



## **Basic Outline of Methods and Purpose of a Traditional, Evidence-Based Taiji and Qigong Training Curriculum**

[www.centerfortaiji.com](http://www.centerfortaiji.com)  
[yyang5@illinois.edu](mailto:yyang5@illinois.edu)

Traditional Taiji curriculum is interrelated and interdependent—the practice will be simpler, and the benefit of practice will be greater and realized sooner, if a complete curriculum is practiced. Also, the benefit will increase in proportion to the quality, understanding, and depth of practice. Qualified teachers are essential in communicating correct and efficient practice methods.

In a randomized, controlled trial at the University of Illinois, the improvements in balance and strength measures in older adults were apparent after two months of moderate Taiji and Qigong instruction (3 days per week, 1 hour per day). It is notable that the choreography of the seven-movement introductory form movement was not learned until after the 4<sup>th</sup> month of the intervention—therefore the effect size observed in the intervention must be attributed to the totality of the curriculum and not to style or length of form choreography.

The Taiji and Qigong curriculum developed by the Center for Taiji and Qigong Studies is a distillation of traditional Taiji training. It was created by Dr. Yang Yang as an introductory training program specifically for research. This program is unique from others used in research in that it contains static and dynamic qigong exercises which, in the oral and written tradition of China, are considered essential for efficient Taiji practice.

The curriculum is also documented in an instructional video, which contains nearly four hours of detailed instruction.

## **I. Sitting Meditation**

A. Purpose: Nurture energy, static “mind/body” integrative exercise, teach practitioner body awareness and to deeply relax mind and body (a deeply relaxed body is not possible unless mind is also relaxed). Necessary for practitioner to “learn” quiescence and transfer that experience to standing and moving meditation.

B. Methods: sitting on edge of chair or with legs crossed on floor—posture important.

C. Common Mistakes: mistaking the “path” (i.e. meditation technique) for the goal (quiescence), emphasizing “moving energy,” attraction to sensations.

## **II. Standing Meditation**

A. Purpose: Nurture energy, static “mind/body” integrative exercise, learn and internalize fundamental postural principles, learn to “relax” and adapt efficient body structure while completing a task (holding a static posture), strengthen body (esp. core). Practitioners generate efficient motor patterns in posture control which can be applied to Taiji form, pushhands, and daily activities. It is the bridge from static relaxation to dynamic relaxation.

B. Methods: Two traditional postures—“Wuji” and “Santi”

## **III. Dynamic Qigong/Silk Reeling**

A. Purpose: Nurture energy, improve range of motion, flexibility, circulation, translate relaxation cultivated in sitting and standing meditation to movement, and learn “reverse” deep breathing pattern characteristic of Taiji movement. Strengthen lower body and core. Intermediate step between standing meditation and choreographed form.

B. Methods: Repetitious practice of single movement exercises (five traditional exercises) that allow practitioners to meditatively focus on relaxation in movement, deep breathing, elongation and range of motion without concern for memorizing choreography.

#### **IV. Taiji Form Movement**

A. Purpose: Teach practitioner mechanics of efficient movement (maximum output, minimal effort), translating the efficient body structure cultivated in standing meditation to choreographed movements, continue to nurture and build energy and improve mind/body connection, strengthen lower body and core in dynamic movement.

B. Methods: All orthodox styles are good and can yield benefit – understanding the movement, and not the style of choreography, is what is important. See discussion of form in attached “Overview of Best Taiji Practices” white paper. Form should be challenging, but not overly complicated, involve a variety of directional movement, the range of motion (arm movements, chest opening/closing, waist turning, and weight shifting) should be as large as comfortable allowed (traditionally, “from big to small”). AVOID low postures and awkward structure that is potentially injurious to the knees, overly simplified form movements with small range of motion (sometimes advertised as “beginning” forms), and excessive choreography.

#### **V. Push-Hands**

A. Purpose Cultivate mental and physical balance in the face of perturbation, and learn to both use and gauge/control the “internal power” that is developed in meditation and form practice, and further develop power.

B. Methods: Simple single hand exercise taught to beginners. Close, engaged, and comfortable force essential to realize benefit. Seniors enjoy “touching.”

#### **VI. Lying Qigong**

A. Purpose: Mind-body meditative exercise. Physically, a restorative exercise for core musculature, upon which the mechanics of Taiji movement fundamentally rely. Essential for frequent/advanced practitioners to avoid over-use injury. Little known but traditional exercise.

B. Methods: Meditative lying on front, side, and back. Can be done either as wuji meditation or Taiji (e.g., “sinking” into the ground, moving).