

太極拳 Tàijíquán

Tàijíquán 太極拳 (pronounced TIE-JEE-CHWEN) is a complete system of mind and body development. While it is an art form firmly rooted in the martial traditions of ancient China, it goes beyond simply being a martial art system. It also encompasses Qigōng (氣功) breathing exercise, Tàijí (yīn (陰) and yáng (陽) energy) philosophy, meditation, and active and continuous awareness of self and others. For centuries, millions of Chinese have practiced tàijíquán to achieve wellness and longevity, and today the practice of tàijíquán has spread across the world, even to your doorstep.

What makes tàijíquán distinct from other martial arts and movement arts is its emphasis on principles of movement. Some specific points are:



1. Low Center of Gravity: movement in tàijíquán is rooted in the earth. Maintaining a low center of gravity builds strength and dynamic control of the legs, enhances balance, and improves the efficiency of one's movements and the energy driving them. The goal is to blend with gravity rather than to fight against it.

2. Slow Movement: practicing the movements of the tàijíquán form at a slow pace builds endurance, balance, dexterity, awareness, and correctness at a natural and comfortable pace.

- 3. Empty Stepping:** when moving about in the tàijíquán form, we step without putting any weight on the foot. This enables the practitioner to maintain complete control of their center of gravity, and also enhances the awareness of the smaller parts of movements we often take for granted.
- 4. Whole Body Movement:** the entire body moves as a single active unit. All muscle groups, organs, and joints are coordinated together, combining the power and the structure of the entire body to achieve maximum results with minimum effort.

Tàijíquán can be an effective treatment for a range of health problems, including back trouble, high blood pressure, stress, hypertension, arthritis, fatigue, breathing difficulties, circulatory and gastrointestinal disorders, depression, and weight problems.



A very accomplished master of tàijíquán and author of The Dao Of Tàijíquán, Jou Tsung Hwa (Zhōu Zōnghuá, 周宗樺), once spoke of four things that one should do to make progress in tàijíquán: "Know yourself. Do your best. Don't overdo it. Make a little progress every day." Employing these simple concepts along with the principles outlined above will provide a strong foundation for any student to develop themselves in tàijíquán.

Tàijíquán is a tool for making personal progress along the road to well being and longevity. Its benefit is accessible to any practitioner, regardless of age, condition, experience, or inclination- all you have to do is practice. One should learn and practice at a comfortable and natural pace- there is no timetable for breakthrough in tàijíquán, but if you pay attention to yourself, you can listen to your body and learn at the pace that works for you.

*Black Bamboo Pavilion
2nd Month, Year of Fire Dog*

