



TRADITIONAL TAIJI
ALLIANCE FOR
VETERANS

<https://stand-easy.com>

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The Tai Chi Letter

A PUBLICATION OF THE TRADITIONAL TAIJI ALLIANCE FOR VETERANS

If you're here, you've found home

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Benefits of Tai Chi Breathing Methods

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OUR MISSION

To create a national network of traditional taiji classes and competitive sports events for veterans.

OUR VISION

To offer a complete range of instruction in traditional taiji practices and methods.

To encourage participation via multiple opportunities and pathways for advancement.

Taiji practice provides many different types of benefits for the body and overall well-being.

The benefits that can be obtained by practicing taiji for balance and overall flexibility are well documented. (1)

One of the benefits of taiji practice is obtained via the breathing methods. They are relaxed, regular, and full. The upper body should be relaxed through the lower back and shoulders so the lungs can open fully. The breathing methods encourage whole - body breathing. With practice, the breathing deepens. Gradually, the muscles in the back

become more relaxed and more helpful in coordinating the breath with each movement. This, in turn, makes it possible to further relax and deepen the breathing naturally.

In studies (2), participants showed measured improvements in oxygen levels, overall respiration rate and depth. Self-reports indicated better sleep and appetite.

This is right in line with what traditional taiji practice calls for and helps develop. In practice, we seek to coordinate the breath with the movement in a relaxed and consistent fashion. As we breathe in,

we open; as we breathe out, we close. The movement follows the breath.

Practicing coordinated movement with relaxed breathing provides a gentle massage for the internal organs that naturally improves their functions.

(1) Studies by researchers at the National Institutes of Health on the benefits of taiji for older people in preventing falls date back to the 1990's.

(2) References in "Tai Chi" [The Clinician's Complete Guide to Complimentary and Alternative Medicine](#), ed. Dr. Donald Novey, MD, Elsevier, 2000.

Program Introduction: Traditional Tai Chi for Veterans

Our Taiji program for veterans includes online and in-person Classes and Events. Paths for participants to advance and use other skills while

enjoying the benefits of taiji practice are included.

The opportunity to become a coach, or a teacher, or an event judge all exist. It's an open table.

There are other opportunities, such as team and event organizer, event photographer, and sports writer.

Interested? We'd like to hear from you.





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Outer Practice: Finding Balance

In traditional taiji practice we often look for the balance points, the place at which we feel well-positioned and well-placed over our feet. Finding that balance seems like an easy thing to do. We do it all the time, right?



But when we try to do it in slow motion—as we do in taiji practice—we can find out very quickly what may have been missing.

The small changes in the way the weight is transferred make a difference. The way the foot is positioned and how the weight is distributed through the leg makes a difference.

And the way the body is aligned, makes an even bigger difference.

When the body is aligned correctly, knee over the

toes, hip over the heel, shoulders over the hip, the body can be in balance. When the body is in balance, the effort required to sustain a movement or a posture is reduced.

This lets us move from having to focus on the muscles needed to maintain balance while we do a movement or hold a posture to focusing on how the movements are connected and how we find the balance points between the movements.

Inner Practice: Being Mindful

Traditional taiji practice requires we be mindful of what we are doing and be fully present in the moment and in the movement.

Distracting thoughts are quieted. We bring our focus to the present and look for the layers we will include in practice today.

Tomorrow may be different. Today, we may focus on the taiji postures, working to do them correctly and completely. Tomorrow, we may focus on the connections between the postures, so they are smooth, continuous, resilient, and complete.

In either case, we need to be paying attention while practicing.

The ability to quiet the mind, reduce distracting thoughts, and focus on the present is a learned skill. It takes practice and patience. Once learned, it becomes another tool for improving practice.

Quote from the Tai Chi Classics

"In applying ward off, the arm must be round and alive; In extending the hand, emphasize sensitivity. If the opponent is empty, I use press; If he is full, I drop the elbows and deflect. By warding off diagonally upward, my opponent will be forced to lean backward and lose his balance."

Early interpretation of the applications by Li I-yu (1832-92) in Wile, Douglas, [Lost Tai Chi Classics from the Late Ching Dynasty](#). SUNY, 1996.

