

The Foundations & Academics of Taichi

Written & prepared by Sifu David Leopold of Chiflow Studios

INTRODUCTION

Taichi is an integral part of Holistic and Alternative Wellness. As a key component to the Healing Arts, Taichi is very suitable for maintaining and improving overall health and well being.

Taichi can be practiced alone or in groups small or large. Community practice on a routine basis can improve mental health, develop friendships, and help maintain ongoing practice.

*Based on data obtained from the “National Health Interview Survey”, an estimated 2.5 million individuals practice Taichi in the US. Canada being approximately 10% population of US, we can estimate approx 250,000 Canadians practice Taichi. Approximately 85 million people worldwide practice Taichi.

*SOURCE : <https://qialance.com>

FOUNDATIONS OF TAICHI

Brief History

Taichi dates back thousands of years. It originated as a Martial Art combined with Qigong principles. Over time, Taichi evolved into a Healing Art. The first known written reference of Taichi appeared in “THE BOOK OF CHANGES” over 3000 years ago during the Zhou Dynasty (1100-1221 BC). The book says “in all changes exists Taichi”, which causes the two opposites in everything. Preventative in nature, Taichi is intrinsic to Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Short Description

Taichi is often described as “MEDITATION IN MOTION”. It promotes the natural flow of energy resulting in overall well being. The combination of slow movement, focus, natural breathing, and relaxation, enables the mind and body to balance and harmonize. Taichi can be practiced as singular movements or as a sequence known as “FORMS”. Offering a wide variety of hand and weapon styles, Taichi is suitable for all age groups and fitness levels.

Taichi Styles

Over the years, many styles & variations of hand & weapon forms have been developed & practiced. Each style has unique characteristics & attributes yet share common principles.

The most well known and widely practiced are THE 5 FAMILY STYLES: CHEN, YANG, HAO, WU, SUN

CHEN : Created by Chen Wangting in the late 1600’s.

The oldest and considered to be the parent of the five Family Taichi styles. Martial in nature, this style accentuates the accumulation and explosive release of energy.

It includes movements such as jumps, kicks, and strikes and is very good for cardio workout. Most suitable for those with a higher degree of fitness level.

YANG : Created by Yang Lu-chan in the early 1800's.

The most popular and widely practiced style of Taichi. The slow, gentle, and flowing movements are comfortable for the body and optimal to promote and maintain good health. This style exemplifies fluid circulation of energy and balance between mind and body. It is suitable for all age groups and fitness levels.

HAO : Created by Wu Yuxiang in the mid 1800's.

Considered more advanced, precision movements are apparent in this style. Postures are simple and upright with complex techniques. Strong focus on controlling and cultivating internal chi force.

WU : Created by Wu Quan-you in the late 1800's.

Unique in its emphasis on the extension of the body leaning forward & backward. It is soft like Yang style yet the movements are smaller and more compact. Much of the intention is towards redirecting incoming force.

SUN : Created by Sun Lu-tang in the late 1800's.

The most recent of the 5 family styles. It is suitable for all age groups and fitness levels. It's gentle on the body joints, emphasizes energy sensations and promotes agility by merging various stepping methods. It combines unique footwork and gentle, flowing, circular hand movements.

**SOURCE: Taichi for Health Institute, Total Taichi Book, The Taichi Effect, Chebucto – Philosophy/Taichi History.*

7 MAIN BENEFITS OF TAICHI

- Better Balance—Of all tai-chi's big benefits, it's the best-documented in medical literature! Studies show that older adults who do hour-long tai chi sessions one to three times a week are 43% less likely to fall, and they *cut their risk of injury in half!*
- No More Pain—A growing number of clinical trials show that tai chi offers significant relief from back, neck, arthritis, and fibromyalgia pain.
- A Sharper Mind—Tai chi can help reduce age-related cognitive decline ... and even slow dementia!
- A Boost in Mood—In 82% of studies, tai chi greatly improved mood and lowered anxiety. Plus, it was shown to be an effective treatment for depression.
- Less Stress—Learn to step back and take a deep, calming breath.
- More Confidence—While gaining muscle and mind control.
- A Healthier Heart—Tai chi may offer advantages over other types of aerobic exercise, especially for people who are sedentary or very out of shape. And that's not all. It also lowers blood pressure and total cholesterol, reduces chronic inflammation, and tones the sympathetic nervous system.

**SOURCE: Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School. "Let the Healing Power of Tai Chi Help your Health!"*

ACADEMICS OF TAICHI

Research Studies and Articles

Over the years, numerous research studies have been conducted and documented to analyze and prove the benefits of Taichi. Much of the research was reviewed in 2015 by researchers at Beijing University & Harvard Medical School. Of the 507 studies included in the 2015 review, 94.1% found positive effects of Tai Chi. These

included healthy people whose mission was health preservation as well as people with conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and osteoporosis.

**Source: Using Tai Chi to Build Strength by: Jane E. Brody, The New York Times, Sept 10, 2018*

Sample List : Research Studies that may or may not be included in the 507 studies noted above.

- A. Taichi for Older Adults: Improving the Physical, Psychological, & Cognitive
by Dr. Hala Tamim & James Manson - School of Kinesiology & Health Sciences, York University
- B. Taichi in Pregnancy & Childbirth
by Eileen Ford-Price - First Published in Cloud Hands the newsletter of Wu's Taichi Chuan Academy, Toronto
- C. Taichi eases Fibromyalgia pain, study. CBC News Health
by Eric Risberg/Associated Press
- D. Taichi Workplace program for improving Musculoskeletal fitness among female computer users
Funded through Centre of Research Expertise by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board of Ontario
- E. Taichi Exercises Improve Type 2 Diabetes Control, Study Suggests
by British Medical Journal
- F. Taichi reduces Inflammation in Breast Cancer Survivors
led by UCLA Cancer Centre Dr. Michael Irwin

Sample List : Articles

- A. Taichi fights stress, getting popular with Millennials
by Amy Chillag – CNN Health
- B. Tai Chi for Fall Prevention and Effect of Tai Chi on Bone Density (Summer 2020 Issue)
by Fracture Link Ontario Osteoporosis Strategy
- C. How Taichi can offer lessons in Management
by Harvey Schachter – Globe And Mail
- D. The slow shifts of Taichi can help build a better body
by Dr. Mehmet Oz & Dr. Mike Roizen
- E. Taichi hits Medical Mainstream
*by Shelley Zarudenec and Clara Byrne
led by Dr. Adam Chen – Mount Sinai Hospital*
- F. Taichi may aid in arthritis treatment
by Kat Carney CNN Headline News
- G. Taichi Improves Diabetes Control
British Journal of Sports Medicine
by Anna Sophia McKenney

ORGANIZATIONS & CLASS RESOURCES

Throughout Canada, there are numerous organizations that teach, host, support and promote Taichi. They include independent schools, community centres, YMCA's, health institutions, universities, and fitness clubs.

Sample List

- Canadian Taijiquan Federation
- The Canadian Tai Chi Academy
- The Canadian Institute of Taichi
- Taoist Taichi Society
- Municipal & Local Community Centres
- Local YMCA's
- Mount Sinai Hospital (The Wasser Pain Management Centre)
- York University (Kinesiology & Health Science)
- University of Calgary
- Wellspring Cancer Support Centres
- World Taichi & Qigong Association

EDUCATIONAL BOOKS

Throughout Canada and worldwide, many books have been published in several languages. They range in subject matter: philosophy, science, theory and practice of Taichi. Depending on the publication, books can be found on Amazon, at major and independent book stores and through your local Taichi establishment.

Sample List

- An Introduction to Tai Chi By: Harvard Health Publications
- The Healing Promise of Qi. Creating Extraordinary Wellness Through Qigong & Tai Chi by: Roger Jahnke
- Tai Chi Theory & Martial Power By: Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming
- T'AI Chi Classics By: Waysun Liao
- The Inner Structure of Tai Chi By: Mantak Chia & Juan Li
- The Tao of Tai-Chi Chuan By: Jou, Tsung Hwa
- Total Taichi By: Ronnie Robinson

CONCLUSION

The vast amount of education, resources, and information that are available about Taichi is extensive. The opportunities and possibilities to learn and connect with other Taichi practitioners and teachers is very accessible. Once you are ready to begin your Taichi journey, take your time and research; find the most suitable instructor and location so you can remain motivated and dedicated to learning and practicing the art of Taichi.