

# Tai Chi Easy

This 2 hour workshop will include a gentle warm up, learning the basic hand motions (sitting and standing), basic Tai Chi walking and putting it all together.

*This approach to Tai Chi can be used to help people learn the longer forms of Tai Chi, easily. For this particular program five movements from traditional Yang Style Tai Chi are used either sitting (Tai Chi Chair) or standing. They can eventually be used with Tai Chi walking to create a moving form.*

## Introduction: “Qi cultivation”

- The major premise of Chinese medical theory is that all the forms of life in the universe are animated by an essential life force or vital energy called Qi. (Commonly pronounced: “chee”).
- Qi cultivation practice: removes resistance from the flow of the Qi and assists the human system in sustaining an ample supply of Qi. Moving the body gently in an optimized posture, deepening the breath and clearing the mind opens the pathways of Qi flow, which allows Qi to circulate to the organs, glands and tissues and maximize function. This is the Qigong state (*also known as “Yogic state” in Yoga*).
- In the Western view, Qi cultivation dilates the blood vessels to carry a larger volume of oxygen and nourishment to the cells and tissues of the organs and glands. The breath increases the availability of oxygen to the blood and accelerates the lymph which delivers the immune cells and eliminates metabolic by products from the cells.
- The gentle body movement accelerates the metabolism slightly and the posture opens the spaces through which biologically active fluids are flowing. The relaxation or mind clearing triggers a shift from the primarily sympathetic function of the autonomic nervous system (*traditionally known as fight or flight*) to a level of function modified by the parasympathetic function (*typically known as the Relaxation Response*), creating a shift in the profile of neurochemicals and hormones from an action system that puts the self-healing capacity into the secondary position, to a resting system that puts the self-healing capacity into primary position of function.
- In this state, however it is described, the functionality of the body’s capacity for self-healing and self-regeneration is accelerated, often to the extent that one can feel it. In China this is called Qi sensation; in the West most people are too busy to have noticed it. Those who do perceive it generally will say, “I feel relaxed and kind of tingly.” Recently this sensation has been called the self-healing sensation.

## Key Principles

1. It is better to do it wrong than not at all. (*Just a deep breath with relaxation, just moving the body gently, just doing a little self-applied massage triggers naturally occurring self-healing capacities.*)
2. Remain in the comfort zone – safety zone. *There is little value in going beyond your comfort zone. Qi state is found when relaxed.*
3. Adapt – modify, to your specific body/health requirements (*laying, seated, standing etc.*)
4. Sustain the Three Intentful Corrections of Body, Breath, and Mind

## 3 Conscious Points of Focus (3 Intentful Corrections)

The Three Intentful Corrections are the essence of Qigong and Tai Chi and therefore are the principle components underlying all of the practice. They can be initiated in about ten seconds and are also sometimes called the *Momentary Methods*. Practice checking in regularly throughout your day.

1. **Body:** Adjust and regulate your body posture or movement.
2. **Breath:** Adjust and deepen your breath.
3. **Mind:** Clear your mind.

**Body:** *supported, head lifting to heavens and feet rooting in earth.*

- Shoulders relaxed, elbows almost never raise above shoulders, fingers relaxed.
- Pelvis like a fruit bowl, coccyx like the tail of a dragon, the organs (fruit) supported in the bowl do not spill out. Belly supporting the spine.
- Feet wide: intent to send roots into earth and draw up energy.
- Knees relaxed, slightly bent with sensation of thighs lifting.
- No joint straight or locked.
- During practice, both arms/hands and legs are alternating between empty and solid (Yin and Yang).
  - For the legs it is related to weighted and unweighted. For the arms/hands, the arms or hand that gives expression to the movement.

**Breath:** *steady smooth, relaxed (like a baby).*

The breath is the most powerful tool for gathering Qi and is the easiest to practice.

- **Signing** breath 3 x's
- **Gathering** breath 3 – 6x's
- **Counting:** Inhale slowly through your nose, and hold your breath for a count of one, one thousand; two, one thousand; three, one thousand. Allow your breaths to be deep, slow and relaxed, but not urgent. On the exhalation, relax even more.

**Mind:** *bring to the present moment, soft open focus, relaxed.*

- A Qigong proverb states, “When the mind is distracted the Qi scatters.”
- Briefly, or for as long as you wish, focus your mind on something simple like clouds drifting across the sky, a prairie of grass in the breeze, water moving in a river or as waves against the shore.
- Smile gently. Relaxation cannot occur without the willingness of the mind.
- The essential point of the Third Correction is to hold the focus on something that does not produce stress or resistance in your body with an attitude of mindfulness, or awareness of the present moment.
  - Breathing... Listening... Thinking (When thinking happens go back to breathing... listening etc.)
- Use the practice to move toward a state of cheerful indifference, agreeable tranquility, disassociation from complexity, or with an attitude of gratitude, inspiration, acceptance, trust, or surrender.
- Use the practice and deepen the practice by disassociating from the past and future and attending to the present moment.
- Tend toward mindfulness in motion, a state of awareness of simply that which is actually occurring.

## Steps of Tai Chi Easy

1. Keep it Easy - remembering to take it easy, have fun and enjoy what you are doing.
2. What is Tai Chi?
  - the balance of Yin and Yang, a phenomenon in the universe not a series of exercises
3. Tai Chi as Sitting Qigong
  - Sitting to focus primarily on the arm and head movements, relaxation and breath as a soothing and healing *Qigong method*.
4. Tai Chi as Standing Qigong
  - Standing to focus on *being rooted* and in alignment while moving the upper body: weight shift, torso rotation and arm movements arising from the center.
5. Tai Chi Walking Qigong
  - Walking as a Qigong walking method without emphasis on particular Tai Chi arm movements, to feel alignment and natural movement of torso in the movement and the natural tendency of the arms to be moved by the center with stepping.
6. Teach Tai Chi Walking In Place
  - movements done in place (especially Harmonizing and Send Qi) in place, lifting the unweighted foot, to practice weight shifting and coordinating arm and torso movement.
7. Integrate Whole Body Tai Chi -
  - Upper and lower body with coordinated walking to fully integrate upper, central and lower body movements.

# Tai Chi Easy™ Sequence

1. Align
2. Open
3. Harmonizing Yin and Yang
4. Brush Knee, Send Qi
5. Cutting Through to Clarity
6. Watching Clouds Pass
7. Gathering Heaven and Earth
8. Close

**Tai Chi Easy Practice** \*Note: sequences do not always have to start on the side used for these directions. Remember have fun, be flexible, explore and notice.

**Align: Body, breath, mind**

**Simple Warm up** (examples)

- Self-massage: hands, ears or feet (small map of body)
- Tracing Acupuncture Energy Channels
- Flowing motion: up/down, expand/contract, side-side, twists

**Opening**

- Stand with feet together, toes forward, sink your weight gently bending knees. Shift weight to one foot so that you are balanced with all your weight on that foot. As you sink down and shift your weight begin to open and lift arms to chest level. Step out about shoulder width. Redistribute weight evenly to both feet & let arms relax down.

**Movement 1: Harmonizing Yin /Yang**

After you open, relax the tailbone and allow it to feel the gentle pull of the earth (like a dragon tail – strong and grounded). Allow the head to rise gently seeking its place in the heavens.

- a. Connect with breath and let the arms rise on inhale forming a Qi ball at chest level. Turn on the internal Tai Chi Pole (core vertical line just in front of spine connecting Heaven and Earth) slightly to the right. As you turn on the Tai Chi Pole the Qi ball moves a little to the right and rotates so the left hand is under the right (left palm face up, right face down). Weight shifts to the right foot.
- b. The left hand begins to move forward and to the left, as if you were throwing a Frisbee, the palm is open, facing in and slightly upward. At the same time the right hand gently drifts downward to the right, palm facing down.
  - The movement to the left is largely driven by the core (Tai Chi pole) turning and by the weight shifting to the left foot. Right palm continues to float downward to about waist or hip level and the left palm gently faces towards the chest and up slightly, with the fingers relaxed and open (the hands guiding the openness of the heart outward in all directions).

- c. The motion continues and concludes fluidly with the Tai Chi Pole turning to the right, the right palm rising up across the chest, arm gently curved across the torso, shoulders relaxed and the left hand pulling back, palm turning down to make a Qi ball on the left.
- d. Now the Tai Chi Pole begins to turn left, the right opens forward and to the right (guiding the Frisbee and energy out) the palm open facing upward. At the same time the left hands gently drifts downward to the left side, palm facing down.
  - The movement again largely driven by the core body (Tai Chi pole) turning and the weight shifting to the right foot. Left palm continues to drift down and the right palm gently faces towards the chest.
- e. The motion continues and concludes fluidly with the Tai Chi Pole turning to the left, the left palm rising up across the chest, arm curved, shoulders relaxed and the right hand pulling back, palm turning down to make a Qi ball on the right.
- f. Continue for as many repetitions as feel appropriate.

## **Movement 2: Brush Knee, Send Qi (Chi)**

To conclude Harmonizing Yin and Yang, and begin Brush Knee, Send Qi  
End with the Qi ball on the right side – body turned slightly to the right.

- a. Turn your Qi Ball over by rotating your hands so the left is on top with the palm facing down and right is on the bottom with the palm facing up.
- b. Slowly, lower the Qi ball (both hands dropping down).
  - Turning the Tai Chi Pole a little more to the right,
- c. The left hand moves down towards the knees while the right hand continues back (sideways extension – because the body is turns) continues backward, then rises as if you are swimming, opening heart energy.
  - The right hand “swims” past the right ear sending the Qi.
- d. The weight shifts slowly toward the left, slowly turning the Tai chi pole to the left sending Qi out/across the midline towards the front.
  - At the same time the left hand “brushes the knees” passing energy across to the left side hand finishes palm face downward at the side of the leg.
- e. Bring the right and left hands towards each other (left hand below the right, left palm turns up) to create a new Qi ball on the left side (near heart level).
- f. Repeat movement on Left side from (b) reversing right and left.  
Continue for as many repetitions as feel appropriate.
- g. Conclusion of Brush Knee Send Qi
  - The upper (left) hand is sending Qi, the lower hand (right) is palm down and has moved back towards the right hip.
  - Bring the lower hand (right) upward.
  - Turning towards the front and distribute your weight equally on your feet.
  - The hand that raises (right) forms an “X” with the upper hand (right) in front of the chest.

### **Movement 3: Cutting the Path to Clarity**

At the beginning of “Cutting the Path to Clarity” your weight is equally distributed on your feet, and your arms are crossed in front of your body about chest height. Palms face your body. The last hand that raised upward in Brush Knee, Send Qi is the farthest from your heart when they are crossed in front of your chest. In this example, the right hand is in front.

- a. The hand closest to your heart (left) moves toward the back of the outside arm (right), both arms move forward, hands separating, palms rotating to face each other out in front making a Qi ball.
- b. The right arm drops down and in towards the body and opens back as the core body (Tai Chi pole) and head naturally begin to turn to the right.
  - The right hand pushes forward leading with the little finger like a “knife edge” cutting the air, as the front hand (left) pulls slowly back in toward the body. The body and head turning back to center.
- c. Both hands move towards each other in front of your body about chin level and center of gravity is centered between right and left feet.
- d. Form a Qi Ball in front with the palms toward each other about shoulder level.
- e. This time the right hand moves forward and the left down and back as the head and body naturally turn to the left.
  - The left hand pushes forward “Cutting the Path to Clarity” leading with the pinky finger, like a “knife edge”, the body and head turning back to center.
- f. Do for as many repetitions as feel appropriate.
- g. Gradually bring both hands back in front of your body about shoulder height.
- h. Complete sequence by centering your weight equally on your feet, and crossing your arms in front of your body about chest height, right arm closest to the body, and left farthest away. The opposite hand is in front at the end of “Cutting the Path to Clarity” as is in the beginning, with palms facing the body.

### **Movement 4: Watching Clouds Pass**

Begin with both arms crossed in front of the chest, as in the end of “Cutting the Path to Clarity” with the weight distributed equally on both feet.

- a. Open the arms up and away from the center of the body about your shoulder height as you shift your center of gravity to your left foot.
  - Elbows are slightly lower than your shoulders, arms arced and your hands about chin level.
- b. Turning the Tai Chi pole slightly to the left.
  - Moving your right arm down in an arc to the left, with your hand open in a scooping motion.
  - Left hand opens away from the body and is about chin level.
- c. Continue this movement until your right hand comes to about the height of your left waist.
  - Move your left hand, with the palm angled slightly down, to just above your right hand.

- Your weight is on your left foot.
- d. Then, gently lowering the left arm, and raise the right to chin level. (Clouds passing)
- e. Turning the Tai Chi Pole to the right.
  - Move your left arm down in an arc to the right, with your hand open in a scooping motion across your body, and your right arm rises and moves across the body.
- f. Continue this movement until your right hand comes about to chin level on the right side
  - The right palm toward the face, and angled slightly open
  - The left hand is about waist height with the palm gently angled toward your torso.
  - Weight is on the left foot.
- g. Both arms are on the right side of the body, with the right hand high and the left hands low.
  - Lower your left hand to waist height, and raise the right hand to chin level, with the palms gently facing the torso.
- h. Repeat as many times as feels appropriate.
- i. Finish by raising your arms until they are crossed in front of your chest.

### **Movement 5: Gathering from Heaven and Earth**

Begin by standing in an easy “horse stance” with the arms crossed in front of your chest, palms toward your body.

- a. Open your arms out to the 45 degree angle, palms facing toward each other
- b. As you bend your knees release your arms, palms turning towards the earth
  - Float and sink gradually down to gather the Yin energy of Earth: sensing and feeling the qualities of Earth energy.
- c. It is important to be careful of your back and knees so only sink as far as is comfortable (keep the Tai Chi pole almost vertical to avoid straining). Gather the Yin energy of Earth in your arms.
- d. Rise up, carrying the Yin Earth energy upward and return to the position with your arms crossed in front of your heart.
- e. Gradually begin to open your arms, slowly reaching up into the Heaven. Look upward between your hands.
- f. Gather the resources of Heaven and carry them downward until your palms are facing each other, holding a small Qi ball) are as high as your chin.
- g. Repeat as many times as feels appropriate

### **Closing:** Reverse of opening

- Stand with feet apart, toes forward, sink your weight gently bending knees. Shift weight to one foot so that you are balanced with all your weight on that foot. As you sink down and shift your weight begin to open and lift arms to chest level. Step the non weight bearing foot in to bring feet together. Redistribute weight evenly to both feet & let arms relax down.