat. First practice the move several times from a stationary position. In other words, don’t try to move forward until you have practiced the technique on both sides of your body from a stationary position. Then try to walk forward and alternate right and left. Once you get the pattern of switching from one side to the other, try to incorporate the “rocking” technique that is Chi Walking. This is often confusing for people as they are trying to think about a lot of things at once and trying to make their bodies do something they have never done before. Their hands are also beginning to cross the midline of the body which challenges the brain. Take it slowly and break it down as much as you need to. Do just the hands for awhile. Then add the steps. And then add the rocking back and forth as you move forward.

### *Martial Arts Application:*

*Your low hand is blocking a kick and your other hand is hitting your opponent in the face or neck.*

(1)



(2)



## Play the Guitar

Such a simple move! It was originally called Play the Lute or the Pippa, but nobody knows what a lute or a pippa is, so it is now called Play the Guitar. And unless you are Paul McCartney, this is the position you would play a guitar. Point the right hand slightly towards the left elbow. Your weight should be on your right foot because the next step will be with your left into Repulse the Monkey.

### *Martial Arts Application*

*Think about stepping into someone and grabbing one arm and pulling the other out of the way. Or you could be blocking something with both arms. It is essentially a transitional movement, both in the form and in a martial arts application.*



## Repulse the Monkey

This is the one move where you will actually walk backwards in the form. It is good to practice just walking backwards first. This is a skill that most people don't utilize in their everyday life. Then practice walking backwards and turning your body 180 degrees each step. In other words, start with your left foot forward and your torso facing East. Step back with the left foot and turn so your torso is now facing West. Continue in the same pattern. Then practice the arm movement separately without moving the feet. This really drives home the need to rotate your body. Start with your left foot forward, your left arm extended to the front and your right arm extended to the back. Both palms are pointing up to the ceiling. Bring the right arm up and over your head in a big circle and cross the palms (no need to touch them together!) bringing the left arm behind you and the right arm in front. Don't rotate! Your body will scream to rotate, but let it feel uncomfortable for a bit. Then repeat the same movement with your arms and step back with your left foot and rotate 180 degrees as you finish with your right arm extended to the front and your left arm extended to the back. Continue the movement on the other side. Always begin the movement with the back hand moving over the head to the front. There is a temptation to move the front hand first, but this is not correct. This move takes lots of time to master because you have to walk backwards and rotate at the same time.

### *Martial Arts Application*

*Imagine someone grabbing your hand and holding on tight. Shift your weight backwards and then bring your back (free) hand forward, rotating your body and pushing your opponent away from you.*



## Ward Off Sequence

This is a long sequence with several separate moves. Take it piece by piece and add each move only as you feel comfortable with the first moves. Always begin in the Hold the Ball position. As you step out into Ward Off, make sure you step a little bit behind and not directly to the side. Let's say you are facing North and both feet are facing forward as you Hold the Ball Right. Step with your left foot so your toes are pointing West. To check if you have your foot in the right place, pull the left foot back to the right so your feet make a backwards "L" on the floor. Your left foot should be just behind your right heel and not in the center of your right foot. This is not part of the move... it's just to make sure you have stepped a little behind with your left foot. This becomes important because as you start your Ward Off rotation, you will need to rotate your right foot so that the toes are almost facing West, just like the left foot. If you don't rotate the right foot, you will feel an unnatural (and unnecessary) pull on your right knee. Once you rotate and Ward Off, you will drop your elbows and Grasp the Bird's Tail. Then you will Roll Back by pulling your arms all the way back to the right. Then you will rotate back to the left and immediately go into Pushing Chi (pg 74). After you learn to put the moves together in the whole sequence, remember that your weight should be shifting back and forth throughout the sequence. Your focus should be on moving from the dan tian just like when you are doing Pushing Chi by itself. Learn the whole sequence going to the left first before you try to learn it going to the right.

### *Martial Arts Application*

*An opponent is approaching you from the left and you block their progress with Ward Off. Then you grab their neck and shoulders and pull them to the right and then back to the left, releasing them, but then pushing them away with Pushing Chi.*



(form continued on next page)

(5)



(6)



(7)



## Gina

(65 years old, retired hospitality designer.  
Owned her own business for years. Participated  
in a variety of dance disciplines all of her life.  
Deals with ongoing migraines and vertigo issues.)

*"I decided to take Tai Chi for two primary reasons: balance and memory.*

*I actually had a bone doctor recommend that as we age we should pay more attention to prevention of falls and balance. He recommended getting a trainer and working on balance exercises. I had read that Tai Chi helps with memory, too, so it seemed like the perfect solution to the two.*

*I have enjoyed the total body/mind concentration that Tai Chi provides while going through the movements. I am a serious multi-tasker and I put together lists in my head even when I doing yoga. Not so with Tai Chi! I can totally be in the present moment. It does not allow for me to be otherwise!"*



## Single Whip

The positioning of your hands is important in Single Whip. You will form a bird's beak with your right hand and will push out into a block with your left hand. The bird's beak is simply formed by touching the middle two fingers to the thumb and letting the fingers drop down so the wrist is the high point. The wrist is actually the contact point if you were to bring the hand up under an opponent's chin. The left hand sweeps across your body in a counter-clockwise semi-circle and then pushes out into an open hand block. Since it is a block, keep the elbow bent. It is not a football stiff-arm technique!

### *Martial Arts Application*

*As mentioned above, the wrist is the contact point against an opponent's chin – not your fingers! Obviously, you need the momentum of an arm swing to make your opponent's head snap backwards as you come up with your hand under their chin. The other hand is a block and is clearly addressed at a different opponent.*



## Wave Hands like Clouds

This is everyone's favorite Tai Chi move! It is very flowing and gentle and relaxing once you master the technique. Practice the arms only with this move first . . . and practice them independently first. Start with the right arm and draw a clockwise circle, palm toward the face. It's as if you are wiping your eyebrows gently. Then draw a counter-clockwise circle with the left arm keeping the palm toward the face again. Then try putting it together by starting with the right arm and as the right arm reaches the bottom half of the circle, start the left arm. Keep the hands loose and light. After you have mastered the arm movement, you can add the footwork. You will always step left with Wave Hands like Clouds. Start from a Single Whip position and begin by bringing the left hand down towards your body into its counter-clockwise motion. As you begin to move the left hand, adjust the left foot so the toes point forward and you are ready to step to your left. Continue your arm movements as you step in with right foot and then out again with your left.

### *Martial Arts Application*

*There are several different interpretations of this move, but most of them center around a double arm motion that will break your opponent's arm. It can be an upward/downward strike that collapses the arm in the middle, or it could be a sweeping motion that catches the wrist in one hand, followed by a strike to the back of the arm/elbow.*





(6)



(7)



## High Pat on Horse

Again, a very simple move. Coming out of the Single Whip, keep your weight forward on your left foot and move your right foot up as you pull your right hand to your temple and extend your left hand out with your palm up. Then shift your weight to your right foot and step forward with your left as you cross your hands right over left.

### *Martial Arts Application*

*This one is very much like Repulse the Monkey except that you are stepping forward instead of backwards. Your opponent is in front of you and you step into him and push him away.*

(1)



(2)



## Kick, Smash and Box the Ears

Your weight must be completely on one side in order for you to kick and then hold the knee up to smash, and then control your step down to box the ears. This is great practice for learning the concept of substantial and insubstantial. It is great to start with just stepping side to side. Then step side to side and lift the knee. Then step side to side, lift the knee and kick. If you are kicking with your left leg, extend your left arm out over your leg and bring your right hand up to block. Then step side to side, lift the knee, kick, smash and box the ears. Remember there is a head between your fists when you box the ears, so don't allow the fists to come together.

### *Martial Arts Application*

*I love this move because the name is so descriptive and so unabashedly aggressive! You are kicking your opponent and then grabbing his head and smashing it into your uplifted knee. Then as you release him, you finish him off by hitting him on both sides of his head with your fists. Pretty clear, huh?*

(1)



(2)



(3)







## Kris

(68 years old, recently retired teacher and library specialist. Lots of demands on her time as a daughter, wife, mother and grandmother! Deals with severe arthritis. Relearning how to play golf now. Also enjoys shopping for antiques, especially hand-worked fabrics.)

*"I had been overseeing the care of several elderly relatives in their 90s who were becoming increasingly immobile. Because I don't want to become immobile, two things became very important: 1) I needed & wanted a lifelong exercise program that would provide stress relief, and 2) I wanted to increase & maintain my strength, balance, and flexibility while not putting undue strain on my knees.*

*I found Dianne and Tai Chi. What a gift! I have been practicing for 3 years, and I do mean practicing! In those 3 years, I've had a partial knee replacement and a knee arthroscopy (different knees). The strength I gained from Tai Chi helped with recovery after both surgeries, making my physical therapy easier to do. As for Tai Chi being a lifelong program, I discovered that knowing all the moves isn't enough - there is always room to improve. There are days when you are reminded to focus on being in the moment, or you're encouraged to slow down your movements, or you learn where a movement originated & why. All of these keep me challenged, learning and improving. As a plus, we laugh and talk and practice as a caring community, and I leave class feeling limber, calm, and refreshed. I cannot imagine my life with Tai Chi."*

## Snake Creeps, Pheasant Stands

This is one of the most difficult moves in the form. You must take into consideration any knee issues, hip issues and certainly basic flexibility when you begin this move. Start from the Single Whip position again. Your weight will be forward toward the left in this position. Rock the weight back to the right which should straighten your left leg. Trace down your left leg with your left hand. As you reach the bottom, turn your torso to the left, bend your left leg and shift your weight onto the left so you can bring your right leg up, knee to the elbow, into the Pheasant Stands position. The weight shift forward is important to allow the back leg to lift off of the ground. If you cannot stand on one leg, it is okay to simply pull the right leg through with the toe barely touching the ground. Remember, it is more important to be balanced than to bring the knee high. Of course, this move needs to be done on both sides of the body. Don't attempt to overstretch your body and reach all the way to the floor if your flexibility is not good. You will improve as you practice over time. Relax into the movement instead of forcing it to happen.

### *Martial Arts Application:*

*As you move forward with your hand arcing up in a circular fashion, imagine a groin strike to your opponent. Knowing that one strike almost never finishes off your opponent, you must protect yourself and come into the position with your knee raised – both as a block and in preparation to kick if needed.*

(1)



(2)



(3)



## Fair Lady Works the Shuttle

This move is similar to Brush Knee and to Part the Wild Horse's Mane. It begins from the Hold the Ball position. The bottom hand will sweep across your body and up, with the hand turning out into a high block. The top hand will move out and slightly across your body. The high block hand should not be close to the forehead. This is NOT Fair Lady Faints! The "shuttle" is not a bus on the 16th St. Mall . . . or a NASA creation that provides space travel. This is referring to the shuttle that a woman would use with a loom to create tapestries.

### *Martial Arts Application:*

*This is a block and punch combination or a double block. It is important that your bottom hand sweeps across your body and up so that it can prevent a blow coming straight in as well as a blow coming from above.*

(1)



(2)



## Pick the Needle up from the Sea Bottom

This move comes out of Fair Lady works the Shuttle. The first thing you should understand is that you do NOT have to actually touch the floor to pick anything up! Keeping your left hand high to protect your face, extend your left leg, but don't put any significant weight on it. This move is essentially a one-legged squat which is a very advanced strength move. Bring your right hand around in a counter-clockwise circle and bend both knees while extending your right hand towards your left foot. Keep your head up and try not to look down. If you look down, you will tend to round your back and lose form. Remember to try to keep your weight back on your right leg, leaving your left leg empty. As you come up out of this move, you will block with both hands up, and then you step forward with your left foot, pushing your hands forward into the move "fan through the back."

### *Martial Arts Application:*

*For those of you who wrestled when you were younger, you can see this move as shooting in and doing a heel pick. It could also become a groin shot like Snake Creeps. After the heel pick or the groin shot, you need to block and push your opponent away.*

(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)





## Dennis

(62 years old, accountant)

*“A few years ago after I turned 60, I found that I was having a lot of trouble keeping up with my other martial arts training. I let that fall away and started to work out on a regular basis at the health club but sensed there was something lacking in the health club only routine. For me, Tai Chi has helped fill that need and bring together the aspects of mental focus, balance, flexibility, strength and coordination. With the benefits of Tai Chi, I am looking forward to a few more years at my desk job and leading an active outdoor lifestyle.”*

## Ginger

(51 years old, hand surgeon.  
Loves kickboxing, hiking,  
paddleboarding and breaking  
boards...in other words, fast,  
physical and outdoor activities!)

*“Tai Chi has helped me both physically and mentally. Physically, it has improved my posture and balance. Mentally, it has a calming effect on my mind, like a physical form of meditation.”*



## Deflect, Intercept and Punch

Your weight shift is critical in this move. The original motion is a circular move coming from your left hip up to directly in front of your body. It is basically a circular backfist with your right hand. Your palm should be facing inward at the end of the move. Your left hand follows the same circular arc, but remains in front of your face as a block for the rest of the move. Then, as you shift your weight to the right, you bring your right hand to your right hip. All of your weight is still on your right leg. You can touch your left foot slightly to help with balance, but do not put weight on it. Then as you step forward with your left, you bring your right hand out into a vertical, reverse punch. Rotation is key in this move to make the punch more powerful.

### *Martial Arts Application:*

*The first part of this move is like the old “wax on, wax off” move in the Karate Kid movies. It is a circular move and is used to deflect away your opponent’s aggression with his hands. After you have removed the barrier of his hands and left him unprotected, you follow up with a punch.*

(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



## Pushing Chi

The most important thing about Pushing Chi is to learn to move from the dan tian. As you begin, with one foot forward, bring your hands to the level of your dan tian. As you bring your weight forward, let your hands drift out away from your body. As you bring your weight back, bring your hands back to the dan tian. Since the breathing is very easy to add to this movement, you can incorporate the breathing pattern right away and it helps to relax the body. Breathe out as you push away from your body and breathe in as you bring your hands towards your body. Don't allow your back heel to raise up off the ground as you push forward. Keep both feet grounded. This will challenge some people as they may have a very tight Achilles tendon. If you struggle with keeping your heel down, shorten your stance a little at first. You will be able to lengthen that stance as you develop some flexibility in your foot and ankle.

### *Martial Arts Application*

*As someone approaches you aggressively, you pull back to absorb the energy they are pushing towards you. Then using that energy and the energy you have pulled from the ground, you push your hands up and into their ribcage to push them away from you.*

(1)



(2)



## Return the Tiger to the Mountain

This is the final move of the form and the weight shift is critical. As you move out of Pushing Chi, you will bring your weight to the right as you open up your arms. Then you shift your weight to the left and then you center yourself as you move into a Wu Chi position which is centered. Then as you close the form, you will always move your left foot towards your right. This is important to close the circle. You began the form by moving your left foot out, so you have to close the form by moving your left foot in so that you complete the circle. Try not to lean too far forward as you do this move and do not look towards the ground. Keep your head up. Your right foot will need to slide slightly in towards your left as you end this move so your feet are not too wide to end the form.

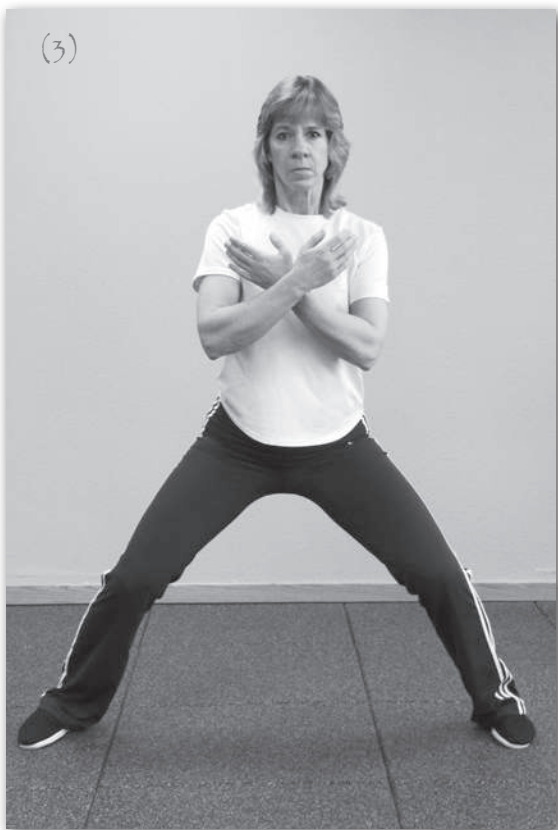
(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)



## Tai Chi 24 Forms

1. Preparation, Facing North
2. Part the Wild Horse's Mane LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, going West
3. Step forward, White Crane Spreads Its Wings
4. Brush Knee, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT
5. Step forward, Play Guitar
6. Repulse the Monkey, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, going back East
7. Left Ward Off, Grasp the Bird's Tail, Rollback, Seal and Push Chi
8. Turn East, Right Ward Off, Grasp the Bird's Tail, Rollback, Seal and Push Chi
9. Single Whip to West
10. Wave Hands Like Clouds, 3 times, going West
11. Single Whip to West
12. High Pat on Horse
13. Gather, Right Kick
14. Smash and Box the Ears
15. Turn Counter Clockwise and Left Kick
16. Left Snake Creeps, Pheasant Stands
17. Right Snake Creeps, Pheasant Stands
18. Step forward, Fair Lady Works the Shuttle, RIGHT and LEFT
19. Pick the Needle up from the Sea Bottom
20. Block, Fan Through Back
21. Turn West, Deflect, Intercept, and Punch
22. Withdraw and Pushing Chi
23. Return the Tiger to the Mountain, Wu Chi
24. Closing

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Fu, Zhongwen, and Louis Swaim. *Mastering Yang Style Taijiquan*. Berkeley, Calif.: Frog/Blue Snake, 2006. Print.

T'ai Chi for Health. Koch Vision, 2004. Film.

Muir, Gordon, and T. T. Liang. *Yang Style Traditional Long Form T'ai Chi Ch'uan: As Taught by Master T.T. Liang*. Berkeley, Calif.: Blue Snake, 2008. Print.

Wong, Kiew Kit. *The Complete Book of Tai Chi Chuan: A Comprehensive Guide to the Principles and Practice*. Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle Pub., 2002. Print.

Yang Tai Chi. YMAA Publication Center, 2012. Film.

Yang, Jwing-Ming. *Tai Chi Chuan: Classical Yang Style : The Complete Long Form and Qigong*. 2nd ed. Wolfeboro, N.H.: YMAA Publication Center, 2010. Print.

Studies:

Hasel, Julie. "Medical Studies on T'ai Chi-." *Tai Chi*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Aug. 2015.

Vanderbilt University survey study cites the benefits of T'ai Chi for such problems as arthritis, rheumatism, back problems, lack of balance, high blood pressure, stress, PTSD, and lack of energy.

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 T'ai Chi significantly improved the balance of persons with mild balance disorders.

Mosquera, Joseph, MD. "Tai Chi Helps Heart-failure Patients." *Tai Chi Helps Heart-failure Patients*. Consumer Reports, 29 Apr. 2011. Web. 30 Aug. 2015. <<http://www.consumer-reports.org/cro/news/2011/04/tai-chi-helps-heart-failure-patients/index.htm>>. After three months of practicing T'ai Chi, patients who had experienced heart failure reported a better mood and sense of well being. (Researchers at Boston Deaconess Hospital)

Sayburn, Anna. "Tai Chi Improves Balance in Stroke Survivors." *Tai Chi Improves Balance in Stroke Survivors*. BMJ Group, 02 Apr. 2009. Web. 30 Aug. 2015. <<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/news/2009/04/tai-chi-improves-balance-in-stroke-survivors/index.htm>>. There's some evidence that learning Tai Chi might help people who've suffered a stroke to balance better.

“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 T'ai Chi is an effective practice for stress management.

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.

“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.

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.

“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.

Wang, C., C. H. Schmid, R. Kalish, J. Yin, D. L. Goldenberg, Y. Lee, and T. McAlindon. “A Randomized Trial of Tai Chi for Fibromyalgia — NEJM.” A Randomized Trial of Tai Chi for Fibromyalgia. New England Journal of Medicine, 19 Aug. 2010. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.

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.

Wong, A. M., and C. Lan. "Tai Chi and Balance Control." *Med Sport Sci* 52 (2008): 115-23. National Center for Biotechnology Information. *Med Sports Sci*. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18487891>>. Balance function begins to decline from middle age on, and poor balance function increases the risk of fall and injury. Suitable exercise training may improve balance function and prevent accidental falls. The coordination of visual, proprioceptive, vestibular and musculoskeletal system is important to maintain balance. Balance function can be evaluated by functional balance testing and sensory organization testing. Tai Chi Chuan (TC) is a popular conditioning exercise in the Chinese community, and recent studies substantiate that TC is effective in balance function enhancement and falls prevention. In studies utilizing functional balance testing, TC may increase the duration of one-leg standing and the distance of functional reach. In studies utilizing sensory organization testing, TC improves static and dynamic balance, especially in more challenging sensory perturbed condition. Therefore, TC may be prescribed as an alternative exercise program for elderly subjects or balance-impaired patients. Participants can choose to perform a complete set of TC or selected movements according to their needs. In conclusion, TC may improve balance function and is appropriate for implementation in the community.

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.)

Wu, W., X. Lui, L. Wang, Z. Wang, J. Hu, and J. Yan. "Effects of Tai Chi on Exercise Capacity and Health-related Quality of Life in Patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." *Int J Chron Obstruct Pulmon Dis* 7.9 (2014): 1253-263. National Center for Biotechnology Information. *Int J Chron Obstruct Pulmon Dis*. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25404855>>.

Preliminary evidence suggests that Tai Chi has beneficial effects on exercise capacity and HRQoL in COPD patients. This exercise can be recommended as an effective alternative training modality in pulmonary rehabilitation programs. Further studies are required to support the preliminary evidence and to observe the long-term effects of Tai Chi.

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 t'ai 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%.

Wang, C., R. Bannuru, J. Ramel, B. Kupelnick, T. Scott, and CH Schmid. "Tai Chi on Psychological Well-being: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." *Tai Chi on Psychological Well-being: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. BMC Complement Altern Med*, 21 May 2010. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <<http://bmccomplementalternmed.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-6882-10-23>>. Tai Chi appears to be associated with improvements in psychological well-being including reduced stress, anxiety, depression and mood disturbance, and increased self-esteem. Definitive conclusions were limited due to variation in designs, comparisons, heterogeneous outcomes and inadequate controls. High-quality, well-controlled, longer randomized trials are needed to better inform clinical decisions.

Li, F, Fisher, K. J., Harmer, P, Irbe, D., Tearse, R. G. and Weimer, C. (2004), Tai Chi and Self-Rated Quality of Sleep and Daytime Sleepiness in Older Adults: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 52: 892–900. doi: 10.1111/j.1532-5415.2004.52255.x. This project was funded by National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health, Grant MH62327. Older adults with moderate sleep complaints can improve self-rated sleep quality through a 6-month, low- to moderate-intensity tai chi program. Tai chi appears to be effective as a nonpharmacological approach to sleep enhancement for sleep-disturbed elderly individuals.

Kuramoto, AM. "Therapeutic Benefits of Tai Chi Exercise: Research Review." *Therapeutic Benefits of Tai Chi Exercise: Research Review* (2006): 42-46. [https://www.wisconsin-medicalsociety.org/\\_WMS/publications/wmj/pdf/105/7/42.pdf](https://www.wisconsin-medicalsociety.org/_WMS/publications/wmj/pdf/105/7/42.pdf). Oct. 2006. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <[https://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org/\\_WMS/publications/wmj/pdf/105/7/42.pdf](https://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org/_WMS/publications/wmj/pdf/105/7/42.pdf)>. The majority of studies on Tai Chi conducted between 1996 and 2004 had focused on health and well being of Tai Chi exercise for senior adults. The results show that Tai Chi may lead to improved balance, reduced fear of falling, increased strength, increased

functional mobility, greater flexibility, and increased psychological well-being, sleep enhancement for sleep disturbed elderly individuals, and increased cardio functioning. Wang, Collet, and Lau did a systematic review on Tai Chi research and found some limitations or biases existing in some of the studies, and it was difficult to draw firm conclusions about the benefits reported. Therefore, more well-designed studies are needed in the future. There need to be studies on the effects on younger and middle-aged people. More longitudinal studies are needed, since time is an important factor of physical and psychological interventions. Studies on the effects of Tai Chi on the immune system and bone loss reduction are still very exploratory and will be especially useful for arthritis patients and others with immune disorders. Future studies should investigate outcomes associated with Tai Chi training as a function of different instructional techniques, different Tai Chi styles, different diagnostic groups, and different age groups. It is not yet clear which of the components in Tai Chi makes the exercise form especially effective for seniors. Tai Chi exercise is a relatively "low tech" approach to preventing disability and maintaining physical performance in older adults. The positive effects of Tai Chi may be due solely to its relaxing, meditative aspects. The current data suggest that Tai Chi can influence older individuals' functioning and well being and provide some appreciation for why this exercise form has been practiced by older Chinese for more than 3 centuries.

Zheng, GY, and Et. Al. "Tai Chi and the Protection of Cognitive Ability." ResearchGate. *Am J Prov Med*, July 2015. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278742802\\_Tai\\_Chi\\_and\\_the\\_Protection\\_of\\_Cognitive\\_Ability](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278742802_Tai_Chi_and_the_Protection_of_Cognitive_Ability)>. Compared with usual physical activities, Tai Chi shows potential protective effects on healthy adults' cognitive ability. Large RCTs with more rigorous designs are needed to fully evaluate and confirm its potential benefits.

Wayne, PM, and Et.al. "Effect of Tai Chi on Cognitive Performance in Older Adults: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." *Journal of the American Geriatric Society* 62.1 (2014): 25-39. *Journal of the American Geriatric Society*. Jan. 2014. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jgs.12611/abstract>>. Tai Chi shows potential to enhance cognitive function in older adults, particularly in the realm of executive functioning and in individuals without significant impairment. Larger and methodologically sound trials with longer follow-up periods are needed before more-definitive conclusions can be drawn.

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.

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 in psychological and physiological functioning following participation in Tai Chi were assessed for 33 beginners and 33 practitioners. The variables in the three-way factorial design were experience (beginners vs practitioners), time (morning vs afternoon vs evening), and phase (before Tai Chi vs during Tai Chi vs after Tai Chi). Phase was a repeated measures variable. Relative to measures taken beforehand, practice of Tai Chi raised heart rate, increased noradrenaline excretion in urine, and decreased salivary cortisol concentration. Relative to baseline levels, subjects reported less tension, depression, anger, fatigue, confusion and state-anxiety, they felt more vigorous, and in general they had less total mood disturbance. The data suggest that Tai Chi results in gains that are comparable to those found with moderate exercise. There is need for research concerned with whether participation in Tai Chi has effects over and above those associated with physical exercise.

Song, Qing-Hua et al. "Effect of Tai-Chi Exercise on Lower Limb Muscle Strength, Bone Mineral Density and Balance Function of Elderly Women." *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Medicine* 7.6 (2014): 1569–1576. Print. To study the effect of Tai-chi exercise on lower limb muscle strength, bone mineral density and balance function of elderly female, 105 urban elderly women, who do insufficient exercise in daily life, are selected as the subject and randomly divided into an observation group (Tai Chi Group), a control group I (Dance Group) and a control group II (Walking Group). Each group is consists of 35 women. Among them, the women in the observation group do Tai-chi exercise once a day, while the women in the control group I dance once a day and in the control group II stick to brisk walking once a day. All women in the three groups

do the above said exercises for 40 minutes and the exercise intensity is controlled to be medium. At the time of selection and after 4, 8 and 12 months upon their exercises, respectively detect and compare the lower limb skeletal muscle mass, lower limb muscle strength, bone mineral density and balance function of the subject. Results: At the time of selection, the general information of the subjects in the three groups show no significant difference ( $P > 0.05$ ); however, after 4 months' exercise, most of the study indexes in the control group I and group II are improved significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ), while most of the study indexes in the observation group show no significant difference ( $P > 0.05$ ) in comparison with those at the time of selection and their general improvement effect is slightly lower than that in the control group; after 8 months, relevant study indexes of the subjects in the three groups are significantly improved ( $P < 0.05$ ) in comparison with those at the time of selection, especially, the effect in the observation group is more obvious and is better than that of the control group II ( $P < 0.05$ ). 12 months later, the effect of the observation group is improved significantly from day to day when comparing to those in the control group I and group II ( $P < 0.05$  or  $P < 0.01$ ). Conclusion: Compared with the senile dance and walking exercises, the short-term Tai-chi exercise effect is not obvious, however, once the exercise period is extended, that is, continuous exercise for 8 months or even above 12 months, the advantage of Tai Chi is more and more significant. The study suggests that as a fitness measure, Tai Chi is more suitable for long-term exercise and its short-term effect is not obvious.

Wolf, Steven L., Huimnan X. Barnhart, Nancy G. Kutner, Elizabeth Mcneely, Carol Coogler, and Tingsen Xu. "Selected As the Best Paper in the 1990s: Reducing Frailty and Falls in Older Persons: An Investigation of Tai Chi and Computerized Balance Training." *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 51.12 (2003): 1794-803. May 1996. Web. 20 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.pnfchi.com/fotos/literatura/1233836450.PDF>>. A moderate TC intervention can impact favorably on defined biomedical and psychosocial indices of frailty. This intervention can also have favorable effects upon the occurrence of falls. Tai Chi warrants further study as an exercise treatment to improve the health of older people.



Dianne Bailey, CSCS, personal trainer, Tai Chi instructor and fourth-degree black belt is the founder and co-owner of The Conditioning Classroom, a private personal training studio in Denver, Colorado that has served the mature population since 2006. She is the creator of the Open the Door to Tai Chi system, which empowers trainers to

learn Tai Chi and incorporate this amazing form of exercise into their current offerings. Her focus has always been the Everyday Person and her first book, *Eating Simply*, is the common sense guide to eating well and still enjoying life. Dianne is also a speaker and a regular contributor to several publications, in addition to serving on the advisory board for the Human Performance Department at Arapahoe Community College. As a member of the Boomer generation, she has experienced the benefits of Tai Chi and wants to make it accessible and approachable to everyone.

If you live in the Denver area and would like to take Tai Chi at The Conditioning Classroom with Dianne, you can contact her at:

dbailey@theconditioningclassroom.com  
303.522.9001  
www.theconditioningclassroom.com