



## **Tai Chi Energy**

Tai Chi, a Chinese martial art form applied within a Nia class, offers unending health benefits. Tai Chi stimulates the central nervous system, lowers blood pressure, relieves stress and gently tones muscles without strain. It enhances digestion, elimination of wastes and the circulation of blood. Tai Chi's rhythmic movements massage the internal organs and improve their functionality. The greatest attribute of Tai Chi is the channeling of the flow of Chi (intrinsic energy) through the body's meridians and balancing polarities (i.e. yin/yang, etc.) Harmonizing oneself with the universe is an attribute to which we strive.

The energy of T'ai Chi is felt most effectively in a Nia class when we consciously activate our muscles (strength) in order to move Chi. We cultivate Chi by mindfully breathing along with simple and deliberate movements. We practice internally directing energy from the core through our feet, hands, head, tailbone as well as circulating chi throughout the body to create healing. The nervous system quiets in the calm yet energizing quality of Tai Chi. Internal presence is developed as we move slowly entering the space of a Nia class. Flowing with the breath, movements glide seamlessly together with awareness and dynamic ease. Grounding through the feet (heel lead) we maintain a strong connection to the earth and develop balanced strength and flexibility in the lower body. Focus on movement from the tan tien (belly) encourages alignment of the spine (three body weights) as well as abdominal and back strength. We practice mindfulness/awareness to keep the mind alert and present (Movement Meditation). Relaxation of body and mind enable chi to flow freely. Systemically, the infusion of the element of tai chi is everywhere within a Nia class.

Applied as a Martial form, or self-defense tool, Tai Chi's benefits continue. Internal strength, agility, precision, focus and intent, and fine tuned awareness multiply. We cultivate the necessary tools to self-heal. Performing subtle, intricate and powerful movements become natural and spontaneous. Self-confidence and internal power are enhanced.

The energy of Tai Chi allows the mind to move into an alpha brainwave state where creativity and transformation can happen - very much like Yoga and meditation. The tranquil and mindful movements create a story that bring to life the very lessons and joys we move through on a daily basis. We begin to self-heal, extend beyond ourselves, and move into a place of service or universality.

## **The Body's Way**

Tai Chi as it relates to The Body's Way aligns with the embryonic stage. The essence of this movement form embraces the idea of *dynamic ease* throughout the whole practice.



An internal movement practice, Tai Chi is felt deeply and slowly. Listening to the voices of the body, sensing, developing awareness, and beginner's mind teaches the internal slow dance.

### ***Balance***

Tai Chi teaches the unifying ideas of polarities. Balancing Yin and Yang, forward and backwards movements, left and right, and internal with external energies to harmonize and ground. Moving energy along a circular path offers dimensionality and fullness to our practice as well as balancing both sides of the brain. Applied as Martial Form, the speed and power generated in linear moves supports and balances the slow circular practice.

### ***Mobility and Stability***

Leading with the heel, transferring weight, and balancing all stem from the element of Tai Chi. Our feet stabilize us and move us. We feel our way through our feet. Being led by internally directed movements provides the alignment support for stepping out. Learning to feel the internal impulse and move out through our belly, feet, hands and spine, allows for mobility. Freedom in the body and mind is felt as we develop strength from the ground up.

### ***My body revealed the Body's Way doing Tai Chi*** **(Personal Side Note)**

After practicing Tai Chi forms consistently for two years, the balance and strength created within my legs and joints were amazing. The awareness and meditation skills I developed by moving slowly and deliberately have certainly changed my life. However, the forms themselves are not balanced from side to side meaning that there were not equal movements for each side of the body. For instance, I overworked the right side if I didn't teach myself the form on the left side as well.

My body didn't feel balanced after doing a form. So I would break down the moves and practice them individually. This enhanced my practice by becoming precise, flexible and strong.

The feedback tools that The Body's Way supports enabled me to get creative and find a way to continue learning without discomfort. Going back to dynamic ease, balance and most of all Joy!