

# Tai Chi



## **A word about mindful movements & mindless exercise**

Tai chi & Qi gong are exercises that are integral part of traditional Chinese medicine. It is helpful in treating stress problems, depression, anxiety, illnesses & injuries. Many people use it as tonic to extend their peak performance.

If you want to find a calm center in the middle of life's storm of change, while also toning your muscles and healing your mind and body, tai chi & Qi gong are just what doctor ordered. It simultaneously heals physical, mental, emotional & spiritual body. You can boost your energy levels, dramatically improve your health, slow your aging process & become more creative. & this is only scratching surface of tai chi's benefits.

Tai chi is practiced by 20% of the world's population & is fast becoming the most popular exercise in the world today.

The Chinese call life energy Qi (pronounced chee). The character for Qi is also character for breath. Qi Gong (pronounced chee Kung and often spelt chi- gong) means breath work or energy exercise. Tai chi is moving form of QiGong. There are sitting & lying forms of QiGong, but tai chi is done standing & moving.

Tai chi is simple, yet sophisticated relaxation exercises that encourage the muscles to let go of tension, the mind to let go of worry and the heart to let go of angst. Tension, worry & angst all block our Qi flow. The more we let go, relax, and open, the more easily and healthfully the energy flows through us.

Much exercise is not very thoughtful. We strain our joints and tissue running on pavement or in other high-impact exercises without paying much attention to the toll it can take on your body. Or for that matter the toll on our mind, as we often listen to loud music or watch the news while scurrying through exercises. Studies have shown that loud noises and excessive TV watching can actually elevate damaging stress responses. When you practice these exercises, let yourself take a break from the rat race, the noise, and the endless demands of the day. Practice these in silence, hearing only your breath and the motion of your body. Let your mind be filled with the experience of letting go of everything.

Tai chi is not only a great physical workout and health tool, but can heal us mentally and emotionally by changing the way we look at life. It shows us that life does not have to be that hard. It is a soothing balm to our frazzled nerves. Its goal is to weave silken threads of calm into our lives, soothing us as we face the day-to-day life.

The goal of tai chi is to move through a series of choreographed movements like slow martial arts routine, but very slowly and in state of complete relaxation. In order to do this, we have to let go of our mental/physical tensions, grudges, prejudices and anything that keeps us tied to the past. This enables us to flow easily into the future by clearing our mind and body of old stress so that we constantly get a fresh perspective on life. It is designed to uncover & release every single place we hold tension or blocked energy.

When our mind or heart holds onto issues (fears, obsessions, angers and so on) our body literally squeezes itself with tension. Going slowly through the movements is like doing an internal scan of the entire body to clear & release any place the body is gripping onto tension.

Tai chi is popular because it does not leave you drained but energized. Its effortless nature is a big stretch for most of us. But somehow we associate exercise with force, pain, and tension. In fact some exercises contribute to stress. When I played junior high school soccer, many years ago, the coaches determined that we were through with running when one of us started throwing up. That's right upchucking. It was the only time in my life I ever hoped to see someone throw up.

Tai chi is helping world to get a healthy, enjoyable view of exercise. The mantra 'no pain, no gain' does not hold true. In tai chi we have a mantra- 'if your exercise causes pain, you'll get so sick of the thought of it that you will never want to do it again.' ours isn't as neatly poetic as 'no pain, no gain', but ours makes infinitely more sense. Tai chi should always always feel good. And since it does feel good, you will look forward to it. Each morning you will find yourself grateful that you are alive and able to practice this cool exercise called Tai chi. Remember- Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.