

## **TAI CHI for HEALTH, BALANCE, AND SELF AWARENESS**

*Chi* is the Chinese word for the omnipresent life energy of the universe. The human being is seen as a microcosm of the natural world. When your *chi* is balanced and flows freely, you experience vitality, relaxation, well-being, and health. When your *chi* is blocked, you are likely to feel stressed, tense, sick, confused, or overwhelmed. Tai Chi, which translates as “the Supreme Ultimate” {exercise}, is the science and practice of learning to manage this energy.

### **Health**

Regular practice of Tai Chi (and its older form known as *Chi Kung*, sometimes spelled *Qigong*) enables you to reach new levels of health, strengthen your immune system, increase your energy, assist in weight loss, and reduce dependence on artificial stimulants like sugar, caffeine, or nicotine. Scientific studies also document its effectiveness in treating most chronic illnesses, including allergies, arthritis, asthma, cancer, digestive disorders, drug addictions, hormonal imbalances, hypertension, immune disorders, and strokes, to name a few.

Intrinsically a holistic discipline, the practice of Tai Chi also promotes mental and emotional health, as well as physical. Through increasing your awareness and learning to direct your intention with your mind, you can effectively transform fear, anxiety, depression, or anger into increased vitality and energy and even stay calm and centered, in the midst of seeming chaos. For more information and research, go to [qigonginstitute.com](http://qigonginstitute.com).

### **Balance**

According to the Chinese worldview, as matter took form the original unity broke out into two poles, yin and yang. Yin and yang may be observed in the polarities of our everyday life: male and female, night and day, hot and cold, wet and dry, and so on. The well known yin-yang symbol reflects a changing rather than static view of reality in which each pole interpenetrates and depends on the other, and is involved in cycles in which one becomes the other.

The practice of Tai Chi helps you to become aware of the constant flow and change of yin and yang energies within your own body, and to learn to bring them into balance. If you have an overabundance of yang energy, you may be overly aggressive, with a tendency toward burnout. If yin energy predominates, you may be overly shy and withdrawn, and lack self confidence. At first, you learn to balance your yin and yang energies individually. Then you are ready to try exercises with a partner in which you learn to stay centered while being challenged by another.

### **Self Awareness**

This cycling movement of change between yin and yang can be further divided out into five phases which correspond to the five elements, each of which is associated with a season of the year. Within each person one particular phase, or archetype, tends to be

primary or dominant. Knowing your type can assist you in understanding yourself and identifying ways to balance your energy.

### What's your type?

<i>Archetype</i>	<i>Element</i>	<i>Season</i>	<i>Qualities</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	Wood	Spring	Bold, creative, action-oriented
<i>Philosopher</i>	Water	Winter	Truth-seeker, reflective, deep thinker
<i>Peacemaker</i>	Earth	Autumn	Stable, solid, harmonious
<i>Wizard</i>	Fire	Summer	Magnetic, exciting, inspiring
<i>Alchemist</i>	Metal	Fall.	Perfectionist, orderly, discriminating

### Examples of Introductory Exercises

**Five Animal Frolic:** Since a major goal of tai chi practice is to unravel and peel off layers of built up tension and congestion in the body, one of the earliest forms is based on imitating the movements of particular animals. Each animal is linked to a particular organ system from Chinese Medicine. The form is done in a clockwise circle and is designed to open up the energy channels of the 5 major vital organs.

**Six Healing Sounds:** Specific sound frequencies are used to open, balance, and cleanse the Lungs, Kidneys, Liver, Heart, Spleen, and Triple Warmer energy channels. The sounds are simple and easy to reproduce and are combined with movements that may be performing in a lying down, sitting, or standing posture.

**Inner Smile:** This ancient meditative practice builds upon and amplifies the known health benefits of simple social smiling. This smile is directed inside yourself, without focus on a particular object, directing warmth, acceptance, and attention within. The result is a natural and effortless opening, relaxing, and balancing of the whole body.

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