**General Information**

Instructor: Darlene Taylor

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Course Meeting: TBD

Course Credit: TBD

**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the complementary and alternative medicine modality of tai chi. It is a 90-minute segment of a three part series entitled “Self-care through Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Modalities.” In this course, participants will receive an introduction to tai chi’s definition, history, benefits, research, professional requirements, styles, and safety precautions. The course will culminate with a practical exercise where students will conduct two parts of a short form yang style.

**Course Prerequisites**

None

**Course Objectives**

1. To understand the definition and history of Tai Chi.
2. To understand the benefits, research and evidence supporting Tai Chi.
3. To learn the major styles and safety precautions of meditation.
4. To identify professional requirements and community resources available in the local area.
5. To develop the confidence to introduce Tai Chi into your self-care regime.

**Course Timeline**

Min Activity

05 Introduction/Learning Outcomes

05 [Video](https://youtu.be/IEJLM29ITMw) (4:48)

05 Definition and History of Tai Chi

05 Benefits of Tai Chi

10 [Video](https://youtu.be/JQas8cE92mc) and brief discussion (1:50)

05 Research and evidence

10 Professional Requirements and community resources

10 Break

05 Styles of Tai Chi

05 Safety Precautions

15 [Video](https://youtu.be/z99bc-K2ppE) (1/8 form Tai Chi) and hands-on practice (9:40)

30 [Video](https://youtu.be/R_oCgD-W5Gg) (2/8 form Tai Chi) and hands-practice (18:22)

05 Summary / Conclusion

**90 Total Minutes**

**Introduction:**

Hello. I’m Darlene Taylor, a wellness coach at Wellness Works, an online business created to help its clients develop personalized plans to obtain optimal holistic wellness in the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual arenas. Our philosophy is simple, "Simple Changes Matter."

Today, I will discuss the benefits tai chi and how you can integrate it into your daily life. As with meditation, tai chi is a complementary, alternative, and integrative medicine modality. It is considered a body-mind modality in that it enhances both the physiological and psychological well-being of participants. And just like meditation, it is a modality that can be used by people of all ages.

**(See** [**video**](https://youtu.be/IEJLM29ITMw) **and discuss.)**

Movie buffs in the audience may have seen tai chi performed in many movies from Kung Fu movie from Disney’s Moana. In 2015, the movie The Intern starring Robert DeNiro open and close with tai chi in the park.

**Definition and History of Tai Chi**

Tai chi is an ancient Chinese body-mind, meditative form of physical exercise. It is a self-paced, series of slow, smooth movements designed to achieve a state of physical and mental relaxation. As you saw in the video, each movement flows into the next movement, creating seamless movement and constant motion.

Like yoga, tai chi is considered “meditation in motion.” (The Free Dictionary, n.d.)

It is a form of Qiqong (Chi Kung) because it also incorporates energy and breathing techniques for self-healing. I speak of energy because in tai chi, it is about balance…yin and yang..the natural balance…all lefts have a corresponding right…all ups have a corresponding down. By maintaining balance, players believe they feel and increase their qi (or life force.)

Originally created as a fighting art, tai chi dates back approximately 700 to 1,500 years ago in China. The exact date is not known. Some date it creation back to a 15th century priest, while others credit a 16th century royal guard of the Chen Wangting as the originator.

What we do know is that today there are over 250 million players worldwide.

**Benefits of Tai Chi**

There are many benefits to Tai chi. Research has shown that practicing tai chi regularly can result in the following:

* Decreases in depression, blood pressure, stress and anxiety
* Improvements in aerobic capacity, mood, flexibility, balance, muscle strength, joint pain and overall wellness
* Reduces the risk of falls in older adults
* Enhances sleep quality

**(See** [**video**](https://youtu.be/JQas8cE92mc) **and discuss)**

**Research and evidence**

Researchers from the Harvard Medical School and the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center conducted randomized trials of 30 patients with chronic heart disease to review the effects of a 12-week tai chi program on their health. What they found was that tai chi may enhance quality of life, exercise capacity, and sleep stability for patients with heart failure. (Yeh, Wayne, & Phillips)

Researchers conducted a systematic review to identify the effects of tai chi on cognitive performance in order adults. Twenty studies with a total of 2,553 participants revealed that “Tai Chi shows potential to enhance cognitive function in older adults, particularly in the realm of executive functioning and in individuals without significant impairment.” (Wayne, et al., 2014)

“Findings from a [2012 randomized controlled trial](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=366%5bvolume%5d+AND+6%5bissue%5d+AND+511%5bpage%5d+AND+2012%5bpdat%5d&cmd=detailssearch) of 195 patients with Parkinson’s disease demonstrated that tai chi improved balance impairments better than resistance training or stretching in patients with mild–to-moderate Parkinson’s disease.” (NCCIH, 2015)

“A [2015 single-blind randomized controlled trial](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=169%5bvolume%5d+AND+6%5bissue%5d+AND+854%5bpage%5d+AND+2015%5bpdat%5d&cmd=detailssearch) in patients with a recent myocardial infarction found that after 12 weeks of practicing tai chi, those in the tai chi group had a significant (14%) increase in VO2 peak from baseline, whereas those in the control group had a nonsignificant (5%) decrease in VO2 peak.” (NCCIH, 2015)

There is additional information that shows the efficacy of tai chi on patients with Parkinson’s, diabetes, fibromyalgia, dementia, breast cancer, lower back pain, osteoporosis, and more. (Nordqvist, 2016)

**Professional Requirements and community resources**

Tai chi instructors do not have to be licensed and certified; however you should inquire about their training. For example, the American Tai Chi and Qigong Association (ATCQA) offers certification from level I through Level III and a Master level course. The International Fitness Professionals Association and the National Qigong Associate offer an instructor certification as well.

According to Beginner Tai Chi (n.d.), finding the right instructor makes all the difference. Below are a few time:

* Regardless of certifications, ensure you instructor has solid skills
* Review your instructor’s credentials
* Visit the school to make sure it’s a fit for you
* Is your instructor’s teaching style compatible with your learning style?

Earlier, I mentioned that tai chi started out as a martial art, so many martial arts businesses offer tai chi training as well. As martial arts is their focus many focus on precision of form. Contrarily, if you are looking for a way to relieve stress you may want to find an instructor that is not as rigid. That might be someone who encourages movement more than accuracy.

**(Break)**

**Styles of Tai Chi**

“There are 5 major branches of Tai Chi: Chen, Yang, Wu, Sun and Hoa. Within those 5 major branches of Tai Chi there are many variations of the forms which generally fit into 3 categories: traditional, competition and modified.” (Thome, n.d.)

Chen is the oldest tai chi style. It is a combination of movements that are hard and fast and slow and soft. Because of this, chen is the most difficult to learn. It is also a large frame form.

Yang is the most popular and widely used style. It is characterized by slow, gentle, flowing movements performed at a steady tempo. This style offers great health benefits. It has a combination of large and medium frame forms.

Wu is the second most popular and widely used style. The movements have a steady tempo of slow, guided movements. Many believe it is the easiest to learn. It is considered a small frame style as the movement of hands and legs is not extended far from the body.

Sun is an agile lively style. It is also considered good for health. It is considered a small frame style as the movement of hands and legs is not extended far from the body.

Hao is the least popular style. The movements are subtle and mostly internal. For that reason it is considered an advanced style.

Each style has both long and short forms. A short form consists of 13 to 40 moves, while the long form can have as many as 80 moves. Today, we are going to perform tai chi using a short form yang style.

**Safety Precautions**

Because Tai Chi is generally slow and gentle, it is relatively a safe form of exercise. It doesn’t require any additional equipment. However, pregnant women and people with severe joint, back or heart problems should consult a physician before beginning a tai chi regime. Tai chi is not supposed to hurt, so if you feel pain…modify.

So, let’s get started. Again, I remind everyone in the room that if you feel uncomfortable, modify and do not perform the movements.

**(See** [**video**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHZo-u0ekPY&list=PLKbhoDbSI76tWzW5QLQCVEJAB5S7JEWbR&index=1) **(Introduction)**

**(Start practical application)**

[Video](https://youtu.be/z99bc-K2ppE) (1/8 form tai chi) and hands-on practice

[Video](https://youtu.be/R_oCgD-W5Gg) (2/8 form tai chi) and hands-practice

**Summary / Conclusion**

So today we’ve talked about the origins of Tai Chi, its benefits, research and evidence, styles and forms of tai chi, professional requirements, and safety precautions. We’ve also conducted two session of the 8 form yang style. I hope that you’ve learned how easy and enjoyable tai chi can really be. As you depart tonight, there is a handout on the tables in the back with a list a local and online resource relating to tai chi.

Next week, I will close out this seminar series with a 90-minute discussion on aroma therapy. See you all then. And remember…."Simple Changes Matter."

# References

Beginners Tai Chi. (n.d.). *Tai Chi Instructors: Finding a Good Instructor.* Retrieved from Beginners Tai Chi: http://www.beginnerstaichi.com/tai-chi-instructors.html

NCCIH. (2015, Aug). *Tai Chi: What the science says.* Retrieved from NCCIH: https://nccih.nih.gov/health/providers/digest/taichi-science#header4

Nordqvist, J. (2016, Sep 6). *What are the Health Benefits of Tai Chi?* Retrieved from MNT: http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/265507.php

The Free Dictionary. (n.d.). *tai chi.* Retrieved from The Free Dictionary: http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/tai+chi

Thome, T. (n.d.). *How to Find a Good Tai Chi Instructor.* Retrieved from Tai Chi for Health: http://www.taichiforhealth.net/how-to-find-a-good-tai-chi-instructor/

Wayne, P. M., Walsh, J. N., Taylor-Piliae, R. E., Wells, R. E., Papp, K. V., Donovan, N. J., & Yeh, G. Y. (2014, Jan 2). *Effect of Tai Chi on Cognitive Performance in Older Adults: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.* Retrieved from Wiley Online Library: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jgs.12611/full

Yeh, G., Wayne, P., & Phillips, R. (n.d.). *T'ai Chi exercise in patients with chronic heart failure.* Retrieved from NBCI: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18487899

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**Local Resources (San Antonio)**

Free Classes: Gentle Wellness, <http://gentlewellness.com/free-classes/>

Tai Chi in the Park: Friedrich Wilderness Park, Sunday, 9:00-10:00 am. Registration required. See details at <http://www.sanantonio.gov/ParksAndRec/News-Events/Events/Event-Details/ArtMID/15385/ArticleID/8931/Tai-Chi?Park=&Facility>=

**Online Resources**

On-line Training: iTai Chi: An Online Tai Chi Teaching and Learning Program

Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVqSvq60opTxiqBxZnne_kw>

# Information: National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, *Tai Chi and Qi Gong: In Depth*

<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/taichi/introduction.htm>

Information: NCCIH YouTube Site, <https://www.youtube.com/user/NCCAMgov>

**Recommended Reading**

Liang, Shou-Yu & Ching, We Wen. (2014) *Simplified Tai Chi Chuan: 24 Postures with Applications and Standard,* Ymaa Publication Center

Lam Kam-Chuen. (1994) *Step-By-Step Tai Chi*, Touchstone

Wayne, Peter (2013) *The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi: 12 Weeks to a Healthy Body, Strong Heart, and Sharp Mind*, Shambhala