

# Ancient Panacea for Modern Times

by Shoshanna Katzman



**T**'ai Chi and Qigong exercises are easy to learn and practice for those of any age or ability. These ancient healing arts developed in China thousands of years ago to cultivate vital energy, restore energetic balance and promote meditation through movement. Easily practiced alone or within a group, Qigong can even be learned through following an instructional DVD or book. Practiced traditionally to reduce high blood pressure, improve lung problems, promote mental acuity, boost immunity, eliminate anxiety, ameliorate pain, ease addiction, create restful sleep and increase overall healing capability - T'ai Chi and Qigong are an excellent addition to any wellness plan.



These ancient techniques for health and wellness are needed more than ever to balance out the fast paced, technological age of our society. Meditative T'ai Chi movements such as "Waving Hands like Clouds" fosters reprieve from extraneous and excessive thinking - transforming "one hundred thoughts into one". The goal of such daily practice is to forge a state known as wuji, or no-mindedness. This brings the practitioner into the moment, able to remain integrated within mind and body regardless of challenging encounters happening around them. Regular practice also promotes postural integration both physically and energetically which uplifts spirit through a centering and

grounding process. This naturally reduces stress and leads to an overall sense of inner calm, confidence and well-being. Furthermore, T'ai Chi and Qigong activate the para-sympathetic nervous system which increases the relaxation response, while decreasing "fight or flight" syndrome. The profound integration of body, breath and mind that occurs provides the personal tools and readiness to fully handle stress as it approaches.

Practice of these invigorating, yet calming exercises offer a panacea for health challenges throughout each stage of life. For athletes, they increase coordination, strength, flexibility and peak performance. In fact, Tiger Woods practiced Qigong to improve his golf swing. The elderly obtain help in balance, bone strength, mental focus and retardation of the aging process. Scientific research has even shown that T'ai Chi reduces the incidence of falls and fractures in the elderly. Menopausal women feel better as hot flashes decrease, yet metabolism increases combined with restful sleep and happier mood. Similarly, pregnant women gain benefit through balanced hormones, increased energy and stress reduction. Lamaze breathing techniques used during labor support are even based on Qigong practices. Men share too in the benefits as intuition is peaked, along with virility. One of the most recent applications is for post-traumatic stress disorder which means help for war veterans and survivors of abuse or trauma. T'ai Chi and Qigong are also commonly practiced in correctional facilities and mental institutions to promote mind-body integration.

As one of the best forms of exercise to promote energetic health and longevity, T'ai Chi and Qigong class offerings have become more prevalent throughout health clubs and spas in the US. The National Qigong Association ([nqa.org](http://nqa.org)) has a registry of teachers and holds annual gatherings where both novices and experts can learn more about these powerful ancient exercises.

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