

# SUNSET TAI CHI

SIMPLIFIED TAI CHI FOR RELAXATION AND LONGEVITY

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- Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center
- Tufts Medical Center, Boston
- Children's Hospital Boston

with

## David Silver

Forewords by

Dr. Irwin H. Rosenberg, M.D.  
Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming, Ph.D.

Relax  
and rejuvenate  
your mind, body,  
and spirit



# Simplified Tai Chi for Relaxation and Longevity

*"A wonderful and practical approach to tai chi and qigong that can correct stress-related illnesses, by a highly respected master-teacher."*

—**Herbert Benson, M.D.**

Harvard Medical School, Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine; Author of the bestselling book *The Relaxation Response*

*"Sunset Tai Chi makes a valuable contribution in integrating the powerful health benefits of tai chi and qigong into Western medicine."*

—**Dr. Yang Yang, Ph.D.**

Author of *Taijiquan: The Art of Nurturing, The Science of Power*; Director, Center for Taiji and Qigong Studies, New York

*"This book is a gift to anyone interested in maximizing his or her health. My cancer patients, who attend Rones' classes, report increased stamina and mood."*

—**Ann Webster, Ph.D.**

Director, Mind Body Program for Cancer; Staff Psychologist, Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital; Instructor in Medicine, Harvard Medical School

*"Rones' work is a cornerstone of our integrative oncology mission and allows us to offer our patients the best supportive care available today. I strongly believe that no integrative therapies library would be complete without the important works of Ramel Rones."*

—**Anne M. Doherty-Gilman, MPH**

Associate Director, Leonard P. Zakim Center for Integrative Therapies, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

Tai chi has steadily become a popular form of mind/body exercise as more and more people in the West discover the rich rewards of living in a holistic way. Tai chi is a journey through the mind, the body, and the spirit, which can be practiced by everyone for health and martial arts.

*Sunset Tai Chi* is a comprehensive introduction to using tai chi philosophy and the setting sun for stress relief. This mind/body program is designed for beginners or intermediate level students. It teaches how to calm down and recuperate from the stress of the day, thus preventing and healing numerous stress-related illnesses.

A full mind/body workout is presented, which can be practiced sitting or standing. This workout includes restorative poses from yoga, purifying movements mixed with meditations from qigong, tai chi stances and drills, a short Sunset Tai Chi form, and a sunset cleansing meditation practice that is essential for end of day stress reduction.

- Relax and rejuvenate yourself after a long day
- Improve the quality of your sleep
- Incorporate mind/body exercise into your daily activities
- Increase your lung capacity and oxygen intake
- Improve performance and prevent injuries
- Tap the power of your mind to improve your health and your martial arts skills
- Boost your natural healing of chronic conditions, such as arthritis, fibromyalgia, insomnia, osteoporosis, sarcopenia, cystic fibrosis, and various cancers

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Report from the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*: Using elements of this Sunset Tai Chi program developed by Ramel Rones, Tufts University School of Medicine coordinated a study of a single-blind, randomized trial of classic Yang-style tai chi as compared with a control intervention consisting of wellness education and stretching for the treatment of fibromyalgia. The August 2010 report published by the *NEJM* states: "Tai chi may be a useful treatment for fibromyalgia and merits long-term study in larger study populations."

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## Introduction

The things we hear most frequently from new students coming to qigong and tai chi classes are: “I can’t relax,” “I can’t sleep,” “I’m too tense,” “I have a hard time changing pace,” or “I cannot wind down.” The pace of activity in modern life is accelerating rapidly. We are inundated with stimuli and information constantly on television, on the Internet, and during our daily interactions. For our jobs, our brains need, more than ever, to stay for long periods of time in a highly-concentrated state—a must for success in the competitive world in which we live. An unfortunate side effect is the toll this level of performance takes on our health and quality of life. Our employers benefit and so does production, but the price we pay may not be worth it in the long run. I am a strong believer in modernization. I love the new-age gadgets, as well as the developments in both medicine and technology, but I am also a strong believer in recognizing what we lose and in trying to incorporate the important principles for better health and improved physical and mental performance. Cars, for example, are a wonderful convenience, but as a result, we do not walk enough. It is important to find time to walk or we will have to deal with muscle and bone loss. Recognizing what we lose when we use modern conveniences will help us find effective ways to address that loss and will allow us the best of both worlds.

The racing mind at the end of the day is part of the game. If you keep thinking and concentrating on your problems for hours, you will experience difficulty in cooling down when you are finished working. Pure instinct tells us to cool down and take a break so we will be ready for the next day. In reality, this break does not always happen. Some people cannot change their working and racing minds into calm, recuperative minds until eleven at night, even when they finish work at six or seven in the evening. Some can only let go by using various substances such as alcohol or other legal and illegal drugs. Some people sit and vegetate in front of the television. These are some of the common ways to change the brain waves from the alpha state with its very active focus to the theta state that is between awake and asleep, the relaxed, healing, and rejuvenating state of mind. There are other methods that are a little more healthful and give you more than just a change in your brain waves. These also give you other benefits, e.g., reading a good book, or exercising, going for a walk or other sports, or just pure joy, such as playing with the kids and maybe your wife.

But even knowing and performing all those techniques and various methods, many still have a difficult time changing pace, falling asleep, and getting a good night’s rest. That is the motivation behind this book. This book offers you mind/body exercises and a tai chi program, which together with the powerful pulling energy of the setting sun

can facilitate the body and the mind to change more easily between the various brain wave states. This change will not happen overnight. You need to determine the time and the place to practice. The optimal length of time for this practice should be between 15 to 45 minutes and the place you practice should be quiet and peaceful, not too warm or cold, and definitely have no distractions, such as cell phones, Blackberries, or annoying sounds or people.

There are many ways to achieve this skill of fluctuating with control between the various mood stages or brain waves. The best method, the one I like the most, is sunset meditation that coordinates the energy of the setting of the sun and the power of the brain, both dissolving and melting. One encourages the other. On the days you do not use the setting sun, use the mind/body program as well as the tai chi routines in this book. On the days you are very busy, some of the visualizations or just doing work on your breathing will go a long way. Over time and through practice, you will be able to change between the brain wave states more quickly and easily, and learn to relax deeply. This change will translate to a much more relaxed evening, a better night's sleep, and enhanced performance, both physically and mentally, the next day.

## How to Use This Book

In order to obtain the full benefits of this book, first read through it thoughtfully and completely so that you understand the theory. Become familiar with what I call the 'mind/body prescriptions.' If you have read the *Sunrise Tai Chi* book or watched the DVD, some of the basic preparation exercises and visualizations will be a repeat for you. In *Sunset Tai Chi*, another layer has been added to keep you stimulated and interested. These skills cannot be excluded for they are the basis for understanding the new techniques. For example, the mind/body prescription Zen mind is as essential a practice before any work is done with raising your energy system as it is for the visualizations evoking spirituality, and the relaxation techniques on which this program focuses. You will find that both programs work together and can provide you with a complete and effective mind/body practice for the entire day. They are an outline for your own effective daily practice. Approach the techniques as if it is the first time. These are fundamental skills that ultimately we all should be constantly mindful of, not only during our scheduled tai chi practice. Remember that the goal is to make both the physical and the mental skills you will learn in both books a regular daily behavior. As a result, at the end of the day you will BE it, instead of only practicing it.

Within the Sunrise and Sunset Tai Chi, you are also learning 16 of the movements common to most tai chi forms. The traditional long Yang-style Tai Chi Chuan (Taijiquan) form is comprised of 37 postures for a total of 108 movements. Although Sunset Tai Chi is a short form, the movements are derived from authentic Yang-style Tai Chi Chuan that will give you a correct foundation. By learning both the Sunrise and Sunset Tai Chi forms you are about halfway to learning the traditional long forms. If your goal is to relax, improve your health, learn to manage your energy, and feel good, then either of the Sunrise or Sunset programs will provide you with the more than enough skills needed.

When you first begin training, practice the physical skills separately from the mental visualizations. Work on the mental exercises, and even if you do not *feel* it, continue the practice. Try moving away from 'feeling' it to more of 'sensing' it. Over time, the internal skills taught in this program will reveal themselves to you. The more you tune in to yourself, the more you will begin to notice small details in your practice. Train the various physical and mental skills individually until you sense that it is time to put them together.

Develop your skill in the 'art of using 80% of your effort.' Do not stretch so far that it inhibits your breathing. Do not breathe so deeply that it inhibits your movement. Inhale deeply and fill your lungs to 80%. Learn to recognize when you are stretching

too far or too little. Learn to know how many repetitions are too many and when you are not doing enough, and learn to know how long you should spend doing an exercise. Learn to let go and not to be too hard on yourself. All of the above recommendations pertain to learning to train at your 80% effort. There is a lot more to this concept than you might think. I challenge you to think about it and develop your ability to use this skill. Progress slowly and naturally. Do not strain or make yourself uncomfortable.

Being able to visualize three or four visualizations at once is not easy. It is a process that takes time. Do not overload your brain. Give yourself time to learn this skill. For beginners, it is natural, when you are trying to put your mind in the energy centers, for other thoughts to steal your mind away from staying focused on the visualization. When you realize a thought has taken your attention, visualize looping your attention, first into the breath, because the breath is 'nothing.' Follow the breath in and out. Stay on top of it the same way you stay on a surfboard, and then get back to the visualization. Move your mind in through the third eye, straight through the spiritual valley and down into the pituitary gland area; connect into the baton in the center of your body, and then lead your mind down into the lower energy center two inches below your belly button or what I call the center of gravity energy center. This trick of using your breath to empty your mind from any thoughts I refer to as 'surfing the breath.'

Remember that using the influence of the setting sun is the main concept of this book, but often your practice will happen during other hours. It is still beneficial to practice whenever you have the time. The more you practice, the more benefits you will derive when you have the opportunity to use the setting sun. Once you develop these internal skills of 'listening' inside the body, i.e., feeling your energy and a strong sensation of your energy centers, you can gradually mix these skills with stretches, stances, tai chi drills, and the Sunset Tai Chi form.

Study the theory and as you continue to practice, refer often to the detailed instructions until you have a strong understanding of the various exercises, the separate tai chi movements, and the tai chi form. Be careful especially at the start to build good habits. Practice the tai chi drills and the form to the left and right equally to develop the symmetry of your mind and body.

One of the main objectives of this program is to free your skeleton from being a prisoner of the soft tissue by stretching and loosening your physical body while using the knowledge in the book as well as the power of the setting sun. If you cannot perform certain physical skills, it is often because the muscles and tendons are restricted from lack of use or insufficient stretching that will in turn restrict the full range of motion of your skeleton. After you have developed strength and flexibility in the muscles and tendons, and regain a healthier range of motion and correct alignment, the quality of your life will change tremendously.



Evoke your spirit in each exercise while maintaining a meditative state, which means to relax deeply so that your brain waves shift to the meditative state between being awake and asleep, and then bring in a sense of spirituality. I like to visualize the spirit of nature, the earth spirit, a sensation of the earth beneath me, the mountains, trees, and oceans around me, and heaven above me. If you are interested in evoking spirituality using your personal religious visualizations, you are more than welcome to do so. One of my students visualizes the three angels, Gabriel, Daniel, and Samuel, coming down and holding their wings around her. Another student, who is a priest, told me that he visualizes the internal energetic baton as the light or the rod of God. Who am I to argue with this concept? I sincerely thanked him, and told him that he had brought me to a deeper sensation with this visualization.

*Sunrise Tai Chi* emphasized drawing the morning energy of the sun inward and charging every cell of your body with clean, natural energy. It is a special routine for the morning that supports having an enjoyable, healthy, and productive day. As the title indicates, the *Sunset Tai Chi* program involves connecting to the sun's energy as it sets, or at any time after 2 P.M. Later in the day, the natural energy outside is waning, and you can gradually allow this setting energy to dissolve stress, tension, or any problem or trauma that is stored in the physical or energetic body. I refer to all of it as impurities. The force of the setting sun reinforces your mind power to draw out and release the impurities from your body. Together with the mind/body program and the tai chi form, you will have the perfect mind/body prescriptions to finish the day and start the evening so you are fresh and ready for the next day. This ancient practice of connecting with the forces of nature, especially the sun, and utilizing those forces for health and prevention, is a powerful and effective meditation skill, which every individual should learn, practice, and enjoy.

**Sitting Tai Chi.** Tai chi and the mind/body prescriptions can be done sitting as well as standing. Sit using correct alignment: lengthen the spine, drop your shoulders, relax your face as well as your groin, breathe deeply, and relax. Sitting tai chi is good for those who are unable to stand or for those interested in refining the training by first isolating the upper part of the body. Training on the edge of a chair offers many benefits for beginners and for more advanced students because doing so restricts movement and causes the practitioner to focus on fine-tuning certain aspects that are needed in the body, breath, mind, energy, and spirit. These five building blocks are discussed in detail, beginning at the end of Chapter 1. (The *Sunset Tai Chi* DVD presents a complete sitting workout that you may follow. Try practicing the cool-down exercises and the tai chi drills and form both ways, standing and sitting, to experience the value of this training.)



# Tai Chi—Grand Ultimate

## WHAT IS TAI CHI?

### About the Internal Arts

For centuries, tai chi chuan (taijiquan) has been a practice acknowledged to promote deep relaxation and excellent health, to prevent injuries and illness, and sometimes to reach higher levels of skill in martial arts. This gentle, moving meditation helps you balance strength and flexibility, offers a low-impact workout, and engages all of the various soft tissues in your body: muscles, tendons, ligaments, fasciae, and skin. When practicing the low stances, you maintain or increase your range of motion through your joints, as well as build bone density.

Commonly known by its abbreviated name, tai chi (taiji) practice improves the circulation of blood and qi (energy) that enhances the body's natural healing capabilities. In addition to learning fundamental tai chi stances and postures, these body-conditioning exercises also help you to increase muscle mass, while the gentle movements continually massage your internal organs, leading to increased flow of blood and oxygen through every cell in your body. Tai chi is an excellent way to improve your quality of life and daily physical performance. You learn to optimize your internal energy use and to allow the natural energy from your surroundings to rejuvenate your body. Relaxation is an essential key to successful practice and should be the primary goal of students new to tai chi. Wherever there is tension in your body, your energetic circulation is stagnant or blocked. Therefore, the primary aspect of studying any internal art is relaxing the entire body, first and foremost.

So many books focus on only one aspect of tai chi, the form. This approach can sometimes give the reader an incomplete understanding. It is important that you have a basic overview of the true meaning of the ancient art of tai chi chuan. Many people believe that tai chi is a kind of 'New Age' exercise for health, but in fact, tai chi is a Chinese philosophy that dates back at least 5,000 years. Some recent archaeological findings suggest that the yin-yang concept of balance and harmony, which is the root of this philosophy, may be over 10,000 years old. This concept predates the moving art of tai chi chuan by many thousands of years.

The yin-yang theory of tai chi philosophy is based on the idea that everything in the universe is created, developed, and constantly changing due to the interaction,

balance, and imbalance of yin and yang, which can be described as any two opposing forces, such as light/dark, cold/hot, or force/yielding. This concept of constant change and yin-yang balance is an approach to understanding the laws of nature, and the universe itself.

Tai chi chuan is often shortened to tai chi, but the practitioner should be clear about the distinction between the martial art of tai chi chuan and the more ancient tai chi philosophy. Tai chi, which translates as grand ultimate, is the creative force that lies between wuji, the state of no extremity, and yin-yang, the state of discrimination. In tai chi chuan, this creative force is the mind, the origin of all movement and therefore the origin of all yin-yang in the body. The tai chi philosophy was later blended with several ancient physical exercises and martial arts forms to create a new martial art style known as tai chi chuan, or grand ultimate fist.

Lao Tzu, an older contemporary of Confucius, wrote and taught Taoist (Daoist) philosophy in the province of Hunan in the sixth century B.C. The classic collection of ancient writings attributed to him, the *Tao Te Ching* (*Dao De Jing*), or *The Way of Virtue*, offers insightful discussions of the Taoist philosophies that lie in the heart of tai chi chuan, such as yin/yang, two opposite extremes, and wuji, a place of no extremities.

The essential principles of tai chi chuan can be traced back thousands of years to ancient Chinese health exercises and to classical yoga in India. As early as the fourth century B.C., Life-Nourishing Techniques (Yangsheng) were being practiced. These techniques included bending, expanding, condensing, and extending movements; breathing techniques; and qi circulation methods similar to the later internal aspects of tai chi.

These ancient exercises and breathing techniques, known as Dao Yin and Tu Na, were created to adjust the imbalance of qi energy in the body, to build more energy, and to increase adaptability to the natural changes in the environment. Dao Yin is the art of guiding the energy in the pathways of the body to achieve harmony, and of stretching the body to “massage” the qi pathways in order to reduce qi energy stagnation and to attain flexibility. Tu Na is the art of breathing that was taught and studied in the Buddhist Shaolin and Wudang monasteries.

Many people ask in class, “What’s the difference between qigong and tai chi?” There is a simple answer: tai chi is qigong, but qigong is not necessarily tai chi. Qigong is the cultivation of your qi energy in the body. Tai chi is a form of qigong, but its movements may also be applied at full speed as a martial art. Tai chi is martial gong. It is a form of qigong that is designed for both health and martial arts. Both medical qigong and tai chi emphasize the power of the mind and the importance of cultivating energy and evoking our spirituality. Many of the internal skills are acquired through meditation.

Qigong is the study (gong) of human energy (qi). It embodies a total system of physical, mental, and spiritual exercises that deal with different aspects of our being. Many popular qigong exercises were developed as long as 2,500 years ago.

Qigong was developed in China and has evolved into four major schools of thought:

1. Scholar Qigong or Confucius Qigong: Ethical development, refinement of personal temperament, and self-cultivation
2. Martial Qigong: Enhancement and development of the strength, endurance, and spirit of the warrior
3. Medical Qigong: Improvement of quality of life. Complements Western treatments. Relieves symptoms of illness
4. Religious Qigong: Divided into two schools—Taoist and Buddhist

Taoist: Cultivation of physical body and spirit, merging with nature to achieve longevity and immortality

Buddhist: Spiritual cultivation as a way to reach enlightenment, freedom from the cycle of life and death

Tai chi is a martial qigong. It is a form of qigong that is designed for both health and martial arts. Both medical qigong and tai chi emphasize the power of the mind and the importance of cultivating energy and evoking our spirituality. Many of the internal skills are acquired through sitting, standing, or moving meditation.

Often, people memorize a tai chi or qigong sequence of movements without learning the internal skills, which are the essence of the art. However, it is through these skills that deeper benefits arise. Your health will improve, your balance will improve, your energy will increase, and your mind and spirit will become more focused and clear. The goal is to make these subtle internal skills as easy as possible for you to understand so you may enjoy these benefits in your daily life, rather than focus on the external forms and becoming frustrated by trying to memorize dozens of intricate tai chi movements. First and foremost, you must learn to relax, and then through practice, you will master the internal skills, after which you can learn external moves and various forms.

## **MY JOURNEY IN THE HEALING ARTS**

### **My Involvement in Tai Chi and Complementary Medicine**

Since I wrote a detailed history of Tai Chi in *Sunrise Tai Chi*, I decided to write a different history for this book which describes my personal journey thoughts, and some important principles as I developed through the martial arts world and into the growing world of complementary medicine and its recognition and acceptance by health care providers and patients.

In my work with the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and the Harvard and Tufts medical school research departments, I have seen tremendous changes in relation to the methods,

### Practicing Small Circulation

For the purpose of isolating only the trunk sit, either in the seiza position with the lower part of your legs folded under your thighs, or a modified seiza position, sitting on an elevated yet flat surface or on a block, or you can sit on the edge of a chair, or cross your legs on a folded blanket. Sitting in any of these postures does two important things that are essential for this meditation. It slows down the energy and blood going into the legs, but slows it enough that the legs get slightly numb and you have an experience of 'being' only a trunk. Sometimes to create this illusion, you can use the trick of putting a blanket on your thighs.

*Remember that letting the legs fall asleep is a goal of sitting meditation so that you can*



Seiza position with the lower part of your legs folded under your thighs.



Sitting on an elevated yet flat surface or on a block.



Sitting on the edge of a chair.

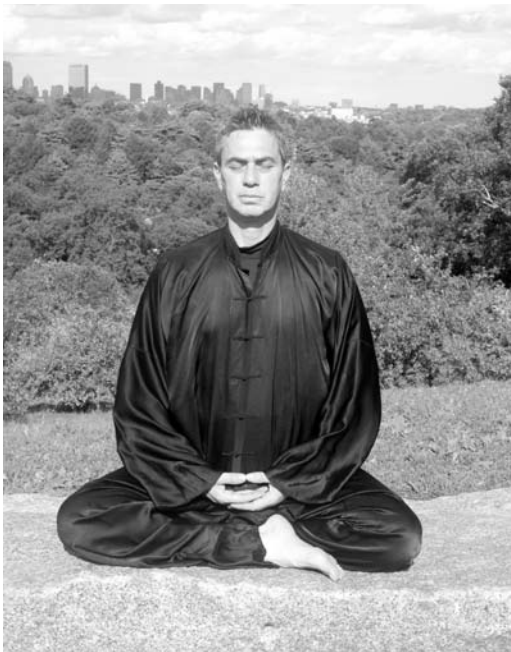


experience just the trunk of the body. That is one of the reasons why we sit for at the most 45 minutes, so your legs will get only a little numb. Over time, you will know yourself and the behavior of your legs. My legs usually fall asleep after about 20 minutes. If you move when the legs are asleep, you will reintroduce flow to the legs and at this point you will actually suffer more from the sensation of pins and needles. Your best option is just not to move, and over time your legs become conditioned to this way of sitting. If you do not like this kind of sitting or have any medical issues that contraindicate allowing your legs to become numb, just sit on the edge of a chair. Also you may sit on a block or cushion, or sit with your legs crossed but not in a lotus position, so the legs will still have circulation of blood and energy, which may prevent injury.

Folding the legs decreases the circulation in them, emphasizing the governing vessel and the conception vessel, which when put together make up the small circulation. By folding the legs, we slow down the energy enough from the grand circulation so that we can divert it to the small circle. Sitting in postures that slow down the energy into the legs creates a situation in which the energy in the governing and conception vessels is stronger, and allows you to experience the small circulation more clearly and strongly. The head should be suspended and empty of thoughts. Once you generate the cycle in the small circulation path, the mind becomes empty, or air, or the place of thoughts with no thoughts.

From my personal experience, your arms can be put in one of three positions:

- If you are cold and want to build up energy and heat, put the palms one on top of the other and place your hands two inches below your navel.

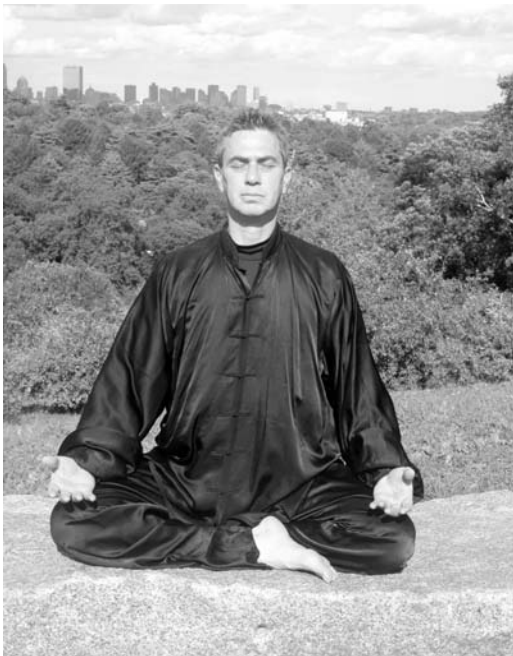


Palms one on top of the other with the hands two inches below your navel (on the ground).

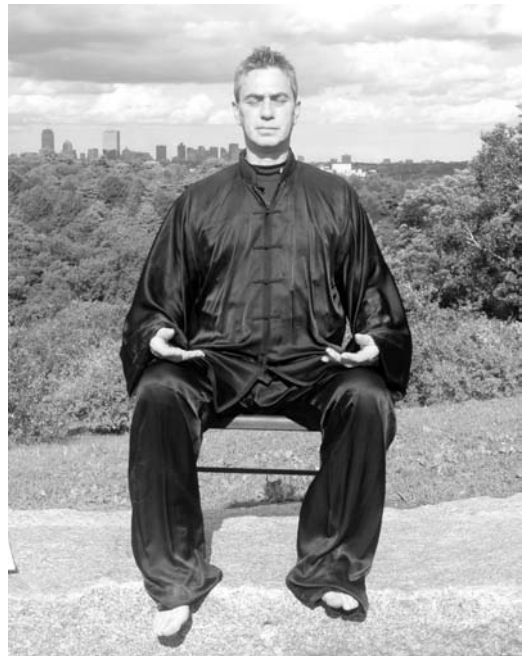


Palms one on top of the other with the hands two inches below your navel (on a chair).

- If you are warm and you want to cool yourself, put your wrists on your knees with the palms facing out.



Wrists on your knees with the palms facing out (on the ground).

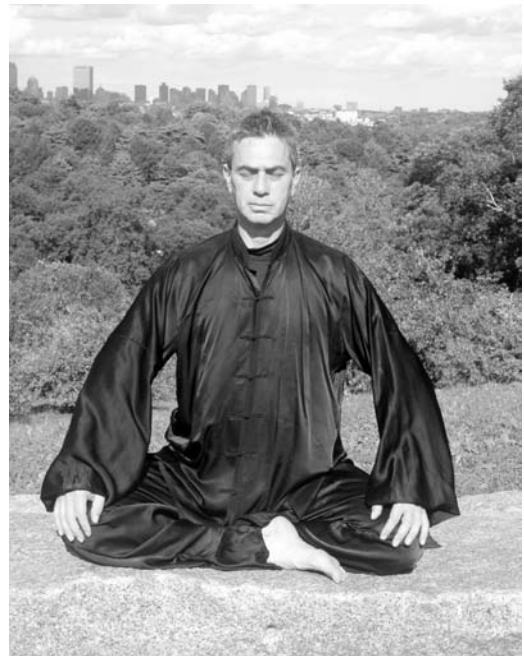


Wrists on your knees with the palms facing out (on a chair).

- If you are neither warm nor cold, put your palms face down on your knees.



Palms face down on your knees (on a chair).



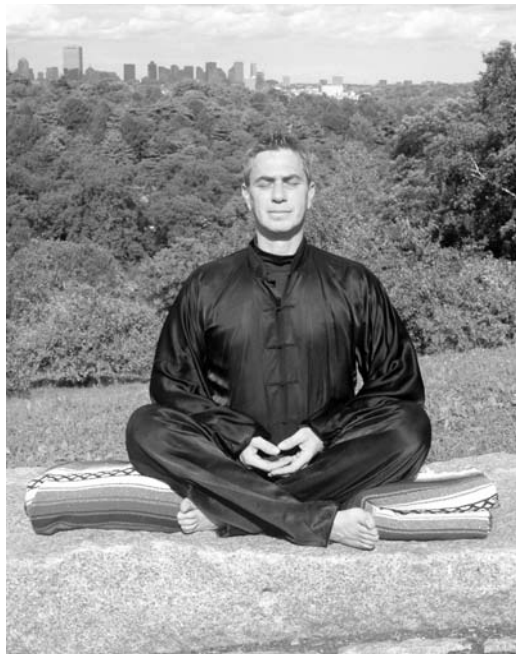
Palms face down on your knees (on the ground).

Having the hands palms down on the knees helps support the lower back. This is often useful for beginners who need to build up their lower back muscles. Sitting in this posture will be hard at first, especially if you are not flexible through the groin and hip area. If your knees are not flat on the ground within five to ten minutes, your lower back will pull back on you and will not allow you to stay focused on the visualization. Instead, you will be occupied with the posture. I recommend using a yoga block, or books, or a folded blanket. The slight height will create enough of an angle toward the front to prevent pull on the lumbar area.

Once you are comfortable in your sitting position, start circulating your mind along the small circulation path. Start from the



Lower back pulling back.



Folded blanket to support the knees.



Using a yoga block.



lower energy center, move down from your lower energy center through the area between the groin and the rectum or what the Chinese call the huiyin cavity, up through the back, over the tailbone, between the spine and the skin, all the way around the middle of the skull, down through the front of the face, the trunk, and back through the huiyin cavity to your center of gravity energy center.

When inhaling, move your mind from your lower energy center to the huiyin cavity up along the governing vessel all the way to your upper lip, and when exhaling, move your mind from the upper lip down the front of the trunk into the huiyin cavity and into the lower energy center. You just completed one cycle (Figure 30). Inhale and repeat the action to the upper lip. Exhale and repeat the action, back to your lower energy center. Your mind moves around the trunk and back into the lower energy center.

### SMALL CIRCULATION PATH

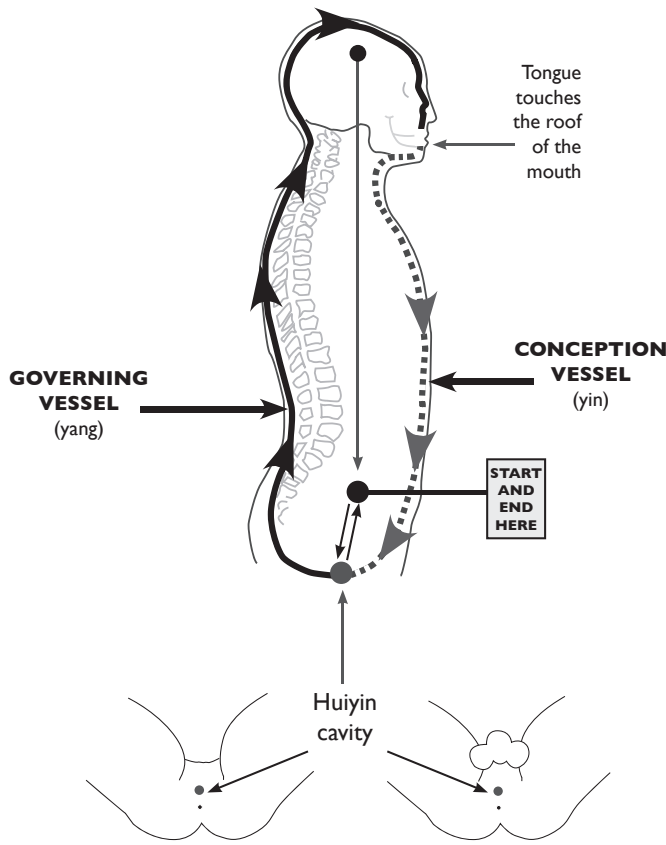


Figure 30. The Huiyin cavity is between the anus and the groin.





## Sunset Tai Chi Form

Tai chi is beautiful. The form is soft and agile and flowing. The practitioner appears to be at peace. This Sunset Tai Chi form is a short sequence of traditional movements common to almost all tai chi styles. Regular practice of this form will allow you to fine-tune your tai chi skills and bring your awareness into the present moment, so you may make the most of your downtime at home, alone or with family.

On a physical level, the tai chi postures engage the whole body. The stances we have just learned utilize strength and flexibility, while maintaining or increasing the range of movement in the joints. The stances, especially when performed low, will increase muscle mass and bone density, which is important for health, as well as martial arts. The pulsing and pumping of the joints and ligaments boosts our energetic circulatory system, the same system that we work on when we go to an acupuncturist.

Relaxing and tensing various groups of muscles creates a cycle of holding and releasing blood, oxygen, and energy into the veins and capillaries, as well as into the energy pathways, known as channels, vessels, and meridians. This works to open up and nourish the body's trillions of cells on the deepest level, and all the way to the extremities. You will enjoy stimulation of your acupuncture points and experience a deep tissue massage at the same time.

When we practice tai chi slowly and mindfully for the purpose of improving our health, it is considered a qigong practice. Qigong and tai chi are sometimes thought of as doing acupuncture on yourself, without the needles. The breath is used as a tool to quiet the mind and to lead energy in and out of the body. For martial applications, in general, when inhaling we block, and when exhaling, we strike. For health purposes, inhaling and exhaling is used for moving/leading energy to a desired area. This deep breathing brings more oxygen in and more toxins, like carbon dioxide, out, thus upgrading the functioning of every cell in your body and giving you abundant energy.

# The Complete Sunset Tai Chi Form

To the Left →



Mountain Stance

Begin Tai Chi



Grind (clockwise 2x)



Grind (counterclockwise 2x)



Crane Spreads Its Wings (2x)

Two Blocks

Brush Knee



← Cloud Hands



Transition

Pick Up Needle

Fan Back

Transition



Nourish & Close Tai Chi

Mountain Stance

*mind  
resides in  
lower energy  
center*

To the Right →



Mountain Stance



left leg out



Begin Tai Chi



Grind (counterclockwise) 2x



Grind (clockwise) 2x

Crane Spreads Its Wings



Crane... (cont.) (2x)

Two Blocks

Brush Knee and Step Forward



Cloud Hands →



Transition

Pick Up Needle



Fan Back

Transit.

Nourish & Close Tai Chi

*mind  
resides in lower  
energy center*

## ELEMENTS OF THE SUNSET TAI CHI FORM

You have already learned the movements. Now they will be strung together into the Sunset Tai Chi form, and we will show the details of each transition from movement to movement so that you can learn this form thoroughly and begin practicing today. These movements are performed as a slow, continuous sequence with an emphasis on relaxation, correct posture, and balance. Eventually, the practitioner may speed up the tai chi form, but increase the speed of your movements gradually, while keeping the postures correct. The goal is to reach the point where the movement is able to generate or emit power, as if you were involved in combat.

At this point, we are focusing on the beginning stage of practice, moving slowly, with an emphasis on the healing benefits of tai chi. This leads to increased awareness and vitality, and helps you to eliminate tension, regain your health, and experience the natural energy within your body and surrounding you. This tai chi form will help you transit from one stage to another and will transform you to a new and refreshed person.

The entire body should always move as one connected unit. While doing the postures, be sure that your arms are moving in conjunction with your torso and that your torso is pushed by the legs. Your arms should not move unless the rest of your body is in motion. Remember to always line up the knees in the direction of the toes, and do not extend the knees past the toes.

As you exhale, the energy goes out through the four gates—the center of your palms and the center of the soles of your feet. Keep your hands in the tai chi hand form—relaxed, and slightly cupped, with the middle fingers downward slightly and the pinky fingers extended. By holding this hand form, you cause some of the energy to stagnate slightly inside the palms, making the energy there stronger. Do not move the arms from the shoulder joints only, but instead through the stretching and releasing of the spine and chest bows.

Once you can perform the form standing or sitting on the edge of the chair with all the external and internal skills taught in this book, use the setting sun to help your entire body to relax, and start using the setting sun and your mind to dissolve and melt the tension and stress through your physical and energetic bodies. Recognize your impurities and allow the mind and the sun to dissolve and cleanse them. The short tai chi form and the powerful energy of the setting sun, over time and practice, will allow you to experience a unique connection between you, the heavens, and the earth.

## MOUNTAIN STANCE

### Sunset Tai Chi Form's First Move

Stand with both feet together, palms placed two inches below your navel. Breathe deeply and close your eyes until you are calm and centered.

When standing still, bring to mind the big mountains and when moving, flow like the great rivers. On an inhalation, open your eyes and move your arms beside your body. You are still a great mountain.

You have awakened, yet you are relaxed. Your brain waves are between the states of being awake and asleep. Sense the earth beneath you and the heavens above. You are a part of the universe.

**Key Points.** Hold your hands beside the body, the middle finger touching the middle of the outer thigh. Try to sense a greater spirit, a connection to the earth and heavens. Align the spine, drop the shoulders, and use deep center of gravity breathing. This stance can also be trained without removing your hands from your belly (two inches below the navel), to reinforce the sensation of the lower energy center. "You are a great mountain." You should be calm, quiet, and centered. You can stay in mountain stance for 20 seconds or 20 minutes, until you are ready to proceed to the next movement: begin tai chi.



Put feet together and palms below navel.



Inhalation. Open eyes, move arms beside body. You are a great mountain.



## BEGIN TAI CHI

### Sunset Tai Chi Form

From mountain stance, shift your weight to the left leg.

Peel up the right foot, from the heel to the ball of the foot.

Place the right foot down a shoulder's width away from the left foot.

Smear the sole of the foot from the ball of the foot to the heel.

Stand with your feet parallel, shoulder-width apart, and slightly bend the knees. The palms face downward, at belly button height. Your elbows should be one fist away from your ribs.

Inhale, and turn the palms to face each other, while stretching the bows. Lift the arms to shoulder height, while visualizing an energy ball between the palms.



Feet parallel, shoulder-width apart; bend knees with palms facing downward at belly button height.



Turn palms, lift arm to shoulder height.



Now, exhale and turn the palms to face downward.

Release the bows and lower the arms to their original position.

**Key Points.** Keep the inner arch of your feet alive. Tuck the tailbone in. Your head is suspended. Your shoulders are relaxed and your face is calm. The main goal of this movement is to sink your mind to the lower energy center.



Exhale, turn the palms to face downward.



Release the bow and lower the arm.



Lower the arms to original position.

### Martial Arts Application of Begin Tai Chi

One martial art application of this posture can be used when you are facing an opponent who has his hands on top of yours or is grabbing your wrists.

Raise your arms and coil your hands around and over the outside of your opponent's hands or arms, and then push the arms downward, gaining an advantageous position for punching or kicking.

If you are interested in a take down, you can use your leg to also drop him to the ground.

If you choose to control your opponent, you can lock him so he cannot move anymore.

Begin tai chi trains us to do two things that are essential for both health as well as martial arts. The first action we do when performing this move is to sink the mind



Opponent grabbing your wrists.



Pull the arm downward.



A take down.

into the center of gravity energy center. This visualization will lead and focus the scattered energy through the body right down to the center where it can be ready for any martial art need or use. It is a stage of being prepared; calmness is an essential principle of being ready for a fight and for preventing illness. The second part of this move is being still. It is written in the *Tai Chi Classics*: “When being still, be as still as a great mountain.” This stillness is the key to seeing and reacting more efficiently to any energy that may come at you. It is much easier to react effectively to a punch from a still position than when hopping and jumping around. When you are still and calm, your ability to see or sense the punch or kick coming at you improves with practice, and you can even reach a point where you can sense the punch before it is launched.



Use your leg to drop opponent to ground.



Raise your arms, and coil your hands around and over the outside opponent's arms.



Control opponent; lock arm over left shoulder.



### Looking and Sensing–Moving or Standing Still

Find a partner. At first, both of you will jump around like boxers. Your partner's task is to touch your chest using three different speeds, slow, medium, and fast, and your task is to block the attacks. Your partner will jump and hop around you and will try to touch your chest by surprise. Your job while also jumping is to try to block his touch to your chest.

The second time, have your partner jump around like the boxer but you just stand still. Ask your partner to approach you with three different speeds: first, slow touches, then medium ones, and last, fast ones. Take a few minutes' break to breathe deeply and become calm, and then stand still. Focus on your partner's chest area while he or she is hopping and jumping. Stay as still, relaxed, and focused as you can.

Next, your partner will try the three-speed touch: slow, medium, and fast. You block the touches or just avoid them by moving your body out of the way. What was your experience?

Most probably, your reactions are much faster when you are starting from a still position than when you are jumping and moving around. This part of martial arts training is called Yi Chuan, which means 'standing still meditation.' It is a part of every traditional Chinese martial arts training. It is one of the most important stepping stones of training internal martial arts. The reason for that is that all motion starts from stillness. You have a better chance of detecting movement if you are still, rather than jumping and moving around.

### Standing Meditation (Yi Chuan)

Different internal styles have different standing meditation postures. The two standing meditations chosen for this book are from yoga and from Yang style Tai Chi.

The first meditation comes from the yoga tradition. Stand in the mountain stance posture.

Empty the mind, and then gather and focus your entire energy at your lower energy center while connecting to the three forces: heaven, human, and earth.

This standing meditation should be practiced on its own until you can stand for 30 minutes.



Mountain stance. Empty the mind, and gather and focus energy at lower energy center.

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