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Written by Leann Rathbone 4th Dan

Edited by Shihan Jim Rathbone

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Sales@DomoAji.com

www.DomoAji.com

Introduction

Tai chi also known as “moving meditation” as well as many other names and spellings is a mind-body practice that originated in China as a martial art, the popular pronunciation being “tie chee”. A person doing tai chi moves their body slowly and gently, while breathing deeply and meditating. Many practitioners believe that tai chi helps the flow throughout the body of a proposed vital energy called qi pronounced “chee,” it means “air” or “power”.

The Tai Chi or Taijiquan (Supreme Ultimate Fist) that is practiced today is commonly thought of as an exercise when in fact Tai Chi is a martial arts with self-defense applications that combine ancient movement and breathing exercise as well as spiritual meditation.

It is believed by the historians of Taijiquan that Chen Chang Xing developed the first and most publicly taught of Tai Chi the Chen style or Old Frame. He taught the Chen Style to Yang Lu Chan, who then developed what we know as the Yang Style of Taijiquan. Yang Cheng Fu, the grandson of Yang Lu Chan, popularized a somewhat modified version of the Yang Style, and this is the form we practice today as the Yang Long Form. Traditionally, it has 108 postures or techniques, although there are many variations.

During the Cultural Revolution in China Tai Chi came close to ending the practice of Tai Chi, 1956 the National Physical Culture and Sports Commission of the People's Republic of China undertook to standardize and simplify many versions of Tai Chi, perhaps recognizing the value of exporting Tai Chi as a health and exercise activity. Taijiquan Committee Chairperson, Professor Li Tian Ji led the development of the 24 position Taijiquan Form and many other standardized Taijiquan forms such as the 32 position Sword Form. He has been called the father of modern Tai Chi.

The Standard Simplified Beijing 24 position Taijiquan Form eliminated some of the movements found in the Yang 108 Long Form, keeping the most essential ones, reducing the number of repetitions of some and "mirroring" others (performing, for example, Grasp the Birds Tail symmetrically to both the right and to the left). Basic principles of Tai Chi are followed, with slow, flowing movements. The form lasts only about 8 minutes, compared to 15 to 20 minutes for the Long Form, it is easier to learn and less difficult to perform. The travel is only about 10 feet in a linear direction, making it perfect for large groups in limited spaces. Thus, it has become the most popular and widely practiced form worldwide.

The form of Tai Chi you are going to learn in this book is the 24 position set also known as the simplified form. This is one of today's most popular Tai Chi forms being taught. This is the form you are most likely to learn in a school, gym, recreation center or the park. The rare self-defense applications are also shown so that you can understand the application of the movement you are doing and why.

Sifu Lin has studied the art of Tai Chi for more than 30 years under some of China's foremost instructors. Ching Ye Ming who studied with Chen Fa Qu, Chen Fa Qu was of the lineage of the founding family of the Chen style, who were instructors to the Emperors of China.

His most recent instructor Leong Xiao Qua, took 2nd place in the national Tai Chi Competition of China. Sifu Lin teaches the forms and provides self-defense application for each position. Knowledge of the self-defense application is rare even in China.

Tai Chi for Health Purposes

A person practicing tai chi moves their body in a slow, relaxed, and graceful series of movements from one balanced position to the next. One can practice on one's own or in a group. The movements make up what are called forms (or routines). Some movements are named for animals or birds, such as "White Crane Flashes Its Wings." The simplest style of tai chi uses 13 movements; more complex styles can have dozens.

In tai chi, each movement flows into the next. The entire body is always in motion, with the movements performed gently and at uniform speed. It is considered important to keep the body upright, especially the upper body.

In addition to movement, two other important elements in tai chi are breathing and meditation. In tai chi practice, it is considered important to concentrate; put aside distracting thoughts; and breathe in a deep, relaxed, and focused manner. Practitioners believe that this breathing and meditation have many benefits, such as:

- Massaging the internal organs
- Aiding the exchange of gases in the lungs
- Helping the digestive system work better
- Increasing calmness and awareness
- Improving balance.

Key Points

- Many people who practice tai chi do so to improve one or more aspects of their health and to stay healthy.
- It is not fully known what changes occur in the body during tai chi, whether they influence health, and, if so, how. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) is sponsoring studies to find out more about tai chi's effects, how it works, and diseases and conditions for which it may be most helpful.
- Tell your health care providers about any complementary and alternative practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

Other Key Beliefs in Tai Chi

Certain concepts from Chinese philosophy were important in tai chi's development (although not every person who practices tai chi for health purposes, especially in the West, learns or uses them). A few are as follows:

- A vital energy called qi underlies all living things.
- Qi flows in people through specific channels called meridians.
- Qi is important in health and disease.
- Tai chi is a practice that supports, unblocks, and redirects the flow of qi.

Another concept in tai chi is that the forces of yin and yang should be in balance. In Chinese philosophy, yin and yang are two principles or elements that make up the universe and everything in it and that also oppose each other. Yin is believed to have the qualities of water such as coolness, darkness, stillness, and inward and downward directions—and to be feminine in character. Yang is believed to have the qualities of fire such as heat, light, action, and upward and outward movement and to be masculine. In this belief system, people's yin and yang need to be in balance in order for them to be healthy, and tai chi is a practice that supports this balance.

Specific Health Purposes

People practice tai chi for various health purposes, such as:

- For benefits from exercise:
 - Tai chi is a low-impact form of exercise.
 - It is a weight-bearing exercise that can have certain health benefits—for example, to the bones.
 - It is an aerobic exercise.
- To improve physical condition, muscle strength, coordination, and flexibility
- To have better balance and a lower risk for falls, especially in elderly people
- To ease pain and stiffness—for example, from arthritis
- For health benefits that may be experienced from meditation
- To improve sleep
- For overall wellness.

Tai chi is a relatively safe to practice. However, there are some cautions.

- Tell your health care provider if you are considering learning tai chi for health purposes (especially if you have a health condition for which you are being treated, if you have not exercised in a while, or if you are an older person).
- If you do not position your body properly in tai chi or if you overdo practice, you may get sore muscles or sprains.
- Tai chi instructors often recommend that people not practice tai chi right after they eat, or when they are very tired, or when they have an active infection.
- Use caution if you have any of the conditions listed below, as your health care provider should advise you whether to modify or avoid certain postures in tai chi:
 - Pregnancy
 - Hernia
 - Joint problems, back pain, sprains, a fracture, or severe osteoporosis
- Aerobic exercise has benefits to the heart and possibly to cholesterol levels. This type of exercise causes the heart to work harder to pump blood more quickly and forcefully. The body adds oxygen to the blood faster, and the person breathes more quickly. Two other examples of aerobic exercise are swimming and brisk walking.

Getting Started

To be successful at learning Tai Chi all you need to know and understand is some basic principles and guidelines. These principle and guidelines are the basic foundation of Tai Chi.

1. All the moves should be done slowly and smoothly
2. Keep your shoulders over your hips
3. Your shoulders and chest should be relaxed not stiff
4. Your pelvis should be slightly tilted forward
5. Head should be straight and chin slightly tucked
6. As general rule one foot should not be moved without first shifting your weight to the other foot.
7. Each movement should flow into the next

	Form Section Name	Chinese Name
Form 1	Commencing form	Qu Shi 起势
Form 2	Part the wild horse's mane	Ye Ma Fen Zong 野马分鬃
Form 3	The white crane spreads its wings	Bai He Lian Chi 白鹤亮翅
Form 4	Brush knee and twist step on both sides	Lou Xi Ao Bu 搂膝拗步
Form 5	Hand strums the lute	Shou Hui Pipa 手挥琵琶
Form 6	Step back and whirl arms on both sides	Dao Juan Gong 倒卷肱
Form 7	Grasp the bird's tail-left style	Zuo Lan Que Wei 揽雀尾
Form 8	Grasp the bird's tail-right style	You Lan Que Wei 揽雀尾
Form 9	Single whip	Dan Bian 单鞭
Form 10	Wave hands like clouds-left style	Yun Shou 云手
Form 11	Single whip	Dan Bian 单鞭
Form 12	High pat on the horse	Gao Tan Ma 高探马
Form 13	Kick with right heel	You Deng Jiao 右蹬脚
Form 14	Strike opponent's ears with both fists	Shuang Feng guan Er 双峰贯耳
Form 15	Turn and kick with left heel	Zhuan Shen Zuo Deng Jiao 转身左蹬脚
Form 16	Push down and stand on one leg-left style	Zuo Xia Shi Du Li 下势独立
Form 17	Push down and stand on one leg-right style	You Xia Shi Du Li 下势独立
Form 18	Work at shuttles on both sides	Chuan Suo 左右穿梭
Form 19	Needle at sea bottom	Haidi Zhen 海底针
Form 20	Flash the arm	Shan Tong Bei 闪通背
Form 21	Turn, deflect downward, parry and punch	Zhuan Shen Ban Lan Chui 转身搬拦捶
Form 22	Apparent close up	Ru Feng Si Bi 如封似闭
Form 23	Cross hands	Shi Zi Shou 十字手
Form 24	Closing form	Shou Shi 收势

To help with the explanation of the form a clock system is used: For the 90 degree angels we will use 12:00 which is straight ahead, 3:00 is to the right, 6:00 is behind you and 9:00 is to the left. The positions in between that we will refer to is 2:30, 4:30, 7:30 and 10:30 which are your 45 degree angels. All forms start with you facing 12:00

Breakdown of each form

With application

Form 1 Commencing form

This is the meditation position so that you can prepare your mind for the physical movements you are about to start. Before you start the mind should be calm and steady. Stand naturally with feet together, hands relaxed at your side, drop your shoulders and relax. Roll the body weight to the right foot and open left foot to the side so that they are shoulder width apart then transfer your weight to both feet. Turn your hands so your palms face backwards and as your breathe in, raise your arms to shoulder height. Lower both hands until the palms are at the waist height with elbows bent and you are breathing out. Bend the knees until the kneecaps are just above the toes. It is important to align the kneecaps above the toes.



